

# Building brand loyalty through digital marketing: insights from young airline travelers

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## ABSTRACT

*This study explores the influence of digital marketing strategies on brand loyalty among young airline passengers, specifically targeting Millennials and Gen Z individuals aged 18-35 years old. With the increasing reliance on digital channels such as social media, email marketing, and search engine marketing, it is crucial to understand how these strategies impact the customer-brand relationship, brand trust, and ultimately, brand loyalty. The research employs a quantitative approach, gathering data from 230 participants who are frequent users of digital platforms and have recent travel experiences with airlines. The findings reveal that social media marketing has the most significant impact on the customer-brand relationship, followed by email and search engine marketing. Additionally, the study confirms that brand trust acts as a critical mediator between digital marketing activities and brand loyalty. These results highlight the importance of tailored digital marketing strategies for airlines aiming to engage and retain young passengers in a highly competitive industry.*

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## Introduction

The digital revolution has significantly transformed the landscape of marketing, particularly in industries where consumer engagement and loyalty are pivotal for success. The airline industry, characterized by high competition and dynamic consumer behavior, is one such sector that has increasingly leveraged digital marketing strategies to engage with its customers (Awe et al., 2025; Farah & Hacıoglu, 2024; Humza and Hacıoglu, 2023). In particular, young passengers such as Millennials and Generation Z are a key demographic because they are highly skilled with digital technology and have the potential to develop strong, long-term loyalty to brands (Muharam et al., 2024).

Digital marketing channels have become indispensable tools for engaging with consumers and fostering brand loyalty. Major airlines are reported to supplement their marketing approaches and strategies with tech-related and digitalization-related activities, like e-mail marketing, search engine marketing, social media marketing, and technology investment (Gürsoy et al., 2022). According to the study of Dumanlı (2019), the participants primarily utilized the internet to explore social media, watch videos, and listen to music. Also, social media, emails, and websites were the most popular digital channels. Clothes and transport tickets (plane, bus, train, etc.) were the most frequently purchased things over online platforms. Social media utilization habits also had a strong impact on consumer behavior. Digital marketing is seen to be extremely impactful on the consumer buying process, as the millennials are up to date with the technology and digital platforms (Atiyyat, 2020).

Despite the growing body of research on digital marketing, there is a noticeable gap in the literature concerning the specific effects of these strategies on brand loyalty within the airline industry, particularly among younger demographics. Previous studies have

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largely focused on broader consumer segments or specific digital tools, often overlooking the nuanced interactions between different digital marketing strategies and their cumulative impact on brand loyalty and the unique dynamics between different digital marketing channels and brand loyalty (Fetais, et al.,2023; Muharam et al., 2024; Moncey & Baskaran, 2020), particularly among young adults, remain underexplored. This research fills this gap by examining how social media, email, and search engine marketing influence the customer-brand relationship, brand trust, and ultimately, brand loyalty among young airline passengers.

This research examines the effect of digital marketing tools, particularly focusing on social media, e-mail, and search engines on brand loyalty of young airline passengers (Millennials and Gen Z) whose age range is between 18 to 35 years old. The study aims to investigate how social media marketing, email marketing, and search engine marketing influence the customer-brand relationship within this demographic. Furthermore, it seeks to explore the role of brand trust as a mediator, assessing how digital marketing activities enhance trust and, in turn, foster brand loyalty.

The second section presents the theoretical framework and provides a comprehensive review of the relevant literature. Section 3 outlines the methodology, including the chosen approach, data collection, and analysis methods. The fourth section presents the results and offers interpretations of the findings. The following section discusses the implications of the results. The paper concludes with suggestions for future research.

## **Literature Review**

### **Theoretical and Conceptual Background**

This study is based on Consumer Behavior Theory, Relationship Marketing and Commitment-Trust theories. Comprehending the behavior of consumers is essential to acknowledging how digital marketing affects brand loyalty. The theory explores how individuals make decisions, including the influence of marketing strategies, social factors, and personal preferences on purchasing behavior. In the context of airline passengers, analyzing how digital marketing channels shape their choices and loyalty toward specific airline brands is essential. Similarly, according to Bhandari & Bansal's (2019) statistical examination of the evidence, online marketers should focus and create SEO and SMM strategies with the consumer's behavioral models taken into account. The significance of establishing and preserving solid bonds between brands and customers is highlighted by Relationship Marketing theory. Digital marketing tools facilitate continuous engagement and communication, allowing airlines to nurture relationships with young passengers, and potentially fostering stronger brand loyalty. Additionally, the findings of Cardoso et al.'s study (2022) demonstrate the significance of loyalty, satisfaction, and relationships in addition to trust in the decision to consume. Loyalty and trust are the foundation of a brand connection. Long-term beneficial actions will be facilitated and amplified by a brand that evokes powerful emotions in the consumer.

Commitment-trust theory highlights the significance of commitment and trust in establishing and preserving connections between businesses and customers (Morgan and Hunt, 1994). Within the context of e-mail marketing, personalized communication, and targeted offers can foster a sense of trust and commitment among young airline passengers. By delivering relevant content and exclusive deals directly to subscribers' inboxes, airlines can cultivate a sense of exclusivity and appreciation among their customer base. This personalized approach to communication helps to establish trust and commitment, ultimately leading to increased brand loyalty among young passengers who value consistent and reliable engagement from the brand.

### **Empirical Review and Hypothesis Development**

#### **Social Media Marketing and Customer-Brand Relationship**

Social media marketing, in particular, has revolutionized how brands interact with their customers. Through platforms like Instagram, X, Facebook, and TikTok, airlines can engage with young passengers in real-time, creating a sense of community and belonging. Studies have shown that social media engagement significantly enhances customer-brand relationships, which is a critical precursor to brand loyalty. Research by Kim and Ko (2020) highlights the significance of social media marketing's positive influence, in the airline sector, on brand loyalty, which leads to emphasizing the role of user-generated content and social engagement in shaping consumer perceptions and behaviors. The way businesses and customers communicate with one another on social media has changed. People may now share their experiences and thoughts as well as receive information on social media, which has turned into a battlefield (Chatterjee, 2022). These days, a business's social media presence is a crucial tool for its marketing, information sharing, and customer engagement (Karaağaoğlu, & Çiçek, 2019).

Airlines now depend heavily on social media marketing to interact with their customers, especially younger passengers who are active on platforms like Instagram, Twitter, and Facebook. Strong customer-brand relationships can be fostered through social media, according to recent research. Ahmad and Laroche (2017) found that social media engagement greatly increases customer interaction and loyalty. Additionally, Phua, Lin, and Lim (2018) demonstrated that enhancing customer engagement and relations with the company is affected by social media marketing efforts, which eventually have a positive influence on brand loyalty. Based on these information, the following hypothesis was developed.

H1: Social media marketing positively affects customer-brand relationships among young airline passengers.

### **Email Marketing and Customer-Brand Relationship**

Email Marketing, though often perceived as a traditional digital tool, remains highly effective in maintaining personalized communication with customers. Well-crafted email campaigns that offer relevant content, exclusive offers, and personalized recommendations can significantly impact brand loyalty by reinforcing the customer's connection to the brand. Email marketing has been perceived as an undesired and unreliable method of marketing communications to customers. These days, its role has transformed and it has become recognized as one of the best marketing strategies for establishing a company's identity, strengthening customer relationships, making new contacts, and promoting sales (Hudák et al., 2017). Furthermore, research by Li and Wang (2019) corroborates the efficacy of email marketing in enhancing brand loyalty, particularly among millennials who value personalized communication and incentives. Email marketing nevertheless remains a very powerful channel for maintaining customer relationships and delivering personalized content. Studies have shown that well-crafted email campaigns can significantly impact customer loyalty by providing relevant information, promotions, and personalized offers. McCormick (2018) highlighted that email marketing enhances customer engagement and loyalty by offering personalized communication tailored to customer preferences. Furthermore, Sudha and Sheena (2017) concluded that targeted email marketing campaigns are highly effective in fostering strong customer-brand relationships, as they maintain direct and personalized communication channels. Therefore, the following hypothesis was formulated:

H2: Email marketing positively affects customer-brand relationships among young airline passengers.

### **Search Engine Marketing and Customer-Brand Relationship**

Search Engine Marketing which includes both Search Engine Optimization (SEO) and Pay-Per-Click (PPC) advertising, is crucial for ensuring brand visibility at critical touch points in the consumer journey. By appearing in search results when consumers are actively looking for travel options, airlines can influence decision-making and enhance brand recall, contributing to long-term loyalty. It is significant for businesses to rank highly in search engines. Customers typically consider the site that appears first in searches to be reliable, which is one of the primary causes of this (Akgün, 2022). Search engine marketing (SEM) acts as a very fundamental part of enhancing the visibility of the brand and making traffic to airline websites. SEM consists of both pay-per-click (PPC) advertising and search engine optimization (SEO). Recent empirical evidence suggests that effective SEM strategies can enhance brand awareness and foster stronger customer-brand connections. Chaffey and Smith (2020) emphasized that SEM significantly influences consumer decision-making processes by improving brand visibility and credibility. Similarly, Batra and Keller (2019) found that PPC advertising not only drives immediate traffic but also contributes to long-term brand building and customer loyalty. Thus, we formulated the following hypothesis:

H3: Search engine marketing positively affects customer-brand relationships among young airline passengers.

### **Brand Trust and its Relationship with Digital Marketing and Brand Loyalty**

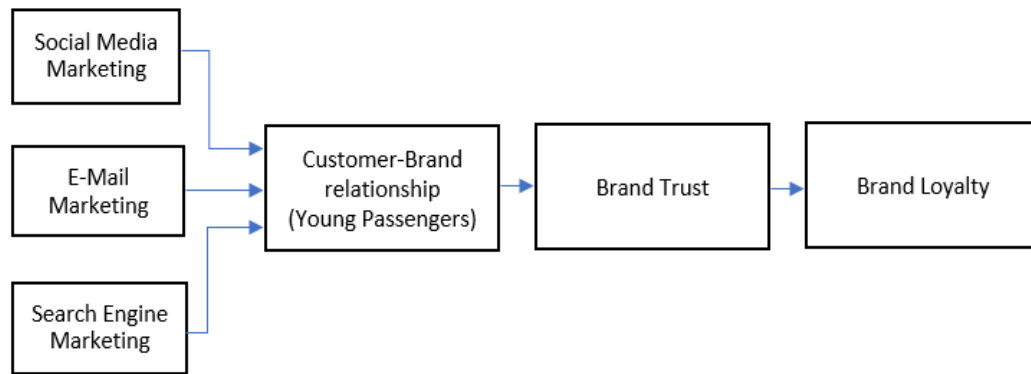
Both brand awareness and brand equity's image are significantly impacted by trust. It has previously been demonstrated that trust plays a critical role in building brand equity and that consumer purchasing intentions are directly impacted by brand equity. This demonstrates how social media-generated e-WOM significantly affects airline brand equity via trust (Seo et al., 2020). As Coşkun (2016) stated that the utilization of digital marketing platforms and channels has a substantial effect on raising awareness of brands among consumers. Additionally, the studies of Kim & Park and Jang (Kim & Park, 2013; Jang, 2005) (as cited in Almali, 2015) researchers found that the trust factor has the greatest influence on factors related to word-of-mouth and intention to purchase. They proposed that "If e-commerce firms can convince consumers to trust them, then the consumers respond by showing favourable purchase or WOM intentions". Lastly, "trust is the crucial factor for consumer loyalty. Brand loyalty is one of the main factors that helps to understand the relationship that is established between the consumer and the brand" (Cardoso et al., 2022). The mediation function of brand trust in the connection between digital marketing strategies and brand loyalty has also been the subject of empirical research. Kim and Ko (2020) discovered that social media marketing involvement increases customer brand trust, which subsequently boosts brand loyalty. This suggests a sequential relationship wherein digital marketing activities foster trust, which subsequently leads to increased brand loyalty. Consequently, the following hypothesis is proposed:

H4: Brand trust is positively affected by young passengers' engagement/experience through digital marketing activities.

Brand loyalty is more accurately defined as a decision-making unit's habit of consistently purchasing goods or services from a business when customers are committed to a particular brand, have a positive view toward it, and plan to keep buying it (Haudi et al., 2022). As stated by (Chou et al., 2023) that in order to improve customer loyalty, commitment and trust are both very necessary. In order to enhance customer-brand interactions, airline marketers ought to create interactive SMMEs programs and motivate consumers to participate with airline brands on social media, since this will increase brand loyalty on Facebook pages (Aljuhmami et al., 2022). Moreover, the study of Boubker & Naoui (2022) stated that brand loyalty and brand love are anticipated by the satisfaction of passengers. Furthermore, these findings demonstrate that favorable word-of-mouth and brand loyalty are significantly enhanced by brand love. However, although consumer satisfaction has the most direct impact on client loyalty, apparently it is not the only factor that predicts loyalty (Akamavi et al., 2015). Li and Wang (2019) demonstrated that customers are more inclined to show loyalty behaviors like positive WOM, repeat purchases, and favorable recommendations when they consider a brand to have higher levels of trust. Building upon this finding, we proposed the following hypothesis:

H5: Brand trust positively influences brand loyalty among young airline passengers.

The research model showing the relationships specified in the hypotheses is presented in Figure 1.



**Figure 1:** Research Model of the Study

## Research and Methodology

### Data Collection and Sampling

A questionnaire has been conducted as a data collection method. Thus, data was collected using an online questionnaire distributed through social media platforms and email lists. The survey included items measured on a 5-point Likert scale, assessing the frequency and impact of digital marketing interactions, the strength of the customer-brand relationship, and levels of brand trust and loyalty. The questionnaire was prepared in three different languages (English, Turkish, and Arabic) to get many various perspectives from different nationalities/countries about the topic of the study. The sample of the research consists of young individuals who utilize the internet actively and travel by air transport/airlines departing from both Istanbul and Sabiha Gökçen Airports. The study targets young airline passengers aged 18-35 years old, who are active users of digital platforms and have recent travel experiences. This age group was chosen due to their high engagement with digital media and their potential for long-term brand loyalty.

The questionnaire was completed with 250 participants who are actively using the internet and had traveled using any airline companies from Istanbul and Sabiha Gökçen Airports. However, the study focuses on the young airline passengers whose age is between 18 to 35 years old. Therefore, 20 responses were omitted from the collected data set since 6 responses were from participants who were under 18 years old and another 14 were from participants who were 36 years old and older. Consequently, the analysis was performed on the 230 responses from the participants of the target group. The responses to the survey that have been gathered from the participants have been evaluated and investigated by using the SPSS (Statistical Package for the Social Science) software program. The analysis included reliability tests using Cronbach's Alpha, descriptive statistics to summarize participant characteristics, Pearson correlation analysis to explore relationships between variables, and regression analysis to test the hypotheses.

## Findings and Discussions

### Demographic Data of Participants

total of 250 responses were collected: 97 from the English survey, 62 from the Turkish survey, and 91 from the Arabic survey. Table 1 shows the results of demographics. The demographic analysis revealed that 52.4% of respondents were male, and 47.6% were female. The majority (92%) of participants fell within the target age range of 18-35 years. Additionally, 55.6% of respondents were residents of Turkey, with the remaining participants residing in various countries, including Germany, the Netherlands, and the United States. The highest percentage for travel frequency is for people who travel less than once a year, which is 31.6% while the percentage of participants who travel between 1 to 3 times a year is 30.8%. The percentages get lower when the travel frequencies get higher as shown below. This is most probably due to the young ages of the participants. Additionally, the distribution of the participants' country residences has also been examined. The highest number of participants who have the same country residence is 139, where they all live in Turkey with a percentage of 55.6% while the other participants live in many different countries such as Germany, the Netherlands, Sweden, Gambia, India, Iraq, Syria, Jordan, Egypt, UAE, Qatar, Bahrain, UK, USA, Uzbekistan, Azerbaijan, Russia, Iran, Lebanon, Libya, and Palestine with small varying proportions for each.

**Table 1:** Demographics Results

Variable	Characteristics	Frequency	Percentage
Age	under 18	6	2.4
	18 – 25	98	39.2
	26– 35	132	52.8
	36– 45	7	2.8
	Over 46	7	2.8
Gender	Female	119	47.6
	Male	131	52.4
Travel frequency in the last four years	Less than once a year	79	31.6
	1 – 3 times a year	77	30.8
	4 – 6 times a year	48	19.2
	More than 6 times a year	46	18.4
	Less than once a year	79	31.6

The reliability analysis confirmed the internal consistency of the survey items, with Cronbach's Alpha values exceeding the recommended threshold of 0.7 for all constructs. Social Media Marketing ( $\alpha = 0.886$ ), Email Marketing ( $\alpha = 0.817$ ), and Search Engine Marketing ( $\alpha = 0.745$ ) demonstrated high reliability, ensuring the validity of the results. Furthermore, as it can be pointed out from Table 2 that in the Reliability Statistics, the Cronbach's Alpha's value is 0.915 which implies that the study questionnaire's reliability is 91.5% and also as it is indicated by the values of the Cronbach's Alpha in Table 4.5. that there every item on the scales has a very high consistency level.

**Table 2:** Reliability analysis

Factors	Scale Format	Cronbach Alpha
Social Media Marketing	LRF	0.886
E-Mail Marketing	LRF	0.817
Search Engine Marketing	LRF	0.745
Customer-Brand Relationship	LRF	0.856
Brand Trust	LRF	0.771
Brand Loyalty	LRF	0.899

**Notes:** LRF - Likert Response Format (Five point: 1=strongly disagree to 5=strongly agree)

Descriptive Analysis facilitates the understanding of the main key features of the data by allowing the data to be presented in a meaningful way and to identify patterns or trends. Therefore, the below Table 3 Descriptive analysis provides the main qualities of the variables of the study's dataset such as mean, range, standard deviation, variance, etc. The data in the table examines the effects of digital marketing strategies on young consumers. Social media marketing (mean 3.40) and e-mail marketing (mean 3.54) were generally evaluated as neutral and partially positive, but both strategies had high standard deviations (1.33), indicating different opinions among the participants. Search engine marketing (mean 4.03) left a more positive impression compared to the other factors and created a more consistent effect with a low standard deviation (1.00). Customer-brand relationship and brand loyalty, both with a mean of 3.83, indicate the establishment of strong ties, while brand trust (mean 3.77) was generally evaluated positively, but it is understood that the perception of trust differs among the participants (standard deviation: 1.13). As a result, the effect of digital marketing strategies varies according to consumer groups, some strategies create a more homogeneous effect, while others reveal more diverse opinions. These findings emphasize that digital marketing practices should be structured in a more segmented and target-oriented manner.

**Table 3:** Descriptive analysis

Factors	N	Range	Min.	Max.	Mean	Std. Deviation	Variance
Social MediaMarketing	230	4.00	1.00	5.00	3.4000	1.32938	1.767
Email Marketing	230	4.00	1.00	5.00	3.5413	1.33128	1.772
Search Engine Marketing	230	4.00	1.00	5.00	4.0326	1.00110	1.002
Customer Brand Relationship	230	3.83	1.17	5.00	3.8319	.94730	.897
Brand Trust	230	4.00	1.00	5.00	3.7717	1.13069	1.278
Brand Loyalty	230	4.00	1.00	5.00	3.8278	1.02353	1.048

The Pearson correlation analysis revealed a strong positive relationship between social media marketing and the customer-brand relationship ( $r = 0.760$ ,  $p < 0.001$ ). This suggests that increased engagement through social media significantly enhances the bond between young passengers and airline brands, supporting Hypothesis 1. Email marketing also showed a significant positive correlation with the customer-brand relationship ( $r = 0.732$ ,  $p < 0.001$ ). The results indicate that personalized email campaigns are effective in strengthening customer-brand bonds, validating Hypothesis 2. While still significant, the correlation between search engine marketing and the customer-brand relationship was slightly weaker ( $r = 0.581$ ,  $p < 0.001$ ). This finding suggests that while SEM is important, its impact on the customer-brand relationship may be less direct compared to social media and email marketing, affirming Hypothesis 3. The analysis confirmed that brand trust plays a mediating role between digital marketing activities and brand loyalty. A strong positive correlation was found between customer-brand relationships and brand trust ( $r = 0.809$ ,  $p < 0.001$ ), as well as between brand trust and brand loyalty ( $r = 0.770$ ,  $p < 0.001$ ). These results support Hypotheses 4 and 5, highlighting the critical role of trust in fostering brand loyalty.

The research model and hypotheses were tested through linear regression. The results were represented in Table 4. In the first model, Social Media Marketing (SMM), Email Marketing (EMM) and Search Engine Marketing (SEM) have significant effects on Customer Brand Relationship (CBR). SMM has the strongest effect on CBR with a Beta value of 0.412, while EMM (Beta = 0.309) and SEM (Beta = 0.240) also have significant effects. Since the F-value of this model is 49.865 and the p-value is 0.000, the overall significance of the model is high and it is determined that these marketing strategies affect CBR. In the second model, Customer Brand Relationship (CBR) has a very strong effect on Brand Trust (BT). The beta value is 0.809 and the t-value is 20.754, which shows that the effect of CBR on BT is quite large and statistically significant. Since the F-value of the model is 22.180 and the p-value is 0.000, the effect of CBR on IT is strongly confirmed. In the third model, Brand Trust (BT) has a strong effect on Brand Loyalty (BL). The effect of BT on BL is significant with a beta value of 0.770 and a t-value of 18.222. This model also indicates a strong relationship with an F-value of 48.611 and a p-value of 0.000.

**Table 4:** Results of Regression Analysis

Model	Independent Variables	Dependent Variables	Std. B	T Value	F Value	Model Sig.
1	Media Marketing	Customer Brand Relationship	.412	6.975	49.865	0.000
	Email Marketing		.309	5.273		
	Search Engine Marketing		.240	5.496		
2	Customer Brand Relationship	Brand Trust	.809	20.754	22.180	0.000
3	Brand Trust	Brand Loyalty	.770	18.222	48.611	0.000

These results show that marketing strategies are effective in increasing customer brand relationship, brand trust and brand loyalty and that these variables strongly influence each other.

According to the results of the analysis, all proposed hypotheses are accepted (Table 5).

**Table 5:** Hypotheses Results

Hypothesis	Result
H1: Social media marketing positively affects customer-brand relationships among young airline passengers.	Accepted
H2: Email marketing positively affects customer-brand relationships among young airline passengers.	Accepted
H3: Search engine marketing positively affects customer-brand relationships among young airline passengers.	Accepted
H4: Brand trust is positively affected by young passengers' engagement/experience through digital marketing activities.	Accepted
H5: Brand trust positively affects brand loyalty among young airline passengers.	Accepted

The table displays the outcomes of hypothesis testing concerning the influence of diverse digital marketing methods on customer-brand interactions, brand trust, and brand loyalty among young airline travellers. The study examines five principal hypotheses, all of which have been affirmed, demonstrating robust empirical evidence for the suggested links.

The initial three hypotheses (H1, H2, and H3) examine distinct digital marketing strategies—social media marketing, email marketing, and search engine marketing—and their impact on customer-brand connections. The endorsement of these hypotheses indicates that youthful airline passengers react favourably to digital marketing initiatives, so affirming that these channels successfully engage and cultivate relationships between airlines and their clientele. This discovery underscores the increasing significance of digital interaction within the airline sector, especially among younger demographics who are notably active on digital platforms.

The fourth hypothesis (H4) examines the influence of brand trust, highlighting that the involvement and experiences of young passengers via digital marketing substantially affect their trust in an airline brand. This outcome highlights the need of establishing relevant and engaging digital interactions, as trust is essential for cultivating enduring consumer connections. Airlines that adeptly employ digital marketing methods to enhance the consumer experience can bolster trust and elevate overall brand reputation.

The approval of H5 ultimately validates that brand trust is a fundamental determinant of brand loyalty among young airline travellers. This discovery corroborates prior studies indicating that trust is an essential element of client retention. When passengers cultivate trust in an airline via favourable digital interactions and experiences, they are more inclined to exhibit loyalty and select the same airline for subsequent travel. This observation underscores the necessity for airlines to prioritise trust-building measures in their digital marketing strategy to foster enduring customer connections.

The table presents compelling evidence that digital marketing techniques significantly influence customer-brand interactions, augment brand trust, and cultivate brand loyalty among young airline travellers. The findings indicate that airlines ought to prioritise the optimisation of their digital marketing strategies across various channels to foster trust and sustain consumer loyalty in a progressively competitive sector.

## **onclusion**

The emergence of digital marketing has revolutionized the world and influenced many industries including the aviation industry, offering airline companies new and innovative ways to involve with their passengers and develop brand loyalty. Digital marketing has become a crucial strategy for airlines seeking to catch and keep the attention of their possible customers.

This research provides significant elements from the examinations of digital marketing, particularly focusing on social media marketing, e-mail marketing, and search engine marketing, and their influence on brand loyalty among the young generation. The results revealed that there is a positive influence of social media marketing on the customer-brand relationship (H1) highlighting the critical importance of engaging young passengers through interactive and relatable content on social media channels. This suggests that young passengers are highly responsive to engaging and interactive content on social media platforms, which helps build a stronger connection with the brand. Social media's ability to create a sense of community and direct communication has proven essential in strengthening these relationships. The positive impact of e-mail marketing on customer-brand relationships (H2) emphasizes the effectiveness of personalized and targeted communication. Email campaigns that deliver relevant and timely information enhance the engagement of the customers as well as build a greater and deeper emotional connection between the brand and its young consumers. The acceptance of the hypothesis that search engine marketing positively affects customer-brand relationships (H3) demonstrates the importance of high visibility and accessibility in search results and targeted advertisements increase brand awareness and perceived relevance, thereby strengthening the association among young passengers and the airline brand. SEM helps airlines capture the interest of potential customers at the moment they are actively seeking travel information. By optimizing their websites for search engines and investing in targeted search ads, airlines can attract more traffic to their digital platforms and convert these visits into bookings. Moreover, the research confirmed that brand trust is significantly bolstered by young passengers' engagement and experiences through digital marketing activities (H4). This finding indicates that positive and consistent digital interactions build trust, which is a fundamental component of long-term brand loyalty. Lastly, the study found that brand trust positively influences brand loyalty among young airline passengers (H5). This relationship highlights the significant role of trust as a mediator between digital marketing efforts and brand loyalty. Reputable companies have a higher chance of keeping loyal customers who repeatedly choose their services over competitors.

Nevertheless, among the three analyzed digital marketing activities, social media marketing exerts the most significant impact on the customer-brand relationship. Ranking in order of effectiveness, social media marketing is foremost, then after that email marketing, with search engine marketing occupying the third position regarding efficiency. The study confirmed that brand trust is significantly enhanced by young passengers' engagement and experiences through digital marketing activities. Furthermore, brand trust was found to be a key determinant of brand loyalty. These results underscore the significance of trust-building strategies in digital marketing efforts for young customers. The study's findings have many applications for marketers in the aviation industry that are aiming to enhance brand loyalty among young airline passengers. Airlines should invest in creating engaging and interactive content specifically on social media channels since it is one of the most effective marketing tools that influences the young generation the most. Strategies such as user-generated content, influencer partnerships, and real-time customer service can help foster stronger customer-brand relationships.

Personalized email marketing campaigns that offer relevant and timely information can significantly improve customer engagement and attract more customers to the brand. To enhance the impact of their email marketing campaigns, airline firms should put more of

emphasis on segmentation and targeted messaging. Focusing more and spending on search engine marketing (SEM) and search engine optimization (SEO) could improve the airline's visibility and accessibility to potential customers. This is very essential for capturing the attention of young passengers who rely heavily on search engines for information. As a result of the positive influence of digital marketing activities on brand trust, airlines should prioritize building and maintaining brand trust. This can be achieved through transparent communication, consistent brand messaging, and delivering on promises. Airlines should also ensure that their digital marketing efforts are not only engaging but also trustworthy, providing reliable information and addressing customer concerns promptly since trust is a crucial mediator that can significantly enhance brand loyalty. The positive correlation between brand trust and brand loyalty underscores the need for a customer-centric approach in digital marketing strategies. Airlines should prioritize customer satisfaction and trust by offering high-quality services, transparent communication, and personalized experiences through their digital platforms. Airline companies should invest more in advanced digital marketing technologies and analytics to better understand customer behavior and preferences. This investment will allow them to perform more personalized marketing activities, which have been indicated to significantly impact brand trust and loyalty, especially among the young generation.

The research focuses on young airline passengers aged 18 to 36, which may not fully capture the diversity of the broader airline passenger demographic. While this age group is significant for understanding digital marketing impacts, the findings may not be generalizable to older passengers who may have different digital engagement patterns and brand loyalty behaviors. The research uses self-reported information gathered using surveys, which can be inclined toward social desirability bias. Instead of expressing their own beliefs or actions, respondents may give responses they feel are more socially acceptable or positive. This could potentially skew the results, particularly in areas concerning personal engagement with digital marketing and perceived brand trust. The study's cross-sectional design offers a momentary perspective, at a single point in time, on the correlation between digital marketing and brand loyalty. This approach limits the ability to infer causality or observe changes over time. Longitudinal studies would be more effective in examining how digital marketing efforts impact brand loyalty and trust over extended periods. The study focuses specifically on social media marketing, e-mail marketing, and search engine marketing. While these channels are crucial, other significant digital marketing avenues such as influencer marketing, mobile app marketing, and content marketing (blogs, podcasts, etc.) are not examined. This narrow focus may overlook other impactful strategies contributing to customer-brand relationships and loyalty. The research may also be limited by geographical and cultural factors, as digital marketing effectiveness and brand loyalty can vary significantly across different regions and cultural contexts. The study does not account for these variations, possibly restricting the results' applicability globally. Digital marketing's effect on brand loyalty might vary significantly across different airline brands, depending on their existing brand strength, reputation, and marketing capabilities. This study does not differentiate between different airline brands, potentially overlooking brand-specific factors that could influence the outcomes. The study measures engagement through perceived experiences and self-reported interactions but does not include specific behavioral metrics like conversion rates, actual usage data, or click-through rates. Including such metrics could provide a more comprehensive understanding of how digital marketing activities influence brand trust and loyalty.

Future research should consider exploring additional digital marketing tools beyond social media, e-mail, and search engine marketing. Platforms like video marketing on YouTube, influencer marketing on platforms like Instagram and TikTok, and evolving technologies such as virtual reality (VR) and augmented reality (AR) could deliver a deeper understanding of their impact on customer-brand relationships and brand loyalty among young airline passengers. Future studies could compare the impact of digital marketing on different age groups like within the young passenger demographic (e.g., Gen Z vs. Millennials). This will provide a more comprehensive understanding of how specific sub-groups react to different digital marketing strategies. Considering the global nature of the airline industry, future research should investigate digital marketing's impact on brand loyalty across different cultural contexts. This would assist airline companies in shaping their digital marketing strategies to various cultural preferences and expectations. Performing longitudinal studies will let the researchers to perceive, detect and track changes in customer-brand relationships, brand trust, and brand loyalty over several years, providing insights into the long-term effects and the sustainability of digital marketing strategies. Future research could incorporate behavioral analytics to evaluate actual customer-performing behavior in response to digital marketing activities. This could contain tracking engagement metrics, click-through rates, and conversion rates to give a more objective measure of the significant value of digital marketing tools.

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**Conflicts of Interest:** The authors declare no conflict of interest.



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