

Hallmarks and potential pitfalls of customer- and consumer engagement scales: A systematic review

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Abstract

Multiple scales measuring a customer's, or consumer's, engagement (CE) with a brand or specific brand elements (e.g., advertising/social media content) have been proposed in the literature, offering researchers different options to gauge CE. However, the myriad proposed operationalizations can yield confusion among scholars regarding how to best capture CE, exposing a growing issue for CE research. Addressing this issue, we take stock of major scales measuring a CE with a brand or specific brand elements. To achieve this objective, we performed a systematic review of major CE scale development articles (2005 to January 2023) using the Preferred Reporting Items for Systematic reviews and Meta-Analyses (PRISMA) approach. We systematically evaluated these scales in terms of their respective CE conceptualization, dimensionality, itemization, and underlying theoretical perspective. We also identify potential scale-related risks, or pitfalls, exposing important insight for CE researchers. Overall, the results suggest the existence of theoretical contamination in specific CE measures (e.g., through the inclusion of related concepts in the proposed CE definition), compromising their theoretical rigor and raising a need for scholars to verify the theoretical underpinnings of their adopted CE scales.

KEYWORDS

brands, consumer engagement scale, customer engagement scale, PRISMA, scale development, systematic literature review, theoretical rigor

1 | INTRODUCTION

In recent years, *customer/consumer engagement* (CE), defined as a customer's (consumer's) resource investment in his/her brand interactions (e.g., Hollebeek et al., 2019), has risen to become a key management imperative (Brodie et al., 2011; Kumar et al., 2019). CE, which is commonly viewed from a consumer's psychological perspective (Mainolfi et al., 2022), has been shown to make an

important contribution to customer/firm relationships, in turn, boosting firm performance (e.g., Giakoumaki & Krepapa, 2020; Pansari & Kumar, 2017). Correspondingly, numerous studies evaluated CE's antecedents and consequences across a range of contexts, including tangible product and service-based settings, among others (e.g., Behnam et al., 2021; Kumar et al., 2019; Temerak et al., 2023).

Relatedly, a number of CE measurement scales have also been proposed in the literature, which adopt different CE

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conceptualizations, dimensionality, and itemization (e.g., Sprott et al., 2009; Vivek et al., 2014). For example, Kumar and Pansari (2016, p. 489) define *customer engagement* as “the attitude, behavior, [and] level of connectedness among customers, between customers and employees, and of customers and employees within a firm,” which is thought to comprise the dimensions of customers’ brand-related purchases, referrals, influence, and knowledge. By contrast, Hollebeek et al. (2014, p. 154) conceptualize *consumer brand engagement* (CBE) as an individual’s “positively-valenced, brand-related cognitive, emotional, and behavioral activity during, or related to, [a] consumer/brand interaction.” Moreover, proposed CE scales have adopted differing engagement objects (i.e., that, with which consumers engage; Hollebeek, 2011), or address different, at times highly specific, contexts. For example, while Obilo et al.’s (2021) instrument record consumers’ brand engagement, Calder et al.’s (2009) scale measures CE with a website. Other scales capture CE with specific brand elements (Lane Keller, 2014), including brand communities (e.g., Algesheimer et al., 2005; Baldus et al., 2015) or brand-related advertising- or social media content (e.g., Calder et al., 2016; Schivinski et al., 2016).

Given the multiplicity of CE measures, researchers working in this flourishing field are faced with a level of potential confusion (e.g., regarding *which* scale to adopt in their empirical CE research or how to develop new, or refine existing, CE scales), thus exposing pertinent literature-based gap (e.g., Ng et al., 2020). Addressing this issue, this article contributes to the CE literature by taking stock of, and assessing, major scales gauging a CE with a brand (e.g., Hollebeek et al., 2014; Ndhlovu & Maree, 2022) or specific brand elements (e.g., Schivinski et al., 2016), thus extending Mittal’s (1995) comparison of customer involvement scales to the domain of CE research. Unlike existing CE-based review studies (e.g., Brodie et al., 2011), and bibliometric (e.g., Lim et al., 2022), or meta-analyses of CE (e.g., De Oliveira Santini et al., 2020), this article specifically focuses on measurement as a fundamental building block of CE research.

By conducting a systematic review of major CE scales using the Preferred Reporting Items for Systematic Reviews and Meta-Analyses (PRISMA) approach (Moher et al., 2009), we identify key scales’ respective properties and potential pitfalls relating to their adoption. Based on our observations, we derive recommendations for further research that applies, develops, or refines CE scales, thus making an important contribution to the CE literature. Specifically, the findings reveal the presence of theoretical contamination in specific CE measures (e.g., through the inclusion of conceptually related concepts in specific CE definitions), threatening their theoretical rigor and raising a need for researchers to validate the theoretical underpinnings of their chosen CE measures (MacKenzie, 2003). In doing so, we focus on a CE with a brand or specific brand elements, given that brands are the primary documented engagement object in the literature (e.g., Delbaere et al., 2021; Hollebeek, Sharma, et al., 2022; Sprott et al., 2009).

To achieve this objective, we synthesize the CE literature, with a focus on the concept’s key hallmarks in Section 2, followed by an

overview of the PRISMA-based systematic review method adopted to explore our objective in Section 3. We, then, discuss the main findings, including our observations from the reviewed scales and potential CE scale-related pitfalls and how to avoid them in Section 4. We conclude with an overview of pertinent implications that arise from our analyses in Section 5.

2 | LITERATURE REVIEW: CUSTOMER ENGAGEMENT

In the last 15 years, CE has emerged as a key metric for managing customer relationships (e.g., Pansari & Kumar, 2017; Hollebeek, Sharma, et al., 2022; Hollebeek, Sprott, et al., 2022). While its conceptualization has been subject to debate, authors tend to agree, or converge, on three major CE characteristics that are also reflected in most CE scales.

First, CE is an *interactive* concept (e.g., Kumar et al., 2019; Vivek et al., 2014), where *interaction* denotes “mutual or reciprocal action or influence” (Vargo & Lusch, 2016, p. 9). In their brand interactions, customers or consumers typically interface with branded products, services, or other brand-related stakeholders, including (frontline) employees, suppliers, or fellow customers (e.g., Clark et al., 2020), in- or outside of the purchase context (e.g., Kumar & Pansari, 2016; So et al., 2014). Moreover, customers may interact with the firm-, consumer-, or miscellaneous owned, or controlled, brand-related digital interfaces, including social media pages, virtual reality-based applications, or service robots, to name a few (e.g., Chen et al., 2023; Hollebeek, Sprott, et al., 2021; Mattison Thompson & Brouthers, 2021; Siuki & Webster, 2021).

Second, CE is commonly regarded as a customer’s, or consumer’s (resource) contributions to, or investments in, his or her interactions with a brand or specific brand elements (Hollebeek et al., 2014, 2019; Kumar & Pansari, 2016). Here, individuals’ elevated contributions reflect their higher engagement, which can be positively, or negatively, valenced (e.g., Hollebeek & Chen, 2014; Obilo et al., 2021). For example, while a customer’s positive contributions to the firm include his/her dissemination of favorable brand-related word-of-mouth or assistance lent to other customers (Van Doorn et al., 2010), negative CE may—for instance—manifest through the customer’s sabotaging, or boycotting, of the brand (Bowden et al., 2017).

Third, while some authors propose unidimensional views of CE (e.g., Sprott et al., 2009; Taheri et al., 2014), most researchers conceptualize it as a multidimensional concept (e.g., Calder et al., 2009; Harrigan et al., 2017). For example, Hollebeek et al.’s (2014) social media-based CBE comprise (a) *cognitive processing*, or the consumer’s cognitive investment in a brand interaction, (b) *affection*, the consumer’s emotional investment in such interaction, and (c) *activation*, or the consumer’s behavioral investment (e.g., of time, effort, or energy) in a brand interaction (Hollebeek et al., 2019). We next outline the method adopted to investigate our research objective.

3 | METHODOLOGY

To assess the properties of major scales gauging a CE with a brand or specific brand elements (e.g., a company's website/social media content; e.g., Calder et al., 2009; Schivinski et al., 2016), we conducted a systematic review of the literature in which we identify, appraise, and synthesize all relevant studies in the field to date (Petticrew & Roberts, 2006). Systematic literature reviews (SLRs) employ a transparent, reproducible procedure for summarizing the state of research on a particular topic (e.g., Siddaway et al., 2019) and are, thus, frequently used to identify communalities and differences in the operationalization of theoretical concepts (e.g., Bergkvist & Langner, 2017; Plumeyer et al., 2019; Tasci, 2021). In the following subsections, we describe the SLR steps undertaken.

3.1 | Data sources and selection criteria

To identify eligible articles for inclusion in our systematic review, we adopted the PRISMA guidelines, a procedure commonly applied in marketing- and consumer research (e.g., Rehman et al., 2020). The guidelines, developed to ensure the accuracy and transparency of the reviewed literature, comprise three steps: (i) *Identification*, (ii) *Screening*, and (iii) *Inclusion* (Page et al., 2021), as discussed further below. To locate our list of eligible articles, we used Scopus, which has been identified as the largest, most comprehensive database of peer-reviewed business literature (Fahimnia et al., 2015; Hollebeek, Sharma, et al., 2022).

In the initial step, we developed a protocol of scale in- and exclusion criteria (Pahlevan-Sharif et al., 2019). Specifically, in our search for eligible CE scale development work, we screened relevant scales published in peer-reviewed journals ranked on the Australian Business Deans Council (ABDC) 2019 list. We selected the ABDC ranking, given its authoritativeness, broad coverage, and widespread adoption (e.g., Hair et al., 2019). Eligible articles, written in English, were screened in terms of their respective titles, abstracts, and keywords. As these articles tended to feature the terms *customer*, *consumer*, *engagement*, *brand*, and *scale*, these were, therefore, adopted as our SLR-based search keywords. Following Hollebeek, Sharma et al. (2022), we selected a publication start year of 2005, as early CE articles (e.g., Algesheimer et al., 2005; Sawhney et al., 2005) appeared that year, and collected eligible articles. We extracted the data on January 22, 2023, after which we assessed each article vis-à-vis the above eligibility criteria.

3.2 | Study selection process

The Identification phase (Step 1) yielded a total of 842 records from the Scopus database, as shown in Figure 1. Before screening the articles, 581 of these were removed as, upon further inspection, they failed to meet the eligibility criteria. Specifically, 513 articles lacked relevance to our research objective (e.g., Jeong et al.'s (2018)

proposed scale measures restaurant customers' healthy food choices, rather than CE) and were, thus, eliminated. Moreover, 49 records appeared in publications other than peer-reviewed journals (e.g., conference papers, books, or trade journals), 13 articles were published before 2005, 5 records were written in languages other than English, and 1 further record was removed due to duplication, yielding a total of 261 eligible articles.

In the Screening phase (Step 2), the retained articles were subjected to title-abstract-keyword screening, which revealed that 221 still did not meet our research objective (e.g., García-Jurado et al., 2021), leading to their additional removal and yielding a total of 40 articles for full-text review. These articles were, first, double-checked to assess their relevance to the research purpose, generating the further removal of another 12 articles and leading us to retain a total of 28 articles for further analysis. For example, several of the removed articles applied, or validated, existing (vs. developed new) CE scales (e.g., Algharabat et al., 2020), thus also failing to meet the selection criteria.

In the Inclusion phase (Step 3), we further analyzed the retained 28 articles. To ensure that all relevant articles were included in our review, the reference lists of these articles were also scanned, which did not identify any additional eligible articles. Our sample of 28 articles is comparable to those deployed in prior studies adopting PRISMA, including Kakaria et al. (2023) review of heart rate variability in marketing research (33 studies), Rehman et al.'s (2020) analysis of social media-based perceived risk antecedents, consequences, and reducers (42 studies), or Serrano-Arcos et al. (2022) review of affinity research (25 studies).

4 | RESULTS

4.1 | Overview

Table 1 provides an overview of the 28 selected articles and their respective characteristics. While 57.1% of the articles were published in the period 2014–2017, 14.3% appeared between 2005 and 2013, and the remaining 8 (28.6%) came out from 2018 to January 2023. Moreover, several of these works are highly cited (e.g., Algesheimer et al. (2005): 1495 Scopus citations; Hollebeek et al. (2014): 1415 citations; and Calder et al. (2009): 602 citations).

Content analysis of the articles revealed the development of multiple, or related, engagement-based concepts, including *consumer engagement* (e.g., Schivinski et al., 2016), *customer engagement* (e.g., Kumar & Pansari, 2016), *CBE* (e.g., Hollebeek et al., 2014; Obilo et al., 2021), *customer engagement behavior* (e.g., Shin & Perdue, 2022), and *online engagement with a brand* (e.g., Paruthi & Kaur, 2017). Moreover, 24 of the 28 articles consider CE as a multi (vs. uni) dimensional construct, consistent with our observation in Section 2. While three of the articles were published in top marketing journals, the *Journal of Marketing* (i.e., Algesheimer et al., 2005) and the *Journal of Marketing Research* (i.e., Kumar & Pansari, 2016; Sprott et al., 2009), the other CE scales appeared in lower-ranked marketing or related (e.g., tourism or technology-based) journals.

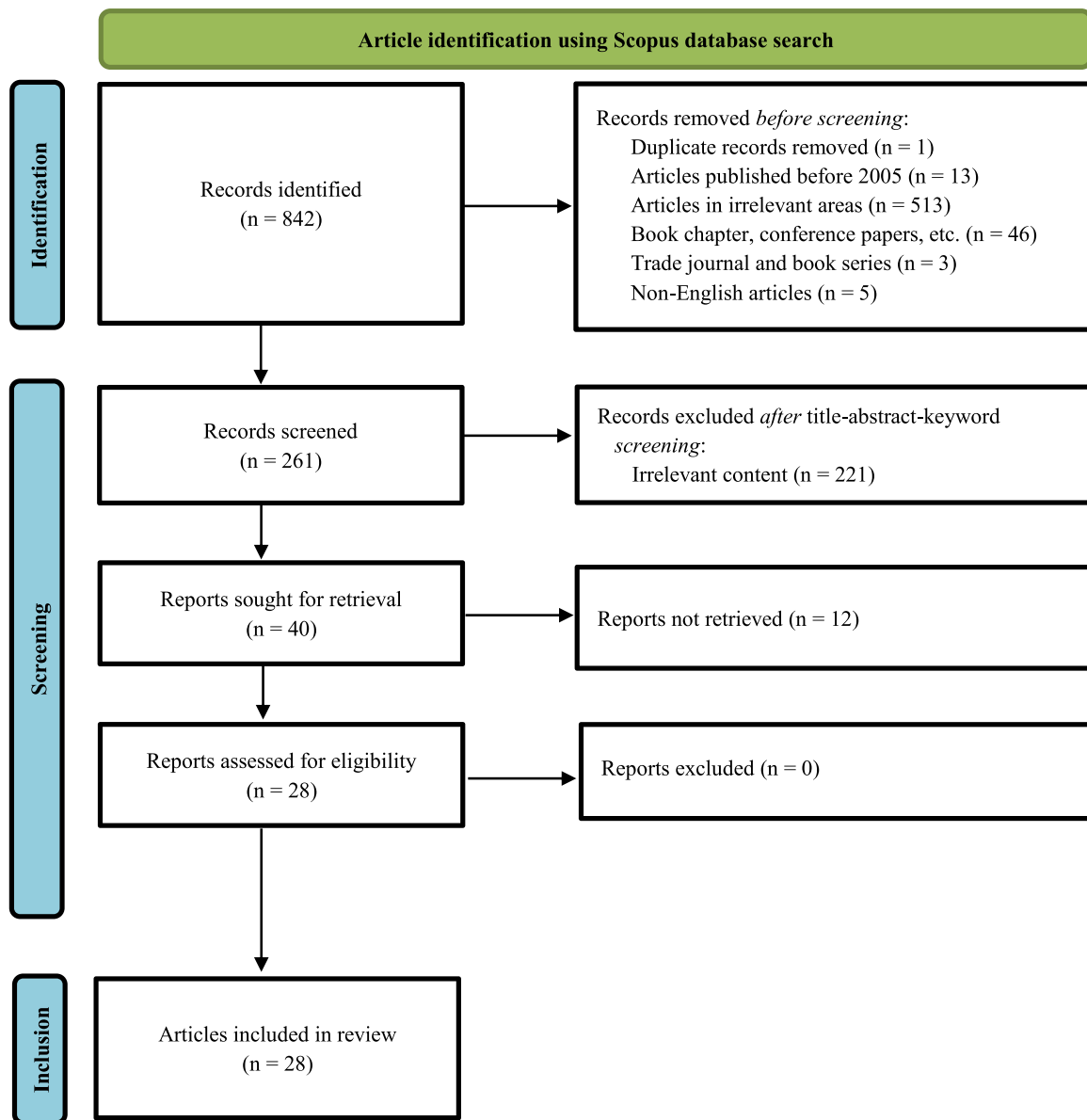


FIGURE 1 Preferred Reporting Items for Systematic Reviews and Meta-Analyses-based flow diagram of the article selection process.

While 21 of the 28 articles define their proposed CE-based concept, an explicit conceptualization was not detected in the remaining articles (e.g., Lourenço et al., 2022), which is problematic given the key role of concept definition in setting the scene for its subsequent operationalization (Voss et al., 2020). Our analysis also reveals a multiplicity of CE study contexts, including social media (e.g., Hollebeek et al., 2014), tourism (e.g., So et al., 2014), and mobile phones (e.g., Dwivedi, 2015), to name a few. Finally, theoretical lenses adopted to explore CE include social exchange theory, uses-and-gratifications theory, service-dominant (S-D) logic, stimulus-organism-response (S-O-R), self-schema theory, regulatory engagement theory, social identity theory, expectancy theory, consumer culture theory, and relationship marketing, revealing CE's theoretical versatility (e.g., Ng et al., 2020) and yielding different content domains for CE-based item generation (Churchill, 1979).

4.2 | Potential CE scale-related pitfalls and how to avoid them

Our analyses also revealed three chief potential risks, or pitfalls, relating to the adoption of particular CE scales. Below, we discuss these pitfalls and identify ways to avoid, or overcome, them.

4.2.1 | Safeguarding CE's pervasive interactive nature

As noted, the CE literature boasts widespread recognition of engagement's *interactive* nature (e.g., Van Doorn et al., 2010; Mirbagheri & Najmi, 2019). Accordingly, multidimensional CE perspectives tend to capture the consumer's, or customer's, thoughts,

TABLE 1 CE scales included in our systematic review.

Author(s)	Citations ^a	Construct	Definition	Dimensionality	Journal	ABDC 2019 ranking
Algesheimer et al. (2005)	1495	Community engagement	"A consumer's intrinsic motivation to interact and cooperate with community members" (p. 21).	Unidimensional	<i>Journal of Marketing</i>	A*
Calder et al. (2009)	602	Consumer engagement with a website	"A second-order construct manifested in various types of first-order 'experience' constructs," where <i>experience</i> denotes "a consumer's beliefs about how a (web) site fits into his/her life" (p. 322).	Multidimensional: Stimulation and inspiration (E), Social facilitation (E), Temporal (C), Self-esteem and civic mindedness (E), Intrinsic enjoyment (E), Utilitarian (C), Participation and socializing (B), Community (E)	<i>Journal of Interactive Marketing</i>	A
Spratt et al. (2009)	503	Brand engagement in self-concept	"An individual difference representing a consumer's propensity to include an important brand as part of how [he/she] views [himself/herself]" (p. 92).	Unidimensional (E)	<i>Journal of Marketing Research</i>	A*
O'Brien and Toms (2010)	542	User engagement	"A quality of user experience that describes a positive human-computer interaction" (O'Brien & Toms, 2013, p. 1094).	Multidimensional: Focused attention (C), Perceived usability (C/E), Aesthetics (E), Endurability (C), Novelty (E), Felt involvement (C/E)	<i>Journal of the Association for Information Science and Technology</i>	A*
Hollebeek et al. (2014)	1415	Consumer brand engagement	"A consumer's positively valenced brand-related cognitive, emotional and behavioral activity during or related to focal consumer/brand interactions" (p. 154).	Multidimensional: Cognitive processing (C), Affection (E), Activation (B)	<i>Journal of Interactive Marketing</i>	A
So et al. (2014)	333	Customer engagement	"A customer's personal connection to a brand as manifested in cognitive, affective, and behavioral actions outside of the purchase situation" (pp. 310–311).	Multidimensional: Identification (E), Enthusiasm (E), Attention (C), Absorption (C), Interaction (B)	<i>Journal of Hospitality and Tourism Research</i>	A
Taheri et al. (2014)	152	Visitor engagement	"A state of being involved with and committed to a specific market offering" (p. 322).	Unidimensional (C/E)	<i>Tourism Management</i>	A*
Vivek et al. (2014)	359	Customer engagement	"The level of the customer's (or potential customer's) interactions and connections with the brand or firm's offerings or activities, often involving others in the social network created around the brand/offering/activity" (p. 406).	Multidimensional: Conscious attention (C), Enthused participation (E/B), Social connection (S)	<i>Journal of Marketing Theory and Practice</i>	B

TABLE 1 (Continued)

Author(s)	Citations ^a	Construct	Definition	Dimensionality	Journal	ABDC 2019 ranking
Baldus et al. (2015)	355	Online brand community engagement	"The compelling, intrinsic motivations to continue interacting with an online brand community" (p. 979).	Multidimensional: Brand influence (B), Brand passion (E), Connecting, Helping (B), Like-minded discussion, Rewards (hedonic), Rewards (utilitarian), Seeking assistance, Self-expression, Up-to-date information (C), Validation	<i>Journal of Business Research</i>	A
Dwivedi (2015)	217	Consumer brand engagement	"A consumer's positive, fulfilling, brand-use-related state of mind that is characterized by vigor, dedication and absorption" (p. 101).	Multidimensional: Vigor (B), Dedication (E), Absorption (C)	<i>Journal of Retailing and Consumer Services</i>	A
Calder et al. (2016)	96	Engagement	"A multilevel, multidimensional construct that emerges from the thoughts and feelings about one or more rich experiences involved in reaching a personal goal" (p. 40).	Multidimensional: Interaction, Transportation, Discovery, Identity, Civic Orientation	<i>Journal of Advertising Research</i>	A
Dessart et al. (2016)	257	Consumer engagement	"The state that reflects a consumer's individual dispositions toward engagement foci, which are context-specific. Engagement is expressed through varying levels of affective, cognitive, and behavioral manifestations that go beyond exchange situations" (p. 409).	Multidimensional: Affective—Enthusiasm (E), Affective—Enjoyment (E), Cognitive—Attention (C), Cognitive—Absorption (C), Behavioral—Sharing (B), Behavioral—Learning (B), Behavioral—Endorsing (B)	<i>Journal of Marketing Management</i>	A
Hollebeek et al. (2016)	37	Consumers' musical engagement (ME)	"A second-order construct comprising four types of consumer experiences with music (i.e. identity-, social-, sportive-, and affect-inducing experience) that, collectively, comprise ME" (p. 418).	Multidimensional: Identity experience, Social experience, Sportive experience, Affect-inducing experience	<i>Journal of Consumer Marketing</i>	A
Hopp and Gallicano (2016)	22	Blog engagement	A multidimensional construct consisting of utility, presence, virality, and personal connection.	Multidimensional: Utility, Presence, Virality	<i>Journal of Public Relations Research</i>	B
Kumar and Pansari (2016)	545	Customer engagement	"The attitude, behavior, the level of connectedness among customers, between customers and employees, and of customers and employees within a firm" (p. 498).	Multidimensional: Customer purchases (B), Customer referrals (B), Customer influence (B), Customer knowledge (B)	<i>Journal of Marketing Research</i>	A*

(Continues)

TABLE 1 (Continued)

Author(s)	Citations ^a	Construct	Definition	Dimensionality	Journal	ABDC 2019 ranking
Schivinski et al. (2016)	233	Consumer's engagement with brand-related social-media content	"A set of brand-related online activities on the part of the consumer that vary in the degree to which the consumer interacts with social media and engages in the consumption, contribution, and creation of media content" (p. 66).	Multidimensional: Consumption (B), Contribution (B), Creation (B)	<i>Journal of Advertising Research</i>	A
Solem and Pedersen (2016)	26	Customer brand engagement	"A customer's motivational and positive state of mind, characterized by physical, emotional and cognitive investments in brand relationships" (p. 225).	Multidimensional: Cognitive (C), Emotional (E), Physical (B)	<i>International Journal of Internet Marketing and Advertising</i>	C
Thakur (2016)	135	Customer engagement	"A second-order construct reflected by the first order dimensions of social-facilitation, self-connect, intrinsic enjoyment, time-filler, utilitarian, and monetary evaluation experiences" (p. 157).	Multidimensional: Social-facilitation, Self-connect, Intrinsic enjoyment, Time-filler, Utilitarian, Monetary experience	<i>Journal of Retailing and Consumer Services</i>	A
Harrigan et al. (2017)	373	Customer engagement	"Customer engagement is characterized by repeated interactions between a customer and an organization that strengthen the emotional, psychological or physical investment a customer has in the brand and the organization" (p. 598).	Multidimensional: Identification (E), Absorption (C), Interaction (B)	<i>Tourism Management</i>	A*
Paruthi and Kaur (2017)	16	Online engagement	"A consumer's psychological state of mind and intensity of [his/her] awareness, affection, participation, and connection with the brand" (p. 134).	Multidimensional: Conscious attention (C), Affection (E), Enthused participation (E/B), Social connection (S)	<i>Journal of Internet Commerce</i>	B
Huang and Choi (2019)	33	Tourist engagement	"A psychological state incurred by interactive, co-creative, tourist experiences with a focal agent/object (people/attraction/activities/encounters) in focal travel experience relationships" (p. 6).	Multidimensional: Social interaction, Interaction with employees, Relatedness, Activity-related tourist engagement	<i>Service Industries Journal</i>	B
Mirbagheri and Najmi (2019)	24	Consumers' engagement with social media activation campaigns	"The extent of cognitive, affective, and behavioral energies that a consumer simultaneously and holistically devotes into a campaign"; in other words, it is "the consumer's level of attention to the	Multidimensional: Attention (C), Interest and enjoyment (E), Participation (B)	<i>Psychology and Marketing</i>	A

TABLE 1 (Continued)

Author(s)	Citations ^a	Construct	Definition	Dimensionality	Journal	ABDC 2019 ranking
Obilo et al. (2021)	37	Consumer brand engagement	"A consumer's positive and negative behavioral interactions with a brand and all its constituent elements (brand content, other consumers, etc.), beyond simple transactions, that result from [his/her] interest in and commitment to the brand" (p. 635).	Multidimensional: Content engagement (B), Co-creation (B), Advocacy (B), Negative engagement (B)	<i>Journal of Business Research</i>	A
Ho et al. (2022)	4	Customer engagement behaviors	A multidimensional, second-order construct including both active behavioral forms (influencing behaviors, customers' interactions, information sharing, participation in events, providing feedback, assisting other customers, and customer complaints) and passive behavior (browsing).	Multidimensional: Influencing behaviors (B), Participation in events (B), Information sharing (B), Feedback (provision); B, Assistance to other customers (B), Customer-to-customer interaction (B), Browsing (B), Complaints (B)	<i>Journal of Marketing Management</i>	A
Lourenço et al. (2022)	1	Consumer brand engagement	A second-order construct manifested in three dimensions: Cognitive, emotion, and behavior.	Multidimensional: Cognitive (C), Emotion (E), Behavior (B)	<i>Journal of Retailing and Consumer Services</i>	A
Majeed et al. (2022)	0	Destination brand engagement	"Tourist brand engagement reflects tourist self-concept and perceived destination brand image" (p. 4).	Unidimensional (C)	<i>Tourism and Hospitality Research</i>	B
Ndhlovu and Maree (2022)	3	Consumer brand engagement	"A consumer's psychological state and behavioral manifestations that occur through the process of value co-creation involving resource integration and service exchanges in consumer-brand interactive service systems" (p. 229).	Multidimensional: Product (smartphone) context, Reasoned behavior, Affection (E), Service (social media) context, Social connection (S), Affection (E), Identification (E), Absorption (C)	<i>Journal of Business Research</i>	A
Shin and Perdue (2022)	1	Customer engagement behaviors	A multidimensional construct consisting of engagement behaviors for influential-experience value, C-to-B innovation value, relational value, and functional value.	Multidimensional: Influential-experience value (B), C-to-B innovation value (B), Relational value (B), Functional value (B)	<i>Journal of Travel Research</i>	A*

Abbreviations: ABDC: Australian Business Deans Council; B: behavioral; C: cognitive; CE: customer/consumer engagement; E: emotional; S: social.

^aScopus (as of January 22, 2023).

emotions, and behaviors during, or related to, his/her brand interactions (e.g., Calder et al., 2009; Hollebeek et al., 2014; Ndhlovu & Maree, 2022). This interactivity is critical, as it helps set CE apart from related concepts, including customer involvement, commitment, participation, experience, or cocreation (e.g., Brodie et al., 2011; Harrigan et al., 2018; Rather et al., 2022).

Interactivity should, therefore, pervade *each* of CE's proposed dimensions (vs. exist as an independent dimension), leading us to caution researchers against adopting, or developing, measures that limit its interactivity to *a single* dimension. For example, authors including Obilo et al. (2021), Harrigan et al. (2017), and So et al. (2014) incorporate interactivity as an *isolated* CE dimension, implying that the customer's brand-related interactivity is limited to this dimension and does not exist *outside* of it. Consequently, these authors' remaining CE dimensions do not explicitly acknowledge, or reflect, CE's interactive nature, thus failing to stay true to its interactive conceptual core that runs as a red thread through the CE literature (e.g., Hollebeek et al., 2019; Kumar et al., 2019; Labrecque et al., 2020). We, therefore, recommend researchers adopt CE scales in which interactivity permeates the *full* ambit of the proposed engagement-based construct (e.g., Hollebeek et al., 2014; Schivinski et al., 2016), rather than only a subset thereof.

4.2.2 | Ensuring the theoretical rigor of the proposed CE conceptualization

At the heart of any rigorous conceptualization lies a clear concept definition (Voss et al., 2020). "Good definitions should (a) specify the construct's conceptual theme, (b) [be] unambiguous..., (c) [be] consistent with prior research, and... (d) [be] clearly distinguish[able] from related constructs" (MacKenzie, 2003, p. 325). When defining a concept, it is, thus, critical to theoretically establish its unique conceptual domain *vis-à-vis* other, potentially closely related constructs.

To secure a CE-based construct's theoretical rigor (Palmer et al., 2009), we, therefore, advise authors to refrain from using existing literature-based constructs, including customer experience, involvement, cocreation, or participation, to define CE, *unless* CE is modeled as a composite construct comprising a prespecified set of existing literature-based constructs (Hair & Sarstedt, 2019; Yu et al., 2021). For example, *relationship quality* is commonly viewed as an aggregate measure comprising customer satisfaction, trust, and commitment (Woo & Ennew, 2004), permitting researchers to aggregate these extant subconstructs, and their respective scales, to capture relationship quality. Importantly, to develop such composite measures, it is essential to ensure that the construct's proposed dimensionality adheres to the researcher's conceptual definition (Sarstedt et al., 2016).

Further inspection, however, revealed that none of the 28 articles views CE as a composite construct comprising a specified set of extant subconstructs (see Supporting Information: Web Appendix). Concerningly, several of them, *nevertheless*, deploy specific existing

constructs to define their proposed CE-based concept (e.g., Mirbagheri & Najmi, 2019; Obilo et al., 2021), thus compromising their ensuing scale's theoretical rigor (MacKenzie, 2003). For example, Ndhlovu and Maree (2022, p. 229) define CBE, a term originally coined by Hollebeek et al. (2014), as "a consumer's psychological state and behavioral manifestations that occur through the process of value cocreation involving resource integration and service exchanges in consumer-brand interactive service systems," thus making explicit reference to the concepts of *cocreation* and *resource integration* in their definition. Not only can this approach be problematic in terms of yielding the proposed concept's expected theoretical overlap with these literature-based constructs (e.g., Voss et al., 2020), but it may also lack consistency with prior CE-based insight, exposing a further threat to its robustness (MacKenzie, 2003).

First, though Ndhlovu and Maree's (2022) scale measures CBE, their conceptualization is inconsistent with Hollebeek et al.'s (2014) original CBE definition. Specifically, by adopting Hollebeek et al.'s (2014) concept designation (i.e., name), but operationalizing it differently, Ndhlovu and Maree's (2022) interpretation of CBE is unlikely to fit with prior literature, creating a theoretical chasm in this respect and tampering with the proposed construct's validity (MacKenzie, 2003; Voss et al., 2020). We, thus, offer the following recommendations to researchers:

- (i) *Those applying existing CE scales in their empirical studies:* To adopt a rigorous full construct conceptualization- and operationalization package, to which Ng et al. (2020, p. 236) refer as "a unified conceptualization and measurement of CE," or
- (ii) *Those developing a new CE-based construct and associated scales:* To create a unique, conceptually distinct construct bearing a unique construct designation or name (vs. adopting an existing concept to refer to a distinct theoretical entity; MacKenzie, 2003), or
- (iii) *Those refining existing CE scales:* To maintain the original construct name and retain its theoretical essence. However, if proposing major variations (e.g., to the construct's theoretical domain), we advise researchers to follow the recommendations under (ii) above, with a view to minimizing conceptual overlap, inconsistencies, and/or confounding across the original (vs. newly developed) CE scales (Greenland et al., 1999; MacKenzie, 2003).

Second, MacKenzie (2003, p. 325) posits: "One common mistake is to define a construct as the result of, and/or the cause of, some other construct." In this regard, Ndhlovu and Maree (2022, p. 229) define CE with explicit reference to the existing literature-based concepts of *resource integration* and *cocreation*, while Obilo et al.'s (2021) CE conceptualization incorporates the related literature-based concepts of the customer's brand-related *interest* and *commitment*. This approach not only meddles with CE's conceptual domain with that of these related constructs but also exposes a level of theoretical inconsistency *vis-à-vis* extant CE research, thus raising further doubts regarding its validity (MacKenzie, 2003). For example, contrary to Ndhlovu and Maree (2022), prior authors have identified *resource*

integration as a CE antecedent and/or *cocreation* as a CE consequence, respectively, *rather than* a part of CE (e.g., Hollebeek, 2019; Hollebeek et al., 2019; Jaakkola & Alexander, 2014; Nangpiire et al., 2022).

Overall, we advise researchers to adopt CE scales that abstain from using existing literature-based constructs to define CE (e.g., MacKenzie, 2003), thus safeguarding their proposed CE-based construct's unique (vs. overlapping) theoretical domain vis-à-vis that of others (e.g., Henseler et al., 2015). We also discourage researchers from (directly) applying other, or related (e.g., employee), engagement scales to measure CE (e.g., Dwivedi, 2015; Solem & Pedersen, 2016), as these are likely to display distinct (vs. fully overlapping) theoretical traits. Finally, we draw attention to Paruthi and Kaur's (2017) *online* (brand) *engagement* scale, which borrows selected CE dimensions (i.e., conscious attention, enthused participation, and social connection) from Vivek et al.'s (2014) CE scale, while taking *affection* from Hollebeek et al.'s (2014) CE instrument, revealing a *mix-and-match* approach that warrants caution. Specifically, because the respective original authors define CE differently and use unique theoretical lenses to inform their analyses (i.e., relationship marketing/S-D logic, respectively), Paruthi and Kaur's (2017) fusion of relevant subsets of their respective scales raises serious questions in terms of theoretical rigor. Overall, we recommend researchers adopt, or develop, CE-based constructs that do not:

1. Contain explicit reference to other literature-based concepts in their CE definition (MacKenzie, 2003).
2. Adopt prior authors' construct (name) to refer to a conceptually distinct theoretical entity, thus jeopardizing construct validity (Voss et al., 2020).
3. Directly apply another construct's (e.g., employee engagement) scale to capture CE (e.g., Solem & Pedersen, 2016).
4. Combine different authors' specific CE-based subscales to create a new CE measure (e.g., Paruthi & Kaur, 2017).

CE scales that appear to follow these recommendations include those proposed by Schivinski et al. (2016), Hollebeek et al. (2014), and Vivek et al. (2014), to name a few.

4.2.3 | Safeguarding the robustness of CE-based nomological networks

To validate their proposed scale, researchers typically explore CE vis-à-vis other constructs in a nomological network, as informed by their adopted theoretical perspective (e.g., Anderson & Gerbing, 1988; Bagozzi, 1984; Franke et al., 2021). For example, prior authors have assessed CE's theoretical association with such constructs as customer involvement, loyalty, cocreation, employee engagement, and firm performance (e.g., Dessart et al., 2016; Harrigan et al., 2018; Kumar & Pansari, 2016). These analyses not only help establish the strength and directionality of CE's conceptual associations but also serve to verify the proposed scale's convergent or predictive validity, thus offering an important scale validation exercise.

However, as noted, several authors include specific other literature-based concepts (e.g., customer involvement, cocreation, experience, or participation), in their proposed CE conceptualization (e.g., Ndhlovu & Maree, 2022; Obilo et al., 2021), thus contaminating their CE-based concept's theoretical domain "by the inclusion of things that are not part" of it (MacKenzie, 2003, p. 325). Consequently, researchers are unable to ascertain whether their results confirming hypothesized structural paths are real, or whether they result from statistical discrepancies. For example, Obilo et al.'s (2021) inclusion of *cocreation* as a CE dimension opposes authors, including Hollebeek et al. (2019) or Jaakkola and Alexander (2014), who view co-creation as a CE consequence (vs. facet). We, therefore, recommend that a proposed CE definition should focus on outlining the construct's unique theoretical ambit and hallmarks, with assessments of its nomological relationships to other, theoretically related constructs *following* its definitional development (vs. occurring simultaneously *with* it; e.g., Bagozzi, 1984; MacKenzie, 2003).

Scholars should, thus, ensure that the constructs modeled in their nomological networks have minimal theoretical overlap with CE. From an empirical perspective, such assessments should not only consider discriminant validity (Henseler et al., 2015), but also the measurement congruence of CE's dimensions with the other constructs, as called for in recent research (Franke et al., 2021). In doing so, we first advise researchers to be mindful of CE conceptualizations that contain explicit reference to other concepts, which—while related to CE—are *not* part of its conceptual domain, but *rather*, exist as CE antecedents or consequences, respectively (Bagozzi, 1984; Brodie et al., 2011). Second, to ensure the psychometric robustness of their nomological networks, we recommend scholars ensure that their CE-based construct does not exhibit substantial theoretical, or empirical, overlap with the other modeled constructs (Bagozzi & Baumgartner, 1994; Henseler et al., 2015).

Overall, future researchers' consideration of the outlined caveats will help safeguard the theoretical rigor, and thus the validity, of their empirical CE scale adoption, development, or refinement studies, thus moving the field of CE research forward. We next conclude by drawing key implications from our analyses.

5 | DISCUSSION, IMPLICATIONS, AND LIMITATIONS

5.1 | Theoretical implications

Given the plethora of available CE scales, researchers increasingly require guidance regarding *which* CE scale to adopt in their empirical studies or how to develop new, or refine existing, CE measures. We address this gap by undertaking a PRISMA-based SLR (e.g., Liberati et al., 2009) of 28 major scales in this area (see Table 1). By evaluating the major scales gauging CE with a brand or specific brand elements, our analyses offer guidance for researchers selecting, developing, or refining CE scales, yielding the following theoretical implications.

First, we recommend researchers explicitly recognize CE's pervasive, ubiquitous *interactive* nature in their empirical studies (vs. limiting, or reducing, its interactivity to a single dimension; e.g., Brodie et al., 2011). Scholars are, therefore, encouraged to adopt, or develop, CE scales that recognize the construct's interactivity *throughout* its proposed dimensionality (e.g., Hollebeek et al., 2014; Schivinski et al., 2016). Sample research questions that arise from this observation include:

1. May particular CE dimensions dominate CE-based interactivity (e.g., in specific contexts)?
2. How might specific CE dimensions work together, or against one another, in fostering customers' overall multidimensional engagement?
3. How does customers' extensive investment—positive or negative—in specific types of brand-related (e.g., social media) interactions, but their limited investment in others (e.g., attending brand-related events), combine to yield their overall CE (e.g., Bowden et al., 2017; De Oliveira Santini et al., 2020)?

Second, we advise researchers to ensure the theoretical rigor of their proposed, or adopted, CE conceptualization (e.g., Jarvis et al., 2003; MacKenzie, 2003). In other words, scholars should abstain from using existing literature-based concepts (e.g., customer experience, involvement, cocreation, or participation) to define CE, unless CE is modeled as a composite construct comprising a prespecified set of extant literature-based constructs (Hair & Sarstedt, 2019). This observation, likewise, raises important implications for research. Specifically, we advise researchers to thoroughly select, or develop, their CE scales for optimal theoretical rigor (Suddaby, 2010). That is, in addition to testing the instrument's reliability and validity (e.g., through confirmatory factor analysis or confirmatory composite analysis; Bagozzi et al., 1991; Hair et al., 2020; Schuberth et al., 2018), we *also* urge researchers to verify its theoretical underpinnings and hallmarks (MacKenzie, 2003), particularly in terms of the proposed concept's definitional clarity, which is crucial in reducing psychological measurement-based variability and promoting the study's replicability (Rigdon & Sarstedt, 2022; Rigdon et al., 2020).

Thus, to optimize the robustness of future CE research, we urge scholars adopting existing CE scales and those undertaking CE scale development or refinement work to carefully define their CE-based concept by highlighting its unique traits (vs. incorporating other literature-based concepts in CE's theoretical domain; MacKenzie et al., 2011). Only after completing this step should scholars explore CE within its nomological network (i.e., by assessing its specific antecedents and/or consequences; MacInnis, 2011), as discussed further below. Sample questions arising from these observations include:

1. What hallmarks should most pertinently feature in CE's conceptualization, and how do these affect CE measurement?

2. Are CE-based definitions stable, or might they change over time (e.g., Bergkvist & Eisend, 2022)?
3. How do specific CE measures perform in terms of their respective nomological validity (Sarstedt et al., 2022)?

Third, we recommend scholars safeguard the theoretical rigor of their CE-based nomological networks, including by minimizing the theoretical overlap between CE and its depicted antecedents and/or consequences (Henseler et al., 2015). To do so, thorough theorizing is, again, required (MacKenzie, 2003; Weick, 1995), including acquiring an in-depth understanding of CE and its adopted theoretical perspective, thus facilitating the development of theoretically rigorous, psychometrically robust frameworks (Bagozzi, 1984). Key research questions that emerge from this observation include:

1. What areas of theoretical overlap (vs. departure) exist for CE, as viewed from different theoretical perspectives, and how does the adopted perspective impact CE scale application, development, or refinement studies?
2. What theoretical perspectives can be adopted to derive further novel CE-based insight, and how may this affect future CE scale application, development, or refinement research?

5.2 | Managerial implications

This study also raises significant implications for marketing practitioners. First, by reviewing major CE scales, the reported analyses help marketers to better understand the CE concept and its measurement properties, in turn facilitating their selection of (a) suitable CE scale(s) in their companies. We recommend managers to periodically record, and monitor, their customers' engagement to uncover its evolving dynamics over time (Viswanathan et al., 2017).

Second and relatedly, by recording the development of their customers' engagement over time using longitudinal techniques, managers will be able to glean enhanced insight into ways to further boost, or optimize, their engagement (e.g., by offering more customized, or personalized, offerings, by pre-empting (vs. merely responding to) their buyers' needs, or by allowing customers to contribute to firm-based new product development processes (e.g., Van Doorn et al., 2010; Venkatesan, 2017). These activities matter, as buyers displaying elevated long-term brand engagement have been shown to spend more with the firm, boost its competitive advantage, and raise its profitability (Brodie et al., 2011; Kumar & Pansari, 2016).

5.3 | Limitations and further research

Despite its contribution, this study is also subject to limitations that offer additional research avenues. First, while we used the Scopus database to locate our list of eligible CE scale development articles, future

researchers may wish to adopt other databases, such as the Web of Science or Google Scholar, to conduct future CE scale-based, or broader CE-based, systematic reviews (e.g., Alves et al., 2016; Rosado-Pinto & Loureiro, 2020). They may, likewise, wish to develop empirically testable CE scale-based propositions, thus extending the work of authors, including Hollebeek et al. (2019) and Brodie et al. (2011).

Second, scholars may not only include journal articles, but also other scholarly works in their analyses, including books, book chapters, or conference papers (Liberati et al., 2009). Likewise, while our analyses were limited to the exploration of CE with a brand or specific brand elements, future researchers may wish to expand their range of studied engagement objects (e.g., CE with particular product categories, business-to-consumer vs. business-to-business-based CE, or service failure- or social media-based CE; e.g., Sands et al., 2022).

Third and relatedly, while we examined our eligible CE scales, future scholars may choose to broaden their analyses to include scales gauging other (e.g., brand/firm-related) stakeholders' engagement, including that of (frontline) employees, managers, and suppliers (e.g., Bissola & Imperatori, 2016). These analyses may—for instance—focus on particular stakeholders' interactions, or potential tensions, and their respective impact on CE (Clark et al., 2020; Hollebeek, Kumar, et al., 2022). Finally, scholars could examine potential differences across reflective (e.g., Harrigan et al., 2018) and formative (e.g., Romero, 2018) CE measures (Sarstedt et al., 2016).

Overall, this article reviewed major CE scales and their respective properties, from which we identified potential pitfalls relating to the adoption of particular scales. Addressing these issues, we offered a set of recommendations toward their resolution, thus moving the thriving sub-field of CE scale application, development, and refinement research forward.

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CONFLICT OF INTEREST STATEMENT

The authors declare no conflict of interest.

DATA AVAILABILITY STATEMENT

The data that support the findings of this study are available from the corresponding author upon reasonable request.

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SUPPORTING INFORMATION

Additional supporting information can be found online in the Supporting Information section at the end of this article.

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