

# The transpiring journey of customer engagement research in marketing

## A systematic review of the past decade

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### Abstract

**Purpose** – To understand how customer engagement has been researched in the last decade, the purpose of this paper is to provide a systematic review of customer engagement research in the existing literature, derive a comprehensive definition of customer engagement and summarize few important and basic issues that future research should address.

**Design/methodology/approach** – An extensive literature review was carried out on customer engagement spread over 38 journals identified from online academic databases of Scopus, Emerald, EBSCOS and Science Direct. A total of 66 conceptual and empirical articles on customer engagement research spanning from 2005 to 2015 were analyzed based on different classification schemes.

**Findings** – Customer engagement is becoming a key concept in marketing. Customer engagement is a multi-dimensional concept comprising of cognitive, emotional, behavioral and social dimensions. The theoretical foundations of this concept predominantly lie with relationship marketing and service-dominant logic. Research on customer engagement has gained a significant pace in the last six years (2010-2015) but most of the articles on customer engagement have come from developed countries.

**Research limitations/implications** – By providing the distribution schema of customer engagement articles based on different criteria and by highlighting the future research avenues, this study is believed to serve as a valuable tool for researchers to understand the current scenario of customer engagement research in the marketing discipline and take this research area forward. This study acknowledges limitations with respect to its exclusive search criteria, which might affect its generalizability.

**Practical implications** – This study exhibits the favorable outcomes organizations can derive by building and managing an engaged customer base. The more an organization knows about how to engage its customers, the better adept it will be to enact so. Therefore, understanding customer engagement is imperative in that regard; this review will help organizations comprehend that better.

**Originality/value** – This is the first systematic review of customer engagement that provides a detailed understanding of the current state of customer engagement research on a single platform and also draws a comprehensive customer engagement conceptualization.

**Keywords** Customer engagement, Literature review, Consumer engagement, Consumer brand engagement, Customer brand engagement

**Paper type** Literature review

### Introduction

In the present market scenario, technological advancement and the fierce competition coupled with the outburst of product choices and increasingly well-informed customers require organizations to engage their customers at all possible touch points. Customer engagement is portrayed as an approach to create, build and enhance customer relationships (Brodie *et al.*, 2013) and is considered a strategic imperative to build a sustainable competitive advantage (Van Doorn *et al.*, 2010; Brodie *et al.*, 2013). Customer engagement is also seen to have the potential to affect customer satisfaction



(Brodie *et al.*, 2013), customer loyalty (Hollebeek, 2011a; Islam and Rahman, 2016a), firm performance (Van Doorn *et al.*, 2010; So *et al.*, 2014a), firm reputation (Van Doorn *et al.*, 2010; Dijkmans *et al.*, 2015) and firm value (Kumar *et al.*, 2010; Vivek *et al.*, 2014), thereby, gaining attention of academicians as well as marketing practitioners (Vivek *et al.*, 2014; Dessart *et al.*, 2015; Islam and Rahman, 2016b). Gallup's research found that "fully engaged" banking customers accounted for a 37 percent increase in annual revenue to their banks than "actively disengaged" customers. Similarly, "fully engaged" consumer electronics shoppers accounted for a 44 percent increase annually in their visits to their preferred retailers than "actively disengaged" shoppers and the spending of "fully engaged" hotel guests accounted for a 46 percent hike annually than "actively disengaged" customers.

Before transpiring into the marketing discipline, the concept of "engagement" was studied in other academic disciplines like organizational behavior and psychology (Hollebeek *et al.*, 2014; Dessart *et al.*, 2015). Since 2005, the term "customer engagement" has been increasingly used in marketing literature (Brodie *et al.*, 2013) and has emerged as an influential research stream. While Marketing Science Institute declared customer engagement as a key research priority in their research priorities list of 2010-2012 as well as 2014-2016 (MSI, 2010, 2014), Kumar (2015) also suggests it as an emerging research area that needs scholarly attention. Howbeit, the concept of customer engagement stands novel to academia. Undeniably, papers on customer engagement have mostly been published in the last few years.

Despite the popularity of customer engagement concept among academicians and practitioners, to the best of the authors' knowledge, there is no systematic literature review available that could determine the present stand of customer engagement research and the direction which this research area is heading to. This asks for a review to present a research roadmap of customer engagement and the guidelines to take this research area forward. In response to this, the present study intends to review customer engagement research in the existing literature. The need for this study is also supported by Brodie *et al.* (2011) who mention "from a theoretical perspective further systematic, explicit scholarly inquiry addressing the CE concept is required" (p. 262). Systematic reviews "summarize in an explicit way what is known and not known about a specific practice related question" (Briner *et al.*, 2009, p. 19). The value of this systematic review lies in the fact that it provides an understanding of the current state of customer engagement research on a single platform through various classification schemes with respect to the distribution of published articles across different countries, journals, contexts and time periods; reports various conceptualizations, dimensions, antecedents and consequences of customer engagement proposed by previous studies; presents a set of theoretical perspectives through which customer engagement has been explored so far, and summarizes few important issues that future research should explore. This paper also derives a conceptualization of customer engagement based on the thorough analysis of the available conceptualizations of the construct in response to the call for further conceptualization of customer engagement by Hollebeek (2011a, 2013) and Dessart *et al.* (2015).

The rest of the paper is structured as follows: first, the description of methodology used is discussed. Second, the research findings in terms of the distribution of articles on various criteria such as country of research, publication journal and year of publication, empirical or conceptual orientation and context specificity is presented. Next, various conceptualizations, dimensions, antecedents and consequences and theoretical perspectives of the concept are discussed. Finally, the paper discusses the potential scope for future research and implications of this study.

**Research methodology**

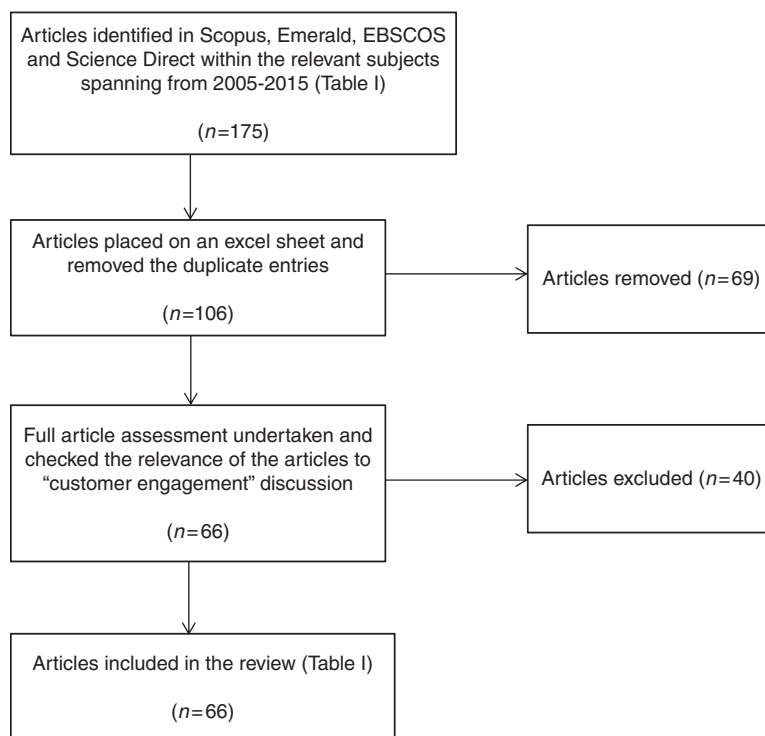
The objective of this systematic review is twofold: first, to present the current state of customer engagement research; second, to expressly summarize few unexploited areas of customer engagement that future research should focus on. To achieve the mentioned objective, four dominant academic databases including Scopus, Emerald, EBSCOS and Science Direct were explored to identify articles on customer engagement. This paper reviews literature spanning from 2005 to 2015. Articles were identified in the “article title, abstract, and keywords” section of the said databases using keywords as “customer engagement”; “consumer engagement”; “customer brand engagement”; “consumer brand engagement”; “customer engagement behavior”; “consumer brand engagement”; and “brand community engagement.” To keep the search process specific to the objectives of this study, above keywords were used with the subject limits of “Business, management and accounting”; “Social Sciences”; and “psychology.” As shown in Table I, a total of 175 articles were identified through the selected search criteria, of whom only 66 studies survived to be taken for final analysis. This paper excludes reports, master and doctoral dissertations, textbooks and conference papers (Ngai, 2005; Chan and Ngai, 2011).

The identified 175 articles were placed on a single excel sheet and replicative articles were removed, leaving 106 articles for further analysis. A detailed assessment of the full article (as recommended by Tranfield *et al.*, 2003) was performed to ascertain the relevance of the articles to customer engagement. After this evaluation, 66 articles that had “customer engagement” or any of the selected keywords central to their discussion were chosen for the final analysis. Rest of the 40 articles had used “customer engagement” or any other selected keyword but were found to be irrelevant to the customer engagement discussion and were not considered. For instance articles such as “Building a targeted pharmacy customer engagement approach” by Hamilton (2009) and “Consumer engagement and the development, evaluation, and dissemination of evidence based parenting programs” by Sanders and Kirby (2012), etc. were excluded. An overview of the selection process is given in Figure 1.

The extant state of customer engagement research based on the context of the studies is presented in Table II. The analysis of the final 66 articles revealed that customer engagement has been studied in four broad contexts; with majority of studies being conducted in the context of online platforms (25), followed by service-brand/firm context (17),

**Table I.**  
Articles found in electronic databases and the articles taken for final analysis per time period

Keyword	No. of articles found			Total	No. of articles taken for final analysis			
	2005-2008	2009-2012	2013-2015		2005-2008	2009-2012	2013-2015	Total
“Customer engagement”	7	26	55	88	2	11	25	38
“Consumer engagement”	6	21	42	69	–	3	12	15
“Customer brand engagement”	–	2	–	2	–	2	–	2
“Consumer brand engagement”	–	2	5	7	–	2	2	4
“Customer engagement behavior”	–	2	4	6	–	2	3	5
“Consumer engagement behavior”	–	1	–	1	–	1	–	1
“Brand community engagement”	–	1	1	2	–	–	1	1
Total	13	55	107	175	2	21	43	66



**Figure 1.**  
Flow diagram of  
article selection  
process

general (multiple entities) context (16) and brand/firm context (8). Most of the articles have concentrated on one engagement object at a time but few articles have also acknowledged multiple customer engagement objects in their studies (classified by this paper as “General” in context). It is important for marketers to realize that customers engage with a wide range of engagement objects other than goods and services.

A trend that needs attention is that up to the year 2012, studies on customer engagement were mostly general in context; but afterwards, studies started focussing on specific contexts such as brands, online communities and services. This rise in the context-specific studies may be due to the attention given on the theoretical building of the concept and the stress on the need for context-specific studies by prior studies.

All the 66 articles were divided into three approximately equal time periods (see Das, 2009). This division was done to identify the growth pattern of customer engagement studies over the last decade (see Fatma and Rahman, 2015) and aid the longitudinal exploration of the customer engagement literature (see Goyal *et al.*, 2013):

- period I: 2005-2008 (four years);
- period II: 2009-2012 (four years); and
- period III: 2013-2015 (three years).

The time period I comprises of two foundational articles by Sawhney *et al.* (2005) and Carter (2008) that conferred customer engagement as a research area in the marketing discipline. The time period II saw the progress of majority of conceptual and qualitative studies on customer engagement literature. This phase led the strong conceptual basis

**Table II.**  
Context of customer  
engagement studies  
per time period

Time period	Brand/firm	Service-brand/industry	Context
2005-2008 (n = 2)	-	-	General (multiple entities) Carter (2008) (n = 1)
2009-2012 (n = 21)	Sprott <i>et al.</i> (2009), Hollebeek (2011a) and Javornik and Mandelli (2012) (n = 3)	Bowden (2009a, b) (n = 2)	Bijmolt <i>et al.</i> (2010), Van Doorn <i>et al.</i> (2010), Gambetti and Graffigna (2010), Kumar <i>et al.</i> (2010), Roberts and Alpert (2010), Verhoef <i>et al.</i> (2010), Ashley <i>et al.</i> (2011), Bolton (2011), Brodie <i>et al.</i> (2011), Hollebeek (2011b), Gambetti <i>et al.</i> (2012), Sashi (2012) and Vivek <i>et al.</i> (2012) (n = 13)
2013-2015 (n = 43)	Hollebeek (2013), Franzak <i>et al.</i> (2014), Sarkar and Sreejesh (2014), Tsai and Men (2014), Dwivedi (2015), So <i>et al.</i> (2015) (n = 6)	Cambra-Fierro <i>et al.</i> (2013, 2014), Verleye <i>et al.</i> (2013), Wei <i>et al.</i> (2013), Banyte <i>et al.</i> (2014), Cabriddu <i>et al.</i> (2014), Chathoth <i>et al.</i> (2014), Jaakkola and Alexander (2014), Kaltcheva <i>et al.</i> (2014), So <i>et al.</i> (2014a, b), Bowden <i>et al.</i> (2015), Cambra-Fierro <i>et al.</i> (2015), Hwang <i>et al.</i> (2015) and O'Brien <i>et al.</i> (2015) (n = 15)	Brodie <i>et al.</i> (2013), Tsai and Men (2013), Wirtz <i>et al.</i> (2013), Ashley and Tuten (2015), Angeles Oviedo-Garcia <i>et al.</i> (2014), Bitter <i>et al.</i> (2014), Claffey and Brady (2014), De Vries and Carlson (2014), Dijkmans <i>et al.</i> (2015), Hollebeek and Chen (2014), Hollebeek <i>et al.</i> (2014), Verma (2014), Wallace <i>et al.</i> (2014), Baldus <i>et al.</i> (2015), Cheung <i>et al.</i> (2015), Dessart <i>et al.</i> (2015), Hammedi <i>et al.</i> (2015), Harwood and Garry (2015), Nadeem <i>et al.</i> (2015), Verhagen <i>et al.</i> (2015) (n = 20)
Total = 66	9	17	16 24

for this emerging construct. Some radical pieces were written in this time period (e.g. Bowden, 2009a; Van Doorn *et al.*, 2010; Verhoef *et al.*, 2010; Brodie *et al.*, 2011; Hollebeek, 2011a, b; Vivek *et al.*, 2012). As an outcome of the conceptual footing and the emphasis given to customer engagement research in the time period II, an outbreak of empirical exploration of this construct took place in the time period III. In this phase, scholarly attention was drawn toward empirical validation of the previously proposed theoretical relationships between customer engagement and other conceptually related constructs (Vivek *et al.*, 2014; Dwivedi, 2015; Nadeem *et al.*, 2015). This phase also represents the development of certain context-specific customer engagement scales (Hollebeek *et al.*, 2014; So *et al.*, 2014a; Vivek *et al.*, 2014; Baldus *et al.*, 2015) which further enhanced the empirical examination of customer engagement.

### Analysis and results

This section begins by describing the year-wise, country-wise, journal-wise and orientation (empirical or conceptual) wise distribution of the 66 identified articles. The section then describes the conceptualizations, dimensions, antecedents and consequences of customer engagement proposed by previous studies.

#### *Year-wise distribution of articles with respect to the study orientation (conceptual or empirical)*

Preceding 2005, the term customer engagement was used by very few articles, implying the relative newness of this concept (Brodie *et al.*, 2011; Marbach *et al.*, 2016). On the basis of the selection criteria of the articles (as mentioned in the research methodology section), the first published article was located in 2005 and was, therefore, taken as the starting year. As evident from Table III, the research on customer engagement has gained a significant pace in the last six years (2010-2015).

Based on the study orientation (conceptual or empirical), it was found that the articles till 2012 were mostly conceptual in nature (12 out of 18); but after 2012, scholarly attention has shifted more toward the quantitative empirical exploration of the subject area. The reason could be the development of certain customer engagement scales (Hollebeek *et al.*, 2014; So *et al.*, 2014a; Vivek *et al.*, 2014; Baldus *et al.*, 2015) that intensified the empirical examination of the concept.

#### *Country-wise distribution of articles in different time periods*

To identify the intensity of research across the globe, a country-wise classification of literature is considered important (Fatma and Rahman, 2015; Goyal *et al.*, 2013). To determine the country of study, respondent countries were reported for the studies that mentioned respondent locations and the first authors of the publication were reported for conceptual studies as well as the ones wherein respondent location was not specified (Fetscherin and Usunier, 2012; Mladen and Silva, 2001). This study found that the 66 identified articles on customer engagement have come from 18 countries with most of the articles from developed countries like the USA (16), Australia (10) and New Zealand (7) as shown in Table IV. In response to the growing significance of customer engagement, research in this domain has started extending across countries in the recent few years. But such studies in developing countries are still scanty. The emerging markets in the developing countries provide huge business opportunities for multinational companies. Future research could, therefore, be directed toward the unexplored countries (developing economies) to enrich the emerging research area of customer engagement.

Time period	Year	Study	Study type	
<i>2005-2008 (n = 2)</i>				
2005 (1)	2005	Sawhney <i>et al.</i> (2005)	Conceptual	
2008 (1)	2008	Carter (2008)	Empirical (quantitative)	
<i>2009-2012 (n = 21)</i>				
2009 (4)	2009	Bowden (2009a)	Conceptual	
	2009	Bowden (2009b)	Empirical (qualitative)	
2010 (7)	2009	Calder <i>et al.</i> (2009)	Empirical (quantitative)	
	2009	Sprott <i>et al.</i> (2009)	Empirical (quantitative)	
	2010	Bijmolt <i>et al.</i> (2010)	Conceptual	
	2010	Van Doorn <i>et al.</i> (2010)	Conceptual	
	2010	Gambetti and Graffigna (2010)	Conceptual	
	2010	Kumar <i>et al.</i> (2010)	Conceptual	
	2010	Mollen and Wilson (2010)	Conceptual	
2011 (6)	2010	Roberts and Alpert (2010)	Conceptual	
	2010	Verhoef <i>et al.</i> (2010)	Conceptual	
	2011	Ashley <i>et al.</i> (2011)	Empirical (quantitative)	
	2011	Bolton (2011)	Conceptual	
	2011	Brodie <i>et al.</i> (2011)	Conceptual	
	2011	Gambetti <i>et al.</i> (2012)	Empirical (qualitative)	
2012 (4)	2011	Hollebeek (2011a)	Conceptual	
	2011	Hollebeek (2011b)	Empirical (qualitative)	
	2012	Gummerus <i>et al.</i> (2012)	Empirical (quantitative)	
	2012	Javornik and Mandelli (2012)	Empirical (qualitative)	
	2012	Sashi (2012)	Conceptual	
<i>2013-2015 (n = 43)</i>	2012	Vivek <i>et al.</i> (2012)	Empirical (qualitative)	
	2013 (7)	2013	Brodie <i>et al.</i> (2013)	Empirical (qualitative)
		2013	Cambra-Fierro <i>et al.</i> (2013)	Empirical (quantitative)
		2013	Hollebeek (2013)	Empirical (qualitative)
		2013	Tsai and Men (2013)	Empirical (quantitative)
		2013	Verleye <i>et al.</i> (2013)	Empirical (quantitative)
	2013	Wei <i>et al.</i> (2013)	Empirical (quantitative)	
	2013	Wirtz <i>et al.</i> (2013)	Conceptual	
	2014 (23)	2014	Ángeles Oviedo-García <i>et al.</i> (2014)	Conceptual
		2014	Ashley and Tuten (2015)	Empirical (qualitative)
		2014	Banyté <i>et al.</i> (2014)	Empirical (quantitative)
		2014	Bitter <i>et al.</i> (2014)	Empirical (quantitative)
		2014	Breidbach <i>et al.</i> (2014)	Conceptual
2014		Cabiddu <i>et al.</i> (2014)	Empirical (qualitative)	
2014		Cambra-Fierro <i>et al.</i> (2014)	Empirical (quantitative)	
2014		Chathoth <i>et al.</i> (2014)	Empirical (qualitative)	
2014		Claffey and Brady (2014)	Empirical (quantitative)	
2014		De Vries and Carlson (2014)	Empirical (quantitative)	
2014 (23)	2014	Dijkmans <i>et al.</i> (2015)	Empirical (quantitative)	
	2014	Franzak <i>et al.</i> (2014)	Conceptual	
	2014	Hollebeek and Chen (2014)	Empirical (qualitative)	
	2014	Hollebeek <i>et al.</i> (2014)	Empirical (quantitative)	
	2014	Jaakkola and Alexander (2014)	Empirical (quantitative)	
	2014	Kaltcheva <i>et al.</i> (2014)	Conceptual	

**Table III.**  
Orientation of  
customer  
engagement studies  
per time period

(continued)

Table III.

Time period	Year	Study	Study type
2015 (13)	2014	Sarkar and Sreejesh (2014)	Empirical (quantitative)
	2014	So <i>et al.</i> (2014a)	Empirical (quantitative)
	2014	So <i>et al.</i> (2014b)	Empirical (quantitative)
	2014	Tsai and Men (2014)	Empirical (quantitative)
	2014	Verma (2014)	Empirical (qualitative)
	2014	Vivek <i>et al.</i> (2014)	Empirical (quantitative)
	2014	Wallace <i>et al.</i> (2014)	Empirical (quantitative)
	2015	Baldus <i>et al.</i> (2015)	Empirical (quantitative)
	2015	Bowden <i>et al.</i> (2015)	Empirical (qualitative)
	2015	Cambra-Fierro <i>et al.</i> (2015)	Empirical (quantitative)
	2015	Cheung <i>et al.</i> (2015)	Empirical (quantitative)
	2015	Dessart <i>et al.</i> (2015)	Empirical (qualitative)
	2015	Dwivedi (2015)	Empirical (quantitative)
	2015	Hammedi <i>et al.</i> (2015)	Empirical (quantitative)
	2015	Harwood and Garry (2015)	Empirical (qualitative)
	2015	Hwang <i>et al.</i> (2015)	Empirical (quantitative)
	2015	Nadeem <i>et al.</i> (2015)	Empirical (quantitative)
	2015	O'Brien <i>et al.</i> (2015)	Empirical (quantitative)
	2015	So <i>et al.</i> (2015)	Empirical (quantitative)
	2015	Verhagen <i>et al.</i> (2015)	Empirical (quantitative)
Total = 66			

Country	2005-2008	2009-2012	2013-2015	Total
Australia	–	3	7	10
Austria	–	–	1	1
Belgium	–	–	2	2
China	–	–	2	2
Finland	–	1	–	1
Hong Kong	–	–	1	1
India	–	–	3	3
Ireland	–	–	2	2
Italy	–	2	2	4
Korea	–	–	1	1
Lithuania	–	–	1	1
New Zealand	–	3	4	7
Singapore	–	–	1	1
Spain	–	–	4	4
Switzerland	–	1	–	1
The Netherlands	–	3	2	5
UK	–	1	3	4
USA	2	7	7	16
				66

Table IV.  
Country-wise  
distribution of  
articles

#### Journal-wise distribution of articles in different time periods

This classification was done to observe where customer engagement research is being published (see Schibrowsky *et al.*, 2007). Articles related to customer engagement were found to be published in 39 reputed peer-reviewed journals in different time periods (see Table V). This number is encouraging for academicians concerned about identifying



**Table V.**  
Journal-wise  
distribution of  
articles

Journal	2005-2008	2009-2012	2013-2015	Total
<i>Annals of Tourism Research</i>	-	-	Cabiddu <i>et al.</i> (2014)	1
<i>Australasian Marketing Journal</i>	-	-	Hollebeek (2013)	1
<i>Computers in Human Behavior</i>	-	-	Verhagen <i>et al.</i> (2015)	1
<i>Electronic Commerce Research and Applications</i>	-	-	Cheung <i>et al.</i> (2015)	1
<i>Engineering Economics</i>	-	-	Banytė <i>et al.</i> (2014)	1
<i>Innovation: Management, Policy &amp; Practice</i>	-	-	Cambra-Fierro <i>et al.</i> (2013)	1
<i>International Journal of Contemporary Hospitality Management</i>	-	-	Hwang <i>et al.</i> (2015)	1
<i>International Journal of Hospitality Management</i>	-	-	Wei <i>et al.</i> (2013)	1
<i>International Journal of Information Management</i>	-	-	Nadeem <i>et al.</i> (2015)	1
<i>International Journal of Market Research</i>	-	Gambetti and Graffigna (2010) and Gambetti <i>et al.</i> (2012)	-	2
<i>International Journal of Networking and Virtual Organisations</i>	-	-	Bitter <i>et al.</i> (2014)	1
<i>Journal of Brand Management</i>	-	-	De Vries and Carlson (2014)	1
<i>Journal of Business Research</i>	-	Mollen and Wilson (2010) and Ashley <i>et al.</i> (2011)	Brodie <i>et al.</i> (2013) and Baldus <i>et al.</i> (2015)	4
<i>Journal of Customer Behaviour</i>	-	-	Claffey and Brady (2014)	1
<i>Journal of Database Marketing &amp; Customer Strategy Management</i>	-	Javornik and Mandelli (2012)	-	1
<i>Journal of Hospitality Marketing &amp; Management</i>	-	Bowden (2009b)	-	1
<i>Journal of Hospitality &amp; Tourism Research</i>	-	-	So <i>et al.</i> (2014a)	1
<i>Journal of Interactive Advertising</i>	-	-	Tsai and Men (2013)	1
<i>Journal of Interactive Marketing</i>	Sawhney <i>et al.</i> (2005)	Calder <i>et al.</i> (2009)	Hollebeek <i>et al.</i> (2014)	3
<i>Journal of Internet Commerce</i>	-	-	Verma (2014)	1
<i>Journal of Marketing Communications</i>	-	-	Tsai and Men (2014)	1
<i>Journal of Marketing Management</i>	-	Hollebeek (2011a)	Bowden <i>et al.</i> (2015)	2
<i>Journal of Marketing Research</i>	-	Sprott <i>et al.</i> (2009)	-	1
<i>Journal of Marketing Theory and Practice</i>	-	Bowden (2009a) and Vivek <i>et al.</i> (2012)	Vivek <i>et al.</i> (2014)	3

(continued)

Journal	2005-2008	2009-2012	2013-2015	Total
<i>Journal of Product &amp; Brand Management</i>	-	Roberts and Alpert (2010)	Franzak <i>et al.</i> (2014), Hollebeek and Chen (2014), Kaltcheva <i>et al.</i> (2014), Sarkar and Sreejesh (2014), Wallace <i>et al.</i> (2014) and Dessart <i>et al.</i> (2015)	7
<i>Journal of Research in Interactive Marketing</i>	-	-	Angeles Oviedo-García <i>et al.</i> (2014)	1
<i>Journal of Retailing and Consumer Services</i>	-	-	Dwivedi (2015)	1
<i>Journal of Service Management</i>	-	-	Wirtz <i>et al.</i> (2013), Hammedi <i>et al.</i> (2015) and So <i>et al.</i> (2015)	3
<i>Journal of Services Marketing</i>	-	-	Harwood and Garry (2015) and O'Brien <i>et al.</i> (2015)	2
<i>Journal of Service Research</i>	-	Bijmolt <i>et al.</i> (2010), Bolton (2011), Van Doorn <i>et al.</i> (2010), Kumar <i>et al.</i> (2010), Verhoef <i>et al.</i> (2010) and Brodie <i>et al.</i> (2011)	Verleye <i>et al.</i> (2013) and Jaakkola and Alexander (2014)	8
<i>Journal of Strategic Marketing</i>	Carter (2008)	Hollebeek (2011b)	-	2
<i>Journal of Travel Research</i>	-	-	So <i>et al.</i> (2014b)	1
<i>Management Decision</i>	-	Sashi (2012)	-	1
<i>Management Research Review</i>	-	Gummerus <i>et al.</i> (2012)	-	1
<i>Managing Service Quality</i>	-	-	Breidbach <i>et al.</i> (2014)	1
<i>Psychology &amp; Marketing</i>	-	-	Ashley and Tuten (2015)	1
<i>Revista Española de Investigación de Marketing ESIC</i>	-	-	Cambra-Fierro <i>et al.</i> (2014)	1
<i>Service Business</i>	-	-	Cambra-Fierro <i>et al.</i> (2015)	1
<i>Tourism Management</i>	-	-	Chathoth <i>et al.</i> (2014) and Dijkmans <i>et al.</i> (2015)	2
				66

Table V.

and selecting a channel for their customer engagement manuscripts. Among these reputed journals, the dominant outlet of customer engagement research has been the *Journal of Service Research* which has published eight articles and the *Journal of Product & Brand Management* which has published seven articles. The dominance was mainly due to the proliferation of special issues by these two academic journals devoted to customer engagement topics.

## 2018

### *Theoretical perspectives used to explore customer engagement*

Various theories have been used in the extant literature to study customer engagement. This review found that 28 studies were built using any of the 13 theoretical perspectives that are presented in Table VI. Rest of the 38 studies did not mention any specific theory adopted to study customer engagement.

The “Relationship Marketing Theory” and the “Service-dominant (S-D) logic” have been broadly utilized as the theoretical prism to explore customer engagement; such as in the works of Brodie *et al.* (2011, 2013), Hollebeek (2011b), Breidbach *et al.* (2014) and Vivek *et al.* (2014). Under relationship marketing theory and S-D alike, customers are not assumed to be mere passive receivers of brand-related clues rather they are believed to be proactive contributors to brand interactions (Fournier, 1998; Vargo and Lusch, 2008). Both these theories implicitly or explicitly presume customer engagement as highly interactive in nature (Hollebeek, 2011b).

Another group of social behavior theories, namely, social exchange theory, social penetration theory and social practice theory, which relate social ties and social interaction, have also been utilized to study customer engagement (Hollebeek, 2011b; Verleye *et al.*, 2013; Hwang *et al.*, 2015; Bitter *et al.*, 2014). Under these theories, customers are presumed to recompense positive thoughts and behaviors toward an object (brand) upon earning certain initial benefits from the brand interaction and exchange; which also conforms to the reciprocity theory used by Cambra-Fierro *et al.* (2013, 2015).

Theoretical background	Study	No. of studies
Organizational psychology	Dwivedi (2015)	1
Reciprocity theory	Cambra-Fierro <i>et al.</i> (2013, 2015)	1
Regulatory engagement theory	Hollebeek and Chen (2014)	1
Relationship marketing theory	Bowden (2009a), Brodie <i>et al.</i> (2011, 2013), Hollebeek (2011b), Vivek <i>et al.</i> (2012, 2014) and Cambra-Fierro <i>et al.</i> (2013, 2015)	8
Resource exchange theory	Verleye <i>et al.</i> (2013)	1
Service-dominant (S-D) logic	Brodie <i>et al.</i> (2011, 2013), Hollebeek (2011b), Breidbach <i>et al.</i> (2014), Chathoth <i>et al.</i> (2014) and Vivek <i>et al.</i> (2014)	6
Social exchange theory	Hollebeek (2011b) and Verleye <i>et al.</i> (2013)	2
Social penetration theory	Hwang <i>et al.</i> (2015)	1
Social practice theory	Bitter <i>et al.</i> (2014)	1
Stimulus-organism-response model	Mollen and Wilson (2010) and Claffey and Brady (2014)	2
The affordance theory	Cabiddu <i>et al.</i> (2014)	1
Theory of planned behavior	Bitter <i>et al.</i> (2014)	1
Uses and gratifications theory	De Vries and Carlson (2014) and Verhagen <i>et al.</i> (2015)	2
Total		28

**Table VI.**  
Theoretical perspectives through which customer engagement has been studied

One more set of theories used by scholars to explore customer engagement is the personal behavior theories such as the affordance theory (e.g. Cabiddu *et al.*, 2014), organizational psychology (e.g. Dwivedi, 2015), stimulus-organism-response model (e.g. Mollen and Wilson, 2010; Claffey and Brady, 2014) and theory of planned behavior (e.g. Bitter *et al.*, 2014). This group of adopted theories regard engagement as a trait and try to illustrate customer behavior (from intention to action) at the individual/personal level.

Other than the leading theories of relationship marketing and S-D, recent studies have started exploring customer engagement through different theoretical lenses such as social and personal behavior theories. Further investigation of this emerging construct through other macro-contexts such as theories of social media and consumer culture theory is suggested (Javornik and Mandelli, 2012; Brodie *et al.*, 2011, 2013).

### *Conceptualization and dimensionality of customer engagement in the marketing discipline*

Through a summarized systematic review of customer engagement literature, this study found that there are many contrasting conceptualizations of customer engagement and scholars are yet to find a conforming conceptualization that is congruous across contexts (Dessart *et al.*, 2015; O'Brien *et al.*, 2015). Table AI presents the studies that have conceptualized customer engagement and have demonstrated various dimensions of the construct. As reflected in Table AI, some authors consider customer engagement as a psychological process (Bowden, 2009a; Brodie *et al.*, 2011) while others see it as a behavior (Ángeles Oviedo-García *et al.*, 2014; Jaakkola and Alexander, 2014). A variation in the dimensionality of customer engagement is also reflected by the review. The identified conceptualizations within the marketing discipline reveal that some studies have described customer engagement as unidimensional (Ángeles Oviedo-García *et al.*, 2014; Van Doorn *et al.*, 2010; Jaakkola and Alexander, 2014; Sprott *et al.*, 2009) but majority of the definitions have considered customer engagement as a multi-dimensional concept comprising of cognitive, emotional and behavioral dimensions (Bowden, 2009a; Brodie *et al.*, 2013; Dwivedi, 2015; Hollebeek, 2011b), whereas social dimension has also been added by a few studies (Balduš *et al.*, 2015; Gambetti *et al.*, 2012; So *et al.*, 2014a).

As an outcome of the analysis of existing conceptualizations, this paper defines customer engagement as the readiness of a customer to actively participate and interact with the focal object (e.g. brand/organization/community/website/organizational activity), [which] varies in direction (positive/negative) and magnitude (high/low) depending upon the nature of a customer's interaction with various touch points (physical/virtual). This conceptualization adheres to the multi-dimensional manifestation of customer engagement comprising of cognitive (experience), emotional (feeling), behavioral (participation) and social (interaction and sharing of one's experiences and content) dimensions (Gambetti *et al.*, 2012; Vivek *et al.*, 2012). The cognitive and affective dimensions imply that customer engagement is state of mind (cognition) and is based on feelings (emotion) (Vivek *et al.*, 2012). The behavioral and social dimensions signify the proactive and interactive nature of customer engagement captured by intense participation and sharing of values and content in customer-firm related social exchanges (Gambetti *et al.*, 2012; Vivek *et al.*, 2014).

Our conceptualization of customer engagement is broader in a sense that it is in line with the previous studies that introduce customer engagement as an intensity of customer's participation (Vivek *et al.*, 2012) with the focal object (Brodie *et al.*, 2011), modeling over time (Hollebeek, 2013), positive (Hollebeek *et al.*, 2014) or negative

(Hollebeek and Chen, 2014) in nature depending upon the experience of a customer (Calder *et al.*, 2009; Mollen and Wilson, 2010) with various touch points (Gambetti *et al.*, 2012). The conceptual footing of our definition lies with the broader theoretical realm of S-D logic (Vargo and Lusch, 2004, 2008) and relationship marketing (Fournier, 1998, 2009). Both these theories address interactive service experiences and marketing relationships among different value-creating stakeholders (Brodie *et al.*, 2011; Hollebeek, 2011b; Vivek *et al.*, 2014). The S-D logic argues “marketing is evolving to a new logic that is service based, necessarily interactional and co-creative of value, network centered and, thus, inherently relational” (Vargo, 2009, p. 374). This emphasis on customers’ proactive contributions in value co-creation through active and ongoing interactions that enhances intimacy between customer and brand (Ind *et al.*, 2013) is also the key tenet of relationship marketing (Carter, 2008; Hollebeek, 2011b); which justifies S-D logic and relationship marketing as the theoretical basis for customer engagement.

#### *Antecedents and consequences of customer engagement*

After an in-depth scrutiny of the 66 articles this study identified various constructs that have been taken either as antecedents and/or consequences of customer engagement by the existing studies. As shown in Table VII, elaborating the classification of Van Doorn *et al.* (2010), all the constructs have been grouped as customer-focussed, firm-focussed and other (context-based) antecedents and/or consequences.

The customer-focussed factors reflect the customers’ attitudinal (e.g. customer trust, satisfaction and involvement, etc.) and/or perceptual (e.g. perceived cost, perceived benefits, relationship quality and many more) variables depending upon customers’ affective states; their goals, traits and resources and are primarily consequential for the customers (Van Doorn *et al.*, 2010); whereas firm-focussed factors reflect the variables that are more in firms’ control (e.g. brand characteristics, brand advertising, service quality and improved work-environment, etc.) and have a direct effect on the firm operations and performance (e.g. advertising effectiveness, higher sales and idea generation, etc.). Other (context-based) variables affecting customer engagement comprise of factors that firm or customers have no control upon. They arise generally from competition or other events (e.g. economic, political and technological).

The classified constructs can affect customer engagement directly or indirectly. Although these factors are identified and listed independently, they are not mutually exclusive, rather they may affect customer engagement separately or may interact with each other and affect customer engagement jointly (Van Doorn *et al.*, 2010). Besides, some factors such as trust, satisfaction, brand love, etc. have been proposed as antecedents (Bowden, 2009a; Van Doorn *et al.*, 2010; Cambra-Fierro *et al.*, 2014; Islam and Rahman, 2016a) as well as consequences of customer engagement (Brodie *et al.*, 2011, 2013; Wallace *et al.*, 2014; Islam and Rahman, 2016b). Some factors proposed as the outcome of customer engagement can also form a feedback loop by subsequently influencing customer engagement (Van Doorn *et al.*, 2010; Vivek *et al.*, 2014), thereby, warranting further conceptual and empirical exploration.

#### **Discussion and future research**

As this review highlights, customer engagement is a vital research area for marketing researchers who are interested in taking an extensive and integrative approach to understand customers. Marketers consider customer engagement as their prime

Antecedents	Study	Consequences	Study
<i>Customer-focussed</i> Customer experience	Bowden (2009a, b) and Claffey and Brady (2014)	Loyalty	Bowden (2009a, b), Sprott <i>et al.</i> (2009), Brodie <i>et al.</i> (2011, 2013), Hollebeek (2011a), Gummerus <i>et al.</i> (2012), Vivek <i>et al.</i> (2012), Cambra-Fierro <i>et al.</i> (2013), Wirtz <i>et al.</i> (2013), Banyt� <i>et al.</i> (2014), De Vries and Carlson (2014), So <i>et al.</i> (2014a, b, 2015), Dessart <i>et al.</i> (2015), Dwivedi (2015), Harwood and Garry (2015), Nadeem <i>et al.</i> (2015) and O'Brien <i>et al.</i> (2015)
Satisfaction	Bowden (2009a, b), Van Doorn <i>et al.</i> (2010), Cambra-Fierro <i>et al.</i> (2013, 2014), So <i>et al.</i> (2014a), Cambra-Fierro <i>et al.</i> (2015), Cheung <i>et al.</i> (2015) and Dessart <i>et al.</i> (2015)	Self-brand associations	Sprott <i>et al.</i> (2009)
Commitment	Bowden (2009a, b), Van Doorn <i>et al.</i> (2010), Hollebeek (2011a), Banyt� <i>et al.</i> (2014), So <i>et al.</i> (2014a)	Brand possession recall	Sprott <i>et al.</i> (2009)
Trust	Bowden (2009a), Van Doorn <i>et al.</i> (2010), Gambetti and Graffigna (2010), Hollebeek (2011a) and So <i>et al.</i> (2014a)	Brand identification	Sprott <i>et al.</i> (2009)
Involvement	Bowden (2009a, b), Brodie <i>et al.</i> (2011), Hollebeek (2011a), Vivek <i>et al.</i> (2012), Hollebeek <i>et al.</i> (2014), So <i>et al.</i> (2014a, 2015) and Dwivedi (2015)	Commitment	Brodie <i>et al.</i> (2011, 2013), Vivek <i>et al.</i> (2012), Wirtz <i>et al.</i> (2013), Cambra-Fierro <i>et al.</i> (2013), So <i>et al.</i> (2014a), Vivek <i>et al.</i> (2014) and Harwood and Garry (2015)
Telepresence	Mollen and Wilson (2010)	Trust	Brodie <i>et al.</i> (2011, 2013), Vivek <i>et al.</i> (2012), Banyt� <i>et al.</i> (2014), So <i>et al.</i> (2014a, b, 2015), Harwood and Garry (2015) and Nadeem <i>et al.</i> (2015)
Identity	Van Doorn <i>et al.</i> (2010), Wirtz <i>et al.</i> (2013) and Verhagen <i>et al.</i> (2015)	Self-brand connection	Brodie <i>et al.</i> (2011)
Consumption goals	Van Doorn <i>et al.</i> (2010)	Emotional brand attachment	Brodie <i>et al.</i> (2011)
Perceived costs	Van Doorn <i>et al.</i> (2010)	Relationship quality	Hollebeek (2011a)
Perceived benefits	Van Doorn <i>et al.</i> (2010), Wirtz <i>et al.</i> (2013), Franzak <i>et al.</i> (2014), Dessart <i>et al.</i> (2015) and Verhagen <i>et al.</i> (2015)	Satisfaction	Gummerus <i>et al.</i> (2012), Wirtz <i>et al.</i> (2013), Banyt� <i>et al.</i> (2014) and So <i>et al.</i> (2014a, 2015)

(continued)

**Table VII.**  
Antecedents and  
consequences of  
customer  
engagement

Antecedents	Study	Consequences	Study
Participation	Brodie <i>et al.</i> (2011), Vivek <i>et al.</i> (2012) and Ángeles Oviedo-García <i>et al.</i> (2014)	Consumer empowerment	Brodie <i>et al.</i> (2013)
Relationship quality	Hollebeek (2011a)	Customer value	Hollebeek (2013) and So <i>et al.</i> (2014a)
Uncertainty avoidance	Wirtz <i>et al.</i> (2013)	Self-brand connection	Hollebeek <i>et al.</i> (2014)
Social media dependency	Tsai and Men (2013, 2014)	Brand love	Wallace <i>et al.</i> (2014)
Interaction	Tsai and Men (2013), Bitter <i>et al.</i> (2014), So <i>et al.</i> (2014a), Tsai and Men (2014) and Cheung <i>et al.</i> (2015)	Brand experience	So <i>et al.</i> (2014a)
Community identification	Tsai and Men (2013, 2014), Dessart <i>et al.</i> (2015) and Hammedi <i>et al.</i> (2015)	Word of mouth	Vivek <i>et al.</i> (2012), Cambra-Fierro <i>et al.</i> (2013), Hollebeek and Chen (2014) and Wallace <i>et al.</i> (2014)
Perceived company actions	Hollebeek and Chen (2014)		
Perceived brand quality/performance	Hollebeek and Chen (2014) and So <i>et al.</i> (2014a)		
Perceived brand value	Hollebeek and Chen (2014)		
Perceived brand innovativeness	Hollebeek and Chen (2014)		
Perceived brand/company responsiveness	Hollebeek and Chen (2014)		
Perceived delivery of brand promise	Hollebeek and Chen (2014)		
Customer brand relationship	Bitter <i>et al.</i> (2014) and Jaakkola and Alexander (2014)		
Social value	De Vries and Carlson (2014)		
Usage intensity	De Vries and Carlson (2014) and Dijkmans <i>et al.</i> (2015)		
Co-creation value	De Vries and Carlson (2014)		
Brand love	Sarkar and Sreejesh (2014)		
Brand jealousy	Sarkar and Sreejesh (2014)		
Brand attachment	So <i>et al.</i> (2014a)		
Rapport	So <i>et al.</i> (2014a)		
Brand usage duration	Dwivedi (2015)		
Customization	Cheung <i>et al.</i> (2015)		
Peer recommendations	Nadeem <i>et al.</i> (2015)		
Brand identification	Dessart <i>et al.</i> (2015)		
<i>Firm-focussed</i>			
Brand advertising	Roberts and Alpert (2010)	Advertising effectiveness	Calder <i>et al.</i> (2009)
Value proposition	Roberts and Alpert (2010)	Consumer welfare	Van Doorn <i>et al.</i> (2010)
Company culture	Roberts and Alpert (2010)	Economic surplus	Van Doorn <i>et al.</i> (2010)
Employee engagement	Roberts and Alpert (2010)	Social surplus	Van Doorn <i>et al.</i> (2010)
Customer experience	Roberts and Alpert (2010)	Cross-brand	Van Doorn <i>et al.</i> (2010)
Brand characteristics	Van Doorn <i>et al.</i> (2010)	Cross-customer	Van Doorn <i>et al.</i> (2010)
Firm reputation	Van Doorn <i>et al.</i> (2010)	Financial performance	Van Doorn <i>et al.</i> (2010) and So <i>et al.</i> (2014a)

Table VII.

(continued)

Antecedents	Study	Consequences	Study
Firm size	Van Doorn <i>et al.</i> (2010)	Competitive advantage	Van Doorn <i>et al.</i> (2010)
Firm diversification	Van Doorn <i>et al.</i> (2010)	Reputation	Van Doorn <i>et al.</i> (2010), Dijkmans <i>et al.</i> (2015) and So <i>et al.</i> (2014a)
Firm information usage and processes	Van Doorn <i>et al.</i> (2010)	Business performance	Cambra-Fierro <i>et al.</i> (2013)
Industry	Van Doorn <i>et al.</i> (2010)	Brand community involvement	Vivek <i>et al.</i> (2012)
Service quality	Verhoef <i>et al.</i> (2010)	Brand community participation	Wirtz <i>et al.</i> (2013)
Organizational support	Verhoef <i>et al.</i> (2010) and Jaakkola and Alexander (2014)	Idea generation	Wirtz <i>et al.</i> (2013)
Organizational socialization	Verleye <i>et al.</i> (2013)	Higher sales	Wirtz <i>et al.</i> (2013) and Cheung <i>et al.</i> (2015)
Brand identification	Wirtz <i>et al.</i> (2013)	Improved brand image	Wirtz <i>et al.</i> (2013)
Brand's symbolic function	Wirtz <i>et al.</i> (2013)	Relationship with customers	Wirtz <i>et al.</i> (2013), Banytè <i>et al.</i> (2014), Jaakkola and Alexander (2014) and So <i>et al.</i> (2015)
Information quality	Wirtz <i>et al.</i> (2013) and Dessart <i>et al.</i> (2015)	Value co-creation	Banytè <i>et al.</i> (2014)
Incentives	Wirtz <i>et al.</i> (2013) and Dessart <i>et al.</i> (2015)	Value	Brodie <i>et al.</i> (2011), Claffey and Brady (2014) and Vivek <i>et al.</i> (2014)
Brand strength	De Vries and Carlson (2014)	Brand performance	De Vries and Carlson (2014)
Firm communication	Banytè <i>et al.</i> (2014) and Jaakkola and Alexander (2014)	Brand attitude	Hollebeek and Chen (2014) and Nadeem <i>et al.</i> (2015)
Employee attitude	Cambra-Fierro <i>et al.</i> (2014)	Brand usage	Hollebeek <i>et al.</i> (2014)
Complaint handling	Cambra-Fierro <i>et al.</i> (2015)	Recognition	Jaakkola and Alexander (2014) and So <i>et al.</i> (2014a)
Website service quality	So <i>et al.</i> (2015)	Improved working environment	Jaakkola and Alexander (2014)
Corporate social responsibility activities	O'Brien <i>et al.</i> (2015)	Differentiation	Jaakkola and Alexander (2014)
		Reduction in antisocial behavior	Jaakkola and Alexander (2014)
		Future patronage intent	Vivek <i>et al.</i> (2014)
		Brand acceptance	Wallace <i>et al.</i> (2014)
		Customer equity	So <i>et al.</i> (2014a)
		Regulation	Van Doorn <i>et al.</i> (2010)
<i>Others</i>			
Competitive factors	Van Doorn <i>et al.</i> (2010)		
Political factors	Van Doorn <i>et al.</i> (2010)		
Economic factors	Van Doorn <i>et al.</i> (2010)		
Environmental factors	Van Doorn <i>et al.</i> (2010)		
Social factors	Van Doorn <i>et al.</i> (2010)		
Technological factors	Van Doorn <i>et al.</i> (2010)		

Table VII.

branding strategy (Hollebeek, 2011b). Marketers also see customer engagement as a crucial driver of customer decision-making process (Bowden, 2009a), organizational performance (Cambra-Fierro *et al.*, 2013), reputation (Van Doorn *et al.*, 2010) and value (Vivek *et al.*, 2014). However, the customer engagement concept stands unexplored in



the marketing literature (Brodie *et al.*, 2011; Hollebeek, 2011a). To the authors' knowledge there exists no systematic review that could describe the present state of customer engagement research and expedite future research by highlighting the imperative issues that researchers should look into.

This study makes multifold practical and academic contributions. On the practical front, this study exhibits the favorable outcomes organizations can derive by having an engaged customer base. Directing an organization's customer engagement strategy is seen as a crucial element of an organization's strategic orientation to markets (Vivek *et al.*, 2014). The more an organization knows about how to engage its customers, the better adept it will be to enact so. Therefore, understanding customer engagement is imperative in that regard; this review will help organizations comprehend that better. Further, understanding how various factors are connected with other relative factors and in what contexts is also critical. Organizations are generating avenues to engage customers with them and with each other. Such organizations need to initiate and manage ongoing networks with customers to develop and sustain enduring relationship ties.

On the theoretical front, this review makes multiple contributions. First, the study presents a comprehensive systematic review of 66 identified articles in the marketing discipline to reveal how researchers have explored this concept so far and presents a route for future research. Second, this review presents various conceptualizations and also outlines various dimensions of customer engagement proposed in the extant literature. Gaining insights from existing conceptualizations of the construct and supporting that by the theoretical foundations, a concise definition, broad in scope and perspective has been derived. Third, a thorough discussion regarding the evolution and relevance of customer engagement has been illustrated. To understand how scholars have investigated the construct, a collection of theories adopted by researchers are identified, summarized and tabulated for easy comprehension and reference of existent research results. Fourth, a tabular summary of various antecedents and consequences of customer engagement, demarcated along the spectrum of customer-focussed, firm-focussed and context-specific, has been presented that will enable readers to readily comprehend the existing state of research conducted with regard to various conceptual relations of the construct with other concepts. By providing the distribution schema of customer engagement articles based on different criteria, this study is believed to serve as a valuable tool for researchers to understand the current scenario of customer engagement research in the marketing discipline and aid in moving the field forward. Lastly, the review revealed various shortcomings in the existing literature on customer engagement that future research should focus on. Table VIII summarizes the major research gaps identified from the customer engagement literature.

#### *Exploration of whether propensity of customer engagement differs across different products and services*

Customer engagement has been studied in a limited set of services such as hospitality (Bowden, 2009a), tourism (So *et al.*, 2014a, b), telecom (Cambra-Fierro *et al.*, 2013) and healthcare (Banytè *et al.*, 2014), thereby, leaving a large number of service contexts unexplored. Besides, there are limited studies that have investigated if the intensity of customer engagement varies across service contexts. Therefore, customer engagement needs to be investigated across different service contexts to check if any variation occurs and if so, the factors that cause the variation need to be identified (Brodie *et al.*, 2011; Hollebeek, 2011a; Bowden *et al.*, 2015).

S. No.	Major gaps identified	Study
1.	Exploration of whether propensity for customer engagement differs across different products and services	Bowden (2009a, b), Ashley <i>et al.</i> (2011), Brodie <i>et al.</i> (2011), Hollebeek (2011a), Cambra-Fierro <i>et al.</i> (2013, 2014), De Vries and Carlson (2014), Franzak <i>et al.</i> (2014), Hollebeek and Chen (2014), Jaakkola and Alexander (2014), Bowden <i>et al.</i> (2015), Dwivedi (2015) and Nadeem <i>et al.</i> (2015)
2.	Development of a valid and reliable measure of customer engagement	Mollen and Wilson (2010), Bolton (2011), Hollebeek (2011a), Gummerus <i>et al.</i> (2012), Vivek <i>et al.</i> (2012), Wirtz <i>et al.</i> (2013), Cambra-Fierro <i>et al.</i> (2014) and Hollebeek and Chen (2014)
3.	Investigation of the role of employees in engaging customers	Kumar <i>et al.</i> (2010), Brodie <i>et al.</i> (2013) and Verleye <i>et al.</i> (2013)
4.	Exploration of negative effects of customer engagement	Verleye <i>et al.</i> (2013), Bitter <i>et al.</i> (2014), Hollebeek and Chen (2014), So <i>et al.</i> (2014a, 2015), Vivek <i>et al.</i> (2014) and Dessart <i>et al.</i> (2015)
5.	Undertaking longitudinal research to further understand customer engagement	Bowden (2009b), Brodie <i>et al.</i> (2011), Hollebeek (2011b), Verleye <i>et al.</i> (2013), Bitter <i>et al.</i> (2014), Dijkmans <i>et al.</i> (2015), Hollebeek and Chen (2014), Hollebeek <i>et al.</i> (2014), Vivek <i>et al.</i> (2014) and Dwivedi (2015)
6.	Further exploration and empirical validation of causal relationships between customer engagement and other related constructs	Van Doorn <i>et al.</i> (2010), Bolton (2011), Brodie <i>et al.</i> (2011), Hollebeek (2011a, b, 2013), Cambra-Fierro <i>et al.</i> (2013), Tsai and Men (2013, 2014), Banyte <i>et al.</i> (2014), Bitter <i>et al.</i> (2014), Cambra-Fierro <i>et al.</i> (2014), Claffey and Brady (2014), Jaakkola and Alexander (2014), So <i>et al.</i> (2014a, b) and O'Brien <i>et al.</i> (2015)

**Table VIII.**  
Major gaps identified  
in the literature

As the subject of customer engagement is still developing, its scrutiny across different product categories (Franzak *et al.*, 2014; Hollebeek and Chen, 2014) is also an interesting research area that needs to be focussed on (De Vries and Carlson, 2014).

#### *Development of a valid and reliable measure of customer engagement*

Attempts have been made by researchers to develop a scale for customer engagement. Various context-specific scales have been developed in the previous studies, e.g. self-concept (Sprott *et al.*, 2009), social media (Hollebeek *et al.*, 2014), multiple entities (Vivek *et al.*, 2014), tourism (So *et al.*, 2014b) and online brand communities (Baldus *et al.*, 2015). These scales vary in dimension and are limited to a few contexts only, leaving a multitude of areas untouched. Therefore, there is a need to develop a much valid measure of customer engagement that can be generalized across multiple contexts (Hollebeek, 2011a; Gummerus *et al.*, 2012; Wirtz *et al.*, 2013; Hollebeek and Chen, 2014).

#### *Investigation of the role of employees in engaging customers*

Customer-employee interaction occurs at almost every touch-point (Sirianni *et al.*, 2013). Organizations can engage customers more effectively if they have a committed workforce who can encourage repeat interactions. To the authors' surprise, no study was found regarding the employee engagement-customer engagement intercept. Therefore, it is imperative to study the role of employees in leveraging customer engagement (Gambetti and Graffigna, 2010; Brodie *et al.*, 2013). Addressing this gap would help organizations frame strategies to ensure positive (customer/employee)

experience that will further drive customer engagement. In the hyper-connected world, prioritizing value co-creation is crucial. It is imperative that employees be equipped with skills to interact with and engage multiple stakeholders.

#### *Exploration of negative effects of customer engagement*

Higgins (2006) argues “to be engaged is to be involved, occupied and interested in something” (p. 442), which may not only be positive but may also be potentially negative in form (Vivek *et al.*, 2014; Hollebeek and Chen, 2014). While several studies have presented diverse factors that drive customer engagement and the outcomes organizations can gain by strategically implementing customer engagement, most of the studies that are identified in this review have predominantly emphasized on the positive expressions of customer engagement whereas negative forms of customer engagement have remained unexplored. Future research may focus on studying negative customer engagement so as to explore some of the damaging effects of engagement (Vivek *et al.*, 2014; Dessart *et al.*, 2015).

#### *Need for longitudinal research to further understand customer engagement*

Most of the studies that have explored customer engagement empirically are based on cross-sectional research (e.g. Bowden, 2009b; Ashley *et al.*, 2011; Gummerus *et al.*, 2012; Brodie *et al.*, 2013; Cabiddu *et al.*, 2014; Cambra-Fierro *et al.*, 2015), reflecting only a snapshot of a customer’s engagement with the focal object (Hollebeek, 2011b). Customer engagement as a process evolves and intensifies over time (Bowden, 2009a; Gambetti *et al.*, 2012). Therefore, it is suggested to conduct longitudinal research to provide better insights regarding how customers engage with a focal object over time (Bowden, 2009b; Hollebeek, 2011b, 2014; Dwivedi, 2015). Longitudinal studies could offer appropriate insights into engagement processes in different contexts (both online as well as offline).

#### *Further exploration and empirical validation of causal relationships between customer engagement and other related constructs*

Marketers need to view their customers holistically, rather than viewing them in a fragmented way through different media channels (Bolton, 2011). Marketers are investing in finding out what factors actually drive customer engagement (Verhoef *et al.*, 2010; Bolton, 2011). Therefore, they are seeking conceptual and empirical models establishing relationship between customer engagement and other related constructs with respect to the conceivably different states of engagement in online and offline environments (Bolton, 2011; Brodie *et al.*, 2011). Although, researchers have proposed numerous factors that may act as antecedents and/or consequences of customer engagement (as shown in Table VII), but most of these factors have only been proposed conceptually. Therefore, future research is directed to investigate and empirically validate the causal relationships between customer engagement and other related constructs (Brodie *et al.*, 2011; Hollebeek, 2011a; Jaakkola and Alexander, 2014; O’Brien *et al.*, 2015) for further progress of this area. Researchers are also suggested to check the controllability of the identified variables as well as the demographic variables on customer engagement (Banyté *et al.*, 2014; Cambra-Fierro *et al.*, 2015; Hammedi *et al.*, 2015).

In addition to the broader research areas conferred above, future research is also encouraged to investigate the extent to which the key drivers and dimensions be generalized across contexts (Brodie *et al.*, 2011; Vivek *et al.*, 2014). Another area of

attention is to study how firms can use customer engagement to segment customers based on their proclivity to engage and how can they manage different forms of customer engagement (Van Doorn *et al.*, 2010; Bolton, 2011; Hollebeek, 2011b). What policies and systems do firms need to implement so as to have a highly engaged customer base than their competitors in both B2C and B2B settings? (Van Doorn *et al.*, 2010; Hollebeek *et al.*, 2014).

This study concludes that customer engagement is a looming research area that needs more focus due to its practical pertinence. Based on the propagation of customer engagement use and importance, particularly in the last six years, this study foresees that more research will be conducted in this area and further articles and results will be exposed in the years to come. Focussing on relationship-building strategies through customer engagement will facilitate marketers devise effective marketing strategies to enhance customer experience, customer loyalty and escalate brand performance and value. Overall, this study makes significant contribution by providing a summary that can help readers understand the state of customer engagement research done so far and assist researchers identify areas for future research.

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Appendix

Authors	Definition	Cognitive	Emotional	Behavioral	Social
Bowden (2009a)	“psychological process that models the underlying mechanisms by which customer loyalty forms for new customers of a service brand as well as the mechanisms by which loyalty may be maintained for repeat purchase customers of a service brand” (p.65)	✓	✓	✓	
Sprott <i>et al.</i> (2009)	“an individual difference representing consumers’ propensity to include important brands as part of how they view themselves” (p. 92)		✓		
Calder <i>et al.</i> (2009)	“a second-order construct that is manifested in various first-order ‘experience’ constructs” where experience is defined as “a consumer’s beliefs about how a site fits into his/her life” (p. 322)	✓	✓	✓	
Van Doorn <i>et al.</i> (2010)	“the customers’ behavioral manifestation toward a brand or firm, beyond purchase, resulting from motivational drivers” (p. 254)			✓	
Mollen and Wilson (2010)	“a cognitive and affective commitment to an active relationship with the brand as personified by the website or other computer-mediated entities designed to communicate brand value. It is characterized by the dimensions of dynamic and sustained cognitive processing and the satisfying of instrumental value (utility and relevance) and experiential value (emotional congruence with the narrative schema encountered in computer-mediated entities” (p. 923)	✓	✓		
Hollebeek (2011a)	“the level of an individual customer’s motivational, brand-related and context-dependent state of mind characterised by specific levels of cognitive, emotional and behavioural activity in direct brand interactions” (p. 790)	✓	✓	✓	
Hollebeek (2011b)	“the level of customer’s cognitive, emotional and behavioral investment in specific brand interactions” (p. 565)	✓	✓	✓	
Brodie <i>et al.</i> (2011)	“a psychological state that occurs by virtue of interactive, co-creative customer experiences with a focal agent/object (e.g. a brand) in focal service relationships” (p. 260)	✓	✓	✓	
Gambetti <i>et al.</i> (2012)	“dynamic and process-based concept evolving over time in intensity on the basis of the brand’s capability of increasingly intercepting consumers’ desires and expectations using all possible physical and virtual touch-points between brand and consumers” (p. 680)	✓	✓	✓	✓
Vivek <i>et al.</i> (2012)	“the intensity of an individual’s participation in and connection with an organization’s offerings and/or organizational activities, which either the customer or the organization initiate” (p. 133)	✓	✓	✓	✓

(continued)

**Table A1.**  
An overview of conceptualization and dimensionality of customer engagement in the marketing discipline

Authors	Definition	Cognitive	Emotional	Behavioral	Social
Brodie <i>et al.</i> (2013)	“a multidimensional concept comprising cognitive, emotional, and/or behavioral dimensions, and plays a central role in the process of relational exchange where other relational concepts are engagement antecedents and/or consequences in iterative engagement processes within the brand community” (p. 3)	✓	✓	✓	
Wirtz <i>et al.</i> (2013)	“as an identification with the OBC that results in interactive participation in the OBC” (p. 230)	✓		✓	
Vivek <i>et al.</i> (2014)	“CE goes beyond purchase and is the level of the customer’s (or potential customer’s) interactions and connections with the brand or firm’s offerings or activities, often involving others in the social network created around the brand/offering/activity” (p. 406)	✓	✓	✓	✓
So <i>et al.</i> (2014a)	“a customers’ personal connection to a brand as manifested in cognitive, affective, and behavioral actions outside of the purchase situation” (p. 310)	✓	✓	✓	✓
Dijkmans <i>et al.</i> (2015)	“consumer’s familiarity with a company’s social media activities (i.e. cognition) and the online following of these activities (i.e. behavior)” (p. 59)	✓		✓	
Hollebeek <i>et al.</i> (2014)	“a consumer’s positively valenced brand-related cognitive, emotional and behavioral activity during or related to focal consumer/brand interactions” (p. 154)	✓	✓	✓	
Ángeles Oviedo-García <i>et al.</i> (2014)	“the manifestation of commitment (through the intensity of interactions and their implications) toward the offers and activities of a brand, product or firm (configurations of value), regardless of whether it is initiated by the individual or the firm” (p. 333).			✓	
Jaakkola and Alexander (2014)	“Behaviors through which customers make voluntary resource contributions that have a brand or firm focus but go beyond what is fundamental to transactions, occur in interactions between the focal object and/or other actors, and result from motivational drivers” (p. 2)			✓	
Dwivedi (2015)	“consumers’ positive, ful-filling, brand-use-related state of mind that is characterized by vigor, dedication and absorption” (p. 101)	✓	✓	✓	
Baldus <i>et al.</i> (2015)	“the compelling, intrinsic motivations to continue interacting with an online brand community” (p. 979)	✓	✓	✓	✓

Table A1.

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