

MBA – Master of Business Administration

Dissertation – Proposal

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The impact of digital marketing practices on brand loyalty:
An analysis of the student preference with special reference
to Sainsbury PLC

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1 Background

The purpose of this research is to identify the most cutting-edge channels of digital marketing in an effort to foster more meaningful, transparent exchanges in the context of Sainsbury PLC. The growth of digital media has allowed businesses to establish more direct lines of connection with their customers and foster a more loyal following for their brands. Businesses now have access to a whole new set of tools and channels on which to build brand loyalty in their products and services because to the rise of digital media (Ahmed, et al., 2016). Making people aware of the brands, getting them to like them, and keeping customers in their best interest (Khan & Islam, 2017) are all challenging problems that are essential to building a solid reputation for the company and brand.

Making people aware of the brands, getting them to like them, and keeping customers in their best interest are all challenging problems that are essential to building a solid reputation for the company and brand (Erdogmus & Cicek, 2022). There is a pressing need to foster brand loyalty across all distribution channels, as a powerful brand can outlast even the most intense of competitors. However, educating customers about the brand's value and helping them recognize the brand's unique selling proposition remain significant obstacles (Ioanăs & Stoica, 2014). To satisfy customers' esteem, the brand image must fulfill its function, and the two must operate in tandem.

A necessity in today's volatile and competitive corporate world is the use of digital platforms to build better brand loyalty. It is being utilized increasingly in an operational role, namely as a tool for maintaining open communication lines and providing consumers with value at a price that is affordable (Mustafa, 2021). Modern forms of media, especially social networking sites like Facebook, Twitter, LinkedIn, etc., have been found to have a profound effect on consumer preferences and interests. This is because there is a powerful customer network that exists, which gives quick input from real users (Gunelius, 2021). According to Trainor, et al (2014), the fundamental effect that digital media has had is to modify the ways in which customers and businesses engage with one another. While making a purchase from a store or market, customers often favour an affordable and simple process (Bilgin, 2018). Due to this, their requirements were met by digital marketing. When compared to more conventional forms of advertisement, digital marketing makes more sense.

Although many businesses in the world use digital media to great effect, in Sainsbury, it is more or less ignoring this innovative channel of customer engagement that has the ability to create brand loyalty. As a result, there is a great deal of value in developing a digital marketing platform for promotional efforts for retailer like Sainsbury.

2 Problem Statement

Sainsbury's launched a fresh digital drive to continue growth in its online sales, attributing the increase in sales and profitability to the success of its brands including Argos, Habitat, and Tu. Sainsbury's announced a 23% rise in underlying earnings before tax to £371m for 28 weeks within 2020 (Valentine, 2021). The pre-tax profit according to the books was £541m within 2020. The Covid-19 outbreak caused a shift in customer behaviour, but the company has been able to sustain its increasing digital sales. In the first half of 2020, digital sales made up around 39% of the supermarket's total retail sales, generating about £5.8bn in revenue (Sainsbury PLC, 2021). The shop has responded by putting more effort into its digital marketing campaigns. After gaining the most market share in the online grocery industry during 2020, the company intends to sustain and drive additional development in digital sales. According to Valentine, (2021), Sainsbury's currently holds a 21.3% share of the UK online grocery industry by value, second only to Tesco. Sainsbury's is extending the use of its loyalty system data to create more focused and successful digital marketing, following the lead of other large retailers such as Tesco and Boots.

In light of the fact that a growing number of people may be abandoning traditional media in favor of new ones, it's vital that attention be paid to digital marketing platforms. In this respect, digital marketing does play a role, since it is now feasible, with the help of tools and measurements, to quantify and analyse the outcome of a marketing strategy (particularly, the digital marketing strategy of the business), allowing marketers to better assess the effectiveness of their efforts . Even though the effectiveness of Sainsbury's digital marketing strategy has been measured in terms of its profit or revenue increase, no assessment has been conducted to evaluate the success of its different digital marketing strategies separately. Thus, this research expected to measure the effect of each digital marketing strategy's effectiveness over building the Sainsbury's brand loyalty.

3 Rationale of the Study

This analysis will focus on the ways in which digital marketing practices are being used by modern businesses, specifically retail supermarkets (Sainsbury PLC), to influence brand loyalty. Thus, Sainsbury PLC will be able to find novel ways of utilizing digital marketing practices to persuade consumers to make repetitive purchases, so they become loyal to the company. Businesses in the retail supermarket industry can learn how to use digital marketing activities to increase customers' purchase intention and keep the business afloat despite the difficulty of bridging the social distance between buyers and the company. Further, this research outcome can assist Sainsbury PLC to develop an updated and strong digital marketing strategy than can outperform the competitors.

Numerous studies have looked into the impact of digital marketing activities that can create brand loyalty. Despite this, few studies have examined how digital marketing activities influence brand loyalty of supermarkets or in the context of Sainsbury PLC. This study was inspired by the need to fill a previously established gap in the literature.

4 Research Objectives

Aim – To identify and apply effective digital marketing practices for Sainsbury PLC, so that it can boost the brand loyalty.

- I. To analyse effective digital marketing practices to be employed by Sainsbury PLC
- II. To identify the impact of those digital marketing practices over the brand loyalty of Sainsbury PLC.
- III. To identify the challenges and opportunities face by Sainsbury PLC when implementing digital marketing practices.

5 Research Questions

- I. What are the effective digital marketing practices to be employed by Sainsbury PLC?
- II. What is the impact of those digital marketing practices over the brand loyalty of Sainsbury PLC?

- III. What are the challenges and opportunities in implementing the digital marketing practices of Sainsbury PLC?

6 Hypotheses

A fun and exciting feature of digital marketing strategies is the entertaining experiences created by marketers on the digital media platforms and enjoyed by their target audiences (Kingsnorth, 2022). With the power of positive emotion, businesses may encourage consumers to maintain a relationship with their brands through the medium of entertainment (Tiago & Veríssimo, 2014). According to the study of Kotane, et al (2019), consumers are always looking for ways to have fun while using digital media platforms, and one way they do this is through disseminating product-related content like images and articles (Khiong, 2022). As a result, entertainment may increase and inspire involvement in digital marketing platforms, leading to a greater sense of customer intimacy with the brand and a corresponding increase in buy intent (Dessart, et al., 2015). Based on that hypothesis 1 can be generated as;

H₁: Entertainment through digital marketing platforms has a positive significant relationship with brand loyalty of Sainsbury PLC

H₀: Entertainment through digital marketing platforms has no significant relationship with brand loyalty of Sainsbury PLC

"Trendiness" is shorthand for the most up-to-date, widely-interesting subjects, or knowledge, which many companies see as important for their target audiences to know (Naaman, et al., 2021). Trendiness can include company-related news, product reviews and suggestions, news about forthcoming trends, etc., all of which serve to increase consumers' confidence in the firms and their products while also raising brand loyalty (Godey, et al., 2013). There is a wide range of information types that businesses may provide to their clientele. The first is the most talked-about topics, which may be anything from social to entertainment to other types of trends. Brand-based educational material is another type, and it may enlighten consumers about the company's values and initiatives in areas like sustainability and social responsibility. Also, consumers like hearing about products from several viewpoints by reading reviews and comments made by other users (Hutter, et al., 2013). In addition, companies may supply consumers with material that is both up-to-date and

useful, such as fashion look books that offer tips and ideas for putting together a stylish winter wardrobe or advice for creating the ideal Scandinavian-style kitchen. Providing the consumers with the most recent, cutting-edge information will help the business grow and prosper (Godey, et al., 2016). According to the sources consulted, not only does this practice assist to save clients time and energy, but it also strengthens the brand and generates more good feedback creating brand loyalty. Based on that hypothesis 2 can be generated as;

H₂: Trendiness through digital marketing platforms has a positive significant relationship with brand loyalty of Sainsbury PLC

H₀: Trendiness through digital marketing platforms has no significant relationship with brand loyalty of Sainsbury PLC

Brands and customers work together to create customized products that cater to each buyer's unique preferences (Seo & Park, 2018). Customization is the process through which companies provide goods and services to their customers in a way that is specific to their preferences and needs. This type of marketing allows businesses to directly interact with prospective buyers, which boosts brand loyalty and sales. The term "customization" can also refer to the sending of communications to a narrow audience (Omar & Atteya, 2020). By emphasizing uniqueness and customization, businesses may gain customers' confidence and strengthen their relationships with them, which in turn create brand loyalty (Kaihatu, 2020). Based on that hypothesis 3 can be generated as;

H₃: Customization through digital marketing platforms has a positive significant relationship with brand loyalty of Sainsbury PLC

H₀: Customization through digital marketing platforms has no significant relationship with brand loyalty of Sainsbury PLC

7 Literature Review

Brand Loyalty

Brands, as discussed by Kotler, et al (2013), encompass much more than their names and logos. Customers' marks exist in their own identities because they reflect their own unique set of

perceptions and emotions in relation to the product and its implementation. For this reason, brands that are both appealing and effective typically exhibit elevated brand value, which indicates a favourable differential impact on customer behaviour (Danaher, et al., 2013). It is a proxy for the brand's ability to win over consumers' trust and preferences. In this role, businesses are actively creating and managing brands (Huang, 2017). Companies like Coca-Cola, Disneyland, and Versace have built brands that are more valuable than the goods or services they provide (Sasmita & Suki, 2015). Market dominance is not due just high profits or efficient management, but also to the fact that consumers perceive that they are receiving excellent value from the brand in question (Alhaddad, 2015).

One explanation for the prevalence of brand loyalty is that customers want to stick with a single provider wherever possible. Marketers define brand loyalty as an action by a customer beyond simple repetition of purchases of the same brand (Alhaddad, 2014). If customers are truly devoted to their favourite brand, they will always choose it over a competing one, regardless of whether the competing option is less expensive or of higher quality (Coelho, et al., 2018). Awareness, quality-brand connection, and recurring buying behaviour are crucial elements in determining brand loyalty. A brand's value or worth in the customers' perspective typically results in improved brand loyalty, but this is not always the case. This is because brand loyalty, as defined by Chaudhuri and Holbrook (2018), is the additional benefit with which a given brand endorses a product. Awareness, perceived quality, affiliation, and satisfaction are the four pillars of brand loyalty (Chen & Lin, 2019). Hence, a consumer's loyalty to a particular brand is the key to the worth of that brand consistent with the concept of brand loyalty, which links the company's name to the customer's memories of certain occasions, feelings, and characteristics (Christodoulides & Jevons, 2021). Further, familiarity with a brand influences how something tastes and sounds.

Digital Marketing

Because cutting-edge marketing strategies and approaches are always developing and improving, there are many facets of digital marketing that may be found which can be used to develop business functionalities (Ryan & Jones, 2012). According to Chaffey and Ellis-Chadwick (2019), digital marketing refers to the promotion of goods or services via the use of digital technology to reach the intended audience. The usage of mobile phones, display adverts, and any other kind of digital marketing are all included in the process of promoting the name of a firm through the utilization

of digital channels. According to Desai and Vidyapeeth (2019), "digital marketing" is the phase in which businesses expand and transform their marketing operations using the Internet and other forms of IT. Instead of using the phrase "digital marketing," Kannan (2017) has stated the process of fostering relationships between firms and their consumers via the use of the Internet and other types of interactive technology was what he referred to as "e-marketing,". This study also claimed that one of the primary purposes of e-marketing is to offer IT-enabled or interactive relationships with clients.

Electronic marketing (EM), often known as digital marketing, is defined as the promotion of goods and services via the use of electronic media and transactions (Charlesworth, 2014). The shifting position of consumers as co-producers is a major factor in this scenario's emergence. Most importantly, value generation is rising in prominence. Technology has been identified as a key factor in enhancing the standard of services offered by organizational units (Chaffey & Ellis-Chadwick, 2019). However, in most of the research, digital marketing was favoured less than social media marketing. It is defined social media marketing (SMM) as motivating customers to connect with a company online (through its website) or offline (via its social profiles). Both platforms, however, can be incorporated for enhancing customer interactions (Desai & Vidyapeeth, 2019).

Digital marketing strategies

These days, consumers may participate in a wide variety of digital activities. Increasing communication via a variety of digital media can provide businesses a broader base from which to reach customers in the global village, but they are far from their only options (Piñeiro-Otero & Martínez-Rolán, 2016). Veleva and Tsvetanova (2020) claimed that it has included several electronic forms of advertising. Email marketing is one of the most famous tools of contemporary marketing strategies, and it facilitates sending timely, customized information to target customer base. In order to meet their customers' needs, online retailers like Amazon and Flipkart send a variety of emails (Chaffey & Smith, 2017). Several internet marketing experts consider email marketing to be the backbone of any successful online sales strategy. This strategy not only enables the companies to connect with the individuals who were included in their target audience, but it also incentivizes those individuals to continue browsing the website (Todor, 2016).

It is generally agreed upon that search engine optimization (SEO) is the single most essential tactic that can be implemented in order to raise a website's visibility in search engines. Digital marketing strategies incorporate a wide range of methods, such as on-site technical research, link building, content production, and blogging (Desai & Vidyapeeth, 2019). The term "search engine optimization" (SEO) refers to the method of attracting visitors via organic search engine results. There are ways to improve a website's visibility in search engine results (De Pelsmacker, et al., 2018). Yet, Pay Per Click (PPC) is a form of digital marketing that costs money. Often, sponsored links will appear at the top of search engine results. If internet advertising is concerned with providing advertisements on other websites, the price varies based on the keywords that have been bid on (Patruti-Baltes, 2016).

Social media marketing is one of the most effective ways to handle a business image across numerous online platforms such as Facebook, LinkedIn, Twitter, and others. In general, it's a great way for businesses to boost their customer loyalty and brand awareness (Darma & Noviana, 2020). Viral marketing is a subset of digital marketing that focuses on content distribution by word of mouth and other non-traditional means. To ensure that the material captures the attention of the market via online communities, several strategies are employed, some of which may include videos on YouTube, Blogs, email marketing, etc. (Baltes, 2015). Among the many forms of digital advertising, SMS (text messages) is particularly popular. The proliferation of smartphones throughout the globe has raised the need of getting news out quickly and accurately (Kannan, 2017). Another subset of digital marketing, "content marketing" as specified by the Content Marketing Institute, is a technique of marketing strategy. This strategy focuses on producing and disseminating information that is both significant and reliable in order to attract in and retain consumers (Vieira, et al., 2019). In addition, it's a regular practice of keeping in touch with customers, even if they don't end up making a transaction. However, businesses should concentrate on the use of content advertising methods to ensure the continuous dissemination of important information to the target and potential customer base, boosting the possibility that they will be developed as loyal customers in the long term (Ryan, 2016).

Conceptual Framework

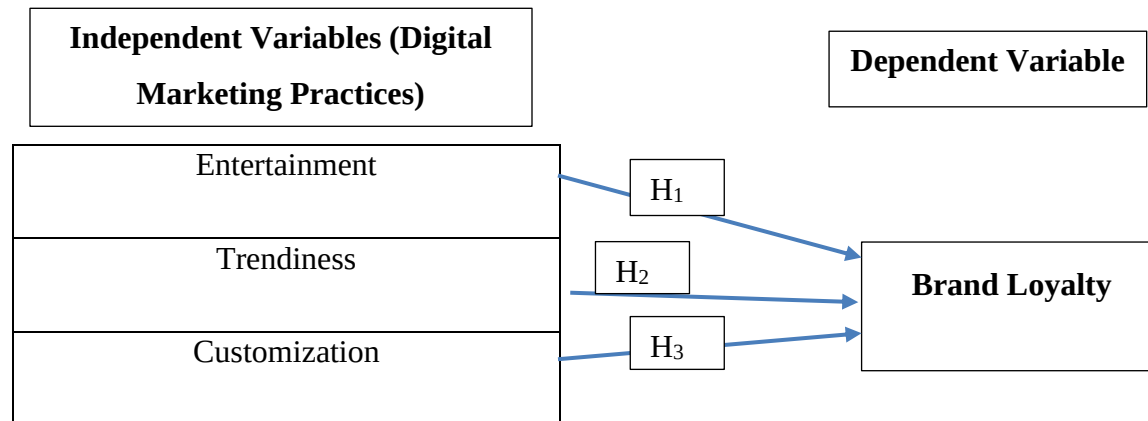


Figure 1: Conceptual Framework

8 Methodology

Research Design

Sounders' research onion model has been incorporated to evaluate the components of research design as follows.

Research Philosophy

A research philosophy is a set of assumptions and beliefs that guides a study of a particular topic or subject (Saunders, et al., 2019). The overarching goal of any research philosophy is to ensure that all of the research conducted adheres to a consistent framework (Burrell & Morgan, 1979).

Due to the use of previously published literature and theoretical frameworks to examine the effects of digital marketing practices on brand loyalty, in this research context, a realist or **positivist methodology** would be most appropriate. It is mainly because this research focuses on what can be demonstrated rather than what is simply assumed to be true. Also, objective data will be used in place of participants' subjective impressions.

Research Approach

Based on the topic at hand, the research approach specifies a specific set of steps to be taken in order to gather, analyse, and interpret the data (Creswell, 2014). The two main schools of thought when it comes to research approaches are inductive and deductive.

Nonetheless, researchers construct a conceptual framework and produce hypotheses, which are associations among variables, after analysing current ideas. These hypotheses are put through a deductive process, where data is gathered and analysed to determine their validity (Saunders, et al., 2019). Unlike the inductive method, the assumptions or premises used in the deductive method are more likely to be correct because they are founded on existing research. By comparing the findings with the literature already in existence, researchers might construct new hypotheses or implications. This method works best when used to big, quantifiable samples from which conclusions may be drawn. For these reasons, the **deductive method** will be used to analyze the data, as the study will involve testing hypotheses and developing a conceptual framework to examine the causal connections between variables.

Research Methods

The quantitative technique is used in order to pick a comprehensible and practicable research procedure to attain the end objective of the investigation. It is possible to conduct a research using either quantitative or qualitative methodologies, or a hybrid design that combines the two. Quantitative methodology, as described by (Sekaran & Bougie, 2016), is the process through which hypotheses are put to the test, data are gathered, relationships between variables are shown, and future results are forecasted. Closed-ended data, often intended as attitude, behaviour, and performance tools and evaluation, comprising statistical scores, to answer research questions or to test hypotheses, are indicative of the quantitative approach.

The researcher thinks that the procedures available in the **quantitative mono method** would be suitable for this investigation because it seeks to analyse the link between components of digital marketing practices and brand loyalty. Research can benefit from these strategies while doing processes like recruiting a representative sample from the public at large, sending out standardized surveys, and analysing the data to prove or disprove ideas.

Research Strategy

The questionnaire is the major data collection instrument for this investigation. In the context of data collection, a questionnaire is a form that participants fill out to provide the requested information (Saunders, et al., 2019). Several researchers like this method because to its numerous benefits, such as high response rates and confidentiality (Williams, 2003) under specific circumstances. The use of survey questionnaires is a common practice in quantitative research because they allow researchers to acquire quantifiable responses from participants, which is crucial for moving the research forward.

Time Horizon

Cross-sectional studies and longitudinal studies are the two main forms of study conducted in the descriptive field, and both must be taken into account while planning the timeline for this investigation. Study designs that "gather data from the same sample of persons on more than one time" are referred to as longitudinal research (Saunders, et al., 2019). Whereas longitudinal studies look at changes over time, cross-sectional studies examine a single point in time and focus on a single issue. In light of its applicability and compatibility to the study's primary aim, cross-sectional research design was selected in this research.

Population and Sample

Population

The set of people with a particular connection to a work post or an investigation is known as the target population (Bryman & Bell, 2011). When considering the current study, the population to this research is customers of Sainsbury PLC who are also students.

Sample Size

The sample size for the research was taken as 100 students who are also the customers of Sainsbury PLC.

Sample Type

Random cluster sampling, under probability sampling will be taken for this research to reach the sample. It sampling type is selected because the researcher will take students from his university to participate into the survey.

Sampling Method

There are two major sampling methods, namely, probability sampling and non-probability sampling. Since this research is quantitative in nature, the researcher will incorporate probability sampling. Through probability sampling, it allows random selection of participants to the sample from a larger population.

Demographic Type

The researcher intends to involve students between the age limit of 18 – 30 for this investigation. Further, both male and female students will be involved. Also, the researcher will specifically focus on obtaining responses from the students who are also the customers of Sainsbury PLC.

Type of data

Primary data refers to information gathered by researchers directly from the people about whom they want to learn more for the purposes of their study. This research analysis will be mainly based on primary data/ A survey questionnaire for this research.

Data Collection Method

The structured questionnaire will be made available on certain social media platforms as a web-based survey, with the students who are also the customers of Sainsbury PLC being the primary focus. Moreover, the data, once obtained, would be processed to produce out the most thorough and relevant result for the research, with some safeguards of some drawbacks which the authors can meet during the data gathering phase.

Preparation of the Questionnaire

This questionnaire will incorporate only close-ended questions. Three sections will be included into the questionnaire. The first section will include questions to test the independent variables of the research. The second section will include questions to test the dependent variable of the research. The third section will include demographic questions. It is expected to have five questions under each independent and dependent variable. Thus, within section 1 and 2, the sum of the questions included will be 20. To measure the responses from these questions, five-point Likert scale will be incorporated. The third section will include 4 demographic questions to test age, gender, marital status and income. Since this questionnaire includes simple questions which is easy to answer, it is estimated 15mins will be taken by each individual to complete the survey.

Data Analysis

Google Forms automatically saves the data and allows researcher to export it to Excel. The information is carefully checked by the researcher to catch any unforeseen problems before they are published. Afterwards, SPSS is used to conduct in-depth analyses of the data (Dhakal, 2018). The following step involves completing the survey's first section, which focuses on the participants' general information, such as their demographics and descriptive statistics analysis, etc. The Cronbach's Alpha test of reliability, validity testing through KMO score, and consistency scale is then employed in the research to analyse the differences in the quality of the research. To continue the investigation, Exploratory Factor Analysis (EFA) is used to identify commonalities and relationships between the variables. Both independent and dependent variables are examined using this technique. With the use of the Pearson Correlation test, the research can determine if the discovered associations are indeed significant. It determines if the variables are connected or not by looking at their values together. Last but not least, the Multiple Regression

test is used to establish a causal link between the explanatory factors and the dependent variable. Calculating the R-squared value of the correlation allows one to assess how much light is shed on the dependent variable.

Ethical Consideration

Ethical issues were underlined as crucial by Saunders et al. (2019), and researchers must take great care to adhere to these guidelines. Participants' privacy and rights, research ethics, protecting the public from damage, and using data ethically are all examples of these guiding principles. These factors prevent fraud, leaks of personal information, misuses of data, and other problems by making participants aware of how their data will be used and stored (Connelly, 2014). The research survey's opening includes some bullet elements that serve to inform participants again and prevent fraud, such as the study's history, purpose, and nature. The study identifies two primary categories, the previous consent and the preservation of respondents' privacy, as being the most crucial. As a result, all respondents are guaranteed the right to anonymity, with the understanding that their names and data would be safeguarded and used solely for academic purposes.

9 Timeline and Budget

Figure 2: Gantt chart

Stages	Weeks															
	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16
Introduction (Background, rationale of the study, aim, research objectives, research questions)																
Literature review																
Research Methodology																
Creating the questionnaire/interview questions																
Collection of data																
Analysis of data																
Discussion/Interpretation of data																
Conclusion and Recommendations																

It is expected to incur no cost for conducting this research since data collection will be conducted as a web-based survey avoiding any physical interactions with the participants. So that, no travelling of transportation cost incurred. Also, no cost for printing the questionnaires as well.

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