

## REWARD AND CONSUMER BRAND ENGAGEMENT: BUILDING BRAND LOYALTY IN THE ON-DEMAND SERVICE PLATFORM

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### ABSTRACT

**Background:** The on-demand service platform is an uprising business that has become more popular recently. Nevertheless, the competition within this industry can make it hard for companies to survive. Therefore, brand loyalty is vital to ensure the business survives the competition.

**Purpose:** This study investigates how reward and consumer brand engagement can affect brand loyalty in the on-demand service industry.

**Design/methodology/approach:** Empirical evidence was collected using a quantitative method using convenience sampling from 232 users of Indonesia's most significant on-demand service industry. This study used Structural Equation Modeling (SEM).

**Findings/Result:** The results of this study show that reward and consumer brand engagement both have positive and significant effects on brand loyalty. Furthermore, consumer brand engagement also mediates the relationship between reward and brand loyalty of the customers.

**Conclusion:** Therefore, it is crucial for on-demand service platforms to improve their reward system for the customer and to pay more attention to their consumer brand engagement to improve brand loyalty.

**Originality/value (State of the art):** Only a few articles use rewards in gamification in a business context.

**Keywords:** brand loyalty, consumer brand engagement, gamification, on-demand service platform, reward

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## INTRODUCTION

The on-demand service platform is a new type of business that proliferates following the rapid growth of technology. The demand for transportation and technological growth has created a new type of business, which is the online transportation business that focuses on on-demand services (Bismoaziiz et al. 2021). This on-demand service platform is essential, especially in big cities, since many people want to transport or send goods daily.

In Indonesia, two major on-demand service platforms are Gojek and Grab (Wibawa et al. 2022). Both platforms are highly competitive, especially with each other. These companies are the market leader in their sector due to their advanced technology in doing business (Wahyuni & Noviaristanti, 2022). In this high-stakes competition, brand loyalty becomes the deciding factor to win the competition (Monfared, 2015). Brand loyalty is crucial for customers in deciding whether to keep using a brand's product or service (Bismoaziiz et al. 2021).

One of the things that is still novel and is considered the vital thing that can affect brand loyalty is gamification. Gamification has been used for companies, whether it is for the internal company, especially in terms of organizational learning (Elidjen et al. 2022; Pangaribuan et al. 2020), or the external company, especially in the marketing field (Robson et al. 2016; F. Xu et al. 2017). Gamification can be defined as using game elements in a non-game context (Deterding et al. 2011).

Reward is a common way to implement gamification. Reward can enhance customer enjoyment and ultimately affect online purchase intention (Y. Xu et al. 2020). Reward is also one of the specific ways to improve brand loyalty, especially in the mobile application industry (Mattke et al. 2021). Loyalty programs are also highly accepted by customers in this industry (Putri & Aprianingsih, 2024). Therefore, it is crucial to understand how rewards can affect brand loyalty in on-demand service platforms.

Another crucial factor affecting brand loyalty is consumer brand engagement. It can be defined as the customer interaction behavior towards goods or services that can benefit the company by allowing them to get more information and maintain their relationship

with the customer (Bismoaziiz et al. 2021). Consumer brand engagement is critical in marketing activities since it can improve customer engagement related to goods or services (Wong & Merrilees, 2015).

Although many studies show that rewards in the form of loyalty programs (Ryu & Suh, 2020), discounts, and rewards can increase brand loyalty, there are also inconsistencies in research results that show that the impact of rewards is not always positive or significant. Several studies have found that rewards can cause customers to focus more on short-term incentives rather than building long-term attachments with brands (Kwiatek et al. 2020). For example, research by J. Kim et al (2022) suggests that although loyalty programs may increase purchase frequency in the short term, their long-term effects on customer loyalty are not always significant. Customers may only participate in programs to earn rewards, not because they have an emotional attachment to the brand (Baker & Legendre, 2020).

In addition, research by (Danaher et al. 2020) shows that the effectiveness of rewards is highly dependent on customer perceptions of fairness and the value of the rewards. If customers feel the reward is unfair or not of high value, this can damage their trust and loyalty to the brand. There is also evidence to suggest that rewards that are too frequent or too easy to obtain can decrease the perceived value of the reward itself, thereby reducing its positive impact on brand loyalty (Gorlier & Michel, 2020). In cases like these, rewards not only fail to build loyalty but can also make customers feel manipulated or simply rewarded based on transactions, not relationships (Hwang & Choi, 2020). The inconsistency of these results suggests that reward implementations must be carefully designed, take customer perceptions into account, and focus on building authentic and meaningful relationships (Koo et al. 2020).

This study aims to investigate how reward and consumer brand engagement can affect brand loyalty in the on-demand service industry. This research seeks to fill the gap in understanding brand loyalty from gamification and marketing perspectives. From a practical point of view, this study can help the on-demand service platform formulate strategies to improve customer loyalty.

## METHODS

The respondents for this study are the customers of the biggest on-demand platform in Indonesia. There are a total of 232 responses to this study. The survey was done from October until December 2022. This study used quantitative research data by applying questionnaires. A non-probability sampling technique was used for this study since the population of this study is unknown. Considering the limited resources, convenience sampling was used as the sampling method to get the data. The data was analyzed using Structural Equation Modeling (SEM) by using the SmartPLS application. SEM can be useful to analyze cross-sectional data. It is also a commonly used technique to analyze quantitative data.

The research model for this study can be seen in Figure 1. Research models show that rewards have a significant influence on brand loyalty, especially when mediated by consumer brand engagement. Rewarding increases consumer engagement with brands, creating a deeper emotional connection and interaction. This engagement then strengthens consumers' loyalty to the brand, making them more likely to remain loyal and make repeat purchases. Research shows that consumer engagement plays an important role in mediating reward effects, thereby increasing the effectiveness of loyalty programs. Therefore, an effective reward strategy should focus not only on incentives but also on increasing consumer engagement with brands.

Brand loyalty is the dependent variable in this study, reward is the independent variable, and consumer

brand engagement is the mediating variable. Brand loyalty was measured by several dimensions: cognitive, affective, conative, and action (Han et al. 2011). Rewards were measured using accomplishment, challenge, competition, playfulness, and guided dimensions adapted from (Högberg et al. 2019). The other variable is consumer brand engagement, measured by cognitive, emotional, and behavioral dimensions (Gatautis et al. 2016). All the variables are measured by using a five-point Likert scale that ranged from "1" for "strongly disagree" to "5" for "strongly agree." The question items for the variables can be seen in Table 1.

## Hypotheses Development

### Relationship between Reward and Consumer Brand Engagement

Previous studies have shown that reward is related to consumer brand engagement (Abou-Shouk & Soliman, 2021; Kaur et al. 2020). The use of rewards can be seen as an integral part of the firm's strategy to raise consumer brand engagement, which, in the end, raises loyalty (Kaur et al. 2020). Moreover, implementing rewards can create a new behavior, especially in the digital world, to motivate and guide the customer to engage with the company. It has been proven to indirectly make the customer pay attention, search for information, and try to understand the goods or services of a particular brand. It can also improve an individual's customer engagement and interactivity with a specific brand (Abou-Shouk & Soliman, 2021). Therefore, Hypothesis 1 is proposed: H1: Reward has a positive effect on consumer brand engagement.

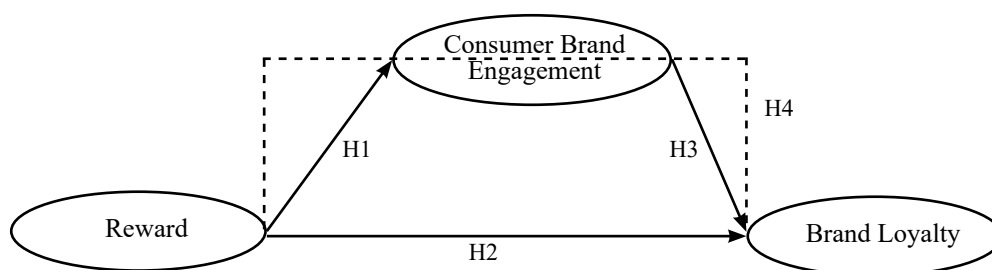


Figure 1. Research model

## Relationship between Reward and Brand Loyalty

The relationship between reward and brand loyalty has been discussed in previous studies (K. Kim & Ahn, 2017; NastasoIU & Vandenbosch, 2019). With a good reward program, brand loyalty can be increased. (NastasoIU & Vandenbosch, 2019) argue that companies should focus on three improvement aspects for brand loyalty. These aspects are personalization, reward types, and

additional services. However, rewards can also reduce the intrinsic motivation of the customer if the reward system is not designed well (K. Kim & Ahn, 2017). To create a sound reward system, it is compulsory also to prepare feedback for the customers to encourage them. Nevertheless, the relationship between reward and brand loyalty is still interesting to study, and therefore, we propose Hypothesis 2: H2: Reward has a positive effect on brand loyalty.

Table 1. Question Items

Variable	Indicator	Question Items
Reward	REW01	The challenge feature in the XYZ app encourages me to participate and win rewards
	REW02	The reward for each achievement completed boosts my morale to complete the challenge
	REW03	The challenge feature in the XYZ app made me keep trying my best to finish well
	REW04	I love challenges because they help me positively develop my abilities
	REW05	I feel like competing when I do the challenge
	REW06	I feel happy and successful when I win a challenge
	REW07	I participated in the challenge because I am very competitive
	REW08	In doing the challenge, I always tried to be the best
	REW09	When doing the challenge, I am always curious about the rewards I will get
	REW10	The challenge in the XYZ app gives me exciting and fun experiences
	REW11	I am encouraged to keep on thinking creatively to solve the challenge
	REW12	The instructions in the XYZ app helped me to finish all the challenges
	REW13	The instructions in the XYZ app for finishing the challenges helped me decide which strategies to use
Consumer Brand Engagement	CBE01	Everything related to the XYZ app attracts my attention
	CBE02	I am happy to know more information related to the XYZ app
	CBE03	I feel proud to get the chance to use the services in the XYZ app
	CBE04	I am happy to engage and interact with the XYZ app community
	CBE05	I often participate in events held using the XYZ app
	CBE06	I love exchanging ideas with the XYZ app community
Brand Loyalty	BRL01	The XYZ app offers better quality than other brands
	BRL02	The XYZ app offers lower prices than other brands
	BRL03	I prefer the services offered by the XYZ app to other brands
	BRL04	I am willing to recommend the XYZ app to other people
	BRL05	Even if the price of the XYZ services increases one day, I will still use the XYZ app as my primary choice
	BRL06	I am willing to spend more money to use the XYZ app services than other brands
	BRL07	I will talk positively to other people related to the XYZ app
	BRL08	I will push my friends and relatives to use the XYZ app services

Relationship between Consumer Brand Engagement and Brand Loyalty

Previous studies have shown how consumer brand engagement is related to brand loyalty. Consumer brand engagement positively affects brand loyalty (Febrian & Ahluwalia, 2021; Leckie et al. 2016) emotional, behavior. It is also vital to help maintain consumer retention, create positive word of mouth, and raise consumer loyalty. It can positively affect building cognitive, emotional, and behavioral loyalty. Companies can improve consumer brand engagement by utilizing social media and communities (Febrian & Ahluwalia, 2021) emotional, behavior. (Jayasingh, 2019) also argues that there is a strong relationship between consumer brand engagement and brand loyalty, especially in social media. Moreover, this study also discussed how consumers seek to fit within a group or a community. Thus, it is essential to see how these two variables are related to each other, and therefore, we propose Hypothesis 3 and

Hypothesis 4: H3: Consumer brand engagement has a positive effect on brand loyalty and H4: Consumer brand engagement mediates the relationship between reward and brand loyalty.

RESULTS

All the data went through the outer and inner model analysis of structural equation modeling (SEM). The data was analyzed using validity and reliability tests for the outer model. The threshold for validity test is the indicators that have the outer loadings >0.70 and average variance extracted (AVE) >0.50 (Hair Jr et al. 2017) we were confident the interest in partial least squares structural equation modeling (PLSSEM). Furthermore, for the reliability test, the variables must have the Cronbach alpha >0.60 and the composite reliability (CR) >0.60. Table 2 shows the results of the validity and reliability test.

Table 2. Results of validity and reliability test

Variable	Indicator	Loadings	Alpha	CR	AVE
Reward	REW01	.828	.955	.960	.651
	REW02	.861			
	REW03	.756			
	REW04	.845			
	REW05	.753			
	REW06	.833			
	REW07	.847			
	REW08	.726			
	REW09	.820			
	REW10	.818			
	REW11	.783			
	REW12	.854			
	REW13	.747			
Consumer Brand Engagement	CBE01	.824	.891	.917	.649
	CBE02	.787			
	CBE03	.724			
	CBE04	.802			
	CBE05	.844			
	CBE06	.847			
Brand Loyalty	BRL01	.780	.916	.931	.629
	BRL02	.772			
	BRL03	.739			
	BRL04	.785			
	BRL05	.798			
	BRL06	.816			
	BRL07	.813			
	BRL08	.836			

This study used SmartPLS as the software basis to analyze the data. The discriminant validity of the data was measured by using the Fornell-Larcker criterion. Based on the results, all three variables are valid. All three variables have the highest number of correlations with themselves instead of other variables. The details of discriminant validity can be seen in Table 3.

The next step is to test the hypotheses by bootstrapping the data. This study consists of three direct relationships and one indirect relationship and is measured using a 95% confidence level. Therefore, the hypothesis is considered to have a significant relationship if the p-value is <0.05.

The results show that all the direct and indirect relationships are positive and significant. The reward positively and significantly affects consumer brand engagement with the path coefficient = 0.765 and the p-value = 0.000. It also positively and significantly affects brand loyalty (path coefficient = 0.231; p-value=0.040). Furthermore, consumer brand engagement has a positive and significant effect on brand loyalty (path coefficient = 0.595; p-value = 0.000). These results indicate that hypothesis 1, hypothesis 2, and hypothesis 3 are all accepted.

In addition, this study also analyzed the indirect effect of reward towards brand loyalty mediated by consumer brand engagement. The result shows that this relationship has 0.455 as the path coefficient value and 0.000 as the p-value. Thus, the indirect effect is also positive and significant, indicating that hypothesis. Moreover, this model has consumer brand engagement partially mediating the relationship between reward and brand loyalty, with both relationships being significant. The direct relationship between reward and brand loyalty has a path coefficient value of 0.231, while the indirect relationship between reward and brand loyalty mediated by consumer brand engagement shows a path coefficient value of 0.455. Therefore, the path through consumer brand engagement as the mediation shows

a more considerable effect. This result shows how vital consumer brand engagement is in affecting brand loyalty. All the results are summarized in Table 4.

The R-square value can measure the effectiveness of this study. Based on the results, the R-square adjusted value for brand loyalty is 0.614, and the R-square adjusted value for consumer brand engagement is 0.584. These results show that 61.4% of brand loyalty can be described by reward and consumer brand engagement, while 58.4% of consumer brand engagement can be described by reward.

This study aims to understand how to raise customers' brand loyalty in on-demand service platforms. The variables studied in this study are reward and consumer brand engagement. The results provided solid support that those variables affected brand loyalty.

In this study, reward positively and significantly affects consumer brand engagement (H1). This result confirms the previous study by (Kaur et al. 2020) with the same result. Therefore, companies should pay attention to rewards when they want to improve their consumer brand engagement. Previous studies also discovered how reward affects brand loyalty (K. Kim & Ahn, 2017; NastasoIU & Vandenbosch, 2019). This study proved that reward is vital for on-demand service platforms business since it directly affects brand loyalty (H2).

Furthermore, consumer brand engagement also positively and significantly affects brand loyalty (H3). This relationship affirms previous studies on these variables (Jayasingh, 2019; Leckie et al. 2016). Finally, this study also measured the indirect effects of reward toward brand loyalty mediated by consumer brand engagement (H4). The result shows that this model is partially mediated by consumer brand engagement, with the indirect effect through consumer brand engagement bigger than the direct effect of how reward affects brand loyalty.

Table 3. Discriminant Validity

Variable	Mean	Consumer Brand Engagement	Brand Loyalty	Reward
Consumer Brand Engagement	3.961	0.806		
Brand Loyalty	4.043	0.771	0.793	
Reward	4.018	0.765	0.686	0.897

Table 4. Bootstrapping Results

Relationship	Path Coef.	SD	T Stat	P-Value
H1: Reward → Consumer Brand Engagement	0.765	0.030	25.107	0.000
H2: Reward → Brand Loyalty	0.231	0.112	2.055	0.040
H3: Consumer Brand Engagement → Brand Loyalty	0.595	0.088	6.728	0.000
H4: Reward → Consumer Brand Engagement → Brand Loyalty	0.455	0.072	6.325	0.000

Reward itself is an essential aspect of creating brand loyalty. Nevertheless, when a company can engage its customers well enough, it will be more effective in increasing loyalty from the reward system that has been created. Therefore, consumer brand engagement is vital for on-demand service platform businesses. It is not enough to only prepare a reward system for the customers; it is also vital for the companies to focus on the consumer brand engagement to increase the brand loyalty of the customers.

### Managerial Implications

This research provides advice for managers to design incentives that not only provide immediate benefits but also encourage consumers to engage more with brands, such as through social media campaigns or user communities. In addition, it is important to monitor and evaluate the effectiveness of these programs periodically, ensuring that consumers feel valued and continue to engage. Data from these reward programs should be analyzed to identify engagement patterns and adjust strategies as needed. Thus, reward programs that are integrated with efforts to increase engagement will increase consumer loyalty significantly.

## CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

### Conclusions

This study highlighted the importance of reward and consumer brand engagement in improving brand loyalty. This study also showed how consumer brand engagement is an essential mediating factor in relating reward to brand loyalty. In conclusion, reward and consumer brand engagement must be considered in improving brand loyalty. The results of this study enrich the gamification theory and marketing theory, which are essential to the on-demand service platforms industry.

### Recommendations

Based on the results, on-demand service platforms should consider gamification elements, such as rewards, to improve customer loyalty to their brand. Companies can give rewards for many aspects related to customer activities. Small activities must be added to help the customers gradually interact with the application and become more engaged. Clear instructions are also needed to ensure all the customers understand what kind of activities they should do to get the reward. In this case, the reward will be a part of the extrinsic value that helps the consumer to engage with the brand and do some activities better than before (Rurianto et al. 2021).

Nevertheless, there should not be too many reward options since it will confuse the customers (Aprianingsih et al. 2022). Therefore, step-by-step activities with reward progression will be more suitable for increasing customer engagement. Companies should also focus on their consumer brand engagement to make the customers more loyal to the brand.

There are several limitations in this study. First, this study only focused on one example of an on-demand service platform application. More studies should be done for other applications and in more varied industries. Second, the respondents for this study only came from Indonesia. It will be interesting to see the differences in results between respondents from other countries. Lastly, other variables related to brand loyalty and gamification can also help improve this study, such as membership, digital badges, and leaderboards.

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