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Novel approach to consumer loyalty: a case study of hospitality service organisations among generations X and Y

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Abstract: Consumer loyalty is considered one of the significant factors that affect market growth and consumer behaviour. Regardless of the numerous studies on customer loyalty, the authors found no empirical study that elaborates on the importance of customer loyalty across generations. The majority of previous studies have proposed customer engagement and customer involvement as one construct in predicting customer loyalty. Thus, the current research tries to fill this gap in the literature by proposing a new model of customer loyalty blends multidimensional consumer involvement as predictors, multidimensional consumer online engagement as a mediator, and finally the moderating role of different generations (X and Y) in the hospitality services context. Present research collected (N = 390) data from Malaysia hospitality service organisations and the data were analysed using structural equation modelling. The results approve all the direct relationships as well as the moderating effect of generation generations X and Y. Moreover, the results confirm the mediating role of consumer online engagement among consumer involvement dimensions and consumer loyalty. The current study highlights significant implications to facilitate and increase consumer loyalty in the hospitality services context, especially in the airline, and hotel industries.

Keywords: consumer loyalty; consumer involvement; consumer online engagement; airlines; hotels; hospitality industry.

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1 Introduction

The tourism and hospitality industry is evolving from being the typical service industry to include co-creation approaches in providing its services. With the growth of the internet, consumers have access to more information, which changes the mode of interaction and communication between organisations and consumers (Lopes et al., 2019; Nuseir, 2018). The growing popularity of the internet has created innovative ways to stay connected with customers for most tourism and hospitality companies (Za et al., 2019). One of the effective methods to interact with customers is through social media platforms to create consumer involvement (Cheung et al., 2019). Many hospitality organisations are continuously seeking new opportunities to attract new customers from various market segments by introducing new brands to the market (Deloitte, 2017). This includes Malaysia, with the numbers of hotels increased over the years from 3182 in July 2018 to 3,450 in January 2021 (CEIC, 2021).

An organisation needs to anticipate customer loyalty and interest in its brand, as this is highly related to the organisation's success (Kim et al., 2020). Consumer loyalty can sustainably express the relationship between a company and existing customers (Hallowell, 1996). The present study, therefore, aims to understand the factors that influence consumer loyalty by examining consumer involvement with its broad dimensions (namely: importance, pleasure, sign, risk probability, and risk consequence), as proposed by Laurent and Kapferer (1985), to get a better grasp of consumer involvement. To better clarify the relationship of consumer loyalty, consumer online engagement has also been considered as a mediator due to the increasing use of social networks among consumers. Moreover, different generational cohorts have been seen as key consumers due to their interactions, explorations, and emotions towards the tourism industry (Kim and Park, 2020). Therefore, the current study attempts to investigate the moderating effect of different generations (X and Y) on the association between consumer online engagement and consumer loyalty. The first section of the current paper reviews the past research, which is followed by the rationale for research in the second section. The third section explains the applied methodology, and the results will be discussed in the fourth section. Lastly, the study concludes with the theoretical contributions, practical implications and recommendations for future researchers.

2 Literature review

2.1 Theoretical foundation

This study applies service-dominant logic theory by Vargo and Lusch (2017) as the dominant theory, because it is the most suitable theory to be applied as the basis for the variables involved in this research and the context of hospitality service organisations such as the airline and hotel industries. According to Vargo and Lusch (2017), service-dominant logic assumes that consumers form holistic experiences when they are involved in value creation (Vargo and Lusch, 2017). Based on consumers' involvement in the resource integration activity, the consumers evaluate and interpret value uniquely (Iyanna, 2016). Value is a subjective matter influenced by different consumer experiences and the level of importance of the services (Stevik, 2011). The value of the services experienced by consumers varies according to their different levels of importance. A consumer tends to evaluate a service as precious when he or she perceives its importance and participates in the event of the service company. Meanwhile, a less-involved consumer may interpret the service value to be insignificant. Hence, this has evoked the development of the axiom that states that value is uniquely determined by the beneficiary, which is the consumer. Therefore, service-dominant logic theory is used as the basic theory for developing the framework of the current study.

2.2 Consumer loyalty

Customer loyalty is referred to as a profound commitment to repetitive purchases of the same brand or set, despite situational changes (Oliver, 1999). The growing competition of the service industry, with the development of digital business strategies, has increased customer demand and expectation (Zehir and Zehir, 2019; Koo et al., 2020). This poses a serious challenge for organisations to ensure perpetual success while price optimisation, the increment of goods, and service quality are insufficient to guarantee long-term success for the company. Building loyal customers is one of the important determinants of a successful product or enterprise because it means effectively handling negative occurrences (Eternad-Sajadi et al., 2016).

Consumer loyalty has been a prominent consideration for organisational success in the tourism and hospitality industry over the past twenty years (Chen et al., 2020; So et al., 2016; Agrawal and Mittal, 2019; Hayati et al., 2020; Yoo and Bai, 2013). Previous studies have considered perceived quality (Nikhashemi et al., 2015), and travel experience (Huang et al., 2019) as the antecedents to consumer loyalty. Meanwhile, researchers found that companies that implemented gamification in their loyalty programs are able to develop habitual consumption and increase purchase intentions and eventually enhance consumer loyalty (Hwang and Choi, 2020). Ahrholdt et al. (2019) discovered that involvement influences the growth rate of loyalty through satisfaction and delights. This indicates that consumer involvement played a vital role in influencing loyalty. A review of the literature shows that there are different factors influencing consumer loyalty, and this subject has been widely studied by previous researchers; however, consumer involvement deserves more research and attention to be empirically tested due to its attributes, and, currently, there is a lack of research in this regard, especially in the hospitality services context. Therefore, this study bridges this research

gap by proposing consumer involvement as a noteworthy variable to predict consumer loyalty.

2.3 Consumer involvement

Involvement has been defined as an unconscious motivation, awakening, or interest that is stimulated by an impulse (Laurent and Kapferer, 1985). Another definition is motivational states that can be used to understand consumer attitudes towards brands or products (Guthrie and Kim, 2009). Consumers who form favourable attitudes towards high-involvement products demonstrate higher purchase intention (Salem and Chaichi, 2018). Moreover, Busser and Shulga (2019) contend that consumer involvement with consumer-generated advertising positively influences loyalty through trust and by creating long-term relationships. Hence, this discussion suggests that high involvement will eventually lead to loyalty. Thus, the following hypothesis is proposed, as shown below:

H1 Consumer involvement significantly influences consumer loyalty in hospitality service organisations.

Laurent and Kapferer (1985) propose different dimensions of consumer involvement that include 'importance', 'pleasure', 'sign', 'risk probability', and 'risk consequence', which are applied in the current research.

2.3.1 Importance

Importance is a dimension of involvement for what a product means to its consumers (Laurent and Kapferer, 1985). Importance includes attributes (Silayoi and Speece, 2007), brand name (Zhang, 2015), and generic product benefits (Lai, 1995). The study by Parihar et al. (2018) shows that the terms importance and interest are interchangeable due to their inherent, enduring values, thus the current research includes interest as a part of importance. Previous studies have found that service importance influences loyalty directly. Furthermore, the importance of a service is believed to have an impact on loyalty (Parihar et al., 2018). Thus, higher consumer interest could enhance the consumer's perception and loyalty level. Extremely interested consumers are also more affected with the enjoyment of using the products, which will in turn influence consumer loyalty (Guthrie and Kim, 2009). Hence, the present study assumes 'importance' as one of the dimensions of consumer involvement that could affect consumer loyalty and the hypothesis is as follows:

H1a Importance has significant positive influence on consumer loyalty in hospitality service organisations.

2.3.2 Pleasure

The pleasure value is the subjective nature of hedonic and emotional value in involvement (Laurent and Kapferer, 1985). Jung and Kim (2015) contend that favourable emotions, such as pleasurable experience during the consumption process, could strengthen purchasing loyalty. As a result, consumers become motivated and intend to express loyalty to a company by spreading positive word of mouth. In contrast, displeased consumers would spread negative word of mouth or express their displeasure

when giving feedback to the service company (Quester and Lim, 2003; Hasan, 2016). Consumers tend to develop favourable feelings towards the organisation when the services provided have sufficiently created emotional appeal and hedonic value (Chaudhuri and Holbrook, 2001), and they become loyal to the organisation gradually. Emotional involvement significantly and positively influences consumer attitudes, which in turn influence the perceived connection towards the brand (Su et al., 2019). Thus, current research believes that pleasure is one of the dimensions of consumer involvement that can positively influence consumer online engagement. The following hypothesis is postulated:

H1b Pleasure significantly and positively influences consumer loyalty in hospitality service organisations.

2.3.3 Sign

Logo, trademark, and package design are the visible sign values of a product or a service (Ghodeswar, 2008). Past researchers (Parihar et al., 2018; Ngo et al., 2020) ascertain that sign values of a product or service can explain the consumers' tendencies, and influence their behaviour. The sign value or the symbolic value of the product or service are the main reasons affecting consumer purchasing behaviour, due to what they symbolise, which exceeds the functional benefits of the service provided (Tong et al., 2017). The symbolic value was also found to influence consumers' consumption behaviour, especially purchase decision, customer engagement, and customer loyalty (Leong et al., 2019; Li and Sun, 2015). Thus, the following argument is hypothesised:

H1c Sign significantly and positively influences consumer loyalty in hospitality service organisations.

2.3.4 Risk consequence

High risk-taking consumers tend to purchase higher-priced items more frequently compared to regular consumers (Greibitus et al., 2011). High-risk perceivers take a longer time to make a purchase decision because they cannot afford to make any mistakes with the high-priced product. Risk importance has been seen to have significant influence on brand loyalty, and it reflects consumers' concerns about the products to ensure high product appropriateness (Vera and Trujillo, 2017). Thus, customers would take more time to decide on the items that they perceived as more important. Therefore, it would be fair to recommend that risk consequences can influence consumer loyalty.

H1d Risk consequence positively influences consumer loyalty in hospitality service organisations.

2.3.5 Risk probability

Risk probability is defined as the likelihood of making a mistake (Laurent and Kapferer, 1985). Gozukara et al. (2014) indicate that risk probability was negatively correlated with motivation and online purchase intention. Risk probability could decrease the consumer's confidence in the service provider, which diminishes the consumer's perception of the company in terms of the service quality, credibility, and reliability (Gozukara et al.,

2014). Risks perceived by consumers could weaken or even destroy the formation of a brand relationship (Lee et al., 2016). Hence, the following hypothesis is proposed:

H1e Risk probability negatively influences consumer loyalty in hospitality service organisations.

2.4 Mediating role of consumer online engagement

Consumer engagement is a mental condition that happens in a service relationship through interactive and co-creative experience (Brodie et al., 2011). Interactive communication through online engagement between consumer and company is compatible with online consumer engagement environments as opposed to offline environments (Kumar et al., 2010). It produces value co-creators who are active consumers who express their ideas and content activities for the company (Fernandes and Remelhe, 2016). The existence of the internet has increased the number of mobile internet users and eased the approach through online platforms. Consumers could be approached easily, and they will also be exposed to every available product and service internationally (Lee and Wong, 2016). Many studies show the importance of customer online engagement and consumer loyalty. For instance, a study by Rajeswari et al. (2017) found that consumers who were engaged in using digital online services offered by a wireline operator showed a more significant level of customer satisfaction and customer loyalty. Thus, this study adopts the online environment to examine consumer engagement. In addition, customer engagement showed a significant influence on customers purchase intention in the hospitality industry (Liao et al., 2019).

Furthermore, the use of consumer online engagement construction has been inconsistent in past literature (Dessart et al., 2015). One-dimensional and multidimensional views have been presented by various researchers. The majority of researchers have focused only on the behavioural dimension (Sprott et al., 2009; Doorn et al., 2010; Vivek et al., 2012; Gao and Huang, 2021). The literature emphasises different dimensions of consumer engagement. For instance, the dimensions can be affective, activation, and cognitive (Hollebeek et al., 2014), or vigour, dedication, and absorption (Cheung et al., 2011; Dwivedi, 2015). Researchers also identify other dimensions of engagement, namely affective, cognitive, and behavioural (Brodie et al., 2013; Dessart et al., 2015; Hollebeek, 2011), which are used in the current research and briefly explained as follows.

Affective engagement is a part of consumer online engagement's dimensions that incorporates the consumers' emotional experience (Calder et al., 2013). Affective engagement is an emotional attachment, and it can mediate the relationship between brand relationship quality and social media usage (Hudson et al., 2015). According to Bowden and Mirzaei (2021), affective engagement embeds the customers' constructive, brand-related sentiment, which includes enthusiasm, dedication, and passion that connect with brand assessment. This then results in the evolution of attitudinal and behavioural loyalty, which includes spreading positive word of mouth, referrals and recommendations towards the service entity. Subsequently, consumers were able to form a connection with the brand through social media and were able to influence the strength of the relationship between the brand and the consumers. This is evidence that affective engagement can influence consumer loyalty.

Behaviour engagement is the action beyond purchase resulting from motivational drivers towards a brand or company (Marketing Science Institute, 2010). Past research shows that consumer involvement has a positive relationship with the activation dimension of consumer brand engagement in the social media context (Hollebeek et al., 2014). Among the dimensions, vigour engagement was regarded as one of the ways to predict consumer perception towards a certain brand, and it also affects the consumer's mental state (Fadeh and Taghipourian, 2016). Users' behaviour engagement is a crucial element to foster users' branding loyalty through social networking tools (Zheng et al., 2015). Researchers showed that interactions through social media have a significant effect on customer loyalty (Esenyel and Girgen, 2019). Marketers encourage consumers to give feedback after they have made their purchases, and this could increase their involvement level through the value-added experience and eventually build loyalty with favourable attitudes (Vinerean et al., 2014).

Cognitive engagement is defined as the enduring and active psychological level that a consumer experiences concerning the subject of engagement (Hollebeek, 2013). Significant cognitive antecedents such as trust, identification, intention to revisit, and loyalty (Huang, 2017; Rather et al., 2018; Ibrahim et al., 2021) influence affection and lead to loyal customers. Cognitive engagement can influence consumer satisfaction due to the change in consumer perception, which could lead to personal preference (Dovaliene et al., 2015). Thus, satisfied consumers may have the potential to become loyal consumers. Meanwhile, Kim et al. (2013) suggest that engaged consumers have higher perceived values and satisfaction, which subsequently lead to consumer loyalty. Additionally, Higgins (2006) suggests that consumer involvement would influence cognitive engagement, and consequently mediate the loyalty of the consumers. Furthermore, due to the limited studies on all three dimensions of engagement in the marketing context, and based on the discussion above, the current research intends to close the gap by examining all three levels of engagement and employ the construct as a mediator. Therefore, the following hypotheses are suggested:

- H2 Consumer online engagement can play a mediating role in the link between consumer involvement and consumer loyalty.
 - H2a Affective engagement can play a mediating role in the link between consumer involvement and consumer loyalty.
 - H2b Behaviour engagement can play a mediating role in the link between consumer involvement and consumer loyalty.
 - H2c Cognitive engagement can play a mediating role in the link between consumer involvement and consumer loyalty.

2.5 Generational differences

In 2016, Generation X's population in Malaysia included approximately 5.744 million people, whereas the Generation Y totalled approximately 11.81 million, with the total population of 30.72 million (Department of Statistics, 2015). Together, generations X and Y make up half (56.96%) of the total population in Malaysia and are a large market for the country. They create a great opportunity to yield high sales volumes, and play a vital role in influencing Malaysia's market through their demands. Nevertheless, the

characteristics and behaviours of both generations are different, and there is no unified method to influence them (Williams and Page, 2011). Generation Y was born in a digital world and is keen on using the internet to build their connections. They were, and still are, internet heavy users who accept new intellectual technology and the internet for communication and connection (Kumar and Lim, 2008). Social media platforms are considered important tools to help Generation Y share their interests, emotions and activities through instant messaging and photo sharing (Jambulingam et al., 2014). Generation Y uses social media networks more frequently than Generation X to share their feelings and to communicate with family and friends (Kuyucu, 2016).

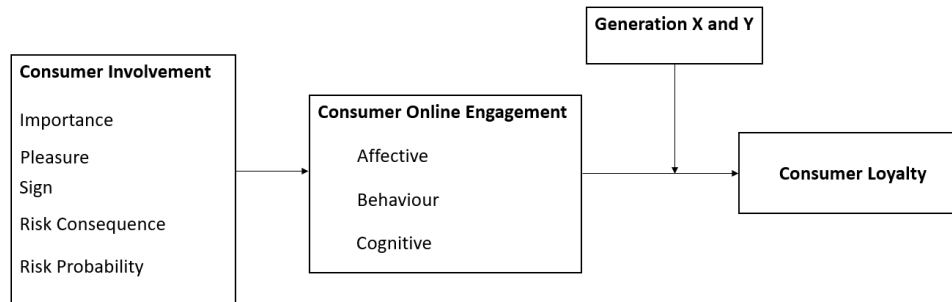
Despite exposure to online engagement, the actual degree of engagement varies from one consumer to another depending on generation (Hoole and Bonnema, 2015). The study by Reisenwitz and Fowler (2019) reveals that there is a significant alteration between generations X and Y regarding the usage of technological-based information. Generation Y has been exposed to variegated alternatives and marketing promotions (Reisenwitz and Iyer, 2009). Generation X is concerned about the value of the services, whereas Generation Y would be loyal if the company provided valuable services with high-quality features (Yang and Lau, 2015). Therefore, these two generations might hold different understandings and values towards services and marketing approaches. Engaged Generation X consumers possibly develop stronger loyalty values as compared to engaged Generation Y consumers due to their exposures and values hold (Reisenwitz and Iyer, 2009; Yang and Lau, 2015). Fernandes and Esteves (2016) discovered that consumer engagement may influence customer loyalty behaviour and they suggest that researchers should add other factors to influence consumer loyalty. Hence, current research assumes that diverse generations can influence consumer behaviour and might affect the association between consumer engagement and consumer loyalty. Therefore, the following hypothesis is suggested:

- H3 Diverse generations (X and Y) play a moderating role in the link between consumer online engagement and consumer loyalty.

2.6 *Conceptual framework*

The airline and hospitality organisations have developed significantly, and many of these kinds of service organisations have adopted the use of social media to increase their competitiveness (Za et al., 2019). Past studies indicate that there is a need for more comprehensive research on customer behaviour (Che Nawi et al., 2019), and thus more variables should be tested to fully understand the phenomenon. Consequently, based on previous research, the following framework (Figure 1) is proposed for the current research.

Based on Figure 1, the research framework proposes that getting customers involved could influence their loyalty. Fundamentally, involved customers would engage with the social media of hospitality services organisations, which would further influence their loyalty. Meanwhile, the factor of generational differences between X and Y would influence the relationship in forming loyal customers given engagement to social media. The research framework displayed four main groups of variables, namely consumer involvement, consumer online engagement, generation (X or Y), and consumer loyalty.

Figure 1 Research framework

Sources: The authors

3 Research methodology

The current study has selected a quantitative survey technique and applied a correlational study to test its hypotheses. The survey instrument used in this study to collect data was the self-administrative questionnaire. The pilot study was done by acquiring responses from 30 hotel customers to ensure the reliability and the validity of the questionnaire with necessary changes in wording. Based on the equation calculation for unknown populations, a margin of error of 5%, a 95% confidence interval, and a 0.5 standard deviation were set, and the required sample size was 384 (Suresh and Chandrashekara, 2012).

This study used Facebook to distribute the questionnaire. This was largely because targeted respondents must be active on social media. Moreover, Wissmann et al. (2012) mention that online questionnaires enable researchers to collect data effectively. This study used the online survey software Survey Monkey to prepare questionnaires for distribution. This software also helped researchers screen respondents before they were allowed to answer the questionnaire. Several screening questions were asked prior to answering. The screening questions were:

- 1 Are you a member of a social media platform?
- 2 What is your year of birth?
- 3 Have you booked a hotel or purchased flight tickets online before?

The questionnaire was sent to respondents through Facebook groups, such as tourism and hospitality groups, or airline and hotel company groups. The respondents were encouraged to forward the questionnaires to their friends and family to reach a better coverage of suitable respondents. A total of 390 useful responses were collected and the sample size was expected to split equally among generations X and Y. Table 1 tabulates the factor loading, reliability, and average variance for the constructs.

Table 1 Factor loading, reliability, average variance

Constructs	Indicators	Standardised factor loadings		Average variance extracted
		(≥ 0.4)	(≥ 0.6)	
Importance	I feel this hotel/airline company is important for me.	0.840	0.830	0.621
	This hotel/airline company never leaves me unconcerned	0.696		
Pleasure	I can say that this hotel/airline company interests me a lot.	0.820		
	When I am staying in this hotel/travelling with this airline company, it is like giving a gift to myself.	0.751	0.875	0.701
	I give myself a pleasure while staying with this hotel/travelling with the airline company.	0.928		
	For me, staying with this hotel/travelling with this airline company is somewhat a pleasure.	0.824		
Sign	I can tell about a person whether he/she supports this hotel/airline company.	0.655	0.854	0.666
	This hotel/airline company gives a glimpse of the type of person I am.	0.881		
Risk consequence	This hotel/airline company tells something about me.	0.890		
	It is annoying staying with this hotel/travelling airline company and it's proven that it isn't suitable for me.	0.457	0.666	0.548
	When I choose a hotel/airline company, it is not a big deal if I make a mistake.*	0.985		
	I would be very upset if after I had stayed in this hotel/travel with this airline company and it has proven it was a mistake.	0.513		
Risk probability	It is rather complicated to choose a hotel/airline company.	-0.814	0.797	0.572
	Whenever I stay with this hotel/travel with this airline company, I never really know whether it is the right choice or not.	-0.838		
	When faced with choosing among hotel/airline companies, I always feel a bit at a loss to make the right choice.	-0.592		
Consumer online engagement (behaviour)	I always visit the hotel/airline company's social media website.	0.629	0.876	0.444
	I always notice the posts by hotel/airline company's social media website.	0.602		
	I always read a post by this hotel/airline company.	0.765		
	I always 'like' post by this hotel/airline company.	0.738		
	I always comment on posts by this hotel/airline company.	0.736		
	I always share posts of this hotel/airline company with friends.	0.656		
	I always post on a social media website about this hotel/airline company.	0.704		
I can continue browsing this hotel/airline company's social media website for a very long period before the book room(s)/purchase tickets.	0.504			
I devote a lot of energy into this hotel/airline company's social media website.	0.621			

Note: *reverse coded items.

Sources: The authors

Table 1 Factor loading, reliability, average variance (continued)

Constructs	Indicators	Standardised factor loadings	Construct reliability	Average variance extracted
		(≥0.4)	(≥0.6)	(≥0.4)
Consumer online engagement (cognitive)	Time flies when I am using the social media website of this hotel/airline company.	0.646	0.840	0.468
	It is so absorbing while browsing this hotel/airline company's social media website until I forgot about anything else.	0.711		
Consumer online engagement (affective)	I am rarely distracted when browsing this hotel/airline company's social media website.	0.600		
	I am immersed in this hotel/airline company's social media website.	0.679		
	My mind is focused on when using this hotel/airline company's social media website.	0.666		
	I pay a lot of attention to this hotel/airline company's social media website.	0.789		
	I am enthusiastic in this hotel/airline company's social media website.	0.755	0.912	0.634
	This hotel/airline company's social media website inspires me.	0.779		
	I found this hotel/airline company social media website is full of meaning and purpose.	0.822		
Consumer loyalty	I am excited when using this hotel/airline company social media website.	0.784		
	I am interested in this hotel/airline company social media website.	0.823		
	I am proud of using this hotel/airline company social media website.	0.811		
	I am very loyal to this hotel/airline company.	0.855	0.702	0.491
	I am very committed to this hotel/airline company.	0.844		
	I don't consider myself a loyal customer of this hotel/airline company.*	0.481		
	I don't plan to revisit/rebooking with this hotel/airline company in the future.*	0.471		
Consumer loyalty	If I were faced with the same choice again, I would stay/travel with this hotel/airline.	0.682		
	I would stay/travel with this hotel/airline operated under the same chain elsewhere	0.776		
	I will recommend this hotel/airline to my friends.	0.690		

Note: *reverse coded items.

Sources: The authors

The main validity tests used in the current research were convergent validity and discriminant validity. To obtain the convergent validity, average variance extracted (AVE) for each latent variable was calculated. The threshold AVE value should be 0.4 and above (Fraering and Minor, 2006). A lower AVE value of 0.6 and above can be accepted with the condition of 0.6 values and above for composite reliability (Fornell and Lacker, 1981). Table 1 shows that all constructs have acceptable convergent validity with most of their AVE values above 0.4. All the constructs are considered to have adequate convergent validity because the composite reliability values of these constructs are above the cut-off point of 0.6. In terms of discriminant validity, the heterotrait-monotrait ratio (HTMT) was used, and the heterotrait correlations should be smaller than the monotrait correlations (Garson, 2016). When the value is lesser than 1, the model is considered well-fitting, as it determines the existence of discriminant validity between the relative constructs (Henseler et al., 2015). Table 2 summarises the HTMT discriminant validity result. All the constructs are below the threshold value of 0.9, and between 0.099 and 0.865, thereby establishing the discriminant validity.

Table 2 HTMT discriminant validity result

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8
Affective								
Behaviour	0.734							
Cognitive	0.840	0.865						
Consumer loyalty	0.560	0.481	0.461					
Importance	0.364	0.499	0.378	0.469				
Pleasure	0.436	0.456	0.366	0.323	0.585			
Risk consequence	0.166	0.320	0.399	0.307	0.316	0.326		
Risk probability	0.151	0.147	0.216	0.193	0.228	0.100	0.807	
Sign	0.370	0.430	0.377	0.361	0.295	0.318	0.397	0.099

Sources: The authors

3.1 Descriptive profile of respondents

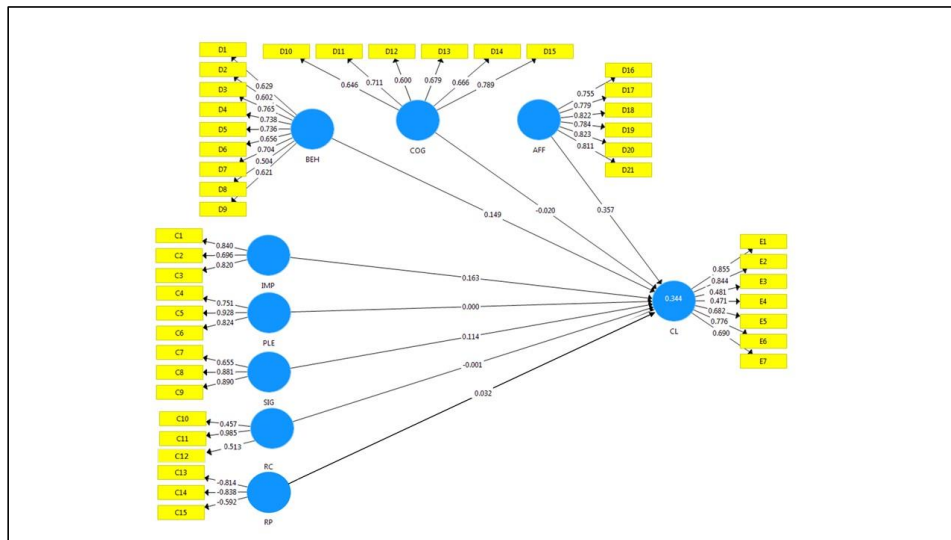
As reported in Table 3, approximately two-thirds of the respondents (67.7%) were female and the rest (32.3%) were male. In terms of generation, the distribution of Generation X (50.5%) and Generation Y (49.5%) is almost equal. Most of the respondents were Malay (58.7%), followed by Chinese (33.1%), and Indian (5.9%). The remaining were Iban and Bidayuh (2.3%). Interestingly, the distribution of the respondents reflected the Malaysian population where Malay is the largest ethnic group. It is followed by Chinese, as the second-largest group, and thirdly, Indian (Department of Statistic, 2017). With regards to the respondents' income group, less than one-third of the respondents (32.3%) has an earned income between RM 1,501 and RM 3,000, while 29.5% of them were earning less than RM 1,500. In addition, 5.9% of the respondents were earning an income of RM 8,001 and above.

Table 3 Descriptive profile of respondents

Variables	Frequency	Percentage
Gender		
Male	126	32.3
Female	264	67.7
Generation		
Generation Y	193	49.5
Generation X	197	50.5
Ethnic		
Malay	229	58.7
Chinese	129	33.1
Indian	23	5.9
Iban and Bidayuh	9	2.3
Income groups		
<RM 1,500	115	29.5
RM 1,501–RM 3,000	126	32.3
RM 3,001–RM 5,000	68	17.4
RM 5,001–RM 8,000	58	14.9
≥RM 8,001	23	5.9

Sources: The authors

Figure 2 Structural equation modelling (see online version for colours)



Notes: CI: consumer involvement, IMP: importance, PLE: pleasure, SIG: sign, RC: risk consequence, RP: risk probability, CL: consumer loyalty.

Sources: The authors

3.2 Structural equation model findings

Next, the researchers ran the PLS-SEM algorithm to analyse the data as shown in Figure 2. The bootstrapping method was used to check the path coefficient, and the values are presented in Table 4. From there, we can see that importance has the strongest influence on consumer loyalty ($\beta = 0.252$), followed by sign ($\beta = 0.215$), pleasure ($\beta = 0.122$), risk consequence ($\beta = -0.065$), and risk probability ($\beta = -0.012$). The effect of consumer involvement on consumer loyalty is ($\beta = 0.440$) and the consumer involvement construct explains 19.5% of the variance in consumer loyalty.

Table 4 Path coefficient

<i>Relationship</i>	<i>Std. beta</i>	<i>Std. error</i>	<i>t-value</i>	<i>Result</i>
CI -> CL	0.440	0.035	12.425	Supported*
IMP -> CL	0.252	0.253	4.526	Supported*
PLE -> CL	0.122	0.061	2.017	Supported*
SIG -> CL	0.215	0.218	4.226	Supported*
RC -> CL	-0.012	-0.013	0.154	Not supported
RP -> CL	-0.065	-0.084	1.184	Not supported

Notes: 1 *significant at $p < 0.01$ level

2 CI: consumer involvement, IMP: importance, PLE: pleasure, SIG: sign, RC: risk consequence, RP: risk probability, CL: consumer loyalty.

Sources: The authors

Hypothesis H1a postulates that the relationship between importance and consumer loyalty is positive. The results indicate that the direct structural model is consistent with the proposed hypothesis, in that importance and consumer loyalty is positively significant ($t = 4.526, p < 0.01$). Thus, H1a is supported.

Hypothesis H1b proposes that a positive relationship between pleasure and consumer loyalty exists. The standardised path coefficient reveals a positive association between pleasure and consumer loyalty ($t = 2.017, p < 0.01$), thus, H1b is supported. The results indicate that a pleasurable feeling felt by the respondents, such as comfort and happiness, will encourage loyalty towards the service company.

Hypothesis H1c proposes that the relationship between sign and consumer loyalty is positive. The results support the hypothesis ($t = 4.226, p < 0.01$) and imply that respondents with high compatibility sign values have higher chances of being loyal consumers because they share similar symbolic values, such as self-identification and images with the airline and hotels.

For hypothesis H1d, the relationship between risk consequence and consumer loyalty was tested. The results show that there is no significant relationship between risk consequence and consumer loyalty ($t = 0.154, p > 0.01$). Hence, H1d is not supported. The finding reveals that respondents' perceptions of high or low-risk consequence do not have any effect on being loyalty consumers.

Hypothesis H1e predicted a relationship between risk probability and consumer loyalty. The standardised path coefficient reveals an insignificant relationship between risk probability and consumer loyalty ($t = 1.184, p > 0.01$), which is in contrast with the proposed proposition. Therefore, hypothesis H1e is rejected. The results indicate that

even though the respondents' make high or low-risk probability assessment, the degree of consumer loyalty remains the same.

3.3 Mediation effect of consumer online engagement

Once the first-order constructs were measured, the latent variables were included to re-access the model and the mediating roles of different dimensions of consumer online engagement (affective, behaviour, and cognitive). The results are demonstrated in Table 5.

Table 5 Mediation effect of consumer online engagement

<i>Relationship</i>	<i>Indirect effect</i>	<i>Std. error</i>	<i>t values</i>	<i>LL</i>	<i>UL</i>	<i>Result</i>
CI -> AFF -> CL	0.176	0.037	4.797	0.104	0.248	Supported*
CI -> BEH -> CL	0.121	0.037	3.295	0.049	0.194	Supported*
CI -> COG -> CL	0.011	0.029	0.398	-0.045	0.067	Not supported

Notes: 1 *significant at $p < 0.01$ level

2 CI: consumer involvement, IMP: importance, PLE: pleasure, SIG: sign, RC: risk consequence, RP: risk probability, CL: consumer loyalty.

Sources: The authors

Hypothesis H2a proposed that affective engagement plays a mediating role in the link between consumer involvement and consumer loyalty. Table 5 shows that the indirect effect of affective engagement is significant ($t = 4.797$, $p = 0.001$), whereas Table 4 shows the significant result of the direct effect without implying affective engagement ($t = 12.425$, $p < 0.01$). The results reveal that consumer involvement affects affective engagement, and consequentially influences consumer loyalty. Consumer involvement has significant association with consumer loyalty since ($t = 8.49$, $p < 0.01$), while the inclusion of affective engagement shows that affective engagement has partial mediation impact on the link between consumer involvement and consumer loyalty. This result supports the hypothesis. Thus, H2a is supported. The overall results reveal that the involved respondents will engage effectively with the service company through social media and eventually increase their chances to be loyal consumers.

Hypothesis H2b postulates that behaviour engagement plays a mediating role in the link between consumer involvement and consumer loyalty. Both indirect ($t = 3.295$, $p = 0.001$) and direct effects ($t = 12.425$, $p < 0.01$) of the model prove the significant relationship between consumer involvement and consumer loyalty. The results show that consumer involvement significantly influences behaviour engagement and consumer loyalty. Meanwhile, consumer involvement also shows significant association with consumer loyalty ($t = 8.49$, $p < 0.01$) even after the inclusion of behaviour engagement as the mediator. However, the results show a partial mediation after behaviour engagement was incorporated as a mediator. Hence, H2b is supported. This finding indicates that involved respondents may behave in an engaging way, such as 'liking' and 'commenting' on the social media page of the airline or hotel, which increases the possibility to be loyal consumers.

Hypothesis H2c suggested that cognitive engagement plays a mediating role in the link between consumer involvement and consumer loyalty. However, the results fail to

support this hypothesis and no significant mediating effect is found for cognitive engagement ($t = 0.398$, $p = 0.690$). Thus, this study is unable to show the mediating effect of cognitive engagement between consumer involvement and consumer loyalty.

3.4 Moderation role of generations X and Y

Hypothesis H3 implied that different generations (X and Y) significantly play a moderating role between consumer online engagement and consumer loyalty. As depicted in Table 6, different generations (X and Y) demonstrate a significant moderating effect ($t = 2.649$, $p = 0.008$). Hence, H3 is supported at the level of $p < 0.01$. The result shows that online engaged respondents, in terms of affective, behaviour, and cognitive engagement, will have their loyalty affected, but the degree of loyalty is stronger for Generation X as compared to Generation Y.

Table 6 Moderation role of generations X and Y

<i>Relationship</i>	<i>Std. beta</i>	<i>Std. error</i>	<i>t-value</i>	<i>Result</i>
Consumer online engagement * generation -> consumer loyalty	0.127	0.131	2.649	Supported*

Note: *significant at the level 0.01.

Sources: The authors

4 Findings and conclusions

The main objective of the current research was to determine the influences of consumer involvement on consumer loyalty among generations X and Y. The proposed research framework was supported by service-dominant logic theory and the addition of mediating and moderating variables to predict consumer loyalty. Specifically, 19.5% of the variance in consumer loyalty was explained by the indirect effect of independent variables including importance, pleasure, sign, risk consequence, and risk probability. 19.2% of the variance in consumer loyalty was explained by consumer online engagement. Lastly, 32.3% of the variance in consumer loyalty was explained by generations X and Y. Consumer loyalty was higher for Generation X (55.3%) compared to Generation Y (26.9%). To conclude, the results indicate that the generation (X or Y) of the respondents had a moderating effect between the link of consumer online engagement and consumer loyalty, and Generation X demonstrated a higher level of loyalty compared to Generation Y.

The findings reveal that, from all the dimensions of consumer involvement, importance, pleasure and sign were predictors of consumer loyalty. The result indicated that consumer involvement was the major indicator of consumer loyalty with the significance level of $t = 12.425$ and p value less than 0.00. Further, there was a high correlation between importance and consumer loyalty with the t value of 4.526. Unfortunately, risk consequence and risk probability were dimensions that could not show correlation with consumer loyalty. Therefore, consumer loyalty could not be predicted by risk consequence and risk probability even though the beta values were negative. This may likely be because risk consequence and risk probability measured

negative perceptions, and, hence, it is reasonable to assume that those variables have a negative impact on consumer loyalty.

Moreover, the results revealed that affective and behaviour engagement mediates the relationship between consumer involvement and consumer loyalty while the mediating role of cognitive engagement was not supported. Airline and hospitality services strive to fulfil the customers' expectations by appealing to them through travelling and temporarily stay. As the number of airline and hospitality companies grow, choosing a suitable airline or hotel becomes a challenging task among consumers. Thus, building consumer connections and attachment with the organisation is of the utmost importance to ensure the well-being of consumers and to develop their loyalty. This study revealed both affective engagement and behaviour engagement mediated the relationship between consumer involvement and consumer loyalty significantly.

5 Contribution of research

This study contributes to theory and practice in various ways. The first contribution is to include consumer online engagement as the mediator with comprehensive dimensions in the link between consumer involvement and consumer loyalty. Previous studies mainly used consumer engagement as one construct. For instance, Hollebeek et al. (2014) combine consumer involvement as a single-dimension construct and use consumer engagement as a whole, by inclusively summing the dimensions of consumer engagement (cognitive, affection and activation) to understand brand usage intent. Hence, the present research examined all the dimensions of consumer online engagement including affective, cognitive, and behaviour. Interestingly, the findings of the current research indicate that affective engagement and behaviour engagement mediate the relationship between consumer involvement and consumer loyalty. The affective and behavioural engagement results are crucial to this study because they indicate that consumers' emotional connections and actions beyond purchase transactions could influence consumer loyalty. Thus, this research contributes to the mediating effect of consumer online engagement, which may enhance the important role of social media, and proposes some practical implications. For instance, organisations need to be actively involved in consumer engagement and focus to get better emotional engagement by receiving customer feedback, being receptive and aware of consumer recommendations and complaints, being involved in different social media channels, and demonstrating active and responsible online customer service. Researchers found that social media has an indirect, constructive effect on the various phases of brand loyalty through the consumer's emotions (Salem et al., 2019). This practice allows both marketers and managers to identify effective approaches to engage consumers to build their loyalty. For instance, managers can offer a longer loyalty program, which is more valuable, and offer more achievable rewards for the consumer to improve consumer loyalty (Chhabra, 2017). Therefore, consumers would be engaged with a company without being neglected by marketers who are experienced in bonding with consumers.

Moreover, the findings in this research have narrowed down the factors influencing consumer loyalty in a more detailed manner by incorporating consumer involvement and its dimensions. Importance was one of the main dimensions in consumer involvement that has an effect on consumer loyalty. By increasing the level of technology usage in

consumer daily life, electronic attractions are necessary, for instance, creating websites and online advertising in social media are inevitably important to consumers. Undoubtedly, importance and interest are pre-determined criteria for consumers to build a long-term relationship with the company (DiDonato and Jakubiak, 2016). Thus, without the attraction of importance, it is difficult to move forward to the next stage of building consumer loyalty. Pleasure was found to have a positive relationship with consumer loyalty. This may be due to the pleasurable feelings felt by consumers, which eventually increase consumer loyalty. Pleasurable feelings in airline and hospitality can be experienced from convenience reservation, satisfactory staying, flying duration, infrastructure, and customer service. For instance, efficient reservation and comfortable staying experience can increase the pleasurable feelings of hotel guests. Sign is found to be associated with the symbolic value that carries the brand image of a company. Consumers search for a compatible sign to relate to their social class, characteristics, and design because these can reinforce their identity through purchase. For instance, the prestigious brand airline provides full service at a higher price. Nonetheless, some of the consumers still travel with the prestigious brand airline because it carries a strong brand image. Therefore, it can be assumed that the suitability of the sign value of the company can increase the influence on consumer loyalty.

Finally, the present study contributes to the body of knowledge by producing the principal direction of generations X and Y behavioural differences. Based on the literature, generations X and Y have not been used as moderators in the association between consumer online engagement and consumer loyalty in different contexts. The results of this research confirm the significant moderating role of these two generations (X and Y) in the link between consumer online engagement and consumer loyalty. Thus, the results specifically enhance the understanding of the generational role as a moderator in hospitality service organisations. Therefore, this research could provide marketers with insights to capture the market details by focusing on generational differences, and through creating marketing activities by using social media. Therefore, this study may serve as a guideline to marketers or managers in designing marketing strategies for consumers of different generations. In the competitive business environment, targeted marketing is essential to develop an effective construction of marketing strategies to different consumers. In this research, both members of these generations (X and Y) demonstrated dissimilar levels of loyalty. According to Yang and Lau (2015), Generation Y is more sensitive to price, and considers low-priced products as substandard. In contrast, Generation X is considered to be substantial consumers who represent a higher level of loyalty towards high-quality goods and services. Consequently, marketers and managers need to understand the important role played by different generations, and to customise and create novel loyalty programs for both generations differently.

6 Recommendations

Notwithstanding the practical and theoretical contribution, the current research is prone to several limitations. Future researchers are encouraged to employ mixed-method research since the qualitative research method allows the researchers to acquire knowledge and produce stimulating findings of consumer loyalty, while the quantitative research method could further validate the assumptions made by the researchers. The mixed-method model is recommended to obtain comprehensive findings rather than division findings

(Hassali et al., 2015). Moreover, the present study can be expanded to a broader research scope by incorporating baby boomers as a moderating variable, other than just Generation X and Generation Y. This is because the number of baby boomers who are using social media is increasing (Ball, 2014). They also possess higher purchasing power than generations X and Y, which makes them strong potential consumers. Thus, the incorporation of baby boomers in future research would likely produce meaningful findings.

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