

Customer Engagement in the Digital Age: A Critical Synthesis and Hybrid Measurement Model

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Abstrak

Customer engagement (CE) is a key concept in marketing that represents the depth and quality of interactions between consumers and brands. Before the digital era, CE was measured through relational indicators such as loyalty, satisfaction, repeat purchases, and word-of-mouth (WOM). With the rise of digital platforms, the concept expanded to include data-driven metrics like likes, shares, user-generated content (UGC), and sentiment analysis. Using a narrative review approach, this paper examines the evolution of CE measurement across three phases: the pre-digital era, the transitional phase of the early 2000s, and the digital era from the 2010s onward. The study shows a shift from static, transaction-based indicators to multidimensional frameworks that reflect cognitive, emotional, and behavioral engagement in real time. A hybrid conceptual model is proposed, combining traditional and digital indicators. Cognitive engagement is represented by attention and information processing, emotional engagement by attachment, trust, and WOM, and behavioral engagement by repeat purchases, UGC, and co-creation. This integration maintains historical relevance while adapting to technological progress. The study advances theoretical and managerial insights while addressing challenges such as distinguishing superficial digital activity from genuine engagement and identifying future research directions like AI personalization, immersive technologies, ethics, and cultural differences in CE.

Keywords: Customer Engagement; Digital Marketing; Hybrid Measurement Model; Narrative Review; Social Media Engagement

1. Introduction

Within the marketing literature, customer engagement (CE) is recognized as a fundamental determinant of long-term business success and sustainable customer relationships. Empirical studies demonstrate that higher levels of engagement are associated with stronger loyalty, greater retention, and increased customer lifetime value (CLV), all of which positively influence profitability [1], [2], [3].

Brodie *et al* [1] emphasized that deep engagement strengthens repeated interactions with brands, encourages advocacy through word-of-mouth, and fosters consistent purchasing behavior. Similarly, Kumar *et al* [3] found that firms implementing structured engagement strategies achieved a 20–30% increase in CLV compared to less-engaged competitors. Consequently, CE is not merely a behavioral outcome but a strategic prerequisite for growth and sustainability—making its conceptual evolution a vital focus of both academic and practical inquiry.

In the pre-digital era, engagement was primarily assessed through classical indicators such as satisfaction, loyalty, repeat purchase, and WOM, all of which emphasized direct transactional and emotional interactions. These measures reflected a brand's ability to maintain enduring relationships through personal contact and emotional bonding [4].

However, digital transformation fundamentally redefined the nature of engagement. The rise of social media, e-commerce, and online communities turned CE into a more participatory, interactive, and real-time process. Contemporary studies indicate that engagement now extends beyond purchase behavior to include digital actions such as likes, shares, comments, content

creation, and co-creation with the firm [5], [6]. In many cases, social identity within virtual communities drives participatory and advocative behaviors that form integral components of modern engagement [7].

Despite these advancements, reliance on digital metrics has drawn criticism for emphasizing surface-level activity. Metrics such as clicks, views, or likes often fail to capture the emotional and cognitive depth of engagement. Razmus [8] cautions that such indicators do not constitute comprehensive measures of engagement. Similarly, Hollebeek *et al.* [9] argue that effective measurement must incorporate psychological and social dimensions, not just behavioral traces. Moreover, patterns of digital engagement in emerging markets differ significantly from those in developed economies, particularly regarding technology adoption and consumer–brand interaction [10], [11].

In this evolving context, understanding how CE has transformed—from traditional relational constructs to complex digital phenomena—becomes essential for both marketing theorists and practitioners seeking to design effective engagement strategies.

Customer engagement (CE) was first introduced as a psychological state arising from interactive experiences between customers and brands—going beyond mere transactions [2], [1]. Hollebeek [2] conceptualized CE as a motivational condition comprising cognitive, emotional, and behavioral dimensions, while Brodie *et al.* [1] emphasized its dynamic and co-creative nature. CE therefore differs fundamentally from loyalty or satisfaction, as it involves active, multidimensional participation rather than passive evaluation or repeated purchasing behavior.

During the pre-digital period, CE measurement predominantly relied on relational indicators such as loyalty, satisfaction, repeat purchase, and word-of-mouth (WOM) [1], [2], [12], [13]. WOM was considered a central manifestation of engagement, representing consumers' voluntary advocacy for a brand [3]. Moreover, active consumer participation—such as providing feedback or filing complaints—was recognized as a behavioral expression of engagement that shaped long-term brand relationships [14]. In essence, CE during this era reflected emotional and behavioral commitment sustained through direct and interpersonal interactions.

The emergence of digital technologies radically expanded the CE construct. With the proliferation of social media, e-commerce, and online communities, engagement became measurable in real time and across multiple platforms. Trunfio and Rossi [6] identified digital metrics such as likes, shares, comments, user-generated content (UGC), dwell time, and sentiment analysis as central to understanding engagement in contemporary settings. Similarly, Vinerean and Opreana [5] argued that digital indicators capture new dimensions of interaction that were previously difficult to observe through traditional surveys.

In parallel, the omnichannel engagement concept was introduced to bridge offline and online experiences. Lawry and Bhappu [15], for example, developed the *Mobile In-Store Experience (MIX) Index*, measuring engagement levels as customers used mobile devices in physical stores—an approach that integrates traditional and digital behaviors into a single analytical framework.

Over time, CE research evolved toward multidimensional frameworks that incorporated psychological depth. Razmus [8] developed the “*Beyond the Likes*” scale to address the superficiality of click-based measures and emphasized the inclusion of emotional and cognitive

indicators. Supporting this view, gamification and m-commerce studies proposed five CE dimensions—cognitive, affective, behavioral, social, and absorptive—highlighting that engagement extends beyond behavior into complex psychological and social experiences (*Frontiers in Communication*, 2025).

Nonetheless, conceptual debates remain. Many scholars question whether digital indicators such as likes or shares genuinely represent emotional attachment. Although these metrics reflect real-time interaction, they often fail to capture the depth of engagement previously represented by relational constructs like satisfaction, loyalty, and WOM [8], [6]. Hollebeek *et al* [9] further note that modern CE instruments tend to overemphasize behavioral aspects while neglecting cognitive and affective dimensions.

This imbalance risks reducing engagement to mere digital activity rather than a holistic psychological state. Consequently, the literature increasingly calls for hybrid measurement frameworks that combine traditional relational indicators with digital metrics—ensuring that CE measurement captures cognitive, emotional, and behavioral dimensions comprehensively.

Despite extensive scholarly attention, several important research gaps remain unaddressed.

First, few studies explicitly compare CE measurement approaches across the pre-digital and digital eras within a unified analytical framework. Much of the existing literature focuses on either traditional or digital perspectives, without tracing the conceptual evolution connecting the two.

Second, empirical attempts to integrate traditional indicators (loyalty, satisfaction, WOM) with modern digital metrics (social interactivity, UGC, influencer-based engagement) remain limited [15], [16]. Consequently, there is a lack of comprehensive models that reconcile relational theory with digital-era data analytics.

Third, emerging trends—such as the adoption of artificial intelligence (AI) and the application of social presence theory—have opened new opportunities for understanding CE, yet are seldom linked with classical CE foundations [17], [18].

Given these gaps, this study aims to conduct a narrative review of the evolution of CE measurement from the pre-digital to the digital era. The specific objectives are to:

1. Examine CE measurement approaches in the pre-digital era, emphasizing satisfaction and loyalty as core indicators;
2. Compare these with digital-era approaches that prioritize interactivity, community participation, and data-based engagement metrics; and
3. Develop a critical synthesis serving as a conceptual foundation for future hybrid measurement models.

Through this approach, the study contributes both theoretically—by clarifying the conceptual trajectory of CE—and practically—by offering insights for marketers to design more effective customer engagement strategies in today’s competitive digital environment.

2. Methodology

This study adopts a narrative review approach to investigate and synthesize the evolution of customer engagement (CE) measurement from the pre-digital to the digital era. The narrative review was chosen for its capacity to provide a comprehensive and integrative understanding

of the conceptual development, measurement indicators, and methodological progression of CE, while also identifying research gaps and future directions [19], [20].

Unlike systematic reviews that focus primarily on methodological rigor and inclusion protocols, narrative reviews allow for the synthesis of diverse theoretical perspectives across periods and contexts. This flexibility enables the construction of a coherent theoretical narrative connecting classical and contemporary CE literature [19].

To ensure relevance and scholarly quality, the review applied the following criteria:

Inclusion Criteria

1. Studies that examine CE in depth— both pre-digital or digital contexts.
Articles that present CE measurement indicators, including both traditional (loyalty, satisfaction, WOM) and digital (likes, shares, sentiment analysis, online reviews, co-creation, dwell time) metrics.
2. Publications from reputable, peer-reviewed journals indexed in *Scopus* or *Web of Science*, as well as open-access repositories such as *MDPI*, *SpringerOpen*, and *Frontiers*.
3. Studies published between 2000 and 2025, reflecting major developments in CE measurement.

Exclusion Criteria

1. Articles that only mention CE superficially without discussing measurement or indicators in depth.
2. Experimental or survey-based studies with small or unrepresentative samples that do not reflect broader market dynamics

Literature Search Procedure

The literature search was conducted systematically using multiple academic databases including *Scopus*, *Web of Science*, and *Google Scholar*, as well as open-access repositories such as *MDPI*, *SpringerOpen*, and *Frontiers*. The keywords used were: “customer engagement,” “social media engagement,” “digital marketing,” “loyalty,” “satisfaction,” “user-generated content,” “brand advocacy,” “co-creation,” and “omnichannel engagement.” The search was limited to studies published from 2000 onward, ensuring coverage of both pre-digital and digital transitions [19], [21]. Titles and abstracts were first screened for relevance, followed by full-text evaluation to ensure alignment with the study objectives.

Selection and Evaluation Process

The selection process followed a stepwise approach:

- 1) Initial Identification: More than 500 articles were initially retrieved.
- 2) Preliminary Screening: Irrelevant or tangential articles were excluded.
- 3) Full-Text Review: Remaining studies were thoroughly reviewed for methodological quality, theoretical contribution, and relevance.
- 4) Final Selection: Approximately 30 articles were retained for comprehensive review, with 12–15 core studies forming the theoretical foundation and an additional set providing contextual and historical support [20], [21]

Methodological Considerations

The narrative review approach emphasizes conceptual richness over the number of studies included. By selectively focusing on influential works, this method generates a strong

theoretical synthesis connecting pre-digital relational models with modern, digitally driven frameworks [19], [20]. The selected literature captures both the historical continuity and the epistemological transformation of CE measurement practices.

3. Result and Discussion

3.1. Result

Analytical Approach

The analysis was conducted through critical comparison and conceptual synthesis, focusing on how CE definitions and indicators evolved from relational to digital paradigms. The review contrasts traditional constructs—centered on loyalty, satisfaction, and repeat purchase—with contemporary indicators emphasizing real-time interaction, interactivity, and user-generated participation.

Additionally, conceptual debates were examined, particularly regarding whether digital indicators (such as likes or shares) truly capture emotional or cognitive engagement, or merely represent superficial user activity [6], [8].

Integration of Classical and Digital Indicators

The synthesis identifies that pre-digital CE focused on relational loyalty, emotional commitment, and behavioral repetition, typically measured through self-reported surveys or interviews. By contrast, digital CE introduced observable behavioral metrics such as engagement rates, dwell time, and online sentiment, allowing for real-time data analytics.

Recent scholarship highlights the need to integrate these perspectives. Hollebeek *et al.* [9] and Vinerean and Opreana [5] argue that CE measurement must combine psychological dimensions (trust, attachment, attention) with behavioral traces (co-creation, sharing, content contribution) to fully reflect the engagement construct.

This synthesis thus establishes the foundation for developing a hybrid CE measurement model that bridges pre-digital relational indicators with modern digital metrics—addressing both the theoretical and empirical fragmentation present in the literature.

Findings: The Evolution of Customer Engagement Measurement

Prior to the emergence of digital technologies, customer engagement (CE) was conceptualized primarily through relational marketing frameworks that emphasized enduring relationships between firms and customers. Grönroos [22] argued that a company's success depended on maintaining high relationship quality and sustained customer satisfaction, reinforced through consistent interpersonal interaction. Similarly, Payne and Frow [23] highlighted the strategic role of relationship management in identifying high-value customers, developing loyalty, and ensuring long-term retention.

The Service-Dominant Logic (SDL) proposed by Vargo and Lusch [24] further expanded this view by positioning customers as *active participants* in value creation, not merely passive recipients of service. In pre-digital contexts, this active participation manifested through direct communication, advocacy (word-of-mouth, WOM), and feedback.

Measurement during this era relied heavily on emotional and behavioral indicators. Emotional engagement was assessed through satisfaction and brand attachment, while behavioral engagement was reflected in repeat purchases, participation in loyalty programs, and informal brand advocacy via WOM [1], [2], [12], [13]. Active consumer behaviors such as

complaint submissions or feedback provision were also viewed as integral aspects of engagement [3], [14].

Data collection techniques were largely manual and interaction-based, including face-to-face surveys, interviews, and observational methods. These tools effectively captured emotional and behavioral components of engagement but rarely addressed cognitive dimensions—such as mental involvement or reflection. Consequently, pre-digital CE measurement emphasized transactional loyalty and emotional commitment, encapsulating customer–brand relationships prior to the rise of digital media.

The early 2000s marked a transitional phase in CE measurement as digital technologies—particularly e-commerce, company websites, and online forums—began reshaping customer interaction patterns. Firms started to complement traditional indicators such as loyalty, satisfaction, and WOM with emerging digital behavioral metrics such as website traffic, repeat visits, click-through rates, and online reviews [25], [26].

During this period, engagement measurement adopted a hybrid approach, combining conventional relational measures with early digital analytics. Surveys and email-based questionnaires continued to capture emotional attachment, while digital data provided real-time insights into user behavior. The concept of omnichannel engagement also gained traction, reflecting the need to integrate offline and online experiences into a unified measurement system [15].

This era represented a critical conceptual transition—from static, transaction-based measurement to dynamic, multidimensional engagement assessment. While emotional and behavioral dimensions remained central, the growing availability of digital data introduced new opportunities to monitor customer activity continuously.

In essence, the transitional era laid the groundwork for modern engagement models, where real-time interaction data could complement self-reported emotional and cognitive measures. It marked the shift from episodic engagement surveys to continuous digital observation, setting the stage for the full digital transformation of CE research.

Since the early 2010s, the proliferation of social media, mobile applications, and e-commerce ecosystems has profoundly redefined how CE is conceptualized and measured. Engagement has evolved from being a periodic, survey-based construct to a real-time, multidimensional process observable through digital footprints.

Trunfio and Rossi [6] demonstrated that behavioral dimensions—quantifiable through digital metrics—became dominant in CE measurement. Their research introduced the COBRA model (Consumers' Online Brand-Related Activities), categorizing user actions into *consumption*, *contribution*, and *creation* activities, each representing different engagement intensities.

Building upon this, Vinerean and Opreana [5] proposed a three-dimensional CE model encompassing emotional, cognitive, and behavioral components. They developed psychometric scales capturing not only observable behaviors but also affective and cognitive responses to brands, underscoring the need for holistic engagement assessment.

Theoretical integration continued through Service-Dominant Logic (SDL) and relationship marketing frameworks, which reemphasized customer co-creation and long-term value generation [23], [24]. CE thus became a reflection of *interactive, co-creative value exchange*, rather than a unidirectional transactional outcome.

Despite these advancements, several methodological challenges persist. Many digital metrics—such as likes, shares, and comments—are behaviorally convenient but conceptually shallow. They capture visible interaction but often fail to reflect emotional depth or cognitive investment [5], [6]. Additionally, emotional and cognitive dimensions remain difficult to operationalize due to their abstract, introspective nature.

Consequently, the current scholarly consensus advocates for a hybrid measurement approach, integrating both quantitative digital metrics and qualitative psychological indicators. This ensures that CE is captured not merely as online activity but as a comprehensive psychological and behavioral state that links emotional attachment, cognitive attention, and observable action.

Theoretical Contribution: Toward a Hybrid Conceptual Model of Customer Engagement

The measurement of Customer Engagement (CE) has evolved alongside technological advances and the growing complexity of customer–brand interactions. While earlier studies concentrated on emotional and behavioral aspects of loyalty, satisfaction, and repeat purchase, recent frameworks emphasize a more holistic, multidimensional understanding of engagement that integrates cognitive, emotional, and behavioral components.

Existing CE models typically examine each dimension in isolation, yet the current study identifies a critical methodological gap: the lack of integration between pre-digital indicators (loyalty, satisfaction, WOM) and modern digital metrics (likes, shares, sentiment analysis, dwell time). To address this, a hybrid conceptual model is proposed—merging traditional and digital perspectives into a unified framework for more comprehensive CE measurement.

Customer Engagement is inherently multidimensional, comprising three interrelated dimensions: cognitive, emotional, and behavioral [1], [2]. The hybrid model integrates both traditional and digital indicators within each dimension to maintain historical continuity while enhancing relevance in today’s data-driven marketing environment.

This framework allows researchers and practitioners to capture the full spectrum of engagement—from internal cognitive processes and affective attachment to observable behaviors across physical and digital touchpoints.

The cognitive dimension reflects the degree to which customers pay attention to, understand, and mentally process brand-related information.

- Pre-digital indicators of cognitive engagement included customer awareness and familiarity derived from exposure to advertising, promotions, or direct product experiences [14], [22], [23]. Data were collected through interviews, surveys, and observational methods that captured consumer recall and recognition.
- Digital indicators now enable more direct and quantifiable measurement through metrics such as *dwell time* (the duration users spend engaging with digital content), *scroll depth*, *click-throughs*, and *interactions with multimedia content* [6], [27], [28]

These indicators allow researchers to monitor how consumers allocate attention and cognitively process brand information in real time. Importantly, metrics like likes or shares are excluded from this dimension, as they primarily reflect emotional or behavioral responses rather than cognitive engagement.

The emotional dimension represents customers’ affective attachment, trust, and identification with a brand.

- In pre-digital contexts, emotional engagement was primarily captured through indicators such as customer satisfaction, loyalty, and word-of-mouth (WOM). WOM is particularly significant as a manifestation of emotional attachment—expressed through voluntary advocacy and brand defense [1], [14], [22].
- In digital contexts, emotional engagement manifests through *positive reviews, ratings, expressive comments*, and *sentiment analysis* of online content [5], [6], [8]

By positioning WOM and sentiment indicators within the emotional dimension, the model ensures conceptual clarity: these indicators represent affective connection and trust rather than behavioral or cognitive engagement.

Thus, emotional engagement reflects the strength of psychological bonding and brand attachment that motivate consumers to act as advocates or defenders of the brand.

The behavioral dimension captures visible, measurable customer actions that demonstrate brand involvement.

- In the pre-digital era, this included *repeat purchases, participation in loyalty programs*, and *active feedback or complaint behavior* [1], [13], [14]
- In the digital era, behavioral engagement encompasses a broader set of real-time activities such as *user-generated content (UGC)*, *participation in gamified campaigns*, *active online interactions* (e.g., commenting or sharing), and *co-creation initiatives* where customers collaborate with brands on product development or marketing [6], [28]

Placing *co-creation* within the behavioral dimension emphasizes that it represents concrete, observable participation rather than an internalized attitude. Behavioral engagement thus embodies the action-oriented component of CE, illustrating how cognitive and emotional involvement translate into tangible customer behaviors.

Synthesis of the Hybrid Model

The proposed hybrid conceptual model provides a structured framework that combines traditional relational indicators with digital interaction metrics across the three CE dimensions. This ensures conceptual integrity, empirical measurability, and contextual adaptability to modern marketing environments.

Table 1 Hybrid Model of Costumer Engagement Measurement

CE Dimension	Pre-Digital Indicators (Traditional)	Digital Indicators (Modern)	Conceptual Focus
Cognitive	Direct product/service experience; exposure to advertising or promotions	Dwell time, scroll depth, multimedia interaction, information link clicks	Measures customer attention and information processing
Emotional	Satisfaction, loyalty, word-of-mouth (WOM)	Positive reviews, star ratings, expressive comments, sentiment analysis	Captures attachment and trust toward the brand
Behavioral	Repeat purchases, loyalty program participation, feedback or complaints	User-generated content (UGC), gamified participation, online actions, co-creation activities	Reflects observable customer participation and contribution

Source: Authors' synthesis based on literature

This model ensures that each indicator aligns with its appropriate engagement dimension, minimizing conceptual overlap and improving construct validity. It also enables comparative and longitudinal research, allowing historical CE models to be reconciled with digital-era analytics.

3.2. Discussion (Font 12, Times New Roman, 1.15 Spacing)

The proposed hybrid model advances Customer Engagement (CE) theory in several key ways:

1. It bridges the historical divide between relational and digital marketing perspectives, ensuring continuity across research eras.
2. It enhances measurement validity by assigning indicators to distinct psychological and behavioral dimensions, reducing redundancy.
3. It provides a theoretically grounded foundation for integrating advanced technologies—such as Artificial Intelligence (AI), Big Data, Augmented Reality (AR), Virtual Reality (VR), and the metaverse—into future CE frameworks.

Through this integration, the model contributes to a more nuanced understanding of customer engagement as a multilayered construct—linking cognitive attention, emotional attachment, and behavioral participation across both physical and digital domains.

Future Research Agenda in Customer Engagement Measurement

Building on the proposed hybrid model, several avenues for future research are identified. These directions reflect both technological and conceptual challenges that shape the evolution of CE measurement in contemporary marketing scholarship.

The rapid development of Artificial Intelligence (AI) and machine learning presents unprecedented opportunities to deepen understanding of customer engagement. AI enables firms to collect, analyze, and interpret massive datasets in real time, revealing behavioral patterns, predicting individual preferences, and enabling hyper-personalized experiences across touchpoints.

Platforms such as e-commerce and mobile banking now leverage AI-driven recommendation systems to enhance the relevance of customer interactions—resulting in improved satisfaction and loyalty [9], [29].

However, a critical limitation arises when AI attempts to infer emotional or affective engagement, which is inherently internal and not always observable through digital behavior. Future studies should therefore integrate AI analytics with psychological methodologies, combining sentiment analysis, experimental design, and self-report surveys to capture emotional depth and cognitive resonance.

Such interdisciplinary integration could yield predictive engagement models that move beyond activity-based metrics toward a more holistic understanding of engagement as both a behavioral and psychological phenomenon. At the same time, scholars must remain cautious of algorithmic bias and the reduction of engagement to mere quantifiable traces—ensuring that personalization reflects genuine customer value rather than manipulative design.

Emerging immersive technologies—including Augmented Reality (AR), Virtual Reality (VR), and the metaverse—have transformed the landscape of consumer-brand interaction.

These technologies allow customers to experience products in three-dimensional environments and engage with brands in multisensory, participatory spaces.

For instance, AR-based retail applications enable customers to virtually “try on” apparel or preview furniture in their own living spaces, enhancing cognitive and behavioral engagement through experiential immersion [7]. In the metaverse, engagement extends beyond individual experiences into social and co-creative ecosystems, where users interact not only with brands but also with other participants in shared virtual spaces [30].

Future research should examine how immersive experiences shape each engagement dimension—whether AR/VR enhances cognitive attention, emotional connection, or behavioral participation—and how these effects persist over time. Moreover, researchers must address the challenge of validating CE indicators in virtual environments: do immersive interactions truly reflect meaningful engagement, or are they simply technologically induced curiosity?

The exponential growth of data collection in digital environments has intensified concerns regarding data ethics, privacy, and consent. Modern CE measurement often relies on large-scale behavioral data—ranging from click patterns to emotional sentiment—raising critical questions about transparency and user autonomy [7], [16].

Although big-data analytics can greatly enhance measurement precision, they also risk violating privacy norms or exploiting user information without explicit consent. Future research should therefore emphasize ethical frameworks for engagement measurement, including data anonymization, informed consent, and compliance with regulations such as the General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR) and California Consumer Privacy Act (CCPA) [6].

Moreover, understanding how ethical data practices influence engagement itself is a promising area for inquiry. Ethical transparency may foster greater trust and emotional engagement, while perceived intrusiveness could diminish long-term loyalty and participation. The integration of ethics, trust, and engagement thus represents an essential research frontier for both scholars and practitioners.

Customer engagement is not a universal construct—it is deeply influenced by cultural context, technological adoption, and social norms. In developing countries, CE often relies more heavily on interpersonal communication and community-based trust, while in developed markets, engagement is primarily digital, mediated through technology and data analytics [9], [16].

Cross-cultural research can illuminate how engagement indicators vary across regions. For example, *user-generated content (UGC)*, *gamified participation*, and *co-creation* may dominate in high-tech markets, whereas *WOM*, *satisfaction*, and *face-to-face interaction* remain pivotal in emerging economies.

Such comparative studies would not only enrich theoretical understanding but also enable multinational firms to adapt CE strategies to cultural nuances. Future research should therefore aim to develop context-sensitive engagement models, integrating cultural dimensions into measurement scales and exploring how socio-technical infrastructures mediate engagement experiences across nations [6], [7].

4. Conclusion

This study underscores that Customer Engagement (CE) has undergone a significant conceptual and methodological evolution from the pre-digital to the fully digital era. In its early stages, CE was measured through relational and emotional indicators such as loyalty, Proceedings homepage: <https://icbens.umpalopo.ac.id/>

satisfaction, repeat purchase, and word-of-mouth (WOM), which captured direct interpersonal connections between brands and customers [1], [2], [14].

During the transitional period, the emergence of online platforms introduced hybrid measurement approaches that combined traditional indicators with early digital metrics—such as website traffic, repeat visits, and online reviews—thereby bridging offline and online engagement experiences [25], [26].

In the digital era, CE measurement has become increasingly dynamic, real-time, and multidimensional, incorporating diverse indicators such as social media interactions, user-generated content (UGC), gamified participation, and sentiment analysis [5], [6], [8]. While these metrics offer new analytical possibilities, many remain limited to surface-level behavioral observation and fail to fully represent the cognitive and emotional depth of customer engagement [8], [9].

To address this limitation, this article proposed a hybrid conceptual model that integrates pre-digital relational indicators with contemporary digital metrics across three key dimensions—cognitive, emotional, and behavioral. The model ensures historical continuity, theoretical coherence, and practical applicability in both academic and managerial contexts.

The model's theoretical contribution lies in its ability to reconcile classical relational marketing concepts with modern digital analytics, offering a more holistic and valid measurement framework. It advances CE research by clarifying the interplay between psychological states and observable actions, thereby enhancing construct validity and empirical measurability.

Practically, the model provides marketers and strategists with a comprehensive tool for designing engagement strategies that reflect not only transactional or interactive activities but also psychological commitment and experiential quality.

Finally, this review identifies several future research directions—including AI-driven personalization [9], immersive technologies (AR/VR and the metaverse) [7], data ethics and privacy [6], [16], and cross-cultural adaptation [7], [16]—that will shape the next generation of CE studies. Addressing these areas will allow researchers to capture engagement as a truly integrated construct—one that bridges emotion, cognition, and behavior within both human and digital ecosystems.

By doing so, the study contributes to the ongoing transformation of marketing thought—positioning customer engagement not merely as a marketing metric, but as a strategic, dynamic, and ethically grounded process that underpins sustainable business performance in the digital age.

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