

A Conceptual Presentation of Customer Engagement in the context of Social Media – An Emerging Market Perspective

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Abstract

Customer engagement entails a broader impact beyond the focal firm and the engaged customer. According to a report by Gallup Consulting, fully engaged customers represent a 23 percent premium on an index based on share of wallet, profitability, revenue and relationship growth. The advent of internet has also given birth to more number of customer engagement options, reflecting both technological and social changes. This paper aims to present a conceptual basis for customer engagement, while also describing the construct in the light of newly-created technological innovation, the social media. Being a context-dependent construct, we put forward customer engagement in the ambit of social media and an emerging market, India. Based on a detailed literature review, the paper first presents conceptual dimensions of customer engagement, while also aiming to define the construct. The major purpose of literature review was to arrive at a conceptually clear delineation of customer engagement and to offer a clear definition of the construct for a better understanding. An exploratory study was then conducted focussing on comprehending customer engagement from the point of view of manager's in the Indian context, and also how to understand how social media plays a role in influencing customer engagement. Based on an exploratory study, the paper presents managerial perspectives as to how Indian manager's recognize customer engagement in the internet era, and what is the role played by social media with regards to influencing customer engagement for firms in India. The results of the study highlight the multi-dimensional nature of customer engagement, with the exploratory study bringing back focus on customer experiences and its role in managing customer engagement. In the context of social media, it is also identified that the behavioural dimension of customer engagement plays a major role with customer interactions forming the back bone of customer engagement. Future research implications are next discussed to take the subject forward in research.

Keywords: Customer engagement, Customer experience, India, Interactions, Managerial Perspective, Social Media.

1. Introduction

The advent of internet has transformed the marketplace into a market space. Marketing thus, is not limited to just one country now, but brands are reaching out to customers across the globe. The emerging markets too have received much attention in the global marketing arena. This is also attributable to the fact that emerging markets contribute almost 30% to world GDP and account for 70% of world's total population. This has attracted various multinationals towards the emerging markets, such as China, India, Mexico etc. Emerging markets are characterized by a heterogeneous market, represented by multiple ethnic and linguistic groups, thus calling for a more in-depth research into these markets. The consumer behaviour of emerging markets also tends to be different and challenges the existing marketing paradigms and notions. What holds good for a developed market may not find a fit in the emerging world. More research into the emerging markets is thus required, to unearth what lies hidden and to offer more consumer insights. The present research adds to the repository of research on emerging markets, focussing on India as an emerging market, with customer engagement through social media as the focal point of discussion.

The use of term "engagement", although finding much acceptance in both practitioner and academic marketing literature lately, is just little more than a decade old phenomenon. The Marketing Research Institute (MSI) listed customer engagement in the MSI Research Priorities 2010-2012, falling under the research priority of "Understanding Customer Experience and Behaviour". Brodie et. al. (2013) in their paper observed that the term was incrementally used in marketing literature since 2005 only (p. 105). With the highly interconnected world making it imperative for marketers to proactively manage customer experience at all times, the concept of engagement has lately generated much interest among marketers as well. Further, the introduction of a variety of new media has made it more challenging for marketers to keep the customer engaged at same levels across all these media. Consumers are bombarded with information, and in such a scenario, it becomes imperative for marketers to hold on to customer's attention and keep them engaged. The shift from mass marketing to targeted marketing, too has given much impetus to the construct, with a few marketers even using the customer engagement metrics as a measure of marketing success.

As marketers dabble with ways to sustain and increase engagement across various media channels, researchers are trying to focus on offering conceptual clarity to the construct.. As the construct of customer engagement lacks consensus among researchers on its form, dimensionality and operationalization, the basic aim of this paper is to contribute to the ongoing research by trying to offer theoretical clarity on the construct. The paper first describes the construct of customer engagement, based on insights from existing literature. A working definition of the concept is thus presented. Next, the scope of customer engagement is defined by delineating it from other similar constructs. Also, being a context-dependent construct, this paper presents a manager's perspective to customer engagement in the light of social media as the communication channel, for an emerging market. The paper is thus aimed at generating more insights on customer engagement, while also calling for further research in future to build upon the existing literature.

2. Conceptual Definition

This section presents the construct of engagement in the light of various literatures that have tried to describe its meaning both conceptually and empirically. Engagement is conceptualized as a multi-dimensional construct and its scope is described in the light of previous research on the subject. A working definition of customer engagement is also presented for future researches to build upon it.

2.1 Customer Engagement Conceptualization

Engagement as a multi-dimensional construct

With a general consensus lacking on the subject, much of the literature in marketing relates engagement to programs that connect brands to individual customers and thus building relationships.

Various authors have conceptualized engagement in different ways, based on its dimensionality. While some authors have described engagement as multi-dimensional construct composed of three dimensions - cognitive, affective and behavioural, others have chosen to keep it either uni-dimensional or two-dimensional. A few others (Vivek et. al., 2012) also added a new dimension to the above three – social, when talking of engagement in the social context. *Table 1* below, while listing down the dimensions used by various authors to describe customer engagement, also helps in identifying the commonality or differences in the way these dimensions have been presented.

Table 1: Engagement dimensions as presented by various authors

S.No.	Terminology Used	Author	Dimensions
1.	Engagement	Sashi (2012)	Connection, Interaction, Satisfaction, Retention, Commitment, Advocacy, Engagement
2.	Customer Engagement	Malthouse et. al. (2013)	Levels of Engagement (High: Low)
3.	Customer Engagement	Brodie et. al. (2011)	Cognitive, emotional and behavioural
4.	Customer Engagement	Vivek, Beatty & Morgan (2012)	Cognitive, affective, behavioural, social
5.	Consumer Brand Engagement	Hollebeek, Glynn & Brodie (2014)	Cognitive, emotional, behavioural
6.	Consumer / Customer Engagement	Brodie et. al. (2013)	Cognitive, Emotional, Behavioural
7.	Customer Engagement	Cheung, Lee & Jin (2011)	Vigor, Absorption, Dedication
8.	Customer Brand Engagement	Hollebeek (2011)	Cognitive, emotional, behavioural
9.	Online Engagement	Mollen & Willson (2010)	Cognitive, emotional, behavioural
10.	Engagement	O'Brien (2010)	Focused attention, perceived usability, aesthetics, endurability, novelty, felt involvement
11.	Customer Engagement	Gummerus et. al. (2012)	Community engagement behaviour, transaction engagement behaviour
12.	Online Community Brand Engagement	Wirtz et. al. (2013)	Behavioural
13.	Customer Engagement	Vivek et. al. (2014)	Conscious Attention, Enthused Participation, Social Connection

S.No.	Terminology Used	Author	Dimensions
14.	Mobile User Engagement	Kim, Kim & Wachter (2013)	Cognition, affection, conation
15.	Online Engagement	Cvijikj & Michahelles (2014)	Likes, comments, shares, interaction, duration
16.	Customer Engagement Behaviour	Van Doorn et. al. (2010)	Behavioural

Table 1, thus, depicts that engagement has been referred to in various forms across the literature, with some scholars terming it as customer / consumer engagement, a few others referring to it in the context of consumer and brands as consumer-brand engagement, while many also base it on the context in which being studied – online or mobile engagement. Further, while most authors choose to describe engagement as a multidimensional construct, some also choose to limit it as a uni-dimensional construct. Also, what may be noticed is that many authors have termed these dimensions in a different manner, although referring to the same set of dimensions. While Hollebeek (2011) and Mollen & Wilson (2010) describe customer engagement to be based on cognitive, emotional and behavioural dimensions, the same set of dimensions is referred to as vigor, absorption and dedication by Cheung, Lee & Jin (2011). Thus, while the terminology remains different, what lies underneath each of these dimensions is one single construct, that of engagement. However, O'Brien (2010) described engagement on a different set of dimensions wherein involvement was described as one of the dimensions to engagement and not a separate construct; the common point still being that engagement is a multidimensional construct. Thus, it may be stated that although engagement being a multidimensional construct, a common terminology to all these dimensions is yet to be arrived at. Also a consensus is required on what dimensions constitute engagement – whether they depend on the context in which being studied or are common across.

Based on these facts, we say that customer engagement is a multi-dimensional construct, composed of three dimensions: cognitive, affective and behavioural. The three dimensions of engagement can be illustrated from the descriptions given by Brodie, Ilic, Juric & Hollebeek (2013) - the emotional aspect includes feelings of gratitude, empathy, trust, feeling safe and a sense of belonging to the group by engaging in the community, the cognitive dimension results from relationships built by sharing information and experiences, while the behavioural dimension is portrayed by member participation in the community, their online activities and offline actions reported in the community, all of which may either be positive or negative in nature (p. 110). Porter et. al. (2011) observed that cognitively, engagement may be described as a positive state of mind characterized by high energy, loyalty and commitment; while behaviourally it is the actions beyond transactions towards the firm (p. 83). Thus, it may be stated that both these dimensions describe different levels of engagement, but represent a single construct as a whole. Being context dependent, each of these dimensions comes into play at differing levels in different contexts.

Definition

With researchers differing in opinion on engagement conceptualizations, there is a lack of consensus on one definition to engagement that describes the construct completely. Various researchers have given their own interpretations of the construct to suit their desired contexts.

Hollebeek (2011), based on synthesis of literature observed that application of the concept of engagement in marketing literature follows the approach of “*who subject engages with what object*” (p. 789). In the present case, subject being the customer and object being social media, with an added dimension to it – the geographical context. While each form of engagement may be defined in a different manner, the focus of present study lies in offering an acceptable definition to customer engagement, suiting the social media context for the emerging market of India.

Table 2 below briefly lists down how various authors chose to define engagement and the various terminologies associated to each of these definitions.

Table 2: Engagement definitions from the literature

S.No.	Author	Terminology Used	Definition / Description
1	Sashi (2012)	Customer Engagement	"a customer-centric approach with its main focus being on identifying customer needs in order to engage with them, and identifying the value additions required to meet those needs"
2	Brodie, Hollebeek, Juric & Ilic (2011)	Customer Engagement	"a psychological state that occurs by virtue of interactive, co-creative customer experiences with a focal agent/ object in focal service relationships....."
3	Vivek, Sharon, Beatty & Morgan (2012)	Customer Engagement	"intensity of an individual's participation in and connection with an organization's offerings"
4	Hollebeek, Glynn & Brodie (2014)	Consumer Brand Engagement	"a consumer's positively valenced brand-related cognitive, emotional and behavioural activity during or related to focal consumer-brand interactions"

S.No.	Author	Terminology Used	Definition / Description
5	Brodie, Ilic, Juric & Hollebeek (2013)	Consumer Engagement	same as in Brodie et.al., 2011
6	Cheung, Lee & Jin (2011)	Customer Engagement in an online social platform	"the level of customer's physical, cognitive and emotional presence in connections with a particular online social platform"
7	Porter et. al. (2011)	customer engagement in virtual communities	"a class of behaviours that reflects community members' demonstrated willingness to participate and cooperate with others....."
8	Kim, Kim & Wachter (2013)	mobile engagement intention	"state of being involved, occupied, retained and intrinsically interested in something"
9	Cvijikj & Michahelles (2014)	Online engagement	"measuring undertaken actions such as click through rates, page views etc. depending on the possibilities offered by the platform"
10	Parent et. al. (2011)	participation/engagement	"the willingness to engage with a brand beyond just the purchase decisions at point of sale"
11	Van Doorn et. al. (2010)	customer engagement behaviour	"customer's behavioural manifestation toward a brand or a firm, beyond purchase, resulting from motivational drivers."
12	O'Brien (2010)	Engagement	"quality of user experiences"

S.No.	Author	Terminology Used	Definition / Description
13	Wolf-Wendel et. al. (2009)	Engagement	"encouraging institutional reflection and action on effective practice."
14	Hollebeek (2011)	customer-brand engagement	"the level of an individual customer's motivational, brand-related and context-dependent state of mind characterised by specific levels of cognitive, emotional and behavioural activity in direct brand interactions"
15	Mollen & Wilson (2010)	online engagement	"cognitive and affective commitment to an active relationship with the brand as personified by the website or other computer-mediated entities designed to communicate brand value."
16	Gummerus et. al. (2012)	customer engagement	"behaviours [that] go beyond transactions, and may be specifically defined as a customer's behavioural manifestation that have a brand or firm focus, beyond purchase, resulting from motivational drivers"
17	Wirtz et. al. (2013)	online brand community engagement	"consumer's intrinsic motivation to interact and co-operate with community members ; identification with the OBC that results in interactive participation in the OBC"

S.No.	Author	Terminology Used	Definition / Description
18	Vivek et. al. (2014)	Customer Engagement	"CE goes beyond purchase and is the level of customer's interactions and connections with the brand or firm's offerings or activities,...."

As can be seen from *Table 2*, engagement gets manifested in the various interactions that customers participate in, online or offline. Brodie et. al. (2011) identified five themes of customer engagement: undertaking interactive experiences, context dependent and motivational state, transient engagement state, multidimensional concept and central role in relational exchange. Based on these themes, Brodie, et. al. (2013) offered a working definition of consumer engagement, to be involving "specific interactive experiences between consumers and brand, and/or other members of the community.....psychological state characterized by fluctuating intensity level that occur within dynamic, iterative engagement processes.....comprising cognitive, emotional, and/or behavioural dimensions" (p. 107).

Based on the above conceptualizations and explanations, we thus define customer engagement to be the result of interactive experiences between the subject and the object, with the context in which these interactions take place defining the form and scope of engagement. The context could be defined based on the subject of study – customer, job, employee, student etc., object of study – media, university, work profile, organization, firm, brand etc., and the geographical sphere – country, culture etc. It is multidimensional in nature, and is composed of cognitive, affective and behavioural dimensions, with the interplay of these dimensions generating different levels of engagement. For the purpose of this study, we say that customer engagement is a result of the interactions that take place between the customer and the firm/brand on social media. Customer's interactive experiences on social media result in relationship formation between the brand and the customer. As consumers begin to explore the relationship further by sharing their experiences, and participating in online activities hosted by the brand, a sense of belonging to the group is developed along with feelings towards the brand - either positive or negative. This leads to customer being engaged to the brand, on social media.

Scope of engagement is described by its context

Vivek et. al. (2012) observed that the scope of engagement can be best described based on the number of ways in which it can be classified (p. 133). It may be classified based on the context being referred to, such as with activities or events, in presence or absence of customers, online vs real-time, at organization premises or beyond that, engaging directly or through a third party, to name a few. Gambetti & Graffigna (2010) too, identified five main contextual dimensions to engagement: consumer, customer, brand, advertising and media (p. 805). These classifications of engagement are nothing but the contextual references to engagement. Thus, we may say that the scope of engagement can best be described based on its contextual aspects, described here as, the form of engagement being studied – student, employee, online etc., the geographical context – dependent on the geographical sphere of its study, and the focal object of engagement – online, mobile, traditional media, advertising among others.

Customer engagement puts customers at the core, the prime focus of this construct being value addition to customer requirements. Yet this engagement is not just limited to customers, but its scope spreads across to include various other forms, such as engagement with brand, media, advertising etc. in its ambit. The present research aims to study engagement, with its scope defined to be based on, 1.) form of engagement – with the customer, 2.) geographical context – emerging market, India, and, 3.) object of engagement – social media; i.e. – we try to present through this paper customer engagement in the context of social media for India, an emerging market.

3. Methodology & Findings

With digital technology becoming a major medium of communication, customer engagement in the context of digital mediums offers much more scope for research. This section presents in detail, the exploratory study conducted for the purpose of conceptually describing customer engagement in the context of social media for an emerging market, India.

3.1 Purpose of the Study

In order to gain more clarity on the construct of customer engagement, an exploratory study was conducted. Being a context-dependent construct, theoretical conceptualization of customer engagement may vary based on the context in which being studied – the object of engagement as the context and the geographical context as well.

Keeping this in mind, the major purpose of this exploratory study was to identify how Indian firms describe customer engagement in the context of social media.

According to a survey conducted by a research firm across developed and emerging markets, web savvy consumers in emerging markets are more inclined towards using social media, in order to reach out to firms or brands (Consumers in emerging markets more inclined to use social media for customer service than those in developed markets). Further, an IMF report forecasted the growth rate for emerging economies at 4.2% for 2015 and 4.7% for 2016. With internet penetration still having much scope of improvement, the penetration of social media has just begun (social media projected to grow at 37.4% in 2015, in India). Also, with the introduction of new forms of devices to access social media or the internet, such as mobile phones, tablets etc., the numbers are set to rise. While marketers have already begun to realize the potential of this platform, it is imperative to understand how they perceive customer engagement, and bring all to one common ground. This exploratory study thus aims to identify how marketers view customer engagement in the context of social media or in general, keeping in mind the Indian audience.

3.2 Research Design

The aim of this exploratory study was to understand managerial perspectives on customer engagement in general, and also in the context of social media. Being context-dependent, the view-point of managers towards the construct would also be influenced by the country in which the study is being conducted.

An open-ended questionnaire was sent by e-mail to digital media managers of 25 firms in India. The firms included banking and insurance sector firms, social media marketing firms, SME's etc. thus representing a wide array of industries. Convenience Sampling was used for the purpose, with e-mails being sent to only those managers that the authors know personally. The questionnaire was aimed at eliciting responses on how firms view engagement, both as a concept and in the context of social media.

The questionnaire included questions such as: how do you describe customer engagement, at what point would you consider a customer to be engaged, how do you describe customer engagement in the context of social media among other questions. The set of questions were based on other similar studies (Porter et. al., 2011; Vivek et. al., 2012; Tsai & Pai, 2013) on the subject. A total of 15 responses were generated.

4. Findings – Managerial Perspectives to Customer Engagement

The term “engagement” is much popular with the practitioners already, and with the introduction of new forms of media, it has proliferated to include added dimensions as well. Our study reveals that Twitter and Facebook top the list of social media channels being used by marketers for engagement.

4.1 Describing Engagement

Emphasizing interaction as a pre-requisite to engagement, as also highlighted in scholarly literature, the respondents observed that interaction and customer experiences form the back-bone of engagement, be it the offline or online mode. The one thing common in all responses was the focus on communication – with the firm, among the customers or in any other form.

“process whereby customer responds or reacts to our communication or converses with us through online and offline modes”

Engagement has often been described to be “beyond purchase”, and this viewpoint was supported by the respondents. Also, it was emphasized that engagement is not just limited to product or service consumption, but extends beyond to include other brand touch-points such as searching for the product or talking about it with others, highlighting the behavioural dimension of engagement. It was also observed that while describing engagement, the three-dimensions of engagement found a reference to them indirectly.

“Customer engagement happens at all brand touch points and not just at the time when my customer uses my offering. It could also be when he/she is searching for it, buying it or simply discussing about it.”

Another respondent offered a very interesting description to engagement:

“Setting lifetime touchpoints with the customers. A person may decide to choose my competition but each time, I revise my rate or have a new offering, I reach out to him again mentioning “Hey, we are still waiting and we have lowered the rates just for you”

“Adding value to customer and making them come back to us for more.”

These responses highlight the cognitive dimension of engagement, with the focus being on long-term relationship building by offering value-addition to the customer.

4.2 Customer engagement and Social Media

With social media making deeper inroads into India, marketers have realized the potential that this platform carries. Not only as a source of mass communication, but its features also offer the facility of one-to-one communication between various stakeholders, be it firm-to-customer or customer-to-customer.

When talking of social media as well, the focus was much on the behavioural dimension of engagement, portrayed by participation in firm's social media related activities.

"A response to a post is not engagement to me. Its only when he shares that post is when he is truly engaged/. Anything shared goes to my profile and everyone is so particular about their social image that they share stuff that they stand for, or believe it or find enticing enough"

"Normally in social media sphere the following actions: like, comment, share , tag construe engagement.

At times, we discount likes as engagement as getting a like is very simple and does not require any effort on a customer's part. But when a customer shares your content, which implies the content is really useful to him."

The focus of customer engagement in the context of social media lies much on its behavioural aspect. Marketers find customer behaviour, such as, sharing or liking a post, participating in conversations etc. to be an embodiment of customer engagement. However it may also be noted that, many customers might not be active users of social media but may be engaged with the medium or the brand passively. A customer may be actively utilizing the information shared on social media without actually participating in any conversations. This is where the other dimensions of engagement, cognitive and affective come into play, and require attention of marketers. Customers must be attracted towards brand's social media, and this can be accomplished by offering content. The content offered should be such that it not only attracts discussion and conversations around it, but also manages to keep the passive customer glued to the content. Thus, while interaction is often described as one of the necessary pre-requisites to engagement, it is content that actually the customer engages with.

"Stories have always worked for communities. India is all about stories be it cinema, soaps or real life drama.....Stories bring success to groups....."

Social media channels offer a variety of features which the brands can utilize to engage with their customers. While there are features such as social recommendation systems (like and share buttons), firms may also create their own pages on social media channels to share content or information. The one common aspect highlighted by respondents, w.r.t. both these features is the "content". Content forms the backbone of any social media marketing plan. The success or failure of a brand on social media too depends on the quality of content shared by it. The content posted by a brand must be relevant, such that the customer is ready to share this content in their social media profiles. Content could be anything from a simple text to videos, audio clips, images etc. Interactions have often been described to be at the forefront for engaging customers on social media, and content forms the backbone of these interactions. By sharing content that induces conversations on social media, be it firm-to-customer or customer-to-customer, firms tend to engage the customers.

5. Implications of the Study

While many researchers have described engagement to be behavioural pre-dominantly, the other dimensions of engagement cannot be ignored completely. The exploratory study reveals that marketer's too feel that customer engagement is a multi-dimensional construct, composed of three dimensions – cognitive, affective and behavioural. However, what also can be noticed is that when referring to engagement in general, the most common reference is made to cognitive dimension, with the other two dimensions being sidelined. However, when talking of customer engagement in the context of social media, what gets highlighted the most is behavioural dimension as also the affective dimension. This

again raises the debate to if engagement dimensions are based on the context in which it is being referred to or are common across all contexts.

At the same time, it is important to mention that social media users may be of two types – active or passive. Active users are those who actively participate on the social media by commenting, participating in conversations, sharing content etc. They tend to rate high on the behavioural dimension of engagement, as their engagement with a brand on social media gets reflected through their social media behaviors and can be tracked easily. Passive users of social media are those users of social media who although read the content, conversation made between other members on social media on a regular basis yet tend not to communicate in any manner. Marketers tend to ignore this set of customers when considering engagement to be based on interactions. While passive users may not interact on the social media, yet they may be actively engaged to a brand on the social media. What lies common to both active and passive users is the content.

Content is the backbone of all interactions that happen on social media and tends to engage both active and passive users alike. Thus marketers must focus on quality content, such that it is intriguing enough for active users to engage in conversations, and giving passive users enough material to engage with the brand through both the content and conversations around it. Brand must be central to any content being shared on social media, such that, the conversations too revolve around the brand. While conversations represent a behavioral aspect of engagement, the content posted must cater to the other dimensions of engagement as well – cognitive and affective.

Conversations that happen on social media can be both positive and negative. Many respondents in the current study reported that many customers take the route of social media to vent out their anger or negative feeling towards a brand. Such negative conversations can further lead to negative engagement i.e. when a person is engaged to a brand not to be associated with it but to dissociate itself from the brand. While active customers shall vent out their negative feelings on social media, passive customers too shall begin to relate with the brand negatively on reading such conversations. Thus customer behaviour on social media could have both negative and positive repercussions for a firm. It is thus imperative for marketers to manage both negative and positive conversations that happen on social media, such that, negative conversations are dealt with on a primary basis.

Lastly, as observed by Vivek et. al. (2014), engaged customers are “more credible” voice of a brand. They help other customers in recognizing their needs while also blurring boundaries between a business’s role and customer’s role (p. 416). Thus, marketer’s focus must lie on engaging the customer by responding to their needs, trying to meet their requirement while also offering some value addition.

6. Conclusion & Future Research

This present study adds to the existing repository on engagement by conceptually defining the construct of engagement. Also, based on the exploratory study, the paper tends to describe how Indian manager’s view customer engagement, offering more insights on the subject. The research further adds to the existing research in emerging markets, providing more insights to marketers on the use of new media to reach out to customers.

Engagement has been conceptualized in many ways in the past. However this paper presents engagement contextually based on social media, with the subject being customer. Our review of literature offers insights on how the construct of engagement has evolved in the recent times. Customer needs, interactions and value addition form the basis of customer engagement, and social media offers marketers a platform to achieve the above. Customer engagement on social media happens based on

the content – leading to more conversations and interactions among members of social media. Customer engagement may get displayed by various customer behaviours such as posting a like, sharing the content, posting a comment or participating in the conversations. While active engagement may be expressed through customer behaviors, passive customers may not express their engagement, and thus it is ultimately the quality of content that generates engagement for both active and passive customers.

The paper also tries to add another context to the study – the study focuses on India, and presents an Indian marketer's view of engagement. India is an emerging market, and talking of internet or social media penetration, there is still a long way to go in reaching the desired levels. With most of the Indian population residing in rural or semi-urban areas, social media offers a platform for marketers to reach out to those customers who are otherwise left unheard. The findings presented may also be helpful in driving future research for emerging markets.

Future research in this direction may try to explore customer engagement on social media particularly, while also defining it conceptually. Being context dependent, the theoretical foundations of the construct may differ based on the context as well. Also, deeper insights are required on the subject, empirically and in the Indian context as well. Empirical studies may also be undertaken in future to understand managerial viewpoint on the construct. It may also be worthy to understand customer perspectives and their views on engagement strategies used by firms. Much research is still required on other relational constructs to customer engagement, which may happen after a clear-cut delineation is made between customer engagement and these other constructs.

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