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Online Customer Engagement A Systematic Literature Review

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Abstract

With the increasing prominence of e-commerce and the digital age, businesses are continually seeking ways to engage their customers effectively through online channels. In the digital age, where e-commerce is becoming more and more popular, companies are always looking for new and efficient ways to interact with their clients online. Online customer engagement plays a pivotal role in the success of businesses in the digital age. Online customer engagement refers to the interaction and involvement of customers with a business or brand through digital platforms. Understanding the importance of online customer engagement and implementing effective strategies can position businesses for sustained growth and success in the ever-evolving digital landscape. The paper will discuss the concept of Online Customer Engagement, what factors motivate a customer to get engaged over the online channels and emerging engagement strategies to strengthen the online customer engagement practices. The approach used in this study was a systematic assessment of literature, and the majority of the insights in the research were derived from a rigorous review of data from secondary sources. This paper provides a systematic review of the existing literature on customer engagement from 2013 to 2023. The article focusing on leading conceptualisation of CE and OCE, OCE antecedents and its consequences or major outcomes, emerging strategies of OCE. This article begins with an introduction to the subject followed by research methodology, and then paper is concluded with conclusion, limitations and future research direction for further studies. The study makes a substantial contribution to the expansion and enhancement of knowledge in the fields of online customer engagement and its contribution to long-term company development and maintain long term relations with the customers.

Keywords: Customer Engagement, Online customer engagement, Antecedent, Factors, Outcomes, OCE Techniques. Online Customer Engagement Drivers.

Introduction

In this dynamic business environment customer engagement has been explored extensively in the academic literature in recent years (Brodie, Hollebeck, Juric, & Illic,2011). Online customer engagement is an important aspect of modern businesses. With the increasing use of digital platforms, businesses have explored innovative ways to connect and interact with their customers. The key to successful customer engagement is creating meaningful and valuable interactions that build strong relationship between the company and its customers. Essentially, customer engagement (CE) is a multifaceted concept that heavily emphasizes the cognitive, emotive, and behavioral components of customer-brand relationship (Brodie et al.,2011; Hollebeek, 2011a, 2011b; Hollebeek et al.,2014; Kumar 2020; van droon et al.,2010). In



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marketing research, CE is taken as a growing subject area of research (Lim et al., 2022). CE is one of the most alluring topic in the hospitality and tourism business like hotels, destinations, events, airlines, and theme parks all are focusing on the tactics for the better engagement with their customers (So & Li, 2020). Online customer engagement is an important contributing and essential aspect for building and fostering strong relationships between a business and its customers (Smith, J et al., 2020). Building on different theoretical backgrounds many researchers in various discipline defined the Customer engagement concept in different ways. Some of researchers define it as a psychological concept where as another group elaborate it as a behavioral concept. Van droorn et al., (2010) has defined in his studies customer engagement as a Uni-Dimensional and conceptualize it as; the customer's behavioral manifestation towards a brand or firm, beyond purchase resulting from motivational drivers. (Vivek et.al, 2011) conceptualize the customer engagement as the combination of behavioural responses with an emotional context. So, the emotional context is confidence and trust, commitment where as behavioral context is action. Bowden (2009) conceptualize the customer engagement as a process that build the loyalty. Brodie et al., (2011) defines the customer engagement as a psychological state that occurs by virtue of interactive, co-creative customer experience with a focal agent/object(e.g. a brand)in focal service relationship.it plays a crucial role in nomological network governing service relationship in which other relational concept. It is multidimensional concept subject to context. Patterson et al. (2006) defines the customer engagement as psychological concept that is characterized by a degree of vigor, dedication, absorbtion and interaction. Calder et.al, (2016) in his empirical studies "Engagement is a multilevel context that emerges from the thoughts and feelings about one or more rich experience involved in reaching a personal goal. Haggins and Scholer (2009) defines the concept as "Engagement is a state of being involved, occupied, fully absorbed or engrossed in something sustained attention. (Sedley, 2008) stated the customer engagement is seen as a retention and acquisition strategy for establishing and maintaining competitive advantages, as well as predicting future business. Customers can use social media to comment, review, create, and share content across online networks. Customers can also communicate directly with organizations, brands, and marketers (Chau & Xu, 2012). According to Calder et. al, (2009), consumer engagement with a website is defined as "a collection of experiences" (consumer's beliefs about how a site fits into his/her life) "with the site." (MSI 2006) "Organization are exploring innovative ways to create and sustain emotional connections with the brand...thus engaging customers through innovation and design". (Wagner and Majchrzak, 2007) has proposed in his study that "the intensity of customer participation with both representatives of the organization and with other customers in a collaborative knowledge exchange process."

Companies are always looking for the ways which could enhanced customer engagement with their firm or organization. With the advent and increasing popularity of social media, customer engagement gets a prominent space in the recent years among marketing research and practitioners. Though in recent years the term Customer Engagement has widely used in marketing literature (Verhoef et.al,2010). Still the understanding of concept is in vague and unsystematically explained. Due to paucity of time and emergence of new media channels the customers raise their demands for go online. Whereas online customer engagement has been paid less attention in brand communities and, in particular, the antecedents and consequences of OCE (Brodie et. al ,2011). Although the existing literature has explored many antecedents and outcomes of customer engagement but few studies are focusing on the nature and concept of OCE and specific drivers and outcomes. OCE still remains an under researched field in the marketing research. To addressing this issue our study carefully reviews the most recent literature on CE and OCE



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published in between the specific time period. This study is an attempt to clarify the concept of CE and OCE by systematic evaluation of existing literature. Scholars and researchers will benefit from this work in many ways. It will contribute in the existing marketing literature to a better conceptualization of the CE and OCE concepts. The main motive of this paper is to bring the insights of the concept of CE in online construct and discuss the various enhance the customer engagement practices.

This article is summarized into several sections. The aim of this paper is highlighted in the opening section, which proposes the basic conceptual knowledge of the construct CE and OCE in relation with different contexts with the help of systematic assessment of prior published studies in marketing research. The conceptual idea of CE along with OCE has detailed in the next section. The driving factors and their consequences are also explained in this part. This section is also proposing the emerging strategies in the field of OCE for the better engagement of customers over the online platform. Additionally, the article includes a detailed description of the research methodology uses in this study, which involve a systematic literature review. This is followed by the conclusion, major findings and limitation of the study. The article concluded by providing numerous productive research areas and suggestions to assist researchers interested in this field with their future work.

Research Methodology

Over the past ten or so years, systematic literature has become a more popular research tool for evaluating papers in a variety of study fields, including management, education, social science, and organizationrelated research. In laymen term the systematic review process may be described as a research methodology wherein researchers examine previously published material in relation to a study inquiry. According to De Menezes and Kelliher (2011), it is a methodical process to locate, choose, and evaluate pertinent material, which is then included in the review. It has many types as framework-based review, bibliometric review, meta-analysis review and structured review. Systematic literature employed a methodical approach to choose, arrange, and retrieve the literature that was accessible. Transparent protocol is followed in the majority of systematic literature reviews (Rosado-Pinto and Loureiro, 2020). According to Rosado-Pinto and Loureiro (2020), transparent protocols make use of data that answers questions about the purpose of the study, the research topic, how to locate and choose research papers, and the inclusion and exclusion criteria of research papers. For this article the best and appropriate strategy for research is systematic literature review. The mains objectives of this article is to gain and to enhance the conceptual knowledge of online consumer engagement, its specific drivers and outcomes, by identifying latest trend, gaps and further suggesting future scope and all these objective can be accomplish by using systematic literature review (Canabal & White, 2008, Paul & Singh, 2017; Paul and Feliciano-Cestero, 2020). The four phases of a systematic literature review are followed in this research. The research topic, the database utilised for the study, and the keywords are defined in the first steps. The screening criteria for the paper are explained in the second step. The application of the screening is explained in the third step. The study's findings are presented in the final steps. The initial three phases of the process are detailed in this section of the paper, and the last step is covered in the next section.

1. Defining Research question, database and keywords:

Determining and identifying a review question is the first step in any systematic literature review (Leonidou et al. 2018). The first question in the article review is, "What is online consumer engagement?" and (ii) How can customer involvement on the internet be improved? The research for this essay begins



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at this point with a search of papers across several database sources. Web of Science is the data source used for this article. Web of Science is the most recommended alternative, according to Bunga Bangsa & Schlegelmilch (2020), because of its extensive coverage of peer-reviewed papers (Li et al., 2010) and incredibly convenient search tools (Prieto-Sandoval et al., 2016). The terms "consumer engagement" and "online consumer engagement" are used while searching the database. The journals used in this study were mainly related to the consumer, marketing and management related studies. Journals used in this research paper are Journal of Product & Brand Management, International Journal of Research in Marketing, International Journal of Business and Management Invention, Journal of International Marketing, Journal of service management Journal of Research in Interactive Marketing, Journal of Marketing Management, Journal of Strategic Marketing, Australasian Marketing Journal, Journal of the Academy of Marketing Science, Journal of Global Marketing Journal of marketing theory and practice and many more.

2. Screening Criteria:

This research paper concentrates on analyzing research papers published between 2015 and 2023. To ensure credibility, only peer-reviewed journals were considered. The selection of papers was limited to those published primarily in the English language for clarity purposes. An initial search was conducted using relevant keywords as a starting point. All those papers which were not written in English language were excluded from this review paper. This paper also excluded all those papers which are published in book, conference, dissertation. For the final selection only paper which are following and addressing the core idea of this research paper were selected.

3. Implementing Criteria of Screening:

To determine which papers to include, the preliminary review protocol established by Sandelowski et al. in 1997 was used as a guideline.

Bibliographic Data Details	Description
Author(s)	Name of the Author/(s)
Year of Publication	The year in which article published.
Journal	Name and other information about the journal in which the paper was published.
Nature/ Type of Publication	What kind of articles are covered in the methodology?
Data collection	What procedures, tools, and strategies were employed to acquire data?
Major Themes	Does the articles provide insights about customer engagement and online customer engagement.

Table 1: Review Protocol

Source: Stechemesser, K., & Guenther, E. (2012).

4. Findings

Customer Engagement: A Concept

The concept of engagement has been examined under various contexts over the years, such as school and education (London et.al.2007), organization (Saks2006; Salanova et.al.2005), public policies (Gregory



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2007), and brands (Spott et.al, 2009). Brodie et al. (2011) characterized consumer engagement as a "psychological state that occurs by virtue of interactive, co-creative experiences with a focal agent/object (i.e. a brand) in a focal service relationship". Taking a context of engagement as an overarching process, ultimately leading to loyalty. Some researchers take it as a Uni-dimensional concept while other take it as multi-dimensional. Some researchers seeing it as behavioural aspects while other looking on psychological aspects. In prior published studies the Customer engagement is defined in terms of combination of cognitive aspects, behavioral aspects and emotional aspects. (Vivek et al,2014) in his study defined customer engagement as "the level of customer's cognitive, behavioral and emotional presence in online brand community". Based on the previously published literature we concluded that there are two basic perspectives from which researchers have defined and explored the concept of customer engagement in earlier literature: psychological aspects and behavioral aspects. Major of the studies focus on CE as a behavioral aspects that takes into account all non-transactional behaviors that impact the firms and defined it as customer behavioral manifestations with a brand or company focus that go beyond purchase and are the outcomes of motivating drives. (Vandroon et al., 2010). On the other hand other researchers who defined it as psychological aspect elaborated the customer engagement concept as caused by the use of an interactive platform. The characteristics of psychological state involves the degree of zeal, devotion, interaction and absorption in brand activities. In addition to that some studies defined CE as a psychological process that drives the customer loyalty (Hollebeek et al., 2011).

Online Customer Engagement

Mollen and Wilson (2010) defined online customer engagement as "the cognitive and affective commitment of the customer to an active relationship with the brand as personified by the website or other computer -mediated entities designed to communicate brand value." Managing customer relationship through social media engagement has become an important component of successful electronic marketing strategies (Chung C et.al,2011). Online Customer Engagement (OCE) refers to any online interaction that you have with your customers through channels such as websites, emails, paid ads, social media, remarketing and product packaging. (Clever.com). According to Jeff Toister "online customer engagement is the process of creating meaningful relation and interaction with customers through digital channels via means of websites, social media channels, and online forum." David Evans, in his study defines it as "online customer engagement is the active role and contribution of customers in web-based exercises with a brand or organization. It incorporates activities like leaving reviews, remarking on post, sharing quality content and getting feedback, which plays a crucial role in the growth and success of business." Chaelene Li characterized it as "OCE is about encouraging a feeling of community and belonging among customers in online realm."

Antecedents/Factors of Online customer engagement

The keywords "Customer Engagement Factors", "Online Customer Engagement Antecedents", "Customer Engagement Consequences", "Online customer engagement Drivers" are the main keywords utilize to search the articles of interest. Several articles with identical keywords were selected so that their authenticity could be compared. With extensive research and analysis, we were able to pinpoint key driving factors and the consequences that influence and encourage the online customer engagement activities. Determining the antecedents and outcomes that are frequently linked to CE is important in order to differentiate it from other marketing constructs and determine what makes CE special. Kumar, V et al.,



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(2020) investigates the antecedents and outcomes of customer engagement behavior in online brand communities. The technological factors are the first in this list. Technological advancement is one of the contributing antecedents in the online customer engagement process. The related technical aspects are like Website's interactivity, an interactive website allows two ways interaction, which enhances customers' online satisfaction (Ho and Lee,2015) and encourage users to engage with focal brand (Islam and Rehman, 2017). High Informational & quality content, researchers have explored that content quality works as an environmental cue in affecting online customer behavior (O' Cass and Carlson, 2012; Nambisan and Baron, 2009). Convenience, is a context-dependent construct that varies from context to context. (Jian et al. 2013). People prefer online services because they involve less cognitive work, give certainty, reduce related perceived risk, and increase perceived utility (Shang et al., 2005). The ease of use of a website has a positive and significant influence on customer behavior toward a website (Rose et al., 2012). The second most driving factor in our findings is social factors. It covers the context of Social presence, numerous studies on CBE employed social presence as a antecedent (M. J. De Oliveira et al.,2016). Our research indicates that several studies have examined the customer's continuous usage, participation in, and engagement with the s-commerce setting using social support as an antecedent. As a number of studies have concluded that the social interaction is an important aspect that derives from the adoption and usage of new media (C. M. K. Cheung et al., 2015). Motivational aspect is another antecedent which contribute in online customer engagement phenomena. Anderson et al., (2014) state that CEB in scommerce contexts necessitates a thorough comprehension of what drives people to purchase. The authors have highlighted to the fact that two aspects of online consumption—hedonic and utilitarian—are the focus of contemporary research (C. Kim et al., 2012). In line with that, Bowden (2009a) suggest that CE is highly affected by the value customers perceive from the firm's offerings. Bowden has provided significant evidence that highlights the vital contribution of Customer Perceived Value in driving customers to engage with brand. Chen, Y et al., (2008) explores in his study the impact of online consumer reviews as a form of word-of-mouth communication on consumer purchasing decisions and brand awareness.

Consequences/Outcomes of Customer Engagement/Online Customer Engagement

If a company want to have a pleased and emotionally engaged set of consumers, it must understand the art and science of customer management in order to engage them in a lucrative and sustainable manner. The SLR findings demonstrate that a number of constructs were examined as a consequence of the CE study. Based on the prior studies we concluded that the major outcomes that influence firm are customer purchase, customer loyalty, brand trust, commitment, satisfaction etc. Customer loyalty is one of the primary relationship marketing outcomes, according to the research(J Jacoby et al, 1973). The researchers investigated the influence of brand image and brand love on CE in the context of fashion clothes, which leads to customer loyalty as a direct result (Islam et al., 2016). Consumer engagement, according to researchers, have a strong impact on customer's evaluation and perceptions, which implies that customer engagement has direct impact on customer satisfaction. (Hollebeek et. al., 2011). Brand Commitment, the impact of CE on commitment was explored by Vivek, Beatty, Dalela, and Morgan (2014). The authors investigated the influence of value co-creation experience and technology environment on consumers' intentions to participate in the future. As an outcome of CE, repurchase intention and e-WOM have been studied combined.



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Emerging Strategies for enhancing online customer engagement

Rapid developments in consumer tastes, along with developing platforms in recent years, have heralded a new era of online customer engagement (emersys.com). Customized websites result in happy users because people find them more appealing, tempting, and desirable than websites with less customization (Kalyanaraman and Sundar, 2006). Researchers have revealed that the gamification has significant and positive impact in various context like product adoption (Müller-Stewens et al., 2017) and brand connections (Berger, Schlager, Sprott, & Herrmann, 2018). Another emerging trend is the games. Gamification can also increase consumer engagement behaviours (Shankar et.al, 2016), that is, customers' behaviours toward a firm, beyond purchase, that contribute to firm performance (Kumar & Pansari, 2016; Verhoef, Reinartz, & Krafft, 2010). According to Brandtzaeg and Flstad (2017), chatbots are frequently employed for productivity purpose, which refers to the capacity to solve an issue or offer rapid and consistent response. The prior studies revealed that engaging with augmented reality and interactive technology improves attitude toward the company, influencing revisiting of an online shopping as well as purchase intention. Van Doorn et al. (2010), Bruneau et al. (2018) characterized Loyalty Program engagement as "customers' behavioural manifestations toward a company's LP," which include members' direct- and indirect LP contributions. Using renowned actress/actresses, famous sports personalities, fashion models, and music stars is very popular in marketing and advertising (Choi, Lee, & Kim, 2005). Consumers engage with the user generated content to express their identity, communicate socially with other consumers or brands, get or spread information, or just be entertained (Daugherty et al., 2008; Muntinga et al., 2011; Shao, 2009). Community building is another aspect for enhancing the customer involvement with the organization. Brand community building has been recognized as an effective approach for developing and maintaining customer relationships (L Dessart et al., 2015).

5. Discussion and Implications

The goal of this research article is to perform a comprehensive evaluation of the literature on customer engagement over the online platform. Though the extensive research work has been done in this field still the concept is scattered and limited. We get insights from a thorough examination of ideas, models, and variables influencing consumer engagement in online media. We emphasized on the prior studies that investigated the factors and their outcomes that influence the online customer engagement. Our rigorous analysis of the key academic data sets has identified that OCE is growing trends in today techno-oriented era. Based on our findings, technological, social and motivational factors are the key driving antecedents of the customer engagement, while customer loyalty, brand trust, e-wom, repurchase intention, customer satisfaction, customer commitment are the major outcomes of the online customer engagement. In this research article we attempt to identify the key emerging modern strategies for strengthening the customer relationship and their interaction with the firm. The work will be beneficial to both academics and practitioners and advancement to a better knowledge of the topic. We also believe that it will open up the possibility of more study in the future. As a result, the study's findings have numerous key implications for both scholars and practitioners interested in online customer engagement field. First, we conduct a systematic analysis of existing CE research to find theories, models, and variables, as well as to explain the customer engagement concept. This can help to increase understanding of what motivates customers to engage in online platform. Another major finding of the study shows that Tech is the pivotal contributing factors for cultivating and nurture the customer interaction with the company through online channel. Social and motivating factors are also contributing in the enhancement of the relationship. The identified



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antecedents and their consequences are likely to assist the business in better understanding what motivates customers to participate in the company websites. This study proposes the innovative and trending key strategies for the boosting up the involvement level of their customers through the online channels. As a result, several enterprises and online businesses are considering utilizing the characteristics to boost their websites. However, this research will help managers comprehend better aspects that enhance online customer engagement and numerous strategies for better engagement of their customers. Overall, the findings of this study will have long-term implications for CE and marketing research by providing a theoretical foundation for conducting empirical research on CE, as well as paving the way for addressing CE in the light of online platform.

6. Conclusion: On the basis of reviewed literature, the concept of customer engagement is multi-dimensional. It has behavioral as well as psychological aspects. In conclusion, online customer engagement plays a crucial role in creating and nurturing the strong relationship with the customers in this techno-age. In this research paper we have address the key antecedents driving factors to boost the engagement level of the customer with online platforms. Overall, online customer engagement is crucial for businesses to stay competitive in today's digital marketplace, foster customer loyalty, and drive long-term success. By leveraging the power of online platforms and strategies, businesses can create meaningful connections with customers, generate positive experiences, and ultimately drive growth. This paper also could be the indicative direction for empirically testing that how different strategies could enhance the customer engagement level and how it can strengthen their relationship with the firm.

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