

# The Social Path to Brand Loyalty: How Interaction and Relationships Drive Commitment in Brand Communities

Indah Fatmawati<sup>1\*</sup>, Aji Listyo Raharjo<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup>Program Doktor Manajemen Program Studi Manajemen, Fakultas Ekonomi Dan Bisnis Universitas Muhammadiyah Yogyakarta Jl. Brawijaya, Geblagan, Taman Tirta, Kasihan, Bantul, Yogyakarta, Indonesia

<sup>2</sup>Program Studi Manajemen, Fakultas Ekonomi Dan Bisnis Universitas Muhammadiyah Yogyakarta Jl. Brawijaya, Geblagan, Taman Tirta, Kasihan, Bantul, Yogyakarta, Indonesia

Corresponden author:

Email: [indahfatmawati@umy.ac.id](mailto:indahfatmawati@umy.ac.id)

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## **Abstract.**

*Brand communities have become an important strategic platform for strengthening consumer-brand relationships and fostering long-term loyalty. However, empirical evidence explaining how experiential and social dynamics within brand communities translate into brand loyalty remains limited. This study investigates the effects of experience, individual interaction, and social relationships on brand loyalty, with community commitment as a mediating variable, among particular DSLR camera brand users in Yogyakarta, Indonesia. A quantitative approach was employed using survey data from 150 members of photography communities. The data were analyzed using Structural Equation Modeling (SEM) with AMOS 22. The findings reveal that individual interaction and social relationships significantly enhance community commitment, whereas experience does not. Furthermore, community commitment has a strong positive effect on brand loyalty and serves as a mediator in the relationships among experience, individual interaction, and social relationships. This study highlights the critical role of social interaction and relational bonding in brand communities as key drivers of consumer loyalty. The findings provide managerial insights for firms seeking to leverage brand communities as strategic tools for relationship marketing and customer retention.*

**Keywords:** brand community, community commitment, social interaction, social relationships and brand loyalty.

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## **I. INTRODUCTION**

Increasing market competition has forced companies to shift their focus from short-term transactions to long-term customer relationship management (Villanueva, J., Bhardwaj, P., Balasubramanian, S., & Chen, Y., 2007). Retaining loyal customers is widely recognized as more cost-effective than acquiring new ones, making brand loyalty a critical strategic objective in contemporary marketing (Arslan, I. K., 2020; Kumar & Reinartz, 2016). In response, many companies have begun to leverage brand communities as a relational marketing strategy to strengthen emotional connections with consumers (Carlson, J., Wyllie, J., Rahman, M. M., & Voola, R., 2019; McAlexander et al., 2002; Laroche et al., 2012).

Brand communities function as social platforms where consumers interact, share experiences, exchange information, and develop a sense of belonging around a brand. Through these communities, firms can create stronger engagement, facilitate knowledge sharing, and encourage advocacy behaviors that ultimately contribute to sustained brand loyalty (Algesheimer et al., 2005; Bagozzi & Dholakia, 2006; Brodie et al., 2013). The rapid growth of hobby-based communities, particularly photography communities, illustrates how consumers increasingly seek social and experiential value beyond product functionality (Schau et al., 2009; Baldus et al., 2015; Dessart et al., 2016).

The photography industry provides a relevant context to study this phenomenon. The rise of photography communities, including photo-hunting events, workshops, and competitions, underscores the growing importance of community-driven engagement among camera users. By supporting and facilitating such communities, camera brands can create spaces where consumers exchange experiences, provide feedback, and build emotional attachment to the brand (McAlexander et al., 2002; Laroche et al., 2012; Hollebeek et al., 2014). These interactions may strengthen community commitment, which represents the psychological attachment and sense of belonging members feel toward the community (Algesheimer et al., 2005; Carlson et al., 2008; Casaló et al., 2010).

Previous research suggests that experiential value and social dynamics within communities play a key role in shaping community commitment. Positive experiences, frequent interactions among members,

and strong social relationships foster emotional attachment and encourage active participation (Bagozzi & Dholakia, 2006; Casaló et al., 2010; Dessart et al., 2016). In turn, committed community members are more likely to develop stronger brand attachment, repurchase intentions, and positive word of mouth, all of which contribute to brand loyalty (Laroche et al., 2012; Hur et al., 2011; Hollebeek et al., 2014).

Despite the growing interest in brand communities, empirical research examining how experience, individual interaction, and social relationships jointly influence brand loyalty through community commitment remains limited, particularly in the context of photography communities in emerging markets. This study addresses this gap by investigating DSLR camera users from particular brands in Yogyakarta who participate in photography communities. Specifically, this research aims to analyze the influence of experience, individual interaction, and social relationships on brand loyalty, with community commitment serving as a mediating variable. By doing so, this study contributes to the literature on relationship marketing and brand community by clarifying the social mechanisms through which community participation translates into consumer loyalty.

## **II. Literature Review**

This study integrates Relationship Marketing Theory, Social Exchange Theory, and Brand Community Theory to explain how social dynamics within brand communities translate into brand loyalty through community commitment. These complementary perspectives provide a multi-level explanation of how social interaction, relational benefits, and shared identity shape consumer–brand relationships.

### **Relationship Marketing Theory**

Relationship Marketing Theory emphasizes the importance of developing long-term relationships between firms and customers, grounded in trust, commitment, and ongoing engagement (Morgan & Hunt, 1994; Kumar & Reinartz, 2016). In contemporary marketing, loyalty is no longer driven solely by product quality or transactional satisfaction but by the strength of relational bonds between consumers and brands (Kwiatk, P., Morgan, Z., & Thanasi-Boçe, M., 2020).

Brand communities represent a strategic relationship marketing mechanism because they enable firms to facilitate continuous interaction, shared experiences, and emotional engagement among customers. Participation in brand communities has been shown to strengthen emotional ties and increase loyalty by creating opportunities for ongoing value co-creation (McAlexander et al., 2002; Laroche et al., 2012; Hollebeek et al., 2014).

### **Social Exchange Theory**

Social Exchange Theory explains that individuals maintain relationships when perceived benefits exceed associated costs (Cook, K. S., Cheshire, C., Rice, E. R., & Nakagawa, S., 2013). Within brand communities, members gain informational, emotional, social, and entertainment benefits through participation. Prior studies show that social and emotional benefits significantly enhance member attachment and long-term participation in online communities (Bagozzi & Dholakia, 2006; Casaló et al., 2010; Dessart et al., 2016). When members perceive valuable benefits from community participation, they develop community commitment, which subsequently strengthens their loyalty toward the focal brand (Algesheimer et al., 2005).

### **Brand Community Theory**

A brand community is defined as a specialized, non-geographically bound community based on shared admiration for a brand (Muniz & O’Guinn, 2001). Such communities create shared identity, rituals, traditions, and a sense of moral responsibility among members. Research consistently shows that participation in brand communities enhances engagement, trust, and loyalty (Schau et al., 2009; Baldus et al., 2015; Brodie et al., 2013). Therefore, brand communities function as social systems that foster community commitment, which ultimately strengthens brand loyalty.

### **Conceptual Development of Research Variables**

#### **Brand Community Experience**

Brand community experience refers to the cognitive, emotional, and behavioral value members derive from participating in brand communities. Prior literature conceptualizes brand community experience as a multidimensional construct encompassing informational, social, and hedonic benefits derived from

interactions and shared activities within the community (Schau et al., 2009; Dessart et al., 2016). Through participation in events, knowledge sharing, and co-creation activities, members gain both utilitarian and experiential value, thereby strengthening their emotional engagement with the brand.

From a relationship marketing perspective, positive experiences foster affective responses, satisfaction, and perceived value, which are key antecedents of long-term relational outcomes. Dessart et al. (2016) emphasize that experiential engagement in online brand communities enhances emotional bonding, immersion, and enthusiasm toward the brand. Similarly, recent studies show that immersive community experiences increase brand trust, perceived brand authenticity, and customer engagement, ultimately strengthening members' attachment and commitment (Kumar & Pansari, 2016; Islam et al., 2018). Consequently, when members perceive that their community participation provides enjoyable, informative, and beneficial experiences, they are more likely to develop emotional attachment and commitment toward the community. Thus, brand community experience functions as a foundational antecedent of relational outcomes within brand communities.

### **Individual Interaction**

Individual interaction refers to the extent to which community members actively communicate, exchange knowledge, and collaborate. Interaction is a core mechanism of value co-creation and relationship building within brand communities (Brodie et al., 2013). Frequent interactions facilitate the development of trust, familiarity, and mutual understanding among members, thereby strengthening a sense of belonging and social identification.

Carlson et al. (2008) argue that interpersonal interaction enhances perceived social presence and community identification, while Bagozzi and Dholakia (2006) demonstrate that participation and communication within brand communities foster emotional attachment and commitment. More recent research confirms that interaction intensity significantly increases engagement, psychological ownership, and long-term participation (Xie et al., 2025). The consequences of strong interaction include enhanced trust, stronger relational bonds, and increased psychological involvement. As members exchange ideas, provide feedback, and support one another, they develop a deeper sense of responsibility and attachment toward the community. Therefore, individual interaction plays a critical role in fostering community commitment.

### **Social Relationships**

Social relationships refer to the development of interpersonal ties, friendships, and emotional support among members within the brand community. Unlike transactional relationships, brand communities foster social identity and belonging through shared values and common interests (Algesheimer et al., 2005).

Casaló et al. (2010) demonstrate that social relationships enhance trust, identification, and participation, while Laroche et al. (2012) show that social benefits significantly strengthen community integration and attachment. Strong social relationships transform brand communities into meaningful social environments where members seek emotional fulfillment and peer support. Recent studies further highlight that social connectedness increases community resilience, engagement, and advocacy behaviors (Rather et al., 2023). The presence of strong interpersonal bonds leads members to remain active, defend the brand, and contribute to community growth. Consequently, social relationships act as a critical antecedent of psychological commitment and long-term loyalty.

### **Brand Community Commitment**

Brand community commitment refers to a member's psychological attachment, emotional connection, and willingness to maintain a long-term relationship with the brand community (Algesheimer et al., 2005). Commitment reflects a deep sense of belonging, identification, and dedication to the community's values and goals.

Committed members are more likely to contribute actively, support other members, and invest personal resources in maintaining the community (Fatmawati et al., 2024a). Research consistently shows that community commitment enhances participation, advocacy, and the quality of long-term relationships (Hur et al., 2011; Laroche et al., 2012). Importantly, commitment acts as a central relational mechanism that converts community participation into behavioral outcomes. Highly committed members tend to resist

switching behavior, defend the brand, and engage in voluntary promotional activities such as word-of-mouth and brand advocacy. Thus, commitment plays a pivotal mediating role linking community experiences and interactions to brand loyalty outcomes.

### **Brand Loyalty**

Brand loyalty refers to a deeply held commitment to repurchase and recommend a preferred brand despite situational influences or competitors' marketing efforts (Oliver, 1999). Loyalty encompasses both behavioral and attitudinal dimensions, including repeat purchases, positive word of mouth, advocacy, and resistance to switching.

Brand communities play a crucial role in strengthening loyalty by fostering emotional attachment and social identity. Laroche et al. (2012) demonstrate that community integration significantly enhances brand loyalty through trust and commitment mechanisms. Recent research further confirms that customer engagement and community participation significantly predict long-term loyalty and advocacy behavior (Islam et al., 2018). Importantly, recent evidence from Fatmawati et al. (2024b) confirms that emotional attachment and relationship quality significantly enhance brand loyalty through psychological commitment and engagement mechanisms. This finding reinforces the importance of relational constructs in shaping loyalty outcomes. Overall, brand loyalty represents the ultimate relational outcome of successful brand community management, reflecting long-term customer retention, advocacy, and sustainable competitive advantage.

### **Hypothesis Development**

#### **The Effect of Brand Community Experience on Brand Community Commitment**

Brand communities provide experiential value beyond functional product benefits by fostering enjoyable, meaningful, and emotionally engaging interactions among members. Participation in community activities, events, and shared practices generates hedonic and learning benefits that foster emotional attachment and identification with the community. Research on brand community practices shows that value creation within communities occurs through shared experiences, rituals, and interactions that strengthen members' psychological bonds. Studies have demonstrated that experiential engagement enhances affective commitment by increasing satisfaction, enjoyment, and perceived value derived from community participation (Schau et al., 2009; Dessart et al., 2016). Similarly, Laroche et al. (2013) found that social media-based community participation generates experiential benefits that increase commitment and relationship quality. When members perceive positive and meaningful experiences within a brand community, they are more likely to develop a sense of attachment and long-term involvement.

H1: Brand community experience positively affects brand community commitment

#### **The Effect of Individual Interaction on Brand Community Commitment**

Interaction among community members represents a core mechanism through which brand communities create relational value. Relationship marketing and social exchange perspectives emphasize that frequent communication, collaboration, and knowledge sharing strengthen interpersonal bonds and promote long-term relational commitment. Participation in discussions, information exchange, and co-creation activities increases members' psychological involvement and sense of belonging. Empirical studies show that active participation in brand communities enhances emotional attachment and commitment by fostering shared identity and mutual support (Bagozzi & Dholakia, 2006; Brodie et al., 2013). Carlson et al. (2008) further demonstrate that member interaction strengthens the psychological sense of brand community, which directly contributes to commitment formation. Therefore, greater interaction among members is expected to strengthen their attachment and commitment to the community.

H2: Individual interaction positively affects brand community commitment.

#### **The Effect of Social Relationships on Brand Community Commitment**

Brand communities function as social systems in which members develop friendships, social networks, and emotional connections. Strong social relationships foster a sense of belonging, shared identity, and emotional support, which are essential drivers of commitment. Prior research shows that relationship quality and social integration significantly enhance commitment and long-term participation in virtual communities (Casaló et al., 2010). Laroche et al. (2013) also demonstrate that social benefits derived from

community participation strengthen emotional attachment and engagement. Furthermore, Algesheimer et al. (2005) found that social integration within brand communities significantly increases community commitment and participation intentions. As social ties deepen, members become more emotionally invested and willing to maintain their involvement in the community.

H3: Social relationships positively affect brand community commitment.

### The Effect of Brand Community Commitment on Brand Loyalty

Brand community commitment reflects members' psychological attachment, sense of belonging, and long-term involvement. Relationship marketing theory emphasizes commitment as a central mechanism that transforms relational exchanges into long-term loyalty behaviors (Morgan & Hunt, 1994). Within brand communities, commitment strengthens members' willingness to maintain relationships with the brand and engage in supportive behaviors such as repurchase, advocacy, and positive word of mouth. Empirical evidence consistently shows that committed community members are more likely to exhibit higher purchase intentions and stronger loyalty toward the brand (Algesheimer et al., 2005). Hur et al. (2011) further demonstrate that managing brand community commitment significantly enhances brand loyalty by increasing emotional attachment and trust. Similarly, Laroche et al. (2013) find that commitment developed through social media communities strongly predicts loyalty outcomes. These findings suggest that community commitment represents a critical driver of loyalty formation in brand communities.

H4: Brand community commitment positively affects brand loyalty.

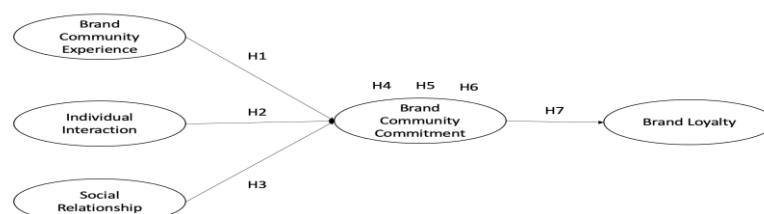
### The Mediating Role of Brand Community Commitment

Brand community research suggests that commitment acts as a key psychological mechanism that converts community participation into loyalty outcomes. Participation in brand communities generates experiential, social, and relational value, fostering emotional attachment and strengthening commitment. This commitment then motivates members to reciprocate through loyalty behaviors, such as continued use, recommendations, and advocacy. Brodie et al. (2013) argue that consumer engagement in brand communities creates value that ultimately translates into relationship outcomes through psychological attachment. Hur et al. (2011) empirically confirm that brand community commitment mediates the relationship between community participation and brand loyalty. Likewise, Laroche et al. (2013) show that social media brand communities influence loyalty indirectly through relationship quality and commitment. Taken together, these findings indicate that experience, interaction, and social relationships are unlikely to influence loyalty solely through direct effects; instead, their strongest influence occurs through the development of brand community commitment. Therefore, commitment is expected to mediate the relationship between community participation and loyalty outcomes.

H5: Brand community commitment mediates the relationship between brand community experience and brand loyalty.

H6: Brand community commitment mediates the relationship between individual interaction and brand loyalty.

H7: Brand community commitment mediates the relationship between social relationships and brand loyalty. The research model is shown in Fig 1



**Fig 1. Research Model**

## III. RESEARCH METHOD

This study adopts a quantitative explanatory research design to examine the relationships among brand community engagement, brand trust, brand love, and brand loyalty. A cross-sectional survey was employed to test the proposed conceptual model and hypotheses.

A quantitative approach is appropriate because this study aims to test theory-driven relationships (Sekaran, U., & Bougie, R., 2016) and assess mediating mechanisms using statistical modeling, specifically covariance-based Structural Equation Modeling/ CB-SEM (Hair Jr, J. F., Black, W. C., Babin, B. J., & Anderson, R. E., 2010).

The population of this study consists of members of online brand communities who actively interact with brand-related content and other members on social media platforms.

The research context focuses on particular DSLR camera users who are members of photography communities in the Special Region of Yogyakarta, Indonesia. These communities represent active brand communities where members frequently share experiences, knowledge, and brand-related content.

This study uses purposive sampling, as the research requires respondents with specific experience participating in brand communities. This technique is appropriate when respondents must meet predefined criteria relevant to the research objectives (Sekaran, U., & Bougie, R., 2016). A minimum sample size of 150 respondents was targeted to ensure adequate statistical power for covariance-based SEM, which commonly requires 100–200 observations for reliable parameter estimation (Hair Jr, J. F., Black, W. C., Babin, B. J., & Anderson, R. E., 2010).

Respondents were required to meet several eligibility criteria to ensure their experience with brand communities was relevant. Specifically, participants had to be Canon DSLR camera users and active members of a photography or brand community. In addition, they were required to follow or join at least one online brand community platform, such as Instagram, Facebook, Telegram, or TikTok, and to have interacted with the community within the last six months. To ensure sufficient engagement, respondents must have been members of the community for at least 5 months and be aged 18 or older. These criteria ensure that respondents possess relevant experience with brand community engagement and brand relationships. The unit of analysis in this study is individual consumers who participate in online brand communities. Each respondent represents one element of the population and provides perceptual data regarding their engagement and relationship with the brand.

Data were collected via a self-administered online questionnaire distributed through social media platforms and online communities. The measurement items were adapted from validated scales in prior studies on brand communities and relationship marketing. To ensure linguistic equivalence and conceptual consistency, the questionnaire was translated into Bahasa Indonesia using the back-translation method. A Likert scale was employed to measure respondents' perceptions and attitudes. All constructs were assessed using a 5-point Likert-type scale ranging from 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree). This scaling approach is widely used to capture respondents' levels of agreement with the questionnaire statements.

All variables in this study were measured using multi-item scales adapted from prior research. The brand community experience construct refers to the functional and emotional benefits gained from participation in a brand community, including informational and instrumental value as well as feelings of enjoyment, excitement, and entertainment. Individuals develop meaningful experiences when they obtain desired benefits, acquire useful information, and experience a sense of adventure and enjoyment within the community, leading to positive overall experiences (Balducci et al., 2015; Brodie et al., 2013; Hsieh & Wei, 2017).

The individual interaction construct captures the depth of communication and information exchange among community members. It reflects the extent to which individuals communicate with other members, share information, contribute to discussions, respond to suggestions, and actively participate in community conversations (Algesheimer et al., 2005; Bagozzi & Dholakia, 2006).

The social relationship construct represents individuals' actions directed toward others within the community that create meaningful interpersonal connections. This construct reflects members' ability to expand their social networks, engage in communication and interaction, and develop new friendships through community participation (Carlson et al., 2008; Muniz & O'Guinn, 2001).

The community commitment construct refers to the psychological attachment and sense of belonging that members feel toward the community. It includes emotional bonding, willingness to contribute, a strong sense of attachment, and pride in being part of the community (Hur et al., 2011).

Finally, brand loyalty reflects consumers' commitment to repeat purchases and strong support for the brand. This construct was measured through indicators such as intention to repurchase, willingness to recommend the brand, sharing positive information about the brand's advantages, and intention to purchase other products from the same brand (Oliver, 1999; Casaló et al., 2010).

#### IV. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

##### Respondent Profile

A total of 150 valid responses from members of particular DSLR camera brand photography communities in Yogyakarta were analyzed. The sample was predominantly male, with 110 respondents (73.3%) compared to 40 female respondents (26.7%). In terms of age distribution, the majority of participants were aged 18-27 years (118 respondents; 78.7%), followed by those aged 28-37 years (29 respondents; 19.3%) and a small proportion aged 38-47 years (3 respondents; 2%).

Regarding the length of community membership, most respondents had been members for 5-18 months (92 respondents; 61.3%), followed by 16-26 months (43 respondents; 28.6%), 27-37 months (10 respondents; 6.6%), and 38-48 months (5 respondents; 3.4%). Overall, the demographic profile indicates that respondents were active and engaged community members with sufficient experience to evaluate community dynamics and brand-related behaviors, making the sample appropriate for examining the relationships among community experience, interaction, commitment, and brand loyalty.

The validity test was conducted to ensure that each measurement item appropriately represented its corresponding construct. An item was considered valid when the significance value was below 0.05. The results show that all indicators across the five variables—experience, individual interaction, social relationship, community commitment, and brand loyalty—met the validity criteria. The Confirmatory Factor Analysis (CFA) for all items ranged from 0.581 to 0.984, exceeding the minimum acceptable threshold and indicating strong item validity. Specifically, the experience construct showed *r*-values between 0.728 and 0.891, while individual interaction ranged from 0.743 to 0.984. Social relationship indicators ranged from 0.581 to 0.984, community commitment from 0.759 to 0.868, and brand loyalty from 0.662 to 0.932. These results were obtained from a pilot study involving 40 users of a particular DSLR camera brand and members of photography communities in Yogyakarta. Overall, the findings confirm that all questionnaire items are valid and suitable for measuring the research constructs, indicating that the instrument is appropriate for further data analysis (see Table 1).

**Table 1 Confirmatory Factor Analysis Results**

Variable	Indicator	Loading Factor	Result
Brand Community Experience	Obtaining desired benefits	0.728	Valid
	Obtaining information	0.829	Valid
	Feeling a sense of adventure	0.875	Valid
	Feeling impressed	0.783	Valid
	Gaining positive experience	0.816	Valid
	Gaining beneficial experience	0.891	Valid
	Enjoyable experience	0.812	Valid
Individual Interaction	Exchanging information	0.971	Valid
	Exchanging ideas	0.821	Valid
	Receiving quick responses	0.743	Valid
	Sharing knowledge	0.984	Valid
	Providing knowledge	0.761	Valid
Social Relationship	Expanding network	0.984	Valid
	Strengthening relationships with members	0.901	Valid
	Making new friends	0.581	Valid
Brand Community Commitment	Feeling psychological attachment	0.806	Valid
	Actively contributing	0.759	Valid
	Giving my full capability	0.868	Valid
	Proud to join the community	0.788	Valid
Brand Loyalty	Using this camera brand service centers	0.913	Valid
	Recommending the product	0.711	Valid

Variable	Indicator	Loading Factor	Result
	Sharing product advantages	0.932	Valid
	Purchasing other products of same brand	0.863	Valid
	Continuous product usage	0.662	Valid
	Explaining product benefits	0.788	Valid
	Repurchase intention	0.835	Valid

The next step after confirming the validity of the measurement items was conducting a reliability test using a pilot sample of 40 respondents. A construct is considered reliable if Construct Reliability exceeds 0.60, as shown in Table 2.

**Table 2. Results of the Construct Reliability Test**

Variable	Construct Reliability	Results
Brand Community Experience	0.935	Reliable
Individual Interaction	0.945	Reliable
Social Relationship	0.848	Reliable
Brand Community Commitment	0.902	Reliable
Brand Loyalty	0.938	Reliable

The reliability test indicates that all constructs surpassed the recommended Cronbach's Alpha threshold of 0.60, confirming that the measurement items are internally consistent and suitable for further analysis.

The study then applied covariance-based Structural Equation Modeling (CB-SEM) using AMOS version 22 to simultaneously evaluate the measurement and structural models while accounting for measurement error. The model was theoretically grounded in prior research linking brand community experience, individual interaction, and social relationships to brand community commitment and brand loyalty. The conceptual framework was translated into a path diagram and subsequently into structural and measurement equations. Brand community experience, individual interaction, and social relationship were specified as exogenous variables, brand community commitment as the mediator, and brand loyalty as the endogenous variable.

The variance-covariance matrix served as the input, and parameters were estimated using Maximum Likelihood Estimation. Model identification results showed positive degrees of freedom ( $df = 289$ ), indicating an overidentified model capable of producing unique estimates. With 150 responses, the sample size met SEM requirements. Normality testing showed most indicators fell within the acceptable skewness and kurtosis range, and although the multivariate critical ratio was relatively high, this is common in Likert-scale data; therefore, the data were considered adequate for SEM analysis.

### Evaluation of Goodness-of-Fit

After confirming the SEM assumptions, the overall model fit was evaluated using multiple goodness-of-fit indices. The results of the model's goodness-of-fit test are shown in Table 3 and Figure 2.

**Table 3. Goodness-of-Fit Results**

Fit Index	Cut-off Value	Model Result	Interpretation
Chi-square probability	$\geq 0.05$	0.000	Marginal
RMSEA	$\leq 0.08$	0.123	Marginal Fit
GFI	$\geq 0.90$	0.877	Marginal
AGFI	$\geq 0.90$	0.844	Marginal
CMIN/DF	$\leq 2.00-3.00$	3.247	Acceptable Fit
TLI	$\geq 0.90$	0.961	Good Fit
CFI	$\geq 0.90$	0.966	Good Fit

The goodness-of-fit evaluation shows that the model achieves an acceptable to marginal fit. Although several indices fall in the marginal range, the model meets key incremental fit indices (CFI and TLI), indicating that it is adequate for hypothesis testing. In SEM studies with complex behavioral constructs, achieving full fit across all indices is rare; therefore, the model is considered acceptable.

## V. DISCUSSION

The findings provide strong empirical evidence that brand community participation plays a central role in shaping brand loyalty through both direct and commitment-mediated mechanisms (Hur, W. M., Ahn, K. H., & Kim, M., 2011). The structural results show that brand community experience, individual interaction, and social relationships significantly enhance brand community commitment (Carlson, B. D., Suter, T. A., & Brown, T. J., 2008), confirming that commitment is built through experiential, interactional, and relational value. Among these antecedents, individual interaction emerged as the strongest predictor of commitment (Zhang, N., Zhou, Z. M., Su, C. T., & Zhou, N., 2013), highlighting the importance of active communication, knowledge sharing, and member engagement in strengthening psychological attachment to the community. This supports the view that brand communities function as social ecosystems where value is co-created through participation rather than passive consumption.

Brand community commitment was found to be the most powerful predictor of brand loyalty (Kuo, Y. F., & Feng, L. H., 2013), indicating that emotional attachment and long-term involvement are the primary drivers of repurchase intention and positive word of mouth. This finding reinforces relationship marketing and social exchange perspectives, which suggest that loyalty develops when individuals perceive relational benefits and reciprocate through supportive behaviors. The results, therefore, confirm that loyalty within brand communities is socially constructed and relationship-driven rather than purely transaction-based (Hur, W. M., Ahn, K. H., & Kim, M., 2011).

The analysis also reveals that community participation directly affects brand loyalty. Individual interaction, community experience, and social relationships all directly influence loyalty, suggesting that participation generates immediate behavioral outcomes through satisfaction, peer influence, and shared brand knowledge. However, the mediation results show that the indirect effects through commitment are stronger than the direct effects, especially for brand community experience and individual interaction. This indicates that community commitment functions as the key psychological mechanism that translates community participation into sustained loyalty. The mediation pattern confirms partial mediation in all three relationships, indicating that community participation strengthens loyalty both directly and indirectly, primarily through the development of commitment.

Taken together, the findings demonstrate that brand loyalty in brand communities is primarily driven by social interaction and relational bonding, with commitment acting as the central mechanism linking engagement to long-term loyalty outcomes.

## VI. CONCLUSION

This study concludes that brand community commitment plays a pivotal mediating role in transforming community participation into brand loyalty. Experience, individual interaction, and social relationships significantly strengthen commitment, which in turn strongly predicts loyalty. Although community participation directly influences loyalty, its stronger impact occurs through commitment development, confirming the importance of emotional attachment and long-term involvement. The results highlight that the pathway to brand loyalty is fundamentally social and relational.

### Limitations

Several limitations should be acknowledged. First, the study used a cross-sectional design, which limits the ability to infer causal relationships over time. Second, the sample size was relatively modest and focused on a single brand community context, potentially limiting generalizability to other industries or cultural settings. Third, the study relied on self-reported data, which may be affected by common method bias. Finally, the model focused on key social and experiential variables but did not include other potential loyalty predictors, such as brand trust, satisfaction, or perceived value.

### Future Research Directions

Future studies should employ longitudinal designs to examine how community commitment and loyalty evolve. Expanding the research across multiple industries and countries would enhance generalizability and allow cross-cultural comparisons. Future models could also incorporate additional

mediators or moderators, such as brand trust, customer satisfaction, identity, or engagement intensity, to provide a more comprehensive explanation of loyalty formation. Finally, qualitative or mixed-method approaches could provide deeper insights into how community interactions create emotional attachment and commitment.

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