

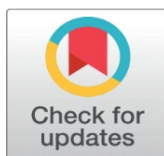
A STUDY ON THE ROLE OF INFLUENCER AND ELECTRICIAN RELATIONSHIP-BUILDING IN ENHANCING BRAND VALUE AND MARKET PERFORMANCE AT HAVELLS INDIA LTD

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Received 15 April 2024

Accepted 21 May 2025

Published 30 June 2025

DOI

[10.29121/ShodhVichar.v1.i1.2025.59](https://doi.org/10.29121/ShodhVichar.v1.i1.2025.59)

Funding: This research received no specific grant from any funding agency in the public, commercial, or not-for-profit sectors.

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ABSTRACT

This research paper examines the impact of relationship-building with electricians, retailers, and micro-influencers on Havells India Ltd.'s brand image, loyalty, and market value. With the electrical goods market in India becoming increasingly competitive, companies rely heavily on influencer-driven recommendations, especially from electricians who directly influence end-consumer decisions. The study focuses on Havells' digital loyalty initiative E-PLUS, a structured reward and engagement program designed to strengthen long-term relationships. Primary data was collected from a structured survey administered to 100 electricians, of whom 60 responded. Additional insights were obtained during field visits, store interactions, and a major Electrician Meet with 115 new electricians in Thane. The study reveals that 67% of electricians were fully aware of E-PLUS, 80% expressed satisfaction with the program, and 62% preferred Havells over competitors such as Polycab, Anchor, and Finolex. The findings indicate that reward systems, on-ground engagement, training, and digital interaction significantly strengthen brand loyalty. Challenges identified include barcode scanning issues, delays in reward crediting, and limited multilingual support. Nevertheless, Havells' influencer engagement strategy has proven effective in enhancing trust, emotional bonding, and product preference.

Keywords: Influencer Marketing, Electricians, Brand Loyalty, E-PLUS Program, Electrical Industry, Havells India Ltd., Relationship Marketing, Brand Value

1. INTRODUCTION

Influencer-driven decision-making is an essential component of the Indian electrical goods market. Unlike mass-consumer FMCG sectors, electrical products are technical and safety-sensitive, causing end-users to depend heavily on electricians and retailers for recommendations. These influencers often determine the final brand installed in homes, offices, and commercial spaces. As a result, companies like Havells have shifted from product-based marketing to relationship-based marketing, focusing on electricians as long-term partners.

In today's highly commoditized electrical market, product differentiation alone is insufficient. Customers depend on the credibility of electricians, who in turn

depend on brands that support them with training, rewards, and consistent engagement. Havells India Ltd., a leader in the industry, recognized the need to build trust and loyalty through systemic influencer engagement. This led to the development of the E-PLUS Program, a digital loyalty platform providing reward points, insurance coverage, recognition, and training.

My summer internship at Havells (Thane region) provided first-hand exposure to these influencer engagement practices. Interactions with electricians, visits to retail outlets, and participation in promotional activities including an Electrician Meet attended by 115 new electricians offered insights into the motivations, expectations, and challenges of field influencers. Moreover, data collected through a survey of 60 electricians helped quantify their awareness, satisfaction, and loyalty toward Havells.

This study explores how relationship-building with electricians enhances Havells' brand reputation, reinforces market preference, and contributes to the company's long-term value. It also assesses the effectiveness of the E-PLUS program, the factors influencing electrician loyalty, and areas for improvement.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

The literature surrounding influencer engagement in technical markets highlights several interconnected themes: relationship marketing, loyalty programs, emotional bonding, and brand equity.

1) Role of Relationship Marketing

Berry (1983) established that relationship marketing involves building long-term, mutually beneficial relationships rather than focusing solely on short-term transactions. Morgan and Hunt (1994) added that trust and commitment are the two foundational pillars of successful relationship management. In electrical markets, electricians become "trust agents," transmitting brand credibility to end consumers. Studies show that consistent engagement improves influencer commitment and advocacy.

2) Influencers in Technical Decision-Making

Kotler and Keller (2016) emphasize that technical influencers (mechanics, plumbers, electricians) hold more persuasive power than mass influencers because consumers trust their expertise. In India's electrical goods market, electricians influence up to 60–80% of purchase decisions. Their brand preference often stems from product familiarity, training, and reward-based motivation.

3) Loyalty Programs and their Impact

Sharp and Sharp (1997) found that loyalty programs increase purchase frequency when they deliver clear rewards and minimize effort. Yi and Jeon (2003) confirm that well-designed loyalty systems improve program loyalty and brand loyalty simultaneously. Havells' E-PLUS aligns with these principles through digital convenience and structured reward mechanisms.

4) Brand Equity and Influencer Behaviour

Aaker (1991) defined brand equity as a combination of brand loyalty, perceived quality, awareness, and associations. Studies show that electricians associate strong brands with reliability, performance, and safety attributes. Havells emphasizes through product training and consistent communication.

5) Digital Engagement Tools

Verhoef et al. (2010) argue that digital platforms enhance customer engagement by improving transparency and communication. Havells' E-PLUS app

provides real-time updates, scanning features, points tracking, and notifications, strengthening digital touchpoints with electricians.

Literature consistently supports the idea that long-term influencer relationships significantly enhance brand performance, especially in markets where recommendations matter more than advertisements.

3. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The study adopted a descriptive research design, suitable for analysing current perceptions, behaviours, and patterns among electricians. A mixed-method approach was used to capture both numerical data and qualitative insights.

1) Primary Data Sources

- A structured questionnaire distributed to 100 electricians, with 60 valid responses.
- Direct interactions during field visits and store visits.
- Observational insights from the Electrician Meet with 115 new participants.
- Discussions with sellers, retailers, and Havells field officers.

2) Secondary Data Sources

- Havells corporate documents
- E-PLUS program manuals
- Industry reports
- Journals, articles, published research papers

3) Tools Used

- Percentage analysis
- Pie charts and graphical interpretation
- Thematic analysis of qualitative insights

4) Scope

- Limited to Thane region
- Focuses on electricians as primary influencers
- Examines E-PLUS as Havells' major relationship-building tool

5) Limitations

- Sample restricted to one region
- Some electricians were hesitant to share detailed answers
- Digital literacy affected responses for app-related questions

4. ANALYSIS AND INTERPRETATION

The analysis and interpretation of data collected from 60 electricians provide meaningful insights into how influencer engagement and the E-PLUS Program affect Havells' brand loyalty and market performance. Each question was analyzed not only based on percentages but also through observation during field visits and the electrician meet.

1) Awareness and Understanding of Havells and E-PLUS Program:

The survey showed that 67% of electricians were fully aware of the E-PLUS Program, while 25% had partial awareness, and the remaining 8% were unaware.

This indicates that Havells has achieved considerable penetration among influencers, but a gap still exists in communication depth. Many electricians said they know the program exists but are not fully clear about benefits such as accident insurance, early redemption rules, or special campaigns.

Interpretation:

Awareness is strong, but onboarding guidance must be enhanced. Electricians often rely on field officers to explain complex features. This proves that digital communication alone is not enough; personal interaction remains essential.

2) Satisfaction with the E-PLUS Program:

- The satisfaction levels reveal a highly positive trend:
- 47% are highly satisfied
- 33% satisfied
- Only 20% neutral or unsatisfied

During field visits, many electricians expressed appreciation for reward points and accident insurance. Some shared that insurance benefits make them feel valued not just as customers, but as important partners. The emotional impact of being cared for plays a major role in satisfaction.

Interpretation:

Satisfaction is closely linked to how well the program delivers practical value. Electricians who regularly redeem points showed much higher satisfaction compared to those using the app only occasionally. This proves that reward activity drives loyalty behaviour.

3) Brand Preference and Market Behaviour:

- Brand preference analysis shows clear dominance:
- Havells – 62%
- Polycab – 18%
- Anchor – 12%
- Finolex – 8%

Electricians prefer Havells due to higher trust, safer products, long-lasting performance, and positive past experiences. Many claimed that customers rarely complain about Havells products, reducing repair-time blame on electricians. This makes them more comfortable recommending Havells over others.

Interpretation:

Brand preference is shaped not only by incentives but by product reliability. Loyalty increases when electricians feel confident that the brand will not damage their reputation with customers.

4) Usage Patterns of the E-PLUS App:

- Among respondents:
- 42% use the app daily
- 33% weekly
- 17% occasionally
- 8% rarely

Electricians who work in high-volume markets and do multiple installations per day use the app more frequently to scan barcodes and track points. Occasional users often struggle with scanning issues or forget to upload invoices.

Interpretation:

Higher app usage is closely linked to higher program satisfaction. The E-PLUS App serves not only as a reward tool but also as a bridge between Havells and electricians. Once app convenience increases, loyalty strengthens further.

5) Most Valued Features of the Program:

Electricians rated the following as the best parts of the program:

- Reward redemption – 55 mentions
- Accident insurance – 48 mentions
- Electrician meets – 40 mentions
- App information & updates – 28 mentions

Reward redemption is the top motivator because it provides tangible, instant value. Insurance is an emotional security feature. Events like meets create community bonding and boost brand trust.

Interpretation:

Electricians value both financial and emotional benefits. This proves that loyalty programs are most effective when they balance economic incentives with recognition and community-building activities.

6) Challenges Identified by Electricians

The major issues faced are:

- Barcode scanning errors – 22
- Reward credit delays – 18
- Lack of training – 15
- Language limitations – 12

Many electricians shared that network issues or poor barcode printing cause scanning failure. Reward delays create frustration because electricians expect digital systems to be immediate.

Interpretation:

The challenges are mostly technical and operational, not emotional. They do not reduce overall loyalty but can reduce engagement if not addressed. Simplifying scanning and offering multilingual support would significantly improve program usability.

7) Insights from the 115 Electrician Meet

The electrician meet played a major role in boosting awareness and onboarding. Many electricians registered for E-PLUS for the first time during the meet. The live demonstration helped them understand how to scan QR codes, check points, and redeem rewards.

Some electricians shared that they feel “seen” and respected when companies organize such gatherings. It increases goodwill and builds long-term relationships.

Interpretation:

Physical interaction remains one of the most powerful tools for influencing electrician loyalty. Digital programs work best when supported by real-world engagement.

8) Combined Interpretation of All Findings

When analyzing all data together, three major patterns emerge:

1) Electricians trust brands that support them emotionally and financially.

Rewards + recognition = higher loyalty.

2) Digital tools strengthen loyalty when they are simple and reliable.

Ease of use significantly affects participation frequency.

3) Personal interaction is still the strongest factor.

Events, visits, and conversations create lasting brand connections that apps alone cannot build.

These patterns reinforce that loyalty is not built through one channel but through a combination of product trust, digital engagement, and consistent relationship-building.

5. FINDINGS

1) High Awareness but Uneven Understanding:

While a majority of electricians were aware of the E-PLUS Program, many displayed only partial understanding of features such as insurance benefits or reward redemption rules. This indicates that communication is effective but can be made more detailed and hands-on.

2) Satisfaction Strongly Linked to Engagement Quality:

Electricians who regularly attended store visits, meets, or received personal communication from Havells representatives reported higher overall satisfaction. This suggests that human interaction still plays a key role even in a digitally enabled loyalty program.

3) Brand Preference Driven by Trust and Past Experience:

The dominant preference for Havells (62%) is strongly influenced by product performance, perceived quality, and long-term familiarity. Many electricians shared that they recommend Havells products because past customers rarely report issues and because after-sales support is reliable.

4) Reward Points Act as a Significant Motivator:

Reward earning and redemption emerged as the most valued feature of E-PLUS. Electricians expressed that the points system offers them tangible value and encourages them to consistently choose Havells products over competitors.

5) Strong Impact of Electrician Meets:

The meet with 115 new electricians significantly boosted awareness, app registrations, and trust. This confirms that physical engagement events remain highly effective in enhancing perceived brand care and belongingness.

6) Digital Adoption is Strong but Needs Support:

Electricians appreciate the app's transparency, scanning features, and ease of tracking points. However, scanning errors, occasional reward delays, and limited language options create friction for certain users.

7) Emotional Bonding Enhances Loyalty:

Many electricians reported that Havells treats them with respect, recognizes their work, and maintains consistent communication. These emotional factors were found to be as important as financial rewards in building loyalty.

8) Market Competitiveness Still Active:

Although Havells leads in preference, Polycab and Anchor remain relevant competitors. Some electricians switch temporarily based on shop availability or temporary incentives, reinforcing the need for continuous engagement.

6. CONCLUSION

The study concludes that the relationship between Havells and its network of electricians serves as a powerful strategic asset that directly influences brand perception, market penetration, and customer trust. Electricians act as frontline influencers whose recommendations significantly shape consumer purchasing behaviour. Therefore, maintaining strong, consistent, and value-based relationships with them is essential for sustaining competitive advantage.

The findings clearly demonstrate that the E-PLUS Program plays a central role in strengthening this relationship. Through structured rewards, accident insurance, training, and recognition, the program provides electricians with tangible and intangible benefits that extend beyond a transactional association. High satisfaction levels and frequent app usage indicate that the program has been well-accepted and effectively supports loyalty-building.

However, the research also highlights critical areas for improvement, such as app usability, language accessibility, onboarding support, and scanning reliability. Addressing these challenges will further enhance electrician experience and solidify long-term brand loyalty.

Additionally, activities such as electrician meets, field visits, and direct communication reinforce emotional engagement, making electricians feel valued and connected. This emotional bond combined with product reliability and digital convenience positions Havells as a trustworthy and supportive brand in a highly competitive market.

Overall, the relationship-building initiatives undertaken by Havells demonstrate that investing in influencer partnerships is not merely a marketing strategy but a long-term value creation approach. As the Indian electrical industry evolves, brands that continue to nurture such partnerships will gain sustained growth, stronger brand equity, and superior market leadership.

CONFLICT OF INTERESTS

None .

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

None.

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