



Relational Visibility: A Missing Link Between Brand Presence and Consumer Loyalty

Suhaeni^{1*}

***Corresponding Mail:**
suhaeni@faperta.unsika.ac.id

Article History:

Submitted: 21-01-2025
Approved: 16-04-2026
Published: 11-05-2026



Available at the open access
journal:
<https://sciedex.com/marketra>

Marketra - Journal of Marketing
Strategy and Customer Research,
licensed under a Creative Commons
Attribution-NonCommercial 4.0
International (CC BY-NC 4.0).



Abstract

Contemporary marketing environments are characterized by unprecedented levels of brand visibility driven by digital platforms, omnichannel interactions, and algorithmically mediated communications. Despite extensive exposure opportunities, many highly visible brands struggle to develop enduring consumer loyalty, revealing a persistent theoretical gap between visibility-related constructs and relationship outcomes. Existing marketing theories provide substantial insights into awareness, engagement, attachment, trust, and loyalty, yet offer limited explanation regarding how brand visibility becomes relationally meaningful before deeper relationship outcomes emerge. Addressing this gap, this article introduces Relational Visibility as a novel marketing construct and develops Relational Visibility Theory as a process-based framework explaining how visibility evolves into consumer loyalty. Through an integrative conceptual analysis drawing upon relationship marketing, consumer-brand relationship theory, social presence theory, signaling theory, and uncertainty reduction theory, the study proposes that consumers who perceive brands as consistently present, psychologically accessible, interactionally familiar, and relationally recognizable develop relational familiarity, which subsequently facilitates trust, commitment, and loyalty. The proposed framework extends visibility literature beyond cognitive accessibility and provides a new theoretical lens for understanding relationship development in increasingly digital, interconnected, and relationship-driven marketplaces while establishing a foundation for future empirical validation and theory refinement.

Keywords

relational visibility; consumer loyalty; relationship marketing;
relational familiarity; consumer trust; brand relationships

¹ Faculty of Agriculture, Universitas Singaperbangsa Karawang, Karawang, Indonesia

1. Introduction

Marketing scholarship has undergone a substantial transformation over the past three decades. Traditional transaction-oriented perspectives have gradually evolved into relationship-oriented approaches that emphasize long-term interactions, trust formation, commitment development, and customer retention as key sources of sustainable competitive advantage (Dwyer et al., 1987; Morgan & Hunt, 1994; Berry, 1995; Grönroos, 1994; Sheth & Parvatiyar, 1995). Rather than focusing exclusively on customer acquisition, contemporary marketing increasingly recognizes that enduring customer relationships generate superior customer lifetime value, advocacy, resilience against competitive offerings, and long-term organizational performance (Payne & Frow, 2005; Palmatier et al., 2006; Kumar et al., 2010).

The emergence of digital technologies has accelerated this relational shift. Consumers now interact with brands across increasingly complex ecosystems comprising websites, social media platforms, mobile applications, online communities, digital marketplaces, and intelligent recommendation systems (Yadav & Pavlou, 2014; Kannan & Li, 2017; Dwivedi et al., 2021). Simultaneously, firms have moved beyond traditional communication models toward omnichannel and ecosystem-based approaches in which value is co-created through continuous interactions among consumers, brands, platforms, and broader stakeholder networks (Vargo & Lusch, 2016; Storbacka et al., 2016; Payne et al., 2017). These developments have intensified scholarly interest in customer engagement, customer experience, brand communities, and consumer-brand relationships as strategic mechanisms for sustaining competitive advantage (van Doorn et al., 2010; Verhoef et al., 2010; Brodie et al., 2011; Hollebeek et al., 2014; Pansari & Kumar, 2017).

At the same time, contemporary marketing environments are increasingly characterized by information abundance and attention scarcity. Consumers are exposed to thousands of commercial messages every day, creating intense competition for cognitive and emotional attention (Davenport & Beck, 2001; Wedel & Pieters, 2008; Teixeira, 2014). In such environments, achieving visibility has become easier than achieving meaningful relevance. Digital platforms, social media algorithms, and recommendation systems continuously amplify brand exposure, yet many highly visible brands struggle to convert visibility into enduring consumer loyalty (Bleier et al., 2019; Rust, 2020; Kannan & Li, 2017).

This situation highlights an important paradox within contemporary marketing. Many brands maintain extensive visibility across multiple communication channels and appear regularly in consumers' daily lives, yet only a limited number succeed in developing strong emotional connections and long-term loyalty. Similarly, some brands achieve substantial awareness and market exposure but fail to generate meaningful trust, commitment, or relational attachment. Existing evidence suggests that repeated exposure alone cannot adequately explain why consumers develop enduring relationships with certain brands while remaining indifferent toward others (Keller, 1993; de Vries et al., 2012; Gensler et al., 2013; Ashley & Tuten, 2015).

The marketing literature has traditionally approached visibility through constructs such as brand awareness, brand salience, brand exposure, and media presence (Keller, 1993). These constructs primarily emphasize cognitive recognition and recall. Consumers are considered familiar with a brand when they can recognize or remember it among competing alternatives. While such perspectives have significantly advanced understanding of brand equity formation, they largely conceptualize visibility as a cognitive phenomenon. Being recognized does not necessarily imply being trusted, valued, or psychologically close to consumers. A consumer may repeatedly encounter a brand and still experience no meaningful relational connection.

Relationship marketing scholars have long argued that trust and commitment represent central mechanisms underlying successful consumer relationships (Morgan & Hunt, 1994;

Doney & Cannon, 1997; Garbarino & Johnson, 1999; Sirdeshmukh et al., 2002). Similarly, research on relationship quality emphasizes the importance of trust, satisfaction, commitment, and emotional bonds in fostering long-term loyalty (Crosby et al., 1990; Hennig-Thurau et al., 2002; Aurier & N'Goala, 2010). More recent studies further suggest that relationship formation increasingly occurs within broader service ecosystems characterized by network interactions, resource integration, and value co-creation (Vargo & Lusch, 2016; Brodie et al., 2019). Nevertheless, these studies primarily explain how relationships are maintained rather than how consumers initially come to perceive brands as relationally relevant actors within their everyday lives.

Parallel developments can be observed in customer engagement research. Scholars have explored how interactions, participation, co-creation, and brand community involvement contribute to stronger consumer-brand relationships (Muniz & O'Guinn, 2001; McAlexander et al., 2002; Schau et al., 2009; Brodie et al., 2013; Dessart et al., 2015). More recent perspectives emphasize the importance of continuous micro-interactions, social participation, and ongoing engagement behaviors in shaping relationship development (Harmeling et al., 2017; Hollebeek et al., 2019). Although engagement perspectives highlight the active role of consumers in relationship creation, engagement itself frequently presupposes some degree of pre-existing consumer interest or relational attachment. Less attention has been devoted to understanding how brands become psychologically meaningful before deeper engagement emerges.

A similar limitation appears within customer experience research. Customer experience studies emphasize the role of interactions across customer journey touchpoints in shaping perceptions and behaviors (Verhoef et al., 2009; Lemon & Verhoef, 2016; Becker & Jaakkola, 2020). While these studies provide valuable insights into experience formation and value creation processes, they do not explicitly explain how continuous brand presence evolves into perceptions of relational familiarity and psychological accessibility. Consequently, an important conceptual space remains underdeveloped between brand visibility and relationship outcomes.

Consumer-brand relationship literature likewise highlights the significance of emotional attachment, brand love, self-brand connection, and relationship quality (Fournier, 1998; Aggarwal, 2004; Park et al., 2010; Batra et al., 2012; Albert & Merunka, 2013). These studies demonstrate that consumers may develop relationships with brands that resemble interpersonal relationships. However, the antecedent mechanisms that transform ordinary visibility into relational significance remain insufficiently theorized. Existing frameworks explain attachment after it develops but offer limited insight into how persistent and meaningful brand presence contributes to its emergence.

The rapid expansion of social media, digital communities, influencer ecosystems, and AI-mediated communication further reinforces the need to revisit this issue. Brands increasingly seek to maintain continuous visibility through content marketing, online communities, influencer collaborations, personalized communication, and algorithmically supported interactions (Muntinga et al., 2011; Labrecque, 2014; Hudson et al., 2016; Hollebeek & Macky, 2019; Huang & Rust, 2021; Dwivedi et al., 2023). Yet marketers continue to face what may be described as a visibility–loyalty gap: consumers often encounter brands frequently without necessarily developing trust, commitment, or loyalty. This phenomenon suggests that visibility alone is insufficient and that a distinct relational mechanism may exist between visibility and relationship outcomes.

This paper argues that the missing mechanism lies in what we conceptualize as Relational Visibility. Unlike traditional visibility constructs that emphasize exposure and recognition, Relational Visibility refers to the extent to which consumers perceive a brand as consistently present, psychologically accessible, interactionally familiar, and relationally recognizable within their everyday lives. The concept draws inspiration from relationship marketing, social

presence theory, signaling theory, and consumer-brand relationship literature by proposing that brands become influential not merely because they are seen frequently but because they are experienced as relationally present (Short et al., 1976; Spence, 1973; Labrecque, 2014).

Accordingly, this study introduces Relational Visibility as a novel marketing construct and develops the foundations of Relational Visibility Theory (RVT). The paper seeks to bridge fragmented streams of literature on visibility, trust, engagement, attachment, and loyalty by proposing a unified conceptual framework. Specifically, this article pursues four objectives. First, it conceptualizes Relational Visibility and distinguishes it from related constructs. Second, it identifies the theoretical foundations underlying the construct. Third, it develops a conceptual mechanism linking Relational Visibility to consumer loyalty through relational familiarity, trust, and commitment. Finally, it proposes a research agenda to guide future empirical validation and theory development.

By introducing Relational Visibility Theory, this article contributes to contemporary marketing scholarship in three important ways. First, it extends visibility literature beyond cognitive recognition by introducing a relational interpretation of visibility. Second, it enriches relationship marketing theory by identifying a previously underexplored antecedent of trust and commitment. Third, it provides a new conceptual foundation for understanding consumer loyalty formation in increasingly digital, interconnected, and relationship-driven marketplaces.

2. Theoretical Foundations

2.1 Relationship Marketing as the Foundation of Consumer Loyalty

The emergence of relationship marketing marked one of the most significant paradigm shifts in modern marketing thought. Earlier transactional perspectives largely emphasized discrete exchanges and customer acquisition, whereas relationship marketing redirected scholarly attention toward long-term interactions, customer retention, and the development of enduring relational bonds between firms and consumers (Grönroos, 1994; Berry, 1995; Sheth & Parvatiyar, 1995). This transition reflected growing recognition that sustainable competitive advantage depends not only on attracting customers but also on maintaining valuable relationships that generate repeated exchanges, advocacy, and long-term profitability.

Among the most influential contributions to relationship marketing is the Commitment–Trust Theory developed by Morgan and Hunt (1994), which identifies trust and commitment as central mediating variables underlying successful relationships. Subsequent research consistently demonstrated that trust facilitates relationship continuity by reducing uncertainty and increasing confidence in future interactions, while commitment strengthens consumers' willingness to maintain relationships despite competing alternatives (Ganesan, 1994; Doney & Cannon, 1997; Garbarino & Johnson, 1999; Hennig-Thurau et al., 2002). Together, these mechanisms form the relational foundation upon which loyalty is built.

The relationship marketing perspective has subsequently expanded beyond dyadic firm–consumer interactions. Contemporary scholarship increasingly conceptualizes relationships as embedded within broader service ecosystems involving consumers, organizations, digital platforms, communities, and networks of value co-creation (Vargo & Lusch, 2016; Storbacka et al., 2016; Brodie et al., 2019). Within these ecosystems, relationship development occurs through continuous interactions rather than isolated transactions, reinforcing the importance of maintaining relational continuity across multiple touchpoints.

Despite these advances, an important limitation remains. Existing relationship marketing research primarily explains how trust, commitment, and relationship quality sustain established relationships. Considerably less attention has been devoted to understanding

the antecedent conditions through which consumers initially come to perceive brands as relationally relevant actors in their daily lives. Consequently, a conceptual gap persists regarding how brands transition from merely being present in the marketplace to becoming meaningful participants in consumers' relational worlds.

2.2 Consumer Loyalty and the Central Role of Trust

Consumer loyalty has long been regarded as one of the most valuable outcomes in marketing research. Early conceptualizations defined loyalty as a combination of favorable attitudes and repeat purchasing behavior (Dick & Basu, 1994), whereas later perspectives emphasized psychological commitment, emotional attachment, advocacy behavior, and resistance to competitive alternatives (Oliver, 1999). Contemporary loyalty research recognizes that loyal consumers contribute substantially to organizational performance through retention, positive word-of-mouth, reduced acquisition costs, and long-term customer value.

A consistent finding across loyalty research is the pivotal role of trust. Consumers are more likely to maintain relationships with brands perceived as reliable, honest, and capable of consistently delivering promised value (Doney & Cannon, 1997; Chaudhuri & Holbrook, 2001). Trust reduces perceived risk, increases confidence in future interactions, and facilitates repeated exchanges over time (Sirdeshmukh et al., 2002). As a result, trust frequently functions as a precursor to loyalty across diverse industries and market contexts.

Empirical evidence further suggests that trust contributes to loyalty both directly and indirectly through relationship commitment (Harris & Goode, 2004; Gustafsson et al., 2005; Aurier & N'Goala, 2010). Consumers who trust a brand become more willing to invest relational resources and maintain long-term relationships, thereby strengthening behavioral and attitudinal loyalty. More recent studies in digital environments similarly highlight the importance of transparency, authenticity, social proof, and perceived reliability in facilitating trust formation (Kim & Peterson, 2017; Mahr et al., 2019).

However, while trust is widely acknowledged as a critical antecedent of loyalty, relatively little research has focused on the processes through which trust itself emerges. Existing studies explain the consequences of trust more thoroughly than its origins. This limitation becomes increasingly important in contemporary digital environments where consumers encounter countless brands and must rapidly decide which brands deserve their confidence. Understanding how trust begins to develop therefore remains an important theoretical challenge.

2.3 Visibility in Marketing Literature

Visibility represents one of the most fundamental concepts in marketing because consumers cannot evaluate, consider, or purchase brands they do not notice. Traditionally, visibility has been examined through constructs such as brand awareness, brand recognition, brand salience, and media exposure (Keller, 1993). These perspectives primarily conceptualize visibility as a cognitive phenomenon involving consumers' ability to recognize, recall, or retrieve brand information from memory.

Because awareness is a prerequisite for most consumer decision-making processes, organizations invest heavily in advertising, public relations, sponsorships, and promotional activities designed to enhance visibility. The rise of digital media has further expanded opportunities for maintaining continuous brand exposure through social media, online communities, influencer collaborations, and user-generated content (de Vries et al., 2012; Gensler et al., 2013; Ashley & Tuten, 2015; Muntinga et al., 2011).

At the same time, the digital era has transformed visibility itself. Consumers now operate within highly cluttered information environments characterized by intense competition for

attention. Research on the attention economy suggests that exposure alone does not guarantee meaningful processing because individuals face severe cognitive constraints when filtering information (Davenport & Beck, 2001; Wedel & Pieters, 2008; Teixeira, 2014). Consequently, visibility becomes valuable only when consumers allocate attention to the brand and perceive its presence as relevant and meaningful.

Although visibility literature has significantly advanced understanding of brand recognition and awareness, it remains largely focused on cognitive accessibility. Existing frameworks explain how brands become known but provide limited insight into how visibility contributes to relational outcomes. Many highly visible brands remain psychologically distant from consumers, whereas other brands successfully transform visibility into trust, commitment, and loyalty. This observation suggests that visibility alone may be insufficient and that a distinct relational mechanism may exist between exposure and relationship development.

2.4 Customer Engagement and Relational Interaction

Customer engagement emerged as a major research stream in response to increasing consumer participation in value creation processes (van Doorn et al., 2010; Verhoef et al., 2010). Unlike traditional perspectives that portray consumers as passive recipients of marketing communications, engagement theory conceptualizes consumers as active participants who interact with brands, contribute content, and co-create value.

Engagement is commonly defined as a multidimensional construct encompassing cognitive, emotional, and behavioral investments in brand interactions (Brodie et al., 2011; Hollebeek et al., 2014). Empirical research consistently demonstrates positive relationships between engagement and important outcomes such as trust, satisfaction, advocacy, relationship quality, and loyalty (Vivek et al., 2012; Kumar & Pansari, 2016; Pansari & Kumar, 2017).

Recent developments further suggest that engagement often develops through a series of ongoing micro-interactions rather than isolated exchanges (Harmeling et al., 2017; Hollebeek et al., 2019). Online communities, social media interactions, and collaborative platforms enable consumers to engage with brands repeatedly over time, creating opportunities for relationship strengthening and value co-creation (Muniz & O'Guinn, 2001; McAlexander et al., 2002; Dessart et al., 2015).

Nevertheless, engagement literature implicitly assumes that consumers already possess sufficient interest or motivation to interact with a brand. In other words, engagement generally explains what happens after consumers notice and value a brand. Much less attention has been devoted to understanding the preceding conditions that make brands psychologically accessible and relationally meaningful before engagement emerges. This unresolved issue suggests that another mechanism may operate prior to engagement in the relationship formation process.

2.5 Consumer Attachment and Relational Closeness

Consumer-brand relationship research increasingly recognizes that consumers may form emotional relationships with brands that resemble interpersonal relationships. Fournier (1998) provided the foundational framework for this perspective by conceptualizing brands as relationship partners capable of generating emotional meaning and relational value.

Subsequent studies introduced concepts such as brand attachment, self-brand connection, and brand love to explain the emotional dimensions of consumer-brand relationships (Aggarwal, 2004; Escalas & Bettman, 2005; Park et al., 2010; Batra et al., 2012; Albert & Merunka, 2013). These studies suggest that consumers often incorporate brands into their identities, lifestyles, and social self-concepts. When such integration occurs, brands become more than products; they become symbolic relationship partners.

Attachment has been shown to enhance loyalty, advocacy, resistance to competitors, and relationship longevity (Chaudhuri & Holbrook, 2001; Brakus et al., 2009; Park et al., 2010). More recent research highlights the role of personalization, digital intimacy, and perceived responsiveness in facilitating emotional closeness between consumers and brands (Japutra et al., 2018; Loureiro et al., 2021).

Despite these contributions, attachment research primarily focuses on mature relationships in which emotional bonds have already developed. Existing frameworks explain the consequences of attachment more effectively than the conditions that facilitate its emergence. Specifically, relatively little attention has been devoted to understanding how repeated brand presence gradually evolves into perceptions of familiarity, closeness, and relational significance. Thus, an important conceptual space remains insufficiently theorized.

2.6 Toward Relational Visibility Theory

The preceding review reveals a consistent pattern across contemporary marketing literature. Relationship marketing explains trust and commitment as foundations of relationship success. Loyalty research explains long-term behavioral outcomes. Visibility research explains awareness and recognition. Engagement research explains active interaction and participation. Attachment research explains emotional bonds and relational closeness.

Collectively, these perspectives provide substantial insight into consumer-brand relationships. However, they remain theoretically fragmented. No single framework adequately explains how continuous brand presence becomes transformed into a perception of relational meaningfulness that subsequently facilitates familiarity, trust, commitment, and loyalty.

This gap becomes particularly salient in contemporary digital environments characterized by information overload, omnichannel interactions, and increasing competition for consumer attention. Brands today must accomplish more than achieving visibility; they must become psychologically accessible and relationally relevant. Yet existing theories provide limited explanations regarding how this transformation occurs.

This table consolidates the intellectual foundations of RVT and demonstrates that the proposed framework emerges from the integration of multiple established theoretical traditions rather than from a single literature stream. Its role is to clarify the specific contribution of each foundational theory and to show how RVT extends existing knowledge by connecting previously fragmented explanations of visibility and relationship development.

Table 1. Theoretical Foundations and Contributions to Relational Visibility Theory

Theoretical Foundation	Core Insight	Contribution to RVT
Relationship Marketing (Grönroos, 1994; Berry, 1995; Sheth & Parvatiyar, 1995)	Long-term relationships create greater value than isolated transactions.	Provides the overarching relational perspective underpinning RVT and positions loyalty as the outcome of relationship development rather than communication exposure.
Commitment–Trust Theory (Morgan & Hunt, 1994)	Trust and commitment are central mediators of successful relationships.	Supplies the downstream relational mechanism through which Relational Visibility ultimately influences loyalty.
Consumer–Brand Relationship Theory (Fournier, 1998)	Consumers can form relationships with brands similar to interpersonal relationships.	Supports the assumption that brands can become meaningful relational actors within consumers’ lives.
Social Presence Theory (Short et al., 1976)	Perceived presence enhances social connectedness and interaction quality.	Explains how brands may be experienced as psychologically present beyond physical or communication visibility.

Theoretical Foundation	Core Insight	Contribution to RVT
Signaling Theory (Spence, 1973)	Repeated signals reduce information asymmetry and shape expectations.	Explains how consistent brand presence communicates reliability, accessibility, and predictability, contributing to Relational Visibility.
Uncertainty Reduction Theory (Berger & Calabrese, 1975)	Familiarity reduces uncertainty and facilitates relationship development.	Provides the logic linking Relational Visibility to Relational Familiarity and subsequent trust formation.
Customer Engagement Literature (Brodie et al., 2011; Hollebeek et al., 2014)	Ongoing interactions strengthen consumer–brand relationships.	Helps explain how repeated interactions contribute to the accumulation of relational signals that support Relational Visibility.
Customer Experience Literature (Verhoef et al., 2009; Lemon & Verhoef, 2016)	Experiences emerge across multiple touchpoints over time.	Supports the view that Relational Visibility develops cumulatively through repeated encounters rather than isolated interactions.

Source: Author's synthesis based on the cited literature.

Rather than deriving from a single theoretical tradition, Table 1 demonstrates that RVT is an integrative framework combining insights from relationship marketing, relationship development, communication, and consumer behavior research. The table clarifies how each foundational theory contributes a distinct explanatory component, while RVT's primary theoretical advancement lies in explaining the previously underdeveloped transition through which brand visibility acquires relational significance and becomes a precursor to familiarity, trust, commitment, and loyalty.

Accordingly, this paper proposes Relational Visibility as a novel construct that bridges visibility literature and relationship marketing literature. Relational Visibility refers not merely to being seen but to being perceived as consistently present, psychologically accessible, interactionally familiar, and relationally recognizable within consumers' everyday experiences. By introducing this construct, the study establishes the theoretical foundation for the development of RVT, which seeks to explain how visibility evolves into relational familiarity, trust, commitment, and ultimately consumer loyalty.

3. Conceptualizing Relational Visibility

3.1 The Need for a Relational Perspective on Visibility

Visibility has traditionally occupied a central position within marketing scholarship because consumers cannot evaluate, consider, or choose brands that remain unnoticed. Consequently, visibility-related constructs such as awareness, salience, recognition, and exposure have long been regarded as essential prerequisites for market success (Keller, 1993). Within these perspectives, visibility is primarily understood as a cognitive phenomenon reflecting consumers' ability to recognize, recall, or retrieve brand-related information from memory.

The contemporary marketing environment, however, presents challenges that extend beyond cognitive accessibility. Digital platforms, social media ecosystems, algorithmically curated content, and omnichannel interactions have dramatically increased opportunities for brands to become visible. Yet the proliferation of communication channels has simultaneously intensified competition for consumer attention. Consumers are exposed to an unprecedented volume of commercial information, making visibility easier to achieve but increasingly difficult to convert into meaningful consumer relationships.

This reality highlights an important limitation within existing visibility literature. Many brands successfully achieve awareness and market exposure while failing to develop trust,

commitment, or enduring loyalty. Conversely, some brands transform relatively modest levels of exposure into exceptionally strong consumer relationships. Such observations suggest that visibility alone cannot fully explain relationship development.

Existing marketing theories provide important explanations for trust formation, engagement, attachment, and loyalty. However, they offer limited insight into how consumers come to perceive brands as psychologically relevant actors within their everyday lives before these deeper relational outcomes emerge. A conceptual space therefore exists between being noticed and becoming relationally meaningful. Understanding this intermediate process requires a broader conceptualization of visibility that incorporates relational rather than purely cognitive considerations.

3.2 Defining Relational Visibility

The concept of Relational Visibility emerges from the intersection of relationship marketing, consumer-brand relationship theory, social presence theory, and signaling theory (Morgan & Hunt, 1994; Fournier, 1998; Short et al., 1976; Spence, 1973). Across these perspectives, relationships develop when individuals perceive another entity as consistently present, recognizable, accessible, and socially meaningful.

Repeated interactions serve not merely as informational encounters but as relational signals that gradually shape perceptions of familiarity, predictability, and psychological proximity. Through cumulative experiences, individuals become increasingly capable of interpreting future interactions and reducing uncertainty regarding relational outcomes.

Building upon these theoretical foundations, Relational Visibility is defined as the extent to which consumers perceive a brand as consistently present, psychologically accessible, interactionally familiar, and relationally recognizable within their everyday experiences, thereby facilitating the development of relational familiarity and subsequent trust formation.

This definition intentionally extends beyond traditional notions of visibility. Whereas conventional visibility constructs focus primarily on whether consumers notice a brand, Relational Visibility concerns how consumers experience the presence of a brand. The distinction is subtle yet theoretically important. A brand may be highly visible in terms of exposure frequency while remaining psychologically distant from consumers. Conversely, a brand may achieve relatively modest exposure yet become deeply embedded within consumers' routines, expectations, and relational experiences.

Relational Visibility therefore captures a form of visibility characterized by relational significance rather than simple observability. The construct reflects not merely whether a brand is seen but whether a brand is experienced as a recognizable and meaningful participant in consumers' everyday lives.

3.3 Relational Visibility as a Relational Perceptual State

A central challenge in conceptualizing Relational Visibility involves clarifying its ontological position within the broader network of marketing constructs.

Relational Visibility is not conceptualized as a communication outcome because exposure alone does not guarantee its emergence. Nor is it conceptualized as a relationship outcome because trust, commitment, attachment, and loyalty typically develop after perceptions of relational visibility have already been established. Similarly, Relational Visibility differs from engagement because consumers may perceive brands as relationally present even in the absence of active participation or interaction.

Instead, Relational Visibility is best understood as a relational perceptual state. It reflects consumers' subjective interpretation of a brand's ongoing presence within their lives. This state emerges when repeated encounters are interpreted not merely as isolated exposures

but as relationally meaningful experiences that contribute to perceptions of familiarity, accessibility, and recognition.

The proposed conceptualization shares certain similarities with the mere exposure effect (Zajonc, 1968), which suggests that repeated exposure increases favorable evaluations. However, Relational Visibility extends beyond mere exposure by emphasizing the relational interpretation of repeated encounters. Consumers do not simply become accustomed to a brand; they begin perceiving the brand as psychologically accessible and socially meaningful.

This distinction is important because it explains why similar levels of exposure may produce different outcomes across brands. Exposure provides opportunities for visibility, whereas Relational Visibility reflects how consumers interpret and internalize those opportunities within broader relational contexts.

3.4 Distinguishing Relational Visibility from Related Constructs

The theoretical contribution of Relational Visibility depends upon its ability to occupy a distinct conceptual domain within marketing scholarship. Although the construct shares certain characteristics with existing concepts, important differences remain.

This table establishes the conceptual distinctiveness of Relational Visibility by comparing it with adjacent constructs that could otherwise create ambiguity regarding construct boundaries. Clarifying these distinctions is analytically important because the theoretical contribution of the article depends on demonstrating that Relational Visibility occupies a unique explanatory domain rather than representing a relabeling of existing concepts.

Table 2. Conceptual Distinction Between Relational Visibility and Related Marketing Constructs

Construct	Primary Focus	Stage in Relationship Development	Core Question Addressed	Difference from Relational Visibility
Brand Awareness	Recognition and recall of a brand	Pre-relational	<i>"Do consumers know the brand exists?"</i>	Awareness reflects cognitive accessibility. Relational Visibility concerns relational presence and psychological accessibility.
Brand Salience	Likelihood that a brand comes to mind in decision situations	Pre-relational	<i>"Will consumers think of the brand when making a choice?"</i>	Salience focuses on mental prominence during purchase decisions, whereas Relational Visibility focuses on continuous relational relevance in everyday life.
Brand Familiarity	Accumulated knowledge derived from prior exposure and experience	Early relationship stage	<i>"How much do consumers know about the brand?"</i>	Familiarity reflects informational knowledge. Relational Visibility reflects perceptions of ongoing presence, accessibility, and recognition.
Customer Engagement	Cognitive, emotional, and behavioral investment in brand interactions	Active relationship stage	<i>"How actively do consumers interact with the brand?"</i>	Engagement generally presupposes consumer involvement. Relational Visibility may emerge before

Construct	Primary Focus	Stage in Relationship Development	Core Question Addressed	Difference from Relational Visibility
				substantial engagement occurs.
Customer Experience	Evaluation of interactions across customer journey touchpoints	Interaction stage	<i>"How do consumers evaluate their interactions?"</i>	Experience focuses on specific encounters. Relational Visibility reflects cumulative perceptions developed across encounters.
Brand Attachment	Emotional bond between consumer and brand	Mature relationship stage	<i>"How emotionally connected is the consumer to the brand?"</i>	Attachment reflects deep emotional connection. Relational Visibility represents an earlier relational condition that may facilitate attachment development.
Relationship Quality	Overall strength of the consumer–brand relationship, including trust, satisfaction, and commitment	Established relationship stage	<i>"How strong is the relationship?"</i>	Relationship Quality is an outcome of relationship development. Relational Visibility is proposed as an antecedent mechanism.
Relational Visibility	Perceived relational presence characterized by consistency, accessibility, familiarity, and recognition	Transitional relational stage	<i>"Is the brand experienced as a meaningful relational presence?"</i>	Distinct construct linking visibility-related phenomena with relationship-development processes.

Source: Author's synthesis based on Keller (1993), Fournier (1998), Brodie et al. (2011), Verhoef et al. (2009), Park et al. (2010), Morgan and Hunt (1994), and the present study.

Table 2 is central to the manuscript because it addresses the most likely reviewer concern regarding conceptual overlap. By positioning Relational Visibility between visibility-related constructs and relationship outcomes, Table 2 clarifies that the construct is neither a variant of awareness, familiarity, engagement, experience, attachment, nor relationship quality. Instead, it occupies a distinct intermediate stage that explains how brands become relationally meaningful before deeper relationship outcomes emerge.

Relational Visibility is introduced to address a missing stage in consumer–brand relationship development that existing visibility and relationship theories do not explicitly explain. While awareness, salience, and exposure account for whether a brand is noticed, they provide limited insight into how visibility becomes relationally meaningful. The conceptual positioning below clarifies the unique theoretical location occupied by Relational Visibility as the transitional mechanism linking brand visibility with subsequent relationship outcomes.

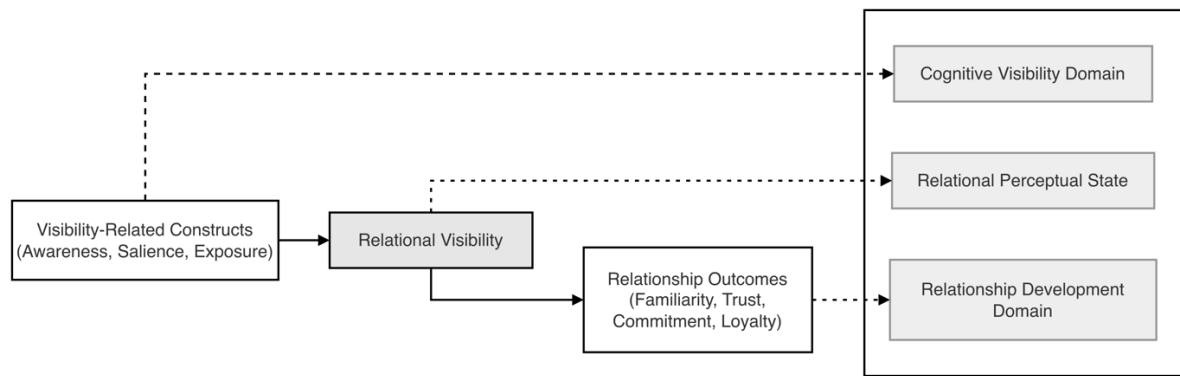


Figure 1. Relational Visibility within the Consumer–Brand Relationship Development Process

Source: Author's conceptualization

By locating Relational Visibility between traditional visibility constructs and relationship outcomes, Figure 1 clarifies the central theoretical contribution of the article. Rather than treating awareness, salience, or exposure as direct antecedents of loyalty, the framework argues that visibility must first acquire relational significance. Relational Visibility functions as a distinct relational perceptual state through which cognitive visibility is transformed into familiarity, trust, commitment, and ultimately loyalty, thereby addressing the theoretical gap identified throughout the manuscript.

Brand awareness concerns consumers' ability to recognize or recall a brand (Keller, 1993). Awareness therefore reflects cognitive accessibility. Relational Visibility extends beyond recognition by emphasizing whether consumers perceive a brand as a meaningful and familiar presence within their everyday experiences.

Brand salience focuses on the likelihood that a brand will come to mind during consumption or purchase situations. Although salience reflects cognitive prominence, it does not necessarily indicate psychological closeness. Relational Visibility addresses relational presence rather than decision-triggered recall.

Brand familiarity generally reflects accumulated knowledge resulting from prior experiences and repeated exposure. Relational Visibility incorporates familiarity but moves beyond informational understanding toward relational interpretation. Consumers may know a brand well without perceiving it as accessible, recognizable, or personally meaningful.

Customer engagement concerns consumers' cognitive, emotional, and behavioral investment in interactions with a brand (Brodie et al., 2011; Hollebeek et al., 2014). Engagement generally assumes some degree of prior interest or involvement. Relational Visibility, by contrast, may emerge before substantial engagement occurs and may function as one of the antecedents that facilitate future engagement.

Customer experience focuses on evaluations of specific interactions occurring across customer journey touchpoints (Verhoef et al., 2009; Lemon & Verhoef, 2016). Relational Visibility differs because it reflects a cumulative perception that develops across multiple experiences rather than evaluations of individual encounters.

Brand attachment represents a relatively mature relationship state characterized by emotional bonds and psychological connection (Park et al., 2010). Relational Visibility occupies an earlier stage within the relationship development process and may contribute to the conditions under which attachment eventually emerges.

Taken together, these distinctions suggest that Relational Visibility occupies a unique conceptual position between visibility-related constructs and relationship outcomes. Existing constructs explain whether consumers know, remember, engage with, experience, or become attached to brands. Relational Visibility explains whether consumers perceive brands as meaningful relational presences.

3.5 Dimensions of Relational Visibility

Relational Visibility is conceptualized as a multidimensional construct comprising four interrelated dimensions that collectively create perceptions of relational presence.

Consistent Presence refers to consumers' perceptions that a brand maintains stable and recognizable visibility across time and touchpoints. The emphasis lies not merely on exposure frequency but on continuity and reliability of presence. Through repeated encounters, consumers develop expectations regarding the brand's ongoing existence within relevant contexts.

Perceived Accessibility reflects the extent to which consumers believe a brand is approachable, available, and responsive when needed. Accessibility reduces perceived relational distance and contributes to confidence that support, information, or interaction opportunities will be available when required.

Interaction Familiarity captures consumers' perceptions that interactions with a brand are predictable, understandable, and comfortable. Familiar interactions reduce uncertainty because consumers develop expectations regarding communication styles, behavioral patterns, and service delivery practices.

Relational Recognition refers to perceptions that a brand acknowledges, understands, and values consumers as individuals. This dimension reflects the interpersonal qualities increasingly expected within contemporary customer relationships, particularly in environments characterized by personalization and customer-centric communication.

Collectively, these dimensions create the broader perception that a brand is not merely visible but meaningfully present. Each dimension contributes a distinct aspect of relational presence while simultaneously reinforcing the overall perception of Relational Visibility.

3.6 Theoretical Significance of Relational Visibility

The introduction of Relational Visibility contributes to marketing theory by addressing an underdeveloped stage within the consumer-brand relationship formation process.

Visibility literature has traditionally focused on awareness and recognition, while relationship marketing has emphasized trust, commitment, and loyalty. Customer engagement research explains participation and co-creation, whereas attachment research explains emotional bonds. Despite their collective contributions, these perspectives leave unresolved the question of how visibility acquires relational significance before deeper relational outcomes emerge.

Relational Visibility addresses this omission by conceptualizing the transition from brand presence to relational relevance. The construct explains how repeated encounters become psychologically meaningful and how brands move from being merely observable entities to becoming recognizable participants within consumers' everyday experiences.

As such, Relational Visibility represents more than an additional marketing construct. It provides a conceptual bridge linking visibility-related phenomena with relationship development processes. By identifying this intermediate stage, the construct establishes the foundation for Relational Visibility Theory and creates opportunities for a more comprehensive understanding of loyalty formation in increasingly interconnected, digital, and relationship-driven marketplaces.

4. Development of Relational Visibility Theory

4.1 Why Existing Theories Are Insufficient

Contemporary marketing literature offers extensive explanations of awareness, engagement, attachment, trust, commitment, and loyalty. Visibility-related theories explain how brands become noticed, whereas relationship marketing explains how relationships are maintained once trust and commitment have emerged (Morgan & Hunt, 1994; Keller, 1993). Consumer-brand relationship research further explains how emotional bonds develop between consumers and brands (Fournier, 1998; Park et al., 2010).

Despite these contributions, an important theoretical gap remains. Existing theories provide limited explanation regarding how visibility acquires relational significance before trust, commitment, attachment, or loyalty emerge. Consumers frequently encounter highly visible brands without developing meaningful relationships, suggesting that visibility alone is insufficient to explain loyalty formation.

This limitation becomes increasingly apparent in digitally connected marketplaces characterized by omnichannel interactions, social media ecosystems, algorithmic personalization, and persistent brand exposure. Under such conditions, visibility is abundant, yet loyalty remains scarce. Consequently, a missing theoretical mechanism appears to exist between brand presence and relationship outcomes.

RVT is proposed to address this omission. The theory argues that visibility influences loyalty only when consumers interpret brand presence as relationally meaningful. Thus, the key question is not whether consumers see a brand, but whether consumers experience the brand as a recognizable relational presence within their everyday lives.

4.2 Core Assumptions of Relational Visibility Theory

RVT rests upon four foundational assumptions.

First, visibility is interpretive rather than objective. Exposure alone does not determine relationship outcomes because consumers actively interpret repeated encounters. The same level of visibility may generate different relational outcomes depending on how brand presence is perceived.

Second, relational meaning develops cumulatively. Consumers construct perceptions of brands through repeated interactions distributed across multiple touchpoints. Relationship development therefore reflects an ongoing process rather than isolated encounters.

Third, uncertainty reduction drives relationship formation. Consistent with Uncertainty Reduction Theory (Berger & Calabrese, 1975), consumers prefer entities that appear predictable, understandable, and psychologically accessible. Perceived familiarity reduces ambiguity and facilitates trust development.

Fourth, loyalty represents the outcome of a relational process rather than a communication process. Consumers do not become loyal merely because brands are visible. Loyalty emerges when visibility evolves into familiarity, trust, and commitment.

Together, these assumptions shift attention from exposure frequency toward the relational interpretation of brand presence.

4.3 The Generative Mechanism of Relational Visibility

The central contribution of RVT lies in its explanation of how visibility becomes relationally meaningful.

The process begins with Brand Presence. Through advertising, service encounters, digital interactions, content creation, and community participation, brands establish ongoing

visibility within consumers' environments. At this stage, visibility remains largely informational.

Repeated encounters subsequently generate relational signals. Drawing upon Signaling Theory (Spence, 1973), these signals communicate continuity, accessibility, predictability, and recognition. Over time, consumers begin forming expectations regarding how the brand behaves and how future interactions are likely to unfold.

As relational signals accumulate, visibility undergoes a qualitative transformation. Consumers no longer perceive the brand merely as an object of awareness but increasingly experience it as a stable and recognizable relational presence. This state is conceptualized as Relational Visibility.

The emergence of Relational Visibility facilitates Relational Familiarity. Unlike traditional familiarity, which reflects accumulated knowledge, Relational Familiarity reflects psychological comfort and perceived relational closeness. Consumers begin feeling that they understand the brand and can anticipate future interactions.

Relational Familiarity plays a pivotal role in the proposed mechanism by reducing uncertainty and enhancing consumers' confidence in future interactions with a brand. When a brand is perceived as familiar, predictable, and psychologically accessible, consumers are more likely to view it as reliable and less risky, thereby facilitating the development of Trust. As trust strengthens, consumers become increasingly willing to maintain and invest in the relationship, leading to the emergence of Relationship Commitment. Over time, this commitment translates into Consumer Loyalty, manifested through repeat purchasing, positive word-of-mouth, advocacy behaviors, and long-term relationship persistence. Accordingly, RVT conceptualizes loyalty as the final outcome of a progressive relational pathway in which Brand Presence evolves into Relational Visibility, Relational Familiarity, Trust, and Commitment, rather than as a direct consequence of communication exposure or visibility alone.

4.4 Theoretical Contribution of RVT

The primary contribution of RVT lies in identifying a previously underdeveloped stage within consumer-brand relationship formation.

Visibility-related theories explain cognitive accessibility, while relationship marketing explains relationship maintenance. RVT explains the transition between these domains. Specifically, it introduces Relational Visibility as a distinct relational perceptual state through which cognitive visibility becomes relationally meaningful.

The theory also contributes by extending the Commitment–Trust perspective. Whereas Commitment–Trust Theory explains how trust generates commitment, RVT explains how trust itself begins to emerge. Relational Visibility therefore functions as an upstream relational condition that precedes trust formation.

Furthermore, RVT contributes to contemporary digital marketing scholarship by providing a framework capable of explaining why continuous visibility does not automatically produce loyalty. The theory suggests that the effectiveness of visibility depends on whether consumers perceive brands as accessible, familiar, recognizable, and relationally relevant.

In this respect, RVT repositions loyalty formation as a relationship-building process rather than a communication outcome.

4.5 Boundary Conditions

The effects proposed by RVT are unlikely to operate uniformly across contexts.

Consumer involvement may strengthen or weaken the importance of relational visibility because highly involved consumers devote greater cognitive resources to interpreting relational signals. Relationship stage may also influence the process, with relational visibility expected to be most influential during early relationship development.

Technology-mediated interactions represent another important condition. Increasing reliance on artificial intelligence, recommender systems, and automated communication technologies may alter how consumers perceive accessibility, recognition, and relational presence.

Finally, market complexity may amplify the value of relational visibility because uncertainty tends to increase in highly competitive and information-rich environments.

These conditions suggest that RVT should be understood as a context-sensitive theory rather than a universally deterministic framework.

4.6 Theoretical Propositions

Based on the preceding arguments, six propositions are advanced:

P1: *Brand Presence positively influences Relational Visibility.*

P2: *Relational Visibility positively influences Relational Familiarity.*

P3: *Relational Familiarity positively influences Consumer Trust.*

P4: *Consumer Trust positively influences Relationship Commitment.*

P5: *Relationship Commitment positively influences Consumer Loyalty.*

P6: *Relational Visibility influences Consumer Loyalty indirectly through the sequential mediation of Relational Familiarity, Consumer Trust, and Relationship Commitment.*

Collectively, these propositions establish the theoretical foundation of Relational Visibility Theory and provide a basis for future empirical validation and refinement.

5. Proposed Conceptual Framework

5.1 Relational Visibility as the Missing Relational Bridge

The central proposition of RVT is that visibility alone cannot adequately explain consumer loyalty. Existing visibility-related constructs, including awareness, salience, and exposure, explain whether consumers notice a brand, but they provide limited insight into how brand presence acquires relational meaning. Conversely, relationship marketing explains how trust and commitment sustain relationships, yet offers less explanation regarding how consumers initially come to perceive brands as relationally relevant actors in their everyday lives (Morgan & Hunt, 1994; Fournier, 1998).

This unresolved gap becomes increasingly important in contemporary digital environments characterized by omnichannel interactions, algorithmic mediation, and persistent connectivity. Consumers routinely encounter highly visible brands without developing trust, commitment, or loyalty. Consequently, visibility should not be viewed as a direct antecedent of loyalty but rather as a precursor whose effects depend on how consumers interpret brand presence (Becker & Jaakkola, 2020; Harmeling et al., 2017).

RVT addresses this theoretical gap by proposing Relational Visibility as an intermediate relational mechanism linking brand presence with relationship outcomes. The theory argues that brands become influential not simply because they are repeatedly encountered but because repeated encounters are interpreted as signals of accessibility, familiarity, continuity, and recognition. Visibility therefore becomes relationally meaningful before it becomes behaviorally consequential.

The conceptual framework below consolidates the central theoretical argument of RVT. It organizes the proposed causal sequence through which brand presence develops into consumer loyalty and explicitly incorporates the multidimensional structure of Relational Visibility. The framework is designed as the article's primary theory model and serves as the foundation for future empirical testing.

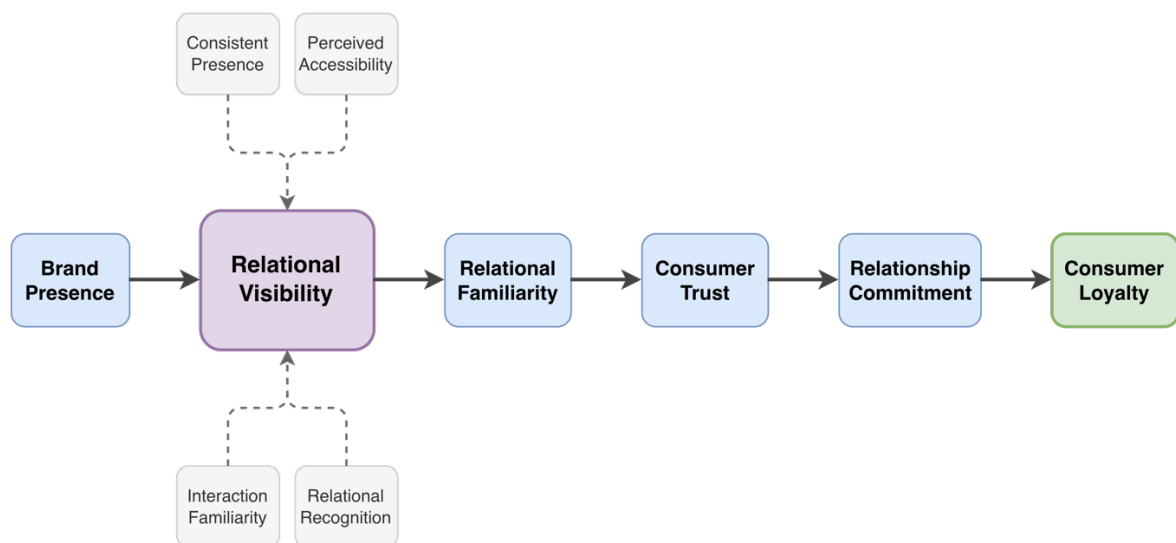


Figure 2. Relational Visibility Theory (RVT): Core Conceptual Framework
Source: Author's conceptualization

The framework articulated in Figure 2 clarifies the process-based logic underlying Relational Visibility Theory. The model proposes that Brand Presence alone is insufficient to generate loyalty outcomes. Instead, brand presence contributes to the formation of Relational Visibility, a higher-order construct composed of Consistent Presence, Perceived Accessibility, Interaction Familiarity, and Relational Recognition. Once established, Relational Visibility facilitates Relational Familiarity, which reduces uncertainty and enables the sequential development of Consumer Trust, Relationship Commitment, and ultimately Consumer Loyalty. The framework therefore reorients loyalty formation away from direct exposure effects and toward a relational pathway grounded in familiarity-building and relationship development.

Accordingly, the proposed framework positions Relational Visibility as the missing relational bridge through which brand presence evolves into loyalty. Rather than following a communication pathway, loyalty emerges through a relational pathway characterized by familiarity formation, uncertainty reduction, trust development, and commitment escalation.

5.2 The Hierarchical Nature of Relational Visibility

A central contribution of this study lies in conceptualizing Relational Visibility as a multidimensional higher-order construct. The literature reviewed throughout this article suggests that relational presence cannot be adequately represented by a single attribute because consumers interpret relational signals through multiple interactional cues simultaneously.

Relational Visibility therefore comprises four interrelated dimensions: Consistent Presence, Perceived Accessibility, Interaction Familiarity, and Relational Recognition. Consistent Presence reflects continuity across time and touchpoints. Perceived Accessibility captures the extent to which consumers believe a brand is available and approachable. Interaction Familiarity concerns predictability and comfort during interactions. Relational Recognition reflects perceptions that a brand acknowledges consumers as unique individuals.

These dimensions collectively generate a broader perception of relational presence that exceeds the explanatory capacity of any individual dimension. This perspective aligns with service ecosystem research suggesting that consumer perceptions emerge from the integration of multiple signals distributed across interconnected touchpoints rather than from isolated interactions (Vargo & Lusch, 2016; McColl-Kennedy et al., 2019).

Consequently, Relational Visibility should be understood not as a communication outcome but as a higher-order relational perception reflecting how consumers collectively interpret ongoing brand presence within their lived experiences.

5.3 Relational Familiarity as a Distinct Relational State

The most distinctive feature of the proposed framework is the introduction of Relational Familiarity as the primary mediating mechanism connecting Relational Visibility and Trust.

Existing marketing literature frequently treats familiarity as accumulated knowledge resulting from repeated exposure. Such interpretations largely conceptualize familiarity as a cognitive outcome. RVT advances a broader perspective by proposing that familiarity may also emerge as a relational state characterized by psychological comfort, predictability, and perceived relational closeness.

Relational Familiarity develops when consumers repeatedly encounter brands under conditions of relational visibility. Through accumulated interactions, consumers gradually perceive brands as understandable, recognizable, and psychologically accessible. Familiarity therefore becomes more than knowing a brand; it becomes feeling comfortable with the brand.

This distinction is theoretically important because it separates Relational Familiarity from traditional Brand Familiarity. Whereas Brand Familiarity concerns informational knowledge, Relational Familiarity concerns relational confidence. The former answers the question “Do I know this brand?” whereas the latter addresses “Do I feel comfortable engaging with this brand?”

Drawing upon Uncertainty Reduction Theory, the framework argues that Relational Familiarity reduces ambiguity regarding future interactions and thereby creates favorable conditions for trust formation (Berger & Calabrese, 1975). In this respect, familiarity functions as the psychological mechanism through which visibility acquires relational significance.

5.4 Relational Visibility as an Antecedent to Trust Formation

Trust has long been recognized as a central determinant of relationship success. However, existing theories typically focus on the consequences of trust rather than its origins. RVT contributes to this discussion by proposing that Relational Visibility constitutes an important antecedent to trust formation.

Repeated perceptions of accessibility, continuity, familiarity, and recognition create expectations regarding future interactions. Consumers begin perceiving brands as predictable and dependable because relational signals reduce uncertainty and increase confidence. Trust therefore emerges not only from satisfactory performance but also from accumulated perceptions of relational presence.

This argument extends the Commitment–Trust Theory by identifying a previously underexplored pre-trust stage. Whereas relationship marketing explains how trust generates commitment, RVT explains how trust itself begins to emerge. Relational Visibility thus functions as an upstream relational condition that facilitates subsequent trust development.

This contribution is particularly relevant in digital marketplaces where consumers often evaluate brands based on ongoing relational signals rather than direct interpersonal interactions (Huang & Rust, 2021; Dwivedi et al., 2023).

5.5 Trust–Commitment Escalation Toward Loyalty

Once trust develops, consumers become increasingly willing to maintain long-term relationships. Trust reduces perceived vulnerability and strengthens confidence in future exchanges. As confidence accumulates, consumers become more willing to invest relational resources, resulting in stronger commitment.

Within RVT, commitment represents a deeper level of relational investment characterized by willingness to preserve relationships despite attractive alternatives. Commitment therefore functions as a stabilizing mechanism that transforms trust into durable relationship outcomes.

The framework proposes a sequential process in which Relational Visibility facilitates Relational Familiarity, Relational Familiarity facilitates Trust, Trust facilitates Commitment, and Commitment ultimately contributes to Consumer Loyalty. Loyalty therefore represents the culmination of a progressive relational process rather than a direct outcome of visibility or communication frequency.

This sequence aligns with broader relationship development perspectives suggesting that enduring consumer–brand relationships evolve gradually through stages of familiarity, trust, and commitment rather than emerging instantaneously from isolated transactions.

5.6 Alternative Pathways and Boundary Conditions

Although RVT emphasizes a familiarity–trust–commitment sequence, alternative pathways may also be theoretically plausible.

Customer Engagement may function as an additional mediator through which Relational Visibility influences loyalty, particularly in social media ecosystems and brand communities. Similarly, Brand Attachment may represent an alternative mechanism in symbolic consumption contexts where emotional bonds play a more prominent role. In low-involvement markets, Relational Visibility may even influence loyalty through a more direct trust pathway.

The strength of these relationships is also likely to depend upon contextual conditions. Brand community strength, customer experience quality, communication consistency, relationship duration, and product involvement may strengthen or weaken the effectiveness of Relational Visibility. Consequently, the proposed framework should be viewed as context-sensitive rather than universally deterministic.

5.7 Measurement and Future Research Directions

For RVT to evolve into a cumulative research program, future studies must establish robust measurement procedures for Relational Visibility. Particular attention should be devoted to developing a Relational Visibility Scale (RVS) capable of capturing its multidimensional structure while maintaining discriminant validity relative to awareness, familiarity, engagement, experience, attachment, and relationship quality.

Future empirical investigations should test the proposed mediation sequence across diverse industries, cultures, and customer journey stages. Longitudinal research may be particularly valuable because relational visibility is expected to emerge gradually through accumulated interactions rather than isolated encounters.

Additional opportunities involve integrating RVT with customer engagement theory, customer experience research, service ecosystem perspectives, and AI-mediated interaction studies. As organizations increasingly rely on personalization algorithms, recommender systems, and conversational AI, understanding how technology shapes perceptions of relational visibility may become a critical area of future inquiry.

Collectively, these directions position Relational Visibility not merely as a new construct but as the foundation of a broader theoretical platform for explaining how brand presence evolves into enduring consumer loyalty in increasingly interconnected marketplaces.

6. Research Agenda

6.1 Advancing Relational Visibility as a Research Program

The introduction of RVT creates opportunities for the development of a new research stream within marketing scholarship. While the present study establishes the conceptual foundations of Relational Visibility, substantial theoretical and empirical work remains necessary before the theory can achieve broader acceptance and explanatory maturity.

The future development of RVT should be viewed not as a single empirical validation exercise but as a cumulative research program encompassing construct development, theory testing, contextual expansion, theoretical integration, and managerial application. Such an approach is consistent with broader perspectives on theory development, which emphasize the gradual refinement of concepts, mechanisms, boundary conditions, and predictive capabilities over time.

Accordingly, this section outlines five major directions through which future scholarship may advance the development of Relational Visibility Theory.

6.2 Construct Development and Measurement Validation

The most immediate priority involves establishing Relational Visibility as a psychometrically valid construct.

Although this study conceptualizes Relational Visibility as a multidimensional phenomenon comprising Consistent Presence, Perceived Accessibility, Interaction Familiarity, and Relational Recognition, these dimensions remain theoretically proposed and require empirical validation. Consequently, future research should focus on scale development and measurement refinement.

Researchers should investigate whether Relational Visibility is best represented as a reflective, formative, or higher-order construct. Particular attention should be devoted to establishing discriminant validity relative to closely related constructs such as brand awareness, brand familiarity, customer engagement, customer experience, brand attachment, and relationship quality.

Successfully distinguishing Relational Visibility from existing constructs represents a critical requirement for demonstrating its theoretical uniqueness.

Beyond traditional survey-based approaches, future studies may also explore behavioral and digital indicators of relational visibility derived from customer interaction data, social media engagement patterns, and omnichannel behavioral traces. Such efforts may contribute to the development of more comprehensive measurement approaches capable of capturing both perceptual and behavioral manifestations of relational visibility.

6.3 Empirical Validation of Relational Visibility Theory

The second stage of theory development involves testing the causal mechanisms proposed by RVT.

The theoretical model developed in this article suggests a sequential process through which Relational Visibility influences loyalty via Relational Familiarity, Trust, and Commitment. While the logic underlying these relationships is theoretically grounded, empirical evidence remains necessary to establish the validity of the proposed pathways.

Future studies should evaluate direct, indirect, and sequential mediation effects using quantitative methods such as structural equation modeling, partial least squares structural equation modeling, and longitudinal modeling techniques. Researchers should also compare RVT against alternative explanations derived from customer engagement theory, customer experience theory, and brand attachment theory.

Particularly important will be determining whether Relational Visibility contributes explanatory power beyond traditional visibility constructs such as awareness, salience, and exposure. Demonstrating incremental explanatory value will be essential for establishing RVT as a meaningful theoretical advancement rather than a reformulation of existing concepts.

Longitudinal research designs may be especially valuable because the theory assumes that relational visibility develops gradually through accumulated encounters rather than emerging instantaneously.

6.4 Contextual Expansion Across Industries and Cultures

A critical challenge for any emerging theory involves demonstrating applicability across diverse contexts.

Future research should investigate whether Relational Visibility operates consistently across industries characterized by different relationship structures, interaction frequencies, and consumption patterns. Contexts such as retail, hospitality, healthcare, financial services, education, e-commerce, and subscription-based services provide particularly promising opportunities for empirical investigation.

For example, healthcare and education settings involve high levels of trust and long-term relational dependence, potentially amplifying the importance of relational visibility. Conversely, low-involvement consumer goods markets may reveal weaker or more indirect effects.

Cross-cultural validation also represents an important research direction. Consumer perceptions of relationships are shaped by cultural values, communication norms, and social expectations. Consequently, dimensions such as Relational Recognition or Perceived Accessibility may vary in importance across individualistic and collectivistic societies.

Investigating cultural differences will not only strengthen the external validity of RVT but also contribute to broader understanding of how relational processes operate within different socio-cultural environments.

6.5 Integrating RVT with Existing Marketing Theories

The long-term success of Relational Visibility Theory will depend partly on its ability to connect with broader streams of marketing scholarship.

Future research should examine how Relational Visibility interacts with established theories of relationship marketing, customer engagement, customer experience, brand attachment, service ecosystems, and consumer-brand relationships.

One promising avenue involves investigating whether Relational Visibility functions as an antecedent of customer engagement. Existing research often assumes that engagement emerges once consumers become interested in a brand. RVT suggests that perceptions of relational presence may represent an earlier stage in this process.

Similarly, future studies may explore relationships between Relational Visibility and customer experience. Positive experiences may strengthen perceptions of relational visibility, while relational visibility itself may shape how consumers interpret subsequent experiences. Such reciprocal relationships remain largely unexplored.

Additional opportunities exist within brand attachment and brand love research. Since attachment typically develops after prolonged interactions, Relational Visibility may represent one of the mechanisms through which emotional bonds begin to emerge.

From a broader theoretical perspective, RVT may also complement Service-Dominant Logic by explaining how repeated interactions within service ecosystems become transformed into perceptions of relational significance. This integration would help connect micro-level consumer perceptions with macro-level ecosystem processes.

6.6 Relational Visibility in Digital and AI-Mediated Environments

Perhaps the most promising future research direction concerns the role of Relational Visibility within increasingly digital and AI-mediated marketplaces.

Consumer-brand interactions are increasingly influenced by artificial intelligence, recommender systems, algorithmic personalization, conversational agents, and automated communication technologies. These developments raise important questions regarding the nature of relational presence in technology-mediated environments.

Future studies should investigate whether consumers develop Relational Visibility toward brands, intelligent systems, or hybrid human–AI entities. Researchers may also examine how personalization algorithms, conversational interfaces, and virtual assistants contribute to perceptions of accessibility, familiarity, and recognition.

Such inquiries become increasingly relevant as organizations rely more heavily on AI-driven customer interactions. Understanding whether algorithmically generated interactions can create relational visibility comparable to human-mediated interactions may represent one of the most significant challenges for future marketing research.

Additionally, digital environments provide unique opportunities for examining relational visibility through behavioral analytics, interaction histories, and real-time engagement data. These contexts may enable researchers to observe the dynamic development of relational visibility in ways that are difficult to capture through traditional survey methods alone.

6.7 Toward a New Stream of Relationship Marketing Research

The broader implication of the proposed research agenda is that Relational Visibility should not be viewed merely as another marketing construct. Rather, it represents the foundation of a potentially broader theoretical perspective concerned with understanding how brands become meaningful relational actors within consumers' lives.

Traditional visibility research explains how brands become noticed. Relationship marketing explains how relationships are maintained. Relational Visibility Theory seeks to explain the intermediate process through which visibility evolves into relational significance.

Future scholars are therefore encouraged not only to validate the proposed framework but also to refine, challenge, and extend it. Through continuous theoretical elaboration and empirical testing, Relational Visibility may evolve into an important explanatory lens for understanding loyalty formation in increasingly interconnected, digital, and relationship-driven marketplaces.

As marketing environments continue to shift toward ecosystems characterized by persistent connectivity, personalization, and ongoing interaction, understanding how consumers come to perceive brands as relationally present may become a central question for both marketing theory and practice.

7. Managerial Implications

7.1 Rethinking Visibility in Contemporary Marketing

One of the most important implications of Relational Visibility Theory is the need to reconsider how organizations conceptualize marketing visibility. Traditional approaches frequently evaluate visibility using indicators such as impressions, reach, exposure frequency, audience size, website traffic, and social media metrics. While these measures remain useful for assessing communication performance, they primarily capture whether consumers have been exposed to a brand rather than whether consumers perceive the brand as a meaningful relational presence.

The proposed theory suggests that visibility should no longer be understood solely as a communication outcome. In increasingly competitive and digitally connected markets, brands face an environment in which exposure is abundant but meaningful consumer relationships remain scarce. Consequently, organizations should shift their strategic focus from maximizing visibility toward cultivating relational visibility. The objective is not simply to increase the number of times consumers encounter a brand but to increase the likelihood that consumers experience the brand as familiar, accessible, recognizable, and relevant within their everyday lives.

This perspective fundamentally changes how marketing effectiveness is interpreted. Rather than asking how often consumers see a brand, organizations should increasingly ask whether consumers perceive the brand as a consistent and trusted presence within their personal experiences.

7.2 From Communication Frequency to Relational Presence

The rise of digital platforms has enabled organizations to communicate with consumers at unprecedented levels of frequency. Social media channels, content marketing programs, mobile applications, and automated communication systems allow brands to maintain continuous visibility. However, the availability of communication opportunities has also created a tendency to equate visibility with communication volume.

Relational Visibility Theory challenges this assumption. Continuous communication does not necessarily create stronger relationships. Excessive communication may even contribute to information fatigue, irritation, and avoidance behaviors. Consumers are increasingly capable of filtering messages that lack personal relevance, regardless of how frequently they appear.

From the perspective of RVT, repeated interactions become valuable only when they contribute to perceptions of relational presence. Communication therefore should not be evaluated merely by frequency but by its ability to reinforce familiarity, accessibility, recognition, and trust. Brands that successfully create relational presence are more likely to become psychologically embedded within consumers' everyday routines and decision-making processes.

This distinction shifts managerial attention away from communication intensity and toward the quality and consistency of relational signals communicated across touchpoints.

7.3 Managing the Dimensions of Relational Visibility

The multidimensional nature of Relational Visibility provides organizations with a practical framework for managing relationship development. Each dimension contributes to the broader perception that a brand is relationally present and therefore offers a distinct strategic lever for managerial intervention.

Consistent Presence highlights the importance of maintaining continuity across customer touchpoints. Consumers should encounter a coherent brand identity regardless of whether

interactions occur through physical locations, websites, social media platforms, customer service channels, or community environments. Consistency reduces uncertainty and strengthens perceptions of reliability.

Perceived Accessibility emphasizes the importance of responsiveness and availability. Consumers increasingly expect brands to be reachable when needed and to provide timely access to information, support, and assistance. Accessibility contributes to relational confidence by reducing perceived distance between consumers and organizations.

Interaction Familiarity underscores the importance of predictable and comfortable interactions. Consistency in communication style, service delivery, and customer treatment allows consumers to develop expectations regarding future encounters. Such predictability contributes to psychological comfort and reduces cognitive effort during interactions.

Relational Recognition reflects consumers' desire to feel understood and valued. Advances in personalization technologies provide organizations with opportunities to demonstrate awareness of customer needs, preferences, and circumstances. When consumers perceive that brands recognize them as individuals rather than anonymous transactions, stronger relational bonds are likely to emerge.

Collectively, these dimensions suggest that relationship development depends not on isolated marketing activities but on the cumulative management of relational experiences over time.

7.4 Relational Visibility as a Strategic Intangible Resource

The theory also suggests that Relational Visibility should be viewed as a strategic intangible resource rather than a short-term communication outcome.

Unlike advertising expenditures or promotional campaigns, Relational Visibility develops gradually through repeated interactions and accumulated consumer experiences. It cannot be created instantaneously through increased spending alone. Instead, it emerges from the consistent alignment of communication, service delivery, customer interactions, and relationship management activities.

This characteristic gives Relational Visibility several properties associated with strategic resources. It is built over time, embedded within consumer perceptions, and difficult for competitors to replicate quickly. Competitors may imitate marketing messages or promotional tactics, but replicating accumulated perceptions of familiarity, accessibility, and recognition requires sustained relational investment.

Consequently, organizations should view Relational Visibility as a long-term strategic asset capable of supporting durable relationship-based competitive advantages. Such advantages may become increasingly important in markets where products and services are easily imitated and differentiation depends more heavily on customer relationships.

7.5 Implications for Customer Relationship Management

Relational Visibility Theory also offers new insights for customer relationship management (CRM).

Traditional CRM systems often focus on transactional indicators such as purchase frequency, retention rates, customer lifetime value, and profitability metrics. While these measures remain valuable, they generally capture outcomes rather than the relational mechanisms that produce those outcomes.

RVT suggests that organizations should complement transactional metrics with indicators capable of assessing relational visibility. Perceptions of accessibility, familiarity, recognition,

and ongoing presence may provide earlier signals of relationship development before changes become evident in purchasing behavior.

Monitoring these indicators may enable organizations to identify relational weaknesses and intervene before customer loyalty declines. Such an approach shifts CRM from a predominantly retrospective function toward a more proactive and relationship-oriented capability.

Moreover, understanding relational visibility may help organizations explain why customers with similar purchasing histories sometimes exhibit dramatically different levels of loyalty and advocacy. Differences in relational perceptions may account for variations that traditional transactional metrics fail to capture.

7.6 Implications for Digital Marketing Strategy

Digital marketing environments provide particularly fertile conditions for the development of Relational Visibility because they facilitate continuous interactions across multiple channels.

However, digital visibility is often evaluated using metrics such as impressions, clicks, engagement rates, and follower counts. While these indicators provide useful information regarding audience activity, they do not necessarily reveal whether consumers perceive a brand as relationally present.

The proposed theory suggests that successful digital strategies should focus on creating coherent relational experiences rather than maximizing exposure alone. Consumers increasingly interact with brands across websites, mobile applications, social media platforms, digital communities, and AI-powered interfaces. Relational Visibility depends on whether these interactions collectively reinforce perceptions of familiarity, accessibility, and recognition.

As organizations increasingly adopt artificial intelligence, personalization technologies, and automated communication systems, maintaining relational visibility may become both more important and more challenging. Technology can increase efficiency, but it may also create perceptions of impersonality if relational signals are not carefully managed.

Consequently, digital marketing strategies should balance technological capabilities with the relational needs of consumers.

7.7 Implications Across Industry Contexts

Although the theory originates within marketing scholarship, its practical relevance extends across a wide range of industries.

Retail organizations can use Relational Visibility principles to strengthen continuity across physical and digital channels. Financial institutions may enhance trust by emphasizing accessibility and relational recognition. Hospitality organizations can reinforce loyalty through familiar and personalized interactions. Healthcare providers may strengthen patient relationships by maintaining continuity of communication and care experiences. Educational institutions can foster stronger connections with students and parents through consistent engagement and perceived understanding of stakeholder needs.

Despite differences in products, services, and market structures, these industries share a common challenge: converting visibility into enduring relationships. Relational Visibility provides a framework for understanding how such conversion occurs.

7.8 Toward Relational Visibility Management

Perhaps the most significant managerial implication of this study is the need for a broader managerial orientation centered on relational visibility management.

Traditional visibility management seeks to maximize exposure. Relational visibility management seeks to strengthen relational presence. This distinction may appear subtle, yet it fundamentally alters how organizations evaluate marketing success.

From this perspective, effective marketing is not measured solely by whether consumers notice a brand. Instead, effectiveness depends on whether consumers perceive the brand as a familiar, accessible, recognizable, and meaningful participant within their everyday experiences.

Organizations that successfully cultivate Relational Visibility are likely to be better positioned to develop trust, strengthen commitment, and generate enduring loyalty. As markets become increasingly saturated with information and communication stimuli, the ability to transform visibility into relational significance may become one of the most important sources of sustainable competitive advantage.

Accordingly, Relational Visibility Management represents not merely a tactical communication approach but a broader strategic philosophy for building long-term consumer relationships in increasingly interconnected and relationship-driven marketplaces.

8. Conclusion

Contemporary marketing environments increasingly reveal a paradox that remains insufficiently explained by existing theory. Brands have never possessed greater opportunities to achieve visibility, yet visibility alone frequently fails to generate enduring consumer loyalty. Consumers encounter brands continuously through digital platforms, social media ecosystems, omnichannel interactions, and algorithmically mediated communications, but repeated exposure does not automatically translate into trust, commitment, or meaningful consumer-brand relationships. This disconnect highlights an important theoretical gap between visibility-related constructs and relational outcomes.

Addressing this gap requires moving beyond the traditional assumption that visibility functions primarily as a cognitive phenomenon. Recognition, recall, and awareness remain important components of marketing effectiveness, yet they provide only partial explanations of why some brands become trusted relationship partners while others remain merely recognizable. Understanding loyalty formation therefore requires greater attention to the relational meanings consumers attach to brand presence.

Relational Visibility is proposed as a distinct construct that captures the extent to which consumers perceive a brand as consistently present, psychologically accessible, interactionally familiar, and relationally recognizable within their everyday experiences. Unlike conventional visibility constructs that focus primarily on cognitive accessibility, Relational Visibility emphasizes relational accessibility. The construct explains how visibility acquires relational significance and becomes embedded within consumers' ongoing experiences and interactions.

Building upon this conceptualization, RVT advances a process-based explanation of loyalty formation. The theory suggests that loyalty emerges through a progressive relational sequence in which Relational Visibility facilitates Relational Familiarity, strengthens Consumer Trust, reinforces Relationship Commitment, and ultimately contributes to Consumer Loyalty. By positioning Relational Visibility as the missing bridge between brand presence and relationship outcomes, RVT integrates previously fragmented streams of research involving visibility, relationship marketing, customer engagement, customer experience, and consumer-brand relationships.

Several theoretical contributions emerge from this perspective. First, visibility is reconceptualized as a relational phenomenon rather than solely a communication outcome. Second, a previously underexplored antecedent of trust and commitment is identified,

extending the explanatory scope of relationship marketing theory. Third, a unified framework is developed for understanding how brands transition from being observable entities to becoming meaningful relational actors within consumers' lives. Collectively, these contributions provide a new theoretical lens for examining relationship development in increasingly interconnected marketplaces.

The managerial implications are equally significant. Sustainable competitive advantage may depend less on maximizing exposure and more on cultivating relational presence. As consumers navigate increasingly crowded information environments, organizations face growing pressure to create experiences that reinforce familiarity, accessibility, recognition, and trust. The strategic challenge is no longer simply attracting attention but becoming a recognizable and valued presence within consumers' ongoing lives and decision-making processes.

Several limitations remain. Relational Visibility has been developed conceptually and has not yet undergone empirical validation. The proposed dimensions, causal mechanisms, and boundary conditions therefore remain subject to empirical examination. Furthermore, the theory has not yet been tested across industries, cultures, relationship stages, or digital environments characterized by varying levels of technological mediation.

These limitations simultaneously create opportunities for future scholarship. Scale development, longitudinal investigations, cross-cultural validation, and comparative testing against established constructs such as customer engagement, customer experience, and brand attachment will be essential for assessing the robustness of the proposed framework. Additional opportunities arise from examining how artificial intelligence, personalization systems, and algorithmically mediated interactions influence the development of relational visibility within contemporary marketing ecosystems.

Increasingly connected marketplaces suggest that the future of marketing may depend not only on whether brands are noticed, but on whether brands become meaningfully present. Understanding how visibility evolves into relational significance therefore represents a critical challenge for both scholars and practitioners. Relational Visibility Theory offers an initial step toward addressing that challenge and provides a foundation for a broader research stream dedicated to explaining how brands become trusted relationship partners in consumers' everyday lives.

References

- Aggarwal, P. (2004). The effects of brand relationship norms on consumer attitudes and behavior. *Journal of Consumer Research*, 31(1), 87–101. <https://doi.org/10.1086/383426>
- Albert, N., & Merunka, D. (2013). The role of brand love in consumer-brand relationships. *Journal of Consumer Marketing*, 30(3), 258–266. <https://doi.org/10.1108/07363761311328928>
- Ashley, C., & Tuten, T. (2015). Creative strategies in social media marketing: An exploratory study of branded social content and consumer engagement. *Psychology & Marketing*, 32(1), 15–27. <https://doi.org/10.1002/mar.20761>
- Aurier, P., & N'Goala, G. (2010). The differing and mediating roles of trust and relationship commitment in service relationship maintenance and development. *Journal of the Academy of Marketing Science*, 38(3), 303–325. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s11747-009-0163-z>
- Batra, R., Ahuvia, A., & Bagozzi, R. P. (2012). Brand love. *Journal of Marketing*, 76(2), 1–16. <https://doi.org/10.1509/jm.09.0339>
- Becker, L., & Jaakkola, E. (2020). Customer experience: Fundamental premises and implications for research. *Journal of the Academy of Marketing Science*, 48(4), 630–648. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s11747-019-00718-x>

- Berger, C. R., & Calabrese, R. J. (1975). Some explorations in initial interaction and beyond: Toward a developmental theory of interpersonal communication. *Human Communication Research*, 1(2), 99–112. <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1468-2958.1975.tb00258.x>
- Berry, L. L. (1995). Relationship marketing of services: Growing interest, emerging perspectives. *Journal of the Academy of Marketing Science*, 23(4), 236–245. <https://doi.org/10.1177/009207039502300402>
- Bleier, A., Harmeling, C. M., & Palmatier, R. W. (2019). Creating effective online customer experiences. *Journal of Marketing*, 83(2), 98–119. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0022242918809930>
- Brakus, J. J., Schmitt, B. H., & Zarantonello, L. (2009). Brand experience: What is it? How is it measured? Does it affect loyalty? *Journal of Marketing*, 73(3), 52–68. <https://doi.org/10.1509/jmkg.73.3.052>
- Brodie, R. J., Fehrer, J. A., Jaakkola, E., & Conduit, J. (2019). Actor engagement in networks: Defining the conceptual domain. *Journal of Service Research*, 22(2), 173–188. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1094670519827385>
- Brodie, R. J., Hollebeek, L. D., Jurić, B., & Ilić, A. (2011). Customer engagement: Conceptual domain, fundamental propositions, and implications for research. *Journal of Service Research*, 14(3), 252–271. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1094670511411703>
- Brodie, R. J., Ilić, A., Jurić, B., & Hollebeek, L. D. (2013). Consumer engagement in a virtual brand community: An exploratory analysis. *Journal of Business Research*, 66(1), 105–114. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jbusres.2011.07.029>
- Chaudhuri, A., & Holbrook, M. B. (2001). The chain of effects from brand trust and brand affect to brand performance: The role of brand loyalty. *Journal of Marketing*, 65(2), 81–93. <https://doi.org/10.1509/jmkg.65.2.81.18255>
- Crosby, L. A., Evans, K. R., & Cowles, D. (1990). Relationship quality in services selling: An interpersonal influence perspective. *Journal of Marketing*, 54(3), 68–81. <https://doi.org/10.1177/002224299005400306>
- Davenport, T. H., & Beck, J. C. (2001). *The attention economy: Understanding the new currency of business*. Harvard Business School Press.
- de Vries, L., Gensler, S., & Leeftang, P. S. H. (2012). Popularity of brand posts on brand fan pages: An investigation of the effects of social media marketing. *Journal of Interactive Marketing*, 26(2), 83–91. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.intmar.2012.01.003>
- Dessart, L., Veloutsou, C., & Morgan-Thomas, A. (2015). Consumer engagement in online brand communities: A social media perspective. *Journal of Product & Brand Management*, 24(1), 28–42. <https://doi.org/10.1108/JPBM-06-2014-0635>
- Dick, A. S., & Basu, K. (1994). Customer loyalty: Toward an integrated conceptual framework. *Journal of the Academy of Marketing Science*, 22(2), 99–113. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0092070394222001>
- Doney, P. M., & Cannon, J. P. (1997). An examination of the nature of trust in buyer–seller relationships. *Journal of Marketing*, 61(2), 35–51. <https://doi.org/10.1177/002224299706100203>
- Dwivedi, Y. K., Ismagilova, E., Hughes, D. L., Carlson, J., Filieri, R., Jacobson, J., Jain, V., Karjaluoto, H., Kefi, H., Krishen, A. S., Kumar, V., Rahman, M. M., Raman, R., Rauschnabel, P. A., Rowley, J., Salo, J., Tran, G. A., & Wang, Y. (2021). Setting the future of digital and social media marketing research: Perspectives and research propositions. *International Journal of Information Management*, 59, 102168. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.ijinfomgt.2020.102168>
- Dwivedi, Y. K., Kshetri, N., Hughes, L., Slade, E. L., Jeyaraj, A., Kar, A. K., Baabdullah, A. M., Koohang, A., Raghavan, V., Ahuja, M., Albanna, H., Albashrawi, M. A., Al-Busaidi, A. S., Balakrishnan, J., Barlette, Y., Basu, S., Bose, I., Brooks, L., Buhalis, D., Carter, L., Chowdhury, S., Crick, T., Cunningham, S. W., Davies, G. H., Davison, R. M., Dé, R., Dennehy, D., Duan, Y., Dubey, R., Dwivedi, R., Edwards, J. S., Flavián, C., Gauld, R., Grover, V., Hu, M.-C., Janssen, M., Jones, P., Junglas, I., Khorana, S., Kraus, S., Larsen, K. R., Latreille, P., Laumer, S., Malik, F. T., Mardani, A., Mariani, M., Mithas, S., Mogaji, E., Nord, J. H., O'Connor, S., Okumus, F., Pagani, M., Pandey, N., Papagiannidis, S., Pappas, I. O., Pathak, N., Pries-Heje, J., Raman, R., Rana, N. P., Rehm, S.-V., Ribeiro-Navarrete, S., Richter, A., Rowe, F., Sarker, S., Stahl, B. C., Tiwari, M. K., van der Aalst, W. M. P., Venkatesh, V., Viglia, G., Wade, M., Walton, P., Wirtz, J., & Wright, R. (2023). “So what if ChatGPT wrote it?” Multidisciplinary perspectives on

- opportunities, challenges and implications of generative conversational AI for research, practice and policy. *International Journal of Information Management*, 71, 102642. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.ijinfomgt.2023.102642>
- Dwyer, F. R., Schurr, P. H., & Oh, S. (1987). Developing buyer–seller relationships. *Journal of Marketing*, 51(2), 11–27. <https://doi.org/10.1177/002224298705100202>
- Escalas, J. E., & Bettman, J. R. (2005). Self-construal, reference groups, and brand meaning. *Journal of Consumer Research*, 32(3), 378–389. <https://doi.org/10.1086/497549>
- Fournier, S. (1998). Consumers and their brands: Developing relationship theory in consumer research. *Journal of Consumer Research*, 24(4), 343–373. <https://doi.org/10.1086/209515>
- Ganesan, S. (1994). Determinants of long-term orientation in buyer–seller relationships. *Journal of Marketing*, 58(2), 1–19. <https://doi.org/10.1177/002224299405800201>
- Garbarino, E., & Johnson, M. S. (1999). The different roles of satisfaction, trust, and commitment in customer relationships. *Journal of Marketing*, 63(2), 70–87. <https://doi.org/10.1177/002224299906300205>
- Gensler, S., Völckner, F., Liu-Thompkins, Y., & Wiertz, C. (2013). Managing brands in the social media environment. *Journal of Interactive Marketing*, 27(4), 242–256. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.intmar.2013.09.004>
- Grönroos, C. (1994). From marketing mix to relationship marketing: Towards a paradigm shift in marketing. *Management Decision*, 32(2), 4–20. <https://doi.org/10.1108/00251749410054774>
- Gustafsson, A., Johnson, M. D., & Roos, I. (2005). The effects of customer satisfaction, relationship commitment dimensions, and triggers on customer retention. *Journal of Marketing*, 69(4), 210–218. <https://doi.org/10.1509/jmkg.2005.69.4.210>
- Harmeling, C. M., Moffett, J. W., Arnold, M. J., & Carlson, B. D. (2017). Toward a theory of customer engagement marketing. *Journal of the Academy of Marketing Science*, 45(3), 312–335. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s11747-016-0509-2>
- Harris, L. C., & Goode, M. M. H. (2004). The four levels of loyalty and the pivotal role of trust. *Journal of Retailing*, 80(2), 139–158. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jretai.2004.04.002>
- Hennig-Thurau, T., Gwinner, K. P., & Gremler, D. D. (2002). Understanding relationship marketing outcomes. *Journal of Service Research*, 4(3), 230–247. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1094670502004003006>
- Hollebeek, L. D., & Macky, K. (2019). Digital content marketing's role in fostering consumer engagement, trust, and value: Framework, fundamental propositions, and implications. *Journal of Interactive Marketing*, 45, 27–41. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.intmar.2018.07.003>
- Hollebeek, L. D., Glynn, M. S., & Brodie, R. J. (2014). Consumer brand engagement in social media: Conceptualization, scale development and validation. *Journal of Interactive Marketing*, 28(2), 149–165. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.intmar.2013.12.002>
- Hollebeek, L. D., Sprott, D. E., Andreassen, T. W., Costley, C., Klaus, P., Kuppelwieser, V., Karahasanovic, A., Taguchi, T., Ul Islam, J., & Rather, R. A. (2019). Customer engagement in evolving technological environments: Synopsis and guiding propositions. *European Journal of Marketing*, 53(9), 2018–2023. <https://doi.org/10.1108/EJM-09-2019-970>
- Huang, M.-H., & Rust, R. T. (2021). A strategic framework for artificial intelligence in marketing. *Journal of the Academy of Marketing Science*, 49(1), 30–50. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s11747-020-00749-9>
- Hudson, S., Huang, L., Roth, M. S., & Madden, T. J. (2016). The influence of social media interactions on consumer–brand relationships: A three-country study of brand perceptions and marketing behaviors. *Journal of Business Research*, 69(1), 27–41. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jbusres.2015.06.004>
- Japutra, A., Ekinci, Y., Simkin, L., & Nguyen, B. (2018). The role of ideal self-congruence and brand attachment in consumers' negative behaviour: Compulsive buying and external trash-talking. *European Journal of Marketing*, 52(3/4), 683–701. <https://doi.org/10.1108/EJM-06-2016-0318>
- Kannan, P. K., & Li, H. "Alice." (2017). Digital marketing: A framework, review and research agenda. *International Journal of Research in Marketing*, 34(1), 22–45. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.ijresmar.2016.11.006>

- Keller, K. L. (1993). Conceptualizing, measuring, and managing customer-based brand equity. *Journal of Marketing*, 57(1), 1–22. <https://doi.org/10.1177/002224299305700101>
- Kim, Y., & Peterson, R. A. (2017). A meta-analysis of online trust relationships in e-commerce. *Journal of Interactive Marketing*, 38, 44–54. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.intmar.2017.01.001>
- Kumar, V., Aksoy, L., Donkers, B., Venkatesan, R., Wiesel, T., & Tillmanns, S. (2010). Undervalued or overvalued customers: Capturing total customer engagement value. *Journal of Service Research*, 13(3), 297–310. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1094670510375602>
- Kumar, V., & Pansari, A. (2016). Competitive advantage through engagement. *Journal of Marketing Research*, 53(4), 497–514. <https://doi.org/10.1509/jmr.15.0044>
- Labrecque, L. I. (2014). Fostering consumer–brand relationships in social media environments: The role of parasocial interaction. *Journal of Interactive Marketing*, 28(2), 134–148. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.intmar.2013.12.003>
- Lemon, K. N., & Verhoef, P. C. (2016). Understanding customer experience throughout the customer journey. *Journal of Marketing*, 80(6), 69–96. <https://doi.org/10.1509/jm.15.0420>
- Loureiro, S. M. C., Guerreiro, J., & Tussyadiah, I. (2021). Artificial intelligence in business: State of the art and future research agenda. *Journal of Business Research*, 129, 911–926. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jbusres.2020.11.001>
- Mahr, D., Stead, S., & Odekerken-Schröder, G. (2019). Making sense of customer service experiences: A text mining review. *Journal of Services Marketing*, 33(1), 88–103. <https://doi.org/10.1108/JSM-10-2018-0295>
- McAlexander, J. H., Schouten, J. W., & Koenig, H. F. (2002). Building brand community. *Journal of Marketing*, 66(1), 38–54. <https://doi.org/10.1509/jmkg.66.1.38.18451>
- McColl-Kennedy, J. R., Zaki, M., Lemon, K. N., Urmetzer, F., & Neely, A. (2019). Gaining customer experience insights that matter. *Journal of Service Research*, 22(1), 8–26. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1094670518812182>
- Morgan, R. M., & Hunt, S. D. (1994). The commitment–trust theory of relationship marketing. *Journal of Marketing*, 58(3), 20–38. <https://doi.org/10.1177/002224299405800302>
- Muniz, A. M., Jr., & O’Guinn, T. C. (2001). Brand community. *Journal of Consumer Research*, 27(4), 412–432. <https://doi.org/10.1086/319618>
- Muntinga, D. G., Moorman, M., & Smit, E. G. (2011). Introducing COBRAs: Exploring motivations for brand-related social media use. *International Journal of Advertising*, 30(1), 13–46. <https://doi.org/10.2501/IJA-30-1-013-046>
- Oliver, R. L. (1999). Whence consumer loyalty? *Journal of Marketing*, 63(Special Issue), 33–44. <https://doi.org/10.1177/00222429990634S105>
- Palmatier, R. W., Dant, R. P., Grewal, D., & Evans, K. R. (2006). Factors influencing the effectiveness of relationship marketing: A meta-analysis. *Journal of Marketing*, 70(4), 136–153. <https://doi.org/10.1509/jmkg.70.4.136>
- Pansari, A., & Kumar, V. (2017). Customer engagement: The construct, antecedents, and consequences. *Journal of the Academy of Marketing Science*, 45(3), 294–311. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s11747-016-0485-6>
- Park, C. W., MacInnis, D. J., Priester, J., Eisingerich, A. B., & Iacobucci, D. (2010). Brand attachment and brand attitude strength: Conceptual and empirical differentiation of two critical brand equity drivers. *Journal of Marketing*, 74(6), 1–17. <https://doi.org/10.1509/jmkg.74.6.1>
- Payne, A., & Frow, P. (2005). A strategic framework for customer relationship management. *Journal of Marketing*, 69(4), 167–176. <https://doi.org/10.1509/jmkg.2005.69.4.167>
- Payne, A., Frow, P., & Eggert, A. (2017). The customer value proposition: Evolution, development, and application in marketing. *Journal of the Academy of Marketing Science*, 45(4), 467–489. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s11747-017-0523-z>
- Rust, R. T. (2020). The future of marketing. *International Journal of Research in Marketing*, 37(1), 15–26. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.ijresmar.2019.08.002>
- Schau, H. J., Muñiz, A. M., Jr., & Arnould, E. J. (2009). How brand community practices create value. *Journal of Marketing*, 73(5), 30–51. <https://doi.org/10.1509/jmkg.73.5.30>

- Sheth, J. N., & Parvatiyar, A. (1995). Relationship marketing in consumer markets: Antecedents and consequences. *Journal of the Academy of Marketing Science*, 23(4), 255–271. <https://doi.org/10.1177/009207039502300405>
- Short, J., Williams, E., & Christie, B. (1976). *The social psychology of telecommunications*. Wiley.
- Sirdeshmukh, D., Singh, J., & Sabol, B. (2002). Consumer trust, value, and loyalty in relational exchanges. *Journal of Marketing*, 66(1), 15–37. <https://doi.org/10.1509/jmkg.66.1.15.18449>
- Spence, M. (1973). Job market signaling. *The Quarterly Journal of Economics*, 87(3), 355–374. <https://doi.org/10.2307/1882010>
- Storbacka, K., Brodie, R. J., Böhmman, T., Maglio, P. P., & Nenonen, S. (2016). Actor engagement as a microfoundation for value co-creation. *Journal of Business Research*, 69(8), 3008–3017. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jbusres.2016.02.034>
- Teixeira, T. S. (2014). *The rising cost of consumer attention: Why you should care, and what you can do about it* (Harvard Business School Working Paper No. 14-055). Harvard Business School.
- van Doorn, J., Lemon, K. N., Mittal, V., Nass, S., Pick, D., Pirner, P., & Verhoef, P. C. (2010). Customer engagement behavior: Theoretical foundations and research directions. *Journal of Service Research*, 13(3), 253–266. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1094670510375599>
- Vargo, S. L., & Lusch, R. F. (2016). Institutions and axioms: An extension and update of service-dominant logic. *Journal of the Academy of Marketing Science*, 44(1), 5–23. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s11747-015-0456-3>
- Verhoef, P. C., Lemon, K. N., Parasuraman, A., Roggeveen, A. L., Tsiros, M., & Schlesinger, L. A. (2009). Customer experience creation: Determinants, dynamics and management strategies. *Journal of Retailing*, 85(1), 31–41. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jretai.2008.11.001>
- Verhoef, P. C., Reinartz, W. J., & Krafft, M. (2010). Customer engagement as a new perspective in customer management. *Journal of Service Research*, 13(3), 247–252. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1094670510375461>
- Vivek, S. D., Beatty, S. E., & Morgan, R. M. (2012). Customer engagement: Exploring customer relationships beyond purchase. *Journal of Marketing Theory and Practice*, 20(2), 122–146. <https://doi.org/10.2753/MTP1069-6679200201>
- Wedel, M., & Pieters, R. (2008). A review of eye-tracking research in marketing. In N. K. Malhotra (Ed.), *Review of marketing research* (Vol. 4, pp. 123–147). Emerald. [https://doi.org/10.1108/S1548-6435\(2008\)0000004009](https://doi.org/10.1108/S1548-6435(2008)0000004009)
- Yadav, M. S., & Pavlou, P. A. (2014). Marketing in computer-mediated environments: Research synthesis and new directions. *Journal of Marketing*, 78(1), 20–40. <https://doi.org/10.1509/jm.12.0020>
- Zajonc, R. B. (1968). Attitudinal effects of mere exposure. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, 9(2, Pt. 2), 1–27. <https://doi.org/10.1037/h0025848>