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THE ANTECEDENTS OF CONSUMER LOYALTY IN THE BOOK RETAIL INDUSTRY: A DATA ENVELOPMENT ANALYSIS AND STRUCTURAL EQUATION MODELLING PERSPECTIVE

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ABSTRACT

Consumer Loyalty is truly intriguing. The psychological state of a consumer influences their repurchase decision. A consumer who is delighted with his/overall shopping experience is likely to exhibit loyalty to a particular store. This study aims to identify the key antecedents affecting Consumer Loyalty in Book retail industry (physical vs ecommerce shopping formats). To achieve the same a structured questionnaire has been developed and circulated among 130 respondents based out of Kolkata. Based on the responses so received only 103 responses has been deemed fit for the study and the rest has been filtered out. A PCA has been done separately for both the shopping formats and the common factors so obtained has been extracted. The common factors so obtained are Product Quality, Convenience, Customer Care, Customer Delight, Service Dependability, Look. Using these common factors a Structural Equation Modeling has been done to identify the degree of influence the factors on the outcome variable that is Loyalty along with mediation effects of independent variables. Customer Delight is found to have mediating effect on Loyalty. Finally, a DEA analysis has been performed to compare which format of shopping fared better than the other in terms of Product Quality, Convenience, Customer Care, Customer Delight, Service Dependability, Look. Based on the results so obtained conclusions and managerial implications of the study has been discussed.

KEYWORDS: *Consumer Loyalty, Book retail industry, Customer Delight, Structural Equation Modeling, DEA Analysis*

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INTRODUCTION

Consumer loyalty to this date remains an unpredictable and elusive topic. Most researchers argue that total satisfaction is an important precursor to Loyalty. Nonetheless, marketing literature is teeming with such analysis and still Consumer Loyalty poses an enigma to academicians' and marketers alike owing to its abstract nature. While there has been instances with some of the world's most renowned brands like Apple who have successfully created a faithful consumer base and retained so, many have failed or have been obliterated from the market. The reflections by Oliver in his famous study "Whence Consumer Loyalty?" that appeared in the AMA Journal in 1999, remains unsorted till date. While the categorization of Loyalty into Cognitive, Affective, Conative and Action strata still is the most relevant framework to understand Loyalty, it does exhibit several shades. This study aims to deconstruct Consumer Loyalty to determine the

antecedents of Loyalty. It takes cues and attempts to study the differences in customer Loyalty to two different retail formats: Traditional versus ecommerce stores in consumers when they buy hobby books. With the ecommerce industry growing leaps and bounds with every passing year, traditional retail formats are facing tough competition to avoid obsolesce. In this particular study the Book retailing industry has been chosen owing to scarcity of available literature. A questionnaire using a five point Likert scale has been developed for the purpose and distributed among respondents in Kolkata.

Based on the responses so received the study aims to establish a model to examine the effects of the servqual and service marketing mix elements on the resultant customer loyalty variable along with the mediation effects of independent variables (if any) on customer loyalty. It also tries to determine which independent variables are predominantly more efficient than the others in determining customer loyalty in both the shopping formats.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Servqual Model and Customer Loyalty

The impact of service quality on customer loyalty has been measured among local Saudi banks in Riyadh where 422 individuals transacting in 5 local banks have been interviewed and it has been established that improving servqual elements like empathy, assurance and reliability can significantly improve customer loyalty (Albarq, 2013). It has also established that improving the above components of servqual model can increase the customer satisfaction which in turn increases the customer loyalty. A separate study on the patients of Army medical centers in West Malaysia has re-confirmed that servqual elements such as tangible, reliability, responsiveness, assurance and empathy has a high degree of correlation on customer loyalty (Ismail & Yunan, 2016). A study on impact of service quality, trust and customer satisfaction on customers loyalty of 304 customers who access the services of major private telecommunication has proposed a conceptual model that has established a positive relationship between customer trust, customer loyalty and servqual model (Akbar & Parvez, 2009). A separate study on commercial airline industry has quoted that often the perceived levels of service quality are lower than expected levels of service quality impacting the customer loyalty (Ostrowski, O'Brien & Gordon, 1993). Customer service, pricing structure and billing system are the components of service quality that significantly impact customer loyalty positively (Santouridis & Trivellas, 2010).

Service Marketing Mix

A conceptual review paper on service marketing mix states that the fundamental concept of marketing comprises of a set of controllable marketing tools that a company can use at its disposition to elicit the required response from the target market (Khan, 2014). The term was first coined by the American Marketing Association at the 1953 Presidential Address. Initially a study on Marketing Mix elements singled out 4P's product, price, place of distribution, and promotion (McCarthy, 1960). Later, 3 more elements Personnel, Physical Evidence and Process were added to the marketing mix in order to incorporate service sector (Muala & Qurneh 2012). A study analyzed the hypotheses on price, promotion, location, product, physical asset displayed lesser than average status while hypothesis on personnel element has been rejected (Jain, 2013). A study among UK and EU marketing academics revealed that there is a general sense of high degree of dissatisfaction with the 4Ps of marketing with a high degree of acceptance for 7Ps framework as a generic marketing mix in the respondents belonging to both the groups (Ahmed, 1995). A cross-sectional study of patients assigned to 6 hospitals in Iran (3 private hospitals and 3 corporate public hospitals) inferred that physical environment and people of the 7Ps model had better status

respectively while promotion fared very badly (Ravangard, Khodadad & Bastani, 2020). Another interesting study conducted in South Africa presented a new marketing mix based on the opinions of MBA students towards initiatives taken by B-schools in marketing themselves. Based on the factor analyzed data seven quite distinct factors in the marketing activities emerged of which people, promotion, and price belonged to the traditional marketing mix while program, prominence, prospectus, and premiums were inferred as new elements of marketing mix in higher education (Ivy, 2008). Thus, in the modern context the 7Ps of service marketing mix have emerged as the most accepted concept across different sectors both by the industry and academia alike.

Service Marketing Mix and Consumer Loyalty

Consumer Loyalty happens to be one of the most intriguing yet elusive topics in marketing research. While there is no dearth of literature on Consumer Loyalty, it consistently remains an abstract concept till date. Perhaps the only plausible meaning to Consumer Loyalty that holds relevance in today's marketing world has been famously stated in the study, "Whence Consumer Loyalty?" (Oliver,1999).It has categorized Loyalty into Cognitive, Affective, Conative and action subcomponents. Time and again researchers have identified satisfaction and repeat purchases as the major precursors to Loyalty. However, it remains a subject of debate due to observed aberrations in consumer purchasing behavior due to the abstract nature of the concept of Loyalty. A study on university students' loyalty has identified that perceived academic quality, perceived administrative quality, physical facilities, student satisfaction, university image, and university switching cost are the major determinants of student loyalty (Ahmed & Ali, 2018). The 7Ps of service marketing popularly known as the marketing mix variables have been subject to intense scrutiny to understand their effect on Consumer loyalty. For instance, a study on the effect of service marketing mix on customer loyalty towards Garuda Indonesia, an airline company argues that the former has significant influence on the latter variable (Gunawan, 2015). Research on 180 traditional market consumers in Indonesia concluded that the level of Marketing Mix implementation value was 74.07% with stress on People element (Anjani, 2018). Passenger satisfaction acts as a mediator between the Service Marketing Mix and Customer Loyalty (Ganesan, 2016). An exploratory study on the attributes of young consumers' favorite retail shops attempts to identify and assess the relative importance of "hard" and "soft" aspects of marketing mix that appeal to the consumer segment belonging to the age group of 19 – 39 years (Chan & Yip, 2012). By deliberating on the concepts of satisfaction and emotional quotient a study conducted in three supermarkets in Sri Lanka revealed that Retail Service Quality positively influenced Customer Loyalty (Sivapalan, 2017).

RESEARCH OBJECTIVES

- To ascertain the most significant factors affecting the loyalty of consumers shopping for books from physical bookstores versus e-commerce websites.
- To check whether there is any mediation/moderation between the independent variable(s) and the resultant dependant variable consumer loyalty.
- To perform a comparative analysis of the common factors obtained from the results of factor analysis (for both the shopping formats) to develop a model on consumer loyalty.
- To determine the most efficient antecedents that predominantly affect Loyalty via appropriate analyses.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

To achieve the above objectives, data has been collected from primary sources such as survey interviews. For achieving the purpose a structured questionnaire has been developed and distributed among 130 respondents based out of Kolkata. Of the responses so received only 103 responses have been deemed fit for the study and the rest have been filtered out due to non – conformity with the structure of data. The data so obtained has been subjected to an exploratory analysis using SPSS 17. The variables so singled out both in case of responses for Physical Bookstore and Ecommerce stores have been compared and the common variables have been extracted for the purpose of developing a model on Loyalty using Structural Equation Modeling.

The SEM analysis has been used to identify the degree of influence the antecedents have on the outcome variable as well mediating effects of other variables (if any). To further determine the efficiency of the antecedents, a DEA has been performed on the independent variables to identify which are the most efficient variables that have a significant impact on the resultant variable. The above analyses have been done using SPSS, Smart PLS and RStudio.

DATA ANALYSIS

To check the consistency of the data, the responses have been recorded in SPSS and the Cronbach alpha and PCA for the responses recorded for shopping experiences from Physical Bookstores have been tested.

The value is shown as 0.931which indicates that the data is consistent and reliable. Before conducting the PCA a KMO measure and Bartlet's test of Sphericity test has been conducted to test the adequacy of the sample. In case of the responses recorded for Physical Bookstores the KMO is 0.858 and Bartlett's test of Sphericity is statistically significant. A KMO measure above 0.70 is considered acceptable and deemed fit for further analysis. From the Total Variance explained table it is evident that by the time the fourth factor has been loaded almost 72% of the variance has been explained. A visual inspection of the Scree plot so obtained it can be inferred that the function starts leveling approximately at the fourth component. Hence, it can be inferred that enough variance might be gained by including the first four components of the data set.

The results are pictorially depicted in the table below:

Table 1: Summary Table for Physical Store

KMO	
Reliability Statistics	**KMO and Bartlett's Test** Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin Measure of Sampling Adequacy. .858 Bartlett's Test of Sphericity — Approx. Chi-Square 2306.987; df 300; Sig. .000
Measureand Bartlet'sTest of Sphericity	

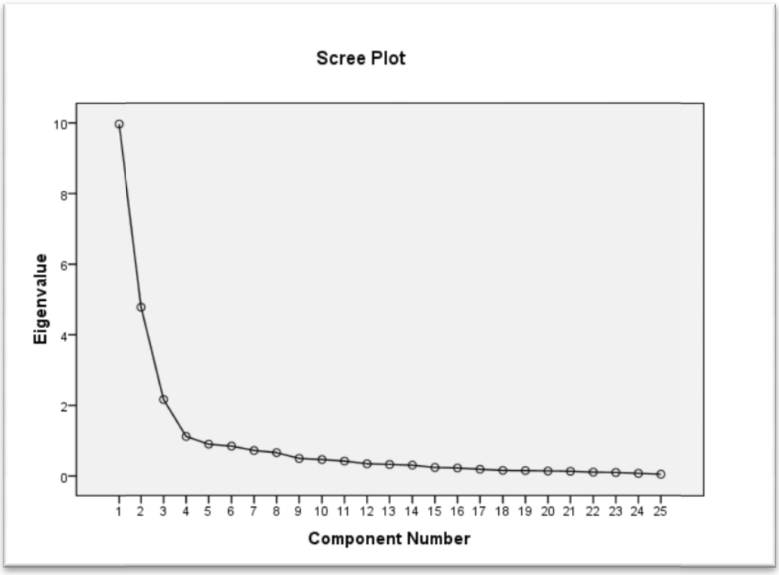
Total Variance explained

Total Variance Explained

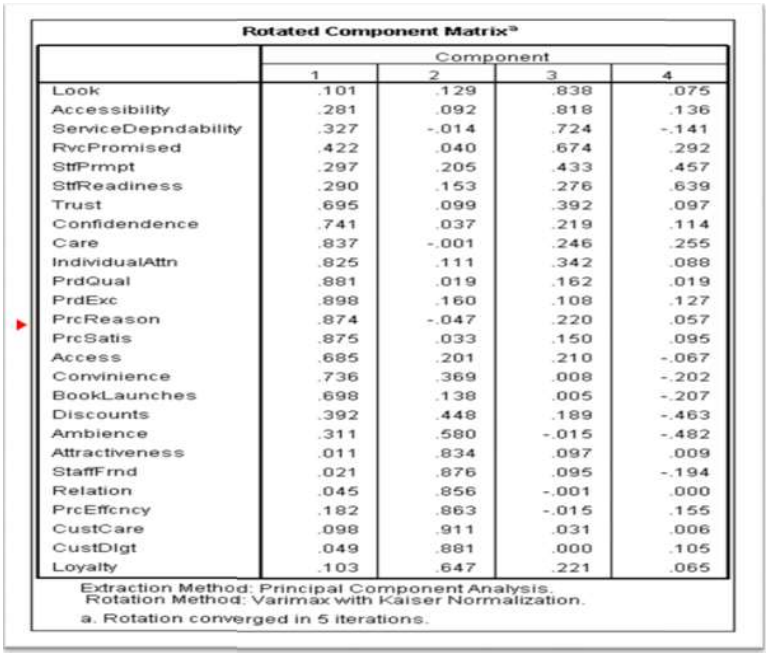
Component	Initial Eigenvalues			Extraction Sums of Squared Loadings			Rotation Sums of Squared Loadings		
	Total	% of Variance	Cumulative %	Total	% of Variance	Cumulative %	Total	% of Variance	Cumulative %
1	9.968	39.874	39.874	9.968	39.874	39.874	7.827	31.308	31.308
2	4.774	19.096	58.970	4.774	19.096	58.970	5.446	21.784	53.091
3	2.161	8.644	67.614	2.161	8.644	67.614	3.259	13.037	66.128
4	1.116	4.465	72.079	1.116	4.465	72.079	1.488	5.951	72.079
5	.896	3.585	75.663						
6	.842	3.367	79.030						
7	.717	2.870	81.900						
8	.656	2.624	84.523						
9	.492	1.969	86.492						
10	.462	1.847	88.339						
11	.419	1.674	90.013						
12	.341	1.366	91.379						
13	.322	1.288	92.667						
14	.302	1.209	93.876						
15	.236	.946	94.821						
16	.224	.894	95.715						
17	.187	.748	96.464						
18	.154	.617	97.081						
19	.149	.595	97.676						
20	.138	.553	98.229						
21	.129	.516	98.745						
22	.105	.419	99.164						
23	.094	.378	99.542						
24	.070	.278	99.820						
25	.045	.180	100.000						

Extraction Method: Principal Component Analysis.

Scree Plot



Subsequently, an inspection of the component matrix comprising of the four extracted factors variables with a communality of higher than 0.7 has been considered as they account for the maximum variance explained for the dataset.



Rotated Component Matrix[a]

	Component			
	1	2	3	4
Look	.101	.129	.838	.075
Accessibility	.281	.092	.818	.136
ServiceDepndability	.327	-.014	.724	-.141
RvcPromised	.422	.040	.674	.292
StfPrmpt	.297	.205	.433	.457
StfReadiness	.290	.153	.276	.639
Trust	.695	.099	.392	.097
Confidendence	.741	.037	.219	.114
Care	.837	-.001	.246	.255
IndividualAttn	.825	.111	.342	.088
PrdQual	.881	.019	.162	.019
PrdExc	.898	.160	.108	.127
PrcReason	.874	-.047	.220	.057
PrcSatis	.875	.033	.150	.095
Access	.685	.201	.210	-.067
Convinience	.736	.369	.008	-.202
BookLaunches	.698	.138	.005	-.207
Discounts	.392	.448	.189	-.463
Ambience	.311	.580	-.015	-.482
Attractiveness	.011	.834	.097	.009
StaffFrnd	.021	.876	.095	-.194
Relation	.045	.856	-.001	.000
PrcEffcncy	.182	.863	-.015	.155
CustCare	.098	.911	.031	.006
CustDlgt	.049	.881	.000	.105
Loyalty	.103	.647	.221	.065

Extraction Method: Principal Component Analysis.
Rotation Method: Varimax with Kaiser Normalization.
a. Rotation converged in 5 iterations.

Figure 1: Rotated Component Matrix for Physical Bookstore.

From the above table it is evident that communalities of variables such as Confidence, Care, Individual Attention, Product Quality, Product Exchange, Price Reasonability, Price Satisfaction,

Convenience, Attractiveness, Staff Friendliness, Relation, Process Efficiency, Customer Care,

Customer Delight, Look, Accessibility, Service Dependability have accounted fairly high for the first three components of Factor Analysis.

For the responses recorded for the Ecommerce stores reliability analysis test, sample adequacy test and PCA has been summarized in the table below.

Table 2: Summary Table of Ecommerce Stores

Cronbach Alpha or reliability testfor Ecommerce Stores	Reliability Statistics Cronbach's Alpha: .841 Cronbach's Alpha Based on Standardized Items: .844 N of Items: 26
KMO Measure and Bartlet's Testof Sphericity	KMO and Bartlett's Test Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin Measure of Sampling Adequacy.: .759 Bartlett's Test of Sphericity — Approx. Chi-Square: 991.578 df: 325 Sig.: .000

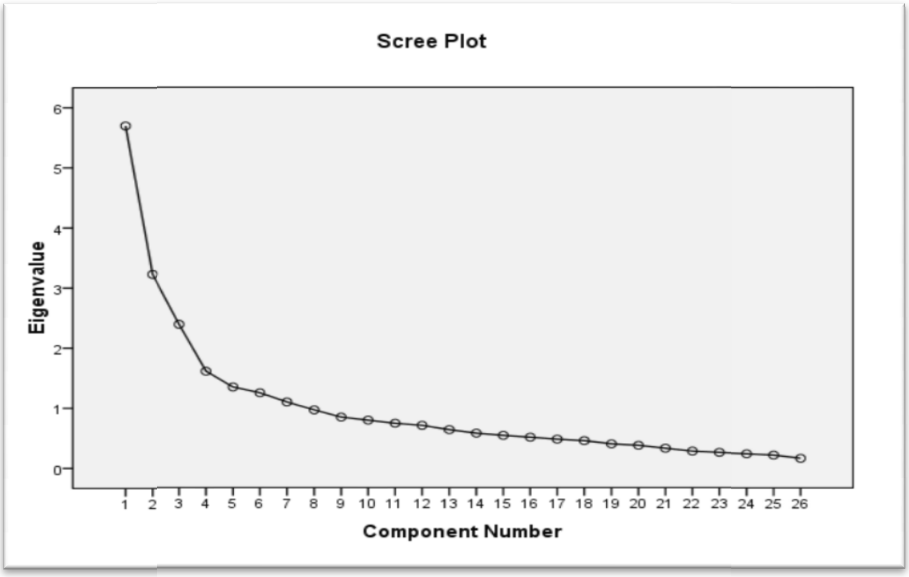
Total Variance Explained Table

Total Variance Explained

Component	Initial Eigenvalues			Extraction Sums of Squared Loadings			Rotation Sums of Squared Loadings		
	Total	% of Variance	Cumulative %	Total	% of Variance	Cumulative %	Total	% of Variance	Cumulative %
1	5.699	21.919	21.919	5.699	21.919	21.919	3.394	13.052	13.052
2	3.228	12.415	34.334	3.228	12.415	34.334	3.280	12.616	25.669
3	2.384	9.170	43.504	2.384	9.170	43.504	2.273	8.742	34.411
4	1.603	6.167	49.671	1.603	6.167	49.671	1.993	7.667	42.078
5	1.342	5.160	54.831	1.342	5.160	54.831	1.936	7.446	49.524
6	1.245	4.787	59.618	1.245	4.787	59.618	1.928	7.414	56.938
7	1.092	4.200	63.818	1.092	4.200	63.818	1.789	6.880	63.818
8	.960	3.693	67.512						
9	.840	3.231	70.742						
10	.790	3.037	73.779						
11	.737	2.835	76.615						
12	.702	2.701	79.316						
13	.630	2.423	81.740						
14	.572	2.201	83.941						
15	.536	2.060	86.001						
16	.505	1.942	87.943						
17	.473	1.818	89.760						
18	.447	1.720	91.481						
19	.394	1.514	92.994						
20	.370	1.424	94.419						
21	.321	1.235	95.654						
22	.274	1.053	96.707						
23	.253	.971	97.678						
24	.233	.896	98.575						
25	.212	.815	99.390						
26	.159	.610	100.000						

Extraction Method: Principal Component Analysis.

Scree Plot



The value of Cronbach Alpha is 0.841 which is in acceptable limit and indicate good internal consistency of the data. For the exploratory data analysis PCA has been performed and the KMO test has a measure of 0.759 while the Bartlet's test of sphericity is statistiscally significant which indicates adequacy of the sample. The Total Variance Explained table shows extraction of seven components with Initial Eigenvalues above 1 which accounts for 63.818% of total variance explained for the data. The scree plot flat lines approximately after 5th factor component which means most of the variables account for variance by the 5th factor component. The Rotated Component Matrix has been given below.

Table 3: Rotated Component Matrix for Ecommerce Stores

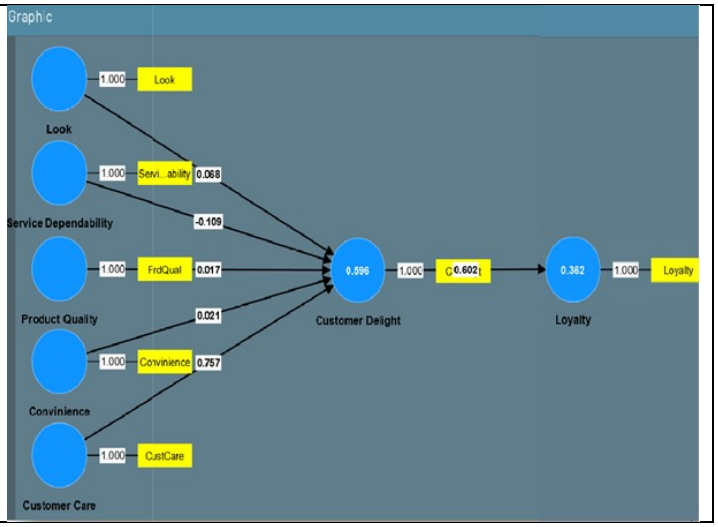
Rotated Component Matrix[a]

	Component						
	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Look1	.069	-.030	.073	.042	.210	.819	.000
Accessibility1	.063	.028	.101	.124	.574	.491	.216
ServiceDepndability1	-.034	-.090	.089	.769	.287	.134	.033
RvcPromised1	.226	.145	.058	.711	.026	-.044	.114
StfPrmt1	.165	.133	.294	.391	-.411	.429	-.018
StfReadiness1	.220	.240	.226	.068	-.173	.682	-.024
Trust1	-.100	.070	.413	.581	-.114	.092	.089
Confidence1	-.122	.190	.617	.369	.144	.165	.096
Care1	-.108	.223	.581	.057	.112	.245	.461
IndividualAttn1	.125	.105	.738	.173	.005	.132	.031
PrdQual1	.006	.050	.151	.118	.041	.022	.799
PrdExc1	.058	.292	-.083	-.005	.410	-.117	.517
PrcReason1	.150	.258	.225	.067	.691	-.084	-.020
PrcSatis1	.146	.565	.484	-.049	.328	-.016	-.027
Access1	-.140	.265	-.022	.147	.566	.187	.215
Convenience1	.072	.804	-.003	.098	.264	.098	.030
BookLaunch1	-.050	.827	.196	-.001	.134	-.005	.128
Discounts1	.069	.753	.230	.015	.031	.142	.218
Ambience1	.240	.517	.209	.048	.149	-.171	.443
Attractiveness1	.517	.096	-.009	.154	.056	.209	.448
StaffFrnd1	.666	-.014	.166	.271	.033	.114	-.014
Relation1	.697	.156	-.172	.079	-.077	.042	.138
PrcEffcncy1	.737	.064	-.132	-.040	.087	-.084	.126
CustCare1	.775	-.184	.127	-.114	-.017	.142	-.017
CustDlght1	.815	.036	.126	-.041	.014	.059	-.185
Loyalty1	-.251	.541	-.344	.205	-.175	.170	-.104

Extraction Method: Principal Component Analysis.
Rotation Method: Varimax with Kaiser Normalization.
a. Rotation converged in 21 iterations.

For the purpose of convenience any communality value of the variables above 0.70 has been taken into account. Thereafter, variables like Process Efficiency, Customer Care, Customer Delight, Convenience, Book launch, Discounts, Product Quality, Service Dependability, Received Promise, Look account for most of the variance for first six factors of the PCA. From the above two results. The common factors emerging and influencing Loyalty in both the formats of shopping are **Product Quality, Convenience, Customer Care, Customer Delight, Service Dependability, Look.** Using the above variables a Structural Equation Modeling and Path Analysis Diagram for both the shopping formats has been done. The table in the subsequent page depicts the **graphical output for SEM for physical bookstores**.

Table 4

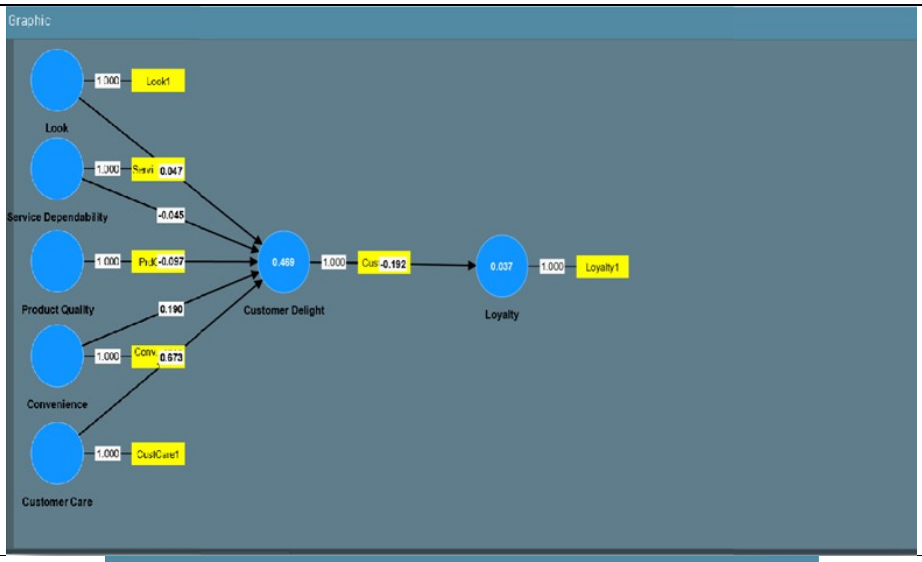
Graphic al Output	

R- Squared Value	R-square - Overview R-square / R-square adjusted Customer Delight: 0.596 / 0.576 Loyalty: 0.362 / 0.356
Model Fit	Model fit Saturated model / Estimated model SRMR: 0.000 / 0.065 d_ULS: 0.000 / 0.119 d_G: 0.000 / 0.037 Chi-square: 0.000 / 18.615 NFI: 1.000 / 0.932

From the table it is evident that the NFI or the Normed Fit Index is 0.932 indicating that the model of interest has improved the fir by 93% in relation to null or independence model. The R- Squared for Customer Delight is 0.596 and for Loyalty it is 0.362. It indicates moderate to good level of acceptability of the model for the Physical Bookstores.

The results of Structural equation modeling for Ecommerce stores have been given below:

Table 5

Graphic al Output	
R Squared Value	R-square - Overview R-square / R-square adjusted Customer Delight: 0.469 / 0.442 Loyalty: 0.037 / 0.027

Model Fit

Model fit

	Saturated model	Estimated model
SRMR	0.000	0.060
d_ULS	0.000	0.100
d_G	0.000	0.020
Chi-square	-0.000	10.469
NFI	1.000	0.884

From the above table it is evident that the NFI score is 0.88 which means that the model of interest has improved the fit by 88% in relation to null or independence mode. The R-Squared for Customer Delight is 0.469 and for Loyalty it is 0.037. The value for R squared is good for customer delight but a little less for Loyalty which might be due to the small sample size.

However these are between the acceptable limits. For the purpose of this study PLS-SEM algorithm has been used since the objective is to create a model that display the effects of antecedents on loyalty on bookstores along with mediation effects of any independent variables. PLS-SEM and CB-SEM are complements of each other however since the aim of this study is to identify the key target constructs and key driver constructs PLS-SEM algorithm has been deemed fit for the study.

In the subsequent section the efficiency of antecedents affecting the mediation variable customer Delight and Loyalty have been test using Data Envelopment Analysis in R. It involves measuring the efficiency of each of the 5 independent variables for both the shopping formats using R Studio. The output from the console is given in the subsequent page.

```
> print(updated)
                Variables Efficiency_Physical_Stores Efficiency_ECommerce_Stores
1:                   Look                1.00000000                   0.7271565
2: Service Dependability                0.06268176                   0.7845058
3:       Product Quality                1.00000000                   0.6652005
4:           Convenience                0.20588235                   0.6031521
5:         Customer Care                1.00000000                   0.5845174
```

The above output is presented in a tabular form below.

Table 6

Variables	Efficiency_Physical_Stores	Efficiency_ECommerce_Stores
1: Look	1.00000000	0.7271565
2: Service Dependability	0.06268176	0.7845058
3: Product Quality	1.00000000	0.6652005
4: Convenience	0.20588235	0.6031521
5: Customer Care	1.00000000	0.5845174

From the above table it is evident that variables such as Look, Product Quality and Customer Care are much efficient in case of Physical Stores whereas Service Dependability and Convenience fare better in case of Ecommerce stores. It indicates that for the sample under consideration, each of the formats have fared differently with different sets of independent variables uniquely affecting loyalty in case of the two different shopping formats.

CONCLUSIONS

From the above study it can be inferred that the Loyalty of a customer in book retail industry is significantly affected by Customer Care, Convenience, Product Quality, Look and Service Dependability for both Physical and E-Commerce shopping formats. The above antecedents affect Customer Loyalty along with the mediating effects of Customer Delight. Hence, as per this study variables such as Look of a store or Ecommerce portal, Dependability of services delivered by the store personnel or delivery executives, quality of products delivered, convenience of shopping and customer care services are extremely important to the consumers for exhibiting their loyalty in both the shopping formats. The study also shows that these independent factors work in tandem to cause delight in the customers which affect their repurchase intentions or loyalty towards a store. Further analysis has also unveiled the fact that for Physical stores the consumers feel that product quality, customer care facilities and look of the stores have fared better in comparison to the E-tail or Ecommerce stores. On the other hand in terms of dependability of services and convenience Ecommerce stores have fared better. Managers who want to retain customers for their stores (both physical and retail) must enhance certain factors that affect loyalty. For example in case of Physical Stores managers must look into ways of improving in house facilities so that shoppers can shop conveniently and experience a hassle free shopping experience. They should also look into ways of improving services so that customers can depend on them without giving any second thoughts. Similarly, in case of ecommerce stores managers must ensure that each product they deliver must be of best quality as well stress more on the Customer Care services by working on improving these. On the other hand they must also work on improving the look of their websites to make it more attractive. Thus, this study seemingly contributes to the body of literature of Consumer loyalty although the study has been conducted on a small sample limited to Kolkata region. Further scope of study is there in case of B2B interfaces where there is a possibility that this construct can be successfully explored and implemented. The construct also has a potential to affect loyalty in other industries like grocery, apparel, gems and jewels, automobiles etc thereby can be beneficial to the managers working in these industries.

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