

Customer Engagement: Conceptual Domain, Fundamental Propositions, and Implications for Research

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Abstract

In today's highly dynamic and interactive business environment, the role of "customer engagement" (CE) in cocreating customer experience and value is receiving increasing attention from business practitioners and academics alike. Despite this interest, systematic scholarly inquiry into the concept and its conceptual distinctiveness from other, associated relational concepts has been limited to date. This article explores the theoretical foundations of CE by drawing on relationship marketing theory and the service-dominant (S-D) logic. The analysis also examines the use of the term "engagement" in the social science, management, and marketing academic literatures, as well as in specific business practice applications. Five fundamental propositions (FPs) derived from this analysis are used to develop a general definition of CE, and distinguish the concept from other relational concepts, including "participation" and "involvement." The five propositions are used in the development of a framework for future research, the undertaking of which would facilitate the subsequent refinement of the conceptual domain of CE. Overall, CE, based on its relational foundations of interactive experience and the cocreation of value, is shown to represent an important concept for research in marketing and service management.

Keywords

consumer to consumer, content analysis, customer relationship management, engagement, experience, relationship marketing, service-dominant logic

Introduction

While the notion of "engagement" in business relationships is not new, significant practitioner interest in the concept has developed in the last decade (e.g., Harvey 2005; Haven 2007). This interest is demonstrated by the number of business conferences, seminars, webinars, and roundtables on the topic of "customer-" and/or "consumer engagement." The terms are also being given considerable attention by several consulting companies, including Nielsen Media Research, the Gallup Group, and IAG Research. Additionally, the Advertising Research Foundation, the American Association of Advertising Agencies, and the Association of National Advertisers are working on ways to define and measure customer engagement.

It is suggested that within interactive, dynamic business environments, customer engagement (CE) represents a strategic imperative for generating enhanced corporate performance, including sales growth (Neff 2007), superior competitive advantage (Sedley 2008), and profitability (Voyles 2007). The rationale underlying these assertions is that engaged customers play a key role in viral marketing activity by providing referrals and/or recommendations for specific products, services, and/or brands to others. Engaged customers can also play an important role in new product/service development (Hoyer, et al 2010; Kothandaraman and Wilson 2001; Nambisan and Nambisan

2008), and in cocreating experience and value (Brakus, Schmitt, and Zarantello 2009; Prahalad and Ramaswamy 2004). This interest in the CE concept observed in the business practice discourse, coupled with the recent increasing use of CE by marketing academics, has led the Marketing Science Institute to list CE as a key research priority for the period 2010-2012 (Marketing Science Institute [MSI] 2010).

The term "engagement" has been used in a variety of academic disciplines including sociology, political science, psychology, and organizational behavior in the last decade (e.g., Achterberg et al. 2003; Resnick 2001; Saks 2006). Within the academic marketing and service literature, very few academic articles used the terms "consumer engagement," "customer engagement," and/or "brand engagement" prior to 2005. Since then the terms are being increasingly used: 9 articles adopting one or more of these terms were identified in 2005, 20 articles in 2006, 18 articles in 2007, 28 articles in 2008, 61 articles in

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2009, and 65 articles in 2010. Despite the growing popularity of the term “engagement,” few authors have attempted to define the concept, or examine how it differs from similar relational concepts, such as participation and involvement. Exceptions include Patterson, Yu, and de Ruyter (2006), Vivek, Beatty, and Morgan (2010), Hollebeek (2011), and Mollen and Wilson (2010), who define CE in terms of a psychological state. Bowden (2009a), by contrast, views CE as a psychological process, which drives customer loyalty. While these authors highlight different aspects of CE, relatively little attention is paid to the conceptual foundations underlying the concept.

We suggest that the conceptual roots of CE may be explained by drawing on theory addressing interactive experience and value cocreation within marketing relationships. Recently, Vargo and Lusch (2004, 2008a) have formally articulated this perspective as the “service-dominant (S-D) logic” of marketing. This theoretical lens offers “a transcending view of relationships,” which contrasts with a more traditional, transactional view of marketing relationships, labeled the “goods-dominant” perspective (Vargo 2009). This broader relational perspective recognizes that specific consumer behavior outcomes are generated by customers’ particular interactive, value cocreative experiences with organizations and/or other stakeholders.

The 2010 *Journal of Service Research Special Issue* titled “Customer Engagement” is of particular relevance to advancing engagement research in marketing. Van Doorn et al. (2010) address “customer engagement behaviors,” which result from motivational drivers including word-of-mouth activity, customer-to-customer (C2C) interactions and/or blogging activity. The authors suggest “customer engagement behaviors go beyond transactions” (cf. MSI 2010), and may be defined as “customers’ behavioral manifestations that have a brand- or firm-focus, beyond purchase, resulting from motivational drivers” (p. 254). Based on this rationale, the authors develop a theoretical model linking customer engagement behaviors to specific customer-, firm-, and contextual antecedents and consequences.

This article builds on the research published in the 2010 *Journal of Service Research Special Issue* on CE. Its contribution lies in the provision of a broader and more rigorous theoretical analysis of the CE concept in order to define its conceptual domain and provide a general definition. The article is divided into three main sections. The first section provides the theoretical foundations of engagement by examining the concept within the marketing, social science, and management literatures. In the second section, five fundamental propositions (FPs) are developed, which are used to arrive at a general definition of CE. This general definition provides a conceptualization that is applicable across a range of situations, rather than limited to a particular situation. The final section derives a set of implications for future research.

Conceptual Foundations of CE

Exploring Theoretical Roots

We draw on theory addressing marketing relationships and interactive service experience to examine the conceptual

foundations of the emerging CE concept. This perspective of relationships and service management was first explored by the Nordic School three decades ago (Grönroos 2010; Gummesson 1994), although Vargo and Lusch’s (2004) seminal article provides a more formal expression of this perspective, which the authors term the “service-dominant (S-D) logic.” The S-D logic, currently, is articulated using a set of 10 foundational premises depicting marketing relationships typified by customers’ interactive, cocreative experiences with other stakeholders, including service personnel, firms, and/or other customers (Vargo and Lusch 2008a).

Four of the foundational premises underlying the S-D logic are of particular relevance for determining the conceptual foundations underlying the emerging CE concept (Vargo and Lusch 2008a, p. 7). Premise 6 states “*The customer is always a cocreator of value,*” which highlights the interactive, cocreative nature of value creation between customers and/or other actors within service relationships. Further, Premise 9 states “*All social and economic actors are resource integrators,*” which implies the context of value creation to occur within networks. In justifying these premises, Vargo and Lusch (2008b, p. 32) state:

“... the service for service foundation of S-D logic provides the motivation for *interaction* and *network* development. That is, we serve—use our network of resources for others’ benefit (individually and collectively)—in order to obtain service from others. Service, as used in the S-D logic, identifies the logic of *interactivity*. (Italics added)”

Moreover, Premise 10 states “*Value is always uniquely and phenomenologically determined by the beneficiary.*” Specifically, Premise 10 emphasizes the highly experiential, inherently subjective, and contextual nature of the value cocreation concept. This particular premise has its roots in the notion of the “experience economy” (Pine and Gilmore 1999), “service encounters,” and “servicescapes” (Bitner 1992). For example, Schembri (2006, p. 388) suggests that within the S-D logic, customers typically, act as “prosumers” in the way they create unique experiences; “therefore [they] are not merely recipients, nor co-producers as in the rationalistic sense, but *cocreators of their service experience.*” Finally Premise 8 states: “*A service-centered view is inherently customer-oriented and relational,*” which highlights the transcending, relational nature of service (cf. Vargo 2009). In this context, service is viewed to generate specific customer benefits through the cocreation value with other actors in specific service relationships by virtue of focal interactions and/or interactive experiences.

These four premises, in particular, provide a conceptual foundation for the development of the CE concept, which reflects customers’ interactive, cocreative experiences with other stakeholders in focal, networked service relationships. Specifically, Lusch and Vargo (2010) suggest particular interactive, cocreative customer experiences may be interpreted as the act of “engaging.” Further, Vivek, Beatty, and Morgan (2010), recognize the central role of CE from what the authors

term an “expanded relationship marketing” perspective. They note this perspective highlights the importance of establishing and maintaining enduring, value-laden interactive customer relationships (e.g., Christopher, Payne, and Ballantyne 1993; Morgan and Hunt 1994), and value cocreation (e.g., Prahalad and Ramaswamy 2004).

Further support for the S-D logic underpinning the conceptual roots of CE is provided by scrutiny of recent literature authored by a diversity of scholars. Specifically, we identified over 50 academic articles using the terms “engage” and/or “engagement” in discussions addressing the S-D logic. The majority of these articles were published since 2007, with two thirds of these addressing specific business-to-consumer (B2C) relationships, and the remaining one third addressing business-to-business (B2B) relationships. Content analysis of these articles indicated the terms “engage” and/or “engagement” are typically used in discussions about processes, cocreation, solution development and/or utilization, interactions and/or relevant, marketing-based forms of service exchange. In the research addressing B2C relationships, the terms “engage” and/or “engagement” are also linked to customer and/or brand experience, emotion, creativity, collaboration, learning, and/or (brand) community interactions.

Of particular note is that the terms “engage” and/or “engagement” appear to replace more traditional relational concepts, including “involvement” and/or “participation.” For example, Schau, Muñiz, and Arnould’s (2009) recent research examining value creation in brand communities draws on the terms “engage” and/or “engagement” 75 times, while refraining from the use of the terms “involvement” and/or “participation” altogether. However, despite the relatively profuse usage of the terms “engage/engagement” in literature addressing the S-D logic, little explicit attention is given to the conceptualization of the term, nor its conceptual distinctiveness from more traditional concepts.

Engagement Conceptualizations in Social Science, Management and Practitioner Literature

The use of the term “engagement” has been traced back to the 17th century, when it was used to describe a number of notions, including a moral or legal obligation, tie of duty, betrothal, employment, and/or military conflict (*Oxford English Dictionary* 2009). However, since then more volitional (e.g., Jennings and Stoker 2004) and/or discretionary (Frank, Finnegan, and Taylor 2004) interpretations of the concept have emerged in the literature, including those addressing the notion of “connection,” “attachment,” “emotional involvement,” and/or “participation” used to describe specific engagement forms (e.g., London, Downey, and Mace 2007). At the meta-level, “engagement,” as a form of social, interactive behavior, has been characterized as a transient *state* occurring within broader relevant engagement *processes* developing over time (e.g., Bryson and Hand 2007; Huo, Binning, and Molina 2009).

In the last two decades, the term “engagement” has been used extensively in fields including psychology, sociology,

political science, and organizational behavior, leading to a variety of conceptual approaches that highlight different aspects of the concept (Hollebeek 2011; Ilic 2008). For example, while “civic engagement” has been studied in sociology (Jennings and Stoker 2004; Mondak et al. 2010), “social engagement” has been examined in the field of psychology (Achterberg et al. 2003; Huo, Binning, and Molina 2009). Further, educational psychology has explored “student engagement” (Bryson and Hand 2007; Hu 2010), while political science examined the “engagement of nation states” (Kane 2008; Resnick 2001). Moreover, in the organizational behavior/management literature, the terms “employee engagement” (Catteww, Flynn and Vonderhorst 2007; Crawford, LePine, and Rich 2010) and “stakeholder engagement” (Greenwood 2007; Noland and Phillips 2010) have been explored.

Appendix A illustrates the diversity in the ways engagement has been defined across a range of social science disciplines, thus extending our understanding of the engagement concept beyond the marketing discipline. The appendix also provides an understanding of the predominantly cognitive, emotional, and/or behavioral dimensionality of CE by showing the different proposed dimensions of specific engagement forms identified from the literature review. As such, the reviewed definitions predominantly represent engagement as a multidimensional concept. However, the expression of specific cognitive, emotional, and/or behavioral dimensions varies considerably across engagement actors (i.e., engagement subjects/objects) and/or contexts.

Moreover, the initial use of the term “engagement” in the business practice discourse was traced back to Appelbaum (2001). Over the last decade, a range of definitions has been suggested for various engagement forms, which illuminate the concept from different stakeholder and/or contextual perspectives (e.g., customer behavior, online communities, etc.). To illustrate this diversity, a selection of definitions is provided in Appendix B.

The definitions in Appendices A and B portray the occurrence of salient engagement states within broader engagement processes characterized by specific interactions and/or experiences between a focal engagement subject (e.g., student; customer) and object (e.g., course/module; brand, product, or organization, respectively). Specific engagement objects may range from individuals (e.g., a particular person) to collective objects (e.g., a specific political institution; Kane 2008).

The literature review indicated a prominence of the multidimensional (i.e., cognitive, emotional, and/or behavioral) perspective of engagement. However, despite the prominence of the multidimensional perspective, over 40% of the definitions reviewed in the academic and business practice literature expressed engagement as a unidimensional concept and as such, focused on *either* the emotional, *or* cognitive, *or* behavioral aspect of engagement. The behavioral dimension in particular, appears dominant within the unidimensional perspective. However, although the unidimensional approaches possess the merit of simplicity, they fall short in reflecting the

Table 1. Engagement Dimensionality: Unidimensional Versus Multidimensional Views

Engagement Dimensionality	Social Science and Management Literatures	Business Practice Literature
Unidimensional		
Emotional	Catteeuw et al. (2007) Roberts and Davenport (2002)	Heath (2007) Campanelli (2007) Shevlin (2007b) Smith & Wallace (2010)
Cognitive	Blumenfeld and Meece (1988) Guthrie (2001) Guthrie and Cox (2001)	
Behavioral	Balsano (2005) Pomerantz (2006) Downer, Sara, and Robert (2007) Saczynski et al. (2006) Achterberg et al. (2003) Grudens-Schuck (2000)	McConnell (2006) Peppers and Rogers (2005) Peterson (2007) Ghuneim (2006) Jasra (2007)
Multidimensional		
Cognitive/Emotional	Koyuncu, Ronald, and Lisa (2006) London, Geraldine, and Shauna (2007) Marks (2000) Marks and Printy (2003)	Passikoff (2006) Harris (2006)
Emotional/Behavioral	Norris, Jean, and Garth (2003) Huo, Binning, and Molina (2009)	Shevlin (2007a)
Cognitive/Behavioral	Bejerholm and Eklund (2007) Kane (2008) Matthews et al. (2010) Hu (2010)	Sedley (2008) ARF (2006) Harvey (2005) Haven (2007) Owyang (2007)
Cognitive/Emotional/Behavioral	Macey and Schneider (2008)	Appelbaum (2001) PeopleMetrics (2010)

rich conceptual scope of engagement. Table 1 provides an overview of the specific (cognitive, emotional, and behavioral) engagement dimensionality adopted in the literature reviewed.

Several investigations within the social science and management disciplines recognize the occurrence of fluctuations in focal engagement levels across “engagement states,” which are observed within broader, iterative engagement processes. Specific illustrations of this observation include research addressing “civic engagement” (e.g., Balsano 2005; Jennings and Zeitner 2003), “stakeholder engagement” (e.g., Greenwood 2007; Grudens-Schuck 2000), “engagement of [nation] states” (Kane 2008; Resnick 2001), “social engagement” (e.g., Achterberg et al. 2003; Bejerholm and Eklund 2007; Huo, Binning, and Molina 2009; Saczynski et al. 2006) and “student engagement” (e.g., Bryson and Hand 2007; Marks 2000; Marks and Printy 2003; Vibert and Shields 2003).

The review also indicates that focal engagement processes may range from short-term and/or highly variable, to long-term, and/or relatively stable manifestations of engagement (Fredricks, Blumenfeld, and Paris 2004). Further, while the subject’s engagement levels at the onset of the engagement process typically are relatively low, these tend to develop over time under particular, conducive contextual conditions (Bejerholm and Eklund 2007), including specific favorable interactions fostering individuals’ engagement levels over the course of specific interactions.

Engagement Conceptualizations in the Marketing Literature

The terms “consumer engagement” and “customer engagement” have transpired in the academic marketing and service literature only in the last 5 years. In contrast to the social science, management, and business practice literatures, which offer a plethora of definitions of relevant engagement forms, relatively few attempts at the systematic conceptualization of CE have been observed in the marketing literature to date. The conceptualizations identified in a literature review are summarized in Table 2.

The most comprehensive definitions acknowledging the existence of cognitive, emotional, and behavioral dimensions comprising the CE concept are provided by authors including Patterson, Yu, and de Ruyter (2006), Vivek, Beatty, and Morgan (2010), Hollebeek (2011), and Mollen and Wilson (2010). In developing their definitions these authors, typically, draw on the literatures available from related fields (e.g., social psychology). For instance, drawing on organizational behavior research, Patterson, Yu, and de Ruyter (2006) propose four specific CE components, including (a) *absorption*: the level of customer concentration on a focal engagement object, such as a brand/organization, thus reflecting the cognitive dimension of engagement; (b) *dedication*: a customer’s sense of belonging to the organization/brand, which corresponds to the emotional

Table 2. Engagement Conceptualizations and Dimensionality in the Marketing Literature

Authors	Concept	Definition	Dimensionality
Patterson et al. (2006)	Customer engagement	The level of a customer's physical, cognitive, and emotional presence in their relationship with a service organisation	Multidimensional: Absorption (C), dedication (E), vigor/interaction (B)
Vivek, Beatty, and Morgan (2010)	Consumer engagement	The intensity of an individual's participation & connection with the organization's offerings & activities initiated by either the customer or the organization	Multidimensional: C, E, B
Mollen and Wilson (2010)	Online brand engagement	The customer's 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	Multidimensional: Sustained cognitive processing (C), instrumental value (C), experiential value (E)
Bowden (2009a)	Customer engagement process	A 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	Multidimensional: C, E, B ^a
Van Doorn et al. (2010)	Customer engagement behavior	Customers' behavioral manifestation toward a brand or firm, beyond purchase, resulting from motivational drivers such as word-of-mouth activity, recommendations, helping other customers, blogging, writing reviews.	Unidimensional: B
Hollebeek (2011)	Customer brand engagement	The level of a customer's motivational, brand-related and context-dependent state of mind characterized by specific levels of cognitive, emotional, and behavioral activity in brand interactions.	Multidimensional: C, E, B
Pham and Avnet (2009)	Engagement behavior	Finds that engagement "seems to be inferred from a pattern of action or withdrawal with respect to a target object (p. 116)."	Multidimensional: C, B ^a
Higgins and Scholer (2009)	Engagement	A state of being involved, occupied, fully absorbed or engrossed in something (i.e. sustained attention), generating the consequences of a particular attraction or repulsion force. The more engaged individuals are to approach or repel a target, the more value is added to or subtracted from it.	Multidimensional: C, E, B ^a

Engagement dimensionality: C, Cognitive; E, Emotional; B, Behavioral.

^a Inferred from, rather than made explicit in, the relevant research.

dimension of engagement; (c) *vigor*: a customer's level of energy and mental resilience in interacting with a focal engagement object; and (d) *interaction*: the two-way communications between a focal engagement subject and object. The latter two dimensions (i.e., "vigor" and "interaction") reflect the behavioral dimension of engagement. In contrast, Vivek, Beatty, and Morgan (2010), by focusing on specific actions and/or interactions, view CE from a predominantly behavioral perspective. Specifically, the cognitive and emotional dimensions of engagement identified in the literature review are implied only by the term "connection" in the authors' proposed definition.

Drawing on a range of social science and management research, Hollebeek (2011, p. 6) defines "customer *brand* engagement" as "the level of a customer's motivational, brand-related, and context-dependent state of mind characterized by specific levels of cognitive, emotional, and behavioral activity in brand interactions." Further, Mollen and Wilson (2010, p. 5) view *online* "brand engagement" to comprise the dimensions of "sustained cognitive processing," "instrumental value" (i.e., utility and relevance), and "experiential value" (i.e., emotional congruence with the narrative schema encountered in computer-mediated entities). The authors also distinguish the concept from "involvement." Specifically, CE is suggested to extend beyond involvement in that it encompasses a proactive, interactive customer relationship with a specific engagement object (e.g., a brand). Accordingly, the authors posit CE transcends beyond "the mere exercise of cognition," and "unlike involvement, requires the satisfying of experiential value, as well as instrumental value." This argument is consistent with the view of CE within the transcending view of relationships articulated within the S-D logic, which highlights interactivity and customer experience (e.g., Vargo 2009).

Bowden (2009a) describes CE as "a psychological process" driving customer loyalty, while Van Doorn et al. (2010) and Pham and Avnet (2009) focus on specific CE behaviors by defining the concept primarily with reference to the specific types and/or patterns of focal engagement activities. Further engagement, according to Higgins and Scholer's (2009) Regulatory Engagement Theory, refers to "a [consumer's] state of being occupied, fully-absorbed or engrossed," thus generating "a level of attraction to, or repulsion from, a focal engagement object." The authors recognize the existence of not only positive expressions of engagement (e.g., bonding; i.e., by virtue of being *attracted to* the object) but also potentially negative expressions of the concept (e.g., dissociating from an object). Of note is that the marketing literature, to date, has focused predominantly on *positive*, as opposed to negative, expressions of engagement.

Moreover, CE with advertising and/or specific media has been examined in advertising research (e.g., Woodard 2006). In this field, CE has been linked to superior advertising effectiveness (Calder and Malthouse 2005, 2008; Calder, Malthouse, and Schädel 2009; Wang 2006). For instance, Calder and Malthouse (2008, p. 5), focusing on the experiential aspects of CE, define "media engagement" as "the sum of the motivational experiences consumers have with a media product."

These authors, in addition to Van Doorn et al. (2010), explicitly refer to the motivational nature of CE, which is also implicit in the work by Mollen and Wilson (2010), Vivek, Beatty, and Morgan (2010), Patterson, Yu, and de Ruyter (2006), Pham and Avnet (2009), and Higgins and Scholer (2009).

Further, Algesheimer, Dholakia, and Hermann (2005), who explore the effects of consumers' identification with a specific brand community, define "brand community engagement" as "a consumer's intrinsic motivation to interact and cooperate with community members." Moreover, Sprott, Czellar, and Spangenberg (2009) address the concept of "brand engagement in self-concept," which, lamentably, fails to fully reflect the rich, interactive nature of CE as outlined above.

Summary

The preceding analysis has shown the S-D logic, and the existence of transcending service relationships, provides the broader conceptual domain within which CE is embedded. Specifically, this theoretical lens highlights the role of interactive customer experience and cocreated value as the underlying conceptual foundations of CE. Engagement, unlike traditional relational concepts, including "participation" and "involvement," is based on the existence of focal interactive customer experiences with specific engagement objects (e.g., a brand).

By extending and refining the insights obtained from the review of the social science, management, and practitioner literatures (cf. Hollebeek 2011; Ilic 2008), the present analysis arrives at five themes, which may be used as a basis for the development of a general definition of CE. The first theme posits that CE reflects a customer's particular psychological state induced by the individual's specific interactive experiences with a focal engagement object (e.g., a brand). A second theme asserts specific CE states to occur within broader, dynamic processes typified by the cocreation of value. It is these first and second themes, which distinguish engagement from the "participation" and "involvement" concepts, because the latter fail to reflect the notion of interactive, cocreative experiences as comprehensively as does CE. A third theme views engagement to play a central role in service relationships where other relational concepts act as specific engagement antecedents and/or consequences. A fourth theme posits engagement be a multidimensional—cognitive, emotional, and behavioral—concept, where the expression of the specific cognitive, emotional, and behavioral dimensions is stakeholder- (e.g., customer) and/or context-dependent. A final theme asserts engagement to occur within specific sets of context-dependent conditions generating different CE levels.

Fundamental Propositions and General Definition

Fundamental Propositions

A "conceptual domain" defines the scope and delineation of a concept (Jarvis, MacKenzie, and Podsakoff 2003; MacKenzie,

Table 3. Fundamental Propositions Defining the Conceptual Domain of Customer Engagement (CE)

	Fundamental Proposition	Justification
FP1	CE reflects a <i>psychological state</i> , which occurs by virtue of <i>interactive customer experiences</i> with a <i>focal agent/object</i> within specific service relationships	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The focal agent/object a customer interacts with may be a brand, product, or organization • Focal CE behaviors that have a brand- or firm-focus extend beyond transactions/purchase (Van Doorn et al. 2010) • Two-way interactions generating CE may occur within a broader network of customers, stakeholders, and other actors in specific service relationships
FP2	CE states occur within a <i>dynamic, iterative process</i> of service relationships that <i>cocreates value</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • CE processes may range from short- to long-term, relatively stable to highly-variable processes typified by CE levels varying in complexity over time • CE occurs within specific service relationships comprising networked agents including customers, organizations, and other stakeholders that cocreates value
FP3	CE plays a <i>central role</i> within a <i>nomological network</i> of service relationships	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Required relational CE antecedents include “participation” and “involvement,” which may also extend to coincide, or occur concurrently, with CE • Other potential relational antecedents may include “flow” and “rapport” • CE relational consequences may include “commitment,” “trust,” “self-brand connections,” consumers’ “emotional attachment” to focal brands, and “loyalty” • The iterative (cyclical) nature of the service relationships process implies that specific CE relational consequences may extend to act as CE antecedents in subsequent CE (sub-) processes and/or cycles
FP4	CE is a <i>multidimensional concept</i> subject to a context- and/or stakeholder-specific expression of relevant cognitive, emotional, and behavioral dimensions	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The relative importance of the particular cognitive, emotional, and/or behavioral CE dimensions varies with the specific CE stakeholders involved (i.e., engagement subject, e.g., customer; engagement object, e.g., brand) and/or the set of situational conditions, thus generating distinct CE complexity levels
FP5	CE occurs within a specific set of situational conditions generating differing CE levels	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Specific interactions between a customer and a focal agent/object and other actors within specific focal relationships may generate different levels of cognitive, emotional, and/or behavioral CE intensity, depending on specific CE stakeholder (e.g., customer, brand) and contextual contingencies driving particular CE levels

Podsakoff, and Jarvis 2005). Based on the key themes derived from the literature synthesis reported in the preceding sections, a set of five draft Fundamental Propositions was developed, which is used to define the conceptual domain of CE in this section. Furthermore, the FPs are used to facilitate the subsequent development of a general definition of CE. In developing the FPs and the general definition, the emphasis is on providing a conceptualization that will be applicable across a range of situations, rather than limited to a particular situation.

In order to strengthen and refine the FPs, to ensure the inclusion of all relevant engagement dimensions, and to enhance the clarity of the propositions, 16 academic experts in the area of CE were identified, solicited, and requested to evaluate the content of the FPs. Each of these 16 academics had published articles in the marketing literature within the topic area of engagement and service relationships in the last 5 years. Thirteen of these authors agreed to participate as an expert panel. An e-mail was sent to these authors with a draft version of Table 3 (i.e., the five FPs and the justification for each FP). The panel were asked to comment whether the FPs adequately captured the conceptual domain

of CE, and whether the FPs sufficiently delineated the concept from other relational concepts, including “involvement” and “participation.” The panel provided considerable written feedback with several of the panelists writing over a page of feedback. The responses focused specifically on the conceptual delineation of CE, relative to other concepts (e.g., involvement, participation), and the dynamic nature of focal engagement processes.

The findings obtained from the literature review, in addition to the panelists’ feedback, were used to derive the following five FPs. Specifically, we refined the wording of the draft propositions based on the panel’s feedback, and a re-examination of the literature. The final five FPs are:

FP1: CE reflects a psychological state, which occurs by virtue of *interactive customer experiences* with a *focal agent/object* within specific service relationships.

FP2: CE states occur within a *dynamic, iterative process* of service relationships that *cocreates value*.

FP3: CE plays *central role* within a nomological network of service relationships.

FP4: CE is a *multidimensional concept* subject to a context- and/or stakeholder-specific expression of relevant cognitive, emotional, and behavioral dimensions.

FP5: CE occurs within a specific set of situational conditions generating differing CE levels.

A summary of the justifications for the FPs is presented in Table 3, while further detail is also provided in the following subsections.

FP1: CE is a *psychological state, which occurs by virtue of interactive customer experiences with a focal agent/object within specific service relationships*. The conceptual complexity of CE largely arises as a result of the concept's interactive, experiential nature inherent in specific service relationships. Specifically, CE occurs between a customer, a focal object, and/or other stakeholders in service relationships and as such, requires firsthand experiences (Hollebeek 2011). Concurring with the principles underlying the S-D logic, specific CE behaviors exhibited may extend beyond individual transactions and as such, include specific customers' pre- and/or post-purchase phenomenological experiences (cf. Van Doorn et al. 2010). Specific customer/firm interactions may also occur within a broader network of consumers, and/or other stakeholders in focal service relationships, thus suggesting CE may extend beyond dyadic interactive experiences.

In the business practice literature, several types of engagement objects have been cited, with the brand being a dominant object. For example, the Gallup Group's consultants indicate that CE consists of both "rational loyalty" and "emotional attachment" to a focal brand (Appelbaum 2001). Engaged customers may experience confidence in the brand, belief in its integrity, pride in the brand, and a passion for it (McEwen 2001, 2004; McEwen and Fleming 2003). Other engagement objects cited include specific products/services, a specific piece of communication (e.g., an advertisement), and/or specific communication channels (ARF 2006). The review highlights that specific interactive experiences are an indispensable component of a customer's particular engaged state (cf. Van Doorn et al. 2010). Such interactive experiences may include interactions with focal stimuli, such as the products or services available (Carù and Cova 2002), user message or content interactions (Cho and Leckenby 1997; Massey and Levy 1999), human-/computer-mediated interactions (Burgoon et al. 1999; Rasmussen 1986), and/or interpersonal interactions (Brodie et al. 2011; Haeckel 1998).

FP2: CE states occur within a *dynamic, iterative process of service relationships that cocreates value*. As discussed, the conceptual roots of CE lie within the expanded view of relationship marketing and the S-D logic, which highlights the importance of specific interactive, cocreative experiential processes by virtue of the occurrence of specific human interactions (Vargo and Lusch 2008a). Examples of such cocreated value include favorably perceived customer/firm communications, service delivery and/or dialogue, which may contribute to ensuing

customer loyalty outcomes. Further, based on the S-D logic, specific cocreated value levels arise from specific interactions in focal service relationship contexts. Therefore, even if no such a priori value cocreative intent is observed, specific cocreated value levels emerge by virtue of focal interactive experiences.

Investigations within the social science and management disciplines recognize the dynamic nature of the engagement process, which is characterized by specific cyclical, iterative dynamics. Concurring with this observation, the expert panel suggested that specific CE relational consequences may extend to act as CE antecedents in subsequent CE processes and/or cycles over time, thus recognizing the iterative nature of the engagement process. As one panelist stated, these can be thought of as "feedback loops over time:"

"While these [concepts] are relational antecedents, many of these can also be relational consequences; specifically participation, involvement, flow, and rapport. For instance, when customers are more engaged they will have higher participation (a behavioral consequence), [and] a better sense of rapport (a psychological consequence). Based on my logic—feedback loops over time—it seems to me that these can be consequences, as well as antecedents."

The engagement process may be viewed as a series of aggregated engagement states (cf. Dunham, Klimczak, and Logue 1993; Zhou, Hall, and Karplus 1999). Based on this observation, the CE process may range from short-term to long-term, and/or relatively stable to highly variable, which may generate varying levels of CE intensity and complexity over time, as addressed in further depth under FP5. Moreover, the iterative nature of the CE process implies that through repeated, temporally dispersed interactions with a focal engagement object CE may reemerge, albeit at different levels, across interactions over time.

FP3: CE plays a central role within a *nomological network of service relationships*. As an emerging relational concept CE, by definition, does not operate in isolation. By contrast, the concept is embedded within a broader network of service relationships in which other relational concepts, such as "involvement" and/or "participation," represent specific CE antecedents and/or consequences, respectively, within a nomological network of particular conceptual relationships. The analysis of the social science/management literatures and business practice discourse revealed a lack of consensus regarding the nature of specific concepts as CE antecedents, concurrent factors, and/or consequences. However, the expert panel agreed that CE played a central role in a broader nomological network of service relationships. As such, this observation serves as a further illustration of the iterative, process-based nature of aggregated CE states addressed under FP2.

Moreover, the nature of CE as a salient variable in service relationships is derived from the concept's interactive, experiential, and cocreative properties as addressed under FP2.

Specifically, the concept's interactive, experiential aspects differentiate CE from other relational concepts within a broader nomological network of service relationships. Within this network, *required* CE antecedents (i.e., which must occur as a precursor to CE) were found to include "participation" and "involvement;" while other relational concepts, including "flow" and "rapport," were found to be *potential*, rather than required, CE antecedents in particular contexts. Further, CE relational consequences may include "commitment," "trust," "self-brand connection," and consumers' "emotional brand attachment" and "loyalty" (Brodie et al. 2011).

Table 4 provides further justification for the specification of these relational concepts as either CE antecedents and/or consequences, and thus suggests the conceptual distinctiveness of these concepts relative to CE. While "participation" and "involvement" are labeled as CE antecedents, these may continue to coexist, or occur *concurrently* with CE, thus extending beyond a strict CE antecedent state. Further, the iterative nature of the service relationship process implies CE's relational consequences may subsequently act as CE antecedents. Moreover, distinct CE subprocesses may be observed for new, as opposed to existing, customers (Bowden 2009a, 2009b). For example, while the concepts of "trust" and "commitment" may represent CE antecedents for *existing* customers, these are, by definition, CE consequences for *new* customers interacting with a specific engagement object, such as a brand, for the first time.

FP4: CE is a multidimensional concept subject to a context- and/or stakeholder-specific expression of relevant cognitive, emotional, and behavioral dimensions. The analysis of the definitions of engagement in the social science/management literatures and the business practice discourse (cf. Table 1) indicates that engagement has been expressed to encompass various context- and/or stakeholder-specific combinations of cognitive, emotional, and behavioral dimensions. However, the majority CE definitions as proposed in the marketing literature adopt a multidimensional view of the concept (cf. Table 2). Specifically, the relative importance of the cognitive, emotional, and behavioral CE dimensions may vary with the specific set of situational contingencies under which CE is observed, thus permitting differing levels of CE intensity and/or complexity to emerge, as addressed in further depth under FP5.

FP5: CE occurs within a specific set of situational conditions generating differing CE levels. The review highlights the nature of CE as an individual, context-dependent concept, which may be observed at different levels of intensity and/or complexity, at different points in time. The rationale underlying this assertion lies in the required existence of specific interactive experiences between a focal CE subject and object within specific sets of situational conditions (May, Gilson, and Harter 2004). For example, Bezjian-Avery, Calder, and Iacobucci (1998) address the distinct expression of CE in online, as opposed to offline, environments; and across advertising, in contrast to other marketing applications. Specific designations of CE levels, which were starting to be explored under FP4, have focused

on "low" through to "high" engagement (Shevlin 2007b), and ranging from "actively disengaged" to "fully engaged" states (Bryson and Hand 2007).

CE states may be viewed to reside on a continuum, ranging from "nonengaged" (i.e., absence of customer/firm or brand interactive experience), "marginally engaged" (i.e., customers being somewhat cognitively, emotionally, and/or behaviorally engaged in a specific interactive experience), "engaged" (i.e., ample levels of cognitive, emotional, and/or behavioral CE in a particular interactive experience), and "highly engaged" (i.e., high levels of cognitive, emotional, and/or behavioral engagement in a specific interactive experience; cf. Shevlin 2007b). A "nonengaged" state exists either before the commencement of an individual's engagement with a focal object, and/or after its termination, while this may also occur during a "CE dormancy" period where CE is temporarily inactive during a particular interactive experience.

Vibert and Shields (2003, p. 225) address the importance of considering the contextual nature of engagement: "Engagement, separated from its social, cultural, and political context, is a contradiction that ignores deeply embedded understandings about the purpose and nature of engagement itself." Further, particular CE levels may be moderated by specific individual-level and/or contextual variables, including personality, mood, and individuals' specific need for cognition (NFC).

A General Definition of CE

The five FPs developed in the previous section provide the basis for a general definition of CE.

Customer engagement (CE) is a *psychological state* that occurs by virtue of *interactive, cocreative customer experiences* with a *focal agent/object* (e.g., a brand) in focal service relationships. It occurs under a specific set of context-dependent conditions generating differing CE levels; and exists as a *dynamic, iterative process* within service relationships that *cocreate value*. CE plays a *central role* in a nomological network governing service relationships in which other relational concepts (e.g., involvement, loyalty) are antecedents and/or consequences in iterative CE processes. It is a *multidimensional concept* subject to a context- and/or stakeholder-specific expression of relevant cognitive, emotional and/or behavioral dimensions.

This general definition is applicable across a range of situations, rather than limited to a particular situation. It builds on the conceptualizations developed by Patterson, Yu, and de Ruyter (2006), Vivek, Beatty, and Morgan (2010), Hollebeck (2011), and Mollen and Wilson (2010). However, unlike these authors' definitions, which provide expressions of the specific behavioral, cognitive, and emotional dimensions of engagement (e.g., Mollen and Wilson's (2010) "sustained cognitive processing"), the proposed definition follows the approach adopted in the organizational behavior literature (e.g., Macey

Table 4. Customer Engagement Conceptual Relationships

Concept	Definition	Conceptual Relationship to Customer Engagement
Involvement	An individual's level of interest and personal relevance in relation to a focal object/decision in terms of his or her basic values, goals, and self-concept (Mittal 1995; Zaichkowsky 1994)	CE antecedent required prior to the expression of a customer's relevant engagement level
Participation	The degree to which customers produce and deliver service (Bolton and Saxena-Iyer 2009)	CE antecedent required prior to the expression of the individual's CE level
Flow	A state of optimal experience characterized by focused attention, clear mind, mind and body unison, effortless concentration, complete control, loss of self-consciousness, distortion of time, and intrinsic enjoyment (Csikszentmihalyi 1990).	May act as a CE antecedent in specific contexts, including online environments
Rapport	Perceived level of harmonious, empathetic, or sympathetic connection to another, which is viewed in some way as congruent to the self (Brooks 1989); A sense of genuine interpersonal sensitivity and concern (Ashforth and Humphrey 1993)	May act as a CE antecedent for existing customers in specific contexts; May also act as a CE consequence for new customers
(Cumulative) customer satisfaction	An overall evaluation based on the total purchase and consumption experience with a good/service over time (Johnson and Fornell 1991)	"CE behavior" antecedent (Van Doorn et al. 2010), i.e., for experienced and/or existing customers; By contrast, may act as a CE consequence for new customers
Commitment	Valuing an ongoing relationship with a specific other party so as to warrant maximum efforts at maintaining it, i.e., a desire to maintain the relationship (Moorman, Rohit, and Gerald 1993; Morgan and Hunt 1994)	CE consequence of a potentially positive relationship with the identification dimension of engagement (cf. Saks 2006)
Trust	Consumer-perceived security/reliability in brand interactions and the belief that the brand acts in consumers' best interests (Delgado-Ballester, Munuera-Aleman, and Yague-Guillen 2003; Rotter 1967)	CE antecedent for existing customers (Bowden 2009, 2009b). Van Doorn et al. (2010), by contrast, view trust as a "CE behavior" antecedent (for existing customers)
Self-brand connection	The extent to which individuals have incorporated brands into their self-concept (Escalas 2004; Escalas and Bettman 2005)	CE consequence for new customers; CE antecedent for existing customers, (Bowden 2009a, 2009b). Van Doorn et al. (2010), by contrast, view trust as a "CE behavior" antecedent (for existing customers)
Emotional brand attachment	Emotion-laden target-specific bond between a person and a specific brand (Thomson, MacInnis, and Park, 2005)	Potential CE consequence, which may develop based on customers' specific interactive brand experiences
Loyalty	Repeated purchases (behavioral loyalty) prompted by a strong internal disposition (attitudinal loyalty; Day 1969) over a given period of time (Guest 1944)	Potential CE consequence, which may occur as the result of a consumer's specific, interactive brand experiences Potential CE consequence (Bowden 2009a; Patterson, Yu, & de Ruyter, 2006)

and Schneider 2008) by portraying the relevant dimensions generically, rather than more narrowly and/or context-specifically—thus being sufficiently broad to encompass any context-specific expression of the CE concept. The general definition also extends beyond the scope of Van Doorn et al.'s (2010) concept, which is focused on specific “CE behaviors.” Further, the proposed, general definition is broad relative to Calder and Malthouse's (2008) conceptualization, which is restricted to the experiential aspects of “media engagement.”

It is also important to reflect on how this definition delineates CE from other relational concepts. Essential to the proposed definition is the notion that the customer's *interactive, cocreated experiences* play a central role in focal service relationships. As shown, the concept has its theoretical roots in the S-D logic and the expanded domain of relationship marketing. This broad theoretical perspective may be used to differentiate CE from other relational concepts (e.g., trust, involvement) within a nomological network characterizing specific service relationships.

As addressed under FP3, some of these associated, relational concepts were found to represent *required* CE antecedents (e.g., involvement, participation), while others (e.g., flow, rapport) were more accurately depicted as *potential* CE antecedents and/or consequences. The iterative nature of the service relationship process implies CE's relational consequences, including “commitment,” “trust,” “self-brand connection,” “emotional brand attachment,” and/or “loyalty,” may act as antecedents to subsequent interactive, cocreative experiences between the customer and a focal engagement object, such as a brand. As aptly put by one of the experts in the panel, this involves “feedback loops over time.”

Implications for Research

Research Agenda

This article provides a conceptual foundation for further theoretical and empirical research in the emerging area of CE. The five FPs and a general definition of CE serve as a basis for the further exploration of CE, as summarized in Table 5.

Each of the five FPs generates a specific set of research questions to facilitate the specification and/or refinement of the conceptual domain and/or general definition of CE. The research questions derived from FP1 focus on exploring the fundamental nature of customers' interactive engagement experiences across contexts. The research questions generated from FP2 focus on developing a deeper understanding of the role of CE in a dynamic, iterative process of value cocreation in service relationships. Further, the research questions derived from FP3 focus on the nature of conceptual relationships between CE and other relational concepts within particular dynamic service relationships. The research questions developed from FP4 address the multidimensional nature of CE, which is affected by the particular context- and/or stakeholder-specific expression of focal cognitive, emotional,

and/or behavioral CE dimensions. Finally, the research questions derived from FP5 focus on the determinants of specific CE levels.

Broader Areas for Future Research

From a theoretical perspective further systematic, explicit scholarly inquiry addressing the CE concept is required. Attention needs to be given to the nature and dynamics underlying specific S-D logic-based conceptual relationships (e.g., cocreation) and the role of broader and/or higher level marketing theory. For example, the linkages between the S-D logic and consumer culture theory (Arnould and Thompson 2005; Cova and Salle 2008) may provide opportunities for the further development and conceptualization of CE by paying more attention to consumers' value cocreative competencies.

The establishment of conceptual linkages with other theoretical perspectives, including social practice theory, may also provide further insights. For example, by embedding the engagement concept within an S-D logic-informed social practice theory perspective, Schau, Muñiz, and Arnould (2009) identified four specific engagement practices, including “documenting,” “badging,” “milestoning,” and “staking,” which contribute to value cocreation within a brand community setting. Moreover, the CE concept has the potential to contribute to other service-centric research frameworks addressing interactive, value cocreative experience, and establishing conceptual linkages with other, conceptually related concepts, such as Verhoef et al.'s (2009) “customer experience” in retailing.

Further, customers' engagement with different types of objects (e.g., networked organizations, suppliers, and/or Government) also merits further attention. While brands/organizations have been the primary engagement objects examined in CE research to date, equally important are the roles of specific products/services, categories, stakeholders, and/or relevant institutions, such as Government and industry governing bodies. Attention also needs to be given to the dyadic and/or networked aspects of engagement within specific consumer-to-business (C2B), business-to-business (B2B) and consumer-to-consumer (C2C) interactions (Kothandaraman and Wilson 2001). Since the five FPs developed in this article are sufficiently general to permit their application to alternate engagement forms, such as supplier engagement in B2B research, and/or social network engagement, these may be applied to explore such other (emerging) concepts.

Further, the specific dynamics underlying two-way, interactive engagement with particular objects including organizations, products/services, employees and/or brands, and potential value cocreation and/or loyalty outcomes, require further theoretical and empirical scrutiny. Future research is required, which explores focal networked dynamics across different engagement contexts. For example, based on the potentially divergent expressions of engagement in online (as opposed to offline) environments, research addressing the specific dynamics in these markedly distinct settings is expected to generate further insights into the CE concept.

Table 5. Customer Engagement (CE) Research Implications Arising from the Five Fundamental Propositions

	Fundamental Proposition	Customer Engagement (CE) Research Implications
FP1	CE reflects a psychological state, which occurs by virtue of <i>interactive customer experiences</i> with a <i>focal agent/object</i> within specific service relationships	<p>How does the nature of specific customer/firm interactive experiences (e.g., online vs. offline) impact upon resultant CE levels across specific contexts?</p> <p>How do specific individuals (e.g., firm, customer), and/or situational factors affect and/or interact, to generate particular context-dependent CE levels?</p> <p>Are particular customer/firm interactive experiences subject to change, maturation, and/or termination over time, and what are the specific ensuing customer behavior outcomes?</p> <p>Do specific CE-based interactive experiences within a particular service network transcend and/or replicate in other (e.g., broader) service networks?</p> <p>How does CE valence (positive/negative) influence particular customer behavior outcomes?</p> <p>What are the specific bottom-line, double and triple bottom-line performance outcomes of interactive, experiential CE levels?</p>
FP2	CE states occur within a <i>dynamic, iterative process</i> of service relationships that <i>cocreates value</i>	<p>How are the changing levels of focal CE states' intensity and complexity throughout relevant CE processes best conceptualized and modeled? Which, if any, are the key CE subprocesses occurring within broader CE processes, and what are their key characteristics?</p> <p>How are focal CE states aggregated and/or modeled to comprise relevant CE processes?</p> <p>To what extent does the intensity of CE during vary within specific CE phases and/or processes; and what are the relevant outcomes/implications of these?</p> <p>How is value cocreated within specific CE states and/or phases, and in which specific CE state/phase, typically, are optimal cocreated value levels observed?</p>
FP3	CE plays a central role within a nomological network of service relationships.	<p>Which particular concepts act as CE antecedents and/or consequences in specific contexts?</p> <p>How does interactivity drive the role of specific concepts to extend beyond pure antecedent and/or consequence states, for example by co-existing with CE, within relevant CE processes?</p> <p>Are the roles of specific relational concepts (e.g. involvement, trust) within the nomological network stable, or relatively variable?</p> <p>What are the key triggers and/or inhibitors of such stability and/or variability of CE conceptual relationships?</p>
FP4	CE is a <i>multidimensional concept</i> subject to a context- and/or stakeholder-specific expression of relevant cognitive, emotional, and behavioral dimensions	<p>What are the key drivers of relevant cognitive, emotional and/or behavioral CE dimensions, and to what extent may these be generalizable across contexts?</p> <p>What is the optimal dimensionality of CE for particular CE stakeholders (e.g. customers, brands, firms) and/or specific contexts?</p> <p>Which factors are the key drivers of CE complexity across contexts?</p> <p>What, if any, are the universal engagement facets applicable in any CE setting?</p>
FP5	CE occurs within a specific set of situational conditions generating differing CE levels	<p>Which factors are salient and generalizable in driving CE levels across contexts?</p> <p>What are the key triggers of particular CE intensity within specific contexts?</p> <p>What are the key determinants affecting the duration of specific CE states?</p> <p>Does a CE 'optimum' exist, yielding the best possible CE outcomes under particular contextual conditions?</p> <p>What levels of CE intensity are most conducive to driving customer loyalty?</p> <p>How does a customer's interactive experience with multiple objects concurrently (e.g., CE with personal sales agent/service brand, or online community/service brand) affect CE intensity within particular contexts?</p>

Moreover, additional testing and refinement of the initial research undertaken by Vivek (2009) to develop a “consumer engagement” scale is required, thus generating further research opportunities in this area. Scrutiny of specific iterative CE dynamics comprising the CE process over time is also recommended. Further, the highly context-specific nature of the engagement concept leads to questions about whether the development of a generic CE scale, similar to Zaichkowsky’s (1994) revised “Personal Involvement Inventory,” is appropriate. In order to develop such generic scale, engagement research across a wide range of service contexts would first be required to gain a detailed understanding of the specific, generalizable engagement dimensions, as distinct from those not readily transferable across contexts. For this reason, further development, refinement, and validation of the conceptual domain of CE are first recommended.

Given the multifaceted nature of CE and other engagement forms, pluralistic empirical research integrating relevant interpretive and quantitative methods of inquiry, is recommended in this emerging area. Based on the limitations inherent in traditional, cross-sectional research methods (Rindfleisch et al. 2008), longitudinal (panel) investigations of CE are expected to contribute more effectively to furthering scholarly understanding of the unfolding of focal engagement processes.

Further inquiry into the effectiveness of specific managerial applications of CE also remains to be undertaken. While speculation abounds regarding the concept’s potential contributions, these claims are yet to be investigated empirically. Sawhney, Verona, and Prandelli’s (2005) and Ramaswamy’s (2009) notion of “engagement platforms” provides a useful avenue for exploring managerial applications of the concept, as does recent research on managing the cocreation of value (e.g., Payne, Storbacka, and Frow 2008; Payne et al. 2009). Although CE is suggested to be a superior predictor of customer loyalty relative to traditional relational constructs (e.g., involvement) in interactive environments, corroboration of these contentions is yet to be undertaken through empirical research.

Kumar et al.’s (2010) “Total Customer Engagement Value” framework represents a major advance in managerial thinking, while Bijmolt et al. (2010) provide an excellent classification of the analytics available to examine CE behaviors. However, further research responding directly to context-specific managerial needs in the emerging area of CE is also needed (MSI 2010). Finally, the relatively recent emergence of the CE con-

cept in the literature may generate specific managerial challenges for the optimal design and implementation of relevant CE campaigns and programs. Such challenges may include both the development and the dissolution of CE, which therefore also merit further scholarly inquiry.

Summary

This section has addressed the importance of undertaking further research addressing the CE concept, and other engagement forms alike. The emerging CE concept was found to have its conceptual roots in the S-D logic and the expanded domain of relationship marketing. This perspective provides a conceptual foundation for the development of the CE concept, which reflects customers’ interactive, cocreative experiences with other stakeholders in specific service relationships. For this reason, the adoption of a service-centric perspective is found to represent a useful theoretical lens, which is used to facilitate the development of a general definition of CE, and delineate CE from other relational concepts. The rationale underlying this assertion is that CE, unlike traditional relational concepts, including “involvement” and “participation,” is based on the existence of a customer’s interactive, cocreative experiences with a specific engagement object (e.g., a brand). The concepts of “involvement” and “participation,” therefore, may be viewed as CE antecedents, rather than dimensions.

The five FPs and the proposed general definition of CE provide a framework for further research to investigate the nature of specific CE conceptual relationships (e.g., the CE/“involvement” interface) within the CE process; and the relative importance of, and/or existence of any interactions among, focal CE dimensions. Van Doorn et al.’s (2010) pioneering analysis and the other papers in the *Journal of Service Research Special Issue* have started to explore these issues. As outlined in Table 5, a rich and challenging set of research questions emerges from this analysis, which merit further empirical investigation in order to refine and validate the conceptual domain, and proposed general definition, of CE. Further, the research avenues listed in Table 5 may also be used to explore novel subareas within the emerging stream of CE research. Finally, while the proposed research questions have focused specifically on *customer* engagement, the broad nature of the five FPs and derived general definition of CE is also expected to transcend beyond specific CE settings to other forms of human social, interactive experiences.

Appendix A. Definitions and Dimensionality of Engagement in the Social Science and Management Disciplines

Discipline	Construct	Authors	Definition/Key Findings	Dimensionality
Sociology	Civic engagement	Jennings and Stoker (2004)	Involvement in voluntary organizations and the performance of volunteer work, facilitating the development of social networks	Multidimensional: C, E, B
		Mondak et al. (2010)	Civic engagement levels are impacted upon to a significant extent by the Big Five Personality dimensions	Undisclosed
Political science	State engagement	Resnick (2001)	Iterative process aiming to influence political behavior of a target state through maintained contacts with that state across multiple issue areas (e.g., diplomatic, economic) and focused on generating a relationship of increasing interdependence	Unidimensional: B
Psychology	Comprehensive (state) engagement	Kane (2008)	A comprehensive engagement campaign comprises three key elements: (a) Mind-set change; (b) Mechanism for change; and (c) Possible staff change	Multidimensional: C, B
	Social engagement	Achterberg et al. (2003)	A high sense of initiative, involvement and adequate response to social stimuli, participating in social activities, interacting with others.	Unidimensional: B
	Task engagement	Huo, Binning, and Molina (2009)	Represented by group identification and group-oriented behavior	Multidimensional: E, B
		Matthews et al. (2010)	Effort or active striving Vigilance performance on a particular task; attentional resource availability, sustained attention, and alertness	Unidimensional: B Multidimensional: C, B
	Occupational engagement	Bejerholm and Eklund (2007)	A lifestyle characteristic that describes the extent to which a person has a balanced rhythm of activity and rest, a variety and range of meaningful occupations/routines and the ability to move around society and interact socially. Levels may vary along a continuum	Multidimensional: C, B
Educational psychology	Student engagement	Bryson and Hand (2007)	On a disengaged-engaged continuum, a student may exhibit differing engagement levels to a particular task/assignment, module, course of study and Higher Education	Multidimensional: C, E, B
		Hu (2010)	The quality of effort students put into educationally meaningful activities	Multidimensional: C, B
		London, Geraldine, and Shauna (2007)	Students' academic investment, motivation, and commitment to their institution; perceived psychological connection, comfort, and sense of belonging toward their institution. Engagement comprises institutional, situational & individual aspects	Multidimensional: C, E, B
Organizational behavior	Employee engagement	Frank, Richard, and Taylor (2004)	Employees' desire/willingness to give discretionary effort in their jobs, in the form of extra time, brainpower/energy (includes cognitive, affective, and behavioral aspects)	Multidimensional: C, E, B
		Catteeuw et al. (2007)	The degree to which employees are satisfied with their jobs, feel valued and experience collaboration and trust. The result is a high-performing, productive company	Multidimensional: C, E
		Luthans and Peterson (2002)	To be emotionally engaged is to form meaningful connections with others (e.g., coworkers/managers) and to experience concern/empathy for others' feelings. Being cognitively engaged refers to the degree of awareness of an employee's mission and role in the work environment. Behavioral engagement plays a lesser role	Multidimensional: C, E, B

(continued)

Appendix A (continued)

Discipline	Construct	Authors	Definition/Key Findings	Dimensionality
		Saks (2006)	The amount of cognitive, emotional, and physical resources an individual is prepared to devote in the performance of his or her work roles. Result is contingent on the economic and socioemotional resources received from the organization	Multidimensional: C, E, B
		Macey and Schneider (2008)	A broad construct consisting of state, trait, and behavioral forms that connote a blend of affective energy and discretionary effort directed to one's work and organization	Multidimensional: C, E, B
		Crawford, LePine, and Rich (2010)	The harnessing of organization members' selves to their work roles by which they employ and express themselves physically, cognitively, and emotionally during role performances (Kahn 1990)	Multidimensional: C, E, B

Note. Engagement dimensionality: C = Cognitive; E = Emotional; B = Behavioral [: Dimensionality inferred, rather than made explicit in the relevant research; Hollebeek 2010

Appendix B. Engagement Definitions in Business Practice

Authors	Definition/Key Findings
Appelbaum (2001)	Consumer engagement consists of both rational loyalty (includes overall satisfaction, intent to repurchase, and intent to recommend) and emotional attachment (including confidence in a brand, belief in its integrity, pride in the brand, and passion for it)
Smith and Wallace (2010)	Customer engagement (CE) refers to the types of connections consumers make with other consumers, companies, and specific brands; CE is viewed as being conducive to enhancement of brand loyalty
PeopleMetrics (2010) ARF (2006): Blair	Customer engagement includes (a) retention; (b) effort; (c) advocacy; and (d) passion Engagement behaviorally summarizes the impact of marketing/branding communications activities in the hearts and minds of consumers in a manner that leads to sales, margin, market share, market value, and cash flow
Campanelli (2007) Foley (2006)	Consumer engagement is emotional connection and empowerment of consumers Engagement is a multidimensional concept, even a multidimensional process, with the end result defined as consumer connection in terms of cognitive, behavioral, emotional, and aspirational facets
Ghuneim (2006)	Consumer engagement is a consumer-based measurement that relates to interaction with an aspect of a brand or media property
Harris (2006)	Consumer engagement is a multidimensional concept: a brand's ability to connect meaningfully with the consumer
Haven (2007)	"We propose a new metric, engagement that includes four components: involvement, interaction, intimacy, and influence"
Peppers and Rogers (2005)	Engagement is a series of customized informational and financial transactions that occur over time and increase both the consumer value to the company and the value of the company to the consumer
ARF (2006): Plummer	Engagement occurs as a result of a brand idea/media context experience selected and attended to by a consumer involved in a category that leaves a positive brand impression
Sedley (2008)	Consumer engagement is repeated interactions that strengthen a consumer's emotional, psychological, or physical investment in a brand. Consumer engagement is not a nirvana that can be reached; it is a process of developing and nurturing relationships
ARF (2006): Hamill	Engagement is a measure of attention paid by a consumer to a piece of communication. There is a two-way flow of information resulting in easier measurement
Heath (2007)	Consumer engagement is a subconscious emotional construct. Level of engagement is the amount of subconscious "feeling" going on when an advertisement is being processed

(continued)

Appendix B (continued)

Authors	Definition/Key Findings
ARF (2006): Laborie	Consumer engagement is a positive consumer attitude resulting from the communication of (a) a given brand, (b) a given category (product/service/etc.), which is delivered through (a) a contact/communication channel (e.g., mass media), (b) via a vehicle, e.g., magazine, etc. Engagement can turn into action/behavior, e.g., communication and/or purchase
Shevlin (2007)	Consumer engagement is repeated and satisfying interactions that strengthen the emotional connection a consumer has with a brand (or product or company)
Owyang (2007)	Online engagement indicates the level of authentic involvement, intensity, contribution and ownership, summarized by "apparent interest." Engagement Formula: Attention + Interaction + Velocity + Authority + Relevant Attributes (variable)
Peterson (2007)	Consumer online engagement is an estimate of the degree and depth of visitor interaction on the site, measured against a clearly defined set of goals. Each organization's version of engagement will be unique. It will be derived from a number of root metrics, probably under a dozen. Common root metrics include frequency, recency, length of visit, purchases, and lifetime value.

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