

**Model: Aaker’s Brand Loyalty Pyramid**

Type of model: Brand model (structure model)  
 Author(s): David Aaker  
 Domain: Brand loyalty

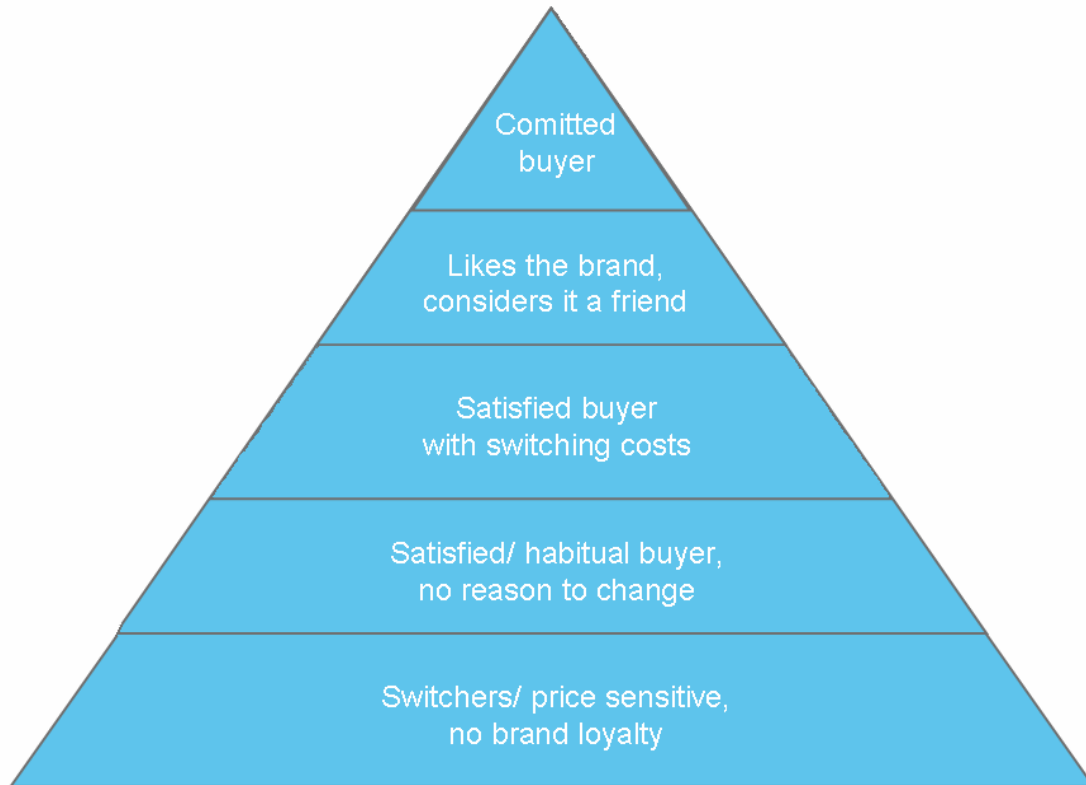


Figure 1: Aaker’s *Brand Loyalty Pyramid*

David A. Aaker defines brand loyalty as *a measure of the attachment that a customer has to a brand. It reflects how likely a customer will be to switch to another brand, especially when that brand makes a change, either in price or in product features.* In his *Brand Loyalty Pyramid*, Aaker identifies five levels of brand loyalty, ranging from not loyal to very loyal (the lowest level is depicted at the bottom of the pyramid). He describes the customer behaviour for each level, and pinpoints challenges faced by marketing professionals in their efforts to lift a customer/ consumer to a higher level. The greater the number of customers/ consumers in the higher sections of the pyramid, the more effective the pursued branding policy.

Aaker’s *Brand Loyalty Pyramid* describes five types of consumer behaviour on the brand loyalty scale: (1) switchers, (2) satisfied/ habitual buyers, (3) satisfied

buyers with switching costs, (4) brand likers and (5) committed buyers. We will further go into these five types in the following:

1. Switchers: these are buyers that are not loyal to the brand in question. This kind of customer/ consumer does not look at the brand at all in his/her purchase behaviour. They tend to buy a brand in the sale, or that they happen to stumble upon. This type of customer/ consumer has no qualms about switching brands. Marketing will be most effective in targeting these consumers by focusing on raising brand name awareness, as that is a precondition for moving up on the pyramid (a brand will, after all, have to be known to people first, before they can even start considering to buy it).
2. Satisfied/ habitual buyer: these are customers/ consumers that buy a brand out of habit. These tend to be reasonably satisfied customers, who basically don't see any reason to change their purchase behaviour (and are therefore not on the lookout for alternatives). When such a customer has to go to some trouble to get his usual brand, he/she will relatively easily buy another brand (instead of going to another shop to get the brand he/she usually buys). Marketing efforts will here have to raise the thresholds between the brand and other brands, which will create opportunities to make a customer more loyal to the brand.
3. Satisfied buyer with switching costs: these are satisfied buyers that are reluctant to switch to a competing brand due to existing thresholds (switching costs). Such thresholds can come in the form of: expenses incurred in terms of time (the time it takes to go to another shop to find the usual brand), financial expenses (when switching costs money), and the feeling of making concessions to quality. If marketing efforts look to entice satisfied buyers of another brand into switching to a brand, the brand will have to offer major benefits compensating the switching costs (such as a free iPod when signing up for a credit card). Retaining buyers or attracting new ones at this level of brand loyalty requires a marketing strategy based on increasing perceived quality.
4. Brand likers: these buyers can be typified as true brand enthusiasts. Their brand preference is mostly engendered by an experience of emotional benefits – alongside more rational benefits, such as price, time and quality. Emotional benefits can be pursued by linking certain associations (through TV ads) and/or experiences (such as the shopping experience) to a brand. This highly positive attitude towards a brand can be seen as a kind of friendship. This is further reflected by the fact that brand likers are generally unable to state why exactly they have such a strong preference for the brand in question (which is normal for people with an emotional bond with a brand).

5. Committed buyer: these are the proud users of a brand, in whose (daily) lives the brand in question actually plays an important role. Committed buyers buy this brand because it closely ties in with their personal values. Examples of committed buyers can be found in the customer bases of brands like Harley-Davidson and Apple. Retention of customers/ consumers at this level of brand loyalty can best be realized by rewarding their loyalty. This can be done through loyalty cards, reward programs enabling customers to earn points, preferential treatment when issuing limited editions, etc.

*Reference(s)*

Aaker, D.A. (1991), Managing brand equity; capitalizing on the value of a brand name. The Free Press, New York, N.Y. \*

\* : available in the EURIB library.