

A GENERALIZED MULTIDIMENSIONAL SCALE FOR MEASURING CUSTOMER ENGAGEMENT

Shiri D. Vivek, Sharon E. Beatty, Vivek Dalela, and Robert M. Morgan

As firms work to engage customers better, researchers have attempted to understand customer engagement (CE) empirically. CE goes beyond purchase and is the level of the customer's (or potential customer's) interactions and connections with the brand or firm's offerings or activities, often involving others in the social network created around the brand/offering/activity. Engaged individuals include current as well as prospective customers. Following the expanded relationship metaphor and service-dominant logic, the researchers conceptualize a three-dimensional view of CE, including conscious attention, enthused participation, and social connection. The final 10-item scale is thoroughly developed and subsequently validated in several contexts. In addition, its nomological validity is assessed.

Marketing scholars have recently begun paying attention to the concept of customer engagement (Brodie et al. 2011b; Calder, Malthouse, and Schaedel 2009; Higgins and Scholer 2009; Vivek, Beatty, and Morgan 2012). Engagement has been researched in a number of disciplines, such as education (Fredericks, Blumenfeld, and Paris 2004; Lutz, Guthrie, and Davis 2006), psychology (Avery, McKay, and Wilson 2007; Bakker et al. 2007; Hallberg and Schaufeli 2006), management (Fleming, Coffman, and Harter 2005), and information systems (Erat et al. 2006; Wagner and Majchrzak 2007). In marketing, customer engagement (CE) was a key MSI (Marketing Science Institute) Research Priority for 2010–2012, and has received attention in special issues by *Journal of Service Research* (2010) and *Journal of Strategic Marketing* (2010), as well as several articles in *Journal of Service Research* (2011).

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However, most of the scholarly work done on CE thus far has been conceptual in nature, with empirical work as an exception (Calder, Malthouse, and Schaedel 2009; Vivek, Beatty, and Morgan 2012). Practitioners as well as academics suggest that the field needs a sound, empirically based, and generalizable CE scale (Bolton 2011; Gambetti and Graffigna 2010; Gambetti, Graffigna, and Biraghi 2012; Mollen and Wilson 2010), which is the goal of this paper.

This paper first offers an integration of the various conceptualizations of CE in the marketing literature. Then, CE's conceptual fit with relationship marketing and service-dominant (S-D) logic is addressed. Next, building on theory and the emergent themes from our qualitative work, a conceptualization and definition of CE is offered. Subsequently, we develop a three-dimensional conceptualization of the construct (composed of conscious attention, enthused participation, and social connection) and present a finalized reliable and valid 10-item scale, validated across several contexts, which we call the CUE scale (Customer Engagement Scale). Finally, this research finds that the scale correlates well with four important customer outcomes—value perceptions, benevolence perceptions, future patronage intent, and affective commitment.

THE NATURE OF CUSTOMER ENGAGEMENT

CE has attracted considerable attention among practitioners for years (Economist Intelligence Unit 2007; Gallup Consulting 2001), and more recently among marketing researchers (Kumar et al. 2010). A number of authors recently pulled together various conceptualizations and definitions of the concept, across diverse disciplines as well as in marketing (e.g., Brodie et al. 2011b; Mollen and Wilson

Table 1
Table of Definitions

Authors	Definitions	Object/Term Used
Vivek, Beatty, and Morgan (2012, p. 133)	The intensity of an individual's participation in and connection with an organization's offerings and/or organizational activities, which either the customer or the organization initiate.	Consumer engagement
Mollen and Wilson (2010, p. 922)	The customer's cognitive and affective commitment to an active relationship with the brand as personified by the Web site or other computer-mediated entities designed to communicate brand value. It is characterized by the dimensions of dynamic and sustained cognitive processing and the satisfying of instrument value and experiential value.	(Online or computer-mediated entities) Customer engagement
Sashi (2012, p. 267)	It embodies interactive consumer experiences where ICTs such as social media act as tools that can enable and facilitate these experiences. The level of consumer engagement is calculative and affective commitment to an active relationship with a firm or the firm's online community.	Consumer engagement process
Brodie et al. (2011b, p. 260)	"[A] <i>psychological state</i> that occurs by virtue of <i>interactive, cocreative customer experiences with a focal agent/object</i> (e.g., a brand) in focal service relationships."	Customer engagement
Hollebeek (2011, p. 790)	The level of a customer's motivational, brand-related and context-dependent state of mind characterized by specific levels of cognitive, emotional, and behavioral activity in brand interactions. It includes the themes of immersion, passion, and activation.	Customer-brand engagement
Gambetti, Graffigna, and Biraghi (2012, p. 668)	Customer-brand engagement appears as a <i>multi-dimensional concept</i> combining such elements as attention, dialogue, interaction, emotions, sensorial pleasure, and immediate activation aimed at creating a total brand experience with consumers.	Advertising/media engagement but referred to as customer-brand engagement
Van Doorn et al. (2010, p. 254)	Customer engagement behaviors go beyond transactions and are defined as a customer's behavioral manifestations that have a brand or firm focus, beyond purchase, resulting from motivation drivers.	Consumer engagement behaviors
Higgins and Scholer (2009, p. 112)	A state of being involved, occupied, fully absorbed, or engrossed in something (i.e., sustained attention), generating the consequences of a particular attraction or repulsion force.	Strength of engagement

Note: ICT = information and communications technology.

2010; Vivek, Beatty, and Morgan 2012). Table 1 provides a set of useful definitions or perspectives on CE, presenting a few of the more widely used definitions in marketing. As is evident from the conceptualizations noted here, there are a number of agreements, as well as disagreements, as to the nature of CE.

It is interesting to note that authors in marketing have difficulty deciding what to call the concept, and hold varying views of its nature. As Table 1 notes, some call it customer-brand engagement (CBE) (e.g., Hollebeek 2011), while others view it as a process (Sashi 2012), and still others address it as behaviors (Van Doorn et al. 2010). Some authors focus only on the online or media aspects of the concept (e.g., Gambetti, Graffigna, and Biraghi 2012; Mollen

and Wilson 2010), while others more broadly consider it to represent individuals' interactions and connections with a brand or even with an organizational offering or activity (e.g., Vivek, Beatty, and Morgan 2012).

Definitions and views of the concept have some similarities across researchers, however. First, CE appears to involve experiences, interactions, and/or connections between the subject (customer) and the object(s), such as brands, Web sites, activities, and other customers (Mollen and Wilson 2010), with several researchers focusing heavily on the experiential nature of the concept as the key (e.g., Calder, Malthouse, and Schaedel 2009; Sashi 2012). Second, engagement appears to be primarily motivational (e.g., Brodie et al.'s [2011b] idea of it being a psychological state or Hig-

gins and Scholer's [2009] idea of it being a state of being occupied/involved/absorbed/engrossed). Also, a number of researchers focus on its behavioral manifestations, which is the primary thrust of MSI and many practitioners (Bijmolt et al. 2010; MSI 2006; Van Doorn et al. 2010; Verhoef, Reinartz, and Krafft 2010).

Further, MSI considers CE to represent "customers' behavioral manifestation toward a brand or firm *beyond purchase*" (2006, p. 4). Vivek, Beatty, and Morgan (2012, p. 127) expand on this idea by pointing out that CE includes those "who interact with the brand without necessarily purchasing it or planning on purchasing it, or on events and activities engaged in by the consumer that are not directly related to search, alternative evaluation, and decision making involving brand choice."

It is interesting to note that while most researchers discuss the positive effects of engagement, addressing how it tends to produce greater loyalty, trust, and commitment (Grégoire, Tripp, and Legoux 2009; Hollebeek 2011), others note that engagement by definition need not be positive—one can be negatively engaged with a company or brand (Higgins and Scholer 2009; Van Doorn et al. 2010). However, this negative side of engagement is not addressed further here.

In addition, researchers disagree as to whether the construct is unidimensional (Sprott, Czellar, and Spangenberg 2009) or multidimensional (Brodie et al. 2011b; Calder, Malthouse, and Schaedel 2009; Vivek, Beatty, and Morgan 2012), as well as to the dimensions. For example, Hollebeek (2011), comparing the dimensions found by others, notes that the relevance of CE dimensions appears to be context specific (e.g., online versus brand or organizational perspective). Her qualitative research revealed three generalized themes—immersion (engrossed in), passion (love or adoration), and activation (willingness to spend time interacting with the brand).

In another effort to find engagement dimensions, Calder, Malthouse, and Schaedel (2009) suggest two basic types of engagement in online media—personal and social-interactive. The relative manifestation of these engagement types varies for different media. Personal engagement is more relevant with newspapers, involving ideas like learning and stimulation, while social-interactive engagement is more relevant with online aspects, and involves socializing and participating in the online community with others.

Finally, Gambetti, Graffigna, and Biraghi (2012) argue for two dimensions, which are slightly different but related to the above categorizations. They suggest the experiential dimension (focusing on the hedonic elements relative to

usage and interaction with the brand) and the social dimension (focusing on interaction, cocreation, sharing of brand-related values and contents, including social exchanges with peers). Further, they suggest CE research has devoted little attention to the social dimension thus far. We now turn to how CE fits into the broader conceptual domains of relationship marketing and service-dominant (S-D) logic.

CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK OF CUSTOMER ENGAGEMENT (CE)

Vargo argues, "marketing is evolving to a new logic that is service based, necessarily interactional and co-creative of value, network centered and, thus, inherently relational" (2009, p. 374). Transcending previous conceptualizations of relationships, the S-D logic argues that while transactions of products and services occur at one point in time, relationships between the parties are evident in the joint, interactive, collaborative, unfolding, and reciprocal roles the entities in the network play, in a continuing process of value cocreation.

Vargo (2009) calls for the need to understand the relational nature and context of value creation better, while Gambetti, Graffigna, and Biraghi (2012) suggest that as consumers and brands interactively cocreate value (i.e., by CE) and develop deeper, more embedded relationships, they develop increasing levels of affinity, intimacy, mutual commitment, and reciprocal trust. Similarly, Fournier (2009) notes that consumers actively mutate and adapt the marketers' brand meanings to fit their life projects, concerns, and tasks. Gambetti, Graffigna, and Biraghi note that the essence of CE involves "brand enacting," or putting the "brand into action" (2012, p. 669). Thus, through CE, consumers interactively cocreate value in their encounters with brands and companies, highlighting value cocreation and S-D logic as the conceptual foundations for CE (see also Brodie et al. 2011a).

Finally, Vivek, Beatty, and Morgan (2012) argue persuasively that relationship marketing focuses too much on retention and not enough on acquisition of customers. By incorporating CE and S-D logic into the relationship marketing perspective, the richness of current or potential customers interacting, immersing, and cocreating with the brand, its employees, other people, or society in general in the enactment of their daily lives, in what Vargo and Lusch (2004) call "value configurations," is more clearly articulated and realized (Brodie et al. 2011a). Next, we turn to our conceptual development of CE and the scale development work.

CONCEPTUAL AND SCALE DEVELOPMENT PROCESS

Before developing the CE scale, which is the ultimate goal of this paper, it was necessary to define the construct. Thus, in the early stages, we also conceptually defined and refined the construct's definition as we proceeded. This process was aided by previous conceptualizations and theory (given that a good deal of effort has been extended in this direction in the past), as well as by the researchers' qualitative inquiry. In addition, the early stages enabled us to develop appropriate items for the Customer Engagement (CUE) scale. Throughout this process, the research followed a grounded theory perspective (Strauss and Corbin 1990). The theory evolved through a continuous interplay between analysis and data collection. Further, as the research progressed, the SD Logic and the expanded relationship marketing perspective appeared to support the data that emerged. Further, established scale development procedures were followed (Anderson and Gerbing 1988; Churchill 1979, 1995) to generate, edit, and purify items (see Table 2). Finally, several empirical studies allowed us to achieve a valid and reliable CUE scale (Table 3). These steps and results appear in detail below.

Conceptual Development and Item Generation

To overcome the limitations of any one activity, diverse methods and tools were used to study the concept of interest. At each stage, the researchers revised their understanding of the construct and its dimensions, and validated findings in a variety of ways. Following Churchill (1979), the process began with a review of relevant literature and existing scales on role and employee engagement in psychology (Avery, McKay, and Wilson 2007; May, Gilson, and Harter 2004; Schaufeli et al. 2002) and customer engagement in marketing (Calder, Malthouse, and Schaedel 2009; Kumar et al. 2010).

After the literature review, we captured the nature of CE as viewed by managers. Given our objective of understanding the new phenomenon of customer engagement, a grounded theory approach (Corbin and Strauss 2007) was taken to collect data from managers. Using snowball sampling, in-depth field interviews (averaging 40 minutes) were conducted with a total of 18 (12 male, 6 female) executives with a range of industries (consulting, cosmetics, logistics, hospitality, and retail), experience (6 to 27 years), age (29 to 67 years), and hierarchical levels (supervisors, managers, senior managers, and vice presidents).

All participants addressed two broad questions allowing interviewees to address these issues relative to their own views: "In your opinion, what is 'customer engagement'?" and "How would you define it and at what point would you consider a customer to be 'engaged' with your company?" Each question was posed as a broad entrée to an in-depth inquiry into the participants' view, with a focus on their subjective interpretations of the CE concept. All transcribed responses were analyzed with text analysis, coding of the interview transcripts, and key word search. The responses revolved around developing relationships with customers that go beyond a simple transactional exchange and might involve multiple levels. Respondents also talked about the need for emotional connections with the brand, suggesting it involves "thinking about my brand." For example:

If you have layers, multiple layers of the relationship . . . also having multiple touch points with the customer. (Group and account executive, B2C [business-to-consumer], 13 years' experience)

The interviews provided the researchers with a deeper understanding of CE from a managerial perspective. For example, interviewees talked about brands that customers may not even own but would "love to own" in the future, suggesting the importance of concentrating on nonowners or potential customers, as well as current customers. In addition, interviewees talked about the importance of value and relevancy of the offer for the customer, with one interviewee stating:

Because they feel they are receiving value from you greater than they are giving. (Account general manager, B2B [business-to-business], 7 years' experience)

Next, the researchers conducted three focus groups, focusing on the experiences of customers, each having 7 to 11 senior undergraduate business students from two U.S. universities. After introducing the idea of customer engagement to the groups, the researchers asked them to express their engagement with something related to being a consumer (i.e., of a business or firm's products or services), as well as why they felt engaged. All personal experiences of engagement revolved around firm offerings, activities, interactions or connections with the firm, brand or service/sales personnel. Besides providing a nuanced view of engagement, the first focus group allowed development of a short statement that reflects CE to aid in the scale development efforts.

The second group additionally addressed the same topics about their view of customer engagement. After a thorough discussion of this topic, the researchers presented them

Table 2
Conceptual, Dimensional, and Item Development

Steps	Description	Results
I. Conceptual Development and Item Generation	1. Executive interviews ($n = 18$).	Obtained managerial perspectives and understanding.
	2. Three student focus groups.	Obtained consumer perspectives, understanding, and item generation.
	3. Ethnographic inquiry at 3 events, including 13 interviews.	Aided in conceptualization and item generation.
	4. Open elicitation of 62 participants (178 incidents).	Aided in understanding and development of types of engagement objects.
II. Dimension Development and Item Editing		Final results: Concept definition and 89 generated items.
	1. Representativeness and readability assessment (20 students).	Five items modified; 32 eliminated (57 remaining).
	2. Dimensional assessment ($n = 5$); reaffirmation and labeling ($n = 3$).	Fifty-seven items categorized into 3 dimensions, which are defined and labeled (interrater reliability = .73).
III. Item Purification and Final Scale	3. Dimensions reassessed and generalizability assessment ($n = 10$).	Weak items, nongeneralizable items revised or eliminated from initial pool; pool reduced to 27 items and 3 dimensions reaffirmed.
	1. Print survey of students ($n = 227$), used EFA factor loadings and item-to-total correlations to reduce scale.	Reduced to 12 items (2 dimensions); social dimension dropped out.
	2. Theory and literature revisited, conducted CFA with above data using 3 dimensions.	Social dimension reintroduced—CFA confirms strength of the scale with 15 items (3 dimensions); see Table 5.

Notes: EFA = exploratory factor analysis; CFA = confirmatory factor analysis.

with the statement developed in the first focus group and asked how well the statement reflected their engagement with a chosen focus of interest. This group suggested minor revisions to the statement provided by the first group. The revised statement derived from both groups is "I enjoy ____ because ____." The third focus group corroborated the modifications suggested by the initial focus groups, thus moving the research to the next step.

The use of the term "enjoy" in this statement requires some discussion. Consistent with Calder, Malthouse, and Schaedel (2009), the framing of this set-up indicates that enjoyable experiences, and not utilitarian activities, elicit engagement. However, sometimes performance of a utilitarian task supported by brands or firms may lead to pleasant affect and therefore becomes associated with engagement

(Waterman 1993). This is similar to the idea of "brand enacting" in which the firm's goal is to "establish with them [consumers] a strong emotional link, highlighting the brand as a container of consumers' memories, habits, and affections" (Gambetti, Graffigna, and Biraghi 2012, p. 670). Just as Fournier noted, "Jean exhibits especially strong relationships with all of the brands that enable her 'trademark'" (1998, p. 350), those that helped her draw significance from marginal household activities. Thus, only utilitarian activities associated with pleasant affect or strong emotion can engage the customer.

Next, an ethnological inquiry through participant observations and phenomenological interviews was conducted with consumers engaged in three different events: at a Clinique beauty workshop, a Sahaj Yoga gathering, and at

Table 3
Scale Validation and Nomological Assessment

Study 1: Scale Validation (Across Contexts)	Study 2: Validation with Brand Context	Study 3: Revalidation with Retail Context	Nomological Validity Assessment
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Survey pretest with 15 CUE items (3 dimensions) using nonstudent respondents (modification based on feedback). 2. Data collection from student and nonstudent sample ($n = 235$). 3. Confirmatory factor analysis (CFA); 3 items eliminated. 4. Assessed construct validity of 3-dimension, 12-item scale: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • convergent validity • discriminant validity (versus WOM activity). 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Validation of 12-item scale on a single focus of engagement (Apple products) ($n = 206$). 2. Two items deleted based on modification indices. 3. Ten-item scale with good model fit used for revalidation in Study 3. 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Revalidation of 10-item scale in retail shopping context ($n = 271$). 2. Revalidated scale with high CFA loadings, significant t-values, and good fit statistics. 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Assessed relationship of CE with four customer outcome variables across two contexts: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Value • Benevolence perceptions • Future patronage intent • Affective commitment 2. Good model fit from CFA of outcome variables. 3. Twenty-three significant correlations of 24 total pairs.

Notes: CUE = customer engagement scale; WOM = word-of-mouth; CFA = confirmatory factor analysis; CE = customer engagement.

Sea World–San Diego. Thirteen people (seven women and six men, ages 19–76 years) participated across the observed events—before, during, and after the events. The researchers followed and observed the participants over several days and even weeks, using recordings and field notes to collect data focusing on their lived experiences. To understand the purpose and meaning of actions and interactions of the participants, repeated brief interviews were conducted at opportune times. This process supported the themes developed from the qualitative work, confirmed the literature’s emphasis on the experiential nature of CE, aided in the development of the definition, and contributed to the generation of the scale items. For instance, Sahaj Yogi Sab and Clinique fan Andy provided succinct insights of their experience:

Sahaj takes care of everything in my life. It’s my passion. . . . I get drawn to any signs of Mataji. . . . maybe there is more to know and understand! (Sab, 71 years)

It’s kind of above and beyond, versus just going to a department store and buying a lipstick. These are events where you are part of that activity that is unusual. (Andy, 32 years)

Lastly, through open-ended elicitation (Netemeyer, Burton, and Liechtenstein 1995), a convenience sample of 62 student (43) and nonstudent (19) participants responded to the following statement up to four times, relative to their foci of engagement: “I enjoy ___ because ___.” This approach produced 178 incidences of CE. That the majority

of responses contained a verb (e.g., shopping, using, listening) indicated that active participation by the customer is an important element of engagement (similar to Gambetti, Graffigna, and Biraghi’s [2012] “brand enacting”). For instance, one respondent wrote, “I enjoy listening to my iPod because I can have my favorite music in it and I can take it anywhere.” CE appears to include feelings and behaviors toward brands/offerings, as well as how much consumers feel socially connected to the business or with other consumers.

The qualitative inquiry steps allowed a conceptualization and definition of CE, along with 89 potential scale items. Using previous conceptualizations, theory, and our qualitative research, we define CE as follows:

CE goes beyond purchase and is the level of the customer’s (or potential customer’s) interactions and connections with the brand or firm’s offerings or activities, often involving others in the social network created around the brand/offering/activity.

Dimension Development and Item Editing

Following Churchill (1979), the next step involved reviewing and editing items to ensure appropriateness, relevance, and generalizability, as well as development of the potential dimensions. Independent coding of the previously transcribed responses, based on uncovered themes by two researchers, led to 89 items (available upon request) (Table 2) that captured the essence of engagement. Scale items were on a five-point Likert scale and included statements such as:

(1) I spend a lot of my discretionary time ____; (2) I like to learn more about ____.

The blank spaces were piped in using the verb and the product mentioned initially by a respondent (e.g., playing my Gibson guitar). Next, 20 undergraduate students edited the items for representativeness and readability. The students responded to the scale items relative to a chosen focus of engagement, while also noting those items that did not accurately represent their focus of engagement. Five items were modified and 32 eliminated in this process, as four or more judges considered them irrelevant or nongeneralizable.

Next, three nonstudents and two Ph.D. students ($n = 5$) sorted the remaining 57 items. This involved a lengthy, methodological clustering process, whereby they sorted, combined, and resorted the items until the items in each category were more similar to each other and distinct from items in other categories. The process had high interrater reliability (0.73), the percentage of agreement between the judges (Miles and Huberman 1994). Cohen's κ , the proportion of agreement between the assigners after chance agreement is removed from consideration, was 0.69, with a κ above .61 providing support for substantial agreement (Viera and Garrett 2005).

Three categories emerged from this process: conscious attention, enthused participation, and social connection. Two marketing academics further examined and agreed on the categorization, coming up with labels individually, which a third researcher scrutinized. We discussed disagreements until a consensus was achieved. The three dimensions, defined below, are consistent with the CE definition provided earlier and fit well with the previous attempts at dimension categorization. For example, *conscious attention* is similar to Hollebeek's (2011) dimensions of immersion and activation and Calder, Malthouse, and Schaedel's (2009) personal dimension. *Enthused participation* is similar to Hollebeek's passion and Gambetti, Graffigna, and Biraghi's (2012) hedonic experiences, while Calder, Malthouse, and Schaedel (2009), as well as Gambetti, Graffigna, and Biraghi (2012), include a *social connection* dimension.

Conscious Attention: The degree of interest the person has or wishes to have in interacting with the focus of their engagement.

Enthused Participation: The zealous reactions and feelings of a person related to using or interacting with the focus of their engagement.

Social Connection: Enhancement of the interaction based on the inclusion of others with the focus of engagement, indicating mutual or reciprocal action in the presence of others.

The initial item pool was overinclusive (Clark and Watson 1995, p. 309) to ensure construct validity. After the dimensions emerged, five Ph.D. students, three nonstudents, and two marketing faculty assessed the fit of the 57 remaining items relative to the three emerging dimensions, as well as the generalizability across contexts. Armed with definitions of both CE and its dimensions, the judges identified and rated weak, tangential, unrelated, and nongeneralizable items (relative to the definitions and dimensions). These items were revised or removed, with 30 items eliminated, leaving 27 items.

Item Purification

In the final stage of item development, 247 undergraduate students at a Southeastern university in the United States were recruited to participate for extra credit. These students were asked to think about how they enjoyed "something that revolves around products or activities offered or organized by a business" and respond to a print survey on a five-point Likert scale (strongly disagree/strongly agree). With a plan to use more generalized samples of consumers in subsequent studies, convenience sampling of students was deemed appropriate at this initial stage. Elimination of 20 unusable surveys left 227 surveys in the final analysis. Table 2 lists the procedures and results of item purification, while respondent demographics appear in Table 4.

Participants responded to the surveys in a variety of contexts of CE, with top categories reported in Table 4. The data were first subjected to exploratory factor analysis (principal axis factoring with direct oblimin rotation) using SPSS 18.0. Several criteria were used to arrive at the number of factors and items relative to each factor: examination of the scree plot, item-to-total correlations, total variance explained by each factor, eigenvalues, factor loadings, and so forth. Elimination of cross-loading or low-loading (< 0.40) items led to the resulting exploratory factor analysis (EFA), which contained only two dimensions: conscious attention (six items), explaining 47.6 percent variance ($\alpha = 0.86$), and enthused participation (six items), explaining 13.7 percent variance ($\alpha = 0.93$) (Nunnally and Bernstein 1994). All item-to-total correlations were in the 0.51 to 0.73 range (Carmines and Zeller 1974). Contrary to the theoretical support, the social connection dimension was not significant in this assessment, which called for further analysis of these data.

The role of social connections is repeatedly emphasized in the literature and theory (Calder, Malthouse, and Schaedel 2009; Gambetti, Graffigna, and Biraghi 2012).

Table 4
Description of the Samples

	Purification (n = 227)	Study 1 (n = 235) ^a	Study 2 (n = 206) ^b	Study 3 (n = 271) ^c
Age				
19–29 years	99%	33%	26%	14%
30–39 years	1	14	20	21
40–49 years		21	24	19
50–59 years		23	21	26
60+ years		9	9	19
Gender				
Male	52	43	41	38
Female	48	57	59	62
Education				
> High school		0	3	4
High school degree		9	24	21
Some college	100	26	28	34
College degree		44	33	25
Graduate degree		21	12	16
Race				
Caucasian	85	98	80	81
Hispanic	3	0	4	5
African American	9	1	6	8
Asian	2	1	5	2
Other	1	0	4	4
Nationality				
American	94	99	95	95
Other	6	1	5	5

^a Major foci of CE (customer engagement): shopping, 26 percent; using Apple products, 23 percent; watching television, 16 percent; using Xbox or Wii, 9 percent; others, 26 percent.

^b Favorite Apple products: iPod, 58 percent; iPhone, 21 percent; Mac, 21 percent; “Owned the product?”: yes, 52 percent; no, 48 percent.

^c Favorite retailer: Walmart, 21 percent; eBay and Target, 7 percent each; Amazon, 6 percent; Best Buy and Kohl’s, 4 percent each; Macy’s, 3 percent; Costco and Home Depot, 2 percent each; others, 44 percent.

Van Doorn asserts, “customer-to-customer interactions beyond a specific service relationship are also an important element of customer engagement” (2011, p. 280; emphasis omitted). Relationship theory also highlights brand relationships as venues for support, advice, camaraderie, and

companionship. Social connections strengthen consumer brand relationships (Fournier 2009). The qualitative studies in this research also demonstrated the importance of social connections. Since the item purification study measured engagement in relation to varied foci of engagement of

Table 5
Customer Engagement Factors

	CFA for Item Purification		CFA ^a = Study1	
	Standardized Loadings (n = 227)	t-Values	Standardized Loadings (n = 235)	t-Values
Factor 1: Conscious Attention	AVE = .54, CR = .87		AVE = .65, CR = .88	
I like to know more about ____.	0.74	13.84	b	b
I like events that are related to ____.	0.62	09.97	b	b
I like to learn more about ____.	0.71	13.26	0.67	11.22
I pay a lot of attention to anything about ____.	0.83	14.21	0.85	15.72
I keep up with things related to ____.	0.69	11.21	0.83	14.89
Anything related to ____ grabs my attention.	0.80	13.72	0.85	15.52
Factor 2: Enthused Participation	AVE = .52, CR = .87		AVE = .55, CR = .86	
I spend a lot of my discretionary time ____.	0.71	10.37	0.71	12.07
I am heavily into ____.	0.75	13.16	0.86	15.80
I try to fit ____ into my schedule.	0.63	10.26	0.65	10.59
I am passionate about ____.	0.89	15.19	0.82	14.69
My days would not be the same without ____.	0.69	11.54	0.66	10.94
I enjoy spending time ____.	0.63	08.47	b	b
Factor 3: Social Connection	AVE = .52, CR = .77		AVE = .77, CR = .91	
I love ____ with my friends.	0.68	8.66	0.77	13.68
I enjoy ____ more when I am with others.	0.73	11.51	0.94	18.51
____ is more fun when other people around me do it too.	0.76	12.37	0.91	17.58

Notes: CFA = confirmatory factor analysis; AVE = average variance extracted; CR = composite reliability. Scale points: 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree). The blanks in the items were filled in by the description of the focus of engagement mentioned initially by the respondent (e.g., learning photography on Sony 101). ^a Confirmatory factor analysis. ^b Items removed after confirmatory factor analysis of Study 1 data.

participants, the lack of a dominant context of engagement apparently led to exclusion of the social connection dimension. That is, the need for social connections appears more variable across contexts than the other dimensions.

Keeping the theoretical support in perspective, the three-item social connection scale was further tested for possible retention, along with the 12-item scale composed of conscious attention and enthused participation (from the EFA) using confirmatory factor analysis (CFA) on LISREL 8.80. As noted by Hurley, CFA is appropriate “to examine the expected causal connections between variables . . . where models have a well-developed underlying theory” (1997, pp. 667–668), which is the case in this con-

text. The results of this CFA revealed a good fit of the data to the model, with χ^2/df (degree of freedom) < 3.00, root mean square error of approximation (RMSEA) = 0.078, and normed fit index (NFI) and the comparative fit index (CFI) above 0.90 (Bentler and Bonnett 1980). The standardized loadings ($0.61 \leq$ all loadings ≤ 0.89) are high and *t*-values are significant (>1.96 ; Table 5).

Scale Validation and Nomological Assessment

Following scale purification, three studies addressed scale validation and nomological assessment. Their approach and results appear below and are summarized in Table 3.

Table 6
Correlation Matrix of Customer Engagement Dimensions and WOM

	Number of Items	Mean	SD	CR#	AVE*	Attention	Participation	Social
Consumer Attention	4	3.77	0.79	0.88	0.65			
Enthusied Participation	5	3.71	0.78	0.86	0.55	0.54**		
Social Connection	3	3.60	1.05	0.91	0.77	0.22**	0.21**	
WOM	4	2.97	0.95	0.91	0.71	0.36**	0.32**	0.27**

Notes: WOM = word of mouth; SD = standard deviation; CR = composite reliability; AVE = average variance extracted. $N = 235$. Word-of-mouth scale items: "I mention this organization to others quite frequently"; "I've told more people about this organization than I've told about most other organizations"; "I seldom miss an opportunity to tell others about this organization"; "When I tell others about this organization, I tend to talk about the organization in great detail." ** $p < .01$.

Study 1: Scale Validation

Study 1 included the 15 CE items representing the three dimensions and a four-item scale of word-of-mouth activity (WOM) from Harrison-Walker (2001), incorporated to address discriminant validity. Respondents were first asked to "think about how you enjoy spending your free time with something that revolves around products or activities organized by, offered by, or purchased from a particular business." The major foci of engagement are reported at the bottom of Table 4. By piping in the respondents' description of focus of engagement, each survey was customized to the specific offering mentioned by the respondent. All items were on five-point Likert scales.

After pretesting the 15-item CUE scale on five respondents, upper-level marketing students in a Southeastern university in the United States were trained as recruiters for an online survey. As part of an extra-credit class assignment, students forwarded a request for participation to individuals, primarily nonstudents over the age of 19, producing a convenience sample. This approach has been successfully used in previous research studies (e.g., Gwinner, Gremler, and Bitner 1998; Jones et al. 2007). After eliminating incomplete or incorrectly filled out surveys, 235 of 268 completed surveys were included in the analysis. All respondents received a validating e-mail, with no problems detected. Respondent demographics appear in column 3 of Table 4.

The initial 15-item, three-factor CE model, estimated using LISREL 8.80 (Jöreskog and Sorbom 2007), led to the elimination of two items from the conscious attention dimension and one from the enthused participation dimension due to standardized loadings below 0.40. A new 12-item,

three-dimensional confirmatory factor model was estimated. The standardized loadings and associated t -values from this model appear in the last two columns of Table 5. Model statistics reveals a good overall fit ($NFI = 0.96$, $CFI = 0.97$, $RMSEA = 0.07$, and $\chi^2 = 115.65$, $df = 51$, $\chi^2/df = 2.37$; $p < .001$), indicating an acceptable model (Kline 2010).

The next step used the Fornell and Larcker (1981) test to assess convergent and discriminant validity. Because all t -values were significant ($p = .05$) and the average variances extracted were greater than .50, convergent validity was established (Table 5). Further, to address Malthouse and Calder's (2011, p. 278) concern of possible conflating of engagement behaviors with nonpurchase behaviors, such as word of mouth, a discriminant validity test was applied to each dimension in the CUE scale and word-of-mouth (WOM) activity. The variance shared between all construct (dimension) pairs (range 4 percent–29 percent) was inferior to the corresponding average variance extracted (AVEs), meeting Fornell and Larcker's (1981) stringent criteria for discriminant validity (see Table 6).

Study 2: Scale Validation with Focus on the Apple Brand

For a generalizable measure of engagement, researchers emphasize the need for assessment across contexts (Brodie and Hollebeek 2011; Gambetti and Graffigna 2010). Thus, the next several studies are aimed at validating the scale; each study focused on a unique, single context.

Since Apple products were the most frequently mentioned by Study 1 participants, Study 2 used a sample focusing on engagement with products from Apple. The data were collected using a national online survey panel

provided by Qualtrics.com. A national sample of panelists received a screener survey, inquiring about the following: "On a scale from 1 to 5, with 5 being the highest, please rate how much you love using Apple® iPod/iPhone/Mac in your discretionary time." The purpose of the screener was to select panelists who were engaged to some extent with an Apple product. Since 3, on a scale of 5, represents an average level of engagement, participants responding with a 3 or more then completed the following statement, relative to the Apple product they engaged with most: "I enjoy spending my free time . . . [Apple iPod/Apple iPhone/Apple Mac]", with the verb and product name piped into the scale. Column 5 of Table 4 lists the demographic and usage characteristics of the respondents.

Respondents represent a cross section of ages, ethnicities, regions, and genders. With regard to usage, it is interesting to note that 48 percent of the respondents engaged (i.e., received a score of 3 or more) with an Apple product did not actually own the product. Perhaps they had seen someone using it, used it, or previously owned it, or wished to use it. This perspective is consistent with the idea that CE is not dependent on the direct ownership of the product, that is, it is not purchase transaction specific. As suggested by S-D logic, transactions may be the temporal isolates in the relationship of these participants with the brand. Of the 236 responses for the Apple survey, 206 were usable, while 30 were eliminated due to incomplete or inconsistent responses.

Next, CFAs were run on the three-dimensional model of CE using LISREL 8.80. The model was run several times, retaining items with loadings above 0.50. In this process, two items, one each from the conscious attention and enthused participation dimensions, were deleted due to low loadings (i.e., less than 0.50). Table 7 presents the results of the final CFA analysis with the 10 items. It shows the standardized loadings and associated *t*-values for the final items, 4 for the enthused participation dimension and three each for the conscious attention and social connection dimensions. Standardized loadings are relatively high ($0.74 \leq$ all factor loadings ≤ 0.96) for each item and the associated *t*-values (> 1.96) are significant. In addition, the AVEs (.69–.74) and composite reliabilities (.87–.96) are consistently high.

While the estimated coefficients of the three-dimensional model in Study 2 are acceptable, adequacy of the model is evident from the ratio of χ^2 statistics and degrees of freedom (< 3.00) (Kline 2010). In addition, RMSEA is within the prescribed limit of 0.08, and the NFI and CFI are well above 0.90 (Bentler and Bonnett 1980).

Study 3: Revalidation with Retailing Focus

Hair et al. suggest, "if more than 20% of the measured variables are dropped or changed with respect to the factor they indicate, then a new data set should be used for further verification" (2010, p. 690). While only two of the 12 items (16.6 percent) in Study 2 were eliminated, to increase the potential for generalizability, we validated the scale in a second single but very different context. Since shopping was the most frequently mentioned focus of engagement with a service (versus a good) in Study 1, engagement with retailers was chosen as the focus for Study 3. Just as in Study 2, a Qualtrics panel was used for data collection, where the panelists were given the following screener: "On a scale from 1 to 5, with 5 being the highest, please rate how much you love shopping in your discretionary time." Panelists reporting 3 or more on the scale were next asked to identify a retailer where they enjoyed shopping. Thereafter, shopping at the mentioned store was piped in the items. The profile of 271 (of 290 total responses) respondents appears in column 6 of Table 4. Twenty-one surveys were eliminated due to incomplete or inconsistent responses. As shown in the lower half of Table 4, respondents mentioned a range of stores, with Walmart receiving the most mentions. As proposed by Appelbaum (2001), customers engage with a range of retailers, such as Walmart and Target, as well as online firms, such as eBay and Amazon.

A CFA was run on the 10-item three-dimensional model using LISREL 8.80. As shown in the columns on the right in Table 7, the standardized loadings are relatively high ($0.73 \leq$ all factor loadings ≤ 0.97) and the corresponding *t*-values (> 1.96) are significant. The estimated coefficients are within acceptable limits and all estimates are reasonable and statistically significant. The AVEs (.61–.65) and composite reliabilities (.83–.86) are consistently high. The goodness-of-fit statistics relative to Study 3 in the lower part of Table 7 also confirm a good model fit according to the norms suggested by Bentler and Bonnett (1980) and Kline (2010).

Nomological Validity: The CUE Scale's Relationship with Marketing Outcomes

Using the data on outcomes relative to CE, collected from studies 2 and 3, this section addresses nomological validity. Placed within the expanded domain of relationship marketing (Brodie et al. 2011b; Vivek, Beatty, and Morgan 2012), and supported by the temporal variances emphasized by Fournier (2009), CE is an experiential process that might influence

Table 7
Results of the Final CFA for Studies 2 and 3

Dimension/Items*	Study 2: Apple Products (n = 206)		Study 3: Retail (n = 271)	
	Factor Loading	t-Value	Factor Loading	t-Value
Conscious Attention	AVE = .74, CR = .90		AVE = .63, CR = .83	
1. Anything related to ____ grabs my attention.	0.87	15.56	0.76	13.81
2. I like to learn more about ____.	0.74	12.30	0.75	13.52
3. I pay a lot of attention to anything about ____.	0.96	18.29	0.86	15.41
Enthusied Participation	AVE = .85, CR = .96		AVE = .61, CR = .86	
1. I spend a lot of my discretionary time ____.	0.92	17.39	0.73	15.10
2. I am heavily into ____.	0.96	18.71	0.84	16.25
3. I am passionate about ____.	0.93	17.69	0.83	15.40
4. My days would not be the same without ____.	0.88	16.04	0.73	11.22
Social Connection	AVE = .69, CR = .87		AVE = .65, CR = .85	
1. I love ____ with my friends.	0.95	17.25	0.97	18.14
2. I enjoy ____ more when I am with others.	0.75	12.11	0.77	13.64
3. ____ is more fun when other people around me do it too.	0.77	12.70	0.75	12.84
Goodness-of-fit Statistics				
Minimum fit function χ^2	67.63		59.33	
Degrees of freedom (df)	33		33	
Comparative fit index (CFI)	0.99		0.99	
Normed fit index (NFI)	0.98		0.98	
Root mean square error of approximation (RMSEA)	0.07		0.06	

Notes: CFA = confirmatory factor analysis; CR = composite reliability; AVE = average variance extracted. * The blanks in the items were filled in by the description of the focus of engagement mentioned initially by the respondent (e.g., using my iPhone, shopping at Macy's).

or be influenced by other relational constructs depending on the stage of relationship of the customer with the focus of engagement. Researchers note that CE should produce several relational outcomes, such as trust, commitment, connection, value perceptions, loyalty, WOM activity, affective commitment, and brand-community involvement (Brodie et al. 2011a, 2011b; Vivek, Beatty, and Morgan 2012). Based on existing conceptualizations, as well as the qualitative interviews in this research, nomological validity of the scale was established using four important relationship outcomes: value perceptions, benevolence perceptions (a dimension of trust), future patronage intent (a behavioral loyalty concept), and affective commitment toward the organization.

Customers receive multiple values from their experiences, which affect the relationship customers have with the organization (Hollebeek 2012). An engaged customer's positive experience with the organization is likely to increase her perception of the derived value (Vargo and Lusch 2004). Supported by S-D logic, *value perceptions* relate to the consumer's assessment of the utility based on perceptions of what the individual receives and gives. Although the literature addresses value perceptions (Holbrook 2006), a suitable measure could not be located. Therefore, based on qualitative interviews with practitioners and customers, we developed a measure designed to represent the construct better than the existing scales we could locate.

Before using the scale, a pretest was conducted, producing adequate reliability.

Researchers suggest that trust, composed of credibility and benevolence (Ganesan 1994), is a consequence of CE (Brodie et al. 2011a, 2011b). A consumer assesses credibility based on characteristics such as task-specific competencies, delivery reliability, and predictability in terms of job-related behaviors (Ganesan and Hess 1997). Consumers base perceptions of *benevolence* on attributions of characteristics of genuine concern and care to the focal partner (Ganesan and Hess 1997). Since assessment of credibility may require transactional experience with the focal organization, this research focused on benevolence, which may be easier to assess without that experience, and thus reasonably accessible by both potential and current customers. Analysis of the qualitative responses in the previous stages also indicated that engaged customers perceived an organization to be benevolent if they thought it cared about them, was concerned about their well-being, and performed acts aimed at doing good (Livnat 2004). These perceptions could arise from several sources of interaction, such as the service workers' extra-role behaviors (Lapierre 2007). Benevolence perceptions were measured with three items from Bove et al. (2009).

MSI Research Priorities state, "many organizations see customer engagement as a route for creating, building, and enhancing customer-organization relationships and (ultimately) improving business performance" (2010–12, p. 4). Jarboe and McDaniel (1987) show that mall browsing influences future patronage of the mall. Engagement with nonpurchase activities might motivate individuals to gather and process more information about companies and products (Celsi and Olson 1988), resulting in increased intent to patronize (Bloch and Richins 1983). We use a single-item measure from Mathwick, Malhotra, and Rigdon (2001) to assess the association of CE with the consumer's *future intent to patronize* the organization that offers them the opportunity to engage. Although multi-item scales are generally preferred, considerable evidence supports the use of single-item scales for retention measures, even noting that single-item measures are often superior to multi-item scales with this type of construct (see Jones et al. 2007; Rossiter 2002).

Affective commitment, the "psychological attachment of an exchange partner to the other . . . is based on feelings of identification, loyalty, and affiliation" (Verhoef, Franses, and Hoekstra 2002, p. 204). This "desire-based attachment" (Bansal, Irving, and Taylor 2004, p. 236) is a bond that motivates the consumer to remain in a relationship with

an organization because he or she wants to. Higher levels of engagement with an organization should produce feelings of dedication and caring for the organization (Bendapudi and Berry 1997; Mollen and Wilson 2010). Three items from Bansal, Irving, and Taylor (2004) provide a measure of affective commitment.

The scale items and results of the CFAs of customer outcome variables for the two samples appear in Table 8. The composite reliability coefficients (0.84 to 0.93) as well as the AVEs (0.64 to 0.82) in the two samples confirm the operationalization and discrimination of the four outcome variables. In addition, the RMSEA for each study is 0.07; the χ^2/df for both studies were less than 2.20, and the CFIs and NFIs were above .90. Given the expected positive association between the CUE dimensions and the outcome variables, correlations were examined to assess nomological validity. Correlations and descriptive statistics appear in Table 9.

Across the two contexts, 23 of the 24 correlations between the dimensions and dependent variables (bold-face in the table) are significant ($p < .01$). This suggests good nomological validity across the dimensions and outcome variables for both contexts. Examined by dimensions, the conscious attention and enthused participation dimensions correlate strongly ($p < .01$) with all outcome variables in the two data sets. When consumers experience cocreative freedom and opportunities to connect, they reciprocate with positive reactions toward the company. The third dimension, social connection, affects company outcome variables, with the exception of the nonsignificant correlation with future patronage intent in the case of retailing.

Clearly, the Apple correlations are uniformly higher than the retail correlations in Table 9. Thus, to explore the degree to which the engagement dimensions differently affect outcomes based on context, we compared correlations with Fisher's r -to- z transformation (Zar 1996). The z scores for the correlations between conscious attention and affective commitment ($z = 2.60, p < .01$), social connection and value perceptions ($z = 8.37, p < .01$), and social connection and benevolence perceptions ($z = 3.63, p < .01$) all show higher correlations in the Apple context versus the retailer context, while the other correlations were not statistically different by context.

In addition, as noted earlier, social connection and value perceptions are significant with Apple but not with retailing. It is evident from the findings that dimensions of CE have stronger associations with important dependent variables. Finally, a comparison of means between the two contexts

Table 8
CFA of Customer Outcome Variables for Nomological Assessment

Outcome Variable/ Items (Source)	Factor Loadings, t-values, AVE, CR, and R ²			
	Study 2: Apple Brand		Study 3: Retail	
	Loadings	t-Values	Loadings	t-Values
Value Perceptions* (Developed)	AVE = 0.77, CR = 0.91		AVE = 0.64, CR = 0.84	
___ has a lot of advantages resulting from it.	0.87	15.51	0.83	16.07
I like ___ because it benefits me in the end.	0.88	15.70	0.89	17.84
It's relevant to my needs.	0.89	16.04	0.67	11.94
Benevolence Perceptions (Benevolence)** (Bove et al. 2009)	AVE = 0.80, CR = 0.92		AVE = 0.82, CR = 0.93	
I think ___ goes out of its way to serve its customers.	0.93	16.72	0.88	18.07
I think ___ always tries to do the right things for its customers.	0.89	15.52	0.91	19.22
I think ___ has a genuine concern for its customers.	0.86	14.67	0.92	19.52
Future Patronage Intent (Intent)** (Mathwick, Malhotra, and Rigdon 2001)	—		—	
I intend to do business with ___ in the future.	0.97	19.09	0.92	19.88
Affective Commitment (Affect)** (Bansal, Irving, and Taylor 2004)	AVE = 0.82, CR = 0.93		AVE = 0.78, CR = 0.91	
I feel emotionally attached to ____.	0.90	16.33	0.75	14.32
With ____, it feels like I am part of a family.	0.90	16.13	0.92	19.62
I feel a sense of belonging with ____.	0.92	16.89	0.96	21.07
Goodness-of-Fit Statistics				
Minimum fit function χ^2	185.21		201.06	
Degrees of freedom (<i>df</i>)	85		88	
Comparative fit index (CFI)	0.99		.98	
Normed fit index (NFI)	0.98		.99	
Root mean square error of approximation (RMSEA)	0.07		.07	

Notes: CFA = confirmatory factor analysis; AVE = average variance extracted; CR = composite reliability. * The blanks were filled in by the description of focus of engagement initially mentioned by the respondent. ** The blanks were filled in by the company the respondent most closely associated with the focus of engagement.

relative to the CE dimensions (see Table 9 for means) shows that while the means of Conscious Attention and Social Connection did not differ significantly, the means of Enthused Participation are different in the two contexts, such that retail shopping generates a higher mean than using an Apple product. These findings suggest a contextual influence of CE dimensions.

DISCUSSION AND IMPLICATIONS

Kumar et al. (2010, p. 297) began with a poignant quote from the Economist Intelligence Unit (2007, p. 2), noting that CE “refers to the creation of a deeper, more meaningful connection between the company and the customer, and one that endures over time. Engagement is also seen

Table 9
Correlations of Customer Engagement and Customer Outcome Variables

	Number of Items	Mean	SD	Attention	Participation	Social Connection	Value Perceptions	Benevolence Perceptions	Intent	Affect
Study 2: Apple Brand										
Conscious Attention	3	2.95	1.19	.96						
Enthused Participation	4	3.49	0.99	0.74**	.89					
Social Connection	3	2.94	1.03	0.74**	0.74**	.88				
Value Perceptions	3	3.47	1.02	0.76**	0.76**	0.74**	.88			
Benevolence Perceptions	3	3.65	0.78	0.51**	0.45**	0.54**	0.55**	.89		
Future Patronage	1	3.74	0.97	0.64**	0.68**	0.61**	0.77**	0.67**	—	
Affective Commitment	3	2.94	1.02	0.72**	0.74**	0.73**	0.69**	0.60**	0.65**	0.91
Study 3: Retail										
Conscious Attention	3	3.07	0.95	0.87						
Enthused Participation	4	3.67	0.80	0.65**	0.83					
Social Connection	3	3.07	1.05	0.32**	0.37**	0.89				
Value Perceptions	3	3.88	0.71	0.50**	0.51**	0.17**	0.80			
Benevolence Perceptions	3	3.85	0.78	0.46**	0.34**	0.26**	0.45**	0.90		
Future Patronage	1	4.36	0.66	0.33**	0.21**	0.06	0.46**	0.55**	—	
Affective Commitment	3	2.94	0.95	0.49**	0.61**	0.28**	0.42**	0.48**	0.24**	0.88

Note: Boldface represents correlations of interest. Values in italics in the main diagonals are Cronbach's α . ** $p < 0.01$; * $p < 0.05$.

as a way to create customer interaction and participation." They pointed out that it involves both transactions (including purchases), and nontransactions (i.e., going beyond the purchase), and relates to customers' behavioral manifestations toward a brand or firm based on important motivations. Clearly, consensus appears to be forming in the academic and practitioner community as to the nature and importance of CE.

This paper attempts to be true to both the existing literature and its extensive qualitative and quantitative assessments in careful development of an understanding of the concept of CE and its dimensions—conscious attention, enthused participation, and social connection. Using classic scale development steps, this research further developed and validated a useful 10-item CE scale, CUE, which appears to be highly applicable, valid, and reliable across several contexts.

While our definition addresses interactions, connections, and social networks, our dimensions and scale items speak to the behavioral manifestations of the concept, that is, one may devote effortful attention, ongoing participation, and interactions with others relative to the brand in developing one's deep connections with a brand. Thus, both our definition and our dimensions are in keeping with the consensus forming in the literature and yet add to our knowledge by providing both a validated dimensionality to the construct, as well as a useful three-dimension validated scale, hitherto not available.

Since CE is an interactive, reciprocal relationship experienced by the customer with a focal agent/object and is meaningful and nurtured in a network of social connections, we build on the expanded relationship metaphor, S-D logic, and relationship theory. The three CE dimensions—conscious attention, enthused participation, and social connection—support the participation, meaningfulness, connectedness, and temporality relative to customers' relationships with brands.

Managerial Implications

Managing and fine-tuning the firm's CE strategy needs to be a critical part of a marketer's strategic approach to markets. We believe that the more marketers know about how to engage their markets, the better able they will be to do so. Thus, understanding CE dimensionality is helpful in that regard. That is, how much does interest or desire to know more about the brand or entity drive the customer's engagement versus how much of the customer's effort is expended in simply using or being engrossed in the use of

the brand or experience? Further, how much connection with others relative to this use or interest is desirable, and in what context? Understanding how these elements vary across segments is critical.

Managers also need to be aware that the emphasis on each of these components will be dependent on several factors embedded in the brand, such as the nature and life-cycle stage of the product and existing brand equity. Only by initiating and managing ongoing connections with customers can brands and businesses expect deeper engagement with customers leading to enduring relational ties. Continued engagement of the customers with varied engagement strategies before, during, and after a purchase transaction can enhance positive word-of-mouth, customer loyalty, and advocacy, as well as relationships that stand the test of time and competition.

In this study, the application of CUE in two different contexts captures the contextual influence of its dimensions. CE and its dimensions appear to have somewhat different relevance in different contexts, with social connection being especially variable. Irrespective of the contextual differences, increasing responsiveness of the customer to CE initiatives enables businesses to involve the customer in strategic decision making and cocreation initiatives, creating value for both parties. Businesses must seek active involvement of potential and existing customers in all phases of the product life cycle, from birth to death. This will increase the potential for offering successful products and allow the customer to feel more connected to the brand or firm.

Further, engagement initiatives and customer's responsiveness to the same give unprecedented opportunities to customers to influence other customers and noncustomers, especially through social connections. This is especially true relative to the online environment. Firms can provide venues for "consumers to share views, preferences, and experiences with others," as well as allowing for WOM activity between consumers (Kumar et al. 2010, p. 298). Engaged customers are a more credible voice of the brand. They not only help other customers recognize their needs, but also make others see how a brand can meet those needs, thus blurring the boundaries between a business's role and a customer's role.

The validated multidimensional CUE scale serves as an important tool for managers. Managers can examine overall CE, as well as its specific dimensions, to gauge the strengths and weaknesses of their engagement strategies. Use of CUE will help managers understand customer preferences for engagement. For instance, what kind of interactive experiences do customers want with the brands? Empirical develop-

ment of CUE demonstrates the importance of understanding and measuring the dimensions of customer engagement in specific contexts, since the dimensions seem to play somewhat different roles in different engagement contexts.

To extend this idea, this scale could easily be adapted to address the various venues the firm is considering using, such as rewording the statements to represent blogging or the use of social networking to understand how their market wants to be engaged. For example, items can be adapted as follows: "I like to learn more about Apple products on Facebook," or "I love to blog about my shopping experiences with my friends."

This research also shows that engagement of customers is not limited to high-involvement product categories; it also extends to mundane activities, such as grocery shopping at Walmart. Thus, our findings encourage companies of all types to focus on engaging consumers through increased opportunities for their conscious attention, as well as truly reciprocal interactions with the product and the organization, in environments that allow connecting with others.

The nomological networks of relationships tested in this research provide a more holistic view of the customer and the strong effects of CE elements on variables of importance to management, such as value and benevolence perceptions, patronage plans, and affective commitment. Managers can adapt marketing tactics and strategies to influence the level of customer engagement and can easily test the effectiveness of their strategies with this scale. For example, the differential effect of social connection suggests that firms should assess its relevance relative to their offerings and their segments. For some individuals and offerings, engagement without others (e.g., friends or other customers) is clearly viable, while for other individuals or offerings, the connection to others is quite relevant and sometimes critical. For example, some consumers read books as a very solitary activity, while others join book clubs or book online communities. Thus, managers can use this information to gauge the extent to which (and to whom) a social connection dimension should be included in their engagement strategies.

This study also emphasizes the importance of relationship building with prospects. While most practitioners focus on existing customers, it is important to engage noncustomers and potential customers as well, which can reduce acquisition costs of the companies.

Limitations and Future Research Directions

While the CUE scale appears valid, there is need for additional investigation. While customer commitment, trust,

and nonpurchase behaviors of substantive interest (Malt-house and Calder 2011), such as positive WOM, blogging, and recommendations might initially result from engagement, they can cause a feedback loop through subsequent influence on CE, which merits investigation with longitudinal studies versus our static study.

The initial studies in this research used student samples and convenience samples accessed through students. While samples that are more representative appear in subsequent studies, this issue could be a potential limitation here. Further, we tested the nomological validity of CUE with samples from Apple and a retail context, but future studies should include additional contexts to increase understanding of the context-specific role of different facets of the CUE scale. Furthermore, when we employed Harman's one-factor test to assess for common method bias, we received a worst-fitting one-factor model, indicating the absence of common factor bias. The nature of CE also indicates that common factor bias will be minimal. However, we recommend that future researchers employ tests that are more robust in order to eliminate the possibility of common method variance.

While customer's engagement could be positive or negative, the CUE scale addresses only the positive aspects of customer engagement. We believe that studying the negative engagement of customers in future research could be quite beneficial in understanding some of the downside effects of engagement. Furthermore, although the findings from this research should extend to online engagement contexts, this issue requires future research. As noted earlier, this scale could be adapted to relate to engagement across or in different venues to make it even more useful. Given the importance of online communities, this extension is an important direction for future research.

Consistent with the literature and our findings, we argue that affect must be involved for the individual to feel engaged. Obviously, this issue is subject to additional study. Also, the ongoing cocreation by the entities in the relationship, which extends beyond the temporally isolated instances of transactions, is notable here and could encourage a broader view of relationship marketing than is currently espoused in the literature (see Vivek, Beatty, and Morgan 2012).

The study measured the relationship of CE with four outcome variables: value perceptions, benevolence perceptions, future patronage intent, and affective commitment toward the associated organization. Future research might study the impact of CE on other consequences, such as customer citizenship behaviors and satisfaction. Specific role and influence of customers, businesses, and other enti-

ties in developing focal engagement platforms also merit attention.

Researchers should study CE in networks, involving business-to-business and customer-to-customer interactions, as well as relative to different foci of engagement in different settings. Understanding the influence of online engagement on offline engagement and vice versa is also important. Finally, understanding engagement segments is another important area, as proposed by Kumar et al. (2010). We encourage scholars to address these fascinating issues further.

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