

Editorial: *Developing “Customer Engagement” Construct*

Marketing is a communication (dependent on understanding customer engagement lifecycle) strategy. Customer engagement is becoming increasingly important within the evolution of a continuous relationship built and driven with an open perspective from brands and customers who become active contributors to the success and growth of the brand itself. But engaging with customers involves first listening, then to engage, and engaging each individual customer, knowing him, understanding him, and examining him across offline and online channels. (Merritt, 2010)

Four years ago, the valuable Journal of Marketing Theory and Practice confirmed that “Customer Engagement” (CE) – a component of “Relationship Marketing” (RM) – is a construct not yet fully developed in marketing. (Vivek , Beatty, & Morgan, 2012) The three distinguished authors argued that CE (a research priority of the Marketing Science Institute, 2006-2008, and 2010-2012) is *“applicable to both offensive and defensive marketing strategies, aimed at attracting, building, maintaining, and enhancing relationships with potential and existing customers.”* After explaining the existing conceptualizations of engagement and CE, the authors, presented the managerial perspective of CE (on the basis of in-depth interviews with a series of executives), the customer-driven perspective of CE (a second exploratory study aimed at consumers), the conceptual framework of CE, by defining (as *the intensity of an individual’s participation in and connection with an organization’s offerings or organizational activities, which either the customer or the organization initiates*) and delimiting the nature of CE (which may be manifested cognitively, affectively, behaviorally, or socially), then they discussed the relationship of CE with other important marketing constructs and so on. Their valuable research focused on CE *from the customers’ perspective in order to give organizations a better understanding of what engages customers*, and suggested the need to align researchers’ perception of the scope of engagement not only with existing customers but also with noncustomers and potential customers. They also did not forget to highlight that *smart firms recognize that customers expect instantaneous responses to their inquiries in today’s instantaneous world.*

More recently, Ernan Roman, President of Ernan Roman Direct Marketing (inducted into the Marketing Hall of Fame based on the dramatic results companies achieved with the three Customer Experience methodologies he created: Voice of Customer Relationship Research, Integrated Direct Marketing, and Opt-in Marketing), showed how essential (and overlooked) is the post-purchase engagement, which drives brand loyalty and subsequent sales by reinforcing confidence in buying decisions. A customer wants to be acknowledged as a person and not just a transaction, and then will more than reciprocate with loyalty and purchases. (Roman, 2016)

On the other hand, also recently published research (examining the effect of service context on CE, presenting propensity to engage as an attitudinal antecedent of customer loyalty behaviors) results in Services Marketing Quarterly revealed that: propensity to engage and

customer behaviors vary significantly among the contexts studied; there is a difference between the high involvement service (healthcare), and the low involvement service (retailing), in both contexts the majority of loyalty behaviors being correlated with customers' propensity to engage. (Fernandes, and Esteves, 2016)

In what concerns the above mentioned case of healthcare with high involvement service (where customers exhibit higher propensity to engage and show more favorable behaviors), it is worth mentioning that Saturday, June 4, 2016, at the Palace of Parliament, Nicolae Balcescu Hall, the "Communication between Doctor and Patient" Session of the Fourth Edition ("Interdisciplinary Perspectives") of Carol Davila University of Medicine and Pharmacy Congress, Bucharest, took place. On this special occasion we approached the challenging topic "Creating the ideal patient experience", (holisticmarketingmanagement.ro) among others underlining the importance of better understanding the virtuous cycle of patient and physician engagement, (Lee, Miller, Daniels, Paine, Gresh, Betz) showing that stronger relationships between patients and healthcare providers have enhanced the engagement and satisfaction of both groups.

Theodor Valentin Purcărea

Editor – in – Chief

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*** <http://holisticmarketingmanagement.ro/creating-superior-patient-experience-a-balance-of-art-and-science/>