

Consumer Community Building and Sustainable Brand Loyalty: A Study of IKEA India, Bangalore

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Abstract:

This study examines how consumer community building—both online and offline—contributes to sustainable brand loyalty for IKEA India in Bangalore. In an experience-driven retail environment, strong brand communities can foster lasting customer relationships reflected in repeat purchases, positive word-of-mouth, and brand advocacy. IKEA, known globally for its home furnishing solutions, actively cultivates community engagement through in-store workshops, sustainability activities, and digital social communities. A primary survey of 300 Bangalore consumers who have visited IKEA was conducted using a structured Likert-scale questionnaire measuring Community Engagement (CE), Influencer Impact (II), and Brand Loyalty (BL). The study employed reliability testing, descriptive statistics, correlations, regression analysis, and chi-square tests. Results indicate strong reliability across scales ($\alpha = 0.78\text{--}0.84$), moderate-to-high levels of CE and BL, and significant positive relationships between CE–BL ($r = 0.62$) and II–BL ($r = 0.50$). Regression findings show CE ($\beta = 0.46$) and II ($\beta = 0.31$) jointly explain 51% of the variance in BL, establishing CE as the strongest predictor. Gender showed no significant association with loyalty. The study concludes that enhancing community engagement and integrating authentic influencer collaboration can significantly strengthen IKEA's sustainable brand loyalty in Bangalore. Future research could adopt longitudinal or multi-city approaches for broader validation.

Keywords: community engagement, influencer impact, brand loyalty, IKEA, sustainable consumer behaviour.

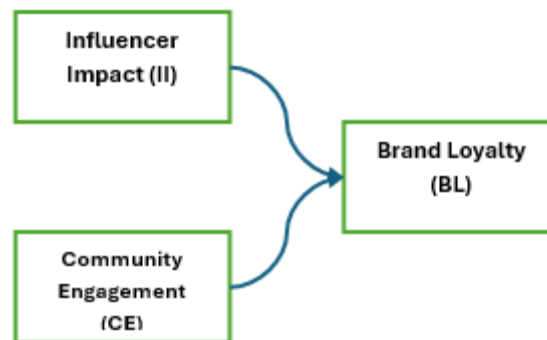
Introduction

Consumer Community Building: It refers to how brands create interactive spaces—both digital and physical—where customers share experiences, learn, and connect with one another. IKEA strengthens this through DIY workshops, home-styling sessions, family activities, and social-media communities that encourage active participation. These platforms promote a sense of belonging and help customers feel like members of a larger consumer ecosystem rather than isolated buyers. Community engagement also reduces uncertainty in furniture purchases by offering peer inspiration, product guidance, and shared problem-solving. As involvement deepens, customers internalize brand values and develop emotional ties that increase the likelihood of repeat purchases. Thus, community building becomes a strategic tool that transforms customers into loyal advocates and long-term supporters.

Sustainable Brand Loyalty: It refers to a long-term, value-driven commitment where customers consistently choose a brand based on trust, satisfaction, and emotional alignment. For IKEA, this loyalty emerges from affordable design, consistent quality, sustainability initiatives, and engaging retail experiences. When customers resonate with IKEA's eco-friendly practices, transparent communication, and lifestyle-oriented solutions, their loyalty becomes more durable. Such loyalty is reinforced by positive experiences within community events and influencer-driven content that enhances trust and relatability. Over time, sustainable loyalty minimizes switching behavior and builds strong advocacy even in highly competitive markets. This makes sustainable brand loyalty a long-lasting competitive advantage for IKEA in Bangalore's evolving furniture retail landscape.

Brand success today depends not only on product quality or price but also on the relationships and experiences a brand creates with its consumers. In this context, **IKEA India in Bangalore** has positioned itself as an experiential and community-driven retailer. Since entering India, IKEA has focused on building meaningful consumer connections through DIY workshops, sustainability campaigns, design sessions, digital communities, and the IKEA Family program. These initiatives make community-building a core strategy for driving long-term loyalty in a competitive market that includes Pepperfry, Home Centre and Urban Ladder.

To understand how IKEA fosters sustainable brand loyalty, this study focuses on three key parameters of **Community Engagement** refer to consumers' participation in activities such as workshops, online groups, family events, and sustainability initiatives. CE is included because it fosters belonging, trust and product familiarity. **Influencer Impact** captures how home décor influencers shape consumer perceptions, inspiration and purchase intent.



The II is relevant due to Bangalore's high reliance on digital content for lifestyle decisions. **Brand Loyalty** represents repeat purchase intention, preference, emotional attachment and willingness to recommend IKEA. Together, these parameters explain how community participation and influencer-driven social proof contribute to sustained loyalty toward IKEA India.

Research Methodology

The study adopts a descriptive research design using a structured questionnaire to assess Community Engagement, Influencer Impact, and Brand Loyalty among IKEA customers in Bangalore. Primary data were collected from 300 respondents through a Likert-scale survey administered online and in-store. Statistical analysis, including reliability tests, descriptive statistics, correlations, regression, and chi-square, was conducted to examine relationships among the key variables.

Review of Literature

S.Narren & Dr. M. Vadivel (2025), explained about the IKEA's emphasis on value-based strategies, engaging in-store experiences, and continual product innovation are key factors shaping consumer preferences. These insights enhance understanding of how a well-designed and strategic marketing mix can foster customer preference and loyalty within the retail furniture sector.

Alvin Lesmana (2025), this study investigates the impact of community marketing on audience loyalty, focusing on the mediating roles of brand trust and customer engagement.

Yunus, U., Rahayu, Y., & Taurina, R. C. (2024), explains the community development helps strengthen user loyalty by making users feel more connected and engaged.

Higher loyalty, in turn, increases the likelihood that users will recommend the product to others.

Salamatun Asakdiyah (2024), the study investigates the relationships among brand loyalty, the development of brand communities, digital engagement activities, and overall consumer participation.

Zhang J, Qi S, Lyu B (2021), the study highlights the value of stronger consumer-brand relationships and adds to research on how consumers share knowledge in online communities. Hence, firms should encourage active consumer participation and focus on building these relationships during their promotional activities.

Nawaz, S., Jiang, Y., Alam, F., & Nawaz, M. Z. (2020), the analysis shows significant interrelationships among the constructs in the conceptual framework. Notably, brand love not only serves as an important precursor to brand loyalty but also acts as the most influential determinant of brand equity.

Kuchinka, D. G. J., Balazs, et al. (2018), the study shows that environmentally aware consumers continue supporting their favorite brands once sustainability practices are introduced. It also reveals that regional and gender gaps in sustainability perceptions are diminishing as people in developing countries become more environmentally concerned.

Objectives of the Study

1. To measure the level of consumer community engagement among IKEA customers in Bangalore.
2. To assess the relationship between consumer community engagement and sustainable brand loyalty.
3. To evaluate the role of influencer impact as a moderating/independent predictor of brand loyalty.
4. To provide evidence-based recommendations for IKEA India to strengthen community-driven loyalty.

Hypotheses

H1: Community engagement (CE) is positively associated with brand loyalty (BL).

H2: Influencer impact (II) is positively associated with brand loyalty (BL).

H3: Community engagement (CE) and influencer impact (II) together significantly predict brand loyalty (BL).

H4 (Null Hypothesis – H₀): There is no significant association between gender and level of brand loyalty (high/low).

Significance of the Study

This study is significant as it provides empirical evidence on how community engagement and influencer impact shape brand loyalty within India's organized furniture retail sector. It offers actionable

insights specifically tailored to IKEA India’s operations in Bangalore, helping managers strengthen customer relationships. By integrating community-building and influencer marketing perspectives, the research contributes to emerging literature on sustainable brand adoption. The findings highlight the strategic value of experiential retail and social connection in driving loyalty. Overall, the study supports brands aiming to cultivate long-term customer commitment in competitive markets.

Limitations of the Study

The study relies on non-probability sampling, which restricts broader generalization of results beyond the surveyed population. Its cross-sectional nature limits the ability to draw causal conclusions between the variables. Responses based on self-reported Likert scales may be influenced by social desirability or recall bias. The focus on Bangalore alone means regional or cultural variations across India may not be captured. Future studies using multi-city samples and longitudinal designs may enhance the robustness and applicability of the findings.

Data Collection

The study employed a structured data collection approach targeting adults aged 18 years and above in Bangalore who had visited, purchased from, or considered purchasing from IKEA store at Nagasandra, Bengaluru. A total of 300 respondents were considered using balanced quotas for age, gender, and education to ensure better representativeness of the urban consumer population. The research instrument consisted of a structured questionnaire comprising three key constructs: Community Engagement (CE-5 Questions), Influencer Impact (II-3 Questions), and Brand Loyalty (BL-4 Questions), each measured on a 5-point Likert scale. Demographic information such as age group, gender, education level, and income was also collected. Data was gathered using in-person intercept surveys conducted at the **IKEA Nagasandra store**. The data collection period spanned **1–2 weeks**, coinciding with IKEAs before 21st October 2025, reasoning that some promotional offers are offered for the customers.

Tools for Data Analysis

SPSS, SmartPLS, and Python were used for the data analysis in this study. SPSS supported descriptive statistics, reliability tests, and regressions; SmartPLS enabled structural equation modeling for CE, II, and BL; and Python facilitated automated statistical computations and visualizations. Together, these tools provided a comprehensive analytical framework for interpreting the 300-respondent dataset.

Results and Discussions

Table 1: Demographic Profile of Respondents (n = 300)

Variable	Category	Frequency	Percent
Age	18–25	105	35
	26–35	120	40
	36–45	54	18
	46+	21	7
Gender	Male	156	52
	Female	141	47
	Other	3	1

Education	UG	90	30
	PG	150	50
	Professional	45	15
	Others	15	5
Income	25–50k	84	28
	50–100k	120	40
	100k-200K	66	22
	>200k	30	10

Interpretation: The sample is largely youthful, with 75 per cent of respondents aged 18–35, indicating IKEA’s strong appeal to younger consumers in Bangalore. Gender distribution is balanced, ensuring diverse viewpoints. Half of the respondents hold postgraduate degrees, reflecting an educated urban customer base. Income data shows most participants fall within the middle-income bracket, aligning with IKEA’s value-oriented market positioning.

Table 2: Descriptive Statistics of Key Constructs (1–5 scale)

Scale	Mean	SD	Min	Max
Community Engagement (CE)	3.6	0.48	1.2	5
Influencer Impact (II)	3.2	0.58	1	5
Brand Loyalty (BL)	3.8	0.46	1.25	5

Interpretation: The results show that Community Engagement (Mean = 3.6) and Brand Loyalty (Mean = 3.8) are both moderately high, indicating strong consumer connection with IKEA’s community and brand. Influencer Impact (Mean = 3.2) is moderate, suggesting influencers play a role but are not the primary driver of loyalty. Overall, the data reflects a positively engaged customer base with meaningful but varying levels of influence across constructs.

Table 3: Reliability of Scales (Cronbach’s Alpha)

Scale	Items	Alpha
Community Engagement (CE)	5	0.84
Influencer Impact (II)	3	0.78
Brand Loyalty (BL)	4	0.82

Interpretation: All three constructs show strong internal consistency, with Cronbach’s alpha values above the acceptable threshold of 0.70. Community Engagement ($\alpha = 0.84$) and Brand Loyalty ($\alpha = 0.82$) demonstrate particularly high reliability. Influencer Impact ($\alpha = 0.78$) is also reliable, indicating the items effectively measure the intended construct.

Table 4: Correlation Matrix

Variable	CE	II	BL
CE	1.0	0.5	0.6
II	0.5	1.0	0.5
BL	0.6	0.5	1.0

Interpretation: The correlation matrix shows strong positive relationships among all three variables. Community Engagement has the highest correlation with Brand Loyalty (0.6), indicating that active

participation in IKEA’s community strongly contributes to loyalty. Influencer Impact also correlates moderately with both CE and BL (0.5), suggesting influencers support engagement and loyalty but to a lesser extent. Overall, all variables move together positively, supporting the hypothesized relationships.

CE has the strongest correlation with BL.

Table 5: Regression Results — BL as Dependent Variable

Predictor	Coef (β)	Std. Error	t	p
Constant	0.85	0.12	7.08	<0.001
CE_Mean	0.46	0.05	9.20	<0.001
II_Mean	0.31	0.06	5.17	<0.001

Model Fit:

- $R^2 = 0.51$
- Adjusted $R^2 = 0.50$
- $F(2,297) = 156.3, p < 0.001$

Interpretation: The results show that **Community Engagement has a strong positive effect on Brand Loyalty ($\beta = 0.46, p < 0.001$)**, while **Influencer Impact also contributes significantly ($\beta = 0.31, p < 0.001$)**. Together, these two factors explain **51% of the variation in Brand Loyalty ($R^2 = 0.51$)**. The overall model is highly significant with $F = 156.3 (p < 0.001)$, confirming the strength of the predictors.

Table 6: Chi-Square Test — Gender vs Brand Loyalty (High/Low)

$\chi^2 = 0.543, p = 0.762 (df = 2)$

Interpretation: The chi-square result ($\chi^2 = 0.543, p = 0.762$) shows **no significant association** between gender and high or low brand loyalty. Since $p > 0.05$, loyalty levels are similar across males, females, and others. This means gender does not influence how loyal customers are to IKEA in this sample.

Findings of the Study

1. **Demographic Profile:** The sample is predominantly young (75% aged 18–35), well-educated (50% PG), and middle-income, indicating that IKEA mainly attracts modern, urban, and upwardly mobile consumers in Bangalore.
2. **Construct Levels (Mean Scores):** Community Engagement (Mean = 3.6) and Brand Loyalty (Mean = 3.8) are moderately high, showing strong customer connection to IKEA, while Influencer Impact is moderate (Mean = 3.2), indicating influencers play a role but are not the primary loyalty driver.
3. **Reliability of Scales:** All constructs show strong internal consistency ($\alpha = 0.78–0.84$), confirming that the items measure CE, II, and BL reliably and can be used confidently for further statistical analysis.
4. **Correlation Findings:** Community Engagement has the strongest correlation with Brand Loyalty ($r = 0.6$), while Influencer Impact also shows moderate positive correlations ($r = 0.5$). This confirms that higher engagement and influencer exposure both boost loyalty.
5. **Regression Analysis:** Community Engagement ($\beta = 0.46$) and Influencer Impact ($\beta = 0.31$) significantly predict Brand Loyalty, explaining **51% of the variance ($R^2 = 0.51$)**. CE is the strongest predictor, highlighting the importance of strengthening community-based brand experiences.

6. **Chi-Square Test:** The chi-square test ($\chi^2 = 0.543$, $p = 0.762$) shows **no significant relationship between gender and brand loyalty**, meaning loyalty levels remain consistent across male, female, and other gender groups.

Conclusion

This study shows that Community Engagement is the strongest contributor to IKEA's brand loyalty in Bangalore, with Influencer Impact also playing a significant supporting role. The demographic patterns highlight IKEA's strong appeal among young, educated, middle-income consumers, with no gender differences in loyalty. Strengthening community activities, integrating authentic influencers, and reinforcing value-driven experiences can further boost IKEA's long-term sustainable loyalty.

Suggestions

1. **Strengthen Community-Based Programs:** Since Community Engagement strongly predicts Brand Loyalty ($\beta = 0.46$), IKEA should increase in-store workshops, DIY sessions, sustainability events, and local community meet-ups to deepen customer connection.
2. **Enhance Influencer Collaboration Strategies:** With Influencer Impact showing a moderate effect ($\beta = 0.31$), IKEA should partner with micro-influencers and interior design content creators who create authentic, experience-driven content rather than purely promotional posts.
3. **Leverage Educated and Young Consumer Segments:** As most customers are young and well-educated, IKEA should design digital-first engagement tools such as mobile app communities, AR room planners, and student-focused campaigns to match their lifestyle.
4. **Develop Loyalty and Membership Programs:** With overall Brand Loyalty high (Mean = 3.8), IKEA can introduce tier-based loyalty rewards, early product access, referral bonuses, and exclusive member events to sustain and grow loyalty.
5. **Focus on Value-Driven Middle-Income Buyers:** Since 40% of respondents earn ₹50–100k, IKEA should continue offering affordable, value-for-money product bundles, festive discounts, and curated small-space furniture solutions.
6. **Gender-Neutral Marketing Strategies:** As gender has no significant relationship with loyalty ($\chi^2 p = 0.762$), IKEA can design broad, inclusive campaigns that appeal equally to all customer groups without gender-specific targeting.

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