

**INVESTIGATING THE IMPACT OF REWARDED CUSTOMER
ENGAGEMENT ON LOYALTY PROGRAM MEMBERS, AND WHETHER IT
INDUCES THEIR ENGAGEMENT IN BRAND'S METAVERSE**

Muniba Rauf, University of Jyvaskyla, Finland ¹
Xiaolin Li, London School of Economics & Political Science, United Kingdom ²
Heikki Karjaluoto, University of Jyvaskyla, Finland ³

ABSTRACT

Customer engagement has been a focus of a significant amount of research. Most of the prior research on customer engagement typically focused on engagement and loyalty in loyalty program context, while the impact of rewarded customer engagement on program members has largely been missed out. Additionally, no prior study yet has focused on the conceptualization of rewarded customer engagement, while exploring and comparing its significance on various digital platforms, such as loyalty programs and Metaverse. Thus, this study aims to conceptualize rewarded customer engagement while investigating its impact on loyalty program members, and whether it induces and/or encourages their engagement in brand's Metaverse platform(s).

This study serves to address these research gaps by conducting extensive un-structured face-to-face interviews with 17 members of the Nike loyalty program, who have been using the program as well as are aware of brand's Metaverse platform(s).

Our findings uncover several unique aspects of relationship between rewarded customer engagement, loyalty programs and Metaverse, such as: 1) whether rewards affect the customer engagement dimensions differently in the context of loyalty programs versus Metaverse, 2) whether rewarded customer engagement in a loyalty program encourages the program members to engage in brand's Metaverse platform(s), 3) whether an individual member has different rewards type preferences for a loyalty program versus Metaverse, and 4) how rewarded customer engagement influences loyalty (intention) in a loyalty program versus in Metaverse.

This research is vital for marketing scholars and practitioners who seek to understand the rise of Metaverse, how the rewarded customer engagement impacts differently on it versus on brand's other digital platforms, such as loyalty programs, and the relationship between them, in order to improve customer engagement as well as to foster loyalty.

Keywords: Metaverse, Rewarded customer engagement, Loyalty programs, Customer loyalty.

¹ murauf@student.jyu.fi

² X.Li166@lse.ac.uk

³ heikki.karjaluoto@jyu.fi