



## Consumer and Customer Engagement: A Review of The Decade (2010-2019) and Future Directions

*Engajamento do Consumidor e do Cliente: Revisão de Uma Década (2010-2019) e Direcionamentos Futuros*

*Compromiso del Consumidor y del Cliente: Revisión de una Década (2010-2019) y Direccionamientos Futuros*

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### Abstract

Customer engagement has been a marketing research priority throughout the decade and several frameworks have tried to conceptualize the phenomenon. Thus, this article aims to summarize ten years of theoretical and empirical studies on customer engagement and to propose directions for future studies about it. A broad review of articles on customer, consumer and brand engagement was conducted and discussed, aiming at the convergence between different existing perspectives. As one of its contributions, this article argues for a more social and dynamic concept of engagement, suggesting the use of the term “consumer engagement”, because the engagement value for the brand comes not just from customers, but from anyone who has contact with the brand, for example through social media.

**Keywords:** customer engagement; consumer engagement; brand engagement; engagement marketing; digital marketing.

### Resumo

*O engajamento do cliente tem sido uma prioridade de pesquisa de marketing ao longo da década e vários frameworks tentaram conceituar o fenômeno. Nesse sentido, este artigo tem como objetivo resumir 10 anos de estudos teóricos e empíricos sobre engajamento do cliente e propor direções para estudos futuros sobre o assunto. Uma ampla revisão de artigos sobre engajamento do cliente, engajamento do consumidor e engajamento com a marca foi realizada e discutida, visando a convergência entre diferentes perspectivas existentes. Como uma de suas contribuições, este artigo defende uma visão mais social e dinâmica do conceito de engajamento, sugerindo o uso do termo “engajamento do consumidor”, compreendendo que o valor do engajamento para a marca não vem apenas dos clientes, mas de qualquer pessoa que tenha contato com a marca, por exemplo, nas redes sociais.*

**Palavras-chave:** engajamento do cliente; engajamento do consumidor; engajamento com a marca; marketing de engajamento; marketing digital.

### Resumen

*El compromiso del cliente está siendo una prioridad de investigación de marketing a lo largo de la década y varios frameworks intentaron conceituar el fenómeno. En este sentido, este artículo tiene el objetivo de resumir 10 años de estudios teóricos y empíricos sobre compromiso del cliente y proponer direcciones para estudios futuros sobre el tema. Una amplia revisión de artículos sobre compromiso del cliente, compromiso del consumidor y compromiso con la marca fue realizada y discutida, buscando la convergencia entre distintas perspectivas existentes. Como una de sus contribuciones, este artículo defiende una visión más social y dinámica*

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*del concepto de compromiso, sugiriendo el uso del término “compromiso del consumidor”, comprendo que el valor del compromiso para la marca no viene sólo de los clientes, pero de cualquiera que tenga contacto con la marca, por ejemplo, en las redes sociales.*

**Palabras clave:** *compromiso del cliente; compromiso del consumidor; compromiso con la marca; marketing de compromiso; marketing digital.*

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Consumer engagement, which can be defined as “the level of a customer’s cognitive, emotional and behavioral investment in specific brand interactions” (Hollebeek, 2011a, p.565), has been one of the companies top priorities over the last few years (Econsultancy & Adobe, 2018; Pilcher, 2017). Furthermore, marketing researchers have been investigating the phenomenon eagerly in the last decade (Verhoef, Reinartz, & Krafft, 2010), a period in which the number of published articles jumped from seven in 2011 to eighty-two in 2018.

However, the definition of customer engagement is not a consensus. While professionals use engagement to refer to behaviors, many academics also consider the psychological aspects of the phenomenon. Thus, according to Maslowska, Malthouse e Collinger (2016), the study of customer engagement can be divided into two groups: the first is focused on behavioral aspects of engagement (e.g. word-of-mouth, cocreation and complaints), and has a one-dimensional perspective (Groeger, Moroko, & Hollebeek, 2016; Harmeling, Moffett, Arnold, & Carlson, 2017; Kumar et al., 2010; Pansari & Kumar, 2017); the second group is more focused on psychological aspects of engagement, viewing engagement as a multidimensional construct consisting of affective, cognitive and behavioral aspects (Brodie et al., 2011; Brodie, Ilic, Juric, & Hollebeek, 2013; Hollebeek, 2011; Hollebeek & Macky, 2019; Islam, Hollebeek, Rahman, Khan, & Rasool, 2019; Sashi, 2012; Vivek et al., 2012).

Another fuzzy aspect in the literature is related to the term customer engagement per se, which suggests that only customer (who really bought the product) engagement is important. Considering only customer engagement means ignoring a big part of the indirect potential value of people who never bought the brand product, but based on their experience with other products can contribute through suggestions and word-of-mouth (WOM). Therefore, this article proposes the use of the term *consumer engagement* for an approach more overarching and coherent with a society more connected and digital (Eigenraam, Eelen, van Lin, & Verlegh, 2018; Gligor, Bozkurt, & Russo, 2019; Groeger et al., 2016; Hinson, Boateng, Renner, & Kosiba, 2019).

That said, recognizing that there is no consensus on customer engagement because there are several theories used to address this issue and they do not necessarily have the same origin, belonging to various fields of knowledge, and it is an arduous task to find unitary concepts in relation to engagement, the purpose of this article is not trying to unify different perspectives but to offer a solid review of the main engagement articles in the marketing area published between 2010 and 2019 to the reader to draw his/her own conclusions.

This article is divided into three sections and the conclusion. In the first one, it was presented a brief history about engagement, engagement definitions, and perspectives under the brands and companies’ points of view. In the second one, it was discussed the evolution of the customer engagement concept to a more social perspective, due to social media massification. And the third one discusses the future of customer engagement, based on web 3.0, introducing new technologies (e.g. big data) and social phenomena (e.g. digital influencers) (Lamberton & Stephen, 2016).

## The Brand Engagement Era

Before addressing the topic, some considerations about the research method used in this study. We used a systematic review as a methodology. The review method consists of three steps: the first comprises review planning: preparation and development of a review protocol; the second refers to carrying out the review: selection of relevant studies and data extraction and the third is the reporting and dissemination of conclusions: presentation of recommendations and conclusions of the review.

After the development of the review protocol, the second stage began, which includes the selection of relevant studies. Initially, titles, abstracts and keywords of articles published in English in the Scopus, EBSCO, Emerald, Sage Journals, Elsevier and Google Scholar databases were searched for the terms Consumer Engagement, Customer Engagement, Product Engagement and Brand Engagement. The period from 2010 to 2019 was considered in the search for articles. After excluding duplicate searches and carefully reading abstracts, keywords, introductions and conclusions, in order to ensure that the articles addressed the objective of the present review, 91 publications were considered for the final analysis.

based on the literature review, it was possible to verify that engagement was not a very discussed theme in marketing literature before 2010. Some events were important to boost the theme: 1) The publication of several studies related to engagement in other areas (Higgins, 2006; Jennings & Zeitner, 2003; Kahn, 1990; London, Downey, & Mace, 2007; Schaufeli, Martínez, Pinto, Salanova, & Barker, 2002; Tsai et al., 2009); 2) In 2008, the inclusion of customer

engagement (henceforth CE) on the research priority list of Marketing Science Institute; 3) In 2010, the publication of Journal of Service Research special edition dedicated to customer engagement. Most CE first studies focus on the customer's direct engagement with the brands (e.g. product use, interaction with employees). In general, those studies considered that engagement was started by the customers and answered by the company (Jennings & Zeitner, 2003), in a unilateral relationship and with little or no interference from other actors.

Being "engaged is to be involved, occupied and interested in something", and not necessarily it is something positive (Higgins, 2006, p. 442). CE can be defined in different ways (see Tabel 1). Hollebeek (2011) uses the term "customer engagement with the brand" and defines it as "the cognitive, emotional and behavioral level in specific interactions with the brand". Van Doorn et al. (2010) focused on the behavioral dimension and defined CE as customer behavioral manifestations concerning the brand or the company besides the purchase. Brodie et al. (2011, p.260) offer a broader view and define CE as "a psychological state that happens through interactive and co-creative experiences with the object".

**Tabel 1**

*Engagement definitions*

Author	Term	Definition
Higgins (2006)	Engagement	"To be engaged is to be involved, occupied and interested in something." (p.442)
Kumar, Aksoy, Donkers, Venkatesan, Wiesel e Tillmanns (2010)	Customer engagement value	"The total value provided by customers who value the brand such that they engage with the firms (1) through their purchase transactions (or customer lifetime value), (2) through their ability to refer other customers to the firm using the firm's referral program (or customer referral value), (3) through their power to positively influence other customers about the firm's offerings on social media (customer influence value), and (4) by providing feedback to the firm for product and service ideas (customer knowledge value)" (Kumar 2018a, p. 11)
Van Doorn, Lemon, Mittal (2010)	Customer engagement behaviour	"A customer's behavioral manifestations that have a brand or firm focus, beyond purchase, resulting from motivational drivers." (p. 254)
Vivek, Beatty, Morgan (2012)	Customer engagement	"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. We argue that it is composed of cognitive, emotional, behavioral, and social elements." (p. 127)
Brodie, Hollebeek, Jurić e Ilić (2011)	Customer engagement	It's a psychological state that occurs by virtue of interactive, cocreative customer experiences with a focal agent/object (e.g., a brand) in focal service relationships. It occurs under a specific set of context-dependent conditions generating differing CE levels; and exists as a dynamic, iterative process within service relationships that cocreate value. CE plays a central role in a nomological network governing service relationships in which other relational concepts (e.g., involvement, loyalty) are antecedents and/or consequences in iterative CE processes. It is a multidimensional concept subject to a context-and/or stakeholder-specific expression of relevant cognitive, emotional and/or behavioral dimensions." (p. 260)
Hollebeek, Glynn, e Brodie (2014)	Customer brand engagement	"A consumer's positively valenced brand-related cognitive, emotional and behavioural activity during or related to focal consumer/brand interactions' and propose it has three dimensions: cognitive processing, affection, and activation." (p. 154)
Pansari e Kumar (2017)	Customer engagement	"The mechanics of a customer's value addition to the firm, either through direct or/and indirect contribution." (p. 295)
Harmeling, Moffett, Arnold, Carlson (2017)	Customer engagement marketing	"Customer's voluntary resource contribution to a firm's marketing function, going beyond financial patronage." (p. 315)
		"The firm's deliberate effort to motivate, empower, and measure a customer's voluntary contribution to its marketing functions, beyond a core, economic transaction." (p. 317)

## Antecedents and Consequences of Engagement with the Brand

Among the CE main antecedents are interaction, participation, and involvement. Interactions between brands and consumers are often used to start the engagement process (Vivek et al., 2012). Consumers interact with brands searching for hedonic and/or utilitarian benefits (Hamilton, Kaltcheva, & Rohm, 2016; Rohm, Kaltcheva, & Milne, 2013). Participation, in turn, is a behavior, the consumer presence on the production process or the delivery of something (Vivek et al., 2012), whereas involvement is a personal interest regarding an object and its features (Zaichkowsky, 1985). Thus, it is the involvement that defines the engagement level (Vivek et al., 2012). However, without participation, the interaction does not exist, so both are important consumer engagement antecedents (Islam & Rahman, 2016; So, King, & Sparks, 2014; Vivek et al., 2012).

As well as a consumer can be involved without participation, engagement can happen at the psychological level too, without a behavioral manifestation. Therefore, considering customer engagement only as behavior is incomplete (Wallace, Buil & Chernatony, 2014). Other CE antecedents were studied over the decade, among the most used were trust, satisfaction, commitment, and company actions (see Table 2).

Concerning the consequences, the engagement's main motivation is related to the value that actors hope to obtain from the interaction (Kumar, 2018; Vivek et al., 2012). Based on social exchange theory (SET), consumers and companies engage as long as the cost-benefit relation is positive (Beckers, van Doorn, & Verhoef, 2016). Based on that, it can be said that consumers are most likely to give suggestions and talk good about the brands if they realize that their relationship with the company is beneficial and reciprocal.

Positive engagements take to a greater commitment and to more long-lasting relationships too, but it is not necessarily more intimate (Vivek et al., 2012). According to Bendapudi and Berry (1997), customers can keep a relationship due to the need to do so, not because they desire it. When a customer is committed to the company due to the fact he/she does not have another option, he/she has a "calculating commitment". When the reason to maintain the relationship is derived from the creation of emotional, trust, and reciprocity bonds, he/she has an "affective commitment". A high level of calculating commitment may take to the loyalty, whereas a high level of affective commitment may take to the delight (Sashi, 2012). Thus, satisfaction is for trust as trust is for commitment, and they are really important constructs to the CE, although not always is easy to identify if they precede or follow the engagement. Although trust and commitment are more accepted as engagement consequences (Carvalho & Fernandes, 2018; Chan & Li, 2010; Vivek et al., 2012), satisfaction may come before or after as a form of constant analysis of interactions (Bowden, Gabbott, & Naumann, 2015; Brodie et al., 2013; Carvalho & Fernandes, 2018; Hamilton et al., 2016; Sashi, 2012). That is why Maslowska et al. (2016) referred to satisfaction as the intrusive measure, advising against using it to measure customer engagement.

Such ambiguity does not happen with the WOM, one of the CE main consequences (Bijmolt et al., 2010; Carvalho & Fernandes, 2018; Islam & Rahman, 2016). Customers highly satisfied and committed are more likely to do a positive WOM and become the brand ambassadors (Matos & Rossi, 2008). However, dissatisfaction and commitment can take to a negative WOM as well. Brands must create actions to avoid negative engagements, because the higher the intensity of an engagement, the higher value is extracted from the interaction (Higgins & Scholer, 2009), and negative interactions are likely to be more intense than the positives one (Baumeister, Bratslavsky, Finkenauer, & Vohs, 2001).

Additionally, Sashi (2012) proposes that customer engagement is a cycle with seven phases: connection, interaction, satisfaction (with the interaction), retention, commitment, advocacy, and engagement. The commitment would be only the affective and not the calculating (since there is no deterrent to ending the relationship) and the retention would be based on the affective bonds built and not on the product quality.

**Table 2***Main antecedents and consequences of consumer/ customer engagement offline and online*

<b>Antecedents</b>	<b>Studies</b>	<b>Consequences</b>	<b>Studies</b>
Customer participation	Brodie, Hollebeek, Jurić e Ilić (2011); Vivek, Beatty, Morgan (2012); Schmitt (2012); Brodie et al. (2013); Leckie, Nyadzayo, Johnson (2016)	Value / consumer value	Vivek et al. (2012); Bowden (2009); Schau, Muñiz, Arnould (2009)
Customer involvement	Vivek, Beatty, Morgan (2012); Brodie et al. (2013); So, King, Sparks (2014); Islam e Rahman (2016); Leckie, Nyadzayo, Johnson (2016)	Trust	Vivek et al. (2012); Brodie et al. (2013); Islam, Rahman (2016); Pansari, Kumar (2017); Carvalho, Fernandes (2018)
Customer-based & Firm-based	Van Doorn, Lemon, Mittal, Nass, Pick, Pirner, Verhoef (2010); Verleye, Gemmel, Rangarajan (2014); Groeger, Moroko, Hollebeek (2016)	Commitment	Chan, Li (2010); Vivek et al. (2012); Brodie et al. (2013); Carvalho, Fernandes (2018)
Accumulated satisfaction with the brand	Van Doorn et al. (2010); Sashi (2012); Brodie et al. (2013); Hamilton et al. (2016); Pansari, Kumar (2017);	Brand community involvement	Vivek et al. (2012)
Satisfaction with the interaction	Sashi (2012); Hamilton (2016); Hollebeek (2011a)	Accumulated satisfaction with the brand	Bowden (2009); Brodie et al. (2013); Carvalho, Fernandes (2018)
Service quality	(Islam et al., 2019)	Loyalty	Bowden (2009); Vivek et al. (2012); O'Brien, Jarvis, Soutar (2015)
Brand attachment	Van Doorn et al. (2010); Wallace et al. (2014); Hinson et al. (2019)	Brand attachment	Brodie et al. (2013)
Trust & Commitment	Sashi (2012)	Brand attitude	Hollebeek, Chen (2014); Hollebeek, Macky (2019)
Social media advertising	Lee, Hosanagar, Nair (2013)	Wom / eWom	Bijmolt et al. (2010); Hollebeek, Chen (2014); Islam, Rahman (2016); Carvalho, Fernandes (2018)
User-generated content	Van Dijck (2009); Malthouse, Calder, Kim, & Vandenbosch (2016)	Connection and affective bonds	Brodie et al. (2011); Brodie et al. (2013)
Firm-generated content	Hollebeek, Macky (2019)	Firm value	Bijmolt et al. (2010); Kumar et al. (2010); Groeger et al. (2016), Kumar 2018a; Hollebeek, Macky (2019)

Therefore, the engagement can be seen as continuous, from “not engaged” to “highly engaged” (high levels of cognitive, emotional, and behavioral engagement) (Brodie et al., 2011). It is worth mentioning that an individual can temporarily suspend interactions with the brand due to adverse reasons and enter into a state of dormancy (Brodie et al., 2011, 2013), engage again when the motivations are high enough. It is possible to argue that a not engaged



consumer is found on the zero phases of the engagement cycle proposed by Sashi (2012), a consumer in a state of dormancy can be at any of the 7 phases.

Engaged customers do not mean loyal customers. Engagement is related to experiences and not to transactions, that way, engagement is distinguished from loyalty to not involve comparisons between brands (Vivek 2012). However, the engagement process accelerates the customer evolution through the different stages that precede the loyalty stage (Oliver, 1999).

## The Social Engagement Era

Lamberton and Stephen (2016) referred to the first half of the last decade as “the social media era”, a period of digital transformation whereby the internet changed people’s lives. The bidirectional communication of social media (Gretry, Horváth, Belei, & van Riel, 2017) is compatible with the two-way nature of relationships and CE (Vivek et al., 2012). Thus, social media are a great opportunity to increase consumer engagement (Sashi, 2012). More engaged, consumers won power and started to be seen as pseudo marketers (Harmeling et al., 2017).

Eigenraam et al. (2018) proposed that consumers engage in a digital environment to have fun, learn about the brand, talk about the brand, give feedback and work for the brand. Each behavior has cognitive, emotional, and behavioral dimensions.

Social engagement is an important type of engagement that was, for a while, neglected by customer engagement literature. Hollebeek et al. (2016) expanded the fundamental assumptions of engagement of Brodie et al. (2011), including a social dimension in addition to cognitive, emotional, and behavioral. Aiming to offer a unique *framework* of why consumers relate to brands, Schmitt (2012) considered social engagement as the most complex and deep engagement level, after experiential engagement and functional engagement, the simplest among the three. Therefore, the social engagement era differs from the era of engagement with the brand by facilitating interactions related to the brand, and not only with the brand, keeping people with common interests together (not only customers).

Brand communities (e.g., Facebook pages) are very used in engagement studies, and social media greatly facilitated the studies (Brodie et al., 2013; Carvalho & Fernandes, 2018; Hollebeek et al., 2014; Islam & Rahman, 2016). Muniz and O’Guinn (2001) define brand communities as a community among users of a brand based on social relations not geographically restricted. A phenomenon that illustrates the engagement relevance about the brand among consumers is unboxing, a popular practice on the internet with over 123 million videos just on YouTube and practiced by at least 1 in 5 consumers (Google, 2014). According to customer experience literature, this type of contact with the brand is considered an indirect experience (Meyer & Schwager, 2007), a conception supported by the non-paying customers’ engagement model proposed by Groeger et al. (2016). Thus, expanding Muniz and O’Guinn (2001) definition, brand communities can be composed of any motivationally driven consumer toward a product or brand. Brand communities help to create emotional bonds with other members and affective commitment to the community, through goal sharing and participation in activities (Bagozzi & Dholakia, 2006; McAlexander, Schouten, & Koenig, 2002).

Likes, shares, comments are ways to measure digital engagement (Chauhan & Pillai, 2013; Hoffman & Fodor, 2010), but also ways of consumers express their *inner self* (i.e., as I see myself) or *social self* (i.e., as others see me) (Lipsman, Mudd, Rich, & Bruich, 2012; Sprott, Czellar, & Spangenberg, 2009; Wallace et al., 2014). Thus, a consumer may like a brand page on Facebook only to create an online identity or to feel part of a group, i. e., improve the social self, but not participate in other ways of engagement. Wallace et al. (2014) show that to page fans talk about the brand, it needs to reflect the inner self.

Electronic word of mouth (eWOM) and codevelop are two of the most valuable engagement digital behaviors (Groeger et al., 2016; Kumar, 2018) to the companies. However, it is important to point out that although companies may stimulate those behaviors, they will hardly have control over those behaviors result (Maslowska et al., 2016).

In one of the first consumer engagement studies on social networks, Chu and Kim (2011) showed that homophilia does not positively relate to eWOM, indicating that consumers do not receive or pass on only similar people’s pieces of information. On the other hand, trust turned out essential for information exchange between users. The Chu and Kim (2011) results showed that people give information to all their contacts, which is understandable, once it is more convenient to publish information to all contacts than to only a part of them; but repost or ask for information only from close people (with whom they have stronger bonds). Such finding is consistent with the idea that weak bonds are important to increase the message range (Brown & Reingen, 1987). Finally, Chu and Kim (2011) showed that consumers are influenced by both the expectations and social norms of others, i. e., what others are buying, using, or talking about (normative influence); as for the value of the information and the authority of who is giving some information (informational influence).

Another behavior facilitated by social media is co-creation between companies and consumers. Cocreation behaviors are based on value generation and S-D logic (Hollebeek et al., 2016). For the behavior to occur, depends on the nature of the activity, the motivation of the parts, integration of necessary resources, and knowledge sharing (Hollebeek et al., 2016; Kunz et al., 2017). In a co-creation process, mutual value is only generated if, and only if, there is a perception of the balance parts of contributions and adaptation to trust and reciprocity norms (Bowden et

al., 2015; Sashi, 2012; Thackeray, Neiger, Hanson, & Mckenzie, 2008). Kunz et al. (2017) suggested four activity groups of cocreation engagement that cover different investment levels (e.g, money, time, effort) of the parts and, thus, different value levels, starting from low investment activities of both parts (e.g., discount coupons, exclusive offers, pages on social networks) to a high investment level and, hence, high value (e.g., ideas competition, an online community created by the company, *webinars*, and *wearables*). Other activities have a greater value only to one part, leading to greater investment by the relevant part. According to Kunz et al. (2017), some high-value activities to the consumer and low value to the company are online *reviews*, UGC, content aggregation via hashtag, and online communities created by the consumer. Examples of high-value activities to the company e low value to the consumers are gamification, corporate blog, e-mails marketing, and video channels.

Consumers have four kinds of valuable resources to the companies formulate successful strategies that can only be obtained by their engagement (Harmeling et al., 2017). The first exclusive consumer resource is his contact network, its size, reach, diversity, and established bonds. The second one is the power of *consumer influence* in his network. The third one is the *accumulated knowledge* about the product, brand, market, and customers. The fourth and last one is the *consumer creativity* on conceptualization and production of ideas, contents e solutions. Therefore, considering the great power of the consumer on digital, the use of these resources by the companies turned out indispensable and may mean the difference between success and failure on the market.

### Engagement on Post Digital Era

In the post-digital era, traditional marketing and digital marketing turned into only one thing (Lamberton & Stephen, 2016). Besides, this is the semantics web era (Web 3.0), a new online environment powered by machine learning and artificial intelligence that connects data to objects, extracting a new meaning able to better meet the needs and create better experiences for consumers (Harris, 2008; Hendler, 2009). A smarter online environment, where users' data are used as feedback to continually improve tools and applications, has generated new possibilities for companies. By the end of the last decade, consumer experience was (and probably still is) the main priority of the marketing activity (Econsultancy & Adobe, 2018; Pemberton, 2018).

Consumer experience is more than entertainment (Berry, Carbone, & Haeckel, 2002) and can be defined as a set of direct interactions (e.g., buyer's journey, the product or service usage) or indirect (e.g., *unboxing* videos, a friend's recommendation, reviews) involving the consumer, the brand or part of. This experience is subjective and involves the consumer in different levels (cognitive, emotional, sensory, physical, and spiritual) (Gentile, Spiller, & Noci, 2007; Meyer & Schwager, 2007).

Engagement marketing seems to be the most appropriate strategy for a connected, interactive world and customer experience is the main source of value and can be defined as "a firm's deliberate effort to motivate, empower, and measure a customer's voluntary contribution to the firm's marketing functions beyond the core, economic transaction" (Harmeling et al., 2017, p. 312). Engagement marketing is an evolution of relationship marketing (Pansari & Kumar, 2017), considering relationships beyond the customer-company. That way, interactions can no longer happen linearly, but networked and more dynamically and interactively (Brodie et al., 2011; Vivek et al., 2012). Engagement marketing breaks with classic marketing, based on the value of economic transactions, to include value generated by non-economic contributions (Harmeling et al., 2017; Kumar, 2018).

This article discusses three rising issues in the market that can contribute to engagement-based marketing strategy, and that deserve attention from researchers in this new decade.

### Consumer Engagement Measurement

The pressure of upper management and investors is constant for marketing to demonstrate economic value generated by its high investments (Hanssens & Pauwels, 2016; Pemberton, 2017). Nevertheless, marketers are still using unimportant metrics of little importance to other company departments, like *awareness*, satisfaction, and ROI (Pemberton, 2018). The combination of *soft* metrics (difficult to measure, e.g., *awareness*) and *hard* (easy to measure, e.g., sales revenue) (Hanssens & Pauwels, 2016) is important to measure the marketing activity performance, because different types of metrics have low correlation (Katsikeas, Morgan, Leonidou, & Hult, 2016), and technology has facilitated both data collection and analysis. In addition, consumer engagement has been a promising marketing measure (Harmeling et al., 2017; Kumar, 2018; Kumar et al., 2010; Kumar & Reinartz, 2016; Sprott et al., 2009) for capturing consumer value beyond their purchases. However, measuring engagement is not that simple and attempts so far use self-report attitudinal measurements (Calder, Isaac, & Malthouse, 2016; Solem & Pedersen, 2016; Vivek, Beatty, Dalela, & Morgan, 2014) or digital interests (e.g., likes, comments).

As a result, it is essential that future studies seek to combine soft and hard measures to capture behavioral and attitudinal dimensions of consumer engagement. Two aspects that may assist future studies are discussed below.

The first one: the engagement value to the company comes from consumers' financial and nonfinancial resources

(i.e., time, knowledge, skills, equipment, influence, creativity, etc.) spend on interactions with the company (Harmeling et al., 2017; Hollebeek et al., 2016; Kumar et al., 2010). Often, these resources contribute to marketing functions.

The second one: feedback loops may be used to evaluate relationships (Garber, Hyatt, & Boya, 2009), from interactions between different engagement ecosystem actors (Maslowska et al., 2016). This feedback loop is important to account for the dynamic nature of consumer engagement (Kunz et al., 2017). Areas like business analytics and machine learning will be increasingly important and can analyze big data, including real-time, allowing for faster strategy adjustment and content personalization, improving engagement ROI (Wedel & Kannan, 2016).

## Digital Content Marketing

A marketing strategy (Kilgour, Sasser, & Larke, 2015) increasingly used and that has been among the marketers' top priorities (Econsultancy & Adobe, 2018; Pilcher, 2017) is digital content marketing (DCM). DCM is defined as "the creation and dissemination of relevant, valuable brand-related content to current or prospective customers on digital platforms to develop their favorable brand engagement, trust, and relationships (vs. directly persuading consumers to purchase). DCM's main goal is to nurture long-lasting relationships by increasing engagement, trust, and retention by fostering engagement (Hollebeek & Macky, 2019).

According to Hollebeek and Macky (2019) and consistent with Hamilton et al. (2016), consumers interact with content for hedonic, functional, or authenticity reasons. All three motives produce different types of engagement. Cognitive engagement is motivated by functional and authenticity aspects and results in brand sense-making (i.e., creation of mind maps about the brand). Emotional engagement is motivated by hedonic and authenticity aspects and results in brand identification. On the other hand, behavioral engagement originates from functional and hedonic motives with content, which can lead consumers to help the company, giving ideas or influencing others. The three types of engagement resultant from DCM will increase brand confidence and attitude and may lead to increased brand equity, an important source of competitive advantage (Barney 1991), and company value (Joshi & Hanssens, 2010; Madden, Fehle, & Fournier, 2006).

## Influencer Marketing

Companies have destinated an increasing share of their marketing budget for digital influencers (Contestabile, 2018; Rakuten, 2019), which can be defined as social media users whose influence allows high engagement with their followers (Civeris, 2018). They can be used by companies as valuable assets to promote their brands, goods, and services (Chu & Kim, 2011).

Based on Harmeling et al. (2017), it can be said that this influence results from one or more of the following factors: contact network size, influence capacity, accumulated knowledge, and creativity. That way, influencers can engage immediately, deeply, and enduringly (van Doorn et al., 2010) than brands. Besides that, just like digital content, influencers seem to convey greater sincerity and honesty (Human, Hirschfelder, & Nel, 2018), combating today's consumer skepticism. Another feature of influencer marketing is the difficult distinction between paid media and earned media, since influencers can be intrinsically or extrinsically motivated (i.e., by the company).

Future studies can investigate what happens when consumers know that content is sponsored and what happens when they don't know and discover on their own. Authenticity is crucial for a successful influencer. Factors such as homophilia and susceptibility to normative (i.e., tendency to accept based on what others expect) and informational (i.e., tendency to accept based on content) influences (Chu & Kim, 2011) may influence the judgment of authenticity. For this reason, companies should seek to choose influencers that not only talk to the brand's target audience but also get involved with the product type. Conventional influencers and consumers are similar in that they are both users and in their ability to generate new brand-related interactions and conversations but differ in scope as influencers have a large number of weak and strong ties, important for spreading the message (Brown & Reingen, 1987).

Digital influencers can be considered mid-users, while customers are end-users. One of the few attempts to calculate the influence of a single source, Groeger and Buttle (2014) calculated the total number of brand-related conversations generated from a small event promoted by one person. The results showed that each person attending the event generated an average of 1,529 unique online and offline conversations. In addition, most conversations were between people with strong bonds. In the digital field, it is expected that influencers reach a large number of people with weak bonds, increasing the message's spreading power but not persuasion (Chu & Kim, 2011).

Another major advantage of using influencers as company communication channels is that they change the functional value of traditional advertising to social value. For this, brands need to know and find a way to meet the social and self-esteem needs of the influencer. Only then will companies be able to deliver social rather than purely functional value (Chatterjee, 2011). This is especially important for companies that rely heavily on influence to promote their business (Hamilton et al., 2016), such as small businesses or experience services that are difficult to evaluate based on attributes; or companies that do not have a high reputation and are considered unreliable. Cho, Huh and



Faber (2014) showed that when a viral advertisement is sent by a reliable person, the criterion used by the receiver to assess the degree of trust is who sent it, not the creator of the advertisement. Thus, digital influencers work as a guarantee regarding the quality and reliability of the message content.

To conclude, a way to implement digital influencers strategy is offered by Kilgour et al. (2015), with minimal adjustments: 1) identify key influencers for the target audience who have a positive relationship with the brand; 2) determine the value influencers receive from their followers and find out how the company can help them increase that value; 3) identify opportunities to integrate new values into the influencers' communication process; 4) evaluate and refine the messages.

## General Discussion

Consumer engagement is one of the topics that has most attracted the attention of marketing scholars and professionals in the last decade. If, on the one hand, there is a consensus regarding its importance, on the other hand, there are still many doubts regarding its definition or even the correct term to refer to this phenomenon. For example, consumer engagement, buyer engagement, or brand engagement. What would be the most appropriate term to refer to this phenomenon? Furthermore, which would be more appropriate: a unidimensional perspective that perceives engagement as a behavior or a multidimensional perspective that takes into account cognitive and emotional aspects? Faced with these and other questions, in this study we seek to summarize a decade of studies on the subject, present different definitions and nomenclatures used, organize the knowledge and offer directions for future studies.

It is important to mention that here we do not seek to unify concepts. By reviewing the studies, it was possible to verify that there are different definitions for this phenomenon, definitions that come from different areas of knowledge. We conclude that the most coherent thing is to recognize the existence of different definitions and the impossibility of unifying them. Therefore, we recommend that future studies choose the definition that is more in line with the context and particularities of the study. For instance, if the analyzed sample consists only of buyers, a behavioral definition is more appropriate; studies on online engagement, an environment in which non-buyers also engage with the brand or product through likes and shares, require a broader definition that takes into account cognitive and emotional aspects.

With regard to the most appropriate term to refer to this phenomenon, we argue that consumer engagement is the term that takes into account the complexity and different perspectives of the analyzed phenomenon. As observed in the review of studies, although some authors focused on the behavioral dimension and defined CE as behavioral manifestations of the customer in relation to the brand, engagement can also happen at the psychological level, without a behavioral manifestation. Thus, the term buyer engagement would be too restrictive. Furthermore, the era of social engagement differs from the era of brand engagement in that it facilitates brand-related, not just brand-related interactions, keeping people with common interests together (not just customers).

In addition, as a suggestion for future studies, we propose that the literature on the consequences of customer engagement could be divided into two groups. The first group is made up of studies that analyze the effect of engagement on individual consumer perception metrics. According to these studies, consumer engagement with a company, brand or product can, for example, impact on their loyalty, their satisfaction, their willingness to pay a premium price, the quality of the relationship with the brand, the intention to purchase or positive word-of-mouth.

The second group, in turn, comprises studies on the effect of consumer engagement on a company's financial performance. In this group, the studies are interested in analyzing how the engagement between consumers and brands impacts the company's sales, profitability or market value. While the first group is more theoretically developed, there is still a lot of scope for investigation regarding the consequences of engagement on company financial metrics, the second group.

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