

## **Young Consumers and Their Relationship with Brand: An Empirical Analysis**

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### **Abstract**

The Indian young urban consumers are benefiting from dividends of the India's transformed economic reforms over the past decade. The preferences of young people have changed with the new Indian economic reforms. They have shunned the use of unbranded products which were characterised by the slow growth and frugal lifestyles. To keep updated for the need of the products an essential task is considered to be analysing the attitude of young consumers in today's marketing world. Attraction towards the advanced technology, a quick adaptation of new market trends and many others make the young consumers very crucial for marketers and brand managers. The objective of the present study is to identify the role of a young consumer in the brand relationship development. The various brand relationship dimensions were considered in the research analysis. In order to achieve the objective of this research, appropriate research designs were applied and the data was collected from the sample of the study and with the help of SPSS and appropriate statistical tools and techniques data was analyzed. The output of the present research provides a significant application to the relationship development of brand manager.

**Key Words:** Brand, young consumers, age, and brand relationship and qualitative research.

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## Introduction

The population of Generation Y is more as compared to the others; they comprise the major segments in the market due to their spending power and attitude. According to (Cui et al., 2003) the population is approximately 31-70 million around the World. Due to their massive size they compromise a significant segment in today's market. Because of their involvement in the current style of spending power along with their potential for large amounts of future spending power (Wolburg and Pokrywczynski, 2001). According to research study by (Neuborne and Kerwin, 1999) it could be risky if the companies ignore this segment as they are considered to be potential customers in the future and will be the dominating segment of the market. Consumers play an important role in the brand name and can affect it positively and negatively (Chovanová et al., 2015).

Multiple attributes and product features influence and impact the young generation in making decisions when purchasing. Companies all over the world are trying to benefit from young consumers as they play an important role in society. However, companies are unable to keep their high growth and market share. Individuals have broadly classified the attributes or brand cues into extrinsic and intrinsic. Extrinsic cues can be defined as peripheral and are related to external things in the product such as price, brand, or store image, whereas intrinsic cues are related to the product's physical characteristics and are independent and constitute. Mobile camera, color, size, etc... can be a good example of intrinsic cues. Furthermore, present studies have conducted that extrinsic cues are general cues like brand name and price while intrinsic cues can be RAM, battery power, camera, and android type (Rehman, et al., 2014). Several studies were conducted to recognize the role of brand cues (name, price, and technology) and also, brand equity so that companies can generate and gather information regarding the preferences of the consumers toward the product. Additionally, the salience of study shows that individuals prefer different products among different ages and young consumers according to the original present study articulates that they are obsessed with the products that have a period time and are more likely to spend their money and time on it like mobile phones as they contain desirable extrinsic and intrinsic cues (Kulshreshtha, et al., 2017).

The revolution of communication technology is increasing day by day and individuals of different ages are finding it easy to get what they want through the internet. Typically, young consumers are always updated with the new advances in technology and the same goes for social media and what is being advertised and so on. Another example is the online websites, as teenagers now buy the items according to their influencers' obsession like females, for example, they see their x fashionista modeling in an online website and talking about it, they immediately buy it and sometimes it is not considered from the priorities. "Facebook" is another well-known social media app in which a study has been assessed on Facebook advertisements and the environment on buying behavior on the young generation with considering the genders. Females are most likely to spend more time on the internet and purchase products online, so they have a good background of many of the brands and also, they usually check the feedback and ask their friends about them (Rehman, et al., 2014).

There is a phenomenon called owning material possessions in which it gets involved with an individual since childhood and by the time it decreases but stays significant to an individual as material possessions express themselves and seek happiness. Commitment is usually related to the longevity of the brand relationship with the consumers and the stability of being preserved. Intimacy is about the strong beliefs about product performance and the relationship of the brand memory that is connected to personal experiences. Brand partner quality is connected to the trust and reliability of this brand and giving a sense of being respected (Sahay and Sharma, 2010).

### **Literature Review**

Scientific researchers are nowadays focusing on the increasing level of internet games used as unique consideration must be paid to incorporating intelligent influential messages which are accepted to have an important impact (cognitive, affective, and conative) on the gamers in response to the brand. Convincing messages in internet games, known as "in-game publicizing" or "brand arrangement in games" infer the combination of marked items or logos during the internet game; this is like item situation during motion pictures. In their correspondence, brands must consider a key of issues like companies must be honest to their young consumers and provide the relevant information about the brand not like what young people imagine so that they don't get disappointed. The communication between young consumers and brands must be authentic and original. Moreover, brands have to be smart enough to generate topics of conversation in which they have to do something that their young consumers prefer because that will affect their profit and reputation even if this thing does not present their brand or company. The conversations must be carried by young people and they have to feel that they are part of this story and they are related to this brand in one way or another. However, brands have to be consistent because online is challenging as many still prefer traditional communication. Brands should do something for young people that they feel they are making a real change in the world. Also, it has to be integrated coherently so that the community can support and lend the values (Budac & Baltador, 2014).

A unique attitude is observed towards the brand in young consumers (Sebor, 2006). They have been born in a brand conscious world and surroundings have also been congruent in changing their perceptions from the time of been raised where they were surrounded by the branded products, therefore they are more comfortable with brands as compared to the previous generations and also build a relationship and respond in a different way (Merrill, 1990). Generation Y is considered to be the trend setters for the other segments of the market (Sober, 2006; Morton, 2001). They are early adopters (Park and Yoon, 2005) and this unique approach makes them understand the complete diffusion of the markets in the entire consumer markets. Therefore, having Y generation in this role could increase the speed of market adoption and diffusion for the new product. According to the research by (Heaney, 2007) young consumers' marketing knowledge associated with brand consciousness results from the presence and growing up in a brand saturated environment. According to the proposal of Bakewell and Mitchell (2003) because of the marketing saturation, on an average of one in six generation Y consumers' fight against marketing by being uninterested in

shopping. Young consumers are individualistic and feel that they represent the brands as an extension of themselves as compared to others, and this is a signal for brands how to approach (Novak et al., 2006). Application of generational theory can be useful to identify the similar responses observed in generational cohort towards brands and marketing, which in turn allows marketers to approach through new perspectives while using the marketing strategies. Straughan and Roberts (1999) share the same view, and consider the criterion of age as less useful than it seems. They invite marketers to take a more nuanced view, and to consider psychographics when segmenting. Considering these limitations, there is a need to approach segmentation based on age with a new lens and to include new perspectives when using it in marketing strategies. This call for a change of perspective aligns with the current context of rapidly ageing populations and demographic transition that may be interpreted as a generational shock with significant political, social and economic impact. One way of going beyond age-based segmentation, which is often criticized as one dimensional, is to place it in a broader theoretical field: Generational Cohort Theory. Anchored in sociology, this theory considers that individuals who experience the same historical, social, cultural, political, and economic events during their coming-of-age years – more specifically between 17 and 23 – share common core values and behaviors over the course of their lives.

The existing literature failed to address the response of young consumers to brands and branding efforts and is still to be explored (Phau and Cheong, 2009). The implications are as the firms cannot apply traditional marketing methods, they should work harder to appeal to or 3 capture these consumers in innovative ways. This break from tradition seems to be important for marketing to this segment. Marketers are now in a difficult position to explore new ways to approach generation Y consumers. The difficulty is in finding an approach that does not push away other profitable segments while being involved with generation. Tsui and Hughes (2001) propose to maintain the brand's core identity and keep it the same across segments. The young consumers may represent brand loyalty by purchasing the branded products. The purchase of i-Pad Apple tablet with very few and limited alternatives is available in the market, the attitudinal loyalty component reflects that they will not purchase any alternative brand even if it is available or even if the Apple i-Pad is not available. A psychological and evaluative component of the attitude towards the congruency and relationship with a brand will be associated that in turn leads to the behavioural aspects of the repurchase of products. The attitudinal loyalty provides a clear and operational method of segmenting the market and also identifies and encourages most loyal behaviour over a period of time with repurchase behaviour (Bandyopadhyay and Martell, 2007). This was supported by the work of Foscht et al. (2009) revealed that repurchase intentions were demonstrated by the young consumers which reflects the loyalty towards the brands.

One of the biggest challenges faced by the marketers is the brand loyalty, an association between the brand and consumer and the brand (Blackston, 2000). A young consumer perceives the brand as congruent with sense of self, are more likely to develop a relationship with the brand. Apart from that emotional connections with brands are significant to young consumers (Tsui and Hughes, 2001). When an emotional bond is created between the young

consumer and the brand it leads to the competitive advantage (Novak et al., 2006). The young consumer generation does not like to be addressed in clusters, rather prefer to be considered as individualistic and definitely feel appreciated by the organisation. Addressing the young consumers through loyalty is particularly important because the benefits of the firms can only increase when this segment becomes more powerful. If brand loyalties can be ingrained into this generation now when it is still young then they can last well into the future (Wolburg and Pokrywczynski, 2001). The use of loyalty program distinguishes the young consumers from other group of consumers and provide special privilege through rewards and helps in development and maintenance of strong relationships. These are easily achievable and appealing fulfilling the self –esteem needs (Gronbach, 2000). It is observed that the application of Loyalty programs encourages and rewards loyal patronage of the consumers, an essential tool considered inhibiting the repurchase behaviour in young consumers (Sullivan and Heitmeyer, 2008). It was noted that the young consumer feel a connection with the brand, want to repeat the purchase and exhibit other brand loyalty behaviours such as positive word of mouth (Wood, 2004).

Culture of origin was considered to be one of the integral components in determining the favourability of the associations towards the brands (O'Cass and Lim, 2002). Young consumers perceive and understand the brands in terms of extrinsic cue cultural origin, and evaluate the brands with respect of culture of the origin. This is one of the reason for which brands of any particular origin become favourable. Young consumers are associated with brands along with an emotional value and high awareness, ultimately leading to purchase intentions. This implies that young consumers have a brand choice associated with the emotional values. Increased purchase intentions among young consumers are based on quality, emotional value associated with a prestigious image, emotionally attached young consumers are a brand's highly profitable market segment (Rossiter and Bellman 2012).

The Involvement of celebrity endorsers or influencers has brought a very positive influence on the young adults of the society. These celebrity influencers or brand ambassadors have a major impact on young consumers' decisions towards their perception and inclination on brand loyalty; they share the experiences in both positive manner and negative manner (Dix et Al 2010). Young consumers are majorly involved in material possessions (Belk, 1998). Out of the Indian population of 1.136 billion people it is estimated that 350 million of them are young consumers between 10-24 years age group, the purchasing power of these young consumers has increased significantly. It became a highly attractive segment for most of the marketers due to the spending power, power of social media, etc. It is important for the marketers to understand their brand loyalty systems, brand relationships and most importantly the switching intentions of the young consumers. It was noted that the young consumers while making brand-related decisions involve the peers and family (Singh et al., 2003).

### **Definition of youth**

According to the National Youth Policy (NYP) 2003, India considers young group with age between 13-53 years, while NYP 2012 considers the age between 16-30 years in young consumer bracket.

Further, the NYP has further divided into three sub-groups for [16- 30 age group] as:

- Age group between [16-21 years] is the first sub-group with adolescents along with needs and areas of concern are substantially different from the youth of other age groups..
- Age group between [21-25 years] is the second sub-group includes youth in the process of completing their education and getting into a career.
- Age group between [25-30 years] is third sub group includes young women and men almost completed their education, including professional, and are, more or less, settled in their job and in their personal life (National Youth Policy, Ministry of Youth Affairs and Sports, Government of India, 2012; Sawant, 2012; Sahay and Sharma, 2010).

### **Elements of Brand Relationship**

There are many dimensions available to measure the brand relationship constructs (Pawar and Raut, 2019; Raut, Brito, and Pawar, 2019), apart from theses the significant contribution towards the consumer-brand relationship done by Keller. Considering Keller's (2001; 2009) consumer brand relationship model, there will be four dimensions which can measure the consumer bonding with their brands. The consumer-brand relationship dimensions are brand loyalty, brand attachment, brand community and brand engagement.

Loyalty considers as how consumers build initial bonding with their preferred brand, which may measure with the help of consumer rephrase of brand and customer knowledge about the brand. The brand attachment demonstrates the consumer emotional bonding with the brand. The brand community exhibits the way consumer identifies himself/herself a member of the particular brand community. Brand community helps the consumer to place themselves in a particular social or communal class. The brand engagement considers as the stingiest level of the consumer-brand relationship. In the brand engagement stage of the consumer-brand relationship, consumer indicates the willingness to spend time and energy with the brand and consider themselves as the owner of their preferred brand (Keller, 2012; 2014; Raut, et al., 2019).

### **Methodology**

The present study incorporated a qualitative and quantitative research approach. In qualitative research, the approach study included the Focus Group Discussion (FGD), while the quantitative research approach included the survey method. The objective of this study is to analyse the role of consumer age and its influence on the level of brand relationship elements. To achieve the stated objective, we have collected the data of 670 respondents through the structured questionnaire with the help of survey methods. The study instruments were merely focused on the two thing firstly demographics of the consumers including young consumer age different classes, gender, income and qualification secondly consider the brand relationship elements such as brand loyalty, brand attachment, brand community and brand engagement. The research design initially is divided into two sections, the first section, the review of literature with consideration of the brand relationship and young consumer as key elements and then structured questionnaire is framed. With the help of a structured questionnaire, the pilot study was conducted and output of the study removes the ambiguity from the research instrument and enhanced the questionnaire. Secondly, the final data were



collected through the questionnaire, which was purified through the pilot study and data was analysed.

## Data Analysis and Findings

### Qualitative Approach:

The Focus Group Discussion used under the qualitative research approach. Total three focus groups have been conducted to understand the young consumers' behaviour towards the brand relationship. The profile of all the focus group discussions members as follows;

**Table 1 Demographic Profile: FGD-1**

No.	Gender	Abbreviation	Age	Occupation	Marital status
1	Male	M1	18	Student	Single
2	Male	M2	23	Employee	Single
3	Female	F1	22	Student	Single
4	Female	F2	21	Student	Single
5	Female	F3	24	Employee	Single
6	Female	F3	28	Employee	Married
7	Male	M3	29	Employee	Married
8	Male	M4	27	Employee	Married

**Table 2 Demographic Profile: FGD-2**

No.	Gender	Abbreviation	Age	Occupation	Marital status
1	Male	M5	22	Student	Single
2	Male	M6	24	Employee	Single
3	Male	M7	30	Employee	Married
4	Male	M8	23	Employee	Single
5	Female	F5	30	Employee	Married
6	Female	F6	19	Student	Single
7	Female	F7	20	Student	Single
8	Female	F8	27	Employee	Married

**Table 3 Demographic Profile: FGD-1**

No.	Gender	Abbreviation	Age	Occupation	Marital status
1	Male	M9	20	Student	Single

2	Female	F9	21	Student	Single
3	Male	M10	19	Student	Single
4	Female	F10	25	Employee	Single
5	Male	M11	30	Employee	Married
6	Female	F11	30	Employee	Married
7	Female	F12	26	Employee	Single
8	Male	M12	25	Employee	Single

In the FGD, the participants discussed their preferred Cell Phone brand, their meaning of brand relationship and their level of brand relationship with their Cell Phone brand. Majorly participants said they are in the brand attachment stage with their Cell Phone brand. Few participants highlighted their different views towards the brand relationship. Few participants emphasized that they are in the brand engagement stage of their brand relationship. The few comments of the participant are as follows;

**F1:** *I am entirely loyal to my Cell Phone brand; whenever I got the chance to tell my social circle about my cell phone brand, I always used that opportunity.*

**M1:** *I loved my Cell Phone brand, and I always trust my Cell Phone brand. This Cell Phone brand gives me a new way of living life. I am delighted with my Cell Phone Brand.*

**M7:** *I am continuously following the community of my Cell Phone brand, which helps me resolve the technical issues related to my Cell Phone. I love my Cell Phone Brand community. Whenever I talk in my Cell Phone brand community, I feel like I am talking with my family members. I am firmly attached to the Cell Phone brand.*

**F9:** *My Cell Phone is my life; I can't imagine life without my Cell Phone brand. I want to tell you that if my Cell Phone brand starts to manufacture anything, I am ready to buy that one without any doubt.*

**M10:** *If I discuss the various Cell Phone brand with my friends and if some said terrible words about my Cell Phone brand, I always tell them that I can't tolerate any nasty comments about my Cell Phone brand. My Cell Phone brand is everything for me, and no one can say anything wrong about my cell phone. I loved my Cell Phone brand, and I am ready to do anything for my Cell Phone brand.*

**F11:** *I am very much loyal to my Cell Phone brand. I know where I can get all the updated information about my Cell Phone brand. I have joined the online community of my Cell phone brand, and I am actively following my Cell Phone brand community.*

### **Quantitative Approach:**

The data analysis was done with the use of SPSS-21. We have tested the present research hypothesis.



**Table 4 Sample Characteristic**

Characteristic Features	Value	Frequency	Percent [%]
Gender	Male	459	68.5
	Female	211	31.5
Age Group	Between [16 -21] years	292	43.6
	Between [21 -25]years	188	28.1
	Between [25 -30] years	190	28.4
Income Class	Less than 2 Lakhs	199	29.7
	2 - 4 Lakhs	109	16.3
	4 - 6 Lakhs	276	41.2
	6 -8 Lakhs	44	6.6
	More than 8 Lakhs	42	6.3
Qualification	Below Graduation	382	57.0
	Graduate	175	26.1
	Postgraduate and above	113	16.9

The sample characteristics show that in the sample, there is a total of 68.5 per cent of male and 31.5 per cent were the female respondents. Comparing the age of respondents as we have divided the respondents age into three category, we have 43.6 percents respondents belongs from the Above 16 years and up to 21 years age category, also 28 per cent of respondents from above 21 years and up to 25 years while we have 28.4 respondents from the Above 25 years and up to 30 years category.

**Table 5 Test of Homogeneity of Variances**

	Levene Statistic	DF1	DF2	Sig.
Brand Loyalty	3.391	2	667	.119
Brand Attachment	7.558	2	667	.089
Brand Community	1.946	2	667	.144
Brand Engagement	3.841	2	667	.125

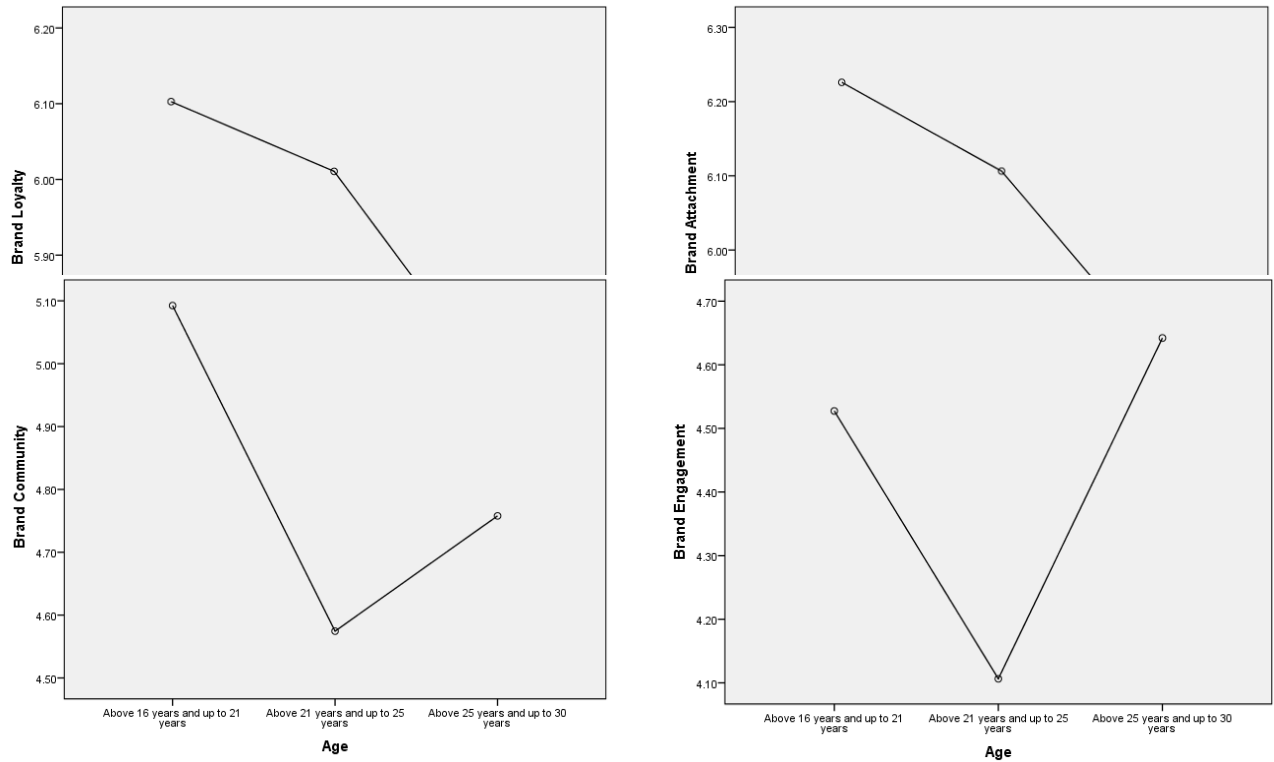
While running the one way ANOVA we have first run the Levene Test that is Test of Homogeneity of Variances and the result of Levene Test confirms that there is homogeneity exist in present data set. Considering the result of Levene Test it confirm the that for further output we have to consider that equal variance assumed for the present data set.

**Table 6**  
**ANOVA**

		Sum of Squares	DF	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Brand Loyalty	Between Groups	17.229	2	8.615	4.173	.016
	Within Groups	1377.112	667	2.065		
	Total	1394.342	669			
Brand Attachment	Between Groups	16.151	2	8.075	4.902	.008
	Within Groups	1098.828	667	1.647		
	Total	1114.979	669			
Brand Community	Between Groups	33.048	2	16.524	5.368	.005
	Within Groups	2053.324	667	3.078		
	Total	2086.372	669			
Brand Engagement	Between Groups	30.914	2	15.457	3.653	.026
	Within Groups	2822.316	667	4.231		
	Total	2853.230	669			

The output of One way ANOVA reveals that there is an effect of consumer age in terms of brand relationship. The output of One way ANOVA demonstrate that, if we are categories the young consumers' age, we can identify the difference in the level of their relationship with the brand. Condensing the first elements of the brand relationship that is brand loyalty ( $p = .016$ ) theirs is difference exist while considering the all there category of young consumers' age. In terms of brand attachment ( $p = .005$ ), it also shows the difference between the young consumers' category. While analysing the brand community ( $p = .008$ ) and brand engagement ( $p = .026$ ) with the young consumers' age class and it demonstrates that existence of a difference.

## Young Consumers and Their Relationship with Brand: An Empirical Analysis



**Figure 1. Mean Plot (age of young consumers and brand relationship dimensions)**

The above plot also confirmed that there is a difference exist between the brand relationship elements, including brand loyalty, brand attachment, brand community and brand engagement while considering the various age class of young consumers.

**Table 7 Multiple Comparisons (Hochberg)**

Dependent Variable	Age (I)	Age (J)	Sig
Brand Loyalty	Between [16 -21] years	Between [25 -30] years	.013
Brand Attachment	Between [16 -21] years	Between [25 -30] years	.006
Brand Community	Between [16 -21] years	Between [21 -25] years	.005
Brand Engagement	Between [21 -25] years	Between [25 -30] years	.034

\*. The mean difference is 0.05 level of significance.

We have run the Hochberg Post Hoc test to understand the difference amongst each group that is multiple comparison analysis. Another reason to run Hochberg is also the confirmation of Leven Test statics about equal variance assumed for the present data set. Hochberg Post Hoc test confirm the following difference. There is brand loyalty and Brand Attachment exists between the age group 16-21 and 25-30. While Brand Community and exists between age group 16-21 and 21-25. The Brand Engagement exists between the age group 21-25 and 25-30.

### **Discussion and Conclusion**

As stated young consumers are innovators and trendsetters which generally exhibits them to be disloyal as they switch from one brand to the other depending on the innovation, demand, popularity along the time (Morton, 2002). It is recommended that with the persistent development, periodic innovations with different product lines within the one brand will satisfy their novelty needs (Moore and Carpenter, 2008), as well as increase their congruency with the brand. Thus, brand needs to continuously change and constantly update as per the needs of the consumer. Example can be observed in tech giants Apple, Samsung and others with the Research Development are constantly innovative and adding up new products to match self esteem of the young consumers. A strong association of the young consumer and the brand can overcome the disloyal nature, additionally if the brand serves the purpose of meeting the values and identity of the consumer. Studies have examined the “relationship” between a brand and its customer as a source of ‘meaning’ (Allen et al., 2008). The qualitative research studies explored to identify the different types of consumer-brand relationships (Fournier, 1998). Furthermore quantitative research studies had tried to describe and associate a personality to a brand as relationship partner (Aaker, 1997) and work done by (Aggarwal, 2004) examined the effects of brand relationships in an experimental setting and study of (Park et al., 2008) insists on use of Interpersonal attachment theory as a part of an argument which is applicable to brands due to the interpersonal-like nature of the consumer-brand relationship.

The output of present study confirms the role of the young consumer sub age class in the formation and development of a brand relationship with their preferred brand. In terms of brand loyalty, the age category between 16 years to 21 years shows high loyalty level as compared to the other age category, the similar trend identified with brand attachment. Considering the brand community level the 16 years to 21 years also shows high. The highest level of brand relationship symbolizes by the brand engagement and it varies with the different age class of young consumers as it demonstrates very high at above 25 years and up to 30 years, while moderate between [16 -21 ] years and low above between [21-25] years.. The finding of this study presents the significant findings and implication, first the need for segmentation of young consumer according to their age class as branding literature confirms the dynamic nature of young consume behaviour. Secondly, the branding strategies need to develop with high consideration young consumers’ age class as a result clearly demonstrated that the young consumer brand relationship varies according to their age classes.

The limitation of this study includes the sample size and bias response of respondents, the variation of these two limitations may lead the different result. For future research perspective, the researcher can test the present dimensions of the brand relationship with the different demographic variable of young consumer.

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