# Kenyan Millennials' Socialization effect on Customer Dispositions and Customer Enablers on Brand Loyalty

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## Abstract

*As millennials increasingly turn to online platforms for brand purchases, even for low-involvement products, the pivotal role of social media in strengthening brand loyalty becomes evident. While prior research has explored customer dispositions and enabling factors in relation to brand loyalty, the impact of consumer socialization has been largely overlooked. This study investigates the moderating influence of consumer socialization on the connection between customer dispositions, enabling factors, and brand loyalty. Existing studies have established that customer attitudes and enabling factors shape brand loyalty, but there is limited research focusing on the consumer socialization of local millennials. Grounded in generational theory, the research targeted 399 respondents aged between 23 and 43. Employing a multi-stage sampling process, a self-report questionnaire, utilizing a Likert scale, was employed, and data analysis involved Hierarchical Structural Equation Regression Analysis and Hayes PROCESS. Findings reveal that millennials exhibit loyalty to brands that offer lower associated risks, establish positive emotional connections, and cater to their specific needs. Customer dispositions demonstrated significant relationships with brand trust, brand impact, and brand relevance at a significance level of 0.05. Moreover, customer enablers, customer switching costs, and customer commitment showed statistical significance at the 0.05 level. Consumer socialization was found to moderately connect customer attitudes, enablers, and toothpaste brand loyalty among millennials at the 0.05 significance level. Millennials value brands that demonstrate commitment to customers but have high switching costs. Additionally, millennials maintain limited brand-related relationships due to a limited interest in forming personal connections. Brand managers can formulate strategies aimed at cultivating brand affinity, trustworthiness, and relevance, as millennials place great emphasis on commitment and are deterred by high switching expenses. Future research should comprehensively assess the role of social media in shaping millennials' brand loyalty.*

**Key words:** Customer Dispositions, Customer Enablers, Toothpaste, Brand Loyalty, Millennials & Consumer Socialization.

## 1.0 Introduction

The contemporary behaviour of millennial customers involves proactively seeking product information online before making purchasing decisions (Kamalul et al., 2022). This underscores the growing significance of social media in influencing consumer socialization (Kihiko, 2017). With the escalating reliance on social media platforms for communication, socialization, and transactions, there is a prevalent trend of leveraging social media to enhance loyalty.

Historically, in the United Kingdom, children typically mirrored their parents' food consumption patterns (Kharuhayothin & Kerrane, 2018). Family dynamics and parental guidance have shaped children's dietary choices and preferences. However, the landscape has shifted, with brands now actively using social media to engage with millennials and foster brand loyalty. For instance, Portuguese millennials heavily rely on social media for socialization (Fernandes & Inverneiro, 2021). Consequently, connecting with millennials through well-thought-out social media initiatives has become an indispensable approach.

In India the younger generation is significantly influenced through social media, guiding urban dwellers toward toothpaste gels and those in rural areas toward toothpowders (Acharya et al., 2018). Meanwhile, Malaysian millennials frequently opt for online purchases of toothpaste as low-involvement products (Harun & Husin, 2019). This trend reflects the increasing adoption of e-commerce for the acquisition of everyday items.

In the United Arab Emirates (UAE), social media plays a pivotal role in shaping consumer socialization, serving as a crucial tool for retaining loyal customers and ensuring the long-term survival of strategic brands (Hanaysha et al., 2021). Conversely, in Iran, peer communication and the use of Instagram have been identified as influential factors in electronic word-of-mouth (e-WOM) (Delafrooz et al., 2019). This suggests that individuals actively engage in discussions and recommend brands on these platforms.

Furthermore, South African parents are demonstrating that their brand loyalty may influence their children to adopt similar behaviour, indicating that despite the prevalence of social media, the family remains a significant cultural influencer in fostering brand allegiance (Bisschoff, 2020). Conversely, Algerians have been socialized to exhibit brand loyalty when trust is evident, as identified by Menidjel et al. ( 2017). This cultural consumer socialization plays a role in

shaping emotional commitment, suggesting that consumers form attachments to brands due to cultural practices or inclinations (Hwang et al., 2021).

To explore the phenomena under investigation, the following objectives were pursued:

i.   To investigate the correlation between customer dispositions and brand loyalty among millennials in private universities in Kenya.

ii.  To explore the relationship between customer enablers and brand loyalty among millennials in private universities in Kenya.

iii. To identify the moderating impact of socialization on the relationship between customer dispositions, enablers, and brand loyalty among millennials in private universities in Kenya.

Giovanis and Athanasopoulou (2017) identified Greek millennials' loyalty in purchasing tablets and phones, while Nichols (2019) observed their loyalty within the retail sector in the United Kingdom. Similarly, Malaysian millennials have shown loyalty to specific brands compared to Generation X and baby boomers, as evidenced by Ruixia and Chein (2019).

In Kenya, consumer socialization influences the brand loyalty of detergents among university students (Kihiko, 2017) as families are socialized to make collective decisions when choosing holiday destinations, facilitated by social media tools (Wanjala, 2015). Social media has emerged as a significant tool in understanding consumer behaviour but there is a void in research that focuses on millennials, in the context of low-involvement products such as toothpaste. This study sought to fill that gap by investigating the moderating effect of consumer socialization on customer dispositions, enablers on toothpaste brand loyalty among millennials within Kenyan private universities.

## 2.0 Literature Review

This study was grounded in the Generational Theory (Strauss & Howe, 1997), acknowledging unique intergenerational differences shaped by political, social, and economic events. These variations result in distinct values and trends for each generation, potentially influencing socialization over a 20-year period (Howe & Strauss, 2018). In the Kenyan context, millennials, came of age during President Daniel Arap Moi's tenure from 1978 to 2002, experienced the introduction of the 8-4-4 education system and witnessed the shift from one-party rule to a

multiparty democracy (Nyadera et al., 2021). Their socialization is characterized by a focus on human rights, technological advancements (such as mobile phones, computers, and social media), and the liberalization of the economy (Mwakale, 2017).

Millennials' attitudes manifest through various dimensions, including brand affect, brand trust, brand perceived quality, brand performance, brand relevance, and brand satisfaction. Among these, brand affect, considered a dispositional factor, holds particular significance (Yao & Hee, 2022). It is contingent upon customer-socialized experiences and expectations, implying that consumers establish not only rational or cognitive connections but also emotional ties with a brand (Farhat et al., 2021).

Brand performance dispositions influences brand loyalty (Thagicu, 2016) but consumers have been socialized to grant brands the benefit of the doubt when faced with a temporary performance dip. This signifies that resolving performance issues and dispelling uncertainty are crucial steps in building and maintaining loyalty (Unurlu, 2019).

Moreover, consumer socialization emphasizes loyalty to brands based on perceived brand quality (Chinomona & Maziriri, 2017). The awareness of specific quality attributes associated with a product, evaluated against alternatives, is integral to consumer socialization. Consumers, give brands opportunities to rectify issues, illustrating a socialization process where trust is the conduit to loyalty (Sitienei & Makokha, 2017). Brand trust relies on the confidence established between customers and businesses through positive and successful interactions (Shin et al., 2019). Consumers may walk away if they feel cheated, prioritize ethical conduct, transparency, and the fulfillment of commitments, fostering a superior perception (Kaur & Soch, 2018).

Moreover, consumers have internalized the connection between their consumption needs and what a brand offers. Brand relevance, recognized as a distinctive differentiation strategy (Guèvremont et al., 2021), operates on economic, psychological, and practical dimensions. Aligning these aspects with consumers' needs and aspirations cultivates loyalty (Mulugeta et al., 2017). Brands can influence loyalty by delivering outstanding value for money, addressing customers' emotional and psychological well-being, and consistently fulfilling their promises.

Sedibe et al. (2019) also observes that brand satisfaction attitudes, achieved through emotional triggers (sensations, emotions, and thoughts), serves to counteract risk perceptions (Sigindi,

2018). While satisfaction is subjective, it provides genuine insights into consumers' trained evaluations of a brand (Chen et al., 2020) based on their experiences compared to initial expectations. Brands can induce satisfaction by tapping into consumers' emotions, sensations, and thoughts, creating positive experiences that offset any negative risk perceptions associated with the brand. This is because consumers have been socialized to equate satisfaction with loyalty.

Furthermore, consumers tend to exhibit lower brand loyalty, especially in relation to products with lower involvement (Sarwar & Siddiqui, 2021). However, millennials demonstrate a willingness to actively engage in their activities with various products (Harun & Husin, 2019). This engagement is primarily facilitated through value co-creation enabled by internet-based technology (Ali, 2018). Consequently, social media is seen as a prominent tool for socialization, fostering brand loyalty by providing brands the opportunity to interact with customers in more interactive and meaningful ways.

Nevertheless, these same consumers have been conditioned to develop loyalty when significant switching costs are involved, positively impacting brand loyalty (Chepkoech et al., 2021). If it is costly to change brands, customers tend to stay with the brand albeit unwillingly. Positive costs related to switching encompass the risk of forfeiting a favorable brand relational status, which may include exclusive benefits or personalized services, while negative costs represent obstacles and challenges associated with switching (Pick & Eisend, 2016). Consumers have been conditioned to perceive switching costs as inconvenient sacrifices, acting as a psychological constraint that discourages them from defecting to other brands (Wechuli, 2021).

However, this commitment to the brand is expressed either as price consciousness or brand dedication (Hidayanti et al., 2018), and it can be influenced. This influence is most effective when consumers have been taught to view a brand as a fundamental part of their identity (Dhurup et al., 2018). This alignment is achievable when the brand resonates with consumers' culture, thereby building an emotional commitment (Hwang et al., 2021). Therefore, establishing a strong and contented connection between consumers and brands plays a pivotal role in ensuring effective service delivery.

Research indicate that commitment is closely linked to customer relationship proneness, leading to enhanced loyalty (Olavarría-Jaraba et al., 2018). Therefore, consumer socialization recognizes this tripartite link involving the customer, the vendor, and the brand to foster trust and contributes to conflict resolution (Soi, 2018). Once this association, is established, customers perceive it as a driving force behind service delivery. Thus, a robust and satisfied consumer-brand connection emerges as a primary driver of effective service delivery that can potentially lead to loyalty.

Nevertheless, socialization is intricately linked to proximity (Hong et al., 2019). Millennials, in particular, are shaped by the values instilled by family and peer groups, with siblings playing a notably influential role (Kharuhayothin & Kerrane, 2018). Peer influence significantly molds the consumption patterns of young individuals, impacting materialistic values, social motivations, and affective consumption styles (Delafrooz et al., 2019; Kharuhayothin & Kerrane, 2018). This influence is responsible for the widespread adoption of IT and the socialization of new consumption beliefs and opportunities (Kihiko, 2017). This suggests that the impact of consumer attitudes and enabling factors on brand loyalty may be shaped by the socialization experiences individuals undergo, particularly in the digital age.

**3.0 Methodology**

A descriptive research design was employed for this study, targeting 399 students aged between 23 and 43 years enrolled in all chartered private universities in Kenya. The sample size was determined using the Slovin Formula, aiming for a 5% margin of error and a 95% confidence level from the total population of 144,859 (refer to Table 1). Quantitative research methods were applied, utilizing Hierarchical Structural Equation Modeling Regression and the Hayes PROCESS method through SPSS. Ethical approvals from Daystar University Ethics Committee was obtained, allowing for the distribution of closed-ended questionnaires.

1.2.1 Reliability, Multicollinearity and Test for Outliers

The Cronbach's alpha values are presented in Table 3, and significant deviation observations were identified through Mahalanobis distance (see Table 2). Collinearity was assessed using Variance Inflation Factors (VIF), with the rationale that if no independent variables were correlated, VIFs would be 1. Tolerance, which measures how close the coefficient determination

is between variables to 1 or 0, was also considered following the insights provided by Oke et al., (2013).

Table 1

*Population Characteristics*

|  | Number | Percentage |
|---|---|---|
| Male | 175 | 43.9% |
| Female | 224 | 56.1% |
| 22 to 26 years | 322 | 80.7% |
| 27 to 32 years | 43 | 10.8% |
| 33 to 37 years | 17 | 4.3% |
| 38 to 42 years | 16 | 4% |
| Degree | 317 | 79.45% |
| Diploma | 32 | 8.02% |
| Master's | 44 | 11.03% |
| PhD | 6 | 1.5% |

*Note; The population Characteristics*

**Table 2**

*Detected Outliers*

| Observation Number | Mahalanobis d-squared | p1 | p2 |
|---|---|---|---|
| 1 | 214.979 | 0.00 | 0.00 |
| 2 | 136.176 | 0.00 | 0.00 |
| 298 | 101.457 | 0.00 | 0.00 |
| 3 | 101.046 | 0.00 | 0.00 |
| 38 | 94.363 | 0.00 | 0.00 |

*Note; identified unusual observations in data.*

**4.0 Findings**

Brand affect (ß = 0.31, t-value = 0.00, p-value = 0.00) demonstrated statistical significance, suggesting that millennials prioritize the emotional connection a brand establishes beyond the products or services it offers. Orzan et al., (2016) indicates that positive emotions associated with

a brand can enhance attitudinal brand loyalty, particularly resonating with the fun element appreciated by millennials. Consequently, tailoring emotional responses to products based on individual customer preferences and experiences becomes crucial.

**Table 3**

*Descriptive Statistics*

| Variable | Scale items | Cronbach Alpha | Mean | Std. Deviation | VIF |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Brand Affect | 4 | 0.72 | 1.89 | 0.84 | 0.81 |
| Brand Performance | 4 | 0.73 | 1.84 | 0.69 | 0.69 |
| Brand Perceived Quality | 4 | 0.73 | 1.97 | 0.73 | 0.61 |
| Brand Trust | 3 | 0.75 | 1.84 | 0.58 | 0.44 |
| Brand Relevance | 4 | 0.77 | 1.83 | 0.59 | 0.39 |
| Brand Satisfaction | 4 | 0.83 | 1.77 | 0.57 | 0.37 |
| Customer Involvement | 4 | 0.87 | 2.97 | 1.08 | 1.83 |
| Customer Switching Costs | 4 | 0.71 | 2.50 | 0.69 | 1.53 |
| Customer Commitment | 5 | 0.79 | 2.57 | 0.87 | 1.68 |
| Customer Relationship Proneness | 4 | 0.82 | 3.07 | 1.17 | 1.64 |
| Attitudinal Brand Loyalty | 6 | 0.77 | 2.09 | 0.68 | |
| Behavioural Brand Loyalty | 3 | 0.80 | 2.26 | 0.65 | |
| Total | 78 | | | | |

*Note; Construct; Descriptive Statistics*

The study revealed that brand trust (ß = 0.24, t-value = 4.35, p-value = 0.00) significantly influenced loyalty. These findings  confirm a positive relationship between brand trust and brand loyalty, aligning with Molinillo et al., (2017) insights. Moreover, the connection between brand trust and loyalty supports Menidjel et al., (2017) argument emphasizing the critical role of trust in retaining loyalty. Therefore, millennials actively seek reassurance from brands to cultivate

positive attitudes, making trust a pivotal element in both preserving and strengthening brand loyalty.

**Table 4**

*The Hierarchical Reduction Regression Analysis Results*

| Dispositions | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Variables | Model 1 | Model 2 | Model 3 | Model 4 |
| Constant | 0.42* | 0.43* | 0.44* | 0.46* |
| Brand Trust | 0.20* | 0.21* | 0.21* | 0.24* |
| Brand Relevance | 0.24* | 0.24* | 0.25* | 0.30* |
| Brand Affect | 0.28* | 0.28* | 0.29* | 0.31* |
| Brand Satisfaction | 0.09 | 0.09 | 0.10 | |
| Brand Performance | 0.04 | 0.05 | | |
| Brand Perceived Quality | 0.01 | | | |
| F | 56.71* | 68.21 * | 85.179* | 112.308 * |
| $R^2$ | 0.47 | 0.47 | 0.467 | 0.463 |
| Adjusted $R^2$ | 0.46 | 0.46 | 0.461 | 0.459 |
| Enablers | | | | |
| Constant | 0.59** | 0.59 ** | 61** | |
| Customer Switching Costs | .18** | .18** | .19** | |
| Customer Commitment | .35** | .35** | .36** | |
| Customer Relationship Proneness | .02 | .02 | | |
| Customer Involvement | .01 | | | |
| F | 58.762* | 78.493* | 117.624* | |
| $R^2$ | .38 | .38 | .386 | |
| Adjusted $R^2$ | .37 | .37 | .372 | |
| Δ R | .38 | .00 | -.002 | |

. *Correlation significant at the 0.01 level and ** at the 0.05 level (2-tailed).

*Note; Outcomes of a hierarchical reduction regression analysis.*

Brand relevance (ß = 0.30, t-value = 5.28, p-value = 0.00) was found to be statistically significant at a 0.05 level of significance. This aligns with Mulugeta et al., (2017) assertion that being relevant to customers is crucial for brand loyalty. Millennials tend to favor brands that effectively address dental concerns, reducing perceived risks associated with the product. Consumers are socialized to purchase brands that address specific dental problems. Sigindi

(2018) observes that different cultural backgrounds have unique brand relevance factors driven by distinct ingrained values.

However, brand performance (ß = 0.05, t = 0.80, p-value = 0.42) did not demonstrate statistical significance. This is inconsistent with Unurlu ,(2019) who saw that brand performance does not have a significant impact on brand loyalty or purchase intention. Therefore, a decline in brand performance does not necessarily result in decreased brand loyalty.

Brand quality perceptions (ß of 0.01, t-value of 0.24, p-value = 0.81) and brand satisfaction (ß = 0.1, t-value of 1.58, p-value = 0.12) also did not exhibit statistical significance. This aligns with the research on brand quality perceptions (Chinomona & Maziriri, 2017) . However, these findings contradict Falahat et al., (2018) postulation that quality perception predicts consumer loyalty to a brand. While an improvement in brand quality is generally expected to enhance loyalty, dissatisfied customers may be loyal due to habit, limited alternatives, economic considerations, or an inability to perceive significant differences among brands.

For brand satisfaction, various studies attribute its lack of influence to psychological attribution in the subjective evaluation of how well the brand fulfills customers' needs (Chen et al., 2020; Mungai et al., 2017). This implies that satisfaction is relative, and customers' evolving needs and preferences can change over time, making it a subjective measure. What satisfies them today may not be relevant or satisfying in the future due to a shift in expectations.

Customer switching costs (ß = 0.19, t-value = 4.50, p-value = 0.00) exhibited statistical significance. These findings align with Christino et al., (2020), who demonstrated a constructive and direct impact of brand switching costs on brand loyalty. Consumers perceived switching costs as inconvenient sacrifices and psychological constraints that discourage them from switching to competitors. However, high switching costs creates a form of superficial loyalty, as customers avoid increased expenses or inconveniences associated with transitioning to alternatives.

Customer commitment significantly influenced brand loyalty (ß = 0.36, t-value of 10.31, p-value = 0.00) at the 0.05 significance level. These results align with Dhurup et al., (2018) findings, linking commitment to brand loyalty, as committed customers integrate a brand into their daily lives and recommend it to others. When customers perceive a brand as an integral part of their

existence, loyalty ensues. Committed customers establish a profound personal connection with the brand, viewing it as a representation of their values, aspirations, or identity.

However, customer involvement (ß = 0.10, t = 0.33, p-value of 0.74) and Customer Relationship Proneness (ß = 0.02, t-value of 0.72, p-value = 0.47) were statistically insignificant. This contradicts Huang et al., (2017) findings that customer involvement is necessary for achieving behavioural brand loyalty. Yet, convenience products are generally associated with low-involvement purchases, indicating that customers may not invest significant time, effort, or decision-making consideration when buying them.

Besides, toothpaste as a low-involvement products, may not have high value commitment or an established relationship with the vendor. Oundo et al., (2016) support these findings, as they observed low commitment for low-involvement products like newspapers. Consequently, the conventional belief that customer involvement universally drives loyalty is challenged, particularly in the context of low-involvement product categories, where extensive support from the vendor may not be necessary.

**Table 5**

*Consumer Socialization Interaction*

| Model | Co-efficient | Standard Error | t | p | Lower Limit Confidence Interval | Upper Limit Confidence Interval |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| **Constant** | 2.02 | .02 | 86.32 | 0.00 | 1.97 | 2.06 |
| **Disposition and Enablers** | .80 | .05 | 17.12 | 0.00 | .70 | .89 |
| **Consumer Socialization** | .09 | .03 | 2.57 | 0.01 | .02 | .15 |
| **Interaction 1** | .13 | 0.05 | 2.42 | 0.01 | .02 | .24 |

*Note; Consumer socialization interface between customer dispositions, enablers and loyalty.*

Furthermore, consumer socialization emerged as a moderator in the relationship between customer dispositions, enablers, and toothpaste brand loyalty among millennials (ß = 0.13, se = 0.05, p = 0.001). Assuming zero consumer socialization, there is a significantly positive effect of customer dispositions and enablers on toothpaste brand loyalty among millennials (b = 0.80, se = 0.05, p = 0.000). The conditional effect of consumer socialization is also positive and substantial (b = 0.09, se = 0.03, p = 0.01), considering customer disposition and customer enabler factors at zero.

Additionally, when at -1 standard deviation (-0.76) on the centered socialization variable (indicating low consumer socialization), there was a significant result (ß = 0.70, se = 0.06, p-value = 0.000). Secondly, at the mean value (0) on the centered socialization variable (reflecting moderate consumer socialization), the effect was positive and statistically significant (ß = 0.80, se = 0.05, p-value = 0.000). Similarly, at +1 standard deviation (0.76) on the centered socialization variable (indicating high consumer socialization), the result was positive and statistically significant (ß = 0.90, se = 0.06, p-value = 0.000) (see table 6).

**Table 6**

*Conditional Effects of the Focal Predictor Consumer Socialization*

| Consumer Socialization | Effect | Standard Error | t | p | Lower Limit Confidence Interval | Upper Limit Confidence Interval |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| -0.76 | 0.70 | .06 | 11.58 | 0.00 | .58 | .82 |
| 0.00 | 0.80 | .05 | 17.12 | 0.00 | .70 | .89 |
| -0.76 | 0.90 | .06 | 14.06 | 0.00 | .77 | 1.02 |

*Note; Consumer socialization interface on customer dispositions, enablers and brand loyalty.*

Whether at low levels of consumer socialization (-0.76), moderate socialization (mean value = 0), or high levels of consumer socialization (0.76), the interactions consistently demonstrated positive and significant outcomes. Therefore, consumer socialization plays a crucial role in moderating the relationship between the three variables, with the strength of this effect varying based on the extent to which millennials are socialized. Ghouse et al., (2020) and Kharuhayothin and Kerrane, (2018) agree with these findings that consumption patterns result from consumer

socialization. Kihiko's (2017) also asserts that consumer socialization influences brand loyalty but on different scales.

**5.0 Conclusions, Recommendations and Suggestions for Future Research**

The study concludes the favorable adoption of customer attitudes, enablers, or brand loyalty is influenced by the moderating effect of consumer socialization, with its strength varying based on the extent of millennials' socialization.

The study found millennials exhibit loyalty toward brands perceived as having lower associated risks (brand trust), fostering positive emotional connections (brand affect), and effectively addressing their category-specific needs (brand relevance). They prefer brands that offer value (customer commitment) and entail high transition costs. Their engagement with brands is limited, and they tend to avoid forming personal connections with vendors (CRP).

Brand managers must acknowledge that millennials are significantly influenced by their socialization experiences, impacting their perceptions and behaviours toward brands. Brand managers should customize their strategies to align with the distinctive millennials socialization patterns. They should craft tailored marketing messages, refining brand positioning, and developing engagement strategies that resonate with millennial consumers. Additionally, integrating social media and other platforms integral to millennials' socialization into marketing campaigns can amplify brand relevance and connection.

The study provides a valuable framework and guidelines for effective brand management, offering strategies attuned to millennials' socialization. Future research endeavors should delve into the specific role of social media in shaping the socialization of millennials.

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