

## CUSTOMER ENGAGEMENT: GROWING RELEVANCE IN MARKETING RESEARCH

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### ABSTRACT

Within marketing research, the number of studies about customer engagement has been growing, emerging mainly after 2005 (Brodie *et al.*, 2011), which reflects the increasing interest of researchers on the topic. The purpose of this study is to provide a systematic literature review to answer to the research question: “What marketing research has been conducted on customer engagement until now and what could be future avenues for research?”

In what concerns methodology, this study applied a systematic literature review which is considered a scientific, replicable and transparent process (De Menezes and Kelliher, 2011). Two dominant academic databases, Web of Science (WoS) (core collection) and Scopus, were used. The search was done on 24/07/2018 and on 25/07/2018. The keywords used were: “customer engagement”, “consumer engagement” and “brand engagement” and several filters were applied. Starting with 617 articles from WoS electronic database and 767 articles from Scopus, after taking out the duplicated articles, applying the exclusion criteria and combining both databases, a total of 648 papers remained. After performing the abstract and the full text reading, 144 articles were finally included for analysis.

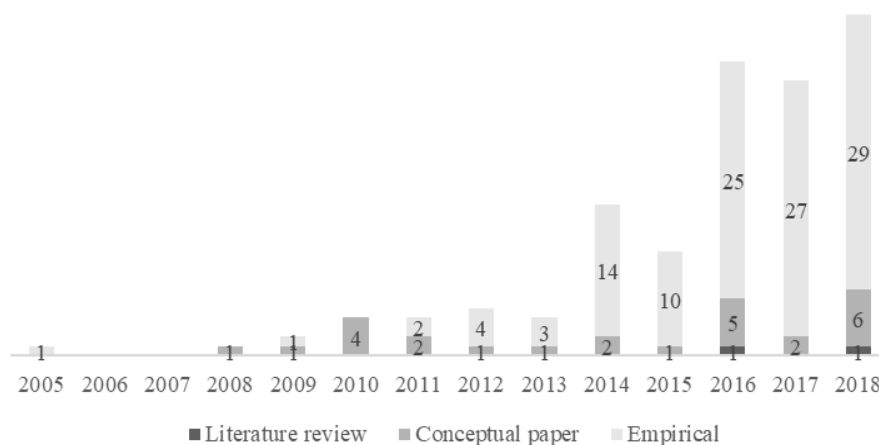


Figure 1. Methodologies used: evolution along the years

Based on the literature review performed, it can be concluded that customer engagement has been a key area of research within the marketing field. The growing number of articles published about the topic and the diversity of authors studying it, together with the different countries where studies are taking place and the diversity of the research context (industries analyzed) seem to reflect the

importance that the topic has gained worldwide. In what concerns the methodologies used, Figure 1 shows that, mainly after 2012, empirical studies have been the most common studies.

It can also be concluded that although different theoretical backgrounds have been presented, relationship marketing and the service-dominant logic are the most common theoretical perspectives from which customer engagement emerges (e.g., Brodie *et al.*, 2013; Fehrer *et al.*, 2018). In what concerns the conceptual roots of engagement and its sub-forms, several definitions of customer engagement are presented in the marketing literature. It is described, for instance, as a psychological state (Brodie *et al.*, 2011) and as a "...behavioral manifestation toward the brand or firm that goes beyond transactions" (Verhoef *et al.*, 2010, p. 247). Many other sub-forms of engagement are found in the literature like "consumer engagement", "brand engagement", "customer engagement behaviors" and "actor engagement", among others. This diversity is also present when authors refer to the dimensions of engagement. Although a significant proportion of the analyzed studies conceptualize customer engagement as a multidimensional construct (e.g., Hollebeek, 2011; Dessart *et al.*, 2016) with the cognitive, emotional and behavioral components, other dimensions have also been referred by different authors (e.g., Vivek *et al.*, 2012; So *et al.*, 2014). The literature review also reveals several gaps for future research: exploration of customer engagement in different industries, undertaking a longitudinal approach, performing a cross-cultural analysis and further investigation about engagement valence, actor engagement, customer engagement in the hospitality setting and about the relationship of customer engagement and other related constructs.

This study has some limitations related to the possibility of human error while performing the analysis, a certain degree of subjectivity in the choice of relevant studies and the possibility that some articles are omitted due to the databases used or the filters applied. Despite the limitations, an important contribution is made as the study presents a review about customer engagement research, highlighting the main conclusions and future avenues for research. The analysis is not only useful for researchers, but also for managers whose objective is to have engaged consumers.

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*Keywords: Marketing, Customer engagement, Systematic literature review*

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