Building Brand Champions: How Loyalty Program Design Shapes Consumer-Brand Relationships Across German Demographics in Global Sportswear

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Abstract

This dissertation explores the impact of loyalty programs on brand loyalty in the German market for global sportswear brands, with a focus on Adidas, Nike, and Puma. Grounded in the Dapena-Baron Brand Loyalty Model, the research examines the dimensions of emotional, cognitive, and habitual loyalty. It identifies which program incentives are most effective and analyzes variations across demographic groups, particularly age and gender.

A survey of 168 German loyalty program members reveals key insights. Monetary incentives, such as discounts, significantly drive habitual loyalty, while experience-based incentives like meet-and-greet events and exclusive product access enhance emotional and cognitive loyalty. Demographic preferences show younger consumers prioritize convenience and unique experiences, women favor outdoor activities, and older consumers value exclusivity and personalization.

The findings emphasize the need for tailored loyalty strategies that integrate practical rewards with emotional engagement to address diverse consumer needs. For sportswear brands, this research provides actionable strategies to optimize loyalty programs, increase consumer satisfaction, and foster lasting relationships. By aligning incentives with demographic-specific preferences, brands can secure a competitive edge and deepen customer loyalty in an evolving market.

Keywords: brand loyalty, loyalty programs, emotional loyalty, cognitive loyalty, habitual loyalty, sportswear industry, German market, demographic analysis

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Resumo

Esta dissertação explora o impacto dos programas de fidelidade na lealdade à marca no mercado alemão de marcas globais de roupas esportivas, com foco na Adidas, Nike e Puma. Fundamentada no Modelo de Lealdade à Marca de Dapena-Baron, a pesquisa examina as dimensões de lealdade emocional, cognitiva e habitual. O estudo identifica quais incentivos de programas são mais eficazes e analisa as variações entre os grupos demográficos, particularmente em termos de idade e gênero.

Uma pesquisa com 168 membros de programas de fidelidade na Alemanha revela insights importantes. Incentivos monetários, como descontos, impulsionam significativamente a lealdade habitual, enquanto incentivos baseados em experiências, como eventos de meet-and-greet e acesso exclusivo a produtos, fortalecem a lealdade emocional e cognitiva. Preferências demográficas indicam que consumidores mais jovens priorizam conveniência e experiências únicas, mulheres valorizam atividades ao ar livre e consumidores mais velhos dão importância à exclusividade e personalização.

Os resultados destacam a necessidade de estratégias de fidelidade personalizadas que integrem recompensas práticas com engajamento emocional para atender às diversas necessidades dos consumidores. Para as marcas de roupas esportivas, esta pesquisa oferece estratégias acionáveis para otimizar programas de fidelidade, aumentar a satisfação do consumidor e fomentar relacionamentos duradouros. Ao alinhar incentivos às preferências específicas de cada demografia, as marcas podem garantir uma vantagem competitiva e aprofundar a lealdade do cliente em um mercado em constante evolução.

Palavras-chave: lealdade à marca, programas de fidelidade, lealdade emocional, lealdade cognitiva, lealdade habitual, indústria de roupas esportivas, mercado alemão, análise demográfica

Título: Construindo Campeões de Marca: Como o Design de Programas de Fidelidade Molda as Relações Consumidor-Marca em Diferentes Demografias Alemãs no Mercado Global de Sportswear

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1. Introduction

1.1 Background

One of the key drivers of enhanced brand loyalty is the implementation of loyalty programs, which have the potential to deepen customer relationships (Yi et al., 2003). The sportswear industry, despite its widespread adoption of loyalty programs, lacks comprehensive insights into which specific incentives within these programs are most effective at fostering brand loyalty and the dimensions through which they achieve this. This gap in understanding presents an opportunity to explore how tailored incentives can better align with consumer preferences and drive loyalty in this sector.

In this context, the findings of this research can be used to create more personalized loyalty programs, especially in online platforms where customers access, manage, and interact with these programs. This study builds upon the Brand Loyalty Model by Dapena-Baron and is grounded in the foundational definition of brand loyalty (Oliver, 1999). While previous research has primarily focused on brand loyalty in the context of products, there is still no clear framework for evaluating and understanding how individual incentives within loyalty programs impact brand loyalty.

The aim of this thesis is to determine the most effective loyalty incentives for various age and gender demographics and to examine their impact on the different dimensions of brand loyalty. By tailoring these incentives, companies can create more personalized loyalty content to strategically enhance brand loyalty within their loyalty program members. This research is particularly valuable in the highly competitive sportswear market, where the global players Adidas, Nike, and Puma have faced growth challenges in recent years, while emerging brands continue to capture market share (S&P Global, 2024).

1.2 Relevance

The German loyalty market has experienced significant growth, with a compound annual growth rate of 11.7% from 2019 to 2023 and a projected 8.7% growth from 2024 to 2028. By 2028, it is expected to generate $8.87 billion in revenue, highlighting its critical importance for global sports brands operating in Germany (Research and Markets, 2024). This importance is particularly evident as established players like Adidas and Puma face stagnating revenue growth, while emerging competitors such as New Balance and Lululemon continue to achieve steady annual gains (Adidas Group Report, 2023; S&P Global, 2024). Since the COVID-19 pandemic, e-commerce has become a dominant force, reshaping consumer behavior and granting customers seamless access to a wide range of brands, even in the absence of physical stores (Research and Markets, 2024). This transformation has compelled global sportswear brands to prioritize their online and digital loyalty strategies, with loyalty programs becoming a central component of these efforts (Adidas Group, 2021). Adidas, in its 2021 corporate report, highlighted the strategic importance of its loyalty programs to bolster loyalty among their customers. The company ambitiously set a target to grow its loyalty membership base to 500 million members by 2025 (Adidas Group, 2021).

As the deadline approaches, the specific incentives of loyalty programs that most effectively drive brand loyalty, as well as the loyalty dimensions they influence, remain unclear. While personalized marketing is widely adopted by brands utilizing e-commerce and has demonstrated its effectiveness, there remains a lack of a structured approach to integrating personalization specifically into loyalty programs to better cater to customers and foster stronger brand loyalty.

The relevance of this thesis lies in the growing importance of loyalty programs as a strategic tool for brands in Germany to remain competitive in a rapidly evolving market. The proposed approach and findings will play a crucial role in enabling Adidas, Nike and Puma to optimize their loyalty programs, ensuring they remain competitive in both the German and global markets (Adidas Group Report, 2023; Research and Markets, 2024).

1.3 Problem Statement and Research Question

To build and sustain brand loyalty, customer engagement strategies such as loyalty programs play a pivotal role. When customers have a positive perception of a brand, they are more likely to remain loyal, reducing the likelihood of switching to competitors (Sheth et al., 1974). This loyalty contributes to increased customer lifetime value and consistent purchasing behavior (Sheth et al., 1974). Loyal customers tend to exhibit repeat purchasing patterns and prioritize trusted brands when choosing similar products (Hunjra et al, 2011). By enhancing brand perception and delivering added value, loyalty programs not only strengthen customer relationships but also support sustainable business growth (Kotler et al., 2012). Loyalty programs that feature benefits like rewards, exclusivity, and personalized offers have proven particularly effective in fostering ongoing customer commitment.

However, it is still unclear which specific benefits have the most significant impact on each dimension of loyalty and whether notable differences exist across age groups or genders that could guide more personalized and effective programs in this area. The insights from this research are intended to help the sportswear brands Adidas, Nike and Puma in the German market to refine the outline of their loyalty programs and enhance personalized content by providing actionable insights for optimizing loyalty program strategies. Therefore, the following two research questions were formulated.

Research Question 1:

Which loyalty dimensions (habitual, emotional, or cognitive) are influenced by specific loyalty incentives among German consumers for global sportswear brands?

Research Question 2:

What are the differences in brand loyalty preferences between demographic groups (age and gender) among German consumers for key attributes of loyalty programs in global sportswear brands?

The first research question helps to understand the impact of specific brand loyalty incentives, while the second identifies their effectiveness in driving higher brand loyalty across different demographics. Together, they clarify the ´what´ (loyalty dimensions and their drivers) and the ´who´ (target demographic preferences), enabling brands to develop a comprehensive, two-tiered strategy.

2. Literature Review

The literature review opens with a definition of brand loyalty based on foundational frameworks, enhanced by modern refinements, and explores an approach that evaluates brand loyalty through its emotional, cognitive, and habitual dimensions. It then explores the role of loyalty programs in fostering customer retention and advocacy, highlighting their proven impact on spending and engagement. Following this, the sportswear market is analyzed through an examination of key players and emerging competitors, providing a strategic context for loyalty initiatives. Porter's Five Forces and the impact of digital transformation, particularly personalization, are discussed to underline the importance of tailored loyalty incentives. Finally, the review addresses the German loyalty market, identifying gaps in demographic-specific responses to loyalty programs and the need for tailored loyalty program approaches in the sportswear industry.

2.1 Brand Loyalty

2.1.1 Definition of Brand Loyalty

Brand loyalty is defined as a deeply rooted commitment to repurchase or support a preferred brand, persisting despite external influences or competing marketing efforts (Oliver, 1999). This concept is explained through a framework that outlines its development across four distinct stages. The first stage, cognitive loyalty, is driven by rational evaluations, where consumers perceive the brand as superior based on available information. This progresses to affective loyalty, where emotional attachment and positive feelings toward the brand begin to influence consumer behavior. In the third stage, conative loyalty, a strong intention to repurchase emerges, reflecting a more deliberate commitment. Finally, action loyalty is achieved when consumers consistently repurchase and actively advocate for the brand, recommending it to others. This staged progression highlights the role of both rational and emotional factors in cultivating lasting loyalty (Oliver, 1999) (Appendix A 1). While the foundational framework for defining brand loyalty remains central, modern elements have been incorporated to further expand and refine the concept. Those increasingly support the emotional dimension of brand loyalty with factors like self-brand connection (Eelen et al., 2017), brand identification (Popp et al., 2017), and brand attachment (Japutra et al., 2019) playing pivotal roles in shaping loyalty. These elements highlight the growing emphasis on the emotional aspects of brand loyalty in recent years. The digital shift has introduced new influences, such as brand advocacy (Coelho et al., 2019), and highlights that brand loyalty is increasingly characterized by positive word-of-mouth (Rust, 2020). Brand loyalty can further be defined as the strengthened consumer commitment and engagement that emerge as brands build and nurture brand communities and sub-brand communities, where active participation within these communities fosters deeper loyalty (Fernandes et al., 2019).

2.1.2 Measurement of Brand Loyalty

In recent years, modern frameworks have expanded the scope of brand loyalty measurement, emphasizing the quality and strength of the consumer-brand relationship as a driver of long-term value (Khamitov et al., 2019). Their multidimensional framework includes relational metrics such as identification with the brand, self-brand connection, trust, emotional attachment, and love for the brand (Khamitov et al., 2019). This approach allows for a nuanced analysis of the elements that contribute to enduring loyalty, reflecting the deeper bonds that brands can foster with their consumers.

A more contemporary perspective conceptualizes brand loyalty as comprising emotional, cognitive, and habitual dimensions, outlined in a tripartite framework (Dapena-Baron et al., 2020). Within this model, cognitive loyalty is rooted in a rational evaluation of a brand's functional benefits, such as performance, forming the basis for a logical connection. Building on this, emotional loyalty emerges from a deep personal attachment to the brand, strengthening resistance to switching by fostering a stronger bond. Meanwhile, habitual loyalty complements these dimensions, arising from repeated purchases driven by routine or convenience, often occurring without significant emotional or rational engagement (Dapena-Baron et al., 2020). This multidimensional perspective offers a comprehensive understanding of brand loyalty, evaluated through 16 specific questions divided into categories targeting habitual, cognitive, and emotional loyalty. The model is particularly valuable as it incorporates three equally weighted dimensions, providing a holistic framework for understanding brand loyalty (Dapena-Baron et al., 2020). These dimensions offer flexibility, as they can be refined into tailored subcategories, allowing the model to align with specific research needs or adapt to emerging market dynamics.

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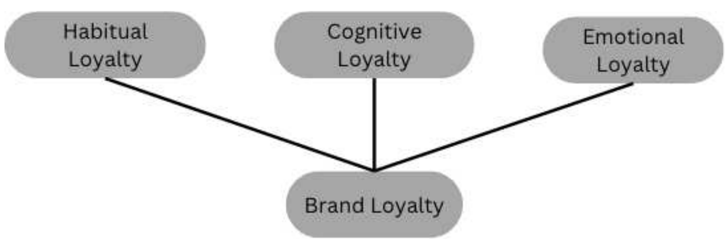

Figure 1: Brand Loyalty Model by Dapena Baron (2020)

2.1.3 Impact of different Loyalty Dimensions

The loyalty dimensions outlined in the model each exert a distinct influence on the customer, as detailed in the corresponding sections that explore the impact of each dimension.

2.1.3.1 Impact of Emotional Loyalty

Emotional loyalty represents a resilient type of loyalty, driven by customers deep emotional connections with a brand. Emotional loyalty stems from trust, attachment, and positive feelings that make a brand irreplaceable in a customer's mind (Carroll et al., 2006). Emotionally loyal customers are more likely to advocate for the brand and remain loyal even during negative experiences (Thomson et al., 2005). A major impact of emotional loyalty is its ability to create long-term relationships that are less influenced by competitive offerings. For instance, customers may continue to purchase from a brand even if its prices increase, provided they feel emotionally connected (Bennett et al., 2002).

2.1.3.2 Impact of Habitual Loyalty

Habitual loyalty is driven by inertia or routine rather than deep emotional attachment or rational evaluations. Customers exhibiting habitual loyalty tend to repeatedly purchase a brand out of convenience, familiarity, or habit (Dapena-Baron et al., 2020).

However, habitual loyalty is considered less stable than emotional loyalty, as it can be disrupted by competitors offering greater convenience (Seetharaman et al., 2004).

2.1.3.3 Impact of Cognitive Loyalty

Cognitive loyalty is rooted in a customer's rational assessment of a brand's functional benefits, such as quality or convenience. This type of loyalty significantly influences customer retention, as consumers perceive high value in brands that meet or exceed their expectations (Oliver, 1999). For instance, customers may remain loyal to a brand that offers superior advantages, provided these benefits are consistently evident.

However, cognitive loyalty is often considered the least stable form of loyalty because it is highly dependent on rational evaluations. If a competitor provides better perceived value—whether through lower prices or higher quality—customers may switch brands (Dick et al., 1994). This fragility makes it particularly important for brands to continuously communicate and deliver their unique value propositions. Additionally, cognitive loyalty is most prevalent in high-involvement decision-making processes, where customers actively compare alternatives and prioritize tangible benefits over emotional connections (Dapena-Baron et al., 2020).

2.2 Loyalty Program

2.2.1 Definition of Brand Loyalty Program

Brand loyalty programs strengthen customer commitment to a brand by offering tailored incentives, encouraging repeat purchases, and cultivating positive perceptions (Yi et al., 2003; Meyer-Waarden, 2015).

These programs often offer financial rewards, such as discounts or cashback, alongside social benefits like community events that foster a sense of belonging, thereby strengthening emotional connections and deepening customer-brand relationships. (Bolton et al., 2004; Gandomi et al., 2013). Moreover, exclusive perks like early access to products or invitations to special events can further boost brand loyalty, particularly in highly competitive markets (Reinartz et al., 2000). By addressing both the practical and emotional aspects of customer needs, these programs foster enduring relationships and improve a brand's competitive standing (Kim et al., 2013; Meyer-Waarden, 2015).

2.2.2 The Proven Success of Loyalty Programs

Loyalty programs have a significant impact on brand loyalty and consumer behavior. On average, members spend 32% more than non-members, highlighting the financial advantages of such programs (Hello Again & Handelsverband, 2024). Additionally, 53% of consumers show a preference for shopping with brands where they are loyalty program members, emphasizing the role of these initiatives in shaping brand preference (Hello Again & Handelsverband, 2024).

Moreover, loyalty programs strengthen emotional connections and foster brand advocacy. About 12% of members actively promote the brand, while 70% recommend it if the loyalty program delivers clear value. Notably, 88% of loyalty members remain committed to their chosen brand, even when competitors offer lower prices (KPMG, 2024).

2.3 Overview of the Global Sportswear Market

2.3.1 Sportswear Market: Key Statistics and Trends

The three largest global sportswear brands—Adidas, Nike, and Puma—are central to this thesis due to their dominance in industry revenue, while emerging competitors have gained traction in recent years (Statista, 2024). The global sportswear market is projected to grow at a compound annual growth rate (CAGR) of 9.9% from 2024 to 2029 (Arizton Advisory & Intelligence, 2024). Adidas, Nike, and Puma, the global leaders in sportswear, have shown signs of stagnation in their financial performance despite the industry's promising growth outlook.

Adidas has maintained consistent revenues of approximately €21.4 billion over the past five years but faced a 4.8% decline between 2022 and 2023 (Adidas Report, 2023). Similarly, Nike reported revenues of €46.6 billion in 2023, experiencing only a slight increase of 0.36% to €46.77 billion in 2024, signaling minimal growth (Nike, 2023; Grand View Research, 2024). Puma recorded €8.6 billion in revenue for 2023, reflecting a modest year-over-year growth of 1.5% (Puma, 2023). These figures underscore the overall stagnation among major sportswear brands, even as market projections remain optimistic.

Meanwhile, competitors and niche brands like Lululemon or New Balance are experiencing rapid growth. Lululemon, driven by the booming athleisure trend, generated €8.5 billion in revenue in 2023, marking an impressive 18% year-over-year increase and positioning itself to potentially overtake Puma as the third-largest global brand (Lululemon Athletica, 2023). Similarly, New Balance achieved a revenue of €6 billion in 2023, reflecting a remarkable 22% growth from the previous year (New Balance Report, 2023).

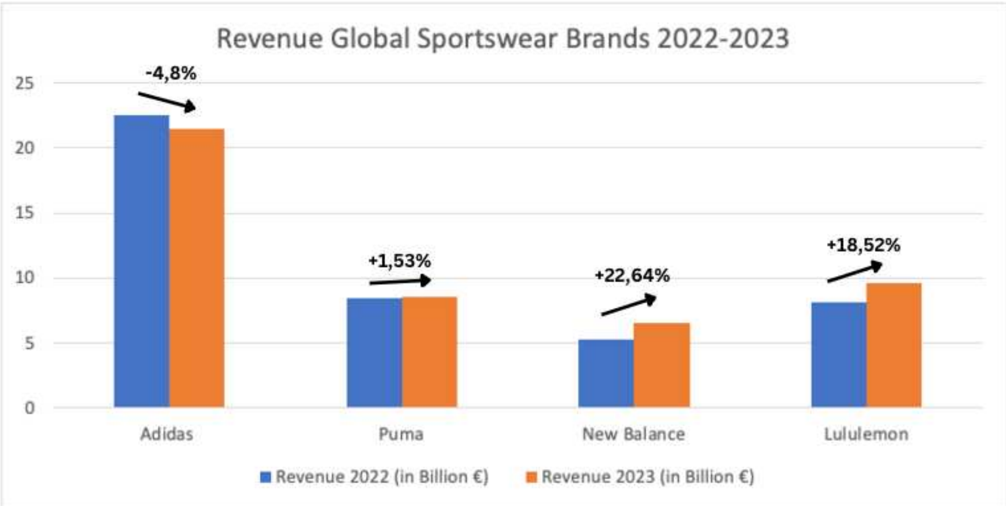

Figure 2: Revenue Global Sportswear Brands 2022-2023

In the German market, Adidas reported a revenue decline of 16.14% from €1.511 billion in 2022 to €1.267 billion in 2023 (Adidas Group Report, 2023). While specific German data for Nike and Puma is unavailable, their performance likely aligns with global trends. These shifts underline the need for loyalty strategies to retain customers amidst growing competition and plateauing growth for established brands.

2.3.2 Competitive Dynamics in the Global Sportswear Industry

The global sportswear market, marked by intense competition and rapidly changing consumer demands, can be effectively examined through Porter's Five Forces framework to identify its challenges and opportunities (Porter, 2008).

Global brands such as Adidas, Puma, and Nike maintain their dominance in the market; however, agile niche players like Lululemon, New Balance or On Running have intensified competitive rivalry by strategically targeting specific market segments through innovation and focused strategies, underscoring the importance of maintaining brand loyalty (S&P Global, 2024; Statista, 2024). One key challenge for global sportswear brands is the growing threat of substitutes and potential new entrants, which has been amplified by the accessibility of e-commerce platforms that empower consumers to explore and switch to alternative brands (Grand View Research, 2024). Meanwhile, established brands have strengthened their loyalty programs to deepen their connection with consumers, cultivate stronger relationships, and minimize the risk of brand switching. (Adidas Report, 2021). Simultaneously, the bargaining power of buyers has increased significantly due to the abundance of information and variety of choices available online. Today's consumers demand better pricing, higher value, and personalized experiences, prompting brands to prioritize digital engagement and seamless shopping experiences (S&P Global, 2024). This shift is evident in the rapid growth of e-commerce, which now accounts for approximately 30% of the sportswear market (S&P Global, 2024). In this context, loyalty programs play a crucial role in retaining customers by offering tailored incentives and fostering brand preference in an increasingly competitive landscape. Supplier bargaining power is not relevant in this context, as global sportswear brands often have diversified sourcing options and leverage economies of scale, minimizing the direct influence suppliers can exert over these companies.

2.3.3 Digital Transformation in the Sportswear Industry: The Role of Personalized Content

Amid these pressures, digital transformation has emerged as a pivotal factor influencing the sportswear industry. Personalized content, driven by advancements in data analytics, artificial intelligence, and machine learning, is reshaping how brands engage with consumers (Kotras, 2020). This type of marketing involves creating customized content that is tailored to a customer's interests and preferences (Donmezer et al., 2023). JD Sports, embracing this trend, has implemented an AI-driven search solution as part of its comprehensive modernization strategy, enhancing the e-commerce experience with precise and personalized search results (Algolia, 2024).

By leveraging machine-learning algorithms, brands can craft highly targeted and tailored marketing initiatives, predicting customer preferences with remarkable accuracy and enabling scalable, one-to-one interactions (Kotras, 2020). This is exemplified by the growing use of personalized content across digital channels like social media and e-commerce platforms, which adapt to evolving consumer needs (Guan, 2023).

This enables marketers to optimize engagement through personalized shopping experiences, including tailored product recommendations, dynamic pricing, and exclusive discounts (Broklyn et al., 2024). In e-commerce, these AI-driven insights empower businesses to allocate marketing spend more effectively, targeting receptive audiences and improving overall campaign performance (Broklyn et al., 2024). Many leading e-commerce companies have demonstrated the effectiveness of these strategies in boosting customer satisfaction and achieving business growth (Rane, 2023).

Building on the potential of personalized content, it can also play a critical role in enhancing online loyalty programs. By analyzing demographic insights, brands can identify and promote incentives tailored to specific consumer groups. Such alignment of loyalty program incentives with the preferences of different demographic segments enables brands to create highly effective strategies to increase customer loyalty, satisfaction, and advocacy.

2.4 Loyalty Programs in the Sportswear Industry

2.4.1 The Importance of Loyalty Programs in the Sportswear Industry

Membership programs are a core strategy for global sportswear brands, integrating digital ecosystems, personalization, and exclusive rewards to enhance customer lifetime value (Adidas Annual Report, 2022). Nike's Nike plus program exemplifies success in customer-centric loyalty strategies. With over 100 million global members, 73% are willing to share data for personalized experiences, driving deeper engagement (Spike Retail, 2020). Nike’s omnichannel approach has led to a 50% increase in program-driven transactions, with members spending three times more than non-members, significantly boosting revenue (Bond Brand Loyalty, 2021).

While customers are increasingly willing to share personal data in exchange for personalized experiences, there remains a gap in understanding how different demographic groups prefer specific incentives.

2.4.2 Key Attributes of Loyalty Programs in Global Sportswear Brands (2024)

Loyalty programs offered by global sportswear brands like Adidas and Nike leverage e-commerce and digital platforms to deliver exclusive benefits and personalized experiences, driving long-term customer engagement and loyalty (Adidas AdiClub, 2024; Puma Membership, 2024). These programs are designed to meet diverse customer needs, offering features such as discounts, exclusive access, unique experiences, fitness resources, personalization, delivery perks, and opportunities for community engagement (Adidas AdiClub, 2024; Puma Membership, 2024).

For instance, discounts like a permanent 10% reduction are often paired with points-based systems, enabling members to earn and redeem points for vouchers, thus encouraging repeat purchases (Adidas AdiClub, 2024). Exclusive product access heightens excitement by providing members with early or exclusive opportunities to purchase new releases and limited editions (Adidas AdiClub, 2024; Puma Membership, 2024; Nike Membership, 2024). Invitations to events, such as Adidas Runtastic activities or Nike Run Club sessions, create memorable experiences while fostering stronger connections with customers (Nike Membership, 2024; Adidas AdiClub, 2024).

Additionally, fitness and wellness resources, including personalized workout plans from apps like Nike Training Club, align with the active lifestyles these brands promote (Nike Membership, 2024). Personalization plays a central role, with features like Nike By You allowing members to customize sneakers, and curated recommendations tailored to individual preferences enhancing the overall experience (Nike Membership, 2024).

Convenience is another key focus, with benefits such as free or expedited shipping offered to higher-tier members, as demonstrated by Adidas' Creators Club (Adidas AdiClub, 2024). Furthermore, community engagement fosters a sense of belonging through fitness challenges, leaderboards, and social sharing tools, highlighting member achievements and cultivating a vibrant, connected community (Adidas AdiClub, 2024) (Appendix A 2).

2.5 Brand Loyalty in Germany

2.5.1 Current Landscape

Brand loyalty in Germany is characterized by moderate adoption of loyalty programs and a pragmatic consumer mindset. With a participation rate of 59%, Germany trails behind the European average of 61.3% and significantly lags markets like Norway and Sweden, where over 80% of adults engage with such programs (YouGov, 2024). This gap presents an opportunity to increase the participation rate in loyalty initiatives within the German market. While 65% of German consumers view loyalty programs as effective for rewarding customers, this figure remains below Great Britain (74%) and Poland (67%). More critically, only 27% of German consumers are likely to recommend a brand based on its loyalty program, compared to 43% in Poland (YouGov, 2024). This lower participation highlights the potential to better tailor loyalty program incentives to German consumers, addressing their specific needs and preferences to drive greater engagement.

Furthermore, German consumers report limited impact from existing programs. Only 34% claim increased loyalty, and 29% indicate spending more due to loyalty incentives. These numbers fall short compared to countries like Great Britain and Ireland, where emotionally engaging and personalized program benefits drive significantly higher brand loyalty (Statista, 2023; YouGov, 2024).

This reflects a space for improvement, as loyalty programs in Germany have the potential to achieve stronger emotional engagement and behavioral impact by incorporating personalized, experiential, and value-driven benefits tailored to consumer expectations.

2.5.2 Building Brand Loyalty in Germany

The German consumer landscape is evolving rapidly, shaped by changing expectations and behaviors. Essential elements like personalization, price sensitivity, trust, and creative incentives play a vital role in building and sustaining brand loyalty (Emarsys, 2022). Personalization has emerged as a crucial factor in building brand loyalty, particularly among younger demographics. Nearly 43% of Germans aged 18–34 believe that proactive personalization will define future brand interactions, and 64% of Germans express loyalty to brands that offer tailored services and support (Sapio Research, 2024; Emarsys, 2022).

At the same time, loyalty incentives have grown increasingly influential. In 2022, 46% of Germans identified discounts and rewards as their primary drivers of loyalty, a notable increase from 41% in 2021 (Emarsys, 2022). While financial benefits like discounts remain highly effective, younger, tech-savvy consumers are showing a growing preference for exclusive experiences and opportunities for community engagement. Trust also continues to play a foundational role in fostering loyalty. For 40% of German consumers, trust and emotional connections are equally as important as tangible benefits such as free delivery or discounts (Sapio Research, 2024). Furthermore, 22% of consumers emphasize the creation of memorable experiences as a key factor in strengthening their loyalty to a brand (Emarsys, 2024).

Although there are some insights into the German loyalty market, gaps remain—especially regarding how specific incentives resonate with consumers in the sportswear market. Moreover, a deeper understanding of how various demographic groups in Germany respond to loyalty program incentives is still lacking, presenting opportunities for further exploration.

3. Gap in Literature

Despite the widespread adoption of loyalty programs in the sportswear industry, there remains a significant research gap regarding how specific incentives influence different loyalty dimensions—habitual, emotional, and cognitive—within the German market. While global brands such as Adidas, Puma, and Nike have introduced loyalty programs, their effectiveness in catering to diverse demographic preferences, such as those based on age and gender, is not well understood.

Existing studies highlight the general benefits of loyalty programs in driving customer retention and advocacy. However, they often fail to pinpoint which specific incentives—such as discounts, exclusive product access, or community engagement—resonate most with distinct demographic groups. The German market, with its unique cultural and behavioral nuances, stands out as a critical area for localized loyalty strategies, presenting an opportunity to unlock untapped potential.

Furthermore, the rapid acceleration of digital transformation has shifted the focus of loyalty programs toward personalization to better engage consumers. While personalized marketing has demonstrated its effectiveness in enhancing customer engagement, there is still no clear framework for integrating these strategies into loyalty programs. Developing such a framework is essential for targeting specific loyalty dimensions and demographic groups, laying the foundation for more effective and tailored loyalty initiatives in the sportswear industry.

4. Research Methodology

4.1 Introduction to the Methodology

The purpose of this methodology section is to detail how the chosen research approach supports the thesis objective of identifying and measuring key attributes of membership programs that contribute to brand loyalty for global sportswear brands among German consumers.

4.2 Research Approach

To achieve the research objectives, this thesis adopts an explanatory research approach grounded in the Dapena-Baron Brand Loyalty Model to quantify the causal relationships between membership program incentives and brand loyalty (Dapena-Baron et al., 2020).

A quantitative survey-based methodology was selected for its effectiveness in examining the impact of these incentives on customer loyalty dimensions—emotional, cognitive, and habitual—among German consumers in the sportswear industry (Dapena-Baron et al., 2020). By replacing products with incentives as key drivers, this research explores how these program features interact with customer attitudes and behaviors, thereby influencing long-term loyalty outcomes based on the knowledge of how to measure brand loyalty in 2024.

4.3 Research Design

A quantitative research approach is well-suited for examining brand loyalty in membership programs, as it provides data-driven insights and allows findings to be generalized to a larger population. This aligns with the positivist perspective, which emphasizes evidence-based and logical reasoning (Ponterotto, 2005). Functional relationships between independent variables (membership program incentives) and dependent variables (brand loyalty outcomes) are examined, with control variables such as age and gender incorporated to account for potential moderating effects and enhance the robustness of the analysis. Brand loyalty, often encompassing subjective aspects like emotions, impressions, and behavioral intentions, can be effectively quantified using structured survey instruments (Bryman et al., 2011). This approach focuses on observable and measurable data, reducing researcher interpretation and potential biases (Abusabha, 2003). By adhering to strict protocols and standardized methods, quantitative research provides reliable testing and verification of findings in the domain of membership-driven brand loyalty (Abusabha, 2003), ensuring objective insights into the complex interplay of emotional and behavioral dynamics.

4.4 Data Collection Method

Primary data was collected through an online questionnaire administered via Qualtrics, a reliable platform renowned for its compatibility with SPSS, enabling seamless data export and advanced statistical analysis. Online surveys provide several key advantages, such as ensuring anonymity, which helps mitigate interviewer bias and social desirability bias—especially for sensitive topics like pricing (Wilson et al., 2003). Additionally, respondents can complete the questionnaire at their own convenience, allowing for more thoughtful and considered responses (Wilson et al., 2003). Data collection was carried out using Qualtrics from November 10, 2024, to November 24, 2024.

4.5 Measurement Framework

This research utilizes the brand loyalty framework established by Dapena Baron (2020), chosen for its comprehensive methodology that aligns seamlessly with Oliver's (1999) seminal theory of brand loyalty. To ensure the model's relevance in 2024, latest factors of Brand Loyalty such as word of mouth (Rust, 2020), self-brand connection (Eelen et al., 2017), and brand attachment (Japutra et al., 2019) were integrated while maintaining the core structure of Dapena Baron's framework. Each of the three dimensions was assigned equal weighting, providing a balanced framework to evaluate their collective influence on brand loyalty.

Dapena Baron's model, initially developed for loyalty of fast-moving consumer goods, was adapted in this study to evaluate the impact of sportswear membership program incentives on brand loyalty. The original dimensions of the model were retained, but the questionnaire was modified to reflect the specific characteristics of sportswear brands and their loyalty program structures. This adaptation enables a more accurate assessment of emotional, cognitive, and habitual loyalty within this industry context. Therefore, fourteen incentives, prevalent within membership programs from brands like Adidas, Nike, and Puma, were individually examined for their influence on loyalty. The benefits were identified through loyalty program analyses to ensure their relevance to the current market (Adidas Adiclub, 2024; Puma Membership, 2024; Nike Club, 2024). An outlined explanation of the incentives is provided in the Appendix. This overview mirrors the presentation of the incentives as they were formatted in the survey rewrite (Appendix A 3).

Responses were gathered by presenting a brief explanation of the incentive, followed by nine questions designed to assess habitual, cognitive, and emotional loyalty. Each dimension was measured through three questions, using a 1-to-7 Likert scale, where 1 represented "very unlikely" and 7 represented "very likely.

Figure 3: Adapted Model to Measure Brand Loyalty Based on Loyalty Program Incentives

To ensure relevance to membership programs rather than individual brands, questions were tailored to focus on broader behavioral patterns, a recommended practice in survey design to maintain contextual validity (Bryman et. al., 2011). For example, emotional loyalty was adjusted from "I love sharing stories about brand x with other people who also wear them" to "I speak positively about the brand with others." To ensure no loss in conceptual or analytical depth, the 9 parameters were carefully selected based on their alignment with the core dimensions of emotional, cognitive, and habitual loyalty (Dapena-Baron et al., 2020).

4.6 Sample Design

This study focuses on German consumers who are active members of loyalty programs offered by Adidas, Puma, and Nike. Given the highly competitive nature of the sportswear market, understanding which benefits most effectively enhance brand loyalty is essential, making the emphasis on current program members particularly relevant. Participants were recruited via a multi-channel approach, including the researcher's network, sports clubs, online forums, and social media platforms such as LinkedIn, Facebook, and WhatsApp. Posts were targeted at sports and fitness groups, and collaborations with sports organizations and fitness centers helped engage relevant respondents. The survey targeted German residents aged 18 and older, ensuring relevance to the German market. A sample size of approximately 200 participants was selected, balancing statistical power and feasibility. A power analysis (alpha = 0.05, medium effect size) confirmed this size as adequate for hypothesis testing. Sampling limitations, such as demographic representativeness, were addressed through diverse recruitment efforts.

4.7 Reliability and Validity

A pre-testing phase was conducted to ensure the reliability and validity of the model and survey. Five participants representing the target demographic completed the survey, providing feedback on clarity and alignment with loyalty dimensions. Their input refined the survey, addressing ambiguities and confirming it effectively captured emotional, cognitive, and habitual loyalty constructs. Based on Dapena Baron's framework, the survey was tailored to align with the research objectives and validated against theoretical expectations, such as monetary benefits increasing habitual loyalty and exclusive events enhancing emotional loyalty (Dapena Baron et al., 2020). The reliability analysis, with Cronbach's Alpha ranging from 0.837 (discounts) to 0.960 (AI recommendations), demonstrates good to excellent reliability for the scales associated with each incentive (Appendix A 4-17).

To minimize response bias, the questions were randomized for each participant, reducing potential order effects. Additionally, an attention check was incorporated into the survey, instructing participants to select a specific value (e.g., 2) on a designated Likert scale. This measure ensured the collection of high-quality data by identifying and excluding respondents who did not follow the instructions.

4.8 Data Analysis

SPSS (Statistical Package for the Social Sciences) was utilized to analyze the data and test the hypotheses, with a focus on examining the relationships between membership program incentives and brand loyalty, as well as their influence on different loyalty dimensions. Descriptive statistics were employed to summarize respondent demographics and response patterns, serving as the foundation for further analysis. To identify significant differences, one-way ANOVA and paired sample t-tests were conducted. All statistical tests were performed with a 95% confidence interval, and results with p-values < 0.05 were deemed statistically significant.

4.9 Ethical Considerations

Ethical concerns in this research may include ensuring informed consent from individuals, maintaining participant confidentiality, and protecting collected data. To address these concerns, informed consent will be obtained by providing participants with clear and detailed information about the study's purpose, procedures, and their rights before they agree to participate. Participants will be assured that their responses will remain confidential, with any identifying information removed or anonymized during data analysis. Data protection measures, such as secure storage and restricted access, will be implemented to safeguard participant information.

4.10 Data Limitations and Scope

This study encountered limitations related to time, resources, and sample diversity. The data collection process was restricted to a two-week period, limiting the opportunity to gather responses from a broader and more diverse pool of participants. Furthermore, the absence of financial resources constrained the recruitment efforts, potentially leading to an underrepresentation of specific demographic groups, such as individuals with limited online activity or those living outside major urban areas. These factors may have influenced the generalizability of the findings. The study's results are predominantly based on the behaviors and perceptions of active loyalty program members, which may not fully represent the perspectives of the broader consumer base. Additionally, the scope of the research was limited by the specificity of the evaluated incentives; for instance, the "Sport Events" incentive does not specify the types of events included. Future studies could address these gaps by utilizing a more detailed and inclusive questionnaire to capture a broader range of perspectives and preferences.

Despite these constraints, the study provides meaningful insights into how loyalty program benefits impact brand loyalty, while recognizing the methodological challenges and scope limitations inherent in the research design.

5. Data Analysis

5.1 Sample Characteristics and Insights

The survey initially received responses from 250 participants. After applying the qualification criteria, 50 participants were excluded because they were either not members of a loyalty program or not residents of Germany. Additionally, 2 incomplete responses were removed during the data cleaning process, and 20 participants failed the attention test. This resulted in a final sample size of 168 valid participants, which formed the basis of the analysis. The majority of participants were in the younger age group of 18–34 years, representing 61.3% of the total. Those aged 35–54 years made up 20.2%, while participants aged 55–64 years accounted for 18.5% (Appendix A 18). In terms of gender, the sample consisted of 61.9% male and 38.1% female participants. Regarding employment status, 41.1% of participants were students, followed closely by 38.1% in full-time employment and 20.8% who identified as self-employed. When analyzing annual income before taxes, the low-income group was overrepresented, with 53% of respondents earning below €40,000. Around 17.3% reported incomes of €40,000–59,999, while 10.1% earned €60,000–79,999. High-income earners, with over €80,000 annually, accounted for 13.1% of the sample (Appendix A 19). Compared to the general German population, the sample cannot be considered fully representative. There is a slight overrepresentation of men, and the average income is below the national average of €54,000 (Statista Research Department, 2024). These deviations are expected, given that a portion of the respondents comes from the author's network, which primarily includes students. Minor discrepancies like these are unavoidable due to the overall sampling limitations.

5.2 Overview Descriptive Statistics

The data analysis examines which loyalty dimensions are primarily influenced by the various incentives and identifies which incentives have the strongest impact on brand loyalty across different demographic groups, such as gender and age. This approach aims to provide insights for targeting customers in a more personalized and effective way, while also highlighting the outcomes these incentives generate.

5.2.1 Impact of Loyalty Program Incentives on Loyalty Dimensions

The analysis reveals distinct patterns across the three dimensions of brand loyalty—Emotional, Cognitive, and Habitual—highlighting how specific incentives drive consumer engagement and attachment. Based on the data presented in the table, access to Exclusive Sport Events (M = 5.66) and Meet-and-Greet Opportunities (M = 5.53) emerge as the strongest drivers of Emotional loyalty, achieving the highest mean scores among all incentives. Access to Limited-Edition Products (M = 5.37) follows closely, emphasizing the role of Exclusivity in fostering Emotional connections with a brand.

Table 1: Incentives Ranked by Their Impact on Emotional Loyalty

Incentive	N	Mean	Std. Deviation
Sportevent_Emotional	168	5,6587	1,09978
Meet_Emotional	168	5,5258	1,13757
Limited_Emotional	168	5,3671	1,10442
Trainingsplan_Emotional	168	5,0813	1,24428
Discount_Emotional	168	5,0794	1,04601
OutdoorCourse_Emotional	168	5,0774	1,23595
EarlyAccess_Emotional	168	4,9861	1,17885
Personalized_Emotional	168	4,9841	1,22287
OneDayDelivery_Emotional	168	4,8353	1,13962
FreeDelivery_Emotional	168	4,8333	1,17413
Voucher_Emotional	168	4,7262	1,10302
RunningClub_Emotional	168	4,7222	1,2168
RunningApp_Emotional	168	4,7024	1,23706
AI_Emotional	168	3,9226	1,24774

When it comes to Cognitive Loyalty, an incentive that emphasizes exclusivity, such as Limited Products (M = 5.41), takes the lead. This type of incentive appeals to consumers' rational evaluations, enhancing their perception of the brand's superiority, relevance, and uniqueness.

Table 2: Incentives Ranked by Their Impact on Cognitive Loyalty

Incentive	N	Mean	Std. Deviation
Limited_Cognitive	168	5,4127	1,07425
Sportevent_Cognitive	168	5,4107	0,99632
FreeDelivery_Cognitive	168	5,3274	1,18117
Meet_Cognitive	168	5,3155	1,09512
Discount_Cognitive	168	5,2361	1,04353
OneDayDelivery_Cognitive	168	5,1349	1,09328
OutdoorCourse_Cognitive	168	5,0734	1,24585
Trainingplan_Cognitive	168	5,0635	1,16728
EarlyAccess_Cognitive	168	5,0258	1,11004
Personalized_Cognitive	168	5,0000	1,13377
Voucher_Cognitive	168	4,8433	0,96439
RunningClub_Cogntive	168	4,8234	1,16441
RunningApp_Cognitive	168	4,7381	1,15421
AI_Cognitive	168	4,1488	1,30088

In the case of Habitual Loyalty, financial benefits emerge as the most effective drivers, encouraging repeat purchases and fostering consistent engagement. Discounts (M = 5.93) are the strongest contributor, followed by Free Delivery.

Table 3: Incentives Ranked by Their Impact on Habitual Loyalty

Incentive	N	Mean	Std. Deviation
Discount_Habitual	168	5,9306	1,07525
FreeDelivery_Habitual	168	5,4405	1,18053
OneDayDelivery_Habitual	168	5,2778	1,20415
Meet_Habitual	168	5,2579	1,25663
Voucher_Habitual	168	5,1905	1,27964
Limited_habitual	168	5,0694	1,22724
Sportevent_Habitual	168	5,0397	1,14765
Personalized_Habitual	168	4,8115	1,2729
EarlyAccess_Habitual	168	4,7917	1,28437
Trainingplan_Habitual	168	4,5675	1,27703
OutdoorCourse_Habitual	168	4,5575	1,2879
RunningApp_Habitual	168	4,4206	1,22691
RunningClub_Habitual	168	4,4008	1,30078
AI_Habitual	168	4,1131	1,31617

Together, these descriptive insights reveal that experience-based incentives primarily strengthen emotional bonds, exclusive and personalized benefits drive cognitive loyalty, and practical, cost-saving incentives reinforce habitual purchasing behaviors.

5.2.2 Gender-Based Variations in Incentives Driving Brand Loyalty

The descriptive analysis indicates that both male and female respondents prioritize monetary benefits and experience-based incentives for driving brand loyalty, with several incentives achieving mean scores above 5. For males, the incentives with the highest impact on brand loyalty include Meet and Greet (M = 5.512), Discounts (M = 5.437), and Access to Sports Events (M = 5.400). For females, Discounts (M = 5.380), Access to Sports Events (M = 5.321), and Outdoor Courses (M = 5.264) show the strongest influence. These findings suggest that both genders value unique experiences and financial benefits as key drivers of brand loyalty, with slight differences in the ranking of specific incentives.

Table 4: Ranking of Incentives by Gender-Specific Mean Scores

Attribute	Male Mean	Std. Dev	Attribute	Female Mean	Std. Dev
Meet and Greet	5,512	0,9157	Discounts	5,380	0,8563
Discounts	5,437	0,8516	Access to Sports Events	5,321	0,9823
Access to Sports Events	5,400	0,8982	Outdoor Courses	5,264	1,2533
Limited Offers	5,348	1,0266	Limited Offers	5,177	0,9734
Free Delivery	5,149	0,9176	Meet and Greet	5,130	1,1502
Early Access	5,003	1,0832	One-Day Delivery	5,045	1,0088
One-Day Delivery	4,993	0,9981	Personalized Offers	5,004	1,0928
Vouchers	4,943	0,8983	Training Plans	4,997	1,1232
Personalized Offers	4,888	1,1187	Free Delivery	4,974	1,2549
Training Plans	4,847	1,1072	Running Club	4,898	1,0748
Outdoor Courses	4,681	0,9787	Vouchers	4,882	1,0139
Running App	4,618	1,0738	Early Access	4,823	1,1226
Running Club	4,496	1,1480	Running App	4,714	1,3336
AI Recommendation	4,115	1,0832	AI Recommendation	3,974	1,0334

5.2.3 Age-Based Variations in Incentives Driving Brand Loyalty

The descriptive analysis reveals that the incentives creating the strongest impact on brand loyalty include experience-based options (e.g., meet-and-greet events, sports events), monetary benefits (e.g., discounts), and exclusive offerings (e.g., limited edition products). These incentives effectively foster brand loyalty across all age groups, with some variation in preferences.

For younger consumers (18–34), experience-based incentives, such as Meet-and-Greet Events (M = 5.694) and Sport Events (M = 5.466), alongside Discounts (M = 5.642), play a central role. The 35–44 age group values exclusivity and unique experiences, with Limited Edition Products (M = 5.381) and Meet-and-Greet Events (M = 5.463) being most impactful. Among older consumers (45–64), exclusivity and convenience are key, with preferences for Limited Edition Products (M = 5.428), Discounts (M = 5.272), and Free Delivery (M = 5.106).

Across all groups, Discounts, Experiences, and Exclusivity consistently achieve high mean scores, underscoring their universal importance in driving brand loyalty, with only marginal differences between incentives.

Table 5: Ranking of Incentives by Age-Specific Mean Scores

18-24		25-34		35-44		45-54		55-64	
Incentive	**Mean**	**Incentive**	**Mean**	**Incentive**	**Mean**	**Incentive**	**Mean**	**Incentive**	**Mean**
Meet and Greet	5,694	Sport Event	5,466	Meet and Greet	5,463	Limited Edition	5,428	Sport Event	5,412
Discount	5,642	Discount	5,448	Limited Edition	5,381	Discount	5,272	Limited Edition	5,409
One-Day Delivery	5,526	Meet and Greet	5,414	Sport Event	5,222	Free Delivery	5,106	Discount	5,244
Sport Event	5,437	Limited Edition	5,270	Discount	5,135	Sport Event	4,978	Early Access	5,125
Voucher	5,244	One-Day Delivery	4,983	Free Delivery	4,956	Running Club	4,944	Personalized Services	5,111
Training Plan	5,136	Free Delivery	4,950	Early Access	4,767	Training Plan	4,889	Meet and Greet	5,097
Limited Edition	5,119	Personalized Services	4,908	Voucher	4,746	Outdoor Course	4,844	Voucher	4,950
Free Delivery	5,106	Training Plan	4,895	Outdoor Course	4,722	Meet and Greet	4,839	Outdoor Course	4,921
Outdoor Course	5,079	Outdoor Course	4,820	Running Club	4,669	Voucher	4,811	Running App	4,871
Early Access	5,064	Early Access	4,751	One-Day Delivery	4,643	Early Access	4,811	Free Delivery	4,835
Personalized Services	4,953	Voucher	4,732	Running App	4,587	One-Day Delivery	4,750	Running Club	4,756
Running App	4,830	Running Club	4,431	Training Plan	4,579	Running App	4,694	Training Plan	4,742
Running Club	4,669	Running App	4,404	Personalized Services	4,567	Personalized Services	4,567	One-Day Delivery	4,699
AI Recommendation	4,254	AI Recommendation	3,751	AI Recommendation	3,841	AI Recommendation	3,872	AI Recommendation	4,584

5.3 Analysis of Mean Differences

The objective of the mean differences analysis in this section is to identify and statistically validate which types of brand loyalty (emotional, cognitive, or habitual) specific incentives primarily influence. Subsequently, the analysis examines significant differences between groups to determine the most effective incentives for various target audiences.

5.3.1 Impact of Incentives on Loyalty Dimensions

Based on the descriptive analysis, a paired sample T-Test was conducted to compare the highest mean of each Incentive within a specific loyalty dimension to its corresponding means in other dimensions. This analysis aimed to identify whether Incentives primarily impact one loyalty dimension or influence multiple dimensions.

Sport Events and Meet-and-Greet Opportunities primarily foster emotional loyalty, significantly outperforming cognitive and habitual dimensions ($p < 0.001$). These Incentives are particularly effective at building emotional connections through memorable and exclusive experiences. Similarly, Outdoor Courses contribute to both emotional and cognitive loyalty equally ($p = 0.584$), while emotional loyalty remains stronger than habitual loyalty ($p < 0.001$).

Incentives such as Limited Products and Early Access are key drivers of cognitive loyalty, emphasizing exclusivity and rational evaluations. Both Limited Products and Early Access significantly surpass habitual loyalty ($p < 0.001$), while Early Access shows no significant difference between cognitive and emotional loyalty ($p = 0.490$), suggesting a balanced contribution. Personalized Offerings also primarily enhance cognitive loyalty, aligning with their tailored and rational appeal.

Practical Incentives like Discounts, Free Delivery, One-Day Delivery, and Vouchers predominantly drive habitual loyalty, encouraging routine behaviors and repeat purchases. For Discounts, habitual loyalty is significantly higher than both cognitive and emotional loyalty ($p < 0.001$), highlighting their effectiveness in creating consistent purchasing habits. Similarly, Free Delivery and Vouchers strongly favor habitual loyalty ($p < 0.001$). One-Day Delivery also leads to habitual loyalty. Finally, Running Clubs contribute to both emotional and cognitive loyalty, showing a dual impact by fostering connections and providing practical value (Appendix A 20).

In conclusion, emotional loyalty is primarily influenced by experiential Incentives like Sport Events, Meet-and-Greets, and Running Clubs. Cognitive loyalty emerges from exclusive Incentives such as Limited Products, Early Access, and Personalized Offers, while habitual loyalty is reinforced through practical benefits like Discounts, Free Delivery, One-Day Delivery, and Vouchers. Recognizing these relationships enables brands to align their loyalty strategies with the specific dimensions they aim to strengthen. The results are summarized in a table to provide a clearer overview of which Incentives have the most significant impact on specific loyalty dimensions. The Incentives "AI Recommendation," "Running App," and "Training Plan" have been excluded from further analysis, as they do not demonstrate a significantly strong influence on brand loyalty within any demographic segment in the later stages of the analysis.

Table 6: Relevant Incentives and Their Strongest Loyalty Dimensions

Incentive	Dominant Loyalty Dimension(s)
Sportevent	**Emotional**
Meet-and-Greet	**Emotional**
Outdoor Course	**Emotional**, Cognitive
Limited Product Access	**Emotional**, Cognitive
Personalized Products	**Cognitive**
Running Club	**Cognitive**, Emotional
Early Access	**Cognitive**, Emotional
Discounts	**Habitual**
Free Delivery	**Habitual**
One-Day Delivery	**Habitual**
Vouchers	**Habitual**

5.3.2 Analyzing Gender-Based Differences in Loyalty Drivers

This section outlines the primary differences and incentives that influence brand loyalty across male and female participants. To explore these dynamics, the following hypotheses are examined:

H01: Male and female users attribute equal importance to loyalty incentives in fostering brand loyalty.

H1: Male and female users attribute different levels of importance to loyalty incentives in fostering brand loyalty.

H02: Among male participants, the 'Meet and Greet' incentive has the strongest influence on brand loyalty.

H2: Among male participants, the 'Meet and Greet' incentive does not have the strongest influence on brand loyalty.

H03: Among female participants, discounts are the incentive with the strongest influence on brand loyalty.

H3: Among female participants, discounts are not the incentive with the strongest influence on brand loyalty.

To analyze gender differences in the impact of loyalty incentives on brand loyalty, a multivariate analysis of variance (MANOVA) was conducted to assess overall variations between males and females. This analysis determined whether significant differences existed in the levels of loyalty generated by each gender through various incentives. Subsequently, one-way ANOVA tests were performed for each incentive to identify specific areas where these differences were statistically significant. Finally, paired-sample t-tests were employed to further investigate and validate whether these differences pertained to the key incentives with the strongest influence on brand loyalty within each gender group.

The MANOVA results revealed a significant multivariate effect of gender (Wilks' Lambda = 0.814, $F(14, 153) = 2.501$, $p = 0.003$, $\eta^2 = 0.186$), indicating that males and females evaluate incentives differently.

Table 7: MANOVA Table

Statistic	Value
Test	MANOVA
Independent Variable	Gender
Dependent Variables	Key Membership Program Attributes
Wilks' Lambda	0.814
F-Statistic	2.501
Degrees of Freedom	(14, 153)
p-Value	0.003
Partial Eta Squared	0.186

A detailed analysis using a one-way ANOVA revealed statistically significant gender differences for three attributes. For "Running Club" ($d = -0.402$, $p = 0.013$), female respondents showed a higher valuation, suggesting this benefit contributes more to their loyalty. Similarly, for "Outdoor Courses" ($d = -0.535$, $p < 0.001$), females develop stronger loyalty through this activity offered compared to males. In contrast, males valued "Meet and Greet" events ($d = 0.377$, $p = 0.019$) more highly.

Therefore, the null hypothesis (H01) is rejected, as the findings demonstrate significant differences in how males and females evaluate loyalty incentives, thereby confirming H1.

Table 8: ANOVA to detect Differences between Gender

Attribute	Male Mean	Female Mean	Male Std. Dev.	Female Std. Dev.	t-Value	p-Value	Cohen's d	Interpretation
Discounts	5,437	5,380	0,8516	0,8563	0.419	0.676	0.067	No significant difference between genders.
Vouchers	4,943	4,882	0,8983	1,0139	0.386	0.683	0.065	No significant difference between genders.
Early Access	5,003	4,823	1,0832	1,1226	1.033	0.303	0.164	No significant difference between genders.
Limited Offers	5,348	5,177	1,0266	0,9734	1.070	0.286	0.170	No significant difference between genders.
Access to Sports Events	5,400	5,321	0,8982	0,9823	0.530	0.597	0.084	No significant difference between genders.
Running App	4,618	4,714	1,0738	1,3336	-0.513	0.609	-0.096	No significant difference between genders.
Training Plans	4,847	4,997	1,1072	1,1232	-0.844	0.400	-0.149	No significant difference between genders.
Personalized Offers	4,888	5,004	1,1187	1,0928	-0.656	0.510	-0.116	No significant difference between genders.
AI Recommendation	4,115	3,974	1,0832	1,0334	0.982	0.328	0.158	No significant difference between genders.
Free Delivery	5,149	4,974	0,9176	1,2549	0.992	0.323	0.158	No significant difference between genders.
One-Day Delivery	4,993	5,045	0,9981	1,0088	-0.257	0.798	-0.041	No significant difference between genders.
Running Club	4,496	4,898	1,1480	1,0748	-2.257	0.013	-0.402	Significant, females value more than males.
Outdoor Courses	4,681	5,264	0,9787	1,2533	-3.365	< 0.001	-0.535	Significant, females value more than males.
Meet and Greet	5,512	5,130	0,9157	1,1502	2.375	0.019	0.377	Significant, males value more than females.

The paired-sample T-Test comparing the incentive with the highest impact on brand loyalty to all other incentives identified the key drivers for male customers. While Meet-and-Greet achieved the highest mean score, it did not differ significantly from Discounts ($p = 0.473$), Limited Products ($p = 0.142$), or Sports Events ($p = 0.228$). These results indicate that for male customers, the four incentives—Meet-and-Greet, Discounts, Limited Products, and Sports Events—have a statistically equivalent highest impact on brand loyalty. The null hypothesis (H02) is rejected, as "Meet and Greet" does not have a significantly stronger influence on brand loyalty than Discounts, Limited Products, and Sports Events, confirming H2.

Table 9: Paired Samples T-Test to Identify Means Comparable to Meet and Greet (Male)

Incentive Comaprison	Mean diff.	Std. Dev.	Lower	Upper	t	Two-Sided p
Mean_MeetAndGreet - Mean_Discount	0,07479	1,05812	-0,13099	0,28056	0,721	0,473
Mean_MeetAndGreet - Mean_Voucher	0,56838	1,19352	0,33627	0,80049	4,856	<,001
Mean_MeetAndGreet - Mean_EarlyAccess	0,50855	1,17351	0,28033	0,73677	4,419	<,001
Mean_MeetAndGreet - Mean_Limited	0,16346	1,12643	-0,0556	0,38252	1,48	0,142
Mean_MeetAndGreet - Mean_Sportevent	0,11218	0,94249	-0,07111	0,29547	1,214	0,228
Mean_MeetAndGreet - Mean_RunningApp	0,89423	1,28026	0,64525	1,14321	7,123	<,001
Mean_MeetAndGreet - Mean_Trainingplan	0,66453	1,16842	0,4373	0,89176	5,8	<,001
Mean_MeetAndGreet - Mean_Personalized	0,62393	1,1892	0,39266	0,8552	5,351	<,001
Mean_MeetAndGreet - Mean_AI	1,39637	1,45134	1,11412	1,67862	9,812	<,001
Mean_MeetAndGreet - Mean_freeDelivery	0,36325	1,09012	0,15125	0,57525	3,398	<,001
Mean_MeetAndGreet - Mean_RunningClub	1,01603	1,33499	0,7564	1,27565	7,761	<,001
Mean_MeetAndGreet - Mean_OutdoorCourse	0,8312	1,21469	0,59497	1,06742	6,978	<,001
Mean_MeetAndGreet - Mean_OneDayDelivery	0,50748	1,00541	0,31195	0,70301	5,147	<,001

The results for women show that while discount has the highest mean, it is not significantly different from Limited Products (p = 0.127), Sport Event (p = 0.611), Outdoor Course (p = 0.482) and Meet and Greet (p = 0.094) in their influence on brand loyalty. As a result, these incentives have the same highest impact on brand loyalty, while all other incentives demonstrate a lower influence. Consequently, the null hypothesis (H03) is rejected, as Discounts and four other incentives have a statistically similar impact as Discounts, confirming H3.

Table 10: Paired Samples T-Test to Identify Means Comparable to Discount (Female)

Incentive Comparison	Mean	Std. Dev.	Lower	Upper	t	Two-Sided p
Mean_Discount - Mean_Voucher	0,49826	0,76289	0,3077	0,68883	5,225	<,001
Mean_Discount - Mean_EarlyAccess	0,55729	1,01921	0,3027	0,81188	4,374	<,001
Mean_Discount - Mean_Limited	0,20313	1,04954	-0,05904	0,46529	1,548	0,127
Mean_Discount - Mean_Sportevent	0,05903	0,92327	-0,1716	0,28965	0,511	0,611
Mean_Discount - Mean_RunningApp	0,66667	1,27072	0,34925	0,98408	4,197	<,001
Mean_Discount - Mean_Trainingplan	0,38368	1,19276	0,08574	0,68162	2,573	0,012
Mean_Discount - Mean_Personalized	0,37674	1,11544	0,09811	0,65537	2,702	0,009
Mean_Discount - Mean_AI	1,40625	1,21397	1,10301	1,70949	9,267	<,001
Mean_Discount - Mean_freeDelivery	0,38715	0,93927	0,15253	0,62177	3,297	0,002
Mean_Discount - Mean_RunningClub	0,48264	1,19034	0,1853	0,77998	3,244	0,002
Mean_Discount - Mean_OutdoorCourse	0,11632	1,31668	-0,21258	0,44522	0,707	0,482
Mean_Discount - Mean_OneDayDelivery	0,33507	0,82116	0,12995	0,54019	3,264	0,002
Mean_Discount - Mean_MeetAndGreet	0,25	1,17572	-0,04369	0,54369	1,701	0,094

While males and females share the same key incentives driving brand loyalty, Outdoor Courses have been shown to be strong loyalty driver for females but not for males. A significant difference was observed, highlighting that the key distinction between genders lies in the influence of Outdoor Courses, which rank among the most impactful incentives for females. For male customers, the most notable difference was observed in the Meet and Greet incentive, which significantly increases brand loyalty. While this incentive also ranks among the key drivers for female customers, its impact is comparatively stronger for males.

Table 11: Statistically Significant Incentives with Highest Mean Scores by Gender

Attribute	Mean	Loyalty Dimension
Male		
Meet and Greet	5,512	**Emotional**
Discounts	5,437	**Habitual**
Access to Sport Events	5,400	**Emotional**
Limited Offers	5,348	**Emotional**, Cognitive

Attribute	Mean	Loyalty Dimension
Female		
Discounts	5,380	**Habitual**
Access to Sport Events	5,321	**Emotional**
Outdoor Courses	5,264	**Emotional**, Cognitive
Limited Offers	5,177	**Emotional**, Cognitive
Meet and Greet	5,130	**Emotional**

5.3.3 Analyzing Age-Based Differences in Loyalty Drivers

This section explores the differences in incentives with the highest impact on brand loyalty across various age groups within sportswear loyalty programs. To achieve this, the following hypotheses are tested:

H04: There are no significant differences in the perception of incentives across age groups.
H4: There are significant differences in the perception of incentives across age groups.

To investigate this, MANOVA and ANOVA were first conducted to reveal general differences between age groups. Subsequently, paired-sample t-tests were performed to identify if the differences are among the key incentives with the greatest impact on brand loyalty within each age group. Initially, Box's Test of Equality of Covariance Matrices was significant ($p < 0.001$), indicating a violation of the assumption of homogeneity of covariance matrices.

Table 12: Box Test of Equality of Covariance Matrices

Box's Test of Equality of Covariance Matrices[a]	
Sig.	<,001

Consequently, Pillai's Trace was chosen as the most robust multivariate test statistic. The MANOVA results revealed a significant multivariate effect of age groups on the combined dependent variables (Pillai's Trace = 0.513, $F(56, 612) = 1.608$, $p = 0.004$).

Table 13: Pillai´s Trace

Test Statistic	Value	F	p-value (Sig.)
Pillai's Trace	0.513	1.608	0.004

As shown in the ANOVA table, significant differences were found between age groups for three incentives: access to meet-and-greet events, one-day delivery, and AI Recommendations.

Table 14: ANOVA between Age Groups

Incentive	Type	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Mean_Discount	Between Groups	4,798	4	1,199	1,682	0,157
Mean_Voucher	Between Groups	7,48	4	1,87	2,169	0,075
Mean_EarlyAccess	Between Groups	4,766	4	1,192	0,987	0,416
Mean_Limited	Between Groups	2,27	4	0,567	0,553	0,697
Mean_Sportevent	Between Groups	4,169	4	1,042	1,214	0,307
Mean_RunningApp	Between Groups	6,561	4	1,64	1,19	0,317
Mean_Trainingplan	Between Groups	4,717	4	1,179	0,952	0,436
Mean_Personalized	Between Groups	4,055	4	1,014	0,824	0,512
Mean_AI	Between Groups	17,133	4	4,283	2,995	0,02
Mean_freeDelivery	Between Groups	8,901	4	2,225	2,36	0,056
Mean_OneDayDelivery	Between Groups	18,244	4	4,561	5,004	<,001
Mean_RunningClub	Between Groups	5,312	4	1,328	1,033	0,392
Mean_OutdoorCourse	Between Groups	2,331	4	0,583	0,455	0,769
Mean_MeetAndGreet	Between Groups	12,919	4	3,23	3,239	0,014

Further the post hoc test showed, which age groups differ significantly for each incentive. For One-Day Delivery, the results show that the youngest age group, 18–24, values this incentive significantly more than the older age groups. Specifically, significant differences were found between the 18–24 group and the 25–34 group (p = 0.038), the 35–44 group (p = 0.024), the 45–54 group (p = 0.024), and the 55–64 group (p = 0.003), with the younger group consistently showing a stronger preference for this benefit.

Table 15: One day Delivery Post Hoc Test

Group Comparison	Mean Difference	Std. Error	p-value (Sig.)	Lower Bound CI	Upper Bound CI
18–24 vs 25–34	0.54317	0.18965	0.038	0.02	1,0663
18–24 vs 35–44	0.88307	0.29215	0.024	0.0772	1,6890
18–24 vs 45–54	0.77953	0.25656	0.024	0.0682	1,4837
18–24 vs 55–64	0.827	0.22283	0.003	0.2123	1,4417

The results indicate a trend where younger individuals, particularly those in the 18–24 age group, show higher brand loyalty when incentivized with fast delivery options such as one-day delivery.

For access to meet-and-greet events, significant differences were observed, but these were limited to the 18–24 age group rating this benefit significantly higher than the 45–54 age group (p = 0.015, M = 0.855). No significant differences were found between the 18–24 group and any other age groups, suggesting the observed difference is relatively isolated and not broadly impactful. Consequently, the null hypothesis (H04) is still rejected, as significant differences in the perception of incentives across age groups were identified. This supports the alternative hypothesis (H4), although the differences were significant for only two relevant incentives.

The impact of AI-driven product recommendations was excluded from the analysis, as it demonstrated no significant relevance to any demographic discussed later in the thesis.

To further identify the group of key incentives with the highest mean values, a paired-sample t-test was conducted for the incentive with the highest mean from each age group. This analysis aimed to define a group of incentives that have similarly high mean scores and contribute equally to achieving brand loyalty.

Within the 18–24 age group, the Meet-and-Greet incentive demonstrated no significant difference compared to Discounts (p = 0.710), One-Day Delivery (p = 0.322), free Delivery (p = 0.124) and Sports Events (p = 0.072), indicating that these incentives have a similar impact on brand loyalty (Appendix A 21).

Table 16: Key Incentives Driving Brand Loyalty Among 18–24-Year-Olds

18-24		
Meet and Greet	5,694	**Emotional**
Discount	5,642	**Habitual**
One-Day Delivery	5,526	**Habitual**
Access to Sport Events	5,437	**Emotional**

Among participants in the 25–34 age group**,** Sports Events showed no significant difference when compared to Limited Products (p = 0.238), Meet-and-Greet Opportunities (p = 0.676), and Discount (p = 0.909), suggesting these incentives exert a comparable influence on brand loyalty (Appendix A22).

Table 17: Key Incentives Driving Brand Loyalty Among 25–34-Year-Olds

25-34		
Access to Sport Events	5,466	**Emotional**
Discount	5,448	**Habitual**
Meet and Greet	5,414	**Emotional**
Limited Edition	5,270	**Emotional**, Cognitive

For the 35–44 age group, the Meet-and-Greet incentive did not show a significant difference when compared to Limited Products (p = 0.81), Early Access (p = 0.379), Running Club (p = 0.147), Outdoor Courses (p = 0.095), Discounts (p = 0.338), Sports Events (p = 0.352), Vouchers (p = 0.055), and Free Delivery (p = 0.299). These results indicate that all these nine incentives have a comparable high and relevant impact on brand loyalty within this age group (Appendix A 23).

Table 18: Key Incentives Driving Brand Loyalty Among 35-44-Year-Olds

35-44		
Meet and Greet	5,463	**Emotional**
Limited Edition	5,381	**Emotional**, Cognitive
Access to Sport Events	5,222	**Emotional**
Discount	5,135	**Habitual**
Free Delivery	4,956	**Habitual**
Early Access	4,767	**Cognitive**, Emotional
Voucher	4,746	**Habitual**
Outdoor Course	4,722	**Emotional**, Cognitive
Running Club	4,669	**Cognitive**, Emotional

In the 45–54 age group**,** the incentive getting access to Limited products showed no significant differences when compared to Training Plans (p = 0.089), Free Delivery (p = 0.194), Running Club (p = 0.044), and Sports Events (p = 0.059), suggesting that these incentives similarly influence brand loyalty among this demographic (Appendix A 24).

Table 19: Key Incentives Driving Brand Loyalty Among 45–54-Year-Olds

45-54		
Limited Edition	5,428	**Emotional**, Cognitive
Discount	5,272	**Habitual**
Free Delivery	5,106	**Habitual**
Access to Sport Events	4,978	**Emotional**
Running Club	4,944	**Cognitive**, Emotional

Among respondents in the 55–64 age group**,** Sports Events showed no significant differences when compared to Limited Edition (p = 0.981), Early Access (p = 0.08), Personalized **Products** (p = 0.064), and Free Delivery (p = 0.084). This indicates that these incentives have a similar impact on brand loyalty for this age group (Appendix A 25).

Table 20: Key Incentives Driving Brand Loyalty Among 55–64-Year-Olds

55-64		
Access to Sport Events	5,412	**Emotional**
Limited Edition	5,409	**Emotional**, Cognitive
Discount	5,244	**Habitual**
Early Access	5,125	**Cognitive**, Emotional
Personalized Services	5,111	**Cognitive**

6. Discussion

The discussion interprets the findings in the context of the research questions and theoretical frameworks, highlighting their implications for both academic understanding and practical applications in the German sportswear industry.

6.1 Discussion of Research Question 1

RQ1: Which loyalty dimensions (habitual, emotional, or cognitive) are influenced by specific loyalty incentives among German consumers for global sportswear brands?

To address RQ1, this section explores how specific loyalty incentives align with the three core dimensions of brand loyalty—habitual, emotional, and cognitive. By examining the relationship between these incentives and loyalty dimensions, the findings provide insights into how different strategies can foster distinct types of customer loyalty, offering a foundation for tailoring loyalty programs to effectively engage German consumers in the competitive sportswear market.

6.1.1 Interpretation of Findings in Relation to Research Objectives and Expectations

As anticipated from the literature review, the three monetary benefits—discounts, free delivery, and vouchers—emerge as key drivers of habitual loyalty. Additionally, one-day delivery, an incentive centered on convenience, also significantly contributes to habitual loyalty. These findings align with existing literature, which emphasizes that habitual loyalty is driven by monetary rewards and convenience (Dapena Baron et al.,2020).

Access to sports events and meet-and-greet opportunities are experience-based incentives that drive emotional loyalty. Similarly, outdoor sports activities and exclusivity-based incentives, such as access to limited products, also foster emotional loyalty by creating positive feelings and a deep attachment to the brand. This attachment aligns with the concept of emotional loyalty, making the brand irreplaceable in the customer's mind (Carroll et al., 2006).

The exclusive opportunities for product personalization, early access to new releases, and participation in community events, such as running clubs, are key drivers of cognitive loyalty. As highlighted in the literature review, these incentives underscore that cognitive loyalty is driven by functional benefits and unique value propositions, enabling customers to perceive greater value in brands and surpass their expectations (Oliver, 1999).

The observation that all incentives influence different dimensions of loyalty indicates that brand loyalty may not adhere to a linear process, as proposed in Oliver’s framework, which culminates in the action of purchasing from the brand (Oliver, 1999).
Instead, brand loyalty could be more accurately understood through a multidimensional approach, where individual incentives interact and collectively contribute to overall loyalty, each addressing distinct but interconnected dimensions. Unlike a linear progression with the outcome of an action, loyalty operates as a dynamic interplay of emotional, cognitive, and habitual dimensions.

6.1.2 Industry Implications

To drive short-term sales growth, brand managers should prominently highlight habitual incentives, such as faster delivery options and monetary benefits, on their loyalty program's website. By highlighting the convenience of fast product delivery and the allure of financial rewards, brands can motivate customers to make more frequent purchases. These incentives not only maximize the sales potential of loyalty programs but also play a crucial role in retaining customers, particularly when new competitors enter the market (Seetharaman et al., 2004).

To capitalize on emotional loyalty, brand managers should emphasize experience-based and exclusivity-driven incentives, particularly during periods of high competition or price increases. Emotionally loyal customers, who are willing to pay a premium and remain less influenced by competitors, can be retained by reinforcing their positive feelings and attachment to the brand. Highlighting these incentives during challenging times ensures that customers continue to choose the brand, even when facing negative experiences or external pressures. (Thomson et al., 2005).

Brand managers should emphasize the tangible incentives that contribute to cognitive loyalty, particularly when competitors offer better perceived value through lower prices or higher quality (Dick et al., 1994). To appeal to customers who actively compare alternatives, prioritize showcasing functional benefits such as product quality, exclusivity, and unique value propositions, as these tangible attributes tend to outweigh emotional connections in the decision-making process (Dapena-Baronet al., 2020).

6.1.3 Academic Contributions

The findings enhance the literature on brand loyalty by identifying which specific incentives influence individual dimensions of loyalty and clarifying their targeted impact within the sportswear industry's loyalty programs. Previously, research primarily focused on the outcomes of these dimensions, without detailing which incentives support their development. This study provides greater clarity, offering brand managers valuable insights into how their incentives directly affect different loyalty dimensions, enabling them to design more effective and targeted loyalty strategies in the sportswear sector.

6.2 Discussion of Research Question 2

RQ2: What are the differences in brand loyalty preferences between demographic groups (age and gender) among German consumers for key attributes of loyalty programs in global sportswear brands?

This discussion examines how age and gender influence brand loyalty preferences among German consumers for key attributes of global sportswear loyalty programs, providing actionable recommendations for brand managers to refine their strategies while contributing to the existing literature on demographic-specific loyalty drivers.

6.2.1 Interpretation of Findings in Relation to Research Objectives and Expectations

The goal was to identify demographic differences in the value placed on various incentives. The results revealed significant differences both between and within demographic groups, with some incentives having a substantially lower impact compared to the most influential ones. Additionally, the findings clarified which incentives were most effective in fostering strong brand loyalty.

As expected from the literature, monetary and experience-based incentives emerged as highly relevant across all demographics (Emarsys, 2022; Emarsys, 2024). However, the study also uncovered notable variations in additional incentive preferences among different groups, emphasizing the need to tailor loyalty program content to specific demographic needs. This targeted approach ensures a more effective strategy for cultivating loyalty.

6.2.2 Industry implications

Experiential incentives, such as access to sports events and meet-and-greets, along with monetary benefits like discounts, consistently showed the strongest overall impact on brand loyalty, highlighting their crucial role in the sportswear sector. These findings emphasize the need to prioritize these experiential and monetary incentives as primary drivers of loyalty, while

also incorporating additional incentives to cater to the diverse preferences of different demographic groups.
Male consumers are primarily influenced by experiential incentives, such as access to sports events and meet-and-greet opportunities, alongside monetary benefits like discounts and the exclusivity of limited-edition products. Emphasizing these incentives, particularly meet-and-greet opportunities, which generate significantly higher brand loyalty among male customers compared to female customers, in loyalty campaigns and prominently featuring them on the website can effectively enhance brand loyalty in a highly competitive market.
Similarly, female consumers respond positively to these incentives but also exhibit a unique preference for activity-based offerings, such as outdoor courses. Emphasizing these activities, particularly by involving female athletes, can foster a greater sense of community and engagement. By positioning outdoor courses as a key incentive, brands can gain a competitive advantage by enhancing emotional loyalty among female consumers, ensuring long-term engagement and connection to the brand. However, content featuring male athletes also resonates well with female customers, indicating shared loyalty patterns across genders.

The 18–24 age group, known as "Instant Gratification Seekers," values speed, convenience, and unique experiences. Incentives such as one-day delivery and meet-and-greet events strongly resonate with this demographic, reflecting a broader cultural shift driven by rapid trend adoption and a preference for immediate access to products. Additionally, experience-based events are becoming increasingly relevant in capturing their attention. Emotional loyalty, driven by these exclusive and memorable experiences, plays a significant role in building a strong connection with this demographic, while habitual loyalty is reinforced through convenience-oriented incentives like fast delivery. To build loyalty effectively, brands should prioritize fast, efficient services and offer exclusive, emotionally engaging experiences that cater to their desire for immediacy.

The 25–34 demographic, known as "Elite Engagers," places high value on exclusivity, premium offerings, and meaningful brand interactions. In addition to the widely preferred incentives such as meet-and-greet opportunities, access to sports events, and discounts, access to limited-edition products significantly enhances brand loyalty. This can be attributed to consumers often being in a career stage characterized by progress and financial stability, allowing them to embrace more aspirational lifestyles. These incentives address all three loyalty dimensions as emotional loyalty is fostered through meaningful experiences and exclusive events that create deep connections to the brand; cognitive loyalty is reinforced by the perception of superior value and premium quality; and habitual loyalty is supported by consistent engagement with high-quality, exclusive offerings. To fully engage this demographic, brands should focus on emphasizing exclusivity while providing premium and emotionally engaging experiences that cater to their aspirations.

The 35–44 age group, as "Balanced Experience Seekers," values a combination of practical rewards, such as discounts and free delivery, alongside experiential and exclusive benefits like meet-and-greet opportunities, limited-edition products, and activity-based incentives such as running clubs and outdoor courses, all of which significantly contribute to high brand loyalty. Influenced by the demands of balancing family and career, their preferences reflect a need for both convenience and meaningful experiences. These preferences address all three loyalty dimensions: habitual loyalty is supported by practical incentives like discounts and free delivery, cognitive loyalty is driven by exclusive offerings that enhance the brand's perceived value, and emotional loyalty—which is particularly significant for this group—is fostered through meaningful and community-driven experiences that create deeper connections with the brand. To engage this demographic effectively, brands should emphasize emotionally resonant experiences while offering a comprehensive mix of convenience, exclusivity, and community-driven benefits, creating a holistic value proposition that caters to their varied priorities.

The 45–54 demographic, described as "Exclusivity-Driven Loyalists," places the highest emphasis on limited-edition products. This strong preference might stem from a desire for uniqueness and differentiation, reflecting their life stage where achievements and personal identity are often tied to exclusive and premium experiences. Emotional loyalty is particularly significant for this group, as exclusivity fosters a deep emotional connection by creating a sense of pride and attachment to the brand. Additionally, habitual loyalty is reinforced through consistent engagement with practical and community-driven rewards that align with their values of reliability and meaningful connections. Brands can win their loyalty by positioning themselves as both premium and accessible, leveraging exclusivity to build emotional bonds and consistent offerings to maintain habitual engagement.

Finally, the 55–64 age group, referred to as "Legacy Seekers," values access to sports events, limited-edition products, personalized services, and early access. This preference reflects their stage in life, where they often prioritize meaningful experiences and exclusivity as a way to solidify their connection to brands they trust. Emotional loyalty is fostered through exclusive and memorable experiences, such as sports events and personalized services, creating a deep sense of attachment to the brand. Cognitive loyalty is driven by the value they perceive in unique and tailored offerings, reinforcing their rational commitment. Habitual loyalty is supported by consistent access to practical benefits, like early access to products, which align with their expectations of reliability. To effectively appeal to this group, brands should focus on tailored offerings that address all three loyalty dimensions, positioning themselves as customer-focused leaders and ensuring lasting engagement by making customers feel valued, recognized, and deeply connected to the brand.

By addressing the unique needs of each demographic through tailored loyalty strategies, brands can foster deeper connections, enhance deeper loyalty, and secure a competitive advantage in the marketplace.

6.2.3 Contribution to Academic Literature

By incorporating a multidimensional perspective of loyalty, this study challenges the traditional linear loyalty models, suggesting a more dynamic interplay between incentives and loyalty dimensions. This study moves beyond the product-driven loyalty factors emphasized in previous research by demonstrating how loyalty program incentives can effectively foster habitual, emotional, and cognitive loyalty. By adapting and extending the Dapena-Baron framework to the sportswear industry, this research provides a versatile model that advances the understanding of loyalty programs across different regions, offering opportunities for cross-cultural comparisons.

This study also addresses a gap in the literature by providing a framework for linking personalized loyalty program incentives to specific loyalty dimensions and demographic groups. By doing so, it offers a roadmap for improving the impact of loyalty programs in markets like Germany, where engagement levels lag behind other European countries (YouGov, 2024).

In conclusion, this research not only advances the theoretical understanding of brand loyalty but also bridges the gap between academia and practice. It provides actionable insights to assist businesses in designing more effective loyalty programs while simultaneously contributing to the development of academic models of brand loyalty.

7. Conclusion and Recommendation

7.1 The Importance of Personalization in Loyalty Program

This study set out to uncover the secret to fostering brand loyalty by addressing two key questions: First, which dimensions of loyalty—habitual, emotional, or cognitive—are most influenced by specific loyalty incentives? And second, how do age and gender shape preferences for these incentives? By applying and adapting Dapena-Baron's model, this research offers fresh and actionable insights, enabling brands to design loyalty programs that not only attract customers but also build deeper, lasting relationships.

As global sportswear brands navigate the challenges of emerging competitors and shifting consumer expectations, the findings emphasize the need of personalization. Understanding the unique preferences of different demographic groups unlocks the potential for loyalty programs to become more than just marketing tools—they become bridges that connect brands with their consumers on a personal level.

7.2 Key Findings on Loyalty Dimensions and Demographics

The analysis revealed that different incentives play distinct roles in driving habitual, emotional, and cognitive loyalty. For brands seeking immediate impact, discounts proved to be the strongest driver of habitual loyalty, encouraging repeat purchases. But loyalty is not just about habit—it thrives on connection. Emotional loyalty is best fostered through exclusive sports events that create meaningful experiences, while cognitive loyalty is strengthened by access to limited-edition products that deliver a sense of exclusivity and value.

Women respond strongly to outdoor courses, making these a key strategy for engaging female consumers. Conversely, men prioritize exclusivity, with meet-and-greet events emerging as particularly effective. Younger consumers (18–24) are driven by immediacy, favoring one-day delivery and exclusive experiences. Middle-aged consumers (25–44) are drawn to the appeal of limited-edition products, while older demographics (45+) respond to a combination of exclusivity and emotional experiences, such as access to sport events.

This study answers its core questions by demonstrating that loyalty dimensions are uniquely influenced by specific incentives, and demographic differences play a crucial role in shaping consumer preferences. These findings address the gap in the literature by providing a clear framework for linking specific loyalty incentives to different dimensions of loyalty and demographic preferences. This framework is particularly relevant for localized strategies in the German market, where engagement levels lag behind other regions (YouGov, 2024).

7.3 Managerial Implications and Strategic Recommendations

Before designing a loyalty program, brand managers must first define the primary objective of the program, aligning it with the competitive dynamics and market-specific challenges. The choice of objectives—whether to drive habitual purchases, foster emotional connections, or create cognitive loyalty—should be informed by a clear understanding of competitors' strategies and consumer preferences.

Once the goals are established, brand managers can use the insights from this study to design programs that either target a specific loyalty dimension for a defined period or focus on strengthening engagement with particular demographic groups.

By tailoring loyalty programs to these unique needs and preferences, brands can significantly enhance the effectiveness of their initiatives. This targeted approach can not only drive immediate results, such as increased engagement and repeat purchases, but also fosters deeper, lasting relationships with customers.

7.4 Final Conclusion: Turning Loyalty into a Competitive Advantage

Ultimately, this research fulfills its objectives by offering a roadmap for brands to harness the power of loyalty programs. In an industry defined by competition, the ability to connect with consumers on a habitual, emotional, and cognitive level transforms loyalty programs into invaluable assets. With the right incentives and a focus on personalization, brands can not only stay relevant but thrive—turning loyalty into their greatest competitive advantage.

8. Limitations and Future Research

While the study provides valuable insights, it also has limitations that offer opportunities for future research. Specifically, future studies could investigate the factors driving brand loyalty among non-members and non-buyers, offering strategic guidance for attracting these groups to loyalty programs. Additionally, exploring the role of AI integration in delivering hyper-personalized marketing experiences and its impact on brand loyalty could contribute significantly to both academic literature and practical applications.

8.1 Expanding Research to Non-Members and Non-Buyers

As this study focuses solely on current users, it lacks insights into how new members and customers can be attracted to loyalty programs. Future research could address this gap by exploring the potential of loyalty programs beyond their existing member base, specifically by examining non-members and non-buyers. Investigating the preferences and perceptions of non-members could uncover critical factors that drive brand loyalty within this underutilized demographic. Additionally, identifying the incentives and program attributes that might encourage non-members to join could help brands address barriers to participation and design strategies that make their programs more inclusive and appealing to a broader audience.

Furthermore, loyalty programs have the potential to serve not only as tools for customer retention but also as effective mechanisms for customer acquisition. Future studies could analyze how specific incentives—such as discounts, exclusive experiences, or personalized offers—impact the purchasing decisions of non-buyers. Understanding how loyalty programs can attract individuals who have yet to engage with the brand, including casual observers or competitors' customers, would provide valuable insights into their role in converting non-buyers into loyal advocates. Such research would offer actionable recommendations for brands aiming to expand their customer base while fostering long-term loyalty among new consumers.

8.2 Exploring the Impact of AI Integration for Hyper-Personalized Loyalty Experiences

While the study provides insights into individual demographic groups, such as gender or age, it could be further enriched by examining the interplay of these factors alongside additional variables, such as income. Since measuring such complexities can be challenging with traditional tools, future research could explore how artificial intelligence can address these gaps. With the growing integration of AI in marketing strategies, future studies could investigate its role in enhancing loyalty programs through hyper-personalization. For instance, research could examine how AI-driven experiences, such as real-time recommendations and tailored incentives, influence brand loyalty across different dimensions. This would provide a deeper understanding of how AI can create more meaningful customer interactions, increase engagement, and foster stronger emotional, habitual and cognitive loyalty.

8.3 Exploring other Key Markets

As this research introduces a novel approach and insights, it currently lacks the opportunity to compare whether customers from different countries have varying preferences for loyalty program incentives when building brand loyalty. Expanding the study to additional regions would allow for the identification of regional and cultural differences, providing valuable context and insights into how loyalty preferences may vary globally.

Future research should broaden its scope to include participants from diverse countries, enabling a comprehensive examination of cultural differences in loyalty preferences. By analyzing the influence of cultural values and norms on the effectiveness of loyalty incentives, such studies could provide critical insights for brands aiming to tailor their loyalty strategies to the unique requirements of global consumer markets.

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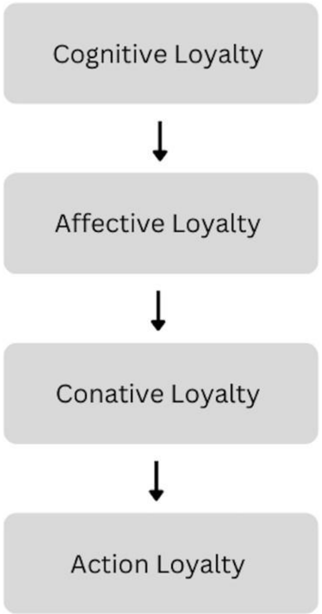
Appendix

Appendix A: Figures and Tables

Appendix A 1: Brand loyalty Model by Oliver (1999)



Appendix A 2: Loyalty Incentives Offered by Brand

Incentive / Brand	Adidas	Nike	Puma
Permanent 10% Discount	✓	✓	✓
Voucher of 1€ for each 10€ spent	✓	✓	
Early Access to products	✓	✓	✓
Exclusive Access to limited products	✓	✓	✓
Invitations to exclusive sports events	✓	✓	✓
Access to meet-and-greets with athletes	✓		✓
Access to running app		✓	
Personalized training plans for running	✓		
Free customization of products	✓	✓	
AI-based personalized product recommendations		✓	
Free shipping on every order	✓	✓	✓
Access to one-day delivery	✓	✓	
Participation in running clubs	✓	✓	
Access to outdoor sports classes		✓	

Appendix A 3: Comprehensive Overview of Loyalty Incentives

Benefit	Description
Discount	As a member of the brand (Nike, Adidas, Puma), you receive a permanent 10% discount on all purchases.
Voucher	As a member of the brand (Nike, Adidas, Puma), you receive a voucher worth €1 for every €10 spent.
Early Access	As a member of the brand (Nike, Adidas, Puma), you gain early access to new product releases before they are available to the general public.
Limited	As a member of the brand (Nike, Adidas, Puma), you have access to limited collections not available to non-members.
Sport Events	As a member of the brand (Nike, Adidas, Puma), you gain access to exclusive sports events.
Meet and Greet	As a member of the brand (Nike, Adidas, Puma), you gain exclusive access to meet-and-greet events with well-known athletes.
Running App	As a member of the brand (Nike, Adidas, Puma), you gain access to a running app that allows you to track your workouts.
Training Plan	As a member of the brand (Nike, Adidas, Puma), you receive personalized training plans for running.
Personalized	As a member of the brand (Nike, Adidas, Puma), you can personalize products for free.
AI Recommendation	As a member of the brand (Nike, Adidas, Puma), you receive AI-based personalized product recommendations.
Free Delivery	As a member of the brand (Nike, Adidas, Puma), you benefit from free shipping.
One Day Delivery	As a member of the brand (Nike, Adidas, Puma), you have access to one-day delivery options to receive your orders faster.
Running Club	As a member of the brand (Nike, Adidas, Puma), you can participate in the brand's running clubs.
Outdoor Course	As a member of the brand (Nike, Adidas, Puma), you can participate in outdoor sports courses offered by the brand.

Appendix A 4: Cronbachs Alpha for the Incentive Discount

Reliability Statistics

Cronbach's Alpha	N of Items
,837	9

Appendix A 5: Cronbachs Alpha for the Incentive Voucher

Reliability Statistics

Cronbach's Alpha	N of Items
,866	9

Appendix A 6: Cronbachs Alpha for the Incentive Early Access

Reliability Statistics

Cronbach's Alpha	N of Items
,942	9

Appendix A 7: Cronbachs Alpha for the Incentive Limited

Reliability Statistics

Cronbach's Alpha	N of Items
,916	9

Appendix A 8: Cronbachs Alpha for the Incentive Sports Events

Reliability Statistics

Cronbach's Alpha	N of Items
,907	9

Appendix A 9: Cronbachs Alpha for the Incentive Running App

Reliability Statistics

Cronbach's Alpha	N of Items
,908	9

Appendix A 10: Cronbachs Alpha for the Incentive Trainings plan

Reliability Statistics

Cronbach's Alpha	N of Items
,815	9

Appendix A 11: Cronbachs Alpha for the Incentive Personlized

Reliability Statistics

Cronbach's Alpha	N of Items
,942	9

Appendix A 12: Cronbachs Alpha for the Incentive AI Recommendation

Reliability Statistics

Cronbach's Alpha	N of Items
,936	9

Appendix A 13: Cronbachs Alpha for the Free Delivery

Reliability Statistics

Cronbach's Alpha	N of Items
,960	9

Appendix A 14: Cronbachs Alpha for the Incentive One Day Delivery

Reliability Statistics

Cronbach's Alpha	N of Items
,899	9

Appendix A 15: Cronbachs Alpha for the Incentive Running Club

Reliability Statistics

Cronbach's Alpha	N of Items
,907	9

Appendix A 16: Cronbachs Alpha for the Incentive Outdoor Courses

Reliability Statistics

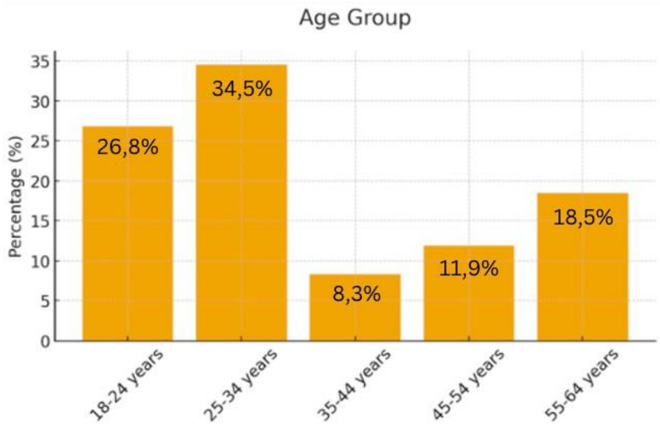
Cronbach's Alpha	N of Items
,947	9

Appendix A 17: Cronbachs Alpha for the Incentive Meet and Greet

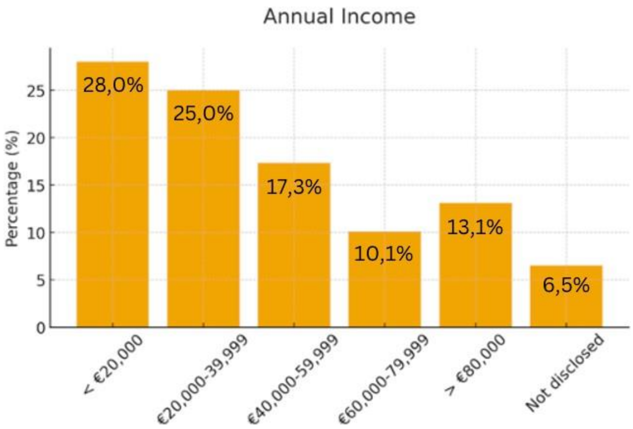
Reliability Statistics

Cronbach's Alpha	N of Items
,932	9

Appendix A 18: Age Distribution Survey Participants



Appendix A 19: Income Distribution Survey Participants



Appendix A 20: Paired Sample T-Test comparing loyalty dimension of incentives

Paired Sample T-Test	Mean	Std. Dev.	Std. Err. Mean	Lower	Upper	t	df	Two-Sided p
Sportevent_emotional - Sportevent_cognitive	0,24802	0,695	0,05362	0,14215	0,35388	4,625	167	<,001
Sportevent_emotional - Sportevent_habitual	0,61905	1,1822	0,09121	0,43898	0,79912	6,787	167	<,001
Meet_Emotional - Meet_Cognitive	0,21032	0,75956	0,0586	0,09462	0,32601	3,589	167	<,001
Meet_Emotional - Meet_Habitual	0,26786	1,06055	0,08182	0,10632	0,4294	3,274	167	0,001
OutdoorCourse_Emotional - OutdoorCourse_Cognitive	0,00397	0,66466	0,05128	-0,09727	0,10521	0,077	167	0,938
OutdoorCourse_Emotional - OutdoorCourse_Habitual	0,51984	1,10446	0,08521	0,35161	0,68807	6,101	167	<,001
Limited_Cognitive - Limited_Emotional	0,04563	0,7546	0,05822	-0,06931	0,16058	0,784	167	0,434
Limited_Cognitive - Limited_habitual	0,34325	0,96749	0,07464	0,19589	0,49062	4,599	167	<,001
EarlyAccess_Cognitive - EarlyAccess_Emotional	0,03968	0,67737	0,05226	-0,06349	0,14286	0,759	167	0,449
EarlyAccess_Cognitive - EarlyAccess_Habitual	0,23413	0,78962	0,06092	0,11385	0,3544	3,843	167	<,001
Personalized_Cognitive - Personalized_Emotional	0,01587	0,63268	0,04881	-0,0805	0,11224	0,325	167	0,745
Personalized_Cognitive - Personalized_Habitual	0,18849	0,94114	0,07261	0,04514	0,33185	2,596	167	0,01
RunningClub_Cogntive - RunningClub_Emotional	0,10119	0,67041	0,05172	-0,00092	0,20331	1,956	167	0,052
RunningClub_Cogntive - RunningClub_Habitual	0,42262	0,88641	0,06839	0,2876	0,55764	6,18	167	<,001
Discount_Habitual - Discount_Cognitive	0,69444	1,03139	0,07957	0,53735	0,85154	8,727	167	<,001
Discount_Habitual - Discount_Emotional	0,85119	1,24495	0,09605	0,66156	1,04082	8,862	167	<,001
FreeDelivery_Habitual - FreeDelivery_Cognitive	0,1131	1,27405	0,09829	-0,08097	0,30716	1,151	167	0,252
FreeDelivery_Habitual - FreeDelivery_Emotional	0,60714	1,12157	0,08653	0,43631	0,77798	7,016	167	<,001
OneDayDelivery_Habitual - OneDayDelivery_Cognitive	0,14286	1,1452	0,08835	-0,03158	0,31729	1,617	167	0,108
OneDayDelivery_Habitual - OneDayDelivery_Emotional	0,44246	1,0449	0,08062	0,2833	0,60162	5,489	167	<,001
Voucher_Habitual - Voucher_Cognitive	0,34722	0,98109	0,07569	0,19778	0,49666	4,587	167	<,001
Voucher_Habitual - Voucher_Emotional	0,46429	1,29333	0,09978	0,26729	0,66128	4,653	167	<,001

Appendix A 21: Paired Samples T-Test to Identify Means Comparable to Meet and Greet (18-24)

Comapred Incentives	Mean	Std. Deviation	Lower	Upper	t	df	Two-Sided p
Mean_MeetAndGreet - Mean_Voucher	0,449	1,056	0,13206	0,7667	2,854	44	0,007
Mean_MeetAndGreet - Mean_EarlyAccess	0,630	1,107	0,29703	0,96223	3,815	44	<,001
Mean_MeetAndGreet - Mean_RunningApp	0,864	1,480	0,41969	1,3087	3,918	44	<,001
Mean_MeetAndGreet - Mean_Trainingplan	0,558	1,211	0,19419	0,92186	3,091	44	0,003
Mean_MeetAndGreet - Mean_Personalized	0,741	1,150	0,39522	1,08626	4,321	44	<,001
Mean_MeetAndGreet - Mean_AI	1,440	1,057	1,12187	1,75715	9,133	44	<,001
Mean_MeetAndGreet - Mean_freeDelivery	0,247	1,056	-0,07032	0,56415	1,569	44	0,124
Mean_MeetAndGreet - Mean_RunningClub	1,025	1,199	0,66447	1,38492	5,733	44	<,001
Mean_MeetAndGreet - Mean_OutdoorCourse	0,615	1,021	0,30816	0,92147	4,041	44	<,001
Mean_MeetAndGreet - Mean_OneDayDelivery	0,168	1,083	-0,15743	0,49323	1,04	44	0,304
Mean_MeetAndGreet - Mean_Discount	0,052	0,928	-0,22695	0,33065	0,375	44	0,71
Mean_MeetAndGreet - Mean_Limited	0,575	0,969	0,28427	0,86635	3,984	44	<,001
Mean_MeetAndGreet - Mean_Sportevent	0,257	0,933	-0,02366	0,53724	1,845	44	0,072

Appendix A 22: Paired Samples T-Test to Identify Means Comparable to Sportevent (25-34)

Comapred Incentives	Mean	Std. Deviation	Lower	Upper	t	df	Two-Sided p
Mean_Sportevent - Mean_Voucher	0,734	1,219	0,41308	1,05436	4,582	57	<,001
Mean_Sportevent - Mean_EarlyAccess	0,715	0,977	0,45758	0,97154	5,568	57	<,001
Mean_Sportevent - Mean_Limited	0,195	1,248	-0,13283	0,52363	1,192	57	0,238
Mean_Sportevent - Mean_RunningApp	1,061	1,231	0,73754	1,38507	6,564	57	<,001
Mean_Sportevent - Mean_Trainingplan	0,571	1,300	0,22906	0,9127	3,344	57	0,001
Mean_Sportevent - Mean_Personalized	0,557	1,377	0,19535	0,91959	3,083	57	0,003
Mean_Sportevent - Mean_AI	1,715	1,379	1,35196	2,07716	9,469	57	<,001
Mean_Sportevent - Mean_freeDelivery	0,515	1,219	0,19488	0,83577	3,22	57	0,002
Mean_Sportevent - Mean_RunningClub	1,034	1,305	0,69145	1,37752	6,039	57	<,001
Mean_Sportevent - Mean_OutdoorCourse	0,646	1,239	0,31988	0,97131	3,969	57	<,001
Mean_Sportevent - Mean_OneDayDelivery	0,483	1,183	0,17162	0,7939	3,107	57	0,003
Mean_Sportevent - Mean_MeetAndGreet	0,052	0,936	-0,19449	0,29794	0,421	57	0,676
Mean_Sportevent - Mean_Discount	0,017	1,142	-0,28314	0,31762	0,115	57	0,909

Appendix A 23: Paired Samples T-Test to Identify Means Comparable to Meet and Greet (34-45)

Comapred Incentives	Mean	Std. Deviation	Lower	Upper	t	df	Two-Sided p
Mean_MeetAndGreet - Mean_Voucher	0,722	1,282	-0,01817	1,46261	2,107	13	0,055
Mean_MeetAndGreet - Mean_EarlyAccess	0,373	1,533	-0,51186	1,25789	0,911	13	0,379
Mean_MeetAndGreet - Mean_Limited	0,087	1,328	-0,67973	0,85433	0,246	13	0,81
Mean_MeetAndGreet - Mean_RunningApp	0,881	1,369	0,09063	1,67128	2,408	13	0,032
Mean_MeetAndGreet - Mean_Trainingplan	0,889	1,384	0,08998	1,68779	2,404	13	0,032
Mean_MeetAndGreet - Mean_Personalized	0,381	1,299	-0,36919	1,1311	1,097	13	0,292
Mean_MeetAndGreet - Mean_AI	1,627	1,857	0,55478	2,69918	3,278	13	0,006
Mean_MeetAndGreet - Mean_freeDelivery	0,413	1,427	-0,41096	1,23636	1,082	13	0,299
Mean_MeetAndGreet - Mean_RunningClub	0,643	1,560	-0,25782	1,54354	1,542	13	0,147
Mean_MeetAndGreet - Mean_OutdoorCourse	0,746	1,553	-0,15051	1,64257	1,798	13	0,095
Mean_MeetAndGreet - Mean_OneDayDelivery	0,825	1,088	0,19747	1,45332	2,84	13	0,014
Mean_MeetAndGreet - Mean_Discount	0,333	1,253	-0,3903	1,05696	0,995	13	0,338
Mean_MeetAndGreet - Mean_Sportevent	0,246	0,953	-0,30422	0,79628	0,966	13	0,352

Appendix A 24: Paired Samples T-Test to Identify Means Comparable to Limited (45-54)

Comapred Incentives	Mean	Std. Deviation	Lower	Upper		df	Two-Sided p
Mean_Limited - Mean_Voucher	0,617	0,870	0,20948	1,02385	3,17	19	0,005
Mean_Limited - Mean_EarlyAccess	0,661	0,894	0,24255	1,07967	3,306	19	0,004
Mean_Limited - Mean_RunningApp	0,733	1,262	0,14273	1,32393	2,599	19	0,018
Mean_Limited - Mean_Trainingplan	0,539	1,301	-0,06996	1,14773	1,853	19	0,08
Mean_Limited - Mean_Personalized	0,861	1,120	0,33704	1,38518	3,439	19	0,003
Mean_Limited - Mean_AI	1,556	1,515	0,84675	2,26436	4,593	19	<,001
Mean_Limited - Mean_freeDelivery	0,322	1,074	-0,18051	0,82495	1,342	19	0,196
Mean_Limited - Mean_RunningClub	0,483	1,002	0,01448	0,95219	2,158	19	0,044
Mean_Limited - Mean_OutdoorCourse	0,583	1,561	-0,14701	1,31367	1,672	19	0,111
Mean_Limited - Mean_OneDayDelivery	0,678	0,955	0,23079	1,12476	3,174	19	0,005
Mean_Limited - Mean_Discount	0,156	0,950	-0,28903	0,60015	0,732	19	0,473
Mean_Limited - Mean_Sportevent	0,450	0,955	0,00315	0,89685	2,108	19	0,049
Mean_Limited - Mean_MeetAndGreet	0,589	1,113	0,06803	1,10975	2,366	19	0,029

Appendix A 25: Paired Samples T-Test to Identify Means Comparable to Limited (55-64)

Comapred Incentives	Mean	Std. Deviation	Lower	Upper	t	df	Two-Sided p
Mean_Sportevent - Mean_Voucher	0,462	0,992	0,09843	0,8263	2,595	30	0,015
Mean_Sportevent - Mean_EarlyAccess	0,287	0,880	-0,03603	0,6095	1,814	30	0,08
Mean_Sportevent - Mean_RunningApp	0,541	0,741	0,2695	0,81294	4,068	30	<,001
Mean_Sportevent - Mean_Trainingplan	0,670	1,239	0,21574	1,12476	3,012	30	0,005
Mean_Sportevent - Mean_Personalized	0,301	0,871	-0,01831	0,62046	1,925	30	0,064
Mean_Sportevent - Mean_AI	0,828	1,520	0,27045	1,38547	3,033	30	0,005
Mean_Sportevent - Mean_freeDelivery	0,577	1,229	0,12623	1,02789	2,614	30	0,014
Mean_Sportevent - Mean_RunningClub	0,656	0,994	0,29118	1,02065	3,673	30	<,001
Mean_Sportevent - Mean_OutdoorCourse	0,491	1,197	0,05199	0,93009	2,284	30	0,03
Mean_Sportevent - Mean_OneDayDelivery	0,713	1,071	0,3204	1,10612	3,708	30	<,001
Mean_Sportevent - Mean_Discount	0,168	0,934	-0,17397	0,51088	1,005	30	0,323
Mean_Sportevent - Mean_MeetAndGreet	0,315	0,699	0,05892	0,5719	2,511	30	0,018
Mean_Sportevent - Mean_Limited	0,004	0,812	-0,29433	0,3015	0,025	30	0,981

Appendix B: Survey

Block 1: Introduction

Introduction

Dear Participant,

Thank you for taking the time to participate in this survey, which is part of my Master's thesis at the Católica Lisbon School of Business and Economics.

This study aims to explore the impact of membership programs offered by global sportswear brands on brand loyalty. Your insights will help us better understand which aspects of these programs foster brand loyalty in the German sportswear market.

Your responses will remain completely confidential and anonymous and will be used solely for academic purposes.

The survey takes approximately 10 minutes, and your participation is greatly appreciated.

If you have any questions or concerns, please feel free to contact me via email at s-tholter@ucp.pt.

Thank you for your valuable contribution!

Block 2: Qualification Check

Qualification Check

Q1

Do you currently live in Germany?

- Yes
- No

Q19

Do you use a membership/loyalty program from any of the following global sportswear brands: Adidas, Nike, Puma?

- Yes
- No

Block 3: Questions regarding each incentive and its impact on loyalty dimensions

Q1 Discount

As a member of the brand (Nike, Adidas, Puma), you receive a permanent 10% discount on all purchases. To what extent do you agree with the following statements as a result?

	Very Unlikely			Neutral			Very Likely
	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
I feel passionate about the brand							
I feel an emotional connection to the brand							
I speak positively about the brand with others							
It delivers my expectations							
It´s a reason I like this brand							
I value the brand							
I buy from the brand more frequently							
I prefer the brand over others							
When making a purchase decision, it is easier for me to choose this brand							
Set the Likert scale to two							

Q2 Voucher

As a member of the brand (Nike, Adidas, Puma), you receive a voucher worth €1 for every €10 spent. To what extent do you agree with the following statements as a result?

	Very Unlikely	.	.	Neutral	.	.	Very Likely
	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
I feel passionate about the brand							
I feel an emotional connection to the brand							
I speak positively about the brand with others							
It delivers my expectations							
It´s a reason I like this brand							
I value the brand							
I buy from the brand more frequently							
I prefer the brand over others							
When making a purchase decision, it is easier for me to choose this brand							

Q3 Early Access

As a member of the brand (Nike, Adidas, Puma), you gain early access to new product releases before they are available to the general public. To what extent do you agree with the following statements as a result?

	Very Unlikely			Neutral			Very Likely
	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
I feel passionate about the brand							
I feel an emotional connection to the brand							
I speak positively about the brand with others							
It delivers my expectations							
It´s a reason I like this brand							
I value the brand							
I buy from the brand more frequently							
I prefer the brand over others							
When making a purchase decision, it is easier for me to choose this brand							

Q4 Limited

As a member of the brand (Nike, Adidas, Puma), you have access to exclusive, limited collections that are not available to non-members. To what extent do you agree with the following statements as a result?

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
	Very Unlikely	.	.	Neutral	.	.	Very Likely
I feel passionate about the brand							
I feel an emotional connection to the brand							
I speak positively about the brand with others							
It delivers my expectations							
It´s a reason I like this brand							
I value the brand							
I buy from the brand more frequently							
I prefer the brand over others							
When making a purchase decision, it is easier for me to choose this brand							

Q5 Sportevent

As a member of the brand (Nike, Adidas, Puma), you gain access to exclusive sports events. To what extent do you agree with the following statements as a result?

	Very Unlikely	.	.	Neutral	.	.	Very Likely
	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
I feel passionate about the brand							
I feel an emotional connection to the brand							
I speak positively about the brand with others							
It delivers my expectations							
It´s a reason I like this brand							
I value the brand							
I buy from the brand more frequently							
I prefer the brand over others							
When making a purchase decision, it is easier for me to choose this brand							

Q6 Meet and Greet

As a member of the brand (Nike, Adidas, Puma), you gain exclusive access to meet-and-greet events with well-known athletes. To what extent do you agree with the following statements as a result?

	Very Unlikely	.	.	Neutral	.	.	Very Likely
	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
I feel passionate about the brand							
I feel an emotional connection to the brand							
I speak positively about the brand with others							
It delivers my expectations							
It´s a reason I like this brand							
I value the brand							
I buy from the brand more frequently							
I prefer the brand over others							
When making a purchase decision, it is easier for me to choose this brand							

Q7 Running App

As a member of the brand (Nike, Adidas, Puma), you gain access to running and training apps that allow you to track your workouts. To what extent do you agree with the following statements as a result?

	Very Unlikely	.	.	Neutral	.	.	Very Likely
	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
I feel passionate about the brand							
I feel an emotional connection to the brand							
I speak positively about the brand with others							
It delivers my expectations							
It´s a reason I like this brand							
I value the brand							
I buy from the brand more frequently							
I prefer the brand over others							
When making a purchase decision, it is easier for me to choose this brand							

Q8 Training plan

As a member of the brand (Nike, Adidas, Puma), you receive personalized training plans for running. To what extent do you agree with the following statements as a result?

	Very Unlikely	.	.	Neutral	.	.	Very Likely
	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
I feel passionate about the brand							
I feel an emotional connection to the brand							
I speak positively about the brand with others							
It delivers my expectations							
It´s a reason I like this brand							
I value the brand							
I buy from the brand more frequently							
I prefer the brand over others							
When making a purchase decision, it is easier for me to choose this brand							

Q9 Personalized

As a member of the brand (Nike, Adidas, Puma), you can personalize products for free. To what extent do you agree with the following statements as a result?

	Very Unlikely	.	.	Neutral	.	.	Very Likely
	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
I feel passionate about the brand							
I feel an emotional connection to the brand							
I speak positively about the brand with others							
It delivers my expectations							
It´s a reason I like this brand							
I value the brand							
I buy from the brand more frequently							
I prefer the brand over others							
When making a purchase decision, it is easier for me to choose this brand							

Q10 AI

As a member of the brand (Nike, Adidas, Puma), you receive AI-based personalized product recommendations. To what extent do you agree with the following statements as a result?

	Very Unlikely	.	.	Neutral	.	.	Very Likely
	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
I feel passionate about the brand							
I feel an emotional connection to the brand							
I speak positively about the brand with others							
It delivers my expectations							
It´s a reason I like this brand							
I value the brand							
I buy from the brand more frequently							
I prefer the brand over others							
When making a purchase decision, it is easier for me to choose this brand							

Q11 Free delivery

As a member of the brand (Nike, Adidas, Puma), you benefit from free shipping. To what extent do you agree with the following statements as a result?

	Very Unlikely	.	.	Neutral	.	.	Very Likely
	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
I feel passionate about the brand							
I feel an emotional connection to the brand							
I speak positively about the brand with others							
It delivers my expectations							
It´s a reason I like this brand							
I value the brand							
I buy from the brand more frequently							
I prefer the brand over others							
When making a purchase decision, it is easier for me to choose this brand							

Q12 One day delivery

As a member of the brand (Nike, Adidas, Puma), you have access to one-day delivery options to receive your orders faster. To what extent do you agree with the following statements as a result?

	Very Unlikely	.	.	Neutral	.	.	Very Likely
	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
I feel passionate about the brand							
I feel an emotional connection to the brand							
I speak positively about the brand with others							
It delivers my expectations							
It´s a reason I like this brand							
I value the brand							
I buy from the brand more frequently							
I prefer the brand over others							
When making a purchase decision, it is easier for me to choose this brand							

Q13 Running club

As a member of the brand (Nike, Adidas, Puma), you can participate in the brand's running clubs. To what extent do you agree with the following statements as a result?

	Very Unlikely	.	.	Neutral	.	.	Very Likely
	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
I feel passionate about the brand							
I feel an emotional connection to the brand							
I speak positively about the brand with others							
It delivers my expectations							
It´s a reason I like this brand							
I value the brand							
I buy from the brand more frequently							
I prefer the brand over others							
When making a purchase decision, it is easier for me to choose this brand							

Q14 Outdoor Course

As a member of the brand (Nike, Adidas, Puma), you can participate in outdoor sports courses offered by the brand. To what extent do you agree with the following statements as a result?

	Very Unlikely	.	.	Neutral	.	.	Very Likely
	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
I feel passionate about the brand							
I feel an emotional connection to the brand							
I speak positively about the brand with others							
It delivers my expectations							
It´s a reason I like this brand							
I value the brand							
I buy from the brand more frequently							
I prefer the brand over others							
When making a purchase decision, it is easier for me to choose this brand							

Block 4: Demographic Insights

Demographics

Q14 *

How old are you?

- 18-24
- 25-34
- 35-44
- 45-54
- 55-64
- 65+

Gender *

What is your gender?

- Male
- Female
- Diverse

Profession *

What is your current occupation?

- Student
- Full-Time Employee
- Part-Time Employee
- Unemployed
- Self-employed
- Prefer not to say
- Others

Income *

What is your annual income before taxes?

- Below 20.000€
- 20.000-39.999€
- 40.000-59.999€
- 60.000-79.999€
- +80.000€
- Prefer not to say