

# Customer Engagement Marketing Framework (CEM): A strategic perspective

Esraa Karam<sup>1</sup>, Matthew Alexander<sup>1</sup>, V Kumar<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> University of Strathclyde, Glasgow, UK

<sup>2</sup> Georgia State University, Georgia State, USA

## Abstract

Many leading firms consider customer engagement one of their top priorities where success is identified as encouraging customers to be the firm's Pseudo-marketers where they contribute to the marketing functions of the organisations (Pansari and Kumar, 2018). In that sense, a novel topic has been introduced to the marketing literature namely 'customer engagement marketing'. According to Harmeling et al. (2017, p.367), Customer Engagement Marketing (CEM) is conceptualized as a "firm's deliberate effort to motivate, empower and measure customer contributions to marketing functions". CEM is a strategic aspect of the engagement process focussing on the planning phase of customer engagement from a firm perspective. Consequently, CEM is a fruitful research that implies a number of academic and practical implications on the best approaches and tools used to stimulate customer engagement behaviours.

This paper has two objectives. First, it introduces a theoretical framework of customer engagement marketing that identifies the main antecedents of engagement marketing, its main initiatives and the main outcomes of the process from a firm perspective developed through 34 in-depth interviews with engagement and marketing managers in retailing, telecommunications, tourism and financial contexts. The results of the qualitative interviews are divided into three key area (see figure 1 attached). The first section highlights the antecedents of customer engagement marketing process and includes into firm-related, initiative-related and customer-related CEM antecedents. The second section highlights CEM initiatives adopted by firms; developmental CEM initiatives and Influential CEM initiatives. Developmental CEM initiatives include product development input and communication platforms; while influential CEM initiatives include social media engagement and product reviews. Finally, the third section includes the outcomes of the CEM process; developmental outcomes and influential outcomes. On one hand, developmental CEM results in content generation, tailoring messaging and brand development; and on the other hand, influential CEM results in content sharing, customer outreach and brand awareness.

The second objective is evaluating the effectiveness of the CEM framework in stimulating influencing and co-developing engagement behaviours of customers. This will be achieved through four experiments in a retailing context. For each experiment, a 2 x 2 x 2 between-subject factorial design is used, with two levels for each of the independent variables of CEM initiatives and two levels for two moderating variables. Data collection for experiments is still in progress where online panel data is used for the data collection where twelve scenarios are developed for each experiment and each scenario has 30 different subjects for each scenario ending up with 1440 participants. Empirical findings will be presented by the time of the symposium.

Findings fill a current research gap and add a real contribution to the engagement literature by introducing a new framework for CEM and exploring the effectiveness of CEM initiatives on engagement behaviours. From a managerial perspective, findings help marketing managers learn the 'art of engaging customers' in a profitable long-term relationship with positive outcomes for both customers and firms through identifying factors that affect formulating effective and efficient strategies to engage their customers in their marketing activities.

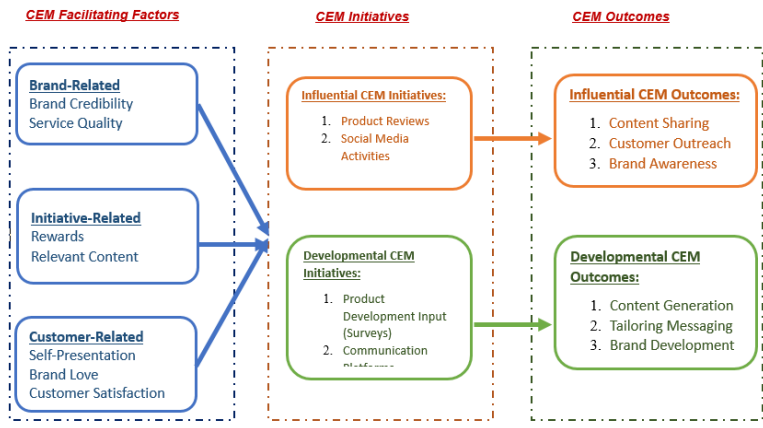


Figure 1: Theoretical CEM Framework – Qualitative Finding