

# Brand Loyalty – The New Recommended Direction for Ride-Sharing Companies: The Case of Vietnam

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**Abstract**—There is an alarming issue in any of the ride-sharing companies such as Uber, Lyft, Grab, Go-viet (Vietnam) and Be (Vietnam), which they cannot make profits and have been on continuous losses. After a careful investigation, this paper suggests that the missing link to their profit is brand loyalty. Based from existing theory, the brand loyalty consists more than just offering differentiated values to hook customers, by which it develops a model of 7 influencing factors that will guide ways for business practitioners to start developing a 7 value-list that is useful for brands to consider differentiating themselves. Employing quantitative data analysis method, deductive approach, comparative-descriptive data model and cross-sectional design, after an online survey was sent to 187 participants and generate 100% response which provides meaningful results. The findings suggest to adjust the model into only 6 influencing factors which are mental availability, physical availability, value offerings, brand trust, effective brand loyalty and purchase frequency. The value list is also reduced to only 6 qualities including economical, pleasant, usefulness, environmental, innovativeness, trust and safety. As a conclusion, this paper persuades that the next big thing of ride-sharing industry must be brand loyalty from multiple perspectives and recommends ways to build brand loyalty for this industry.

**Index Terms**—brand loyalty, ride-sharing companies

## I. INTRODUCTION

In today's world, when the competition is so fierce and it is almost impossible to predict what kind of innovative competitors will tomorrow bring to the table, it is very important to maintain and nurture the relationship with customers to ensure the brand presence in their mind is still strong in case an unexpected rival interrupts the industry. In other words, when brand presence and brand loyalty are high, enterprises are privileged to grow and adapt to the new competition before consumers switch to new brands. Furthermore, knowing how to build brand loyalty will also help new entrants quickly gain competitive advantages and outperform older brands.

A typical example is the war between traditional taxi industry and modern car-booking applications in Vietnam.

In the past, consumers had always complained about non-transparent taxi fare, complicated booking procedures and vague travel routes; and obviously consumers lost trust and loyalty towards taxi brands over time. Then, when ride-sharing providers like Grab, Uber enter that market and solve all of those concerns at a lower price, they immediately took over market share. According to Goldstein [1], if taxi providers had cared about consumers' concern and innovated to improve consumer-company relationship, they would not have lost all the lose all the market share nowadays. Therefore, it is proposed that nurturing brand loyalty is one of the strategic and survival activities of any companies.

Although ride-sharing firms understand the importance of network effects and is investing well in market acquisition, this is not enough to yield profit and create consumer loyalty. Tauscher and Kietzman [2] have proved that understanding the network effect and scalability only do not guarantee success in this industry and sharing economy firms with perfect network effects can still fail due to 6 common causes (see Table I). To match Table I with ride-sharing current situation, business in this field are facing the risks of low customer lock-in, low control over quality, high competition and excessive costs. Indeed, according to a small spontaneous survey, active ride-sharing users in Vietnam said they often switch among the three major apps (Grab, Go-Viet and Be) to find the lowest price because they do not prefer any particular brand and price is still the overriding decision factor. Taken all together, ride-sharing brands have not effectively differentiated themselves and made consumers love them. Unless they found a way to lock consumers in like Airbnb, Amazon or Apple, their business will not sustain.

TABLE I. CAUSES AND FAILURES IN THE SHARING ECONOMY

Cause of Failure	Related Risk for Sharing Economy Firms
1. Low customer lock-in	The transaction-centered nature of sharing economy business models generally creates low switching costs between platforms. Hence, sharing economy firms can rapidly lose their entire network of participants.
2. Low control over service quality	Sharing economy business models inherently lead to lower control of the

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	customer experience because it is delivered by independent participants.
3. High competition for idle resources.	New entrants can threaten the business model of the dominant platform by aggressively competing for its supply-side participants.
4. Low transaction frequency	Business Models face difficult economics if they address a market in which product or service transactions occur infrequently.
5. High cost of developing both market sides	Pioneering Firms need to invest heavily in legitimizing sharing business models if they enter entirely new markets.
6. Unexpected changes in the legal environment	Regulatory changes threaten the firm's business model or impose expensive lawsuits.

The problem is ride-sharing platforms are trying to target mass market (heterogeneous market) with identical offerings. Because of non-differentiation, these firms get locked in regional price wars and have to *constantly offer new discounts* otherwise consumers would switch to other platforms due to low switching cost. Based from the study presented by Tauscher and Kietzman [2], this exacerbates the price sensitivity nature of this industry because stated in a real failure case, consumers did not return to pay regular prices after a long discounted period. But in an analysis of on-going discounts have been proved to devalue a product in consumer perception and can put firms into discounted loop. Therefore, it is recommended for ride-sharing firms to stop following this marketing tactics and try to lock consumers in through brand loyalty strategy.

After brand loyalty has been proved to be what ride-hailing firms should focus on, the following parts are going to find out how ride-sharing companies can build brand loyalty without relying on price discount. This is broken down into the following fields of consideration:

1. What factors contribute to brand loyalty in the most up-to-date literature?
2. Are the factors applicable or do they need adjustment for ride hailing industry?
3. What values could ride-sharing companies offer to effectively differentiate themselves?

## II. LITERATURE REVIEW

Oliver [3] defines brand loyalty as “a deeply held commitment to re-buy or patronize a preferred product or service consistently in the future, despite situational influences and marketing efforts having the potential to cause switching behavior”. In other words, the higher the brand loyalty level is, the more likely consumers repurchase a product or service even when competitors promote discounts or other penetration efforts. This finding is consistent with the premise in introduction. Furthermore, academic literature generally like [4] agrees there are two types of brand loyalty: attitudinal loyalty and behavioral loyalty. Attitudinal loyalty portrays the *state of mind in which a brand is more preferred than other brands* in the same categories, while behavioral loyalty explains the *conditions* in which consumers

continuously make repurchase behaviors without relying on conscious preference. The two forms of loyalty can exist independently, and both contribute to the final loyalty level of consumers. According to Peppers [5], monopolies are those who have the greatest power in behavioral loyalty, while companies in competitive market are focusing more on attitudinal loyalty. Based on this new and contemporary view on brand loyalty, several old loyalty assumptions are challenged, which will be explained further in later discussion. Moving back, the fact that taxi industry was easily replaced by the ride-sharing platform is largely due to ingrained user dissatisfaction. Without attitudinal preference, loyalist behavior patterns are easily disrupted, therefore in order to have a strong loyalist base, brands should focus on building both attitudinal and behavioral loyalty.

*Then how to increase both attitudinal and behavioral loyalty? Followings are recommendations and discussions.*

### A. Increase Brand Satisfaction?

Customer satisfaction is the term frequently used in business and marketing activities to measure how well the product or service meets consumer expectation. At the first glance, one may think satisfaction is the main driver of brand loyalty simply because if the consumers are dissatisfied, they will unlikely to have repeat purchases. This perspective had lasted for a while, until extant literature started present mixed findings on empirical evidence by [6]; in which satisfaction can have positive impact or not on brand loyalty based on different occasions. In other words, consumers can have very high satisfaction towards a brand but still purchase another brand due to other factors.

To explain this phenomenon, this paper uses the model of loyalty-satisfaction relationship developed by [7] because it portrays the complicated relationship in a clear-cut graph (see Fig. 1). The model explains when a firm locates in the non-competitive zone, the satisfaction level hardly influences their brand loyalty or repurchase behavior. The non-competitive zone is described with few competitors and substitutes, high switching cost, intellectual property and strong loyalty program. In contrast, in a highly competitive market where similar competitors are redundant, consumers have many choices so they rely on satisfaction level to choose a brand. Within the same industry, a brand can either be in a competitive zone or non-competitive zone depending on different strategies and how it differentiates itself on the market. For example, thanks to massive community and many strategies to cultivate neurological connection, Apple conquers the non-competitive zone and leads the smartphone markets for years [8]. However, most firms in the ride-hailing market got stuck in the non-differentiated competition where they have to discount the price to raise values due to similar qualities. Hence, firms are recommended to add values to their products and move towards the non-competitive zone because

fighting over satisfaction level via discount strategy does not result in profitable loyalist followers. This is not the first-time firms are recommended to do this, [9] developed a popular move-to-non-competitive-zone strategy, officially named blue ocean strategy – and it has been higher appraised by academic and business practitioners.

*H1: There is no established brand loyalty among ride-sharing consumer at the moment*

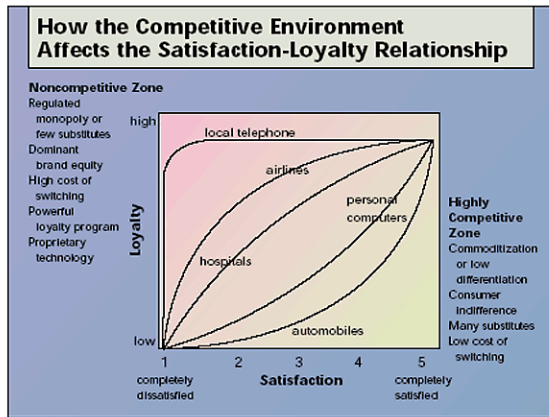


Figure 1. How the Satisfaction-Loyalty Relationship is affected by business environment.

$$\text{VALUE} = \frac{\text{QUALITY}}{\text{COST}}$$

Figure 2. The value equation.

Furthermore, satisfaction scale is a subjective evaluation in which different consumers with different personalities can have different perception of satisfaction levels. Therefore, there is never a universal definition of satisfied customers, and relying solely on consumer satisfaction to boost brand loyalty is not effective, which is consistent with the extant literature findings which say satisfied consumers still drop out [7]. However, the above arguments do not deny the fact that satisfaction does contribute partly to consumer loyalty because leaving consumers completely dissatisfied is assigned to death, lessons from the taxi industry. - Increasing satisfaction level will positively influence consumer attitudinal loyalty where consumers are strongly aware that they like the experience with a brand. In conclusion, within an industry, brand satisfaction towards a firm does not exclusively associate with its loyalty because each firm has different strategies and positions in the market, hence, it is proposed that:

*H2: Contrary to current assumption, higher satisfaction level does not associate with higher loyalty*

#### B. Increase Brand Availability

Beside from developing attitudinal loyalty, brands should as well focus on behavioral loyalty through

increasing *brand availability*. Sharp's [10] argument that receives a great deal of consensus among marketing practitioners claims that brands grow and compete in the contemporary market mainly by developing two assets: *physical availability* and *mental availability*.

##### 1) Mental availability

Mental availability is a concept pioneered by [10] in which he said 'a brand's mental availability refers to the probability that a buyer will notice, recognize and/or think of a brand in buying situations'. He further notes that mental availability is not the state of preference, but more of a feeling of familiarity. He found out that customers' purchase decision is not always rational, in other words they do not always weight and compare products scrutiny before buying, so whichever brand has a stronger mental presence will more likely to be purchased and agreed by [11]. This is why mental availability directly affects behavioral loyalty but not attitudinal loyalty. Mental availability is created through marketing activities such as PR, advertisements, billboards and social media interactions where brands pay and fight for the chance of being seen by consumers. As a result, brands try to create strong memorial links, yield many intangible values and associate consumers' needs closely with the brand image so when consumers face their needs, they are more likely to remember a particular brand. The more customer touch points brands can create and effectively manage, the higher its mental availability is and the higher the brand loyalty is. Built upon the analysis, the following hypothesis is proposed:

*H3: Mental availability has a positive relationship with brand loyalty*

##### 2) Physical availability

In support for mental availability, after consumers think of a brand when they face a particular need, how quick and approachable is the product or service towards consumers will increase the likelihood of being purchased, which is physical availability. Different industries deal with different issues in physical availability. For example, the FMCG industry deals with supply chain problems while SaaS companies need to design their product in the seamless way so that users can perform an action without interruptions [12]. Physical availability also relates to how the product or service showcases itself among others in through branding elements such as logo, colors and symbol so that it is highly recognizable. Hence, with the above explanations of physical availability, the following hypothesis is generated:

*H4: Physical availability has a positive relationship with brand loyalty*

In conclusion, by becoming more available both mentally and physically, brands are offering the highly-requested value to the consumers: time-saving, which is very important for every human.

### C. Offer More Unique and Distinctive Values

From previous section, the importance of differentiation and unique value offerings have been repeatedly mentioned and this is indeed one of the most important loyalty factors in this research. Value proposition and differentiation have always been the mainstream topic since the birth of marketing [13]. Offering a unique set of values helps a brand stand out from the standard, explain why consumers should choose it over competitors and cultivate higher perceived qualities [14]. As a result, based on the value equation (see Fig. 2) presented by Hinterhuber [15], brand's perceived value is increased and consumers are willing to pay more in exchange for the perceived values.

At its core, every product is a commodity which is similar and this part is called generic product. The three brands Grab, Go-viet and Be in Vietnam are genetically a vehicle-booking app and this is called the generic part of the app. The other part is called offered (or augmented) product [16]. This is a set of additional values that sellers and marketers add into the commodity and make customers pay a higher price. Lifebouy is a successful example, it has positioned itself to be more than a cleansing product that provide hygiene, Lifebouy social marketing campaign connects the product with a higher meaning of fighting against death and disease. As a result, it has turned million users into their loyalists [17]. Lifebouy has made itself outstanding by deeply understanding consumers' needs and realizing critical and unconventional values that will immediately yields consumer attention.

In contrast, ride-hailing have not been able to create loyalists and consumers and the fact that consumers in the ride-sharing industry chooses whatever cheaper option proposes that ride-hailing brands have not fully established strong value proposition to become exceptional in certain values compared to the rest. So forth, it is recommended that ride-sharing brands seek to become the symbol of certain values.

Then, which values would be adored by ride-hailing consumers or sharing economy consumers in general? Academic journals generally agree that values can be categorized into two main motivations: *utilitarian* and *hedonic values*. *Utilitarian values* refer to the overall results of the transaction, to evaluate if the transaction provides economic benefits or not [16]. Meanwhile, *hedonic values* come from experiential benefits which are the positive feelings consumers have during the consumption process [3]. Both factors play very important roles for any products or services. This categorization helps understand the nature of scattered values and make sure that no value is dismissed during the collection and idea generation process.

In conclusion, ride-sharing firms are expected to deliver these values in order to have a strong value proposition in consumer perception. The following hypothesis is proposed:

*H5: Offering unique values positively influences brand loyalty*

### D. Sustain Brand Trust

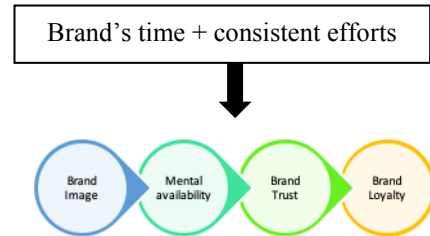


Figure 3. Relationship between mental availability, brand trust and brand loyalty

*"A brand is the personification of a product, service or even entire company. Also, like a person, a brand has a name, a personality, character and a reputation. Like a person, you can respect, like and even love a brand. You can think of it as a deep personal friend, or merely an acquaintance...."*

One of the best marketers of all time, pioneered the concept in which brand-consumer relationship resembles societal relationship, in other words, brands build relationship with consumers from a stranger to a trusted friend. No matter kind of relationship, maintaining trust is the key to any long-term and lasting relationship, so for the one between a brand and consumers. Despite its importance, according to the recent report on trust, only 56% of people trust business and only 47% trust the media globally. Customers have a lot of reasons to distrust brands because business is built on the basis of earning profit out of buyers. Indeed, it takes a lot of time and efforts to make consumers trust you. Academic scholars have proved that trust is truly rewarding because it has a positive relationship with brand loyalty [18], [19], [20], [21]. In the sharing and technological economy, specifically ride-hailing market, brand trust plays an even more significant role because consumers must place a great deal of trust on their vendors in advance by allowing them to access user's data and information. Therefore, it is argued that trust is a strategic component that ride-sharing brands should build and maintain with consumers. Based on the above arguments, the following hypotheses are proposed:

*H6a: Brand trust has a positive relationship with brand loyalty in ride-sharing market*

*H6b: Time usage has a positive relationship with brand loyalty*

To calculate trust level, it is necessary to understand the brand trust concept, which is the possibility perceived by customers that brands act for the benefits and welfare of consumers. Hence, trust involves how well consumers

understand a brand as a whole, and associate brand with being responsible, honest, consistent and so on [21]. Building on two decades of experiencing and learning brand trust, Edelman Net Trust Score (ENTS) calculates trust by four main dimensions:

TABLE II. ELEMENTS OF TRUST SCALE.

Overall Trust	"I trust this company to do what is right"
Purpose	"This company tries hard to have positives impacts on society"
Ability	"This company is good at what it does"
Integrity	"This company is honest"
Dependability	"This company keeps its promises"

#### E. Increase Switching Cost

The Interdependency Theory explains that in order to commit to a relationship, the person must show a level of dependence on the partner, which is the combined result of *high satisfaction level*, *few alternatives* and *high level of investment*. Satisfaction factor has been illustrated in Fig. 1; the second factor: brands can limit the number of alternatives by offering more unique and exceptional values for consumers. The final factor is the amount of investment consumers put into a brand. Higher investment will lead to higher switching cost because it implies consumers may have to put the same investment in order to receive similar benefits elsewhere. High switching cost has been proved to increase consumer loyalty and their demand to stay [22]. Loyalty program is one evidence of brand's efforts to increase consumer's sense of investment and future rewards. Imagine when consumers become an investor, the more they put in, the larger the reward would be a very tempting loyalty generator. This involves a requirement of established trust, where consumers signal a strong sense of trust and a guarantee that they can reach promised future of the brand. CGV VIP loyalty program is an example of a well-managed combination of high sense of investment and strong trust. Steinhoff and Palmatier [23] developed a loyalty program effect model in which high rule clarity and reward visibility positively influence target customers.

In conclusion, it is hypothesized that:

*H7: Loyalty program and sense of high investment have a positive relationship with brand loyalty*

### III. CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

Based on the in-depth literature review, the conceptual model that aims to answer research questions is generated as illustrated in Fig. 4. This model consists of 6 *independent* variables (satisfaction, mental availability, physical availability, unique value offering, brand trust and high switching cost) and 1 intervening variable (time), which together have potentially positive relationship with brand loyalty. The brand loyalty indicator is a dependent variable itself and is used to test if there is no established loyalty among ride-hailing consumers.

If the conceptual model is valid, it will become a

valuable source for current ride-hailing practitioners to cultivate brand loyalty more effectively and have a brighter future of profitability. Hence, this research follows the deductive reasoning to justify this model. Deductive studies that aim to turn abstract ideas into concrete facts usually involve quantitative design because it provides a coherent and standardized value of the variables: number, which can simplify complicated concepts [24]. Given the short time allowed to conduct this research, the author wants to focus intensively on literature review to provide the most comprehensive possible conceptual model so that the research's objective is simply to test out current hypothesis with minimal need to develop further hypothesis. As the research wish to pursue a separate a concrete data interpretation process, the quantitative method is more suitable.

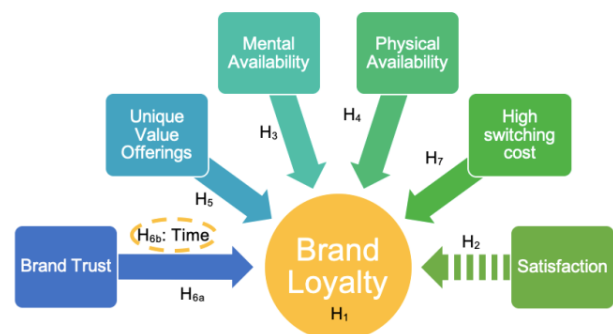


Figure 4. Research conceptual framework.

HYPOTHESIS	DESCRIPTION
1	<i>There is no established brand loyalty among ride-sharing consumer at the moment</i>
2	<i>Contrary to current assumption, higher satisfaction level does not associate with higher loyalty</i>
3	<i>Mental availability has a positive relationship with brand loyalty</i>
4	<i>Physical availability has a positive relationship with brand loyalty</i>
5	<i>Offering unique values positively influences brand loyalty</i>
6A	<i>Brand trust has a positive relationship with brand loyalty in ride-sharing market</i>
6B	<i>Time usage has a positive relationship with brand loyalty</i>
7	<i>Loyalty program and sense of high investment have a positive relationship with brand loyalty</i>

Figure 5. Summary 1. Hypothesis review

## IV. RESEARCH DESIGN AND RESULTS

### A. Theories and Methods

As the time provided is limited, this paper uses the quantitative data approach in collaboration with the cross-sectional study design. Cross-sectional study design is a branch of the observational design in which respondents' answers are recorded massively in the short period or almost at the same time. This kind of study is time and cost-effective without too much interruption into the established conceptual model, hence, it is appropriate for this research. To ensure the cross-sectional nature of data, the author takes advantage of online questionnaire tools using the Microsoft Office forms and distributes the to



massive respondents and records answers within 7 days only. Any later responses are not taken into the data analysis process. Cross-sectional study is effective in recording the trend of consumers, especially advantageous for such a quickly-evolving industry like ride-sharing. On the other hand, because cross-sectional study data is collected over a short period of time due to limitation of time and money, it is not as effective as cohort study, which is conducted by following individuals in a life-time, or experimental study, which chooses different conditioned respondents to observe, in delivering causal relationship results. Hence, relying on cross-sectional design alone does not help this research understand the relationship between different variables and brand loyalty level; so the author incorporates the descriptive-comparative approach into this study.

Descriptive research is one of the major techniques in the academic research field, whose function is to describe facts and characteristics of individuals, groups, events or nature. In other words, descriptive research design can justify abstract ideas using real life phenomena, realize new relationship pattern that was previously neglected or to simply have a more concrete understanding of respondents. Descriptive research is mainly focused with the question “what is” with some example such as ‘What kinds of activities that involve technology occur in sixth-grade classrooms and how frequently do they occur?’ and ‘How should instructional designers improve software design to make the software more appealing to students?’ Hence, it is suitable to explain the main research question ‘What factors contribute to brand loyalty in ride-hailing market’.

Meanwhile, comparative research design aims to make a comparison between two groups to realize similarities and differences and draw conclusions. This technique is particularly useful for this research because there will always be two respondent groups by nature: loyalist and non-loyalist, or loyalist and the general. By comparing descriptive data (in the form of mean, median and mode) between these groups it generates meaningful understanding of their varied behaviours with regards to each variable. Although comparative-descriptive research is useful, it is quite expensive because it requires double or triple sample size of a regular descriptive research to qualify non-biases in each compared group, which is also one of the limitation of this paper. In addition, despite the effort of incorporating descriptive-comparative design, it is impossible to deliver precise causal relationship, rather the result will be an association or correlation that potentially leads to causation.

#### *B. Data Collection and Sampling*

To ensure both loyalist and non-loyalist ride-hailing users are available for analysis, the random sampling technique was used over a large sample size (100 respondents). This data sampling method is simple, cost-effective yet it requires a large population of the sample in order for the results to be valuable. However, that is

not a worry given a wide number of ride-sharing app adopters in Ho Chi Minh City only – 4.5 million users [25]. Because the ride-hailing market is highly heterogeneous, there are not many conditions to be considered for the population of this study. Respondents are only required to live in Vietnam, aging from 16 to 50 and have used ride-sharing services before.

To ensure the cross-sectional nature, the research was sent to 187 people within 7 days with the aim to record 100 answers. However, after eliminating 13 survey takers who have never used ride-sharing services, the sample size reduces to 87. Among 87 people, 74 of them are living in Ho Chi Minh City, 2 live in Hanoi and 2 live in Dong Nai. Therefore, it is important to understand that the results of this research will greatly present the characteristics of ride-hailing market in Ho Chi Minh City. Secondly, 82 respondents aging from 18 to 30, which leaves only 5 from 31 to 50. Hence the study will largely reflects behaviours and thoughts of university students, office workers and young adults. These demographic factors may become a limitation in the effort of generalisation of this research results.

With regards to genders, there are 40 males, 44 females and 3 individuals who preferred not to reveal their gender. In asking for the respondents’ answers, the author wants to make sure that this research is not gender-biased, for example greatly explains the behaviours of men more than women. However, the option ‘Prefer not to reveal gender’ has been added during the questionnaire design process to ensure equality and respectfulness towards the third gender. However, since the proportion of male and female gender is almost equal and their size is superior to the 3 individuals not revealing gender, this research results should not be worried with gender-biased.

#### *C. Discussion*

This study starts with the alarming issue that every ride-hailing company is facing – cannot make profits and continuously record losses [26], [27], [28]). Hence, it carried out a thorough investigation into the industry and pointed brand loyalty as the missing link to profitability. From this point of view, the mission is to develop a model that helps ride-sharing firms understand what factors underlying brand loyalty and how to effectively put them into practice.

As the introduction hints, brand loyalty, unique value proposition and justified differentiation strategy are among the most critical practices to start gaining profits for ride-hailing companies. Hence, the study starts with aims to demystify all possible factors that can influence brand loyalty, consider if these factors are applicable or need adjustment for the ride-hailing industry and suggest most important values that brands should focus on differentiating themselves. The proposed conceptual model proposed 6 independent and 1 intervening variables that potentially affect brand loyalty level in the ride-hailing industry. The later part was to empirically

examine what and how the 7 theoretically proposed variables are related to current brand loyalty level within the industry. The dependent variable (brand loyalty) has been tested via their tendency to switch to another brand if there is a lower price offered. All 6 interdependent variables (satisfaction, mental availability, physical availability, values, brand trust, sense of switching cost) have been measured using the 5-point Likert scale via measuring items found in literatures exclusively on each of the variables. After designed, an online questionnaire was sent to massive respondents until the sample size of 100 was reached. Data is then recorded, assembled and analysed mainly using Excel data analysis tool.

#### 1) *How important is each value?*

In this question, respondents are required to arrange each value in order from the most important to them to the least important. Ranking frequencies of each value are synthesized and listed accordingly. Then the values are visualized into the 100% stacked bar chart. According to the general ride-sharing users, economical, usefulness, pleasant and trust and safety benefits are among the most importantly cared about. Other factors such as innovativeness, environmental and social benefits are least favoured with regards to the majority of samples.

It is also noticeable that economical factor, in other terms discounts and low prices, is still the leading decision factor, which is consistent with the literature review of current ride-hailing problems. It is important for ride-hailing brands to establish value proposition in unique factors and set itself apart from competition.

#### 2) *How consumers think about brands' values?*

With regards to the values, respondents are again asked to rate how they feel about each of the value of their chosen brand on the scale from 1 to 5, in which 1 is not at all, 2 is a little bit, 3 is fairly, 4 is a lot and 5 is absolutely. The result is then calculated to find the mean value of each value rated by each group and summarized. In general, all players in the industry are performing moderately well with both loyalist and non-loyalist groups rate the values from 'fairly' to 'a lot'. For visualization, mean values are input into a line chart which shows that loyalist users consistently have a stronger sense for most of the values except for social benefits.

#### 3) *Brand trust*

In this measurement, respondents rate their consent with the following measuring items of their trust towards their chosen brand, with 1 is 'not at all', 2 is 'a little bit', 3 is 'fairly', 4 is 'a lot' and 5 is 'absolutely'. As the mean values have been calculated for each group, they are put into comparison using the line graph. The two lines coherently shows that loyalist consumers have a higher trust level towards the brands they chose than that of non-loyalists. Hence, hypothesis 6a is approved. However, the chart indicates that consumers are not sure whether

brands will cheat on them or not. This indicates that the overall ride-hailing consumers do not have a strong trust towards their service providers which inhibits them from becoming loyalist consumers of any brand.

#### 4) *Switching cost / loyalty program*

In this section, consumers are again asked to rate how they feel with loyalty programs (with regards to investment and ROI) of their chosen brands on the scale from 1 to 5, with 1 is not at all and 5 is absolutely. To justify whether a strong loyalty program is associated with high level of brand loyalty or not, only Grab users will be interpreted because each brand's loyalty program is different and allocating all brands into one analysis will generate mixed results. After calculating the rates of both Grab's loyalist and non-loyalist users, the mean values are inserted into comparison. The result strongly suggests that there is a consistent positive relationship between loyalist users and high ratings, which indicates that strong loyalty program that provides a positive sense of ROI is positively associated with brand loyalty. Hence, hypothesis 7 is confirmed.

#### D. *Reviews and Implications on Actions*

Brand loyalty in the ride-sharing industry is a rarely studied phenomenon. Despite an extensive body of literature believing the network effect as the key survival strategy for firms in the sharing economy [28], [29] and the ride-hailing industry, this study is one of the pioneers in shedding lights on brand loyalty matters for such an infant economy, asking for critical consideration of brand loyalty strategy such as loyalty programs and differentiation leader strategy, and publicly calling ride-sharing firms to stop relying on discounts and price promotions.

After carefully understanding ride-hailing industry, backed this research data, the final findings provide an updated list of 6 factors (see Fig. 5) that could enhance brand loyalty for a firm including: mental availability, physical availability, offering unique values, brand trust, effective loyalty program and considering purchase frequency. Ride-hailing firms should not extensively focus on the satisfactory level because this scale is not reliable to predict consumer loyalty as well as is not effective in turning users into loyalist followers. Furthermore, for such a quickly-evolving industry, being present in the market early is not the uttermost advantage anymore because with more distribution channels and customer touch points, it has never been faster to reach and establish trust with consumers as long as the offering is attractive and unique [30]. This signals a positive sign for any newcomers to the ride-hailing industry, with a strong market acquisition and customer retention strategy with focus on cost leader or differentiation leader they can quickly gain market shares. Newcomers and current brands if trying to massively acquire market share through increasing mental and physical availability can generate the Double Jeopardy effect that somehow results

in several loyalist users. However, the loyalty link is not strong and is easily broken if a competitor offer a cheaper price.

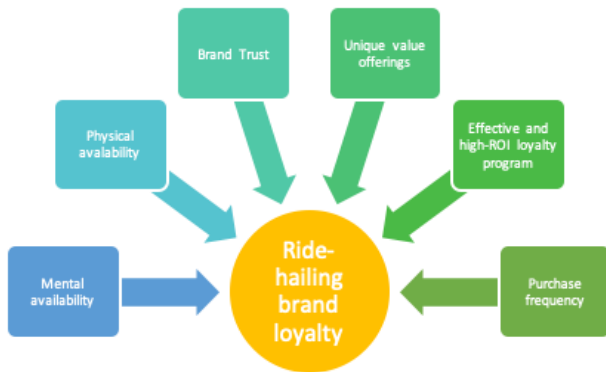


Figure 6. Revised 6-influencing-factor model.

After that, with regards to value offerings, the findings show that all values except for ‘social’ (usefulness, pleasant, economical, environmental, innovativeness) contribute positively to repurchase behaviour and predicting loyalty. Hence, it is suggested that a brand should differentiate themselves by providing excellent quality in one value, then slowly satisfy more values with enough resources. It has been the fact that one brand cannot expect to satisfy all the needs of the market, it is better to go step-by-step.

#### E. Limitations

Despite being one of the pioneers to investigate consumer loyalty towards ride-hailing brands and factors contributing to their loyalty, this study still comes with several limitations. First, as stated previously in data collection method, the research greatly presents the model of respondents aging from 18 to 30 and living in Ho Chi Minh City. This will be a defect in our efforts to generalize the research results to any other market. Secondly, the random sampling technique did not yield equal respondents of each brand, which leaves the Grab users population outweigh the other two. Furthermore, for a comparative study like this it requires double to triple sample size in order to validate non-biases of each comparative group. The sample size (100) thus is relatively small and with some constraints in money and time the sample size could not reach a higher population for Be and GoViet users. Third, since this research is cross-sectional, more accurate causal relationships could not be made with data availability. Future researchers should take ideas of this study as a foundation for longitudinal research designs. Finally, data analysis method of this study is considered relatively simplified, thus, could not arrive at more detailed confirmation of the relationship between the factors and brand loyalty.

#### V. CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Despite all of the limitations, this study has proved why brand loyalty is the missing link towards

profitability for current ride-hailing brand. The paper has one main implication that is ride-hailing brands should navigate more resources into building loyalist consumers and differentiate themselves more effectively. The six-factor model is a valuable source for brands to start understanding their loyalist users and build strategies to increase their interaction with the brand. 6 valuable qualities that are highly rated by users and loyalist followers are also provided for brands to start building some niche strategies to attract new customers.

However, with limitations in sampling techniques, analysis techniques and constrained time frame, the author have several recommendations for readers and interesting parties. In regard of future academic researchers, it is highly advised to get funded to generate a massive stratified random sampling and longitudinal research that have great sample size to reconfirm and develop further the findings of this research. For business practitioners, a brand should consider one interesting value and invest in in-depth studies about consumer behaviours towards that value. Business nowadays especially technological ride-hailing firms are flooded with valuable big data which are the traits of their customers. It is recommended to make use of those data to justify findings of this paper and start taking action on building brand loyalty.

#### CONFLICT OF INTEREST

The submitted work was carried out without any conflict of interest whatsoever.

#### AUTHOR CONTRIBUTIONS

This paper is fully conducted by Mark Benesio Carace, from literature review, survey, data collection, data analysis to paper construction

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