



# Shielded By Loyalty: Analyzing Consumer Resistance To Negative Word-Of-Mouth- An Empirical Study On Lucknow City.

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## **ABSTRACT:-**

Brand loyalty plays a massive role by acting as a critical determinant of consumer behaviour thereby influencing purchase patterns and long-term brand attachment. Specially in an environment which is increasingly shaped by rapid dissemination of information and negative word-of-mouth (NWOM). Understanding the protective function of brand loyalty has become crucial in a world where negative word-of-mouth (NWOM) and the quick spread of information are shaping society more and more. The goal of this study, "Shielded by Loyalty: Analyzing Consumer Resistance to Negative Word-of-Mouth," is to investigate how consumer resistance to NWOM and brand loyalty are related.

The study's goals are to determine how loyal consumers are to a brand, how much they are exposed to unfavorable word-of-mouth, and how loyalty levels relate to resistance behaviors. To determine whether loyalty serves as a protective barrier against adverse influences, special consideration is given to extremely devoted customers. A structured questionnaire that can be accessed by a wide range of people, including common and semi-literate consumers, is used to gather primary data. To analyze the data, statistical tools are used, with an emphasis on finding trends, correlations, and differences among various loyalty segments.

It is anticipated that the results will show a positive correlation between resistance to NWOM and brand loyalty, emphasizing loyalty as a moderating factor in consumer decision-making. The study adds to the body of knowledge on consumer behavior and offers useful advice for brand strategists who want to improve customer retention and brand resilience against reputational risks.

**Key words:-** Consumer Behaviour, Brand Loyalty, Negative Word-of-Mouth, Consumer retention.

## **I. INTRODUCTION:-**

In the ever-changing world of contemporary marketing, brands face constant competition as well as the impact of consumer-to-consumer communication. Among these, negative word-of-mouth (NWOM) has become a potent force that can impact consumer decision-making and brand perceptions on a never-before-seen scale. Word-of-mouth communication, especially negative feedback, has a genuine and persuasive power that sets it apart from traditional advertising, which is meticulously planned and managed. NWOM poses a serious threat to brand equity and customer retention strategies because consumers are more likely to believe peer opinions than company promotional messages. Consumer reaction to NWOM varies, though. Some customers quickly accept and act upon unfavorable information, changing their brand preferences and purchasing habits. Others exhibit exceptional resistance to harmful influences, especially those with a high level of brand loyalty. Brand loyalty, which is

characterized as a strong desire to regularly buy a preferred brand in the future, can serve as a buffer against the harm that NWOM can do to one's reputation. In order to filter and occasionally ignore unfavorable information, loyal customers frequently rely on their prior positive experiences, emotional ties, and established brand trust. In a setting where unfavorable opinions can spread quickly and extensively, this protective behavior is essential for brands looking to hold onto their market share and clientele.

Modern marketers must comprehend how consumer behavior, brand loyalty, and resistance to NWOM are related. Although the significance of brand loyalty in promoting advocacy and repeat business has been thoroughly examined in earlier studies, little is known about how loyalty interacts with unfavorable outside factors. In particular, it is unclear whether high levels of loyalty can delay or prevent brand switching decisions and to what degree loyalty moderates the impact of NWOM on a consumer's attitude. Understanding these dynamics is useful for developing resilience plans during brand crises, since brands invest a lot of money to build devoted customer bases. In order to close this gap, the current study, "Shielded by Loyalty: Analyzing Consumer Resistance to Negative Word-of-Mouth," looks at how much brand loyalty affects consumer resistance to NWOM. It focuses on evaluating how loyal customers are, how often they encounter unfavorable remarks, and how they react behaviorally and emotionally afterward. The study aims to produce empirical evidence on this important component of consumer-brand relationships by employing a structured questionnaire for primary data collection aimed at a wide range of consumers, including common and semi-literate consumers. It is anticipated that the results will provide both theoretical advancements in the study of consumer behavior and practical advice for brand managers looking to protect their companies from reputational risks. Knowing and fostering brand loyalty is not just a marketing goal; it is a strategic necessity in a time when consumer voices have the ability to quickly undermine brand narratives. Therefore, this study aims to expand our understanding of how emotional connections with brands can act as a buffer against the waves of unfavorable public opinion, straddling the boundaries of consumer psychology and strategic brand management.

## **II. LITERATURE REVIEW:-**

**Singh, V., Jain, A., & Choraria, S. (2016)** The study emphasizes how important complaint handling is for various complainant types such as voice, private, and third party. These procedures can assist retailers in differentiating and appropriately managing different kinds of complaints. Good complaint handling procedures can boost the complainants' loyalty and trustworthiness.

**Sharma, R. (2020)** The results demonstrate a strong, favorable, and direct relationship between brand awareness and personality, as well as between perceived quality and brand loyalty. Additionally, consumer-based brand equity (CBBE) is directly and significantly impacted by brand loyalty, perceived quality, brand personality, and brand awareness. The specific brand equity dimension's impact on one another and all dimensions on brand equity is demonstrated empirically by the current study. Important information for creating plans to improve CBBE is provided by this study.

**Ahmed, Z., Haq, M. Rizwan, M., & Ahmad, M.(2014)** Examining the variables influencing brand loyalty is the aim of this study. Based on the study's findings, we learned how loyal Bahawalpur consumers are to the Hewlett Packard brand.

**Malik, M. E., Riaz, U., Ghafoor, M. M., Iqbal, H. K., Shahbaz, S, Hassan, N., & Mustafa, M.(2013).** According to the study, building brand loyalty and awareness takes time. For customers to be more likely to make a purchase, managers everywhere should actively work to increase their brand awareness and loyalty. If the targeted customers are also being informed about the brand, these efforts have a higher chance of succeeding. This study aids the apparel industry in concentrating on brand loyalty and awareness in order to boost purchase intentions for their brands.

**Khan, MM, Memon, Z., & Kumar, S.(2019).** The study advised marketing managers to carefully evaluate product attributes, celebrity personality, and target audience characteristics when choosing a celebrity. Furthermore, the chosen celebrity shouldn't have promoted too many rival brands or goods. Ignorance of these factors would result into customers getting mislead and damage of a brand's reputation. Additionally, since brand quality and loyalty are significant factors in determining purchase intentions and brand image, businesses shouldn't overlook them.

### **III. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY:-**

#### **1. Hypothesis:-**

**H<sub>0</sub>:** There is no significant relationship between brand loyalty and consumer resistance to negative word-of-mouth.

**H<sub>1</sub>:** There is a significant positive relationship between brand loyalty and consumer resistance to negative word-of-mouth.

#### **2. Objectives:-**

1. To study the level of brand loyalty among consumers.
2. To examine consumer exposure to negative word-of-mouth related to brands.
3. To analyze how brand loyalty influences consumer resistance to negative word-of-mouth.
4. To identify whether highly loyal consumers continue their brand preference despite negative opinions.

#### **3. Research Design:-**

This study adopts a descriptive research design to examine the relationship between brand loyalty and consumer resistance to negative word-of-mouth (NWOM). The purpose is to collect quantifiable data from consumers regarding their loyalty towards brands and their behavioural response upon encountering negative brand-related information. The study emphasizes understanding the intensity and patterns of consumer resistance across different loyalty levels.

#### **4. Research Approach:-**

A quantitative approach is employed, using a structured questionnaire as the primary tool for data collection. The quantitative method allows for the statistical analysis of relationships between key variables such as brand loyalty, exposure to NWOM, and consumer resistance behaviour.

#### **5. Sampling Design:-**

- Population: Consumers across diverse age groups, education levels, and income groups, including common and semi-literate individuals.
- Sampling Technique: Convenience sampling is used, targeting consumers available and willing to participate in the survey, ensuring accessibility to common people.
- Sample Size: 60 respondents are targeted to achieve a reliable and diverse data set.

#### **6. Data Collection Method:-**

The sources of data collection composed of primary data collection method. A structured questionnaire that consisting of:

Demographic questions for instance name, age, gender, Brand loyalty scale questions, Exposure to negative word-of-mouth situations, Consumer response and resistance behavior questions

The questionnaire uses Likert scale responses (e.g., Strongly Agree to Strongly Disagree) to measure perceptions and attitudes.

Data collection is conducted online (using forms if necessary) to cover a broader demographic.

#### **7. Data Analysis Techniques:-**

- Correlation- For examining the direction and strength of the relationship between brand loyalty and resistance to NWOM.
- Regression Analysis: In order to determine the brand loyalty's influence on resistance to negative word of mouth.

Statistical analysis is carried out using software tools such as SPSS or Excel.

#### **8. Scope of the Study:-**

The study focuses primarily on urban and semi-urban consumers, ensuring inclusion of literate and semi-literate individuals. It covers respondents exposed to consumer goods brands across sectors like FMCG, electronics, and apparel.

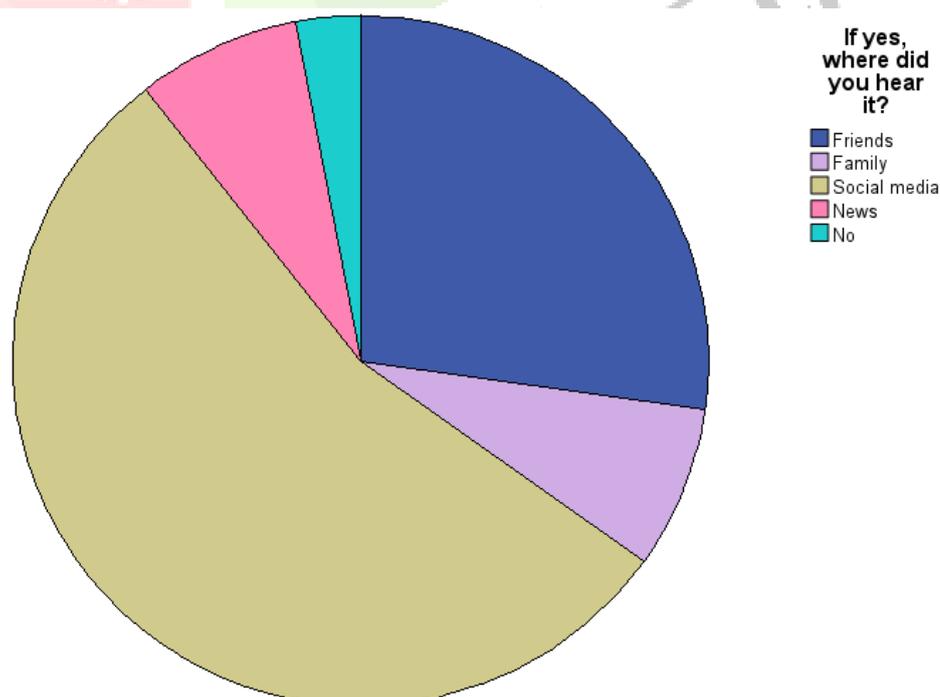
## **9. Limitations of the Study:-**

- **Sampling Bias:** The study uses a convenience sampling method, which may not fully represent the broader population. As a result, the findings may be limited in generalizability to all consumers, particularly in rural or less accessible areas.
- **Social Desirability Bias:** Respondents, particularly those from less-educated or semi-literate backgrounds, may provide answers that align with social expectations or desirable behaviors rather than their true opinions or experiences, potentially skewing the data.
- **Geographical Constraints:** The study is geographically limited to urban and semi-urban areas, primarily focusing on consumers in larger cities. This may not account for variations in consumer behavior across rural or remote regions.
- **Limited Product Categories:** The research focuses on certain product categories, such as fast-moving consumer goods (FMCG), electronics, and apparel, which may not fully capture the dynamics of brand loyalty and Negative word of mouth of several other sectors like that of luxurious goods and services.
- **Cross-Sectional Data:** The study is based on cross-sectional data, meaning it captures consumer behavior at one point in time. This does not allow for tracking changes in attitudes or loyalty over time or in response to long-term exposure to NWOM.
- **Self-Reported Data:** Since the study relies on self-reported responses, there may be discrepancies between what participants say they would do and their actual behavior in real-world scenarios, especially regarding brand loyalty and resistance to NWOM.
- **Exclusion of Non-Respondents:** As with any survey-based study, non-respondents may differ from those who complete the survey, potentially introducing bias. The study may not capture the full range of opinions and behaviors present in the general population.
- **Cultural and Social Factors:** The study primarily focuses on a specific cultural context, and consumer responses may vary significantly across different cultural, social, or economic environments, limiting the applicability of the findings to other regions or countries.

## **IV. RESULTS AND FINDINGS:-**

### **4.1. Data Analysis and Interpretation:-**

#### **4.1.1. CHART**



**Figure 4.1: Pie Chart**

The sources from which respondents claimed to have heard unfavorable remarks regarding their favorite brands are depicted in the pie chart. The chart's largest portion represents the majority of respondents who said they had heard unfavorable word-of-mouth from friends. Family members came in second, underscoring the powerful impact of trusted and personal networks on consumer perceptions. The fact that a smaller but still noteworthy percentage of respondents said they had come across unfavorable remarks on social media shows how online platforms are increasingly influencing consumer sentiment. News sources made up a comparatively smaller portion, suggesting that social media and interpersonal channels were more effective than traditional media at disseminating unfavorable brand information. Additionally, some respondents chose "No," indicating that they had not received any unfavorable correspondence about their favourite brand.

**Conclusion**

These results highlight the fact that friends and family continue to be the most powerful conduits for the dissemination of unfavorable word-of-mouth, which is something that brands need to closely watch and manage through relationship marketing and efforts to foster trust. Despite its secondary role, social media's growing influence and capacity to quickly magnify negative sentiments make it impossible to overlook.

**4.1.2. CORRELATION ANALYSIS**

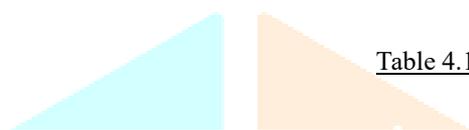


Table 4.1: Correlation analysis

			How important is brand name for you when purchasing a product?	How much does negative talk affect your trust in the brand?
Spearman's rho	How important is brand name for you when purchasing a product?	Correlation Coefficient	1.000	-.080
		Sig. (2-tailed)	.	.524
		N	66	66
	How much does negative talk affect your trust in the brand?	Correlation Coefficient	-.080	1.000
		Sig. (2-tailed)	.524	.
		N	66	66

The relationship between the importance of brand name when buying a product and the degree to which bad word-of-mouth damages brand trust was evaluated using a Spearman's rank-order correlation. The results of the analysis showed a very weak negative correlation ( $\rho(66) = -0.080, p = 0.524$ ) that was not statistically significant. This implies that among the sampled respondents, consumer resistance to unfavorable word-of-mouth is not significantly correlated with the perceived significance of the brand name.

The results showed no significant relationship, indicating that other factors may be influencing consumer reactions, despite the expectation that greater brand loyalty (importance of brand name) would strengthen resistance to negative word-of-mouth.

### 4.1.3. REGRESSION ANALYSIS

Table 4.2.1 Model Summary

Model Summary				
Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate
1	.162 <sup>a</sup>	.026	.011	.770

a. Predictors: (Constant), How important is brand name for you when purchasing a product?

Table 4.2.2 ANOVA

ANOVA <sup>a</sup>						
Model		Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
1	Regression	1.027	1	1.027	1.732	.193 <sup>b</sup>
	Residual	37.958	64	.593		
	Total	38.985	65			

a. Dependent Variable: After hearing negative comments, what did you do?

b. Predictors: (Constant), How important is brand name for you when purchasing a product?

To investigate whether brand name importance could predict consumer behavior after hearing negative remarks about a brand, a straightforward linear regression analysis was performed. According to the model summary, the correlation coefficient (R) was 0.162, and the R Square value was 0.026. This implies that the perceived significance of brand name accounts for only 2.6% of the variation in consumer behavior that follows unfavorable word-of-mouth. The model's very low explanatory power was indicated by the adjusted R Square, which was nearly zero (0.011).

Additionally, the ANOVA table demonstrated that the regression model was not statistically significant, with a p-value exceeding the standard cutoff of 0.05 ( $F(1, 64) = 1.732, p = 0.193$ ). This suggests that in this sample, there is no statistically significant correlation between the predictor variable (brand name importance) and the dependent variable (reaction to unfavorable remarks). As a whole, the regression results show that consumer resistance to negative word-of-mouth is not significantly predicted by the importance placed on brand name, indicating that other factors might have a greater impact on consumers' post-NWOM behavior.

- The significance of the brand name is not a reliable indicator of how customers will respond to unfavorable rumors.
- Other factors (such as product satisfaction, brand experience, and emotional attachment) may be more accurate predictors.

### 4.1.4. HISTOGRAM ANALYSIS

Table 4.3.1 Statistics

#### Statistics

Do you often buy the same brand for your preferred products?

N	Valid	66
	Missing	0

Table 4.3.2 Frequency

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	1	23	34.8	34.8	34.8
	2	36	54.5	54.5	89.4
	3	5	7.6	7.6	97.0
	4	2	3.0	3.0	100.0
Total		66	100.0	100.0	

There were no missing data from the 66 responses that were gathered for the study. 34.8% of respondents consistently preferred the same brand (Always), while 54.5% said they "sometimes" bought the same brand, according to descriptive statistics for the question "Do you often buy the same brand for your preferred products?" Just 3.0% and 7.6% of respondents, respectively, said they "never" and "rarely" remained brand loyal. This shows a strong tendency towards consistent brand preference among the surveyed population, with about 89% of the consumers displaying some level of brand loyalty.

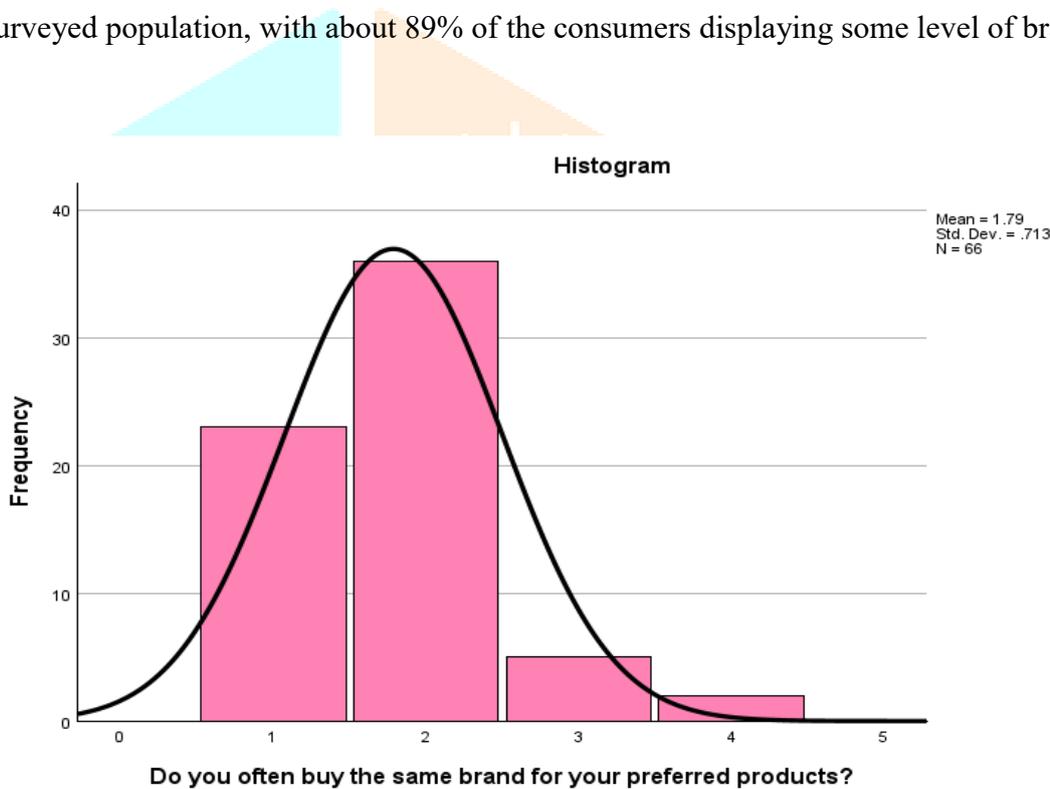


Figure 4.2 Histogram

The distribution of brand loyalty responses was slightly positively skewed, according to the histogram, indicating that the majority of customers reported higher levels of loyalty. The responses were comparatively concentrated around higher loyalty categories ("Always" and "Sometimes"), as indicated by the mean brand loyalty score of 1.79 and the standard deviation of 0.713. In consumer behavior research, where responses frequently skew toward positive experiences, the slight skewness is acceptable even though the distribution was not perfectly normal.

**Conclusion**

The results imply that most consumers have consistent brand preferences, which is important to understand how resistant they are to unfavorable word-of-mouth. A solid basis for additional correlation and regression analysis to investigate whether greater levels of brand loyalty predict greater resistance to unfavorable information about brands is provided by the high percentage of consumers who report regular or sporadic brand loyalty. Using Pearson correlation and basic linear regression techniques, the following stage of analysis will concentrate on evaluating the connection between brand loyalty and customer resistance to unfavorable word-of-mouth.

## **CONCLUSION:-**

Important conclusions about brand loyalty and resistance to unfavorable word-of-mouth were drawn from the examination of primary data gathered from 66 respondents. With 34.8% of consumers always preferring the same brand and 54.5% occasionally doing so, descriptive statistics showed that most consumers had moderate to high levels of brand loyalty. With minimal variation throughout the sample, the histogram of brand loyalty responses revealed a slight positive skew, confirming that the majority of participants reported relatively high loyalty towards their preferred brands. This preliminary result supports the notion that a sizable percentage of customers form emotional or habitual bonds with brands, which affects their purchasing decisions.

Consumer resistance to negative word-of-mouth and brand name importance had a very weak and statistically insignificant negative relationship, according to Spearman's rank-order correlation analysis ( $\rho = -0.080$ ,  $p = 0.524$ ). This implies that consumers' acceptance or resistance to unfavorable opinions about brands is not significantly influenced by the significance placed on brand names alone. This was corroborated by the regression analysis, which revealed that perceived brand importance is not a significant predictor of resistance behavior, accounting for only 2.6% of the variance in consumer reaction to hearing negative remarks ( $R^2 = 0.026$ ,  $p = 0.193$ ). These findings underline the need for stronger emotional or experiential ties with customers and suggest that loyalty based solely on brand image or reputation may be flimsy and susceptible to adverse stimuli.

The pie chart analysis also showed that the main channels for disseminating unfavorable brand-related information were friends and family, followed by social media and the news. This demonstrates how important interpersonal influence is in influencing consumer perceptions more so than formal or mass media channels. Word-of-mouth from reliable personal networks seems to have greater sway than information from public sources, indicating that in order to manage negative narratives, brands need to keep a close eye on customer experiences at the local level.

Overall, the findings imply that although consumers do exhibit brand loyalty, the impact of unfavorable word-of-mouth cannot be mitigated by a brand's name alone. To strengthen customer loyalty and fortify their defenses against reputational risks, brands must prioritize not only brand name recognition but also the development of emotional ties, trust, and customer satisfaction. Future studies might look into examining other elements that might improve resilience against unfavorable brand communications and boost brand loyalty, such as emotional engagement, personal experiences, product satisfaction, and post-purchase support.

## **SUGGESTIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS:-**

Several recommendations and ideas can be made for brand managers, marketers, and upcoming researchers based on the study's findings:

- 1. Focus Beyond Brand Name Recognition:**

Companies need to go beyond image-building because the study found that consumers are not always resistant to bad word-of-mouth when a brand's name is valued. Prioritizing consistent product quality, individualized experiences, and emotional engagement is necessary to increase customer loyalty.

- 2. Strengthen Emotional Bonds with Consumers:**

Companies should spend money on relationship marketing tactics that aim to develop customers' shared values, trust, and emotional bonds. Compared to loyalty based solely on brand image, emotional attachment-driven loyalty is more resistant to unfavorable information.

- 3. Enhance Post-Purchase Support and Service Quality:**

Brand trust can be greatly increased by offering first-rate after-sales support and efficient grievance redressal procedures. Negative word-of-mouth can be lessened by brands that quickly resolve customer complaints at its roots.

- 4. Monitor and Manage Word-of-Mouth Channels:**

Given that most unfavorable remarks were disseminated by friends and family, companies ought to aggressively encourage happy consumers to share their positive experiences. Negative

narratives can be rebutted with the use of word-of-mouth marketing techniques, testimonials, and referral programs.

5. **Leverage Social Media Responsibly:**

Despite having a smaller role than personal networks, social media is becoming more and more significant. To keep a positive brand presence online, brands need to keep an eye on online discussions, politely reply to unfavorable comments, and encourage genuine engagement.

6. **Create Community-Based Brand Engagement:**

Establishing customer communities, loyalty programs, and interactive forums can boost positive peer-to-peer influence and foster a feeling of community among clients, which lessens the impact of unfavorable word-of-mouth.

7. **Focus on Consistency and Transparency:**

Customer trust is increased through transparent brand communications and consistent product quality delivery. Isolated bad experiences are less likely to influence a devoted customer who believes the brand is genuine.

8. **Encourage Future Research on Deeper Loyalty Drivers:**

In order to better understand how to shield brands from unfavorable word-of-mouth across various consumer segments, future research could delve deeper into other factors like emotional loyalty, experiential loyalty, and the significance of customer satisfaction.

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