

Consumer Loyalty: Singular, Additive or Interactive?

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Abstract

Consumer loyalty may be defined as a singular concept, usually as an attitude toward the loyalty object or as repeat-patronage behaviour; alternatively, the definition may combine attitude and behaviour in either an additive or an interactive expression.

We argue that definitions of loyalty are useful if they predict phenomena such as recommendation, search and retention (loyalty outcomes). In three consumer fields, we find that combination measures of customer loyalty often perform poorly as predictors of loyalty outcomes compared with singular measures since recommendation is predicted by attitude but not by repeat patronage, whereas retention and search behaviour are predicted better by repeat patronage than by attitude. We also find that the prediction of loyalty outcomes is not improved by the inclusion of an interaction term in the model.

On this evidence, we argue that combination concepts of loyalty are of limited value. Further, we find that there is no form of loyalty that consistently predicts all the different loyalty outcomes and, therefore, we should abandon the idea of a general concept of loyalty.

Keywords: Consumer loyalty, Recommendation, Search, Retention

1. Introduction

1.1 Aims

Concepts of loyalty and their associated measures are of value if they can be used to predict behaviour such as customer recommendation, reduced search for alternatives and high customer retention (hereafter termed loyalty outcomes). The issue addressed here is how well different measures of loyalty predict these loyalty outcomes. We compare singular definitions, based on either behaviour or attitude, with definitions that combine behaviour and attitude. We test which of these definitions of loyalty help us to predict different loyalty outcomes, and we ask whether one definition alone will usually predict all three outcomes, thus justifying a general concept of loyalty. We conduct these tests using three sets of studies on supermarket, car and service categories respectively (described and analysed in sections 5-7).

Before this, we examine the different definitions of loyalty (section 1.2), report previously established evidence on combination measures of loyalty and the predictors of retention (section 2), set out a theory predicting retention, search behaviour, and recommendation (section 3), and draw hypotheses based on this theory (section 4).

1.2 Definitions of Loyalty

Loyalty to an object (e.g. a brand, store, service or company) is shown by favourable propensities towards that object. These propensities may be behavioural or attitudinal. In industrial and service marketing, behavioural loyalty is viewed as *retention* of the brand (e.g. Reichheld 1996; Reinartz and Kumar 2000). For services, particularly those in semi-continuous use such as mobile-phone airtime, such retention can be measured by the *duration of time* that the customer has used the service and, for durables, by the customer's *repeat*

purchase of the brand. In markets such as groceries, where customers may use several brands in a category, researchers have used the *share-of-category expenditure* to measure customer loyalty (e.g. Baldinger and Rubinson 1996; Bhattacharya 1997; Bhattacharya, Fader, Lodish and DeSarbo 1996; Deighton, Henderson and Neslin 1994). Another behavioural measure of customer loyalty, which was used by Hauser and Wernerfelt (1990), is *portfolio size*; this is the number of brands used in a period (the larger the number, the lower the loyalty). Turning to attitudinal measures, *liking* the brand has been used as a predictor of retention (e.g. Baldinger and Rubinson 1996) while other researchers have explained loyalty in relation to *satisfaction* (e.g. Oliver 1999; Shankar, Smith and Rangaswamy 2003), *commitment* (e.g. Bloemer and de Ruyter 1998; Pritchard, Havitz and Howard 1999), and *trust* (e.g. Ennew and Binks 1996; Morgan and Hunt 1994).

Definitions may be *singular*, in the sense that they focus on single concepts, either attitudinal or behavioural. However, much of the discussion of loyalty has centred on more complex definitions that may include both antecedents and consequences of loyalty. These more elaborate treatments have often represented consumer loyalty as a *combination* of concepts. For example, Jacoby and Chestnut (1978) proposed a six-component definition of loyalty that included both attitude and behaviour. This approach to the conceptualisation of loyalty seems to be partly related to a need to represent the causes of loyalty, and partly semantic, that this is what the term 'loyalty' means. Semantic considerations provide a start in scientific definition but the idea that attitude-behaviour congruence is required for loyalty seems ill founded. In interpersonal contexts, loyalty is shown when persons do not undermine others by what they say or do. A person who has undisclosed misgivings, yet still behaves supportively, is seen as loyal. Thus, everyday usage appears to link loyalty more with behaviour than attitude.

The inclusion of potential causes in the definition of loyalty is typified by Oliver (1999); he defines loyalty as '*a deeply held commitment to re-buy or re-patronise a preferred product/service consistently in the future, thereby causing repetitive same-brand or same brand-set purchasing, despite situational influences and marketing efforts having the potential to cause switching behavior*'. This definition implies a positive correlation between attitude and behaviour in loyal groups but Oliver reports that this association is usually quite weak and concludes

that true loyalty, with emotional commitment to the brand, is rare.

A problem raised by complex definitions such as that of Oliver (1999) is that, by incorporating the causal explanation of loyalty into its definition, it becomes impossible to test this causality without circularity. It may be better to focus on the essence of a concept and to exclude potential causes and effects from the definition. Here, we can learn from an earlier and related controversy in the attitude-behaviour field, which was described by Fishbein and Ajzen (1975). These researchers were faced with a wide variety of definitions of attitude and commented (1975, p10):

"Clearly, there exists a great diversity of viewpoints concerning the attitude concept, and this state of affairs is reflected in a multitude of definitions of attitude. Many of the disagreements among investigators are questions of theory rather than definition. For example, we saw that many definitions of attitude make explicit reference to the nature of the disposition or to factors that influence it. Theorists usually have not made clear which aspects of an elaborate theoretical description of attitude are essential in defining aspects of the concept and which are speculative arguments that require empirical verification."

Fishbein and Ajzen (1975) stripped attitude back to its essential evaluative meaning and treated cognitive and behavioural factors as separate concepts that were linked to attitude in a testable causal model. The theories that used this simplified definition of attitude (reasoned action and, later, planned behaviour) have provided major explanations in social and consumer research. We propose a similar approach to the definition of loyalty and thus prefer simple definitions that express the essence of the concept rather than definitions that incorporate possible antecedents and consequences.

Another complex definition of loyalty treats it as an *interaction* between attitude and behaviour. A definition of this form is justified when each component facilitates the other and one component on its own is insufficient, for example when motivation and ability are both required for high performance. Day (1969) measured loyalty in this way and found that this gave stronger associations with customer characteristics than a measure of behaviour on its own.

Mellens, Dekimpe and Steenkamp (1996), favoured a combination conceptualisation of loyalty but pointed out that the operational definitions of researchers did not, in

Figure 1: Dick and Basu's (1994) Framework for Customer Loyalty Relationship

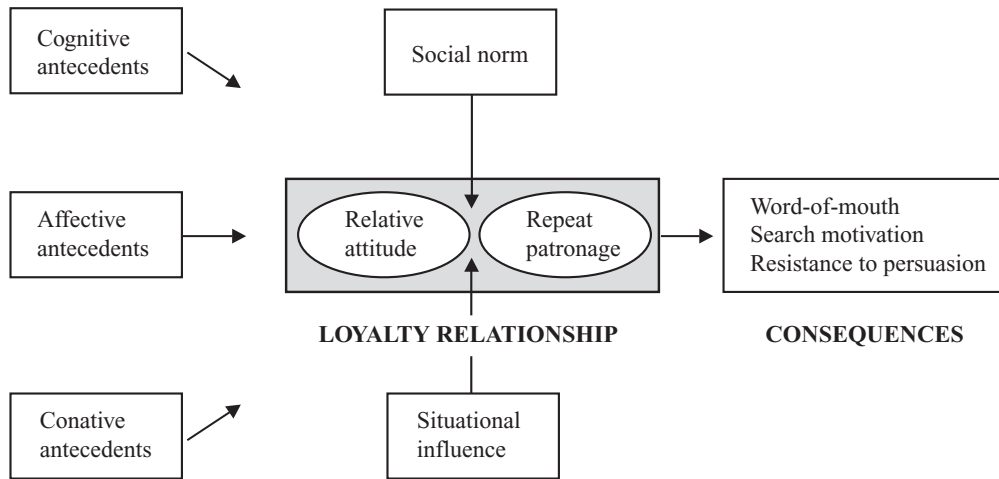


Figure 2. Dick and Basu's (1994) Typology of Loyalty

		Repeat patronage	
		High	Low
Relative attitude	High	True loyalty	Latent loyalty
	Low	Spurious loyalty	No loyalty

practice, correspond with this conceptualisation. One of their conclusions was that “*more research is needed on the consequences (e.g. in terms of predictive validity) of using simple rather than advanced measures*”. In this paper, we report on this needed research. We test whether combination measures of loyalty predict specific loyalty outcomes better than singular measures and whether one measure predicts a number of different outcomes, thus justifying a generalised concept of loyalty. From here on we use the term *repeat patronage* to cover the behavioural predictor of loyalty outcomes.

2. Previous Evidence

Below we review evidence on the issues raised above.

We examine the support for conceptualising loyalty either as an interaction or as an addition of repeat patronage and attitude, and, because of the affinity between satisfaction and attitude, we also examine the evidence that customer retention can be predicted from satisfaction measures.

2.1 Loyalty as a Combination of Attitude and Behaviour

Day (1969) found only weak evidence that repeat patronage, measured as share-of-category purchase, was associated with customer characteristics and suggested that this was because many behaviourally loyal customers were influenced mainly by opportunity and

routine rather than by preference. Day proposed that attitude to the product would distinguish the intentionally based *truly loyal* customers from the *spuriously loyal* customers whose retention arose from convenience, environmental pressure, or habit. When Day used a product of attitude and repeat patronage as a measure of loyalty he found that both consumption and demographic variables were related to this measure better than they were to a measure of repeat patronage on its own. Day did not compare his interaction model with an additive model based on repeat patronage *plus* attitude, so it was not clear that the product term raised explanation beyond that of the main effects in an additive model. Thus, Day's evidence gave support for a *two-dimensional* measure but it remained open whether this should have an additive or an interactive form. We have only identified one study in which an interaction term enhanced the prediction of a loyalty outcome; Bolton (1998) found that the retention of mobile phone airtime was predicted better when the model included a term for the product of customer satisfaction and tenure duration.

Dick and Basu (1994) presented the framework model of loyalty that is shown as Figure 1. They suggest that relative attitude drives repeat patronage, subject to antecedent and situational constraints, and that an attitude-behaviour association leads to further loyalty behaviours. They state "*customer loyalty is viewed as the strength of the relationship between an individual's relative attitude and their repeat patronage*". (By *relative* they mean compared with available alternatives because it is the contrast between alternatives that is likely to motivate behaviour such as recommendation). An association between attitude and repeat patronage will not necessarily raise the prediction of loyalty outcomes. To our knowledge, this aspect of the theory has not been tested. It might be tested using a series of studies, but this is not attempted here. However, the model does raise the question of how much attitude and repeat patronage are correlated and we do report on this matter.

Dick and Basu also present the typology shown in Figure 2; this divides consumers into four segments using two levels of behavioural loyalty and two levels of relative attitude to the brand. Figure 2 suggests that we should find most of the expected consequences of loyalty (e.g. word of mouth recommendation, reduced search and retention) in the 'high-high' top left quadrant of Figure 2. This Figure seems to indicate a combination rather than a correlational basis for loyalty and we test this, using hierarchical regression to separate main and interaction

effects. Dick and Basu make it clear that their model of customer loyalty should apply to retail, service, frequently purchased goods and industrial contexts, but they do not report systematic predictive tests of the models shown in Figures 1 and 2.

2.2 Related Evidence

Baldinger and Rubinson (1996) found that both repeat patronage (share-of-category requirement) and attitude predicted the retention of grocery brands over one year though the effect of attitude appeared to be quite weak. In this work, there was no test for an interaction effect. Baloglu (2002) found that high attitudinal loyalty raised positive word of mouth and reduced search for alternatives but that a repeat-patronage measure did not affect word of mouth and had little effect on search. Another study by Pritchard and Howard (1997) used the Dick and Basu typology to segment travellers; this work showed a number of differences between the four segments but the authors did not investigate loyalty outcomes such as recommendation and retention. Macintosh and Lockshin (1997) also found significant differences between customers divided according to the Dick and Basu typology, but they predicted *intention* to repurchase, rather than actual retention. Mittal and Kamakura (2001) compared satisfaction-intention and satisfaction-retention links and found limited correspondence between the two. They also argue that when intention is measured at the same time as its predictors, as is usually done, common method effect may inflate the association. Furthermore, Chandon, Morwitz and Reinartz (2005) have found that correlations in surveys between intention and subsequent behaviour are artificially increased by the process of asking about the respondent's intentions. This evidence implies that an intention measure may be a poor proxy for actual retention.

2.3 Satisfaction and Retention

Studies predicting retention from attitudinal measures have mainly employed satisfaction as the independent variable. If we exclude studies in which intention to re-buy has been used as a proxy for retention, we find only three cases showing a strong association between satisfaction and behaviour. Andreasen (1985) studied ten patients who reported serious dissatisfaction with their medical care and found that six of them switched physicians; Bolton (1998) found that dissatisfaction had a strong predictive power in interaction with customer tenure; and Bolton and Lemon (1999) found that

increases in satisfaction were associated with later increase in usage of mobile phones.

There are more studies showing weaker effects. Crosby and Stephens (1987) found that life assurance renewal had a low positive correlation with satisfaction with the provider. Kordupleski, Rust and Zahoric (1993) found limited evidence for a lagged effect of satisfaction on retention in company research by AT&T. Reichheld (1993) reported that “between 65 percent and 85 percent of customers who defect say they were satisfied with their former supplier”. Ennew and Binks (1996) did not find clear evidence of a positive association between service quality (usually closely related to satisfaction) and retention. Additionally, Hennig-Thurau and Klee (1997) have reviewed this field and generally find moderate association between satisfaction and retention.

This review shows that satisfaction generally has a positive association with retention but that the effect is often small. One reason for this is that the measure of satisfaction usually employed is not *relative*. People are likely to be motivated to recommend or retain a supplier because of the *superiority* of that supplier over others and a relative satisfaction measure should be more sensitive to this difference between alternatives. In our work, we use relative measures of attitude. A second reason for a weak association between satisfaction and retention can be found in the pattern of defection. At least with regard to services, defection often occurs as a consequence of specific failures at the point of delivery (Keaveney 1995); such episodes are unlikely to be anticipated well by an attitudinal measure. Prior satisfaction may sometimes allow the customer to discount the failure, as Bolton found (1998), but there may also be other situations in which a high prior satisfaction makes service failure all the more upsetting. A third reason why defection is often unrelated to satisfaction is that it may be involuntary; this is often found with regard to retail services where location may constrain usage (East, Lomax and Narain 2000). We conclude from this review that attitudinal measures are unlikely to give a strong prediction of brand retention.

2.4 Research on Customer Tenure and Recommendation

As noted, one measure of repeat patronage is customer tenure duration and, later, we test whether this is related to customer recommendation. Here, we review evidence on the association between recommendation and tenure.

In 1990, Reichheld and Kenny suggested that long-term customers might refer more new customers than recently acquired customers. In 1996, Reichheld repeated this claim. It seems likely that long-term customers will come to like their suppliers more and that this could then raise the rate of recommendation of these suppliers. Those who are dissatisfied with a supplier are more likely to switch so that survival bias should leave long-term customers who are more positive toward their supplier. But other factors could oppose any positive association between tenure and recommendation. Less interesting services do not bear repeated recommendation to the same person so long-tenure customers may “use up” their opportunities to recommend. Also, novelty wears off over time so that the supplier’s product may become less salient to a user with longer-term use and, as a result, less talked about. This loss of novelty is likely to be greater in frequently used services, such as credit cards, compared with infrequently used services, such as car servicing. Loss of novelty will be offset if the offering changes frequently, e.g. fashion stores. These considerations suggest that recommendation rates could differ between categories and we would expect recommendation rates to fall with tenure more for services that are less interesting, less changing and more frequently used.

Previous evidence suggests that the rate of recommendation usually declines with the duration of customer tenure. East, Lomax and Narain (2000) showed that recommendation rates fell with tenure for supermarkets and women’s hairdressing. Naylor and Kleiser (2000) found that first-time users of a health resort used more word of mouth compared with repeat buyers. Gremler and Brown (1999) found only a modest growth in the total number of claimed recommendations made by customers of banks and dental practices over time, which suggested that the rate of recommendation fell off with tenure duration. Wangenheim and Bayón (2004) found that new utility customers recommended more than established users. These studies indicate that recommendation rates are negatively related to tenure. Two studies show no relationship between tenure and recommendation rate (Kumar, Scheer and Steenkamp 1995; Verhoef, Franses and Hoekstra 2002). Also, a comment by Reinartz and Kumar (2000) indicated that recommendation was associated with attitude than customer tenure.

3. The Effect of Similarity between Measures

We argue that recommendation will be predicted mainly by relative attitude, and retention will be predicted mainly by repeat patronage. This is because of measurement similarities within each pairing. Our argument starts with the observation of Ajzen and Fishbein (1977) that two measures are more likely to be related if they are similarly specified by reference to object, action and context (and time, where applicable). For example, if we compare the attitude to Woolworth and the attitude to shopping at the nearest Woolworth store, the latter will provide a better prediction of actually shopping at the nearest Woolworth store because of the common specification. This issue of measurement compatibility may be seen as an example of common method effect: when two measures have features in common they are more likely to be associated. More specific explanations will also apply and we introduce these in the context of the studies that are reported. Below, we explain the effect of measurement similarity in relation to recommendation, search and retention.

3.1 Recommendation

We suggest that the relative attitude to a brand will predict recommendation of that brand because the reasons for liking one brand more than another are often the same as the reasons that are given when making a recommendation in favour of one brand over another. In this way, relative attitude and recommendation have features in common. By contrast, repeat patronage has no strong features in common with recommendation. This means that we would expect a lower association between repeat patronage and recommendation than between relative attitude and recommendation.

3.2 Search

When spending is high at the main store (high repeat patronage), there is less to spend at other stores and this will have the effect of reducing the number of other stores used (search measure). Thus, the repeat-patronage and search measures are, to a degree, competing for the same effect and, because of this commonality, we expect them to show a negative correlation. By contrast, the search measure does not have features in common with the attitude measure and this leads us to expect a weaker correlation between these variables. But when we measure search by the number of car makes considered before purchase, there are no obvious features in

common with either relative attitude or repeat patronage and, in this case, we cannot predict which of these variables will relate most to search.

3.3 Retention

Retention has much in common with repeat patronage since these two behaviours may be seen as the same behaviour at different times. This suggests that retention will be predicted better by repeat patronage than by relative attitude, which has no obvious features in common with retention.

4. Hypotheses

Based on our review, we frame three hypotheses. We test these Hypotheses in three sets of studies. The categories investigated and some of the measures used are changed for each Set. In particular, we change the measure of repeat patronage. This is because the conventional measure of repeat patronage varies with the category and we wished to test the measures normally used. Our Hypotheses provide predictive tests as suggested by Mellens, Dekimpe and Steenkamp (1996) and relate to ideas found in the work of Day (1969), Dick and Basu (1994), Jacoby and Chestnut (1978) and Oliver (1999).

H₁: Recommendation, search and retention will be significantly associated with either relative attitude or repeat patronage, but not both. Specifically, we expect repeat patronage to be positively associated with retention, negatively associated with search (in Set 1) and not associated with recommendation; relative attitude will be positively associated with recommendation but not with retention or search in Set 1.

H₂: The addition of an interaction term (relative attitude by repeat patronage) to any of the main effects models predicting recommendation, search, and retention will not increase R² substantially. It is possible for an interactive term to add substantially to the explanation provided by a model, even when one or both of the components of the interaction term do not do so on their own. Thus, support for H₁ does not preclude support for H₂. However, our review shows little previous evidence for the superiority of an interaction model.

H₃: No single definition of loyalty will predict all three loyalty outcomes (recommendation, search and retention). If we find that recommendation, search and retention are predicted by different variables, H₃ will be supported.

Table 1: Supermarkets - Predictions of Loyalty Outcomes

	Britain			New Zealand		
	Estimate	Sig.	Cox & Snell R ² %	Estimate	Sig.	Cox & Snell R ² %
(a) Recommendation of main store (UK, N=869, NZ, N=1157)						
Main Effects Model						
Relative Attitude	1.05	.000		1.33	.000	
Repeat patronage	-0.20	.02	9.2	-0.10	.21	14.4
Interaction Model						
Relative Attitude (1)	0.43	.23		0.77	.03	
Repeat patronage (2)	-0.88	.02		0.67	.06	
<i>1 x 2 term</i>	0.24	.07	9.5	0.20	.11	14.6
(b) Number of stores used (UK, N=871, NZ, N=1140)						
Main Effects Model						
Relative Attitude	0.08	.42		-0.10	.23	
Repeat patronage	-0.68	.000	9.5	-0.90	.000	14.3
Interaction Model						
Relative Attitude (1)	0.08	.77		0.44	.12	
Repeat patronage (2)	-0.68	.02		-0.36	.21	
<i>1 x 2 term</i>	-0.19	.99	9.5	-0.18	.05	14.6
(c) Retention of main store over 12 months (UK, N=577, NZ, N=976)						
Main Effects Model						
Relative Attitude	0.07	.64		0.17	.11	
Repeat patronage	0.25	.02	1.0	0.47	.000	3.6
Interaction Model						
Relative Attitude (1)	-0.03	.93		0.003	.99	
Repeat patronage (2)	0.13	.78		0.29	.42	
<i>1 x 2 term</i>	0.04	.79	1.0	0.06	.60	3.6

5. Set 1: Supermarket Loyalty

We surveyed supermarket customers, using as a measure of repeat patronage the proportion of spending given to their primary store-group. Data were collected in two countries, Britain and New Zealand, to provide a broader test of the Hypotheses. These countries have some differences in retail structure and population density, which could affect results. If the same results are obtained in both countries, the findings are more generalisable.

5.1 Data

We conducted initial surveys in 1998. Twelve months later, the respondents were re-surveyed so that the retention of the main store group could be assessed. In Britain, a sample of 2000 names and addresses was drawn from the electoral registers of England and Wales. In New Zealand, 2200 names were drawn from the electoral rolls. In both cases, at each address, the first woman's name was selected since supermarket shopping is predominantly a female role; if the household did not

contain a woman, the first man's name was used. An accompanying letter indicated that a response was sought from the person who usually did the shopping in the household. In both cases, a two-wave postal survey was used but, additionally, an intervening reminder card was used in New Zealand. The usable response rates were 46% (Britain) and 61% (New Zealand) in 1998. In 1999, when respondents were re-contacted, 77% of the British respondents and 82% of the New Zealand respondents returned questionnaires.

Single-item measures were used, which are shown in Appendix A. The number of supermarkets used in the last four weeks served as the measure of search behaviour.

5.2 Results

Retention rates were 76% in the UK and 72% in New Zealand. We used ordinal regression to predict recommendation, number of stores used and retention because the predicted variable was ordinal. For two-valued outcomes such as retention/defection, ordinal regression provides the same coefficients as logistic regression.

Table 1 shows how well relative attitude and repeat patronage predict the three loyalty outcomes. In this table we describe the analyses dealing with main effects as the Main Effects Model and the analyses that include the interaction term as the Interaction Model.

H_1 : Hypothesis 1 was that each loyalty outcome would be predicted by one variable and therefore that an additive model would not be supported. The three forms of the Main Effects Model in table 1 relate to this. First, we found that recommendation was strongly predicted by attitude in both countries ($p < 0.001$) but was weakly predicted *negatively* by repeat patronage in Britain ($p = 0.02$) and showed no relationship to repeat patronage in New Zealand. Second, the number of stores used (search) was negatively predicted by repeat patronage ($p < 0.001$) in both samples, as hypothesised. There was no significant association between attitude and number of stores used. Third, primary-store patronage was significantly associated with retention in both countries while attitude was not, though the models were very weak. Thus, the three behaviours were each predicted in the expected direction by one variable only, H_1 stands and an additive model is not supported.

These findings do not occur because attitude and repeat patronage are so highly correlated that one is eclipsed in

the regression analysis. The Spearman rank correlations between the measures of relative attitude and repeat patronage were fairly low ($r_s = 0.13$ for Britain and 0.15 for New Zealand).

H_2 : Hypothesis 2 was that the inclusion of an interaction term would not add substantially to R^2 . This is tested by a comparison between the Main Effects and Interaction Models (see Endnote). In examining the gain in R^2 , we are concerned with effect size rather than with significance and we set a relatively low hurdle of an improvement in R^2 of two percentage points. Using this criterion, there are no substantial gains in R^2 when the interaction term is added in respect of any of the three outcomes and H_2 is therefore supported.

H_3 : Hypothesis 3 was that there would be no measure of loyalty that predicted all three behavioural outcomes (recommendation, search for alternatives and retention). We have shown that recommendation is predicted by attitude, while the number of stores used and retention are predicted by repeat patronage. Thus, there is no consistent loyalty predictor across the three outcome behaviours and H_3 is supported.

5.3 Discussion of Set 1

The research findings presented above confirm all three Hypotheses. An additional finding was that retention was poorly predicted by our measures. One explanation for this is that, in retail, brand switching is controlled by environmental contingencies that are not well anticipated by measures of either attitude or repeat patronage. Environmental control of everyday habits might also explain the lack of any effect of attitude on the number of stores used. Also, the fairly low correlation found between the measures of relative attitude and repeat patronage suggests that there is little direct causal connection between these variables and that each is affected by different contingencies.

The lack of any effect of repeat patronage on recommendation may have arisen because those people who use a wide variety of stores (low repeat patronage) are the ones who can best compare those stores and this could offset any tendency to recommend derived from more exclusive use. If this is so, a different measure of repeat patronage might show a positive relationship with recommendation.

6. Set 2: Car Repeat-Purchase Brand Loyalty

In order to widen the test of our Hypotheses and to examine further the issues raised above, we conducted

research on car purchase (new and second-hand combined).

6.1 Data

An Internet study on UK car purchase was conducted in 2003; there were 495 respondents. Internet studies have low response rates; in this case it was 2%. For cars, we could use a direct measure of repeat patronage. We investigated the main car make of those who had made at least three successive car purchases, designating the last three purchases as 1, 2 and 3 with 3 the most recent. Our measure of repeat patronage is greater if purchases 1 and 2 are the same make and our measure of retention is greater if 2 and 3 are the same make. We also asked about recommendation and the number of alternative cars considered (search) so that we could predict these

outcomes. The key questions used are shown in Appendix A.

We used the repeat-patronage measure and the relative attitude to the second car to predict both the number of alternative car makes considered and the retention of the car make when choosing the third car. For recommendation, we focused on recommending the third car and therefore used the rating of this car for the relative attitude measure and the makes of cars 2 and 3 to establish the measure of repeat patronage.

6.2 Results

There was a fair degree of behavioural loyalty when this was measured as buying the same car make as last time. From purchase 1 to 2, and 2 to 3, the car make comparisons showed that 30% and 31% of respondents

Table 2: Cars: Prediction of Loyalty Outcomes

	Estimate	Sig.	Cox & Snell R ² %
(a) Recommendation			
(N=495)			
Main Effects Model			
Relative Attitude	0.91	.000	
Repeat patronage	0.30	.10	17.5
Interaction Model			
Relative Attitude (1)	0.92	.000	
Repeat patronage (2)	0.64	.004	
<i>1 x 2 term</i>	0.16	.009	18.6
(b) Number of other makes considered			
Main Effects Model			
Relative Attitude	-0.03	.74	
Repeat patronage	-1.05	.000	7.2
Interaction Model			
Relative Attitude (1)	0.34	.19	
Repeat patronage (2)	-1.75	.001	
<i>1 x 2 term</i>	-0.30	.135	7.7
(c) Retention of car make at third purchase			
Main Effects Model			
Relative Attitude	0.23	.03	
Repeat patronage	0.58	.005	3.4
Interaction Model			
Relative Attitude (1)	0.55	.08	
Repeat patronage (2)	2.02	.001	
<i>1 x 2 term</i>	0.62	.01	4.8

bought the same make again on successive purchases. When 1 and 3 were examined, the rate dropped to 19%. Some part of these repeat rates may be ascribed to chance; using the market shares disclosed in the survey, we estimated that approximately 10% should be deducted from the rates observed to correct for chance.

H_1 : Are loyalty outcomes predicted by relative attitude, repeat patronage or both? From H_1 we expect only one significant predictor for each loyalty outcome. In table 2, the Main Effects Model shows that, for car purchase, attitude is a significant predictor of recommendation, but repeat patronage is not, as in Set 1. On the number of

other makes considered (search), we find that the repeat-patronage measure is significantly related in the direction expected (negative) whereas relative attitude is not significant, as in Set 1. On retention, the model was weak (R^2 less than 0.05) but here both attitude and repeat patronage are significant with the latter dominating. So, in Set 2, H_1 is rejected with regard to retention but supported for the other two loyalty outcomes. The correlation between relative attitude and repeat purchase was significant but not large ($r_s = 0.22$, $p < 0.001$).

H_2 : Does the product of relative attitude and repeat patronage add significantly to the prediction of loyalty

Table 3: Correlations (R^2) Between Variables in 23 Service Studies

(1) Service (country, response rate %)	(2) N	(3) Method	(4) Repeat patronage (tenure) & recom- mendation	(5) Relative attitude & recom- mendation	(6) Repeat patronage (tenure) & relative attitude
Cheque book service (UK, 81)	187	Deliver to household and collect	-0.44*	0.32*	0.05
Credit card (UK, 81)	165	Deliver to household and collect	-0.39*	0.10	0.22*
Car insurance (UK, 81)	156	Deliver to household and collect	-0.36*	0.19*	0.23*
Credit card (UK, 43)	140	Deliver to household and post return	-0.28*	0.12	0.04
Main supermarket (UK, 81)	164	Deliver to household and collect	-0.09	0.32*	0.10
Mobile airtime (UK, 86)	266	Class distribution to students	-0.04	0.32*	0.03
Motor insurance (UK, 58)	109	Deliver to household and post return	-0.03	0.21*	0.14
Dentist (UK, 57)	208	Deliver to household and post return	-0.03	0.36*	0.06
Dry cleaning (UK, 52)	111	Deliver to household and post return	-0.02	0.41*	0.15
Internet provider (UK, na)	118	Email via friends	0.02	-0.05	0.23*
Leisure centre (UK, 40)	95	Mail survey of members	0.04	0.24*	0.05
House contents insurance (UK, 58)	121	Deliver to household and post return	0.04	0.32*	0.20*
Main supermarket (Mexico, 40)	166	Mail delivery and return	0.06	0.42*	0.11
Main fashion store (UK, 81)	152	Deliver to household and collect	0.07	0.38*	-0.06
Car insurance (Mauritius, 45)	201	Mall intercept	0.07	0.01	0.17*
Favourite restaurant (UK, 86)	187	Class distribution to students	0.08	0.21*	0.04
Email (UK, na)	223	Email via friends	0.10	0.14*	0.27*
Hairdresser (Mexico, 40)	163	Mail delivery and return	0.12	0.45*	0.24*
Search engine (UK, na)	206	Email via friends	0.13	0.34*	0.30*
Main fashion store (Mexico, 40)	158	Mail delivery and return	0.18*	0.35*	0.12
Car servicing (UK, 52)	131	Deliver to household and post return	0.20*	0.43*	0.33*
Car servicing (Mauritius, 45)	167	Mall intercept	0.20*	0.03	0.19*
Car servicing (UK, 81)	110	Deliver to household and collect	0.25*	0.42*	0.21*
Means			-0.01	0.26	0.15

* significance < 0.05

outcomes using the additive model and thus support an interaction model? There are no substantial changes in R^2 from the Main Effects Model to the Interaction Model, as in Set 1, and so H_2 is supported.

H_3 : Does any one measure of loyalty predict all three behavioural outcomes (recommendation, search for alternatives and retention)? No single formulation consistently predicts the different outcomes; repeat patronage fails to predict recommendation at a significant level and attitude fails to predict the number of alternative makes considered.

In Set 2, we also measured the *intention* to re-buy the current car make. When we conducted a regression analysis on this measure of intention, the R^2 was 0.28 and both relative attitude and repeat patronage were significant. The addition of an interaction term did not raise the R^2 .

6.3 Discussion of Set 2

With the exception of the prediction of retention, the findings of Set 2 support our Hypotheses. In particular, the results suggest that there is no connection between the degree of past patronage and the degree of recommendation.

As in Set 1, this study showed weak prediction of actual retention. If the intention to re-buy is predicted instead of true retention, a much stronger explanation is obtained. We review this matter in the General Discussion.

7. Set 3: Customer Tenure Duration and the Recommendation of Services

In Set 3, we focus on the recommendation of services. We chose recommendation because the evidence from Sets 1 and 2 had shown that this outcome was better explained than retention or search and we chose services to widen the scope of our work and because recommendation appears to be particularly influential in the adoption of new service suppliers. For example, Keaveney (1995) showed that 50% of service customers found a new supplier through recommendation. In this work, we used the duration of customer tenure as a measure of repeat patronage.

7.1 Data

From 2000 to 2003, we conducted surveys to investigate factors associated with recommendation in 23 service categories used by respondents. Most of the surveys were conducted in the UK but one (covering three categories)

was carried out in Mexico and one (covering two categories) was carried out in Mauritius. Response rates were in the range 40%-86%. Table 3 shows the categories, the response rate, the numbers of users responding, and the method used to apply the questionnaire. We present the rank correlations between repeat patronage (measured as customer tenure) and recommendation, relative attitude and recommendation, and relative attitude and repeat patronage. Examples of the items covering repeat patronage, relative attitude and recommendation are shown in the Appendix.

7.2 Results

The findings reported in Table 3 are ordered by the correlation between repeat patronage and recommendation (column 4). Overall, the mean correlation of column 4 is close to zero but this average obscures the fact that, in some services, recommendation is negatively related to repeat patronage (e.g. cheque service and credit cards) while in other categories it is positively related (e.g. car servicing, fashion stores in Mexico).

Column 5 shows that 22 of the 23 correlations between relative attitude and recommendation are positive and 18 are significant. Column 6 of Table 3 shows that relative attitude is often positively associated with customer tenure (average $r_s = 0.15$). These data indicate that some process, such as loss of salience, is counteracting the tendency for recommendation to rise as attitude rises with tenure.

Using regression, we probed the four cases in column 4 showing a significant positive association between repeat patronage and recommendation; only in one case did repeat patronage remain significant when relative attitude was included in the equation. These data therefore give general support for H_1 since, in most cases, recommendation is strongly and positively associated with relative attitude and only one case was found when repeat patronage was significantly associated with recommendation, after controlling for the effect of attitude.

In order to test H_2 , we selected the three cases in Table 3 where both attitude and repeat patronage were significantly and positively associated with recommendation, since these conditions made an interaction effect more likely. Table 4 shows the results. In no case was the R^2 raised by as much as two percentage points by the addition of the interaction term to the regression analysis.

Since we only considered one outcome, recommendation, we cannot test H_3 in Set 3.

8. General Discussion

8.1 The Findings Reviewed

Our research has used a variety of measures and different categories to examine three Hypotheses about loyalty. We show that recommendation is significantly predicted by relative attitude in the supermarket and car Sets, and in a substantial majority of the 23 service cases. By contrast, recommendation is generally not predicted significantly by repeat-patronage measures. With regard to search, the model outcomes are weaker but the repeat-patronage measure is significant and the relative attitude measure is not significant. On retention, we find that neither attitude nor repeat patronage give a strong prediction but that repeat patronage is significant in both the supermarket and car cases and relative attitude is significant only in the case of cars. The inclusion of an interaction term never had more than a marginal effect on the R^2 , even in Set 3 where we selected cases that would give the best chance of finding this effect. This means that, on a principle of parsimony, there is no case in our studies for invoking interaction effects in order to predict loyalty outcomes.

Our evidence suggests that attitudinal and behavioural measures of loyalty do not have much in common. Empirically, we can see this in the relatively low correlations found between the repeat patronage and relative attitude measures in our studies. These low associations suggest that attitude is conditioned in ways that may be unrelated to repeat-patronage behaviour.

Although a combination of attitude and repeat patronage may sometimes predict further loyalty behaviour, the assumption that this is *normally* the case does not appear to be justified. We believe that our findings should cause marketers to question whether loyalty should be seen as some combination of relative attitude and repeat patronage. This approach to loyalty is often found in textbooks, which may cite Day (1969), Dick and Basu (1994, particularly the typology, figure 2), Jacoby and Chestnut (1978), Mellens Dekimpe and Steenkamp (1996), and Oliver (1999) in support. However, we point out that none of these sources provided evidence showing that loyalty outcomes were predicted better by a combination measure.

8.2 What is the Alternative?

Instead of asking what loyalty is and what its consequences are, it might be more productive to focus on loyalty outcomes such as recommendation and retention and to ask about the conditions that produce these outcomes, including loyalty measures. When this is done, different measures of loyalty can be tested alongside other variables such as expertise, opportunity and weight of purchase. The interest in loyalty stems from its potential outcomes, so let us examine these outcomes directly.

8.3 Explaining Findings

The general explanation for our findings is in terms of common method effect and is very simple. In particular, we explain that relative attitude predicts recommendation because attitudes are based on particular attributes of the object and that it is these

Table 4: Predictors of Recommendation

	Car Services			Fashion Stores					
	Study 1 (N=131)			Study 2 (N=110)					
	Estimate	Sig	Cox & Snell R ² %	Estimate	Sig	Cox & Snell R ² %	Estimate	Sig	Cox & Snell R ² %
Main Effects Model									
Relative Attitude (1)	1.40	.00		1.16	.00		1.50	.00	
Repeat patronage (2)	0.14	.38	18.3	0.37	.05	17.6	0.22	.06	19.6
Interaction Model									
Relative Attitude (1)	1.44	.12		2.89	.05		0.61	.44	
Repeat patronage (2)	0.19	.87		1.95	.13		-0.58	.36	
<i>1 x 2</i>	-0.01	.97	18.3	-0.37	.21	18.6	0.26	.20	20.5

attributes that are also likely to be the content of recommendations. Similarly, we argue that past patronage and retention are essentially the same behaviours, though separated in time. This may prompt the response that the explanation is obvious and near to a tautology. *Once stated*, the explanation is obvious but no one to our knowledge has previously stated it in this form. We argue that “obvious” explanations that no one has yet recognised are useful. For example, this particular explanation leads to a focus on those evaluative attributes that may be used in word of mouth.

8.4 The Weak Prediction of Retention

Brand retention was poorly predicted in our studies. We accept that there may be circumstances in which retention is better predicted, for example when the predicted behaviour follows soon after measurement, but, generally, our findings indicate that brand retention is difficult to predict in the longer term. This finding suggests that attempts to raise retention by enhancing satisfaction may have limited effect on this variable though they could impact on recommendation. Against this argument, Anderson and Mittal (2000) suggest that some product attributes have more effect on retention than others and that some customers are more responsive than are others. When these attributes and customers are targeted, retention may show more relationship with satisfaction, but the scope for applying such a focused approach may be limited.

One explanation for the weak prediction of retention is that consumer volition is heavily constrained by opportunities and social rules. Supermarket use is restricted by the proximity of stores, and car purchase by company policy. Attitude may be “crowded out” by such constraints so that it has little effect on retention. For cars, we show that the *intention* to repeat purchase is much more strongly determined than retention and here attitude has a predictive role. One interpretation of this is that intention is much less constrained by external contingencies (which may not yet have occurred) and therefore relative attitude can have more predictive effect.

However, whatever the explanation, the practice of using an intention measure as a proxy for retention seems unjustified. Although there is published evidence that intentions do predict behaviour quite well, this evidence deals more with the prediction of category purchase than with the prediction of brand purchase, as studied here.

8.5 Implications

This work has practical value. Customer tenure and satisfaction are often available in databases. Our data suggest that practitioners might use satisfaction scores to pick segments for incentivised recommendation but they should be careful about using tenure for this purpose. In general, the categories that are frequently used and unchanging are recommended more by recent customers. Long-term customers may recommend a category more only if it is complex and used infrequently.

9. Conclusions

In a series of studies, we tested whether additive or interactive combinations of relative attitude and repeat patronage predict loyalty outcomes better than singular measures. A number of measures were used for repeat patronage and recommendation and the work was conducted on retail, durable and service products. We found that recommendation was predicted by relative attitude and not by repeat patronage, while search behaviour and retention were predicted more by repeat patronage than by relative attitude. These findings cast doubt on the value of combination concepts of loyalty and also on the idea that there is a generic form of loyalty that will predict a variety of different loyalty outcomes.

Endnote

The testing and interpretation of interaction effects is discussed by Jaccard and Turrisi (2003). The hierarchical regression method for testing for interaction may be subject to error when the product term is formed from ordinal measures since non-linearity may distort the product term. However our expectation is negative, that there will be no effect, and it seems unlikely that distortions could lead to the elimination of a real effect.

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Appendix A: Measures with Response Frequencies

			Frequencies	
			%	%
Set 1: Supermarkets			UK	NZ
Relative attitude				
Compared with other stores, would you rate your main store as ...?	Poor	[1]	2	1
	Adequate	[2]	22	22
	Good	[3]	60	55
	Excellent	[4]	16	22
Repeat patronage				
What proportion of your total grocery spending is made in your main store	50% or less	[1]	11	5
	51 – 80%	[2]	36	28
	81 – 95%	[3]	34	42
	More than 95%	[4]	19	25
Recommendation				
Have you ever recommended your main store to others?	Rarely or never	[1]	35	38
	Occasionally	[2]	52	50
	Quite often	[3]	13	12
Search				
In the last four weeks , how many different supermarkets or other grocery stores have you used?	One	[1]	18	22
	Two	[2]	45	40
	Three or four	[3]	31	34
	More than four	[4]	6	4
Retention of the main store group. This was measured over a 12-month duration by comparing the main store chain reported in 1999 with that reported in 1998.				

Appendix A: Measures with Response Frequencies (Cont.)

		Frequencies
		%
Set 2: Car purchase		
Relative attitude		
How do you rate your current car, compared with the best alternative make of car that you could have realistically chosen?		
Much worse	[1]	1
Worse	[2]	8
The same	[3]	27
Better	[4]	38
Much better	[5]	26
Recommendation		
In the last six months, how many times have you actually recommended <car make> to others?		
Never	[1]	31
Once	[2]	18
2-3 times	[3]	41
4-6 times	[4]	6
More than 6 times	[5]	7
Search		
How many other makes did you consider before you chose your current car, the <car make>?		
No other car brands considered	[1]	27
1 other brand considered	[2]	17
2 other brands considered	[3]	27
3-5 other brands considered	[4]	22
More than 5 other brands considered	[5]	7
Set 3: Service Use, Sample Questions		
Relative attitude		
Compared to other car servicing firms, how do you rate the firm you use?		
Poor	[1]	1
Below average	[2]	1
Average	[3]	17
Good	[4]	59
Very good	[5]	22
Repeat patronage		
How long have you been using this firm?		
Less than 1 year	[1]	11
1-2 years	[2]	21
2-4 years	[3]	26
4-8 years	[4]	25
More than 8 years	[5]	17
Recommendation		
How many times have <i>you</i> recommended this firm to others in the past six months?		
0	[1]	62
1	[2]	15
2	[3]	15
3-4	[4]	5
5-8	[5]	1
More than eight times	[6]	2