Emotional Experiences Brand Communities Provide to Users to Brand Influence Loyalty — A Case Study of Xiaomi Brand Community

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Abstract: In recent years, with the improvement of national consumption level, consumers have paid more attention to the added experiences from a brand when choosing products. The emotional experiences provided by brand communities play a crucial role in the formation of brand loyalty. This study takes the Xiaomi brand community as a case study, analyzing the emotional experiences of users in the brand community and their impact on brand loyalty through questionnaires and interviews. The results show that emotional experiences such as sense of resonance, sense of companionship, and sense of being valued have a significant positive effect on brand loyalty, with sense of resonance having the most significant impact. The study also summarizes three key processes that driving function by identification that resonates with the brand, genuine touch from brand's official recognition, and the role of the brand community in upgrading social relationships. Based on the findings, this study proposes practical recommendations for Xiaomi to further develop fan culture, strengthen brand resonance, focus on user needs, improve feedback efficiency, and enhance community building to meet users' social needs in order to foster brand loyalty.

Keywords: Brand Community, Brand Loyalty, Emotional Experience.

1. Introduction

In recent years, with the improvement of national consumption levels, consumers have increasingly paid attention to the added experiences that come with a brand when choosing products. In addition to high-quality products and convenient after-sales service, which are the material experiences provided by merchants, emotional experiences brought by brand communities have also greatly influenced consumers' choices [1]. As a result, many businesses are eager to build their own brand communities. Among them, Xiaomi, with its built-in traffic attributes, is a typical representative, and the enthusiasm of "Mi Fans" is evident. This study aims to analyze the emotional experiences of Xiaomi community users and explore how these emotional experiences affect users' brand loyalty behavior.

Previous studies on the impact of brand communities on brand loyalty often introduce one or more mediating factors, establish corresponding conceptual models, and then use methods such as surveys, interviews, literature collection, and virtual ethnography to obtain experimental data, followed by quantitative analysis to verify the correlation of these brand community-related factors with brand

loyalty [2]. The main mediating factors studied in the literature include community identification, brand identification, social capital, community internal integration, customer fit, and user experience [3-5]. The research samples include various fields such as mobile phone brands, car brands, and sports brands, and the conceptual models tested are generally proven to be valid, offering broad strategies or recommendations.

However, past studies have mainly focused on correlation and regression analyses of variables, lacking research into emotional factors and specific analysis of brand-building strategies and brand philosophies. This may lead to homogenized or overly general strategic suggestions.

This study will take Xiaomi as a specific case, combining its brand development strategies and brand philosophy to observe and analyze its brand community. Questionnaires and interviews with brand community users will focus on emotional experiences and how Xiaomi builds its brand community to foster brand loyalty.

This study is expected to identify the emotional experiences that brand communities can provide to consumers that influence brand loyalty, determine which emotional experiences have a more significant impact on brand loyalty, and explore the processes involved. The findings will offer user-perspective recommendations for brand community development, strengthening the connection between consumers and brands, and helping brands better achieve brand loyalty [6].

2. Research Methodology

2.1. Questionnaire

2.1.1. Preliminary Preparation

To determine the variable dimensions, this study conducted a week-long observation of posts in the Xiaomi community. The content of the posts was coded thematically to identify positive and negative emotional experiences, and to summarize brand loyalty behaviors under different circumstances. Below is a summary of the coding for emotional experiences and brand loyalty behaviors.

In terms of positive emotional experience coding, the following categories were identified: sense of achievement, desire to share, sense of being valued, social needs, sense of companionship, and sense of resonance.

Sense of Achievement can be reflected when users help other users solve technical problems or share their experiences of improving their community level. This sense of achievement provides users with positive feedback, which, to some extent, increases the brand's stickiness and the community's activity level.

Desire to Share can be reflected when users participate in offline Xiaomi fan events and upload group photos or exciting moments from the event to the community. These shares receive feedback from other users, providing emotional value to the sharer and inspiring admiration from the commenters.

Sense of Being Valued can be reflected when users' feedback is responded to by the official brand, expressing their joy at the brand's prompt response and fulfillment of promises. This undoubtedly increases users' trust in the brand and further solidifies their loyalty.

Social Needs can be reflected when users share life snippets or interactions with others, displaying satisfaction in their social connections. Using the brand as a medium to make friends further strengthens the bond between the user and the brand.

Sense of Companionship can be reflected in the deep emotional attachment expressed by loyal users of the brand, who have been using Xiaomi products for many years. These users often mention the long-term companionship with the brand, and the habit of using Xiaomi products creates a sense of attachment.

Sense of Resonance can be reflected when users resonate with other community members regarding certain life experiences or brand philosophies. Such group mutual recognition significantly strengthens the anchor point in users' hearts.

In terms of negative emotional experience coding, the following were identified: dissatisfaction and complaints.

Disappointment can be reflected in users' repeated complaints about mobile signal issues, where users mention that the phone shows full signal strength but no network. This dissatisfaction with product performance can certainly undermine brand loyalty.

Complaints include complaints such as slow system updates or not winning in a lottery. Although these expressions are negative, they are not severe enough to result in user churn.

In terms of brand loyalty behavior coding, the following categories were identified: satisfaction with purchase, repurchase intention, product recommendation, and cross-category trust.

Satisfaction with Purchase means users displaying products within the community, expressing satisfaction, and sharing their expectations for future product releases.

Repurchase Intention means users who plan to replace their devices, specifically expressing a desire for recommendations from other users.

Product Recommendation means users recommending certain mobile phones to others within a price range, indicating their trust and support for the brand.

Cross-Category Trust means users showcasing their Xiaomi smart home devices and expressing support and satisfaction with the brand.

2.1.2. Questionnaire Design

Based on the data obtained from observations and relevant literature, the questionnaire was divided into four sections: Xiaomi community usage, emotional experience dimension scale, brand loyalty behavior scale, and demographic information. Items Q6-Q11 focus on evaluating emotional experiences, while Q12-Q17 assess brand loyalty. All items use a 5-point Likert scale (1 = "Strongly Disagree", 5 = "Strongly Agree"). The questionnaire will be distributed through both official and unofficial Xiaomi online platforms to accurately collect feedback from target users. This data will undergo Pearson correlation coefficient analysis to verify the correlation between emotional experiences and brand loyalty, and to provide quantitative data on the impact of different emotional experiences on brand loyalty, ensuring the objectivity and reliability of the study.

2.2. Interviews

On the basis of the observations and questionnaire, some users will be invited for in-depth interviews. These interviews will take a semi-structured approach and focus on users' emotional experiences and the process of brand loyalty formation. The interviews will explore how emotional experiences influence users' brand loyalty. The results will provide a deeper explanation and background for the quantitative data, helping to understand the role of emotional experiences in brand loyalty, while also identifying potential influencing factors that were not captured in the observations and questionnaires.

3. Research Findings

A total of 126 valid samples were obtained through the distribution of the questionnaire in Xiaomi and Mi Fan topic areas on platforms such as the Xiaomi community, Weibo, and Xiaohongshu, over the course of one week. Samples with completion times of less than 30 seconds, consistent answers, or inconsistent responses to the reverse-scored questions (Q16 and Q17) were excluded.

3.1.   High Correlation between Emotional Experiences and Brand Loyalty Behaviors

To comprehensively analyze the level of brand loyalty, this study conducted correlation analysis on the indicators from Q6-Q11 and Q12-Q17. Pearson correlation coefficient analysis was performed for each emotional experience indicator and the corresponding brand loyalty indicators (see Table 1). As shown in the table, all variables related to emotional experiences and brand loyalty exhibit positive correlations. Except for "Sense of Achievement" and "Dissatisfaction when Switching to Another Brand," as well as "Sense of Achievement" and "Dissatisfaction when Complaining to Others," where the Pearson correlation coefficients were between 0.5 and 0.7, most other variables showed strong positive correlations. Notably, the Pearson correlation coefficient between "Sense of Resonance" and "Willingness to Recommend" was the highest at 0.93.

Table 1: Pearson correlation coefficient table for each emotional experience indicators and the corresponding brand loyalty indicators

Emotional Experience Indicator	Satisfaction with Purchase	Repurchase Intention	Product Recommendation	Cross-Category Trust	Prefer Other Brands When Disappointed	Complain to Others When Disappointed
Sense of Achievement	0.86	0.87	0.74	0.87	0.67	0.67
Desire to Share	0.82	0.80	0.68	0.80	0.71	0.71
Sense of Being Valued	0.81	0.74	0.77	0.74	0.76	0.76
Social Needs	0.88	0.91	0.77	0.91	0.75	0.75
Sense of Companionship	0.88	0.91	0.77	0.91	0.75	0.75
Sense of Resonance	0.87	0.86	0.93	0.86	0.74	0.74

3.2.   Highest Correlation between Sense of Resonance and Brand Loyalty

To further understand the impact of emotional experiences on brand loyalty, the six indicators of brand loyalty were averaged, and Pearson correlation coefficients between each emotional experience and brand loyalty were recalculated (see Table 2). According to the Pearson correlation coefficient results, the correlation between "Sense of Resonance" and the overall brand loyalty indicators was 0.888, which was higher than for other emotional experience indicators.

Table 2: Pearson correlation coefficient table for each emotional experience indicators and brand loyalty

Emotional Experience Indicator	Pearson correlation coefficient with brand loyalty
Sense of Achievement	0.827
Desire to Share	0.798
Sense of Being Valued	0.811
Social Needs	0.877
Sense of Companionship	0.877
Sense of Resonance	0.888

3.3. The Role of Emotional Experiences in Brand Loyalty

Based on three in-depth interviews with Xiaomi brand community users, this study summarizes the processes through which emotional experiences influence brand loyalty from the users' perspective.

3.3.1. Driving Function by Identification that Resonates with the Brand

The interviewees generally expressed strong recognition of the Xiaomi brand, which is reflected in their sense of resonance. They mentioned the charismatic personality of Lei Jun, the brand's value-for-money philosophy, the "Born for Fans" spirit, and how senior members in the community positively influenced new users' brand loyalty. This indicates that such recognition aligns users' positions with the brand, motivating them to support the brand's development voluntarily. For example, Interviewee A said, "Xiaomi's philosophy of letting everyone enjoy the beautiful life brought by technology and always believing that good things are about to happen really struck a chord with me," and "I am genuinely happy for Xiaomi's success." Interviewee B mentioned, "When I was at level 3 in the community, a level 7 senior shared their experience, talking about how difficult it was to reach level 7 and gave me tips, which made me more motivated to log into the Xiaomi community."

3.3.2. Genuine Touch from Brand's Official Recognition

During the interviews, Interviewee A mentioned, "Lei Jun's personal involvement in product development and executives using phones made by their own company demonstrate the brand's sincerity and care for users." Such experiences of being valued by the brand enhanced users' trust in the brand and made them more willing to continue supporting it. Additionally, Interviewee C noted, "When I saw Lei Jun returning a 1999 yuan red envelope as a gift, the group was really touched," and at the end of the interview, Interviewee C invited the interviewer to join their unofficial brand community. This shows that such sincere emotional engagement motivates users to become more loyal to the brand and actively participate in brand promotion and community activities.

3.3.3. Upgrade Social Relationships

Brand communities also play an important role in helping users establish and maintain social relationships. Interviewee C mentioned, "Through the Xiaomi community, I met like-minded friends, especially when it comes to flashing ROMs and other technical matters. We help each other and make progress together." This upgrade in social relationships deepened users' dependence on the brand because they not only gained functional value from the products but also formed new relationships and bonds within the community. Interviewee B also mentioned, "One of my middle school classmates is also a Mi Fan. Through exchanging experiences about flashing ROMs and using devices, our friendship deepened." This social need being met led to spontaneous recommendations by users, further reinforcing brand loyalty.

4. Discussion

4.1. Analysis of Results

The results of this study show that emotional experiences play a significant role in promoting brand loyalty, providing new insights for brand community building. First, sense of resonance, sense of companionship, and sense of being valued have demonstrated significant roles in enhancing brand loyalty. This indicates that emotional resonance between a brand and its users can greatly enhance user loyalty during communication and interaction. Sense of resonance is the most significant factor

affecting brand loyalty, with the highest correlation of 0.888. This suggests that when users resonate with a brand's ideology and values, they are more likely to support the brand and even become voluntary promoters of it.

These results can be interpreted as indicating that emotional factors within brand communities provide users with an emotional connection that goes beyond the product itself, thereby forming brand loyalty. Specifically, for a brand like Xiaomi, which has always built emotional connections with users through its "Born for Fans" philosophy, cost-effective strategies, and Lei Jun's personal charm, this ideological alignment triggers resonance in users, leading them to naturally remain loyal to the brand.

4.2. Suggestions

4.2.1. Deepen Fan Culture and Strengthen Brand Resonance

Since its founding, Xiaomi has been dedicated to creating "Mi Fan culture." Its slogans have consistently emphasized the core idea, maintaining consistency and clarity in its messaging. Through emotional connections and a sense of resonance with users, Xiaomi has successfully built a large base of loyal customers. It is recommended that Xiaomi continue to deepen its emotional ties with its fans. This can be achieved by regularly organizing events such as the "Mi Fan Festival," online live-streaming activities to enhance the alignment between the brand's story and users' values, further fostering a sense of resonance [7]. Other companies can also focus on creating resonance with users in their brand-building processes to better achieve brand loyalty [8].

4.2.2. Focus on User Needs and Improve Feedback Efficiency

User feedback in brand communities is an important bridge for maintaining the relationship between the brand and its users. Xiaomi should further strengthen its user feedback mechanisms to ensure that users' voices are heard and responded to in a timely manner. This will not only enhance users' sense of being valued but also demonstrate the brand's sincerity. Specifically, Xiaomi could improve response times, establish regular user feedback collection activities, and set up dedicated feedback teams to strengthen interaction between the brand and users, thus promoting user loyalty. Brands must make sure that users feel their opinions are valuable and can directly influence the improvement of products and services [9].

4.2.3. Strengthen Community Circle Building and Meet Users' Social Needs

Brand communities are not only spaces for user interaction but also important platforms for meeting users' social needs. Xiaomi should further strengthen the community structure by refining subgroup divisions and creating more niche interest circles. Currently, Xiaomi's community features sub-topics such as photography, outdoor activities, gaming, and public welfare, which have greatly contributed to increasing community engagement [10]. At the same time, Xiaomi should encourage users to share their life experiences and product feedback, deepening the breadth and depth of interactions within the community. This will make the community an integral part of users' daily lives, thus further strengthening brand loyalty. By constructing a richer social ecosystem, Xiaomi can not only solidify its existing user base but also attract new users to join the community.

5. Conclusion

Through the analysis of Xiaomi's phone community, this study concludes that there is a high correlation between emotional experiences within brand communities and brand loyalty. In other words, positive emotional experiences within brand communities can help foster brand loyalty.

Among various emotional experiences, users' sense of achievement, desire to share, sense of being valued, social needs, sense of companionship, and sense of resonance all play significant roles in forming brand loyalty. Sense of resonance is the most crucial factor influencing brand loyalty, with experiences of resonance in brand communities greatly promoting users' loyalty to the brand. This study also describes the process through which emotional experiences help form brand loyalty, showing how resonance drives internal user motivation, how the brand's sincerity leads to reciprocation, and how brand communities and social relationships mutually reinforce each other.

Compared to past research, this study again validates the significant correlation between emotional experiences within brand communities and the development of brand loyalty. Moreover, this study contributes to the deeper exploration of emotional experiences in previous research, attempting to identify which emotional experiences have a significant positive impact on brand loyalty.

However, this study lacks a mature conceptual model as theoretical support, and the research methods using observation and interviews may be subject to subjective influences, potentially leading to bias in the results. Additionally, due to time constraints, the sample size for this study is relatively small, and it did not cover a comprehensive range of users, which led to a somewhat limited user perspective. Future research could expand the sample size to cover a more diverse user group, thereby enhancing the generalizability and representativeness of the findings. Additionally, employing more systematic theories in conjunction with focus groups to identify emotional experience dimensions would reduce subjective bias and improve the objectivity of the research.

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