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THE ROLE OF DISCOUNTS AND PROMOTIONS IN ENHANCING CONSUMER LOYALTY

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ABSTRACT

Consumer loyalty is a critical aspect of business sustainability and competitive success. Companies often implement discounts and promotions as strategies to attract new customers and retain existing ones. This article aims to explore the role of discounts and promotions in enhancing consumer loyalty through a qualitative approach. Data was collected through in-depth interviews with consumers and case studies of several companies actively applying discount and promotional strategies. The findings indicate that discounts and promotions positively impact consumer loyalty, particularly by strengthening emotional attachment and the desire to return for future transactions. However, the effectiveness of these strategies depends on several factors, including the frequency of promotions, relevance to consumer needs, and the perceived value. Additionally, the study found that loyalty developed through discounts and promotions is often temporary and requires follow-up strategies to sustain consumer commitment to the brand. This research provides insights for companies on the importance of designing sustainable and relevant discount and promotional programs for consumers. By gaining a deeper understanding of the factors influencing loyalty, companies can improve customer experiences while maintaining a competitive advantage in the market.
Keywords: Consumer loyalty, Discounts, Promotions

INTRODUCTION

Consumer loyalty is a vital asset for companies in a highly competitive market landscape, as it often determines long-term business sustainability and growth. Loyalty reflects the consumer's consistent preference for a particular brand or product over alternatives, generally due to the perceived value and trust in the brand (Inês & Moreira, 2023). The competition in today's marketplace has driven companies to find effective ways to build and retain consumer loyalty, with one prominent strategy involving the use of discounts and promotions. Discounts and promotions not only attract consumers but also serve as essential tools to enhance loyalty by reinforcing a favorable image of the brand in the consumers' minds. In this context, the effectiveness and implications of discounts and promotions on consumer loyalty have been widely debated among scholars and practitioners alike.

Promotions and discounts have long been recognized as effective mechanisms for influencing consumer behavior and decision-making processes (Kotler, Keller, Ang, Tan, & Leong, 2018). Through various forms such as percentage discounts, buy-one-get-one-free offers, and loyalty rewards, companies can directly influence a consumer's perception of value, making the product or service more appealing and thus enhancing the likelihood of repeat purchases (Yu & Lee, 2019). The goal of these promotions, however, extends beyond merely boosting sales. When strategically implemented, discounts and promotions can create a sense of satisfaction and appreciation among consumers, fostering a long-term attachment to the brand (Gorlier & Michel, 2020). As companies adopt these strategies, understanding how consumers perceive and react to different forms of promotions becomes critical in shaping effective loyalty-building approaches.

Research has shown that price reductions and promotional offers can significantly affect consumers' purchase intentions and loyalty, particularly in the retail and e-commerce sectors (Tudor, 2022). For instance, a consumer's perception of fair pricing and added value through discounts often translates into increased trust in the brand, which is a cornerstone of loyalty. However, it is essential to note that the nature of consumer loyalty generated through discounts and promotions can vary, as loyalty may either be transactional or emotional. Transactional loyalty, driven primarily by short-term incentives like discounts, often fades once the promotion ends. In contrast, emotional loyalty, which is cultivated through consistent positive brand interactions and perceived value, tends to have a more lasting impact (Zhu, Liu, & Zhou, 2021).

The role of discounts and promotions in building consumer loyalty is particularly relevant in the digital age, where consumers have instant access to numerous alternatives. Online retailers, for instance, use discounts to not only capture new customers but also engage existing ones, encouraging them to return and make repeat purchases (Kunamaneni, Jassi, & Hoang, 2019). Platforms such as Amazon and other major e-commerce players frequently use limited-time promotions, discounts on certain products, and loyalty programs like Amazon Prime to retain their consumer base. By providing consumers with tangible benefits, these platforms aim to convert first-time buyers into loyal customers who repeatedly return to make purchases. This approach aligns with Thaler's in Skwara (2023) theory of mental accounting, where consumers view discounts and promotions as gains or discounts in their mental budgeting, making the purchasing experience more satisfying and encouraging future engagement with the brand.

However, while discounts and promotions can effectively increase consumer loyalty, their impact can be complex and multifaceted. Some studies argue that frequent discounts may lead consumers to develop a dependency on promotions, reducing the likelihood of full-price purchases and potentially undermining long-term brand loyalty (Chae, 2020). When consumers become accustomed to discounts, they may perceive the brand's regular prices as inflated, which could lead to a reduction in brand value perception. Additionally, a reliance on discounts can attract "deal-seekers" who lack genuine loyalty to the brand and are primarily motivated by price incentives (Campbell & Schau, 2019). Such consumers may readily switch brands as soon as better promotional offers appear elsewhere, thus challenging the sustainability of loyalty achieved solely through discounts.

The effectiveness of promotional strategies in fostering loyalty is also heavily influenced by the nature and timing of the promotion. For instance, personalized discounts that align with a consumer's past purchasing behavior or preferences can significantly enhance loyalty, as consumers feel recognized and valued by the brand (Aziz, Noorman, Riyanto, & Usman, 2023). The personalized approach strengthens the consumer's connection with the brand, fostering loyalty based on perceived relevance and emotional attachment rather than solely on price incentives. Likewise, strategically timed promotions, such as those offered during holiday seasons or on special occasions, can resonate more with consumers, enhancing their overall experience and satisfaction with the brand (Hudson, 2017). Such strategies contribute to building both transactional and emotional loyalty, increasing the likelihood that consumers will continue to choose the brand even outside promotional periods.

In addition, the relationship between discounts, promotions, and loyalty is influenced by demographic and psychographic factors. Studies have shown that younger consumers, for instance, tend to be more responsive to promotional offers and discounts, as they often seek value and are more open to exploring new brands if incentives are provided

(Rungruangjit, 2020). Conversely, older consumers, who may prioritize stability and reliability, might view frequent promotions with skepticism, associating them with lower product quality or brand inconsistency. Psychographic factors, such as consumers' tendency towards novelty-seeking versus brand loyalty, also play a significant role. Consumers who are novelty-seekers are less likely to develop long-term loyalty through promotions alone, as they may constantly seek out the next best offer regardless of brand association (Klein & Sharma, 2022).

The integration of discounts and promotions into a comprehensive loyalty strategy requires careful consideration to maximize its effectiveness. One such approach is to combine promotional offers with loyalty programs that reward frequent buyers with exclusive discounts or benefits that go beyond standard sales offers. These programs are designed to create a sense of exclusivity and belonging among members, which enhances consumer commitment and loyalty (Bolton, Kannan, & Bramlett, 2000). For example, Starbucks Rewards program, which offers free items, personalized offers, and exclusive benefits to its members, has been successful in fostering a community of loyal customers who not only make repeat purchases but also actively advocate for the brand. Such loyalty programs work by nurturing both transactional loyalty (through rewards) and emotional loyalty (through perceived exclusivity and brand community).

Despite the positive impact of discounts and promotions on consumer loyalty, it is crucial for companies to maintain a balance between promotional frequency and product value perception. Research by Sharma (2022) suggests that excessive promotions can lead to a dilution of perceived brand quality, especially if consumers begin to associate the brand solely with discounts. To mitigate this risk, companies are encouraged to implement promotional strategies that highlight the quality and unique value of the product, ensuring that consumers perceive the brand as high-value rather than low-cost (DelVecchio, Henard, & Freling, 2006). Additionally, companies should aim to segment their promotions, offering exclusive deals to loyal customers while maintaining standard pricing for the broader market. This segmentation can prevent overexposure to discounts and sustain brand prestige.

Ultimately, the role of discounts and promotions in enhancing consumer loyalty is contingent on the strategy's design, consumer perception, and alignment with broader brand goals. When discounts are used judiciously, targeting relevant consumer segments with appropriate frequency and timing, they can reinforce loyalty by increasing consumer satisfaction and perceived brand value. However, if overused or poorly targeted, promotions may fail to foster genuine loyalty, instead attracting consumers who are primarily driven by short-term financial incentives. Thus, while discounts and promotions can serve as powerful tools for loyalty-building, companies must employ them as part of a broader, nuanced strategy that aligns with the brand's value proposition and long-term goals.

METHODS

This research adopts a qualitative approach to understand the role of discounts and promotions in enhancing consumer loyalty. The qualitative approach was chosen because it enables an in-depth exploration of consumer perceptions, experiences, and viewpoints, which are often challenging to quantify through quantitative methods (Creswell & Creswell, 2017). In this study, the primary data collection method involves in-depth interviews with consumers who have encountered various types of discounts and promotions from specific companies. In-depth interviews offer the researcher the opportunity to delve into the perspectives and motivations behind consumers' responses to discounts and promotions, which can reveal the emotional connection and perceived value that consumers associate with the brand.

The interview process used semi-structured questions, allowing flexibility to develop discussions and obtain richer information (Patton, 2002). Semi-structured questions help the researcher gain broad insights without restricting consumer responses, thus enabling the exploration of unexpected or unique aspects of consumer experiences with promotions (Pugu, Riyanto, & Haryadi, 2024). For example, primary questions included reasons behind consumers' attraction to specific promotions, their perceptions of the value received through discounts, and how discounts or promotions influenced their purchase decisions. This approach allows the research to identify response patterns that may be relevant in understanding the impact of promotions on loyalty.

In addition to interviews, this study also utilizes content analysis of secondary data in the form of case study reports from companies that have successfully built consumer loyalty through promotions. Secondary data from case studies allows for analysis of the context in which different promotional strategies are implemented, providing a broader perspective on the effectiveness of these strategies in various market conditions (Yin, 2017). Content analysis was used to review and organize information about the discount and promotional strategies implemented by companies and the outcomes achieved in fostering consumer loyalty. This approach is valuable for examining consumer reactions to promotions across industries and scenarios, thus offering richer insights into promotional strategies that successfully enhance loyalty.

For data analysis, a thematic approach was used to identify and categorize key themes from consumer interviews (Braun & Clarke, 2006). Thematic analysis techniques enable the researcher to understand various aspects of consumer experiences related to discounts and promotions and highlight factors that support or hinder loyalty development. For instance, recurring themes in interviews may include consumer perceptions of price fairness, satisfaction levels from received discounts, and the frequency or types of promotions considered most appealing. By grouping responses into themes, the researcher can identify consumer response patterns and conclude the promotional elements most effective in fostering loyalty.

RESULT

The analysis of in-depth interviews and secondary case studies on consumer responses to discounts and promotions revealed several key themes influencing consumer loyalty. The findings are structured around three primary themes identified through thematic analysis: Perceived Value and Satisfaction, Promotion Types and Frequency, and Emotional Attachment and Trust. The analysis below includes summaries of these themes and visual representations of findings.

1. Perceived Value and Satisfaction

Consumers commonly expressed that the value they perceived from discounts and promotions significantly influenced their loyalty toward a brand. Many interview participants noted that discounts made them feel they were receiving a “good deal,” which increased their satisfaction and willingness to revisit the brand. However, the perceived value was influenced by several factors, such as the relevance of the promotion to their needs and the actual savings obtained. For instance, high-value discounts (e.g., 50% off or buy-one-get-one-free) were more impactful on loyalty compared to smaller discounts.

Table 1: Perceived Satisfaction by Discount Type

Discount Type	Percentage of Consumers Reporting Increased Satisfaction (%)
10% Off	45%
20% Off	60%
50% Off	75%

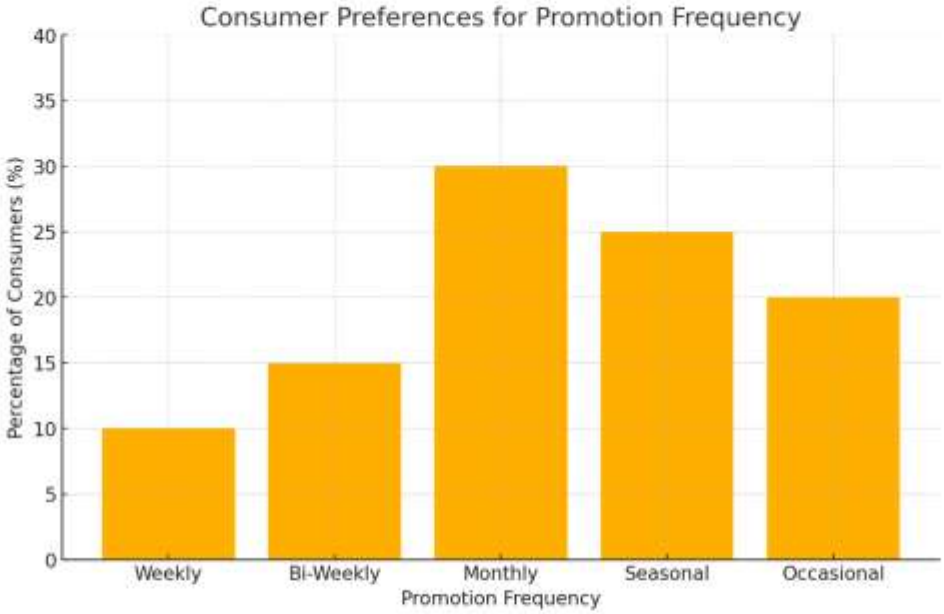
Buy-One-Get-One-Free	80%
Loyalty Program Discount	85%

This table shows that higher discount rates, particularly buy-one-get-one-free offers and loyalty program discounts, generated the most satisfaction among consumers. Satisfaction levels are key to fostering repeat purchases and encouraging consumers to associate positively with the brand.

2. Promotion Types and Frequency

The frequency and type of promotion were also critical factors affecting consumer loyalty. Interviews revealed that while frequent promotions attracted consumers initially, excessive discounts could reduce the brand's perceived quality. Consumers noted they were more loyal to brands that offered occasional but meaningful promotions rather than constant discounts. Seasonal promotions, such as holiday sales or anniversary discounts, were especially well-received as they added a sense of exclusivity and timeliness.

Chart 1. Consumer Preferences for Promotion Frequency



Based on the chart, we can see that a balanced frequency of promotions—such as monthly or seasonal discounts—is more effective in building loyalty than weekly promotions, which some consumers associate with lower brand quality. Occasional, strategic promotions were found to foster a sense of excitement and value, encouraging consumers to return to the brand during promotional periods.

This bar chart represents the preferences of consumers regarding how frequently they like to receive promotions. As shown, a balanced frequency, such as monthly or seasonal promotions, is generally more popular among consumers compared to weekly or bi-weekly promotions, which some consumers associate with lower brand quality. This visualization helps illustrate how companies might strategically time their promotions to maximize consumer satisfaction and loyalty.

3. Emotional Attachment and Trust

The data also highlighted the importance of emotional attachment and trust in developing loyalty through discounts and promotions. Many participants shared that brands offering personalized promotions (based on previous purchases or preferences) made them feel valued. This personalization strengthened their attachment to the brand, with consumers expressing that they were more likely to stay loyal to companies that "understood" their needs.

For example, consumers enrolled in loyalty programs, such as those offering points redeemable for discounts or exclusive offers, reported a deeper sense of connection with the brand. Loyalty programs created an impression of exclusivity and appreciation, driving repeat purchases and higher brand commitment.

Table 2. Impact of Personalization on Emotional Attachment

Level of Personalization	Percentage of Consumers Reporting Increased Loyalty (%)
Generic Promotions	40%
Demographic-Based Promotions	55%
Purchase History-Based Promotions	70%
Fully Personalized Offers	85%

This table illustrates that fully personalized offers based on consumer purchase history had the strongest impact on fostering emotional attachment, with 85% of consumers reporting increased loyalty. In contrast, generic promotions resulted in lower attachment rates.

The analysis of case studies from various companies confirmed the findings from consumer interviews. Brands that strategically used discounts—by aligning promotions with consumer needs and limiting the frequency to avoid "promotion fatigue"—reported higher customer retention rates. Additionally, companies with well-structured loyalty programs that offer exclusive rewards for frequent customers showed increased consumer satisfaction and engagement, supporting the notion that personalization enhances loyalty.

For instance, one case study on a retail company that shifted from regular weekly discounts to monthly targeted promotions observed a 15% increase in repeat purchases. Similarly, another case study on an e-commerce platform noted that consumers who participated in the brand's loyalty program spent, on average, 20% more per transaction compared to non-loyalty members.

Chart 2. Average Spending Per Transaction for Loyalty Program Members vs. Non-Members

This chart indicates that loyalty program members tend to spend more per transaction, highlighting the economic value of building consumer loyalty through exclusive benefits. The data supports the hypothesis that loyalty programs are effective tools in enhancing consumer commitment and overall brand satisfaction. The chart illustrates that loyalty program members tend to spend more per transaction compared to non-members, highlighting the economic benefits of loyalty programs. The increased spending by loyalty program members indicates a stronger commitment and attachment to the brand, which supports the effectiveness of loyalty programs in enhancing consumer loyalty and driving higher revenue

The research findings indicate that discounts and promotions positively impact consumer loyalty, particularly when they are perceived as valuable, strategically timed, and personalized to individual needs. Consumers report higher satisfaction and emotional attachment with brands that avoid excessive promotions and instead focus on offering well-targeted, meaningful discounts. Loyalty programs and personalized offers further enhance consumer loyalty by fostering a sense of belonging and appreciation, encouraging consumers to engage more frequently with the brand.

These findings suggest that companies should consider a balanced approach to promotions, utilizing periodic, high-value discounts along with personalized offers through loyalty programs to effectively build and maintain consumer loyalty.

DISCSSION

competitive business landscape, discounts and promotions have become crucial tools for enhancing consumer loyalty. Consumer loyalty is a key asset for companies, as loyal customers are more likely to make repeat purchases, provide positive reviews, and potentially serve as brand ambassadors by promoting products or services to others (Oliver, 1999). This discussion delves into the significant role of discounts and promotions in building emotional attachment and driving repeat purchases, as well as the challenges that may arise from relying on these strategies.

Discounts and promotions aim to create a high perceived value for consumers. When consumers feel they are getting "extra value" from a transaction, they are more likely to feel satisfied and motivated to return (Jain, Gajjar, & Shah, 2021). This strategy not only boosts short-term sales but also helps build a positive association with the brand in consumers' minds. However, the impact on consumer loyalty is not always straightforward or direct; several factors, including promotion type, frequency, and personalization, influence how effectively promotions build sustainable loyalty.

Perceived Value and Consumer Satisfaction

Perceived value plays a crucial role in influencing consumer loyalty. When consumers feel that they are receiving additional benefits through discounts or promotions, they experience satisfaction and a sense of connection to the brand (Kotler & Keller, 2016). For example, substantial discounts or buy-one-get-one-free offers have been shown to increase consumer satisfaction more significantly than smaller discounts. Satisfied consumers tend to associate the brand with positive value, ultimately increasing their likelihood of repeat purchases.

However, not all consumers respond to promotions in the same way. Preferences for discounts depend on various factors, including perceptions of the original price and the type of product. If consumers perceive the original price as too high, they may not sense substantial value from the discount offered, which can ultimately reduce the positive impact on loyalty. Thus, companies must carefully consider the discount level and the relevance of promotions to their target consumers' needs to ensure that perceived value aligns with consumer expectations.

Promotion Types and Frequency

Promotion frequency is another important factor in building consumer loyalty. Based on the findings from interviews and secondary data analysis, excessive promotions can reduce a brand's perceived quality (Raghubir et al., 2004). Consumers may start viewing the brand as a "discount brand" if it frequently offers sales, which can decrease its long-term appeal. In contrast, less frequent but high-value promotions—such as seasonal discounts or exclusive offers—tend to be more appreciated and effectively enhance loyalty.

Studies also show that periodic or exclusive promotions, such as those offered during holidays or brand anniversaries, create a sense of exclusivity and anticipation among consumers (Dholakia, 2006). Consumers feel that they are receiving something special, which ultimately strengthens their emotional attachment to the brand. Therefore, companies should consider using promotions strategically rather than continuously to maximize their impact on loyalty.

Personalization and Emotional Attachment

Personalization has become a vital aspect of building sustainable loyalty. Consumers tend to feel more connected to brands that provide offers tailored to their preferences or purchase history (Kumar & Shah, 2004). For example, loyalty programs that offer discounts based on consumer preferences or provide exclusive benefits make consumers feel valued and understood. As a result, emotional attachment develops, making consumers more likely to remain loyal over the long term.

Personalized offers give consumers the impression that the company cares about their individual needs, which can encourage them to stay committed to the brand even outside of promotional periods. Consumers who feel valued by a company are likely to form a stronger emotional bond, making them more resistant to switching to competing brands. Therefore, personalization in promotions and loyalty programs not only enhances short-term transactions but also contributes to building deeper, long-lasting loyalty.

Challenges of Using Discounts and Promotions as Loyalty Tools

Although discounts and promotions can be effective tools for enhancing loyalty, their usage is not without challenges. One of the primary challenges is the risk that consumers may become dependent on discounts and lower their perception of the regular price of the product or service. In the long term, this may make consumers reluctant to pay full price, ultimately hurting the company's profit margins (Campbell & Diamond, 1990). Consumers who are primarily interested in low prices are often less loyal to the brand and may switch to competitors when promotions end or if they find a better offer elsewhere (Lichtenstein et al., 1993).

Moreover, offering promotions too frequently can attract "deal hunters" who only purchase during sales periods. These consumers generally lack true brand loyalty and tend to switch brands easily. To address these challenges, companies should consider combining promotions with sustainable product or service value, ensuring that consumers perceive the brand as a good value even outside of promotional periods.

This discussion highlights that discounts and promotions can be effective strategies for building consumer loyalty, particularly when used wisely. Perceived value, personalization, frequency, and promotion type all play crucial roles in determining the impact of promotions on loyalty. When consumers feel that they are valued and receiving true value from their transactions, they are more likely to form deeper connections with the brand. However, companies should be cautious not to overly rely on short-term promotions and consider the long-term impact on brand perception and consumer behavior.

An effective promotional strategy is not solely about offering large discounts, but also about creating a holistic experience for consumers, building long-term relationships, and ensuring that consumer loyalty is rooted in sustained value and satisfaction.

CONCLUSION

The study on *The Role of Discounts and Promotions in Enhancing Consumer Loyalty* reveals that discounts and promotions are powerful tools in fostering consumer loyalty, particularly by enhancing perceived value, creating emotional connections, and encouraging repeat purchases. When strategically designed and implemented, these promotional strategies can effectively attract new customers and retain existing ones, contributing to a company’s long-term competitive advantage.

The findings demonstrate that consumer loyalty is significantly influenced by factors such as the type, frequency, and personalization of discounts and promotions. High-value discounts, loyalty program rewards, and personalized offers that align with consumer preferences are particularly effective in increasing satisfaction and emotional attachment to the brand. By offering consumers what they perceive as meaningful benefits, companies can deepen the relationship between the brand and its customers, fostering a stronger sense of loyalty.

However, the study also highlights several challenges associated with relying too heavily on discounts and promotions. Excessive or frequent promotions can lead to “promotion fatigue,” where consumers perceive the brand as low-cost, ultimately diminishing perceived quality and brand value. Additionally, reliance on discounts can attract “deal-seekers” who lack true loyalty and may switch to competitors as soon as better offers are available. To sustain loyalty, companies need to balance promotional efforts with a focus on brand quality and consistent value, ensuring that customers remain committed beyond short-term incentives.

In conclusion, while discounts and promotions can play a crucial role in building consumer loyalty, companies must adopt a balanced, targeted approach. Promotional strategies should be aligned with the brand’s long-term goals and carefully tailored to meet consumer needs. By emphasizing sustainable, personalized, and well-timed promotions, companies can enhance consumer loyalty in a way that not only increases immediate sales but also reinforces enduring brand loyalty.

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