

Chapter 9

Then, Now, and Hereafter of Customer Engagement: Insights From Bibliometric and Thematic Literature Review

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ABSTRACT

This chapter presents an overview of customer engagement literature and scientifically maps the research areas based on 878 articles sourced from leading journals from 2005 to 2021. Using the Web of Science database and bibliometric analysis, research articles on customer engagement were extracted to uncover the topic's thematic evolution and key research areas. Furthermore, the study uncovers the most CE publishing journals, principal authors, three fields plot, and most cited articles through scientific investigation and visualization of the scholarly customer engagement research in the R program. Overall, the findings of the study provide a holistic understanding of customer engagement, illustrate the topic's conceptual structure, and reveal key directions for future research in academia and industry.

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INTRODUCTION

Managing customers has evolved from customer transactions to customer relationships to customer engagement (CE) (Pansari & Kumar, 2017). During the past decade, the term CE has been a buzzword in marketing literature as well as practice. This growing inclination and the appreciation of customer engagement have created a plethora of explorations leading to a tremendous increase in the array of literature. The concept of CE gained prominence around 2010 (Lim et al., 2022) and seems to continuously evolve along the changing sphere of information and communication technologies that provide new avenues for actively engaging customers. These developments and their prospects call for synthesizing the literature in the domain which will fuel the advancement and influence of knowledge in the field.

CE is defined differently by different authors. Van Doorn et al. (2010) defines CE behaviors as “a customer’s behavioral manifestation that have a brand- or firm focus, beyond purchase, resulting from motivational drivers”. According to Brodie et al. (2011), the concept is defined as “customer engagement (CE) is a psychological state that occurs by interactive, co-creative customer experiences with a focal agent/object (e.g. a brand) in focal service relationships”. Whereas, Pansari and Kumar (2017) define CE as “mechanics of a customer’s value addition to the firm, either through direct or/and indirect contribution”. Based on these definitions we infer that CE is all about interactions between the customer and the product which has cognitive, emotional, and behavioral dimensions.

CE literature is regarded to have a very complex intellectual structure due to a lack of conscience in conceptualization and measurement as well as due to diverse contexts and parties associated (Rosado-Pinto & Loureiro, 2020). There exist quite a few literature reviews in the domain (Barari et al., 2020; Hollebeek et al., 2021; Lim et al., 2022; Pansari & Kumar, 2017; Rosado-Pinto & Loureiro, 2020; Srivastava & Sivaramakrishnan, 2021) that provide answers to specific questions. The review study of Pansari & Kumar (2017) discusses the components of CE including the antecedents and consequences and proposed the relevant firm strategies. The meta-analysis of CE by Barari et al., (2020) posits the two different pathways of CE (organic and promoted pathway) and results in various engagement approaches and their relationship. The systematic review (Rosado-Pinto & Loureiro, 2020) merges the theoretical pillars of CE and provides eight paths for future research. In particular to the methodology adopted, Hollebeek et al., (2021) and Lim et al., (2022) have used the Scopus database to analyze the CE literature, whereas (Srivastava & Sivaramakrishnan, 2021) studied CE literature and outline the clusters arisen through bibliometric coupling. These researches indicate the recent appearance of bibliometric studies in the marketing discipline as well. The existing CE studies in this area although providing a broader view are either limited to a particular time frame (Hollebeek et al., 2021), or have limited to the particular context in the management area (Hollebeek et al., 2021) or similar (Srivastava & Sivaramakrishnan, 2021). To fill this gap, we quantitatively mitigate CE’s vast literature through a bibliometric analysis, which provides an overview of CE studies and has identified different research themes. Additionally, this paper differs from the systematic analysis and meta-analysis and adopts Sepulcri et al.’s (2020) approach to intellectually quantify the CE literature and arrived at the following research questions.

RQ1: What are the developments happening in CE as an academic research domain concerning publications, journal performance, author contributions, distribution of country and affiliations, and most cited articles?

RQ2: What is the conceptual structure of the field, derived from the keywords and their co-occurrences forming topic clusters and themes?

RQ3: What are the radical perspectives on thematic evolution and future research directions?

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