

Guest editorial

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Engaging young consumers

Introduction

Engagement is increasingly becoming popular in the marketing literature. Though a relatively new concept, it has attracted the attention of both academics and practitioners. This popularity can primarily be attributed to the finding that engaging consumers have considerably positive consequences for the organizations ([Sawhney et al., 2005](#)). An engaged consumer is typically the one who is physically, emotionally and cognitively attached to an organization or brand. Adapted mainly from the organizational behavior literature ([Gupta et al., 2018](#); [Uraon and Gupta, 2019](#); [Gupta, 2019](#)), its definition is under scrutiny for gaining clarity on the specifics of it. Given this ambiguity, engagement in marketing literature has been looked through several lenses ([Jaakkola and Alexander, 2014](#); [Verhoef et al., 2010](#)).

Today, marketers are facing the challenge of engaging consumers for sustainable sales, and researchers are moving toward finding the potential ways and means of answering the questions so raised. Though youth buying behavior and attachment behavior is different from others, the marketing literature has limited studies that explore such differences. Therefore, the main motif for this special issue is in exploring the engagement construct and examining the antecedents and consequences of engaging young consumers in different contexts.

Objective of this special issue

The main objective of this special issue is to explore and examine the factors relating to engage young consumers. The sub-objectives of this special issue are as follows:

- to understand the factors affecting consumer engagement among youth;
- to explore the consequences of engaging young consumers; and
- to gain clarity on the constructs relating to engagement in the marketing literature.

Relevance of engaging young consumers

Several scholars have urged to examine the ways in which young consumers can be engaged. For example, [Harris and Dennis \(2011\)](#) emphasized on the need to investigate whether youths can be more engaged in social media, specifically Facebook, than others. Similarly, [Pantano and Viassone \(2015\)](#) examined the role of store atmosphere, channel availability and service quality on purchase intention, but their results led them “to speculate that the presence of innovative technologies is a basic element for attracting young consumers” (p. 110). Similar arguments for engaging young consumers in technology were put forth by [Pantano \(2016\)](#) that young participants often are experts of advanced technologies such as smartphones and are also greater aware of internet and mobile tools for shopping. Another reason for engaging young consumers was given by Morris (2019) that it is beneficial for companies to engage with consumers at an early age because it helps them develop profitable business in long run. Scholars suggest that because of the same reason,

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young consumers should also be engaged in green consumption habits (Blose *et al.*, 2019; Nguyen *et al.*, 2018).

Articles in this issue

This special issue has seven papers that relate at least to both young consumers and engagement. It is interesting to find that this special issue covers diverse industries that were less explored so far in the context of young consumers. In particular, it has implications for apparel industry, food industry, digital marketing industry, matrimony industry, fashion, social media and internet. For example, three articles including the following are essentially about the ways in which young consumers can be engaged online:

1. "Engaging customers through credible and useful reviews: the role of online trust";
2. "Drivers of social media disengagement: a study of young consumers in Vietnam"; and
3. "Honey, find me the moon: exploring engagement on dating and matrimony platforms."

Another article titled "Adoption barriers in engaging young consumers in the Omni-channel retailing" discovers the issues faced by young consumers in exhibiting engagement behaviors in the omni-channel retailing processes. One of the articles in this special issue titled "Examining the engagement of young consumers for religiously sanctioned food: the case of halal food in India" is also on religious beliefs in eating a particular food. Next, the fashion side of the young consumers is uncovered by the article "Fashion brands are engaging the millennials: a moderated-mediation model of customer-brand engagement, participation and involvement." Given the importance of going green, the awareness of using green products among youth across the world has been captured by the article titled "Examining the effects of customer engagement and brand experience on consumers' purchase intention towards green apparels."

Conclusion and directions for future research

The objective of exploring and examining the factors relating to engaging young consumers has been realized in this special issue. Though the articles in this special issue cover several research gaps, there are several others that are yet to be explored. These research gaps have been detailed in the articles of this special issue. Overall, future studies may particularly include the cross-cultural effects on engaging young consumers. Companies, especially multinational companies, often find it to be a challenge to engage diverse set of target markets. Thus, understanding the marketer–consumer relationship from marketers' side is equally important. Whereas, the articles in this special issue did have some valuable recommendations for the marketers, there need to be studies in the future to know the feasibility of these suggestions. Next, studies that compare and contrast the young consumers from other consumer segments should also be studied. It would help organizations formulate effective strategies for each of the market segments.

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