

Beyond the dyadic: customer engagement in increasingly networked environments

In recent years, marketing is witnessing a paradigm shift where traditional boundaries between customer and provider roles are blurring, and markets are becoming increasingly interconnected (Hollebeek and Andreassen, 2018; Alexander and Jaakkola, 2016). That is, contemporary customers are no longer simply fulfilling passive end-user roles in relation to firm-based offerings, but are proactively contributing to their interactions with brands, firms and other stakeholders (Baumöl *et al.*, 2016; Sasser *et al.*, 2014). Through these interactions, customers are therefore increasingly engaged in shaping firms' offerings and cocreating value. Customers' various activities and behaviors that extend beyond traditional buyer/user roles are captured by the overarching term of customer engagement (CE), which has gained traction in the last decade (Hollebeek *et al.*, 2016, 2018). To date, CE's literature-based advancement is evidenced through the development of CE conceptualizations (Brodie *et al.*, 2011), measurement instruments (Hollebeek *et al.*, 2014) and insight regarding CE's role in broader nomological networks or contexts (Kumar and Pansari, 2016; Brodie *et al.*, 2013, 2016). While CE's reciprocal, social nature, as well as its contribution to value creation at a systemic level has been identified (Jaakkola and Alexander, 2014), an understanding of engagement-related dynamics in settings that extend beyond the customer/firm dyad remain elusive, as explored in this special issue.

By means of a stepwise exercise of zooming out, our first paper by Alexander *et al.* (2018) introduces a multi (micro, meso, macro)-level perspective on actor engagement, in particular highlighting the role of institutions in influencing engagement. The paper also argues that actors' multiple roles generate a need for individuals' role-balancing activity, which can result in disengagement behavior (e.g. for actors' lower-priority roles). The role of reference groups and role conflict associated with actors' multiple role balancing is also highlighted as critical to understanding why engaged actor proclivities may wax and wane in particular contexts.

Second, Keeling *et al.* (2018) investigate the evolving roles and structures of triadic engagement by conceptualizing the concept against a two-level framework in healthcare. The authors first identify the structure of triadic consultations in terms of the human voice, virtual voice and networked voice, which are subsequently related to companions' contributions to discussions and virtual network impact. Second, actors' evolving roles are linked to three phases of transformation, including enhancement, empowerment and emancipation.

Third, Viswanathan *et al.* (2018) explore the dynamics between social media engagement, firm-generated content and live/time-shifted television viewing. They find that advertising efforts initiated by the TV show have a positive effect on time-shifted viewing, yet a negative effect on live viewing. Second, the authors report that tweets posted by the TV show have a negative effect on time-shifted viewing, but no effect on live viewing. Finally, the authors observe that while tweets posted by viewers reduce time-shifted viewing, these serve to increase live viewing.

Fourth, Jonas *et al.* (2018) explore stakeholder engagement in the context of B2B intra- and interorganizational innovation. In this context, they identify eight stakeholder engagement antecedents that drive innovation. Their empirical study also shows how individual and organizational stakeholder engagement is influenced by friendship, common experiences, self-representation, trust, common goals, resource dependency, level in the hierarchy, institutional arrangements and local proximity.



Fifth, Sim *et al.* (2018) explore service system-based engagement through a fuzzy set analysis in the higher education context. As multiple engagement foci exist in service systems, this paper examines the interdependence among these foci. The authors identify five solutions, each with a different constellation of engagement dimensions, with cognitive processing emerging as a core condition for each of these solutions. This finding suggests service providers should seek to engage with consumers particularly from a cognitive perspective.

Sixth, Fehrer *et al.* (2018) explore the dynamics of CE within the dyad and beyond. Through an experimental design, the study shows that CE does not emerge *per se* in dyadic customer/brand interactions in a utilitarian service setting. Therefore, for high engagement behavior to occur, incentives and ties to other network actors are essential. The findings also suggest that engagement behavior must overcome a certain intensity threshold to unfold its effect.

Seventh, Azer and Alexander (2018) conceptualize negatively valenced influencing behavior and explore its forms and triggers. Through data collected from negatively valenced online reviews, the authors identify relationships between cognitive and emotional triggers of six forms of direct and indirect negatively valenced influencing behaviors.

Eighth, Li *et al.* (2018) develop a set of propositions that posit that actors' past, current and future psychological dispositions can shift between positive, negative and ambivalent valences. They also find that actor engagement valence is triggered by other service system actors' engagement objects and value propositions. Actor engagement valence antecedents comprise individual factors (e.g. cognitive evaluations) and network-related factors (e.g. social norms).

We are thrilled about this special issue, and thank our contributing authors, reviewers and the *Journal of Service Management* for supporting our initiative. We also hope it will spark discussion and debate within your communities and encourage the undertaking of further research in this important and growing area.

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