CHAPTER – II

CUSTOMER ENGAGEMENT: AN ASSESSMENT OF EVOLUTION AND DEVELOPMENT

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CHAPTER – II
CUSTOMER ENGAGEMENT: AN ASSESSMENT OF EVOLUTION AND DEVELOPMENT

This chapter highlights Conceptual foundations of customer engagement; Evolution of the concept; Engagement in the online and social media context; and customer engagement: an identification of parameters

2.1 INTRODUCTION
In today’s highly dynamic and interactive business environment, the role of “customer engagement” in co-creating interactive customer experience and value is receiving widespread attention from business practitioners and academics alike. It is suggested that customer engagement represents a strategic imperative for generating enhanced corporate performance, including sales growth, superior competitive advantage and profitability. 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. However, despite this interest relatively little is known to-date regarding the meaning and theoretical foundations of the customer engagement concept, or its distinctiveness from other concepts, such as ‘participation’, ‘involvement’, and ‘commitment’. In research article “Customer Engagement: Conceptual Domain, Fundamental Propositions & Implications for Research” authored by Rod Brodie, Linda Hollebeek, Biljana Juric and Ana Ilic addresses this issue. The customer engagement concept has been heralded for its potentially superior predictive and/or exploratory power in service, customer retention and loyalty contexts (Bowden, 2009a). As such, this promising new concept is expected to extend beyond the contributions made by traditional relational constructs including perceived quality, consumer involvement and customer satisfaction in explaining and/or predicting loyalty, and customer value outcomes alike (Hollebeek, 2010).

Early in this century, research interest in engagement regenerated and different Conceptualizations of engagement came up. In educational psychology, for instance, ‘student engagement’ was found to be pivotal in a student’s receipt of teacher support (Skinner & Belmont, 1993) and achieved results (Bryson & Hand, 2007). Moreover, many organizations measure, and intend to optimize, their ‘employee engagement’ levels based on the notion that heightened such engagement levels may contribute to productivity and profitability increases (Greenwood, 2007). The meaning of engagement is, however, context
specific, giving rise to potential variations in the interpretation of the concept (Little & Little, 2006). In the field of social psychology, Achterberg et al. (2003) conceptualize ‘social engagement’ as ‘a sense of initiative, involvement and adequate response to social stimuli, participating in social activities and interacting with others’. In educational psychology, London, Downey, and Mace (2007) define ‘student engagement’ as ‘students’ academic investment, motivation and commitment to their institution, their perceived psychological connection, comfort and sense of belonging towards their institution’. Moreover, in organizational behaviour, Saks (2006) defines ‘employee engagement’ as ‘the amount of cognitive, emotional and physical resources an individual is prepared to devote in the performance of one’s work roles’, which is thought to be contingent on the economic and socio-emotional resources received from the organization.

Engagement has also been discussed in the advertising literature where it is suggested that it may be used as a proxy measure of the strength of a company’s customer relationships based on the extent to which customers have formed both emotional and rational bonds with a brand. Engagement is therefore argued to include feelings of confidence, integrity, pride, and passion in a brand (McEwen, 2004).

2.2 CUSTOMER ENGAGEMENT: CONCEPTUAL FOUNDATIONS

2.2.1 (Overview of academic engagement research)

The engagement concept originates in disciplines including psychology, sociology and organizational behavior (Brodie et al., 2011a). An overview of selected engagement conceptualizations identified within specific academic disciplines is provided in Table 1 (Brodie et al., 2011a), which reveals the following observations. First, despite a considerable level of conceptual breadth across the reviewed disciplines, the definitions signal positively favorable expressions of relevant engagement forms. For example, Fredricks et al.’s (2004) ‘student engagement’ comprises individuals’ ‘willingness to master particular skills’; and Schaufeli, Martínez, Pinto, Salanova, and Bakker’s (2002) ‘employee engagement’ is described as a ‘positive, fulfilling work related mindset’ and activities. Second, Table 1 exposes the highly interactive nature of engagement (May, Gilson, & Harter, 2004), whether stated explicitly, or implicit in particular conceptualizations. To illustrate, Achterberg et al.’s (2003) ‘social engagement’ explicitly incorporates ‘interacting with others’, ‘participating in social activities’ and ‘adequate response to social stimuli’. Similarly, Bejerholm and Eklund’s (2007) ‘occupational engagement’ entails the ability to move around society and interact socially. The ‘interaction’ concept is often used synonymously with ‘interactivity’ (Hoffman & Novak, 1996).
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>DISCIPLINE</th>
<th>CONCEPT</th>
<th>AUTHOR(S)</th>
<th>DEFINITION</th>
<th>THEMES/DIMENSIONALITY</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Educational psychology</td>
<td>Student engagement</td>
<td>Fredricks et al. (2004)</td>
<td>The multifaceted nature of student engagement exists in the following dimensions: (a) cognitive, e.g. willingness to master certain skills; (b) emotional, e.g. positive/negative reactions to teachers; (c) Behavioral, i.e. participation (e.g. in academic/extracurricular activity)</td>
<td>Multidimensional: 1. Cognitive 2. Emotional 3. Behavioral</td>
</tr>
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</table>

The particular level of interactivity pertaining to specific engagement forms was found to be dependent on factors including: (a) personal characteristics, for example ‘initiative’ (Achterberg et al., 2003), or ‘motivation’ (London, Downey, & Mace, 2007), which under SET, is contingent upon an individual’s perceived value level extracted from particular interactions; and (b) contextual contingencies, for example ‘positive/negative reactions to teachers’ (Fredricks et al., 2004), which may vary across contexts, and/or interact with specific (inter-) personal characteristics. Third, the reviewed conceptualizations shared a multidimensional perspective of engagement, which appears dominant in the literature (May et al., 2004). Specifically, the majority of reviewed conceptualizations reveal a generic, tripartite (cognitive, emotional, behavioral) engagement dimensionality, with particular context-specific variations observed (Brodie et al., 2011). For example, Jennings and Zeitner’s (2003) ‘civic engagement’ dimensions include (cognitive) media attentiveness, (emotional) trust and (behavioral) political involvement.

2.2.2(Engagement research in marketing)

Scrutiny of engagement research in marketing indicates the emergence of several engagement sub-forms, including ‘customer engagement’ (Patterson, Yu, & De Ruyter, 2006), ‘customer engagement behaviors’ (Van Doorn et al., 2010), customer brand engagement (Hollebeek, 2011b), ‘consumer engagement’ (Vivek, 2009) and ‘engagement’ more generically (Higgins & Scholer, 2009). While the majority of research adopts an intra-individual, consumer psychology-based perspective, Van Doorn et al. (2010) take a more company-centric view by observing the effects of specific customer engagement behaviors through an organizational lens. Analogous to the observation in Section 2.2.1, Bowden (2009) posits the existence of focal, two-way interactions between a specific subject (e.g. customer/consumer) and object (e.g. a brand/product or organization; Patterson et al., 2006) as a necessary condition for the emergence of relevant engagement levels. The CBE concept, in particular, addresses specific interactions between a focal customer and a particular brand (Hollebeek, 2011b). Key tenets typifying CBE include the concept’s individual-level, motivational and context-dependent nature, giving rise to fluctuating CBE levels over time (Hollebeek, 2011b). Whilst a general consensus regarding the generic, multidimensional (cognitive, emotional, behavioral) nature of relevant marketing-based engagement forms is observed from Table 2 (e.g. Patterson et al., 2006; see Section 2.2.1), the expression of specific engagement dimensions may vary across contexts (Brodie et al., 2011). To illustrate, while Mollen and Wilson’s (2010) online ‘engagement’ dimensions include ‘active sustained cognitive processing’, ‘instrumental value’ and ‘experiential value’, Van Doorn et al.’s
2010 organization-centric ‘customer engagement behaviors’ are theorized to comprise the dimensions of ‘valence’, ‘scope’, ‘nature’ and ‘customer goals’. Moreover, research addressing the nature and dynamics underlying specific CE relationships with other focal concepts is sparse to-date (Hollebeek, 2011a). For CE, examining the nature of conceptual relationships with other specific concepts,

Table 2.2: Engagement Conceptualization in the Marketing Literature

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>AUTHOR(S)</th>
<th>CONCEPT</th>
<th>DEFINITION</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Vivek (2009)</td>
<td>Consumer Engagement</td>
<td>The intensity of a consumer’s participation &amp; connection with an organization’s offerings &amp;/or its organized activities</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Patterson et al. (2006)</td>
<td>Customer Engagement</td>
<td>The level of a customer’s physical, cognitive &amp; emotional presence in their relationship with a service organization</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hollebeek (2011a)</td>
<td>Customer Brand Engagement</td>
<td>The level of an individual customer’s motivational, brand-related &amp; context-dependent state of mind characterized by specific levels of cognitive, emotional &amp; behavioral activity in brand interactions</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Van Doorn et al. (2010)</td>
<td>Customer Engagement Behaviors</td>
<td>The customer’s behavioral manifestation toward the brand or firm, beyond purchase, resulting from motivational drivers</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Phillips &amp; McQuarrie (2010)</td>
<td>Advertising Engagement</td>
<td>Modes of engagement are routes to persuasion</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Malthouse &amp; Calder (2010)</td>
<td>Media Engagement</td>
<td>A motivational experience; being connected to a specific media</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Algesheimer, Dholakia, &amp; Herrmann (2005)</td>
<td>Brand Community Engagement</td>
<td>Positive influences of identifying with the brand community through the consumer’s intrinsic motivation to interact/ co-operate with community members</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Abdul-Ghani, Hyde, &amp; Marshall (2010)</td>
<td>Engagement</td>
<td>Requires consumer connection (e.g. with specific media)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Higgins (2006)</td>
<td>Engagement</td>
<td>Being engaged is to be involved, occupied &amp; interested in something</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Hollebeek (2011a), Brodie et al. (2011a).

While there still isn’t a universally accepted definition of what customer engagement is or how it should be measured, Ron Shevlin offers a good starting definition: “Repeated interactions that strengthen the emotional, psychological or physical investment a customer has in a brand.” Essentially, engagement is the connection between the brand and the customer. Thus, from the above discussion, we can define the term customer engagement as a consumers’ rational and emotional attachment towards a service brand or product. It can be considered as a behavioral and attitudinal manifestation towards a product/brand derives from cognitive and affective evaluation developed through consumers experience/satisfaction.
2.3 ENGAGEMENT CONCEPTUALIZATIONS IN SOCIAL SCIENCE AND MANAGEMENT LITERATURE

Literature within organizational behavior describes engagement as physically, emotionally or cognitively expressed “task behaviors that promote connections to work and others”, which motivate the employees and encourage personal development (Bowden, 2009). The concept of social engagement in the field of social psychology has been defined as “a sense of initiative, involvement and adequate response to social stimuli, participating in social activities and interacting with others”, whereas student engagement in the field of educational psychology has been conceptualized as “students” academic investment, motivation and commitment to their institution, their perceived psychological connection, comfort and sense of belonging towards their institution” (Hollebeek, 2011b). An overview of the diversity of engagement conceptualizations across the different academic disciplines reveals few important observations. First of all, engagement can be viewed as a process that can be 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)” (Brodie et al., 2011b). Second, most of the reviewed conceptualizations present engagement as a multidimensional concept comprising behavioral (actions), cognitive (thoughts) and emotional (feelings) dimensions (Hollebeek, 2011a). Even though there is still a relatively large number of researchers, who view engagement from the unidimensional perspective, the focus remains on the three mentioned dimensions with the behavioral focus being the dominant one (Brodie et al., 2011a). According to the Oxford Dictionary the verb “to engage” means to employ or hire, to bind by a contract, to hold fast, and to take part in something (Van Doorn et al., 2010). All these meanings point to the behavioral aspect of engagement, however, the unidimensional perspective lags behind in expressing the wider scope of the concept (Brodie et al., 2011a). Furthermore, Hollebeek (2011a) also points out that despite of looking into engagement from a wide range of disciplines, all the different definitions of the term reveal favorable expressions towards the concept and its highly interactive nature.

2.4 ENGAGEMENT CONCEPTUALIZATIONS IN THE MARKETING LITERATURE

The exploration of available marketing literature reveals the emergence of several engagement sub-forms, such as “customer engagement”, “customer engagement behaviors”, “consumer engagement”, “customer brand engagement” as well as the more general conceptualizations of simply the “engagement” itself (Hollebeek, 2011a). Bowden (2009)
presents customer engagement as a sequential psychological process that customers move through to become loyal towards a brand. This process is suggested to model the mechanisms by which loyalty may be developed and maintained for two different types of customers – new and existing. Bowden (2009) is also discussing the distinction between customer engagement and the more traditional marketing constructs such as involvement, commitment and loyalty. It is in fact suggested that customer engagement process helps to examine the dynamic relationships between these constructs and further the understanding of how they drive the development of customer loyalty. Customer engagement has also been explored as a new perspective in the field of customer management (Verhoef, Reinartz, & Krafft, 2010). It has been highlighted that the emerging concept of customer engagement is highly important in the increasingly networked society. Building on the research of van Doorn et al. (2010), Verhoef et al. (2010) consider customer engagement as behavioral manifestations towards a focal object (e.g. a brand or a firm), other than purchase, resulting from motivational drivers. The concept of customer engagement behaviors implies that van Doorn et al. (2010) are focusing on the behavioral aspects of the relationship between the customer and the firm. Some other authors have also suggested that customer engagement includes a continuum of behaviors ranging from pure voice (complaining, recommendation, word-of-mouth) to pure exit (reduced or discontinued consumption) (Hirschman, 1970). All the customer engagement behaviors are proposed to comprise five dimensions: valence (positive or negative), form and modality, scope (temporal and geographic), nature of impact and, finally, customer goals. Moreover, van Doorn et al. (2010) establish a conceptual model suggesting that customer engagement behaviors are affected by customer characteristics, firm initiatives and the contextual environment. In addition, they also present a number of consequences that customer engagement behaviors bring to the firm, the society and the customer itself. Despite the customer management research mostly being focused on the transactional side of the customer-firm relationship, the non-transactional forms of behavior have also gained their share of attention recently. Verhoef et al. (2010) acknowledge the importance of the impact of word-of-mouth and co-creation in particular. It has been recognized that ignoring the non-transactional behavior manifestations may have detrimental effects to the firm because of potentially wrong valuation of the customers (Kumar et al., 2010). The paper of Kumar et al. (2010) introduces a new metric for customer valuation, where they include both the value from transactional and the non-transactional behaviors and, therefore, disagree with the view of van Doorn et al. (2010). Hollebeek (2011b) presents the concept of customer brand engagement and defines it as “the level of an individual customer’s motivational, brand-
related and context-dependent state of mind characterized by specific levels of cognitive, emotional and behavioral activity in direct brand interactions”, where the focus lies on the interactions between a specific subject (the customer) and the focal object (brand). The cognitive activity refers to the level of engrossment or concentration towards a brand, whereas the emotional and behavioral activities reflect the level of an individual’s pride or inspiration and the level of energy expressed while interacting with the brand, respectively (Hollebeek, 201lb). Just like Bowden (2009), Hollebeek (201lb) also suggests that customer brand engagement contributes to developing customer loyalty by focusing on conceptualizing the positively valenced expressions of customer brand engagement. In her other works Hollebeek (2011a) further explores the concept of customer brand engagement and, by utilizing qualitative research methods, identifies the key themes of customer engagement behavior: immersion, passion and activation. This implies that the level of customer’s brand-related concentration (immersion), positive affect (passion) and the level of energy put in particular brand interactions (activation) together represent just how much the customer is prepared to exert cognitive, emotional and behavioral investments while interacting with the focal brand (Hollebeek, 2011a). Mollen and Wilson (2010) elaborate on the concept of engagement from the perspective of online consumer experience. Building on the findings from e-learning and online marketing literature, the authors suggest that a consumer’s experiential response to a website or some other computer-mediated entity comprises three experiential states including perceived interactivity, telepresence and engagement. In particular, engagement is defined as “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” and is suggested to comprise the dimensions of active, sustained, cognitive processing, attainment of instrumental value (relevance and utility), and experiential value (emotional congruence) (Mollen & Wilson, 2010). Another conceptualization addressed in the literature is the “brand engagement in self concept” (Sprott, Czellar, & Spangenberg, 2009). The construct suggests that consumers vary in their tendency to possess brand related schemas, meaning that differences exist in consumers’ tendency to engage brands in their self-concepts and, therefore, also in their brand-related behaviors. Sprott et al. (2009) develop a scale to measure the self-brand connections in individuals. However, the concept has been criticized for failing to fully capture the interactive nature of customer engagement (Brodie et al., 2011a). Engagement has also been conceptualized as a state of sustained attention, which can be characterized by full absorption and involvement as well as being fully occupied or engrossed in something (Higgins &
Scholer, 2009). Higgins & Scholer (2009) also recognize that individuals can be engaged on different levels of intensity and suggest that the more a person is engaged, the more intense will be the experience of the motivational force. This means that a more engaged individual will experience the positive target more positively and the negative target more negatively in the pursuit of his goal. Thus, the authors express considerations towards both positive (e.g. attraction) and negative (e.g. repulsion) expressions of engagement. Brodie et al. (2011a) have derived the main themes prominent in the literature concerning customer engagement and developed a set of five fundamental propositions, which consequently provide the basis for the suggested general definition:

"Customer engagement (CE) is (1) a psychological state that occurs by virtue of interactive, co-creative customer experiences with a focal agent/object (e.g. brand) in focal service relationships. It occurs (2) under a specific set of context-dependent conditions generating differing CE levels; and (3) exists as a dynamic, iterative process within service relationships that co-create value. CE plays (4) 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 (5) a multidimensional concept subject to a context- and/or stakeholder specific expression of relevant cognitive, emotional and/or behavioral dimensions."

Unlike most other reviewed conceptualizations, Brodie et al. (2011a) suggested a definition that can be applicable in a wide range of contexts. Furthermore, a generic expression of the dimensions (cognitive, emotional and behavioral) comprising the engagement concept allows for it to encompass any context-specific expressions of the customer engagement. However, this particular conceptualization has also received criticism for being too broad and exposing to the danger of confounding the behaviors, which are potentially caused by engagement, and all other behavioral indications (Malthouse & Calder, 2011). A comment on Brodie’s et al. (2011a) conceptualization also suggests that the interactive and co-creative nature of experiences should not imply that engagement requires a high level of overt activity. Malthouse & Calder (2011) point out that engagement can arise not only from active behaviors such as e.g. blogging, but simply receiving communication can also be viewed as interactive and co-creative, as long as these experiences are immersive. Finally, Brodie’s et al. (2011a) definition also addresses the issue of differentiating customer engagement from other relational concepts and suggests that they represent the potential antecedents and/or consequences embedded in the iterative process of service relationships.
2.5 CONCEPTUAL RELATIONSHIPS

Exploring the newly emerged concept of customer engagement may also lead to a question whether it could simply be the case of “the old wine in a new bottle” (Bowden, 2009). However, all the authors researching different sub-forms of engagement (Brodie et al., 2011a; Hollebeek, 2011a; Mollen & Wilson, 2010; Bowden, 2009) argue that this is not the case and that there is a clear distinction between engagement and other more familiar relational concepts. Mollen & Wilson (2010) suggest that involvement is an important dimension of engagement and therefore an important relational concept to discuss. Involvement has been defined as an internal state of arousal, which can be used to reflect an ongoing concern by the customer towards a product based on the perceived importance and/or general interest in the purchase process (Bowden, 2009). Mollen & Wilson (2010) identify three major differences between engagement and involvement. First of all, the definition of involvement indicates that it requires a consumption object (e.g. product category). Second, involvement refers to a more passive allocation of mental resources and unlike engagement does not encompass an active relationship with the consumption object. Finally, engagement not only requires the attainment of instrumental value through relevance and utility, but also a certain degree of emotional bonding, which can be achieved through pleasant and satisfying experiences. Besides involvement, Bowden (2009) also compares the customer engagement process with and delineates the distinction from the concepts of commitment and loyalty. Commitment often encompasses some sort of psychological attachment, where a customer views a specific commitment object as the only acceptable choice alternative. Thus, commitment generally means that unlike in the case of involvement, a customer is not simply interested in an issue, but rather holds an actual attitudinal position. Loyalty is also known to comprise an attitudinal element. However, it is most often evaluated in the behavioral manner, e.g. the intention to repeat a purchase. Commitment and loyalty are often considered as highly related concepts. Nevertheless, the effects of the two may yield different behavioral outcomes. It has been discovered that due to attitudinal attachment brand-committed customers are actually less likely to switch brands than the brand-loyal customers (Bowden, 2009). Mollen & Wilson (2010) also discuss the constructs of interactivity, flow and telepresence in relation to the online brand engagement. However, these are depicted as a process, where interactivity is assumed to be an antecedent of telepresence, which consequently is an antecedent of engagement. There is no consensus about the definition of interactivity in the literature, so the authors propose their own definition, which suggests that interactivity is an “experiential phenomenon”, which describes to what degree customers perceive the communication as
"two-way, controllable and responsive to their actions". The construct of flow is viewed as a cognitive state, which asserts when individuals are so involved in an activity, that it makes them forget everything else. Telepresence is related to flow; however, it extends to a psychological state of being present in a computer-mediated environment. The process of telepresence is expected to positively affect both the instrumental and the experiential value and, thus, suggested to be an antecedent of engagement. Brodie et al. (2011a) building on one of their fundamental propositions to the concept of customer engagement also suggest that it is only a part of a broader relationship structure, where the other concepts play the roles of antecedents and/or consequences. Apart from some of the constructs mentioned already, Brodie et al. (2011a) also consider and justify a number of other potential antecedents and/or consequences of customer engagement, such as participation, rapport, customer satisfaction, trust, self-brand connection, and emotional attachment. The authors have found some relational constructs such as involvement and participation to be prerequisite to drive engagement, whereas the others could act as both potential antecedents and consequences within particular dynamic service relationships. This point of view is in line with the argument of Bowden (2009) saying that new and existing brand customers will follow a different engagement process in developing loyalty. The iterative nature of the service relationships implies that different concepts will play different roles in different contexts. For instance, an exploratory analysis investigating consumer engagement in a virtual brand community has revealed that the consequences of consumer engagement in that particular case included loyalty, satisfaction, empowerment, connection, emotional bonding, trust and commitment (Brodie et al., 2011b). Furthermore, Hollebeek (2011b) has pursued defining the conceptual relationships of customer brand engagement and identified involvement and interactivity to be the antecedents required prior to the expression of a relevant customer's brand engagement level. Flow has also been determined to be an antecedent state, whereas the concepts of co-created value, brand experience, perceived quality, customer value and brand loyalty are suggested to represent the potential consequences of customer brand engagement. Finally, rapport, customer satisfaction, trust and commitment could act as both antecedents and/or consequences depending on whether the customer is new or existing. The concepts of interactivity, rapport and value co-creation in particular have been noted as of high relevance in service contexts and Web 2.0 settings, which can be characterized by human interactive forms.
2.6 EVOLUTION OF THE CONCEPT ‘ENGAGEMENT’

The engagement concept has its roots in a variety of parent disciplines including (social) psychology and organizational behaviour (Achterberg et al., 2003; May et al., 2004). The meaning of engagement in the management and applied psychology literature is reasonably consistent. Khan (1990) has conceptualized the construct of engagement, and his work has been widely cited in most of the studies in this area when defining personal /employee engagement (Harter, Schmidt and Hayes, 2002; Rothbard, 2001; Salonova, Agut and Peiro, 2005; Schaufeli, et al., 2002). Schaufeli, et al. (2002) further described engagement as “a more persistent and pervasive affective -cognitive state that is not focused on any particular object, event, individual, or behaviour”.

In the organizational behaviour literature, employee engagement has been used as a means to explore and explain organizational commitment and citizenship behaviours, and has been subsequently applied as a predictor of financial performance (Saks, 2006). Engagement has also been found to enhance morale, cohesion and rapport via psychological “contagion processes” (Salanova et al. 2005). Within this stream of literature, Kahn (1990) defines engagement as “task behaviours that promote connections to work and to others,” which may be expressed physically, cognitively and/or emotionally and which serve to increase employee motivation (May et al., 2004). In sum, in the organizational behaviour literature, engagement has been found to potentially generate a number of positive consequences at both organizational and individual levels including attitudes, intentions and behaviours (Saks, 2006). It has also been positively linked to outcomes such as job satisfaction, low absenteeism, high organizational commitment, superior customer-related performance and customer evaluations (Salanova et al., 2005; Harter et al., 2002). As a result of the valuable insights offered by investigations of engagement across various parent disciplines, academic interest in the concept is emerging in the marketing literature (Bowden, 2009; Heath, 2007). Within the discipline the concept is typically applied as “customer engagement” (Bowden, 2009; Patterson et al., 2006), reflecting customers’ relevant individual and/ or context-specific levels of engagement with particular objects, such as brands (Sprott et al., 2009), products or organizations (Patterson et al., 2006).

Kahn (1990) was the first to apply the concept of engagement to work. Engagement was first conceptualized in psychology describing the behavior of engaged employees, in the study he suggested that employees vary in their expression of selves in work roles. Those who perceive more supportive conditions for authentic expression tend to be engaged. Further he
defines 'personal engagement' as 'the simultaneous employment and expression of a person's "preferred self" in task behaviours promoting connections.

On the other hand, Maslach, Schaufeli and Leiter (2001) defined work engagement as "persistent, positive affective-motivational state of fulfillment." Later, presenting engagement as a motivational construct, Schaufeli et al. (2002) defined engagement as a positive, fulfilling, work-related state of mind that is characterized by vigor, dedication and absorption.

Stressing the assumption of optimal functioning in terms of well-being (Hallberg & Schaufeli 2006), the concept of engagement in various sub-fields of psychology has been dimensionalized as involving vigor, dedication and absorption (Schaufeli et al. 2002).

Vigor is characterized by high levels of energy and mental resilience while working and by the willingness and ability to invest effort in one's work. Dedication is characterized by a sense of significance, enthusiasm, inspiration, pride, and challenge. The final dimension of engagement, absorption, is characterized by being fully concentrated and happily engrossed in one's work, whereby time passes quickly and one feels carried away" (Schaufeli et al. 2002). Rothbard (2001) suggests two dimensions of engagement, attention and absorption.

On the other hand, Maslach (2001) considers engagement to be the opposite of burnout.

Kahn (1990) suggested three psychological conditions for employee engagement: meaningfulness; psychological safety; and availability. Meaningfulness is defined as the value of a work goal or purpose, judged in relation to an individual's own ideals or standards. Psychological safety is defined as "feeling able to show and employ one's self without fear of negative consequences to self-image, status, or career" (Kahn, 1990). Psychological availability is defined as an individual's belief that s/he has the physical, emotional or cognitive resources to engage the self at work (Kahn, 1990).

Here we summarizes the existing literature on the construct of engagement and customer engagement from the fields of psychology, management, information systems, marketing and some practitioner literature discusses the relevant literature on engagement, which has also been summarized in Table 2.1.

As the table shows, the term engagement has been used in the marketing literature, but not defined systematically. In psychology, several researchers have attempted to define engagement, either generally (Schaufeli et al 2002), or in the context of work (Maslach, Schaufeli and Leiter, 2001), role (Watkins et al., 1991) or employment (Avery, McKay and Wilson, 2007).
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>AUTHOR(S)/ YEAR</th>
<th>OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY</th>
<th>MAIN CONTRIBUTIONS</th>
<th>DEFINITION OF C.E.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Whelan &amp; Wohlfeil (2006)</td>
<td>Effectiveness of event marketing as a communication strategy</td>
<td>Event marketing facilitates CE with the brand through informal dialogues and personal first hand brand experiences</td>
<td>None</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sawhney, Verona &amp; Prandelli (2005)</td>
<td>Case studies on co-creating value through engaging customer through the internet</td>
<td>Virtual CE is customer-centric, active, two-way, continuous, focuses on social and experiential knowledge, has direct as well as mediated interactions with prospects and potential customers</td>
<td>None</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Winsor (2004)</td>
<td>Brands and the role they play in organizational success</td>
<td>The most valuable feedback is gleaned from consumers when they are actually engaged in making purchasing decisions</td>
<td>None</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bakker et al. (2007)</td>
<td>Tests if job resources act as buffers and diminish the negative relationship between pupil misbehavior and work engagement</td>
<td>Job resources boost work engagement, especially in situations when job demands are high</td>
<td>None</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gravenkemper (2007)</td>
<td>Engagement principles that facilitate community-building efforts in orgs.</td>
<td>Six principles: communicate a compelling message; build a guiding coalition; create principle-based vs. compliance -based guidelines for decisions and behaviors; identify early engagement indicators; generate continuous opportunities for dialogue; plan assimilation strategies for new members and new leaders</td>
<td>None</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Avery, McKay &amp; Wilson (2007)</td>
<td>Examined how individual or situational factors relate to engagement; Measured variables included perceived coworker age composition, satisfaction with older and younger coworkers</td>
<td>Satisfaction with coworkers &amp; perceived age similarity relates to engagement</td>
<td>Meaningful employee expression in work roles.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Higgins (2006)</td>
<td>Proposes that strength of engagement can contribute to experienced value through its contribution to experience of motivational force</td>
<td>Proposes certain implications of the contribution of engagement strength to value</td>
<td>None</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Author(s) and Year</td>
<td>Research Question/Method</td>
<td>Important Findings/Concepts</td>
<td>Academic Literature- Information Systems</td>
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<tr>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hallberg and Schaufeli (2006)</td>
<td>Investigates whether work engagement could be empirically separated from job involvement and org. commitment</td>
<td>Work engagement, job involvement and org commitment are empirically distinct constructs and reflect different aspects of work attachment</td>
<td>None</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>May, Gilson and Harter (2004)</td>
<td>Explores the determinants and mediating effects of meaningfulness, safety and availability on employee engagement</td>
<td>Meaningfulness is most strongly related to engagement. Job enrichment and work role fit relate to meaningfulness; rewarding relationships to safety; availability to resources available</td>
<td>None</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Schaufeli et al (2002)</td>
<td>Examines the factorial structure of a new instrument to measure engagement</td>
<td>Dimensions of Engagement: Vigor (high levels of energy and mental resilience), dedication (sense of significance, enthusiasm, inspiration, pride and challenge) and absorption (being fully concentrated, happy and deeply engrossed)</td>
<td>Engagement is a positive, fulfilling, work-related state of mind that is characterized by vigor, dedication and absorption.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Maslach, Schaufeli, and Leiter, (2001)</td>
<td>Engagement is opposite of burnout</td>
<td>Engagement promises to yield new perspectives on interventions to alleviate burnout</td>
<td>Work engagement is a persistent, positive, affective-motivational state of fulfillment</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Watkins et al. (1991)</td>
<td>Understanding relationship between role relevance and role engagement in school psychology</td>
<td>Relevance and engagement possess similarities in structure</td>
<td>Role engagement is the degree to which various role behaviors are actually practiced or engaged in by school psychologists</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kahn (1990)</td>
<td>Explores the conditions at work in which people personally engage, or express and employ their personal selves, and disengage, or withdraw and defend their personal selves</td>
<td>Psychological conditions of personal engagement (1) How meaningful is it for me to bring myself into this performance? (2) How safe is it to do so? (3) How available am I to do so?</td>
<td>Engagement is the simultaneous employment and expression of a person’s ‘preferred self’ in task behaviors that promote connections to work and to others personal presence (physical, cognitive and emotional) and active, full performances</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rothbard (2001)</td>
<td>Develops a model of engagement in the multiple roles of work and family</td>
<td>Components of role engagement attention and absorption</td>
<td>None</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wagner and Majchrzak (2007)</td>
<td>Studies of wiki technologies in three organizations to determine the enabling characteristics of CE</td>
<td>CE is enabled through community custodianship, goal alignment, value adding processes, emergence of layers of participation, management and monitoring effort, and enabling technologies. Suggests customers should take the role of custodians</td>
<td>Customer engagement becomes defined as the intensity of customer participation with both representatives of the organization and with other customers in a Collaborative knowledge exchange process.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Erat et al (2006) Describes communities of customers in the context of knowledge sharing Discusses challenges in engaging Customers online, the different roles Customers can take.

"Engagement with customers calls for exchanging information and knowledge with customers and fostering exchanges between customers"

Fleming, Coffman and Harter (2005) Develops a variation of six sigma (human sigma) to manage variability in sales and service groups Suggests performance is the result of an interaction of employee engagement and customer engagement; Emotions inform both sides’ judgments and behavior more powerfully than rationality

Nambisan (2002) Multi-theoretic approach to examining the design of virtual customer environments Discusses 4 themes-interaction patterns, knowledge creation, customer motivation, and virtual community-NPD team integration; suggests that patterns of interactions vary with the roles customers play

ARF (2006) Turning on a prospect to a brand idea enhanced by the surrounding context

People Metrics Engaged customers: 1) promote the company or brand, 2) intend to return in the future, 3) go out of their way to do business with the company, and 4) feel passion, even love, for the brand and experience.

Wikipedia (Wiki-dictionary) (2010) Suggests CE is an online social phenomenon, where customer behavior revolves around product Categories. Gives other definitions of CE, and discusses marketing practices

Shantanu Narayen (CEO, Adobe) (2007) On redefining the motto of Adobe Health of a company relies on the extent to which it creates meaningful and sustainable interactions


Rieger & Kamins (2006) Exploring barriers that prevent companies from engaging their customers and employees CE is an emotional connection between the company and its customers

Band & Guaspari (2003) | How marketing executives can overcome the internal action gap by helping their whole organization become customer engaged | Customer engaged organization doesn't only deliver superior results but is also able to adapt and respond more nimbly in a competitive environment | None

Source: Secondary

As summarized in Table, customer engagement is narrowly defined and excludes the consideration of prospects and potentials. Although the existing conceptualizations, especially the definition of Wagner and Majchrzak (2007), recognize the importance of participation, these definitions fail to recognize that even prospects and potentials participate in online conversations and exchange of views and ideas. Although the existing studies recognize the benefits organizations might derive from engaging customers, these studies do not recognize the several values consumers might derive from their connection with a company. Broadening the scope of customer engagement, consumer engagement involves customers, prospects and potentials; online and offline marketing programs; individual organizations as well as organizational networks. Further, unlike customer engagement, consumer engagement involves, but is not limited to knowledge exchange. Engaged consumers may derive any or all possible extrinsic and intrinsic values from being engrossed with an offering or activity.

The importance of engaging the consumer has been recognized in the existing literature. However, customer engagement until now has been predominantly researched in online contexts under the exchange paradigm, with very few if any, systematic or empirical attempts to explore and operationalized the construct. Most of the work on customer engagement is descriptive in nature. Sawhney, Verona and Prandelli (2005) studied two cases of online product development to suggest how differing levels of customer involvement can facilitate collaborative innovation. Studies also suggest that the interaction of customer engagement and employee engagement result in better performance. Fleming, Coffman and Harter (2005) found that business units with even moderately high levels of employee and customer engagement are financially more effective, as compared to those with very high levels of either customer or employee engagement. More recently, Bowden (2009) provided a conceptual framework of the process of customer engagement, which is based on the extent to which customers are either new or repeat purchasers of a specific service brand. Thus, we can see that consumer engagement has not been empirically conceptualized and defined in the existing literature. The existing conceptualizations of the construct are narrow and inconsistent.
Several themes emerge from the existing literature on customer engagement. First, customer engagement has been recognized as an emotional connection between a company and its customers (Narayen 2007; Rieger and Kamins 2006). Second, customer engagement is focused on interaction with and participation of customers (Wagner and Majchrzak 2007; Nambisan 2002). Third, knowledge exchanges with and between customers are the key to engaging customers. Information and communication technologies are providing great opportunities for organizations to exchange knowledge and engage with the customer (Erat et al. 2006; Joshi and Sharma 2004). Fourth, the existing literature suggests certain antecedents and outcomes of customer engagement. Organizational processes, enabling technologies, goal alignment with customers, organizational monitoring processes, and the different roles customers want to take affect the extent to which customer can be engaged (Wagner and Majchrzak 2007; Bakker et al. 2007; Erat et al. 2006; Nambisan 2002). Moreover, businesses are primarily engaging customers into the product development life-cycles, involving customers in product and process innovations (Joshi and Sharma 2004; Nambisan 2002; Thomke and von Hippel 2002).

2.7 ENGAGEMENT IN THE ONLINE SOCIAL MEDIA CONTEXT

Internet is an open, highly cost-effective and far reaching global network, which helps reducing or even eliminating the barriers of geography and distance (Sawhney, Verona, & Prandelli, 2005). In the physical world, businesses often face the trade-off between the richness and the reach of their communication. That is, a rich dialogue with a customer requires personal interaction and physical proximity, which means that there are only a limited number of customers that the firm can communicate with in the most effective manner. Internet, however, allows the firms to overcome these constraints and reach a much larger number of customers without having to lose on the richness of the communication too much. The emergence and rise of new social media channels in the recent years enabled the customers to increasingly participate in the new forms of customer/firm interaction processes. Discussion forums, chat rooms, email, bulletin boards, blogs and social networks are just some of the tools facilitating interactive customer experiences, that may eventually also foster the development of customer engagement with the specific brands (Brodie et al., 2011b). Hollebeek (2011b) also recognizes the importance of customer engagement in the so called Web 2.0 applications, which are designed in a way that enables them to aggregate the information from their user base in order to expand their content as well as value (Wilkins, 2007). Some practitioners even refer to customer engagement as the Holy Grail in the context of online marketing (Mollen & Wilson, 2010). One of the main reasons behind the suggested
importance of the concept lies in the definition of Web 2.0 and the fact that this kind of setting would not persist without the user-generated content, which in turn requires users to be engaged in the new media. Not surprisingly, this specific sub-form of engagement has also gained attention among the researchers. For instance, Cheung et al. (2011) have initiated a study exploring customer engagement in online social platforms. The authors of the research-in-progress paper have defined it as "the level of a customer's physical, cognitive, and emotional presence in connections with a particular online social platform". The conceptual model developed suggests that customer engagement in an online social platform is a construct comprising vigor (level of energy and mental resilience), absorption (level of concentration and engrossment) and dedication (sense of significance, enthusiasm, inspiration, pride and challenge) towards the online social platform, which are driven by involvement and social interaction. The consequences reflected in the model exhibit the authors’ belief that customer engagement will have a positive effect on online social platform participation and word-of-mouth communication about the platform (Cheung et al., 2011). The study by Cheung et al. (2011) is expected to contribute highly to the existing knowledge about social media engagement by providing a validated measurement scale for customer engagement in online social platforms. However, the research is still in progress and no results have been published to date. Thus, even though the new media present a number of significant opportunities and challenges for researchers and practitioners (Hennig-Thurau et al., 2010), most of the existing research is primarily conceptual or qualitative (Cheung et al., 2011).

2.8 CUSTOMER ENGAGEMENT: AN IDENTIFICATION OF PARAMETERS
In this section, an assessment of parameters of customer engagement has been presented in the light of the conceptual framework mentioned above in order to identify the core characteristics of customer engagement. It leads to, find out the parameters capable of measuring customer engagement characteristics.

Defining engagement, Higgins & Scholer (2009) used sustained attention i.e., focusing mental energy on a particular thing at a particular time out of many possibilities. This particular choice may be due to existing attitude of the person or expectation from outside or within the self. It is reflected here that attention is the sign of engrossment of consciousness towards a particular thing or phenomenon. It signifies the state of presence of consciousness about the things and their design and this in fact is the state of awareness. The level of awareness comes about the accumulation of exposure, attention, interaction and sustained interaction i.e., involvement (Kumar & Patra, 2012).
In other words, exposure and awareness are crucial premises for any kind of involvement. These are the two prime movers in this regard. Unless a person is substantially aware about something including self there will be no sign of sustained cognitive evaluation process undergone before and without this there will be no formation of attitude towards things in question that leads to more deeper attitudinal formation in the form of involvement, attachments, self identity and socialization as well. Awareness leads to consciousness and goal directed (self-interest) interaction. The conscious interaction is the involvement (Bloch, 1982). Involvement is an internal state indicating arousal, interest, or drive invoked by a stimulus or a situation (Andrews et al., 1990). This suggests that involvement has been conceptualized as a cognitive, affective or motivational construct indicating state of mind (Smith & Godbey, 1991), or perceived personal relevance (Zaichkowsky & Lynne 1985; Richins & Bloch, 1986; Celsi & Olson, 1988). Involvement is clearly a behavioral construct which focuses on actions and would be an antecedent of Customer Engagement (Vivek, 2009).

However, Sustained extensive –intensive interaction, i.e., involvement leads to a continuous and deeper relationship of self with the object or phenomenon which is the attachment. In one of the study by Ball & Tasaki (1992), it is stated that “Attachment is the extent to which an object which is owned is used by that individual to maintain his or her self concept”. Examining the same in the marketing literature, in the contexts of objects, retailers and brands, attachment has been identified to be driven by individual self-expression and identity development (Kleine et al., 1995; McCracken, 1989; Ahuvia, 2005; Ball & Tasaki, 1992). The scale developed by Ball & Tasaki (1992) suggests that possession is important in consumers’ maintaining and supporting their sense of identity and self-worth, even if the consumer does not admit it. Object attachment has been found to strongly impact use of products, and may define or strengthen the sense of identity of consumers (Ahuvia, 2005; Falk & Campbell, 1997). Attachment is an affective construct and strongly associated with ownership or possession of objects or products which leads to Customer Engagement. However, attachment could lead to engagement in several situations (Vivek, 2009).

Attachment is due to any deeper relationship of self under the umbrella of self interest or preferred self merged into one entity i.e., self-brand connection with the object. In this state of consumers brand personality, success & failure and performance of brand are all identified with pain and gain of self in identity with object. Consumers use brands to express and validate their identity (Aaker, 1997; Berger & Heath, 2007; Escalas & Bettman, 2005). This
proposition stems from the more general notion that individual behavior is motivated by the need to reaffirm self-image (Dunning, 2005; Rogers, 1947).

A brand's personal relevance captures the self-expressive function of a brand by focusing on the degree to which consumers perceive a brand to be related to their identity and to which they have closer personal relationships than with other brands (Aaker, 1997; Aaker et al., 2004; Fournier, 1998). Stronger preferences for a self-expressive brand are likely to be reflected in greater perceived personal relevance of the brand and a closer perceived relationship with the self-expressive brand. A brand's perceived uniqueness reflects the degree to which consumers view brands to be differentiated from one another (Amaldoss & Jain, 2005; Berger & Ward, 2010).

The set of brand associations consumers have about a brand is become more meaningful as it is more closely related to the self. Brand association help consumers to meet self-verification or self-enhancement goals. When individuals have incorporated a brand into their self-concept then it can be considered as connection between self and brand i.e. self-brand connection. Self-Brand Connection captures the strength of the "connection" between perceived brand meaning (including image and brand personality), and the consumer's self-concept. The creation of a strong and meaningful Self brand connection is more likely to occur when the consumer's personal experience with the brand is closely tied to the image of the brand, and when the brand itself satisfies an identified psychological need (Escalas, 2004). The personal meaning associated with a brand can be derived from: (a) the image or "personality" of the brand that develops over time from the advertising programs and the dynamics of popular culture in society (Keller, 2008), and (b) the individual's personal experiences with the brand (Escalas, 2004).

It is a nature of human consciousness that individuals extend their self by sharing perception, attitude and preferences with likeminded people's perception, attitude and preferences that leads to commonality of the same. This can be considered as socialization of individual self into a group-self towards an object. Socialization can be considered as a process of interpersonal interaction over a subject matter using any social network media over a period of time. It refers to those processes that help customers to adapt and come to appreciate the values, norms, and behavior patterns of the company. Such socialization is critical as services become more customized and personalized. Customer socialization facilitates customer company identification which is a necessary condition in customer participation. Customer socialization also develops the position transparency, self-efficacy, and social approval for active customer participation. Consumers use prominent social networks (socialization) in
order to create and share content; communicate with one another and build relationships (Libai, and Bolton, 2010) which offer great potential for customer engagements. Prior research has shown that community participants exhibit a high level of engagement and loyalty towards the firm (Algesheimer & Dholakia, 2005; Algesheimer & Borle, 2010) which holds true for on-and offline encounters (Shankar & Smith, 2003). Virtual communities were proven to offer opportunities to create valuable relationships with customers. They allow users to spread increased positive word of mouth (WOM), promote loyalty and satisfaction and they allow firms/company to benefit from insights of co-creation (Shankar & Smith, 2003; Prahalad & Ramaswamy, 2004; De Valck & Van Bruggen, 2009). Virtual communities of interest are essentially networks for word of mouth where individuals with a shared interest for a product, business or action can exchange pre- and post-purchase information, affiliate with other individuals and provide information as well as social support. Thus based on the above discussion the parameters/components of customer engagement can be explored as: Exposure Awareness, Involvement, Attachments, Self-brand connection and Socialization. Therefore, any activities addressing the above parameters of customer engagement in broader prospective, as strategic applications and standing approach in its execution may be categorized as the customer engagement practices. Hence, the customer engagement practices can be measured through-exposure, awareness, involvement, attachments, self-brand connection and socialization level. The model delineates the structural mechanism of customer engagement where exposure and awareness act as pre-requisites for energizing involvement i.e., the interaction of consumer with product(s)/brand. Involved consumers having positive experience feel attached with the product/brand and increasingly connect with the product/brand (i.e., self brand connection). At this stage of self-brand connection the consumers/customers find product(s)/brand as part of their life and become loyal to the same. The loyalty of the consumers may be either of the two types: one is cognition led and another is based on cognition-affective duo. The cognition led loyalty has the tendency of shifting brand loyalty for the reason that cognition is emergence of rationality supported by knowledge. This may bring loss of customer engagement to the marketers as depicted in the diagram above. On the other hand, cognition – affective led loyalty is formed by rationality duly moderated and mixed up with emotions which blocks the free play of rationality expressed in the form of intensely pursuing self interest. This way it reduces the tendency of shifting brand loyalty. The relationship of all the identified components of customer engagement can be better understood with the model proposed below.
Moreover, the cognition–affective loyalty is a strong tender for the customers/ consumers to socialize their self-brand personality with referral groups and friend circle in a social set up with the help of different media that finally convert the product/brand their common self identity. Any success or failure, and positive or negative view regarding the product/ brand become a matter of concern to the whole group in a sense that it might be the group common drawback. Therefore products or brand becomes a social unit of the group and this is socialization of a brand. The model further illustrates sequential interlinkage of parameters of customer engagement jointly emits the customer engagement level.

With the support of extensive literature survey and the discussion made above sec. 2.8 the parameters of customer engagement are highlighted as Involvement, Attachments, Self-brand connection and Socialization. Exposure and awareness here are considered as the criteria variables jointly energies the parameters from Involvement to Socialization in a sequential manner where socialization stands for communalization of objects of interest as customers’/ consumers’ attitude towards the object(s) band together into an unified phenomenon. The logic behind the proclamation is that once people got the exposure about the product(s)/
brand(s) through different media it creates an awareness and confidence in the product(s)/brand(s) which results into positive attitude for the same and it produces in the end some positive responses as well. Sec 2.8 offers some useful ideas that the marketers can make use of. These are enumerated as follows:

i. Parameters of customer engagement are identified. It may help the marketers to measure the level of customer engagement in a particular market for a brand or product.

ii. As the customer engagement level can be quantified, the marketers can compare the customer engagement level at two different points of time and between two products or brands.

iii. It helps to relate exposure and awareness among the consumers/ customers with customer engagement.

iv. It suggests the brand managers or marketers to manage media in an efficient and effective manner to successfully energies the parameters of customer engagement for attaining required level of customer engagement.

v. It helps the marketers to operationalize the customer engagement concept.

vi. It helps the marketers to monitor the customer engagement process and develop principles, techniques and strategy for a successful management of customer engagement.

2.9 CONCLUSION OF THE CHAPTER

The concept ‘customer engagement’ developed and evolved in its own way in a variety of parent disciplines. It is an area of marketing and consumer behaviour in which the values of customers (and their mutual bonding) are of prime importance. On metaphysical level an engagement is basically an engrossment of cognitive, affective and Conative state of one’s existence with elements of his or her environment to which everyone is parted with. If the element here is a brand or a product this may be the customer engagement. Increasingly, executives are finding that the winning differentiator is no longer the product or the price, but the level of engagement—the degree to which a company succeeds in creating an intimate long-term relationship with the customer or external stakeholders. Although the term “engagement” is sometimes used to describe customer marketing, loyalty, satisfaction and retention practices, companies are now realizing that engagement also is a more strategic way of looking at customer or stakeholders relationships. It appears here that the concept of customer engagement has become too inclusive at one place or too conceptual and this is the sign of mist prevailing around it and it needs more concise definition and framework to find
out well casted and clearly categorized set of criteria to make the concept theoretically explorable and workable in practice

A few suggestions may be offered in this regard:

- **Social personality:** We are socially programmed human after a long span of our cultural leads. Anything that give us a sense of belonging towards something as being part of it or concerned with it in many other ways, we feel voluntarily engaged. Therefore it is required that the brand should itself be dressed as a social identity. It must work and live in the society working as a legal person and be part of it living in some useful manner that any absence of or annihilation is felt as personal loss or boredom or even doom. This is the way a brand becomes a socialite and this leads to customer engagement.

- **Brand as a family member:** Brand must make a space in our life as a family member whose success we feel and failures we bear. This tie is stable and sustainable. The brand must live; work and share in the same spirit and be part of our life. This is the gateway of customer engagement.

- **Brand as a source of pride:** Brand must appear as a source of pride among the users and be felt in the same way as an entity engaging in value addition to the users, the stakeholders and the public in the closer circle at least. Anything that is useful and admired by the surrounding for some genuine reasons are also a matter of pride and that we all feel and share voluntarily with others. Through that we are also identified with that admiration and this has definite business meaning also.

- **A collectively cared and shared brand:** Those who consume more they also know more and those who know more feel more too. Keeping in mind the same proposition the brand managers should facilitate these customers be part of the whole concept of the brand in some explicitly recognizable basis. Customers should find it here that being part with the brand is more than being satisfied and it is a space created where they are motivated to participate in developing and promoting the whole concept of the brand they are involved in. This may be in the form of being a model of the ad-campaigns for the brand, member to the advisory board of the product development or ideation, sharing success by being part of the brand success by promoting it among the fraternity etc.

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REFERENCES


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