CHAPTER 7
CONCLUSIONS

7.1. INTRODUCTION

The scope of this study was to examine the variation in relationships between e-loyalty and its antecedents across different websites in a B2C environment. Based on the review of existing literature a conceptual model of e-loyalty was developed which included e-service quality, e-perceived value, e-trust, e-satisfaction, number of members and number of peers. Alongside the conceptual framework, a set of hypotheses was developed. The study applied a positivist philosophy with deductive and quantitative approach. The study fell into the category of explanatory research and implemented survey methodology through questionnaires to obtain quantitative data to examine hypotheses. A total of 493 valid responses were generated from the Internet users who favoured a particular website in three categories, and 352 responses were generated from university students. SPSS 20.0 and Amos 20.0 were applied to test the hypothesized relationships. The results demonstrated that antecedents of e-loyalty had variation in influencing power across different websites.

In this chapter, Section 7.2 provides a discussion on the achievement of objectives. Theoretical contribution and managerial implications of this study are presented in section 7.3. Section 7.4 discusses the limitations and scope of future work.

7.2. ACHIEVEMENT OF OBJECTIVES

The purpose of this study was to investigate and answer the following four research questions:

1. What factors determine the loyalty for a website?
2. Does the user’s primary need affects e-loyalty and its antecedent’s relationship?
3. What are the hierarchies of e-loyalty antecedents, in order of importance, for different website category?
4. What are the various strategies used by websites to create and ensure website loyalty?
The study provided answers to the research questions which are discussed below:

1. *What factors determine the loyalty for a website?*

   The findings confirmed that e-service quality, e-perceived value, e-trust, e-satisfaction, number of members and numbers of peers were the determinants of e-loyalty. Further, e-service quality comprised of convenience, customization, contact interactivity and responsiveness. Number of members does not have a significant impact on loyalty for product website while number of peers does not have a considerable relationship with loyalty in service website.

2. *Does the user’s primary need affect e-loyalty and its antecedent’s relationship?*

   In line with our objective, we compared the results of all three websites and found significant differences in the strength of association between e-loyalty and its determinants among three categories of the websites. Results supported hypotheses H1-H10 for all categories except H9 and H10 for product website and service website, respectively; however, noteworthy differences in their priorities were found. The relation between number of peers and e-loyalty was insignificant for service website, but it was significant for product website and social networking website. Number of members and e-loyalty relation was significant in service website and social networking website; whereas empirical analysis does not support the relation between e-loyalty and number of members for the product website.

   Analysis results confirmed that when the primary need of the user changes so does the influential significance of determinants of e-loyalty on e-loyalty. In other words, the strength of relationship between e-loyalty and its determinants changes across websites even for same user. For example, when a user logs on to his/her preferred website to purchase a product, the expectations differ when the same user visits the preferred service website or logs in the preferred social networking website. The results concluded that e-service quality, e-perceived value, e-trust, e-satisfaction, number of members and numbers of peers were the determinants of e-loyalty but had different significance for the same user in different website category.

3. *What are the hierarchies of e-loyalty antecedents, in order of importance, for different website category?*
E-service quality ($\beta = 0.560, P < 0.001$) was the most influential factor for a service website, e-perceived value ($\beta = 0.510, P < 0.001$) for product website while the number of peers ($\beta = 0.408, P < 0.001$) had highest impact on e-loyalty in social networking website. Overall results are shown in table 7.1.

Table 7.1: Hierarchies of e-loyalty antecedents in order of importance

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Service Website</th>
<th>Google</th>
<th>Product Website</th>
<th>Amazon</th>
<th>SNS Website</th>
<th>Facebook</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>ELY$\rightarrow$ESQ</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ELY$\rightarrow$MEM</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>NS</td>
<td>NS</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ELY$\rightarrow$PEE</td>
<td>NS</td>
<td>NS</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ELY$\rightarrow$PEV</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ELY$\rightarrow$SAT</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ELY$\rightarrow$TRU</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


4. What are the various strategies used by websites to create and ensure website loyalty?

Table 7.2: Website loyalty techniques

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Responsiveness</th>
<th>Page loading speed</th>
<th>Progressive rendering</th>
<th>Advertisement</th>
<th>Graphics &amp; Animations</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Contact interactivity</td>
<td>User Interface</td>
<td>character</td>
<td>Clarity of purpose &amp; concise text</td>
<td>Interactive customer support tools</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Convenience</td>
<td>Consistent navigation</td>
<td>Accurate summarization of links</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Customization</td>
<td>Personalized web pages</td>
<td>Anticipation of user choices</td>
<td>Multilingual content</td>
<td>Contextual advertising</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>E-trust</td>
<td>Security</td>
<td>Privacy</td>
<td>Credibility</td>
<td>Past experiences</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>E-satisfaction</td>
<td>Brand name</td>
<td>Reputation</td>
<td>Supportability</td>
<td>Physical existence</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>E-perceived value</td>
<td>Innovation</td>
<td>Pricing</td>
<td>Choice</td>
<td>Relevance</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Number of members and Number of peers</td>
<td>Electronic word of mouth – referrals, reviews, blogs, social network</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
There are various techniques which the websites are using to enhance their loyal customer base. Table 7.2 lists the loyalty techniques. Incorporating these techniques help a website to acquire and maintain customers and in creating a long term relationship with them.

Overall the study provided a deeper and better understanding of e-loyalty and its determinants relationship. The study concluded that website-category specific models of loyalty can be a useful approach to increase the efficacy of e-loyalty models.

7.3. CONTRIBUTION OF THE THESIS

The present study contributes to both theory and practice in many ways. Theoretically, this study provides a conceptual model of e-loyalty. Exploration of antecedents that are responsible to determine e-loyalty is done. Then, this study sheds light on the under-explored area of effects of product/service attribute or website type on e-loyalty and helps to explain the variation in relationships between e-loyalty and its antecedents. Simultaneous examination and comparison of the relative importance of key antecedents of loyalty across different categories of websites is done. Till now, to the best of our knowledge, no such comparison has been done. It helps in determining the relative importance of e-loyalty antecedents across different website categories. For this study, the websites are categorized on the basis of user’s primary. Justification and rationale are provided for using such approach. Thus, this study also empirically examines e-loyalty using a distinct approach to differentiate the websites.

Another differentiating aspect of our research is that the responses are obtained from same individuals. Sanchez-Franco, Peral-Peral and Villarejo-Ramos (2014) noted that individuals react differently to the online environment, depending on their personal characteristics. To avoid the effect of personality conflicts in examining the relative importance of e-loyalty antecedents, responses for three websites are obtained from the same user rather than different ones. Furthermore, social factors have not been given much importance in existing studies, especially in case of product websites and service websites. But with growing number of virtual communities, chat rooms, blogs and reviews some studies have recognized the importance of such factors in creating e-loyalty (e.g. Christodoulides and Michaelidou, 2010; Toufaily, Ricard and Perrien, 2013). Hence, this study differs from others in this aspect also i.e. two social factors (numbers of members and numbers of peers) are included and examined in the proposed e-loyalty model. Further, many
studies emphasized the importance of e-loyalty antecedents but a discussion on practical strategies adopted by websites to ensure loyalty is absent in the literature. The present study also discusses the strategies adopted by three successful websites to create and maintain loyalty. Managerially the study assists websites managers:

1. To appreciate the importance of user’s need based website category, and
2. What antecedents should be given closer attention in the respective website category to improve website loyalty?

7.4. IMPLICATIONS

The present study contributes to both theory and practice in many ways. The results furnish academicians and website managers a better understanding of ‘what user wants’ and ‘what websites should provide’. The theoretical contributions and managerial implications of the study are:

7.4.1. Theoretical contribution

Theoretically, this study provided a conceptual model of e-loyalty. The study emphasized the under-explored area of effects of website type or product/service attribute on e-loyalty. It was determined that responsiveness, convenience, contact interactivity, customization, e-trust, e-perceived value, e-satisfaction, number of members and number of peers were the major determinants of e-loyalty but their relative importance changes with the user’s primary need. The same user evaluates a product website in different manner than a service website or a social networking website. Previous researchers have examined the e-loyalty models in different contexts and regions. However, less emphasis has been given to examining loyalty perception of users across different websites; little research has been conducted to determine the relative importance of e-loyalty determinants.

Existing studies differentiated between content-based websites and product-based websites and separate websites on the basis of tangibility and intangibility component, and offline fulfillment and online fulfillment. This study followed a distinct user need based approach to categorize the websites, and it was ascertained that a user evaluate a website depending upon the need for which he/she visits a website.

Further this study proved the importance of inclusion of social factors in e-loyalty models for product and service website. Most of the existing studies have not given much
importance to ‘large customer base’ as an influencing factor in framing the loyalty perception towards a website.

In addition to the theoretical conceptual model, this study also provided a detailed discussion of practical techniques adopted by the website in agreement with the proposed model. Various techniques adopted by websites in general, and adopted by Google, Amazon and Facebook have been explored and presented. Existing studies lacks such discussion.

7.4.2. Managerial implications

In practical terms, the outcomes of this study contain a number of implications for website managers.

Fast page loads, progressive rendering, selective use of advertisement, graphics and animations, good interactive design, concise text, interactive support tools, consistent navigation, personalized web pages, anticipation of user choices, contextual advertisement, security, privacy, credibility, reputation, brand name, supportability, innovative steps, pricing strategies, choice, relevant content and a satisfied large customer base help in different ways to achieve success for a website. Thus, managers should focus on these aspects to enhance the efficiency and effectiveness of a website.

Although the e-loyalty antecedents were more or less remained same in different website category, but the treatment of these antecedents should differ as per the case. Therefore, websites need to consider not only the determinants of e-loyalty but also mull over the significance of these antecedents. A service website should give priority to e-service quality; product website should primarily focus on price leadership strategy and a social network website at first aims to pursue individuals to join their social network, thus making the switching cost higher to existing users.

Interestingly, neither so many years of existence nor huge consistent profits is required to build the promoters confidence in a website but sustainable popularity is enough to infuse funds from various sources., In 2014 Bezos announced to invest up to $ 2 billion in Amazon India operations, only after one year of its inception in India, despite losing one crore per day (Ghosh, 2015). Flipkart was able to raise $ 1 million in 2009 to $1 billion in 2014 only after seven years when they started operations in 2007 (Rai, 2014) having booked a loss of Rs 400 crore in last financial year. They are winning the confidence of promoters by ensuring their sustainable popularity via adhering to strict loyalty principles. Service website like Google and social networking site like Facebook rely heavily on advertisements and promotions for
revenues since they are providing free services to their users. The revenue from advertisements simply depends on how many visitors have seen or clicked the advertisements. The popularity wins the race in comparison to profits. Thus, website managers should focus on increasing the popularity of website in their early days rather than focusing on revenue. This sustainable popularity can be achieved through superior service quality, high standards of security and privacy, providing higher monetary and non-monetary benefits, overall satisfaction, and greater network benefits. The existing and other upcoming websites should incorporate these principles into their website design to acquire and retain existing customers.

In summary, a site to achieve success, it is imperative to look upon all antecedents of loyalty but major antecedents should be given priority depending upon the website category. The category to be determined on the basis of the primary need of the user.

7.5 LIMITATIONS AND SCOPE OF FUTURE WORK

No study is faultless and thereby this section will present the limitations of this study along with the scope of future work.

E-service quality, e-trust, e-perceived value, e-satisfaction, number of members and number of peers were considered in developing a conceptual framework of loyalty for websites. The inclusion of other variables that has been less emphasized in literature may affect the results. Thus, future studies could incorporate other variables to generate more accurate e-loyalty model.

Non-probability sampling technique was used in this study, thus limits the generalizability of the conclusions. Although the e-loyalty model was empirically examined twice with different respondents and justification is provided for the use of non-probability sampling techniques but more sophisticated sampling methods could be used to extend the generalizability.

The sample size of 493 and 352 in this study passed the recommendation of various authors but still sample size stands low in comparison to the total Internet using population of India. Future studies may verify and develop the existing model with larger sample size.

The study was conducted for a service website, a product website, and a social networking website but does not observe the effects of multi-channel operations on the
website loyalty. However, the three particular websites, Google, Amazon and Facebook exists online and provides products and services through web only. For online companies that offer products/services online and as well as offline, effects of the multichannel operation on loyalty could be explored.

All the respondents in this study were confined to one country. Prospect future studies may replicate the study in other environments and to a culturally different country to review the existing model and to enhance its validity and generalizability.

The sample demography represented the population demography; still results were gender skewed as 78.30% of the sample being men while 21.70% were female. In future, the results could be generated with equal representation of male and female.

The study had covered various techniques adopted by websites to ensure loyalty but not all. The technology is changing very rapidly thus the techniques discussed in this study may become obsolete in near future and be replaced by newer ones, thus a constant check on technology advancement and its implementation is required for loyalty creation.

Finally, the relative importance of e-loyalty antecedents can be examined for different products and services within a website category. For example, in product website category, e-loyalty model can be examined for two products with different degree of tangibility and with different level of involvement like apparel (high involvement product) and book (low involvement product).

The limitations of this study do not outweigh its contributions. We hope that our findings will contribute to the accomplishment of accurate and meticulous e-loyalty models. Future studies could generate more precise antecedents of e-loyalty, helping online companies to acquire and maintain loyal customers.