

# After-Dark Engagement: Nocturnal Socialization Patterns of Gen Z and Millennials in Valenzuela City as a Basis for Brand Activation Campaign

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## ABSTRACT

Nocturnal socialization has become a defining consumer behavior among Generation Z and Millennials, particularly in urban settings where after-dark interactions occur through both physical spaces and digital platforms. This quantitative descriptive-correlational study examined the relationship between offline and online nocturnal activities and brand engagement among 375 respondents aged 18 to 40 years in Valenzuela City. Data were gathered through a structured online survey and analyzed using frequency, percentage, weighted mean, standard deviation, Pearson product-moment correlation, and linear regression through IBM SPSS Statistics v31.0.1. Results showed that respondents demonstrated moderate offline nocturnal

engagement ( $M = 2.56$ ), moderate online nocturnal engagement ( $M = 2.93$ ), and moderate overall brand engagement ( $M = 2.72$ ). Nocturnal socialization patterns had a significant influence on brand engagement ( $M = 2.75$ ), and both offline and online activities were significantly correlated with brand trust, loyalty, and advocacy. Online nocturnal activity showed the strongest relationship with brand trust ( $r = .516$ ,  $p < .001$ ). The findings suggest that after-dark consumer behavior provides a strategic opportunity for brands to strengthen trust, loyalty, and advocacy through immersive, digitally shareable, and phygital brand activation campaigns.

**Keywords:** *Nocturnal socialization, Generation Z, Millennials, brand engagement, phygital marketing, brand activation*

## INTRODUCTION

Nocturnal socialization has become an important feature of contemporary consumer culture, especially in urban settings where young consumers remain socially and digitally active beyond conventional daytime hours. In Valenzuela City, Generation Z and Millennials participate in after-dark activities through physical venues such as cafés, night markets, food establishments, concerts, and social gatherings, while also extending these interactions through digital platforms such as TikTok, Facebook,

Instagram, livestreams, and online communities. These late-night activities create meaningful opportunities for brands to engage consumers at moments when they are socially receptive, connected, and willing to interact with content and experiences.

The increasing visibility of after-dark behavior also reflects the emergence of phygital consumer experiences, where physical and digital interactions are no longer separate but mutually reinforcing. Offline encounters may lead to online sharing, while digital content can motivate consumers to visit nightlife venues, participate in events, or interact with brands. For marketers, these patterns are important because they reveal when, where, and how young consumers form impressions, build trust, show loyalty, and advocate for brands.

Despite the growing relevance of late-night social behavior, existing studies have often focused on short-term outcomes such as purchases, event attendance, or general social media use. Less attention has been given to deeper brand engagement indicators such as brand trust, brand loyalty, and brand advocacy. Studies have also tended to emphasize student populations or general digital behavior, leaving gaps in understanding the interaction between online and offline nocturnal activities in a specific local urban context. This study addresses these gaps by examining nocturnal socialization patterns of Gen Z and Millennial consumers in Valenzuela City and determining their influence on brand engagement.

Specifically, the study described the respondents' demographic profile, measured their level of offline and online nocturnal socialization, assessed their level of brand engagement in terms of trust, loyalty, and advocacy, and tested the relationship and influence of nocturnal socialization patterns on brand engagement. The results were used as the basis for strategic insights that may guide culturally relevant and effective brand activation campaigns for young urban consumers.

## **Literature Review**

### ***Nocturnal socialization patterns***

Nocturnal socialization refers to social, economic, and digital activities that occur during nighttime. Literature suggests that evening-oriented individuals tend to be more active during late hours and are more likely to participate in digital and social activities such as gaming, browsing, content consumption, livestreaming, and online interaction (Tariq et al., 2024). Late-night digital media use has also been associated with chronotype, sleep patterns, tiredness, and increased nighttime engagement, although it may carry risks such as fatigue and sleep disruption (Kortesoja et al., 2023; Distor et al., 2022).

Nocturnal behavior is not limited to online interaction. Physical nighttime environments such as cafés, night markets, food hubs, concerts, and nightlife venues provide active spaces for social and consumer participation. Fan et al. (2024) emphasized that nighttime amenities generate movement, consumption, and economic spillover, while Aramayona and Guarneros-Meza (2024) described the nocturnal city as a socio-cultural space where formal and informal activities interact. Philippine and regional studies also suggest that nighttime activities influence consumer safety, food consumption, well-being, and social behavior (Caballero, 2024; Reyes et al., 2024; Salvador et al., 2024).

Taken together, the literature indicates that nighttime engagement is a multidimensional behavior shaped by lifestyle, digital access, work or study routines, and social motivation. For young consumers, after-dark activity becomes a meaningful setting for identity expression, peer connection, and exposure to brands.

### ***Brand engagement***

Brand engagement is commonly understood as the consumer's emotional, cognitive, and behavioral connection with a brand. It is reflected in trust, loyalty, advocacy, participation, and willingness to sustain a relationship with a brand. Prior studies indicate that consumer experiences, interactivity, authenticity, and trust significantly shape brand engagement outcomes (Farhat et al., 2022; Ndlovu & Maree, 2024).

Experiential and digital interactions are particularly relevant in brand engagement. Chen et al. (2020) found that night tourism experiences are related to satisfaction and loyalty, while Kuo and Chen (2023) emphasized that interactive brand activities on social media affect continued participation. In the Philippine context, social media influencers, café experiences, and food-based consumption environments have been shown to influence purchase intention, revisit intention, and recommendation behavior (Dalangin et al., 2021; Libiran et al., 2024; Ong et al., 2025).

The literature therefore suggests that brand engagement does not emerge from a single factor. Instead, it develops from repeated, meaningful, and interactive consumer experiences. For Gen Z and Millennials, after-dark contexts may strengthen engagement because these are moments when social interaction, entertainment, and digital sharing occur simultaneously.

### Theoretical and conceptual foundation

The study was anchored on a phygital consumer-brand relationship perspective, which explains how physical and digital experiences jointly influence consumer participation and brand attachment. In this study, offline nocturnal activities such as dining out, visiting cafés, and attending events were viewed as physical brand touchpoints, while online nocturnal activities such as social media interaction, livestreaming, online shopping, and digital communities were viewed as digital touchpoints. These activities were examined as predictors of brand engagement in terms of brand trust, brand loyalty, and brand advocacy.

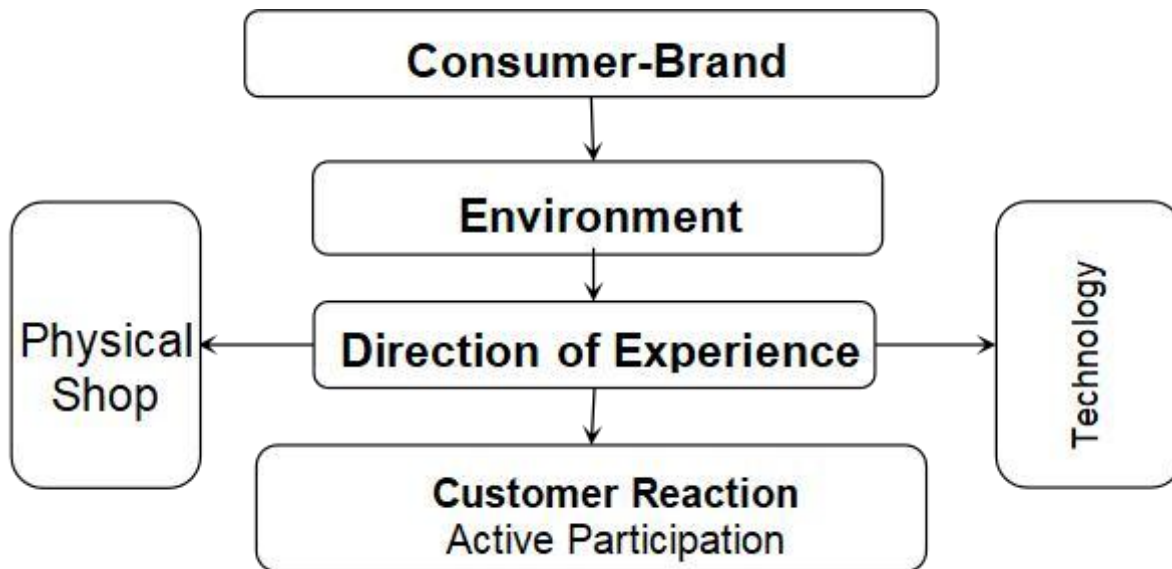


Figure 1. *Phygital Consumer-Brand Relationship Framework*

The research simulacrum presents nocturnal socialization patterns as the independent variable and brand engagement as the dependent variable. Offline and online activities were treated as the two dimensions of nocturnal socialization, while brand trust, loyalty, and advocacy were treated as the core dimensions of brand engagement. The model assumes that stronger participation in after-dark social behavior increases opportunities for consumer-brand interaction, which may strengthen trust, loyalty, and advocacy.

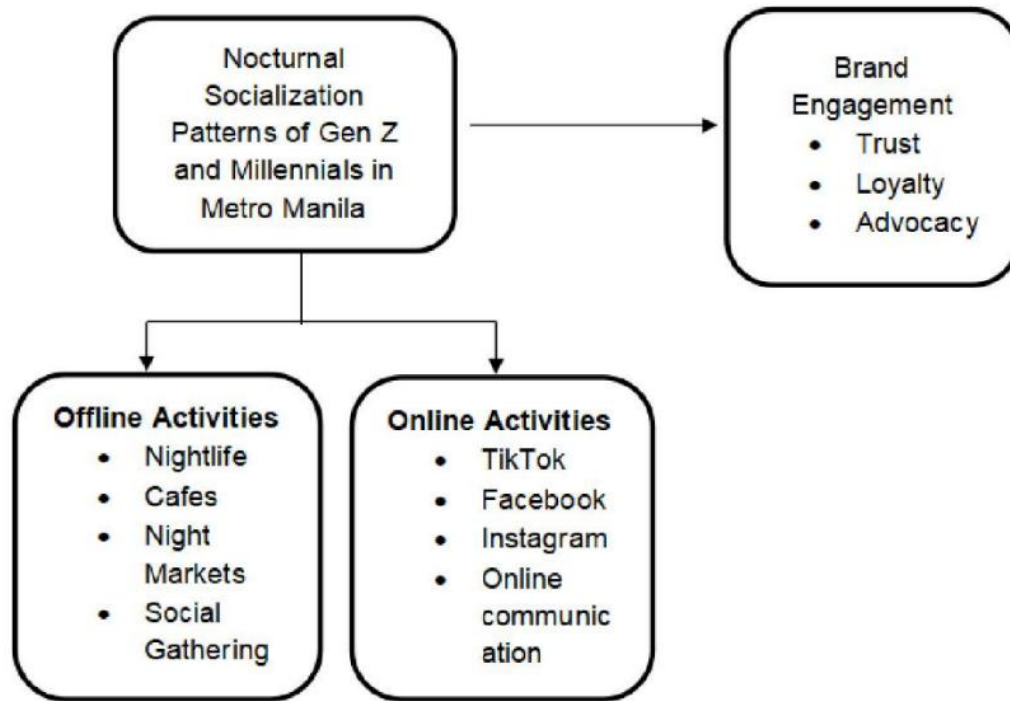


Figure 2. *Simulacrum of the Research Study*

## METHODS

### Research Design

The study employed a quantitative descriptive-correlational research design. The descriptive component was used to describe the respondents' demographic profile, the level of offline and online nocturnal socialization, and the level of brand engagement. The correlational component was used to determine the relationship between nocturnal socialization patterns and brand engagement. This design was appropriate because the study measured naturally occurring behaviors without manipulating the variables.

### Research Locale

The study was conducted in Valenzuela City, an urban area in Metro Manila characterized by active food establishments, cafés, night markets, social spaces, and digitally connected communities. The locale was suitable for examining after-dark behavior because it includes students, employees, self-employed individuals, and night-active consumers who participate in both offline and online socialization.

### Participants and Sampling Technique

The respondents were 375 Generation Z and Millennial consumers aged 18 to 40 years who resided in Valenzuela City and participated in nighttime activities. Purposive sampling was used to select respondents who met the inclusion criteria: residence in Valenzuela City, age between 18 and 40 years, and participation in offline or online nocturnal activities such as dining out, visiting cafés, attending events, using social media, livestreaming, joining online communities, or shopping online during late hours. Individuals below 18 years old and those who did not participate in nocturnal socialization were excluded.

The target sample size was initially computed at 400 respondents using Slovin’s formula with a 5% margin of error. However, the final valid sample consisted of 375 respondents after incomplete, duplicate, and ineligible responses were removed.

$$n = \frac{N}{1 + Ne^2}$$

Figure 3. Slovin Formula Used for Sample Size Computation

### Research Instrument

A structured survey questionnaire was used to gather data. The instrument contained six sections: demographic profile, offline nocturnal activities, online nocturnal activities, brand trust, brand loyalty, and brand advocacy. Items in the main sections were measured using a four-point Likert scale: 4 = Strongly Agree, 3 = Agree, 2 = Disagree, and 1 = Strongly Disagree. The questionnaire was reviewed for content validity and improved based on expert feedback before administration.

### Data Gathering Procedure

Data were gathered using an online survey distributed through social media platforms, Facebook Messenger group chats, and community pages. Before answering the questionnaire, respondents were informed about the purpose of the study, voluntary participation, anonymity, and confidentiality. The survey remained open until 375 valid responses were obtained. Responses were screened, coded in Microsoft Excel, and prepared for statistical analysis.

### Data Analysis

The data were analyzed using IBM SPSS Statistics v31.0.1. Frequency and percentage were used to describe the demographic profile of the respondents. Weighted mean and standard deviation were used to determine the level of nocturnal socialization and brand engagement. Pearson product-moment correlation was used to determine the relationship between offline and online nocturnal activities and the dimensions of brand engagement. Linear regression was used to determine the influence of nocturnal socialization patterns on brand engagement. The level of significance was set at 0.05.

### Ethical Consideration

The study followed ethical principles of voluntary participation, informed consent, anonymity, confidentiality, beneficence, and respect for persons. Respondents were informed that they could decline participation or withdraw without penalty. The survey did not collect names, exact addresses, or contact details. All responses were stored in password-protected electronic files accessible only to the research team and were used solely for academic and research purposes.

## RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

### Demographic profile of the respondents

Table 1. *Demographic Profile of Respondents (N = 375)*

| Characteristics | Category             | f   | %    |
|-----------------|----------------------|-----|------|
| Age             | 18-28 (Generation Z) | 331 | 88.3 |
|                 | 29-40 (Millennials)  | 44  | 11.7 |

|                                   |                                |     |       |
|-----------------------------------|--------------------------------|-----|-------|
| Sex                               | Female                         | 208 | 55.5  |
|                                   | Male                           | 157 | 41.9  |
|                                   | Non-binary / Prefer not to say | 10  | 2.7   |
| Employment Status                 | Student                        | 238 | 63.47 |
|                                   | Employed                       | 82  | 21.87 |
|                                   | Self-employed                  | 30  | 8.00  |
|                                   | Unemployed                     | 23  | 6.13  |
|                                   | Housewife                      | 2   | 0.53  |
| Monthly Income                    | Php 10,000 and below           | 235 | 57.3  |
|                                   | Php 10,001-Php 20,000          | 78  | 21.3  |
|                                   | Php 20,001-Php 30,000          | 32  | 8.5   |
|                                   | Above Php 30,000               | 30  | 8.0   |
| Frequency of Nocturnal Activities | 1-2 times per week             | 133 | 35.5  |
|                                   | 3-4 times per week             | 143 | 38.1  |
|                                   | Daily                          | 79  | 21.1  |
|                                   | 5 or more times per week       | 20  | 5.3   |

Note. Percentages are based on N = 375 and may not total exactly 100 due to rounding.

The demographic profile shows that the respondents were predominantly Generation Z, with 331 respondents or 88.3% belonging to the 18-28 age group. Millennials represented 44 respondents or 11.7%. Females composed the largest sex group at 55.5%, followed by males at 41.9%, while 2.7% identified as non-binary or preferred not to disclose their sex. Most respondents were students (63.47%) and belonged to the Php 10,000 and below monthly income category (57.3%). In terms of nocturnal participation, the largest group engaged in nighttime activities three to four times per week (38.1%).

These findings indicate that the study mainly captured the behavior of young, digitally active, and socially engaged consumers. Although many respondents had limited income, their strong presence in nocturnal and digital spaces suggests that they possess high social influence and online reach. This makes them important targets for relationship-based and shareable brand activation strategies.

### Level of nocturnal socialization patterns

Table 2. *Level of Nocturnal Socialization Patterns*

| Indicator                    | Mean | Interpretation      |
|------------------------------|------|---------------------|
| Offline Nocturnal Activities | 2.56 | Moderate Engagement |
| Online Nocturnal Activities  | 2.93 | Moderate Engagement |
| Overall Mean                 | 2.75 | Moderate Engagement |

Note. Means were interpreted using the study's four-point Likert scale.

Respondents showed moderate engagement in both offline and online nocturnal activities. Online nocturnal activities obtained a higher mean ( $M = 2.93$ ) than offline nocturnal activities ( $M = 2.56$ ), producing an overall mean of 2.75. This suggests that while physical activities such as dining out, visiting cafés, and attending social gatherings remain relevant, digital platforms are more frequently used during nighttime. The accessibility, convenience, and perceived safety of online platforms may explain why respondents continue social interaction through social media, livestreaming, and online communities after dark. This supports the idea that contemporary nocturnal socialization is increasingly phygital, combining physical experiences with continuous digital connection.

### Level of brand engagement

Table 3. *Level of Brand Engagement*

| Dimension      | Mean | Interpretation      |
|----------------|------|---------------------|
| Brand Trust    | 2.64 | Moderate            |
| Brand Loyalty  | 2.76 | Moderate            |
| Brand Advocacy | 2.76 | Moderate            |
| Overall Mean   | 2.72 | Moderate Engagement |

Note. Means were interpreted using the study's four-point Likert scale.

The overall level of brand engagement was moderate ( $M = 2.72$ ). Brand loyalty and brand advocacy obtained the highest mean scores ( $M = 2.76$ ), while brand trust was slightly lower ( $M = 2.64$ ), although still within the moderate range. This indicates that respondents were willing to support, patronize, and recommend brands, but their trust in brands may still require further strengthening. The finding suggests that after-dark campaigns should not only seek visibility but should also build credibility, authenticity, and consistent consumer relationships.

### Overall influence of nocturnal patterns on brand engagement

Table 4. *Overall Effect of Nocturnal Patterns on Engagement*

| Indicator                     | Mean | Interpretation        |
|-------------------------------|------|-----------------------|
| Influence on Brand Engagement | 2.75 | Significant Influence |

Note. The interpretation follows the study's scale for influence on brand engagement.

The overall mean of 2.75 indicates that nocturnal socialization patterns exerted a significant influence on brand engagement. This finding means that after-dark environments, whether physical or digital, shape how young consumers perceive and interact with brands. During late hours, respondents are often more socially connected and more receptive to content, recommendations, and brand experiences. Therefore, nighttime activity provides strategic timing for brands to strengthen trust, loyalty, and advocacy.

### Relationship between nocturnal patterns and brand engagement

Table 5. *Pearson Correlation Between Nocturnal Patterns and Brand Engagement (N = 375)*

| Variable           | Brand Trust | Brand Loyalty | Brand Advocacy |
|--------------------|-------------|---------------|----------------|
| Offline Activities | .473**      | .461**        | .471**         |
| Online Activities  | .516**      | .469**        | .454**         |

Note. \*\*  $p < .001$ .

The Pearson correlation results show significant positive relationships between nocturnal socialization patterns and all dimensions of brand engagement. Correlation coefficients ranged from .454 to .516, indicating moderate positive relationships. The strongest relationship was observed between online nocturnal activities and brand trust ( $r = .516, p < .001$ ), followed by offline activities and brand trust ( $r = .473, p < .001$ ). These findings show that greater participation in after-dark online and offline activities is associated with stronger brand trust, loyalty, and advocacy.

Because all p-values were below the 0.05 level of significance, the null hypotheses were rejected. This confirms that offline and online nocturnal activities have significant relationships with brand engagement dimensions. Online nocturnal engagement appears particularly influential, suggesting that brands should prioritize social media, livestreaming, influencer content, interactive posts, and real-time community engagement during peak nighttime hours. However, offline experiences remain important because cafés, events, night markets, and social gatherings provide emotional and experiential reinforcement.

The results support the phygital view of consumer-brand relationships. Young consumers encounter brands in physical spaces and extend these encounters through digital storytelling, sharing, and advocacy. A successful brand activation campaign should therefore combine immersive offline experiences with digitally shareable content. For example, campaigns may include late-night café activations, night-market booths, student ambassador promotions, TikTok challenges, hashtag-based contests, and referral incentives.

### Strategic brand activation insight

Based on the findings, the proposed strategic direction is a relationship-based marketing framework that builds brand trust, loyalty, and advocacy among Gen Z and Millennial consumers. The framework begins with trust-building through consistent nighttime posting, authentic reviews, testimonials, and active social interaction. It then moves toward loyalty development through exclusive nighttime promotions, rewards, discounts, and personalized incentives. Finally, it strengthens advocacy through referral incentives, user-generated content, hashtag challenges, and community events. These actions are expected to lead to long-term consumer engagement and brand value.

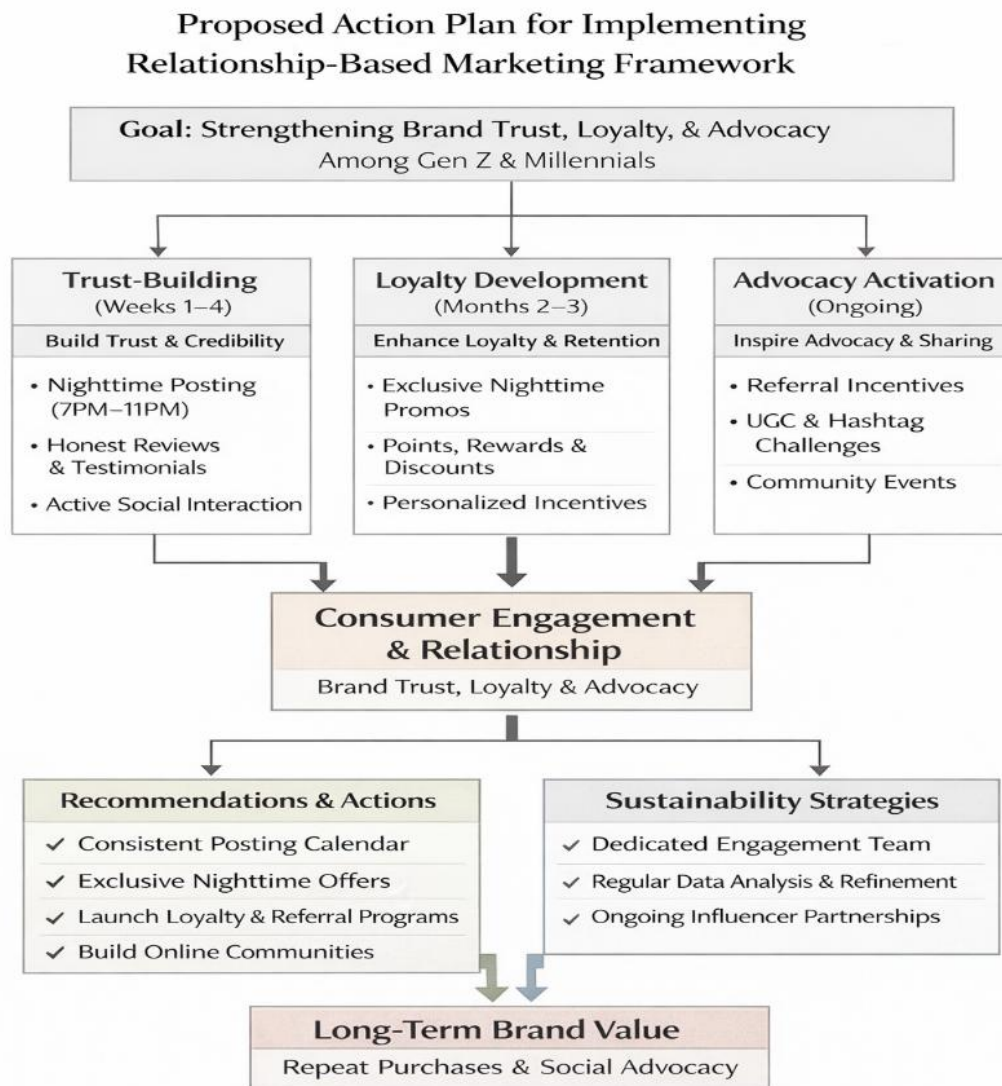


Figure 4. Proposed Action Plan for Implementing a Relationship-Based Marketing Framework

## CONCLUSION

The study concluded that Generation Z consumers, particularly students and young consumers with active online habits, dominated nocturnal socialization in Valenzuela City. Their after-dark activity occurred both offline and online, but online nocturnal engagement was slightly stronger. This indicates that late-night digital platforms have become central spaces for socialization, entertainment, and brand interaction among young consumers.

The study also concluded that brand engagement among respondents was moderate in terms of brand trust, loyalty, and advocacy. Although respondents were willing to support and recommend brands, trust remained slightly lower than loyalty and advocacy, suggesting that brands must strengthen credibility and authenticity to sustain long-term relationships. Both offline and online nocturnal activities were significantly related to brand engagement, with online nocturnal activities showing the strongest association with brand trust.

Overall, nocturnal socialization is not merely a lifestyle pattern but a strategic consumer-brand engagement opportunity. After-dark interactions create conditions where consumers are socially receptive, emotionally engaged, and digitally connected. Brands that align their campaigns with these behavioral patterns can create stronger phygital relationships by combining immersive physical experiences with real-time, shareable, and community-driven digital engagement.

## Recommendation

Businesses and brand managers should design scheduled nighttime digital campaigns, particularly during peak engagement hours from 7:00 PM to 11:00 PM. Campaigns may include livestreams, flash sales, interactive polls, giveaways, short-form videos, and influencer collaborations that directly respond to the nighttime behavior of Gen Z and Millennial consumers.

Brands should implement phygital brand activation programs that combine physical experiences in cafés, night markets, social events, and campus-based spaces with online amplification through TikTok, Facebook, Instagram, hashtags, and user-generated content. This combined approach may strengthen both emotional attachment and digital visibility.

Businesses should adopt relationship-based marketing systems focused on trust-building, loyalty development, and advocacy activation. Consistent posting, authentic testimonials, personalized incentives, referral programs, and online community-building may help transform passive consumers into active brand advocates.

Student and Gen Z networks should be activated through peer-oriented campaigns such as campus ambassadors, referral incentives, group-based promotions, digital rewards, and community challenges. Since many respondents were students with limited income but high social influence, brands should prioritize relationship capital, shareability, and co-creation rather than purely sales-centered campaigns.

Future researchers may expand the study to other cities or provinces to compare nocturnal socialization patterns across different urban contexts. Qualitative methods such as interviews, focus groups, and diary studies may also be used to explore emotional motivations behind after-dark engagement. Future studies may examine moderating variables such as income, employment type, lifestyle, digital literacy, and psychological factors to deepen market segmentation and campaign design.

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