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Transforming B2B customers into Brand advocates:

An empirical study of customer engagement in a contemporary marketing context

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Declaration

Affidavit

I,   Lara Klinkenberg

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hereby declare,

1. that I have independently written this assignment. I have neither made use of any other sources, tools and resources as those given nor have I used any other unauthorised resources,

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3. that, in so far applicable and required, I have informed my employer or project providing organization about the topic, title, form and content of my paper and have received consent and permission from the employer and/or project providing organization for it.

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Abbreviations and Definitions

1. Brand advocates – Customers that are passionate about a focal brand and act as spokesperson of a business.

2. Behavioral customer engagement (BCE) – BCE refers to the behavioral aspect of the customer engagement construct and focuses on the totality of physical, observable, and quantitatively measurable actions that a customer performs throughout the participation and interaction within the business-customer relationship. From a marketing perspective, the latter is restricted to behavioral engagement with a company's brand-related activities.

4. Customer engagement (CE) – A psychological state of mind based on cognitive and emotional experiences as well as a related set of behavioral manifestations such as the totality of interactions with an organization or brand, all of which characterize the essence of a holistic customer relationship.

5. Customer engagement marketing (CEM) – A marketing approach used by firms to engage their customers continuously over time at each stage of the customer lifecycle by creating meaningful and relevant opportunities for customer interactions through an integrated set inbound marketing means.

6. Inbound marketing – The promotion of a company and their offerings based on a pull-communication strategy that drives prospect to a business instead of reaching out to an audience through advertising formats. It is based on content marketing, SEO and social media.

7. Psychological customer engagement (PCE) – PCE is defined as the psychological aspect of the customer engagement construct and covers both the emotional and cognitive dimensions. PCE describes the overall state of mind of a customer in the form of intangible, psychological brand perceptions towards a brand (as engagement object), which are shaped throughout the customer-firm relationship.

1. Introduction

The introduction of this master thesis provides a well-found outline on the motivation and context of this thesis. It further describes the research problem, a related set of research questions and objectives as well as the overall structure.

1.1 Background

Over the last decades, Marketing as a function and overall organizational endeavor has fundamentally evolved in response to various external factors and influences in today's competitive business environment. Considerable changes in customer behavior, new technological advancements as well as the ongoing evolution of globalization and digital transformation are just a few areas which have contributed to a lasting paradigm shift. In this context, the focus of marketing operations transcended beyond a mere transactional purpose to a robust relationship-building approach. The latter is less about selling but emotionally connecting with customers as firms seek to develop long-term relationships to create profitable loyalty. Hence, both B2C and B2B organizations are concerned with increasingly providing personalized experiences with the help of tailored marketing means. These are based on understanding and solving unique customer challenges to engage customers in meaningful conversations throughout their lifetime. Recent studies particularly highlight the benefits of the initially old but yet undervalued construct of Customer Engagement (CE) and its positive contribution to business outcomes (Pansari & Kumar, 2017; Hollebeek, 2011; Reinartz & Kumar, 2002). Thereby, it's worthwhile recalling that the cost of retaining existing customers is significantly lower than the cost of acquiring new customers (Reichheld & Sasser, 1990). Consequently, it is no surprise that customer engagement becomes even more paramount in today's highly competitive business landscape in which companies struggle with customer churn and decreasing loyalty (Grönroos, 2007, Pansari & Kumar, 2017).

1.2 Motivation and relevance

The motivation of this master thesis and respective empirical study is inspired by the recent academic, and managerial discussion of the old concept of customer engagement (CE) put into a new marketing context. As such, CE is defined as "the level of an individual customer's motivational, brand-related and context-

dependent state of mind characterized by specific levels of cognitive, emotional and behavioral activity in direct brand interactions" (Hollebeck, 2011). Yet, there are a variety of definitions and discussions around the concept of CE in various fields of study. Furthermore, recent conceptualizations have thoroughly described the multidimensional nature of the CE construct as well as a set of related antecedents and consequences (Hollebeck 2011, Pansari & Kumar, 2017; Bowden, 2009). In general terms, academicians especially acknowledge that the level of customer engagement may be a superior predictor of loyalty outcomes where conventional marketing constructs such as customer satisfaction and perceived quality provide limitations. Yet, findings in contemporary marketing literature remain largely conceptual to-date, and further investigations are needed to determine and quantify the potential contribution of CE to business outcomes (Bowden 2009, Hollebeck 2011, Pansari & Kumar, 2017).

One of the most recent conceptualizations of the CE construct goes back to Pansari & Kumar (2017). Their proposed framework serves to explain the process, antecedents, moderators, and consequences of customer engagement and covers a set of implications for both B2C and B2B organizations across industries. A significant contribution of their study lies in the exploration of the theory of engagement and how it applies to a business context. Pansari's & Kumar's (2017) conceptual framework is based on 13 distinct theoretical assumptions, all of which are based on the notion that customer engagement unfolds within a relationship based on commitment and trust. Furthermore, the hypothesis was formulated that CE provides indirect and direct value contributions (i.e., in terms of satisfaction and emotion, business performance) within a reciprocal customer-firm relationship (Pansari & Kumar, 2017). From a marketing perspective, Pansari & Kumar (2017, p. 306) additionally propose that "the higher the customer's engagement (direct and indirect contribution), the higher will be his/her probability to (a) opt in to the firm's marketing program, (b) provide the firm access to his/her personal information, and (c) enable the firm to provide relevant marketing communication." In this respect, they further suggest a positive association between CE and marketing outcomes.

Based on that assumption, the research conducted in the present thesis aims to go one step further. As such, it seeks to explore the association and relationship between behavioral engagement driven by marketing/brand-related activities of a firm and a customer's psychological engagement in the form of emotional and cognitive brand perceptions. Thus, it was hypothesized that an 'engaged' customer is more likely to display a high degree of direct brand-related interaction (behavioral engagement) with a firm's digital marketing resources (such as website, blog, downloadable content, email, and social media) and vice versa. The guiding research proposition is further embedded in a conceptual model. It proposes the existence of a reciprocal and linear relationship between online brand interaction (referred to as behavioral engagement) and overall emotional and cognitive brand perceptions (referred to as psychological engagement). In this respect, the author aims to validate that a high degree of behavioral engagement is not only associated with but related to higher levels of psychological engagement, which may ultimately serve as an indicator of the quality of the customer-firm relationship. Correspondingly, the preliminary empirical research laid down in this thesis points towards a similar business outcome related direction as discussed in previous studies. These further imply that higher customer engagement can provide tangible (higher profits, revenue, or market share) and intangible (trust, commitment and involvement) benefits to the organization (Pansari & Kumar, 2017).

Generally, the motivation behind this study is primarily driven by both an academic and business interest in the subject matter of CE. As the majority of studies have mainly focused on describing the construct and conceptually discussing its multidimensional nature, little is known about the potential applicability in business and specifically marketing context. Additionally, as previously noted, there are limited empirical insights on how online brand interactions (initiated through inbound marketing means) relate to customer engagement and thus may shape loyalty outcomes in a B2B environment. The latter appears to be a relevant scope to study the subject of customer engagement and generate empirical insights on the contribution of marketing activities while assessing the relationship between the behavioral and psychological dimension of CE. Especially in the context of contemporary marketing literature and practice which has shifted from a conventional outbound

focus to an inbound methodology, it can be noted that substantial research and managerial practice of inbound marketing is primarily directed at new customer acquisition. However, little is documented on the usage and adoption of inbound marketing tactics to increase customer engagement and sustainably shape brand perceptions, which may contribute to customer loyalty. Consequently, there is a considerable lack of awareness in the marketing domain paired with limited availability of practical recommendations, especially for B2B firms to assess, map, and accordingly drive customer engagement among their customer base. Respective empirical insights on the measurable linkage between the behavioral and psychological dimensions of CE may ultimately trigger future research into the subject matter. Lastly, organizations may be inspired further to invest in customer engagement marketing to transform their B2B customers into brand advocates.

1.3 Context

This thesis was written in the scope of a research project conducted at the author's employer, which is referred to as the case company. The research methodology and the related design of the empirical study were adapted accordingly to match the situational challenges that the case company faces concerning their current marketing operations and customer relationship management initiatives. The following section thus provides additional insights on the research context by giving a brief introduction to the case company and the related problem statement.

InVision Group from now on referred to as the case company is a market-listed software company with its headquarters in Dusseldorf, Germany. InVision was founded in 1995 and since then has focused its operations on providing specialized software for call centers. With more than 100 employees worldwide and offices in Europe and Northern America, the company is a well-established medium-sized player in the cloud-based contact center segment of the global customer service sector. The latter represents a thriving industry projected to triple in size in the next few years by reaching around US$20.9 billion in 2022 (Singh, 2018). Despite considerable growth, the industry is increasingly affected by disruptive forces such as advancements in customer service technologies and channels, regulatory challenges as well as intensified competitive pressure on a

global scale (Dimension Data, 2015). Operating in this fast-paced environment, InVision offers software as a service (SaaS) products in the workforce management (WFM) category for a wide range of clients across industries and geographies (InVision Group, 2019).

Thereby, the company pioneered in providing cloud-based WFM software to support its customers in optimizing staffing and increasing productivity of employees at higher efficiency and lower cost. By 1999, InVision had already established subsidiaries in the UK, France, Italy, Spain, Switzerland, Austria, the Netherlands, Sweden, South Africa, and the United States and became an international provider of workforce management and e-learning solutions for the contact center industry. Since 2011/2012, InVision restructured its business model to cloud computing and agile development, offering subscription-based software packages at a competitive pay per use pricing model. Today, the company strives to continuously optimize its internal processes while focusing on R&D initiatives as well as market growth in three key regions US & CA, UK & IE, and DACH to establish themselves as a well-known and leading global player in their market segment. In the previous financial year, InVision reported a total annual turnover of around 13 Million Euros, which is mainly due to recurring subscription revenues from its product brand 'injixo' (InVision Group, 2018). injixo is a cloud-based workforce management suite that comes in two product flavors, such as a basic standardized WFM solution for small to medium-sized call centers and an enterprise offering for large businesses. The software covers a variety of features for forecasting, scheduling, intraday management, and reporting to facilitate workforce planning, optimize service delivery and scale call center operations (InVision Group, 2019).

To date, injixo is used by more than 500 contact centers worldwide and counts around 30k users among InVision's customer base. However, annual growth (revenue and user growth) has slowed down in recent years due to a considerable customer retention problem. In fact, the firm internally reported a 20% churn rate among its global customer base. Although the resulting drop in monthly recurring revenue (MRR) was eventually mitigated by new customer acquisition and existing revenue streams from long-term customer contracts, the company struggled to achieve its corporate growth strategy. In response, InVision

increased the focus on sustainable customer relationship management as well as so-called customer nurturing initiatives to tackle the churn problem and improve customer retention. Thereby, the company primarily changed its marketing and sales approach, which previously involved short-term, acquisition-driven tactics. Instead, operations became more customer-centric and long-term oriented based on a set of new business objectives directed at retaining and delighting existing customers sustainably (Internal observation, 2019).

In this context, marketing operations at the company also shifted from transaction-based initiatives to engagement strategies aimed at nurturing customers throughout their lifetime. Thereby, InVision continuously leverages a set of tailored inbound marketing means such as content, email, and social media marketing. Eventually, the new marketing approach turned out to be successful while contributing to a reduction in overall customer attrition. Additionally, the firm managed to strengthen the relationship with existing customers through reinforcing positive brand perceptions of trust, reliability, and commitment to providing superior customer value (Internal observation, 2019). On account of recent KPI improvements, management has developed an additional interest in exploring the concept of customer engagement marketing in more detail. Given the relevance of the subject as denoted in contemporary marketing literature, the author decided to explore the topic empirically at the example of InVision as the case company.

1.4 Research problem

Although the subject of customer engagement is widely discussed in contemporary literature, research appears to be limited to the descriptive and conceptual nature of the construct itself. In fact, there is a considerable lack of empirical evidence as well as few practical insights and recommendations on how businesses can adapt and integrate related practices in their business operations to effectively and efficiently drive positive contributions on business outcomes such as customer retention, loyalty, and profitable customer action. Furthermore, limited insights on the subject of customer engagement in the B2B sector are given, particularly in terms of how B2B customers are engaged with brands these days. In the marketing context, few studies examine the qualitative and quantitative impact of strategies and tactics on customer engagement and loyalty,

especially in the B2B sector. In this context, inbound marketing is often discussed in the scope of customer acquisition and demand generation. Still, literature falls short in accounting for its use in driving customer engagement and shaping positive brand perceptions, which may affect the formation of loyalty. Consequently, limited practical recommendations on how to measure, drive, and project customer engagement levels in a B2B setting exacerbate a sound and targeted implementation of holistic engagement marketing strategies.

In consideration of the motivation, context, and research problem addressed, the present thesis and related empirical study explore the concept of customer engagement in a practical setting. The goal is to investigate the hypothesized relationship between the behavioral and psychological dimensions of the CE construct at the example of a customer sample at the case company. In this context, the behavioral manifestation of customer engagement (from now on referred to as BCE) covers the totality of observable online brand interactions, whereas the psychological disposition (from now on referred to as PCE) quantifies the level of emotional and rational brand perceptions. Thus, the author developed a conceptual model based on a set of guiding research propositions that imply positive correlations as well as a certain degree of causality between the respective CE dimensions. Finally, preliminary findings may demonstrate the predictive power of brand-related online interactions (i.e., the behavioral manifestation of CE) for assessing the quality of the customer-firm relationship (i.e., the psychological dimension of CE).

Concerning the case company, the author primarily seeks to generate valuable insights and recommendations for future operations by studying how current marketing activities and related engagement tactics drive CE behavior and ultimately influence the formation of positive brand perceptions (i.e., emotional attachment and rational loyalty). On the one hand, the study laid down in this thesis is intended to benefit customer relationship and retention initiatives at the case company by providing additional insights into the mechanics such as measurement and interpretation of CE findings. On the other hand, preliminary research results can provide a scientific and empirical contribution to contemporary literature on the value, measures, and tactics to predict and drive customer engagement in a practical setting. Therefore, the primary beneficiaries

of this study are the case company as well as marketing academicians and practitioners who seek to learn about the results, replicate respective findings and apply practical recommendations provided in the CE Marketing framework that is developed in the conclusion section of this thesis.

1.5 Structure, research questions, and objectives

This thesis can be structured into five main parts. The first part covers a substantial literature review on the subject of customer engagement and its relevance and application in an academic and business context. It further describes the origin of engagement, recent definitions, and classifications of the construct as well its dimensions, antecedents, and consequences, which are discussed in current conceptualizations and theoretical models.

The second part serves to establish the link between the theoretical customer engagement construct and contemporary marketing practice. First, it aims to outline the most common marketing philosophy these days - inbound marketing. As such, the origin, underlying methodology as well as primary objectives, strategies, and tactics are described in detail to establish a baseline for subsequent chapters. Second, the arising phenomenon of customer engagement marketing (CEM) is introduced, which closes the loop between the theoretical construct of customer engagement and current inbound marketing practice. The chapter explains the fundamentals and essential concepts behind the subject. Finally, the author elaborates on the role of inbound marketing tactics (i.e., content, email, and social media marketing), which provide various touchpoints to drive brand interactions and encourage customer engagement in brand-related conversations.

After an extensive literature review, the subsequent part of this thesis focuses on the research methodology and conceptual model. Moreover, the data collection process and timeline are described, while preliminary findings in relation to a set of predefined research assumptions are presented in a structured manner. Furthermore, insights into the preparation and modeling of primary data using descriptive and inferential statistics are provided. Finally, the results are discussed in a structured manner and adequately visualized with the help of charts, tables, and diagrams. The conclusion part ultimately serves to summarize

the most relevant findings from the previous analyses. Additionally, a preliminary Customer Engagement Marketing (CEM) Framework is proposed together with a set of practical recommendations that can be applied by both the case company and other firms who seek to adopt an initial engagement marketing approach. Ultimately, a collection of theoretical and managerial implications is provided with a description of the study limitations and proposals for future research. Table 1 shows a structured overview comprising the main research questions and related research objectives that are addressed in each chapter.

TABLE 1: RESEARCH QUESTIONS AND OBJECTIVES

	Research Questions	Research Objectives	Chapters
1	What is customer engagement and why is it important as defined in both academic literature and management practice?	Explore the origin, role and relevance of customer engagement, its dimensions, antecedents and consequences as well as the relation to marketing constructs and the impact on business outcomes.	2.1 2.1.1 2.1.2 2.1.3 2.1.4 2.1.5
2	What is the role and contribution of contemporary marketing practice in the context of customer engagement?	Establish a link between marketing as a potential driver for enhanced behaviour-based customer engagement (BCE) and its relation to perception-based customer engagement (PCE) as an outcome.	2.2 2.2.1 2.2.2 2.2.3
3	How does the behavioural manifestation of customer engagement (BCE) in terms of online brand-related interaction relate to psychological customer engagement (PCE)?	Elaboration and testing of a set of pre-defined research propositions which are consolidated in the conceptual model (introduced in chapter 3 - research methodology and conceptual model).	4 4.1 4.2 4.3
4	What are the main recommendations for the case company (and other B2B firms) seeking to drive customer engagement?	Provide a set of strategic and practical recommendations for B2B marketers aiming to maintain and maximize customer engagement (CE) with the help of targeted inbound marketing tactics.	5 5.1 5.2 5.3 5.4

2. Literature Review

Given the overall background of this thesis outlined in the Introduction, this chapter provides a thorough theory baseline on the subject of customer engagement in a contemporary marketing context.

2.1 Customer engagement

This section focuses on the first research question and discusses the topic of customer engagement (CE) and why is it essential as defined in both academic literature and management practice. It further aims to describe and deconstruct the subject while also elaborating on the CE concept in a contemporary marketing context. The chapter is structured into five major sections. It starts with an

introduction and deep dive into the origin of engagement by considering its very foundations rooted in the interdependence theory proposed by Thibaut and Kelly (1959), the commitment trust theory introduced by Morgan and Hunt (1994) as well as the engagement theory developed and discussed by Pansari and Kumar (2017). The next section gives an overview of the several definitions and classifications of the engagement construct gathered from recent literature. Based on that, the next part serves to describe and clarify the academic and business relevance of customer engagement by investigating the dimensions, antecedents and consequences, related marketing constructs as well as conceptual models, key findings, limitations, and business practices.

2.1.1 Origin of engagement

The role, dealings, and management of customers have dramatically evolved over the last few centuries in response to structural, strategic, and operational changes in a firm's macro and microenvironment. Until the very start of the 1990s, particularly in the marketing domain, business conduct was mainly focused on transactional endeavors. The goal was primarily based on measuring the relation and impact of purchase actions on a firm's profitability in terms of monetary and customer value, share-of-wallet as well as frequency and recency of purchase actions (Pansari & Kumar, 2017). However, transaction-based business goals and marketing operations have slowly but steadily shifted towards a more relationship-oriented approach in the early 2000s. The latter was focused on establishing, developing, and sustaining long-term customer relationships to drive customer satisfaction and loyalty through an optimized product and service experience (Morgan & Hunt, 1994; Berry, 1995). This phenomenon has not only shaped the emergence of relationship marketing as a business priority but also led to substantial research, literature, and discussions among academicians, scholars, and marketing practitioners seeking to understand customer relationships and lifetime value (Kumar, 2008). Likewise, related research triggered actionable insights from studying the link between customer satisfaction, loyalty, and business profitability (Homburg & Geirging, 2001; Shankar, Smith & Rangaswamy, 2003). In response to that, the idea of engagement and the linkage to profitable loyalty has started to take shape. Although today's crowded, increasingly competitive and oversaturated market place brought up an increasingly demanding customer, the notion was formed

that a different, more sustainable approach that goes beyond satisfying customers is required these days. In this context, Pansari & Kumar (2017, p. 294) argue that "profitable loyalty and satisfaction need to be evolved to a higher level, a level of desired differentiation and sustainable competitive advantage." In response, organizations shifted their goals from merely building customer relationships to the means of understanding, building, and increasing customer engagement in all possible ways. The latter triggered the rise of the term customer engagement and fundamentally shaped its adoption and usage in contemporary marketing literature and business practice. Figure 1 shows the evolution of customer engagement, according to Pansari and Kumar (2017), which is based on the engagement theory as the very foundation.

FIGURE 1: THE EVOLUTION OF CUSTOMER ENGAGEMENT
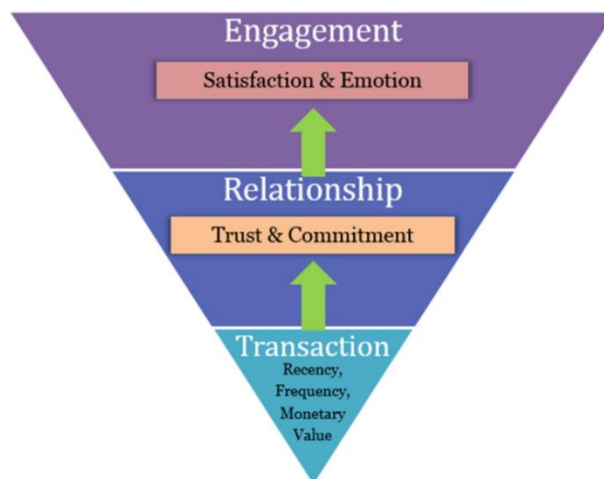
(Pansari & Kumar 2017, p.295)

In their conceptualization depicting the evolution of engagement, Pansari & Kumar (2017) propose that customer management has mainly evolved from a transaction-based to a relationship-oriented perspective focused on trust and commitment as the cornerstones. Further, they suggest that the latter has transcended by forming a deeper connection between customer and firm. Thus, customer engagement is viewed as the next logical step after a relationship has been established. The tenets of relationship marketing have subsumed in the engagement theory that is built on satisfaction and emotion. Thereby, trust and commitment create the very foundation on which a healthy and positive relationship is formed. The commitment trust theory (Morgan & Hunt, 1994) and

the interdependence theory (Thibaut & Kelly, 1959) further relate to the engagement construct proposed by Pansari & Kumar (2017).

The commitment trust theory introduced by Morgan & Hunt in 1994 states that the main drivers of establishing long-term relationships are commitment and trust, which are essential components that firms need to develop. In the scope of relationship marketing, building sustainable customer relationships is a core objective that firms seek (Berry & Parasuraman, 1991) to eventually promote increased efficiency, effectiveness, and productivity in a cooperative setting (Morgan & Hunt, 1994). In recent literature, various definitions are provided to explain commitment and trust in multiple contexts (Morgan & Hunt, 1994; Moorman et al., 1992; Moorman et al., 1993). Whereas trust has been defined as a construct that builds on the willingness and confidence of one party to rely on another party (Moorman, Deshpande & Zaltman, 1993), commitment goes one step further. As such, it is based on an enduring desire to keep and maintain a relationship that is considered to be valuable (Moorman, Zaltman & Deshpande, 1992). The tenets of trust and commitment are further described as intrinsic characteristics that should form on a mutual basis to ensure a reciprocally successful relationship. As business-customer relations have progressed in recent years due to technological advancements, evolving customer needs, and changes regarding a firm's capabilities, building reciprocal and value-oriented customer relationships have become a core priority of both B2C and B2B companies. With the shift from transactional endeavors towards a deeper involvement and emotional bonding with a brand, firms increasingly pay attention nowadays to the meaning and importance of building trust to sustain customer commitment and loyalty (Morgan & Hunt, 1994).

The interdependence theory developed by Thibaut and Kelly (1995) further elaborates on the characteristics and quality of such relationships that firms seek to build with their customers. Besides, it considers the maximum output that both parties contribute to the relationship (Kumar, 2013). Thereby, the interdependence theory emphasizes the interaction between the parties, which presents the essence of a close relationship. Interaction is further defined as mutual contributions such as communication, as well as tangible and intangible products that parties create for each other throughout the relationship (Thibaut &

Kelly, 1995). In the marketplace, a firm, for example, provides products and services that customers acquire in return for a monetary contribution to the firm. Additionally, they may as well give feedback to the company for product development and improvement that the business can leverage for optimizing its customer experience only to offer even better products and services - describing a continuous improvement loop. Thibaut and Kelly (1959) further suggest that the level of satisfaction and emotional connectedness that the customer obtains from the relationship are significant drivers for its quality.

In their engagement theory, Pansari and Kumar (2017) incorporate the tenets of both the trust and commitment theory and the interdependence theory and suggest that high quality and mutually satisfying relationship characterized by trust and commitment as well as interaction and a sense of emotional bonding translates into reciprocal engagement between customer and firm. They further explain the engagement construct by referring to an engaged partnership where both partners display an active interest in the well-being of one another while interacting with each other frequently to build emotional connectedness and commitment (Pansari & Kumar, 2017). Hence, the engagement theory relies on the artifacts of the relationship concept and states that a satisfying relationship that is also shaped by an emotional attachment progresses to a level of engagement, which can be a powerful driver for customer loyalty. Pansari & Kumar (2017) argue that nowadays, companies have shifted their business focus from merely selling to emotionally connecting with their customers to achieve both short-term revenue and a lifetime of profitable loyalty. This approach should further translate into a more sustainable approach to doing business. In practical terms, companies seek to deliver superior customer experiences by using personalized interactions, adopting tactics to delight customers while spending more time and effort to build and develop customer intelligence. They do this by understanding their unique challenges and needs to adjust communication, offerings, and services accordingly. In this respect, firms intend to go beyond satisfying their customers by building long-lasting relationships that turn clients into evangelists and spokespersons of the business (Pansari & Kumar, 2017).

2.1.2 Definitions and classification

The term engagement has been widely studied in various contexts and with different meanings. In contemporary management literature, engagement is viewed as an organizational activity or endeavor, especially with a firm's internal stakeholders. From a marketing perspective, engagement is further understood as an activity or contribution of the customer toward the firm which is referred to as customer engagement (CE) (Kumar et al., 2010; Brodie, Hollebeek, Jurić & Ilić, 2011; Vivek, Beatty & Morgan, 2012). In recent years, CE has been discussed as an outcome measure similar to other customer-centric instruments such as customer satisfaction, loyalty, trust, commitment, involvement as well as customer brand value in the attempt to assess and quantify the effectiveness of a company's marketing activities. Furthermore, Schaufeli, Martinez, Pinto, Salanova, & Bakker (2002) consider customer engagement as a dynamic variable that can vary with different engagement levels or intensities, thus being subject to changes over time, yet relatively persistent and pervasive.

In the last 15 years, customer engagement has found increasing popularity among marketing academicians who have studied the topic from several perspectives such as relationship marketing (Bowden, 2009), consumer/customer psychology (Vivek et al., 2012; Kumar, 2013) as well as services marketing (Brodie et. al., 2011). Thereby, extensive discussions primarily revolve around related aspects such as customer behavior, attitudes, and metrics to measure CE. Appendix 1 provides a comprehensive overview of contemporary literature around customer engagement, including definitions, scope, and type of study (empirical, conceptual).

Given the various conceptualizations of customer engagement in contemporary management and marketing literature, it can be noted that CE is a multidimensional construct (Pansari & Kumar, 2017). As one of today's key research subjects, there are various definitions of CE following both conceptual and empirical studies that discuss the topic from several perspectives, applicable to both a B2C and B2B environment and elaborating on the CE framework, its dimensions, related constructs, antecedents, and consequences.

Concerning the definitions provided in table 2, customer engagement can be described in general terms as a contextual process that combines a set of behavioral, cognitive, and emotional drivers. These can be expressed through the level or degree of direct and indirect interaction with a brand or organization that takes place in the scope of a focal business-customer relationship. The subject of CE can further be deconstructed into three main areas covering an attitude and behavior-based conceptualization of CE (Greve, 2014).

(1) A psychological process of the customer that leads to the formation of loyalty. (Adapted from Bowden, 2019)

(2) A customer's behavioral manifestation towards a brand or a firm, beyond purchase, resulting from motivation drivers. (Adapted from Van Doorn et al., 2010)

(3) a psychological state that is characterized by a degree of vigor, dedication, absorption, and interaction. (Adapted from Patterson et al. 2006)

A slightly different conceptualization of customer engagement is provided by Kumar et al. (2010) who clusters CE into a set of distinct behaviors which are based on intrinsic and extrinsic motivations:

(a) Customer purchasing behavior: repeat purchases, additional purchases through cross-selling and up-selling, which corresponds with the quantitative measure of customer lifetime value (based on extrinsic and intrinsic motivations).

(b) Customer referral behavior: new customer acquisition through incentivized referral programs initiated by the firm, which corresponds with customer referral value (based on extrinsic motivations).

(c) Customer influencer behavior: social influence, recommendation behavior, and word-of-mouth demonstrated by the customer towards other acquired customers and prospects (based on intrinsic motivations).

(d) Customer knowledge behavior: feedback for product development and improvements provided by the customer that contribute to knowledge development and innovation for the firm and corresponds to customer knowledge value (based on extrinsic and intrinsic motivations).

Whereas Kumar et al. (2010) mainly focuses on specific behaviors that drive the level of CE by attaching quantitative measurements (e.g., Customer Lifetime Value, Referral value etc.) to each of them, Hollebeek (2011a) discusses the concept of 'customer brand engagement' in a brand-related and context-dependent scope focusing on cognitive, emotional and behavioral activity. Customers can demonstrate the latter throughout direct brand interactions (Brakus, Schmitt & Zarantello, 2009). Direct brand interactions in this context refer to physical, contact-based, and proactive customer interactions with a brand. Cognitive activity further determines the level of concentration that individual displays while emotional activity is described in terms of brand-related emotions such as inspiration, pride, or appreciation expressed by customers within a focal relationship (Schaufeli et al., 2002). Ultimately, behavioral brand-related activity may be displayed in the form of a customer's level of energy or commitment in interacting with a brand (Patterson et al., 2006). Hollebeek (2011a) further suggests that the present conceptualization of CE is characterized by a tripartite taxonomy of cognitive, behavioral, and emotional engagement elements (May, Gilson & Harter, 2004). Further, it is based on the customer engagement framework proposed by Patterson et al. (2006) and the employee engagement concept proposed by Schaufeli et al. (2002).

However, Vivek et al. (2012) claim that the manifestation of CE is not only based on the cognitive, behavioral, and affective or emotional basis but also includes a social component. While cognitive and affective elements focus on the experiences and emotional attachment of customers towards a focal brand or organization, behavioral and social features incorporate the level of involvement or participation displayed by customers in exchange situations and within the business-customer relationship (Vivek et al., 2012).

Given that, it can be noted that customer engagement covers the totality of customer interactions with an organization either initiated by the firm or the customer. Moreover, it quantifies the intensity or extent of customer participation and connection with a firm's offering, presence, and organizational activities, which can take place in both offline and online settings.

In their CE framework, Vivek et al. (2012) propose that customer involvement and participation are antecedents of customer engagement. In contrast, trust,

commitment, word-of-mouth, loyalty, and community involvement are treated as consequences. This conceptualization is in line with Brodie et al.'s (2011) description, who argues that CE is a psychological state that occurs in context-specific settings and is shaped by co-creative customer experiences. However, this perception of CE is fundamentally different from the framework proposed by Pansari & Kumar (2017), which defines customer engagement as the underlying mechanics characterizing a reciprocal relationship between customer and firm where the customer provides specific value addition to the firm through direct or indirect contribution. This notion is further based on Kumar et al.'s (2010) conceptualization. The latter stresses the combination and outcome of the behavior and attitudinal component that may shape the intensity of customer engagement displayed by the customer towards the firm. In this context, direct contributions refer to tangible, action-oriented demonstrations of engagement, such as purchase behavior, which includes both recency and frequency aspects.

In contrast, indirect contributions consider intangible, effect-oriented manners or practices such as referral behavior, social media conversations, and community building as well as feedback/suggestions provided by the customer to the organization. Both sets of activities or behaviors may translate into a certain level of engagement that a customer displays towards a focal organization or brand (Kumar, 2013). While several definitions provide similar insights into the multi-dimensional construct of customer engagement shaped by both behavior and attitude-based attributes, many studies of CE are restricted in terms of their applicability within the B2C domain and happen to be mainly conceptual. The CE framework proposed by Kumar & Pansari (2015; 2017), however, is based on both a theoretical and empirical study with a primary focus on a behavior-based conceptualization allowing for measurable and actionable insights to determine and segment the level of engagement across B2C and B2B customer groups.

In the scope of this thesis, Pansari & Kumar's (2017) conceptualization is selected as a centrally guiding framework given its actuality and applicability for the main research topic. Furthermore, the author supports the description of CE from two significant angles that define the construct using a behavioral as well as cognitive/emotional perspective which is advocated by the majority of researchers (i.e. Hollebeek, 2011a; Brodie et al., 2011; Vivek et al, 2012;

Bowden, 2009; Ilić, 2008 and Patterson et al. 2006). Thereby, a new definition of CE was developed by adapting and consolidating explanations provided by Bowden (2009) and Van Doorn et al. (2010) in the context of and formulated as follows:

> 1) *'CE describes a psychological state of mind based on cognitive and emotional experiences as well as a related set of behavioral manifestations such as the totality of interactions with an organization or brand, all of which characterize the essence of a holistic customer relationship.'*

Consequently, subsequent research steps, analyses as well as discussions covered in this thesis are based on the notion of a behavioral and psychological classification of CE. In the course of this thesis, these two CE dimensions are further referred to as PCE (psychological customer engagement) and BCE (behavioral customer engagement). Correspondingly, the following definitions can be provided to explain BCE and PCE, which happen to be the main variables that the author addresses in the following chapters and primary research activities.

> 2) *'BCE refers to the behavioral aspect of the customer engagement construct and focuses on the totality of physical, observable, and quantitatively measurable actions that a customer performs throughout the participation and interaction within the business-customer relationship. From a marketing perspective, the latter is restricted to behavioral engagement with a company's brand-related activities, which are further described in chapter 2.3.*

> 3) *'PCE is defined as the psychological aspect of the customer engagement construct and covers both the emotional and cognitive dimensions. PCE describes the overall state of mind of a customer in the form of intangible, psychological brand perceptions towards a brand (as engagement object), which are shaped throughout the customer-firm relationship.*

2.1.3 Academic and business relevance

The tenets, concepts, and practical application of customer engagement has been extensively discussed from different perspectives in contemporary marketing literature in the last decade. Both academicians and practitioners have explored the subject from different dimensions looking at the benefits, challenges, limitations, and consequences besides practical implementation and business outcomes.

From an academic perspective, customer engagement is said to go beyond the advantages of mere relationship marketing, which are frequently linked with attributes such as lower marketing cost, optimized marketing efficiency, overall higher marketing effectiveness, and higher revenues (Kumar et al., 2008). However, when it comes to customer engagement, Reinartz & Kumar (2002) emphasize the importance of developing a holistic and encompassing picture of today's customer. They argue that "companies need to judge customers by more than just their actions /.../ to identify the true apostles" (p. 4). As a result, customers may be valued insufficiently by not considering all the activities, behaviors, and attitudes, which play a role in customer engagement (Kumar et al. 2010). Academicians note that these are not often taken into account in business operations especially when it comes to resource allocation (Verhoef, Reinartz & Krafft, 2010) and calculations of return on marketing investment as well as in other marketing and business KPIs (Rust, Lemon & Zeithaml, 2004; Gupta, Lehmann & Stuart, 2004).

Since the study of customer engagement serves to reflect or measure the level of a customers' context-specific, individual behavioral and attitudinal engagement with a focal object, such as products, brands and/or entire companies (Sprott, Czellar & Spangenberg, 2009; Patterson et al., 2006), its predictive power towards loyalty outcomes is mostly discussed in recent academic literature. Yet, related documentation about the relationship between customer engagement and customer loyalty remains mostly conceptual to-date (e.g., Bowden, 2009; Brodie et al., 2011; Vivek et al., 2012).

Recent conceptualizations by Kumar et al. (2010) further suggest that CE can have an impact on customer value while Vivek et al. (2012) state that it may as

well affect marketing outcomes such as share-of-wallet, cross-selling and word-of-mouth. Additionally, the benefits of customer engagement are discussed both from an operational and strategic perspective. In contrast, the latter refers to high-level organizational objectives such as sales growth, corporate performance, and sustaining competitive advantage as well as profitability (Brodie et al., 2011).

Today's highly dynamic, interactive, and competitive business environment is dominated by a shifting focus from mere customer acquisition to customer retention. Reichheld & Sasser (1990) already stated decades ago that the cost of acquiring new customers is essentially higher than the cost of retaining existing clients. This essential and fundamental insight further shaped the idea of developing long-term customer relationships, driving retention, and sustaining profitable loyalty as a paramount endeavor for organizations (Grönroos, 2007). Given these discussions, it can be noted the importance of CE in academia is largely associated with positive business outcomes as well as with a new understanding of customer value and loyalty.

In a business context, customer engagement has evolved into a primary focus area for many organizations nowadays. Guided by increasing academic relevance and research, the CE concept has slowly but steadily found its way into business practice. A recent study on customer engagement conducted among more than 100k respondents in around 19k business units within the B2B sector demonstrated a significantly positive connection between CE and business outcomes (Yu, Harter & Fleming, 2014). The study further highlighted the benefits of customer engagement across industries while indicating that highly engaged customers (in the top quartile) provide on average 50% higher revenues and 34% higher profitability. It further showed that it contributed to 63% lower attrition on average as compared with less engaged customers (in the bottom quartile). As a result, the meta-analysis strongly confirmed the linkage between B2B customer engagement and expected organizational benefits (as discussed in contemporary literature). It also indicated high generalizability and correlational consistency across firms and industry sectors (Yu et al., 2014).

While this study implied that customer engagement has proven to be of high relevance in a business context, current empirical research revealed that only

29% of B2B customers are actively engaged. In contrast, the remaining 71% either demonstrated a considerably low engagement level, were indifferent or actively disengaged. According to Gallup Inc. (2016), this is a critical alarm signal for organizations. It indicated that a substantial amount of revenue and growth potential is lost or at least not sufficiently exploited within a firm's customer base (Gallup Inc., 2016). As a result, B2B companies across various industries are at risk of losing their customers. According to Gallup Inc. (2016), the reason is plain and simple: It is less about the characteristics of a firm's actual offering, such as its products and pricing, but more due to the nature of a holistic customer experience, which fails to engage customers on various levels.

2.1.4 Dimensions, antecedents and consequences

To understand the concept of customer engagement (CE) in a holistic manner, it is essential to deconstruct, describe, and elaborate on its various dimensions, antecedents, and consequences. In contemporary literature, engagement is conceptually viewed as a multi-dimensional construct, as shown in table 2 - CE definitions and literature review. As a broader concept, it has found widespread acceptance that CE can be classified into three major dimensions (i.e., cognitive, emotional, and behavioral) (Brodie et al., 2011; Hollebeek, 2011a; Bakker & Schaufeli, 2008; Salanova, Agut & Peiro, 2005). The cognitive dimension refers to the cognitive activities that are presumably taking place in a consumer's or customer's mind, such as thought processing, interest, and concentration that are related to a focal engagement object such as a brand or organization (Hollebeek, 2011b). Hollebeek (2011a) further elaborates on the role of brand activities that involve cognitive processing and the formation of interest in consumer/customer-brand interactions. In comparison, Patterson et al. (2006) also consider cognitive dimensions in their CE construct, which are primarily classified as 'vigor,' which also describes the mental stability and flexibility demonstrated by individuals when interacting with a focal object or party. Vigor is stated to translate into a consumer's willingness to dedicate effort, time, and energy for participation or contribution to business activities while indicating a certain level of commitment.

The emotional dimension of CE, as opposed to the cognitive dimension, focuses on the emotional activity in the form of feelings such as pride, inspiration, or

excitement (Hollebeek, 2011b). Heath (2007) further discusses that mere engagement as a mental state can be understood as a subconscious, emotional construct which is fundamentally shaped by emotional stimulation. The latter is often subject to brand interactions to create unique experiences and mental models in a consumer's/customer's mind, thus shaping overall brand perception and evoking positive emotional responses. As such, the emotional dimension especially considers the expression of 'dedication' and 'affection' towards a focal engagement object (Patterson et al., 2006; Hollebeek, Glynn & Brodie, 2014). While dedication, as explained by Patterson et al. (2006), is associated with the sense of belonging, which is often expressed in enthusiasm, pride or passion, attachment, Hollebeek et al. (2014) describes positive feelings for an engagement object which are endorsed through interaction.

Whereas the cognitive and behavioral dimension primarily focuses on mental activities, the behavioral dimension is said to concentrate on behaviors and actions. Hence, it refers to a state of observable, physical consumer/customer behavior towards a specific engagement object (Hollebeek, 2011b). The term 'engage' further emphasizes the intense focus on the behavioral dimension of the CE framework as it relates to a specific action such as communication with an organization or user-based interaction with a product or brand (Van Doorn et al., 2010).

In summary, it can be recapitulated that the majority of academic studies propose a multi-dimensional CE construct consisting of three pillars. These are stated to combine cognitive (thoughts), emotional (feelings), and behavioral (actions) dimensions, which are predominant in contemporary literature. Furthermore, research suggests that there are various marketing constructs associated with CE (Pansari & Kumar, 2017; Hollebeek, 2011a; Bowden, 2009; Patterson et al., 2006), which are often characterized by an inferred relationship (Bowden, 2009). A substantially consolidated set of related constructs, yet conceptually different, is presented by Hollebeek (2011a). She discusses 12 major marketing subjects such as involvement, interactivity, flow, rapport, co-created value, brand experience, perceived quality, customer satisfaction, trust, commitment, customer value, and brand loyalty. Each concept can be clustered into three main buckets based on the nature of the relationship to the CE framework. As such,

every construct is categorized into an antecedent, consequence, or a combination of both. Appendix 2 provides a solid overview of the respective marketing constructs related to CE.

As shown in Appendix 2, there are three dominant marketing constructs which are categorized as antecedents of customer engagement. Hollebeek (2011a) further states that involvement and interactivity are required prior to the emergence of customer brand-engagement levels. Flow can also be described as a precursor that eventually shapes CE through personally meaningful, transformative, and powerful peak experiences (Schouten, McAlexander & Koenig, 2007). By contrast, other well-known marketing concepts such as brand experience, brand loyalty, co-created value, as well as customer value, are classified as consequences of customer engagement. Brand experience, for instance, has a robust behavioral focus but also includes affective and cognitive responses to brand-related stimuli, which also encourage proactive customer endeavors, especially during a service encounter (Brakus et al., 2009; Hollebeek, 2011a). Eventually, this may drive the generation of co-created value perceived by the customer in response to a positive brand experience. A related but slightly different terminology is provided by Pansari & Kumar (2017), who discuss the concept of customer experience as a holistic and cognitive measure that is viewed as an outcome of organizational activities directed at the customer as opposed to customer-driven behavior towards the firm. As such, customer experience can be considered to be in a state that is shaped through multiple touchpoints and interactions with an organization/brand as well as distinct products and services at various levels from customer acquisition throughout the entire customer lifetime (Pansari & Kumar, 2017). According to Schouten et al. (2007), customer experience further encompasses the notion of motivational and affective constructs such as flow and involvement, which substantially contribute to the experience factor.

In contrast to customer engagement, however, the customer experience concept does not presume a motivational state (Brakus et al., 2009). The latter is driven by distinct customer needs and values, which are preconditions that motivate individuals to engage with a focal object, which ultimately (Sprott et al., 2009) triggers a behavioral, cognitive, and emotional state or response that eventually

forms into a subjective and unique customer experience. The concept of brand loyalty behaves similar to the brand experience concept in the sense that it is evoked by an internal disposition towards a firm, brand, or product, which is heavily influenced by the experience factor. Pansari & Kumar (2017) further define it as an outcome measure by distinguishing between attitudinal and behavioral loyalty. The latter concentrates on repeat purchases and thus focuses mainly on revenue contributions to the firm, which are primarily initiated by customer transactions.

Despite the clear differentiation between antecedents and consequences which apply to the discussed concepts, other marketing constructs such as trust, commitment, and customer satisfaction can be both viewed as influencing factors or causes (antecedents) and effects or outcomes (consequences) to customer engagement. Hollebeek (2011a) argues that the nature of the relationship mainly differs when it comes to dealing with new and existing customers. Existing customers may display a certain level of commitment, trust, and satisfaction before a particular brand encounter (e.g., marketing communication for cross-selling / up-selling). New customers are likely to develop a specific attachment (in the form of i.e., commitment, trust, etc.) towards a brand over time while engaging with the firm and its products. According to Pansari & Kumar (2017), commitment especially indicates the depth of the attitude or internal disposition of a customer toward a brand and is crucial in a valued customer relationship. Likewise, customer trust as a marketing concept also shapes the customer-firm relationship and becomes essential in developing and maintaining it sustainably over time. As a result, it may be equally important to both build and increase trust, satisfaction, and commitment. By engaging new and existing customers across different brand touchpoints to benefit intercorrelated but merely outcome-based constructs such as customer experience and loyalty.

2.1.5 Conceptual models

Contemporary marketing literature on customer engagement offers various conceptual models. Generally, respective conceptualizations aim to depict and explain the CE framework in relation to its dimensions, antecedents, and consequences as well as contributions to business outcomes. The most

frequently addressed and current conceptualizations are provided by Hollebeek (2011) and Pansari & Kumar (2017).

CE conceptualization by Hollebeek

In a substantial study titled "Demystifying customer brand engagement: Exploring the loyalty nexus," Hollebeek (2011a) developed a conceptual model with the help of contemporary academic literature which focused on the process and contributions of customer brand engagement. Hollebeek (2011a) further extended the suggested CE framework by introducing a preliminary customer engagement/loyalty taxonomy to approximate and segment brand engagement levels across a firm's customer base. Hollebeek's brand engagement framework primarily served to clarify how firms can engage their customers by building satisfying and emotional customer relationships. Moreover, the conceptual model suggests distinct connections and interrelations between customer brand engagement and particular marketing constructs such as Involvement, Trust, Commitment, Customer Satisfaction, and Loyalty. Customer brand engagement in this context is defined as a three-dimensional concept comprising cognitive, emotional, and behavioral attributes, as illustrated in figure 2.

FIGURE 2: CONCEPTUAL CE MODEL BY HOLLEBEEK
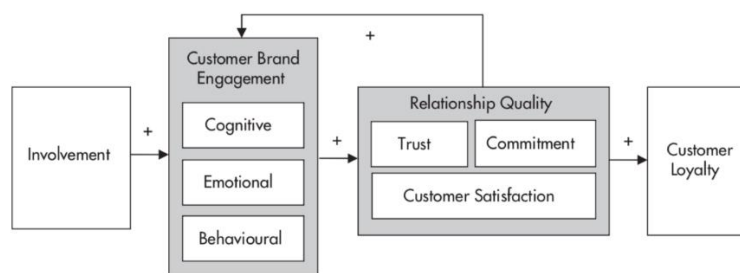
(Hollebeek 2011a, p.796)

The conceptual model was designed around three major research propositions. First and foremost, Hollebeek argues that involvement (which is previously defined as an antecedent to CE) is positively related to customer brand engagement. This contention is further supported by Mittal (1995) and Zaichkowsky (1985), who state that the occurrence of customer engagement towards a particular firm or brand requires a certain level of customer interest or

personal relevance. Second, Hollebeek hypothesizes that a positive relationship exists between customer brand engagement and relationship quality. The latter can be defined as a high-level construct incorporating well-known marketing concepts such as trust, customer satisfaction, and commitment previously categorized as consequences of CE, particularly for existing customers (Hollebeek, 2011a). Lastly, Hollebeek proposes a positive association between relationship quality and customer loyalty. Recent literature reported a significant connection between a buyer's perceived relationship quality and repurchase intentions (Hewett, Money & Sharma, 2002). Furthermore, there seems to be widespread support about the linear association between relationship quality and loyalty (Hennig-Thurau & Klee, 1997).

Given the above propositions, contemporary research to-date supports the notion that a positive relationship between engagement and loyalty is expected to exist. Bowden (2009), for instance, states that certain levels of customer stimulation (e.g., through marketing and customer nurturing initiatives) and minimized tedium, especially in a service context, are expected to have a favorable effect on satisfaction and loyalty ratings. However, Hollebeek (2011a) challenges this contention to a certain extent by asserting that customer loyalty outcomes are positively influenced by brand engagement up to a particular breaking point. Beyond this very optimum, additional initiatives to increase customer engagement may turn out to be detrimental to customer loyalty by resulting in an occupational burnout or customer draining/fatigue for specific customer segments resulting in a stress reaction (cf. Bakker, Van Emmerik & Euwema, 2006). Given this, Hollebeek (2011a) assumes a curvilinear rather than a linear relationship between customer brand engagement and customer loyalty while noting that the peculiarity of the relationship may vary across different customer segments. She proposes an engagement-based loyalty segmentation framework, which is shown in figure 3. The model measures customer brand engagement in terms of customer-focused direct brand interactions (physical, first-hand contact with a product/service) and comprises four distinct clusters. Furthermore, customers are segmented based on the level of Loyalty (low - high) shown on the y-axis and the degree of customer brand engagement (low - high) presented on the x-axis and respectively characterized as 'Apathists', 'Activists', 'Exits' or 'Variety Seekers' (Hollebeek, 2011a).

(Hollebeek 2011a, p.797)

As such, the model suggests differential customer engagement and loyalty outcomes across the four segments while also showing variances in the engagement-loyalty relationship itself. Hollebeek (2011a), for instance, argues that low-engaged segments such as Apathists and Exits may display a linear relationship between engagement and loyalty (cf. Bowden, 2009; Patterson et al., 2006). Yet, highly-engaged segments such as Activists and Variety seekers follow more a curve-linear characteristic of the said relationship with the latter exhibiting a preferred zone of an organization's driven engagement intent and a favored optimum as illustrated in figure 4.

FIGURE 4: ENGAGEMENT/LOYALTY NEXUS
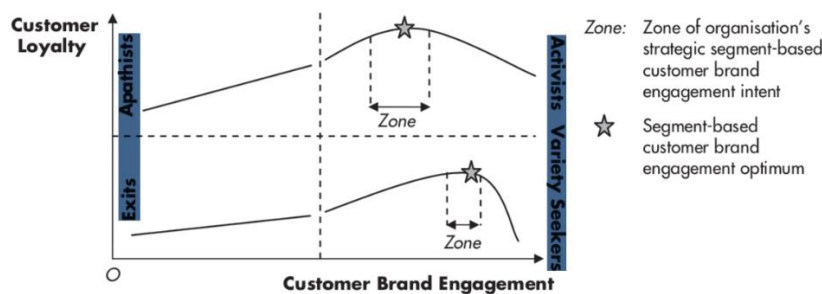
(Hollebeek 2011a, p.800)

The 'Apathists' segment is primarily characterized by lower customer brand engagement, yet customers in this group tend to show a high level of loyalty. Hollebeek (2011a) explains that these customers are expected to be dominant, especially in the context of utilitarian product categories, which are mainly instrumental and functionality-driven and often restricted by limited brand choice or alternatives. Due to low involvement but high potentially enforced loyalty due

to convenience, availability, and functional attributes, such customers are less likely to exhibit 'customer drainage' caused by extensive engagement levels. Similar to 'Apathists,' the 'Exit' customer segment is not expected to be affected by symptoms of occupational burnout due to their low engagement-loyalty combination (cf. Wright, 2008). A different picture, however, emerges concerning 'Activists' and 'Variety Seekers', both of which express high engagement levels. Hollebeek argues that especially activists, who are loyal and highly engaged customers and thus desirable for firms, are more prone to be overly sensitive to excessive engagement behaviors. Hence, this may have an adverse effect on overall customer loyalty. Consequently, it may result in decreasing repurchase actions or in the worst-case brand switching. The latter is especially given when dealing with 'Variety Seekers' that tend to be less committed to a brand and always on the hunt for new and better alternatives (Hollebeek, 2011a).

Discussion

Hollebeek's proposed CE conceptualization is based on the notion that customer engagement is primarily influenced by involvement and relationship quality in a customer-business context. This contention is slightly different from the CE conceptualization proposed by Pansari & Kumar (2017), which focuses on satisfaction and emotion as main engagement drivers that are further influenced by various moderating factors. Furthermore, in contrast to prevailing assumptions that expect a predominantly linear relation between CE and loyalty (cf. Bowden, 2009; Patterson et al., 2006), Hollebeek argues that the linkage to customer loyalty as a CE consequence follows a somewhat inconsistent pattern across different customer segments. Therefore, she emphasizes the importance of exploring and clustering customers based on their engagement and loyalty behavior to understand differences among customer engagement behavior. This view is also supported by Pansari & Kumar (2017) in their CE conceptualization. However, a sound segmentation approach would require a standardized measurement instrument to quantify engagement levels accordingly. In this respect, Hollebeek (2011a) suggests profound psychometric tests of the so-called Gallup CE11 customer engagement metric. The author further discusses the CE11 framework in subsequent paragraphs and recommends additional investigations in this area to develop novel measurement concepts.

In conclusion, it can be noted that empirical testing and validation of the suggested CE conceptualization, its interrelations with given marketing constructs, and suggested loyalty outcomes across customer segments is pivotal. Further research into the nature of the relationship (e.g., causation/correlation, strength, etc.) between customer engagement and loyalty across various industries, firms and customer types is necessary to verify the model's practical applicability and relevance and eventually develop well-found recommendations for organizations to implement and devise business strategies in this area. Hollebeek (2011a), for instance, suggests statistical modeling through cluster-analytic procedures under different contextual conditions. On top of that, identifying the allocation of customers and the respective proportion within different segments may as well provide useful insights on proposed brand engagement/loyalty nexus, which can be addressed and investigated using empirical analysis. Additionally, further research into the area of moderating factors that may influence and shape engagement levels across customer segments can shed some light on the actual dynamics of the model. Finally, marketing scholars and practitioners can as well benefit from understanding the strategic factors, causes, and actions required to maintain and increase customer engagement considering an organization's zone of strategic intent. The latter should also be subject to substantial investigation to verify Hollebeek's assumptions accordingly and determine whether an engagement optimum can be identified, quantified, and applied across industries, firms, and customer types.

In terms of managerial implications, the extensive engagement conceptualization and related engagement/loyalty segmentation may generate increased awareness, especially among marketing academicians and practitioners. Hollebeek (2011a) further states that additional research and empirical testing in the field of engagement, particularly in combination with customer loyalty may result in the development of practical models or tools to help organizations better understand and potentially even predict loyalty outcomes (cf. Appelbaum, 2001; Bowden, 2009). These insights may eventually trigger a different perspective on relationship marketing and customer nurturing as a driver to increase customer engagement and provide essential contributions to business outcomes such as customer retention and churn mitigation.

CE conceptualization by Pansari & Kumar

Similar to Hollebeek's conceptualization, Pansari and Kumar (2017) propose a holistic CE framework that focuses on the process-perspective from the generation and development of customer engagement to its direct and indirect contributions on tangible and intangible business outcomes. In this context, they also discuss engagement drivers such as customer satisfaction and emotions while considering moderating factors such as involvement and brand value as well as customer variables and firm characteristics (i.e., nature of the firm, type of industry, brand value, involvement, convenience). As a critical contribution of their study, Pansari & Kumar (2017, p. 308) suggest a different view on the theory of customer engagement by arguing that "customers become engaged with the firm when a relationship based on trust and commitment is satisfying and has emotional bonding." Their definition of customer engagement emphasizes the interplay between customer satisfaction and emotion that influence engagement levels, which then eventually translate into direct and indirect contributions to an organization's overall performance. In this regard, Pansari and Kumar (2017) describe satisfaction as a rational assessment of a firm's offering in relation to its intended purpose and need fulfillment. Emotions, however, focus on the mental state arising from cognitive and emotional appraisals when interacting and experiencing the offering. Furthermore, the concept of customer contributions is adapted from Kumar et al. (2010). It incorporates customer purchases, customer knowledge as well as customer referrals and customer influence which are classified into direct and indirect attributes.

Pansari & Kumar (2017) assign a strong quantitative and transactional focus (e.g., customer purchases) to direct contributions and, in contrast, describe indirect contributions as a qualitative value contribution to the firm (i.e., customer knowledge and feedback, as well as influence and referral behavior). In their model, satisfaction and emotion are viewed as primary antecedents of customer engagement, whereas both direct and indirect contributions are labeled as consequences that lead to intangible and tangible business outcomes (e.g., performance, marketing efficiency). Based on their model, Pansari & Kumar developed 12 distinct guiding propositions that are encapsulated in a structured conceptual CE framework shown in figure 5.
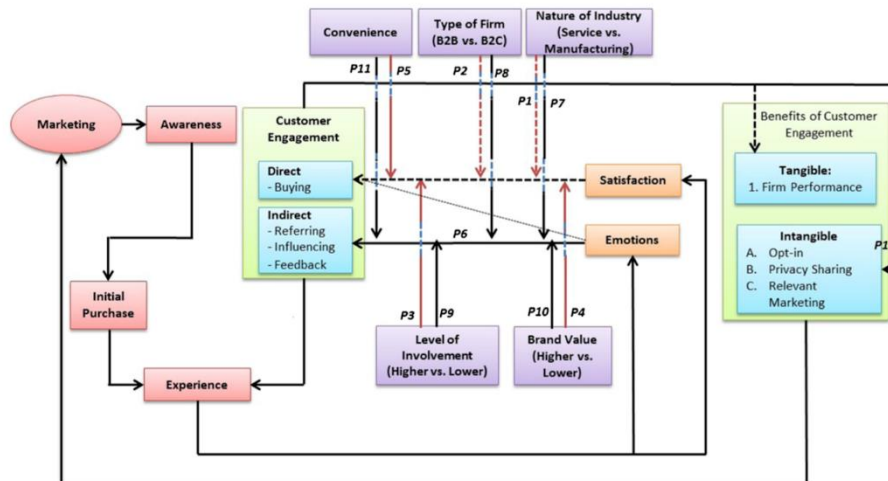
(Pansari & Kumar 2017, p.300)

The framework suggests a positive relationship between satisfaction and direct contributions of CE. On the one hand, Pansari & Kumar (2017) further propose that these will be especially enhanced in service industries, within B2B organizations and particularly for lower involvement products that are characterized by high levels of convenience and low brand value. On the other hand, they hypothesize that the relationship between emotions and indirect contributions will be reinforced for the service industry, B2C firms, and high involvement products characterized by higher brand value and convenience.

As previously shown in figure 5, the framework starts with marketing activities performed by the firm to generate awareness for their offering using different marketing means (e.g., advertising, social media, etc.). The early brand awareness eventually turns into consideration and ultimately leads to a purchase action, which, according to Pansari & Kumar (2017), creates an experience. The latter can be positive or negative and subsequently affects the level of customer satisfaction and emotional attachment to a particular firm or brand. Based on the notion that satisfaction is likely to lead to repeat purchases (Anderson 1994), the framework further emphasizes the proposed relationship between satisfaction, emotion, and the CE construct, which covers both indirect and direct contributions. The degree or intensity of CE, yet moderated by influencing factors such as the nature of the firm and industry, eventually leads to tangible and, predominantly, intangible benefits for the firm. Finally, Pansari & Kumar (2017, p. 306) hypothesize that "the higher the customer's engagement (direct and indirect

contribution), the higher will be his/her probability to (a) opt in to the firm's marketing program, (b) provide the firm access to his/her personal information, and (c) enable the firm to provide relevant marketing communication" (intangible benefits) which may eventually help an organization to increase overall marketing effectiveness and thus maximize business performance and ROI (tangible benefits).

On account of their conceptual framework, there is no evidence of whether and how the research propositions and suggested relationships discussed apply to real-world scenarios and contemporary business practice. Pansari & Kumar (2017) developed several implications for further research to test, evaluate, and analyze the applicability and relevance of the CE framework over a period of time, across industries and geographies. Furthermore, it can be noted that studying the heterogeneity as well as time-series effects of satisfaction and emotions in empirical analysis might provide additional insights regarding the validity of the model. The same can be stated when it comes to it quantifying the suggested link between CE and business performance.

In terms of the managerial implications deduced from the CE framework, Pansari & Kumar (2017) recommend that both B2C and B2B companies operating in service and manufacturing industries must find ways to manage both satisfaction and emotion to increase customer engagement levels by maximizing its direct and indirect value contributions. To do this, they additionally developed a practical matrix model to segment customers into distinct engagement clusters or dimensions (Indifference, Attraction, Passion, and True Love) based on the intensity of emotions (y-axis) and the level of satisfaction (x-axis) as shown in figure 6. Based on that, they developed tailored strategies for each dimension (i.e., need-focused, value-focused, altruistic-focused, and engagement-focused) intending to help firms evaluate and better understand different customer segments while managing existing resources to maximize tangible and intangible business outcomes sustainably (Pansari & Kumar, 2017).
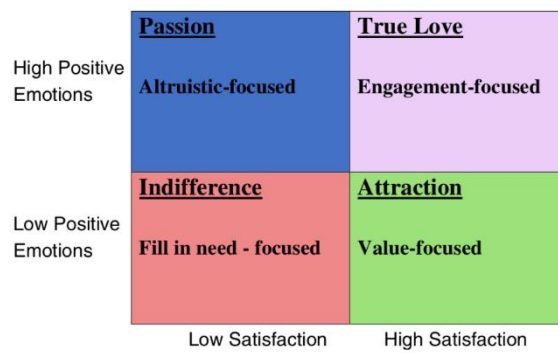
(Pansari & Kumar 2017, p.306)

As depicted in the matrix, it can be noted that customers with lower positive emotions and a little satisfaction level fall in the first dimension (Indifference) and thus belong to the segment which covers 'fill-in-need customers.' This customer group tends to have a neutral disposition towards a particular firm, brand, or offering and exhibits a lower state of emotional involvement and overall satisfaction. Both may result from various factors such as the nature of the product (e.g., high convenience, low brand value, involvement, etc.) but also due to customer/target group characteristics (e.g., size of wallet, need fulfillment, intended product usage, etc.). Hence, respective strategies suggested by Pansari & Kumar (2017) are based on generating increased customer intelligence to understand why customers are less attached to the firm, brand, or offer. Therefore, to meet customer needs/characteristics more effectively, firms must identify the actual reasons for indifference while adapting marketing communication, product development, and or brand positioning to increase overall relevance.

In contrast to the 'Indifference' dimension, the 'Passion' segment of the matrix consists of altruistic-focused customers who show an imbalance of high emotional involvement and low levels of satisfaction. Such customers are passionate about a particular brand or organization (e.g., sports and entertainment industry). Low levels of satisfaction can especially arise due to poor service, unmet expectations, or inferior product quality. Thus, Pansari and Kumar (2017) recommend to further strengthen the emotional bond with these customers by delighting them with superior service and overall customer

experience. Another strategy would be to focus on referral programs to extend the follower/fan base and turn more customers into brand advocates.

The (Attraction) dimension of the matrix groups 'value-focused' customers who seem to display a high level of satisfaction but low emotional involvement. These customers may be rationally satisfied with the firm, brand, or offering but not emotionally attached. The banking or insurance sector might be good examples of industries where the majority of customers display such behavior. Convenience, price, as well as location, might be decisive for customers to choose one brand over another. Pansari & Kumar (2017) suggest that these firms should focus on creating more personal relationships and a deeper emotional connection with their customers to leverage both direct and indirect contributions to business outcomes more effectively. Ultimately, the goal is to migrate such customers from the 'Attraction' dimension to 'True Love.' The latter is viewed as the ideal stage characterized by customers with a high emotional attachment and satisfaction level. In this stage, firms should focus on further maximizing both the emotional connection and sustain customer satisfaction to ensure superior engagement, which may lead to successful business performance in the long term.

Discussion

With one of the most recent CE conceptualizations, Pansari & Kumar (2017) performed a large and extensive literature study and consolidated relevant research findings in the development of their framework. Furthermore, Pansari and Kumar (2017), similar to Hollebeek (2011a), provide a more holistic perspective to the CE construct by considering related marketing constructs as antecedents and consequences in their conceptualization. Past studies have mainly discussed the concept of CE in social science - often in a narrow scope - and primarily focused on the dimensionality and construct itself (cf. Bowden, 2009; Van Doorn et al., 2010; Brodi et al., 2011),

Contemporary literature acknowledges the limitations of traditional marketing constructs when it comes to explaining and mainly predicting customer behavior outcomes such as loyalty (cf. Sureshchandar, Rajendran, & Anantharaman 2002; Taylor & Baker, 1994). Oliver (1999), for instance, argues that while satisfaction

may play an essential role in loyalty transformation, it becomes less critical as various mechanisms influence loyalty. The latter is incorporated in the given CE conceptualizations. However, loyalty is described as a rather abstract concept comprising several factors which are yet not fully explored and empirically validated (cf. Pansari & Kumar, 2017; Hollebeek, 2011a).

Nevertheless, what is commonly acknowledged by various marketing academicians and practitioners is that engagement is a multi-dimensional concept, as described in the previous chapter. In a marketing context, it unfolds through two-way interactions between consumers/customers and a focal engagement object such as an organization, brand, or given offering and elicits cognitive, emotional, and behavioral responses that can be classified into engagement levels under particular contextual circumstances. Still, the concept, its practical applicability, and respectively relevance, as well as its impact on contemporary business practice, remain mostly theoretical due to lack of empirical validation. The exploratory investigations center on the conceptual development of the CE construct and its potential favorable relationship to business outcomes such as customer loyalty and retention (Hollebeek, 2011a).

As a result, further comprehensive empirical testing and statistical validation are necessary to proceed with and capitalize on findings in the area of CE from a marketing perspective. Generally, there seems to be growing interest and a greater sense of practitioner awareness associated with focusing and operationalizing the customer engagement concept in a business context. Especially the expected relation and overall integration of CE in the realm of common marketing constructs such as customer experience, customer value, customer satisfaction as well as customer loyalty emphasizes the potential relevance and applicability of the CE construct in overall business practice (e.g., service industry, web 2.0 settings). (Patterson et al., 2006; Bowden, 2009; Hollebeek, 2011a; Pansari & Kumar, 2017).

2.2 Engagement marketing

To explore customer engagement ideologies and recent conceptualizations in a contemporary marketing context, this chapter provides an introduction to the topic of B2B inbound marketing. It describes the definition and origin of this new

marketing paradigm while explaining the importance as well as underlying methodology, including objectives, strategies, and tactics. This chapter further closes the loop between customer engagement and inbound marketing by introducing and explaining the fundamentals and essential concepts of Engagement Marketing. It also discusses the importance of driving customer-brand interactions to shape customer engagement levels and building brand advocacy using inbound marketing tactics such as content marketing, social media, and email marketing.

2.2.1 B2B inbound marketing

B2B marketing underwent substantial changes in recent years as the modern B2B buyer has become more self-directed and educated in finding new ways to seek information online to drive purchase decisions. According to a thorough study conducted by Google and Millward Brown Digital in 2015, the majority of B2B buyers start their business-related research with a general Google search (Snyder & Hilal, 2015). In response to this, B2B marketing evolved in response to a paradigm shift from traditional outbound methods to digital channels and an inbound approach to marketing.

The term 'inbound marketing' was coined by Brian Halligan and Dharmesh Shah, co-founders and CEO/CTO of HubSpot Inc, a SaaS company with an all-in-one Inbound Marketing and sales platform. Halligan and Shah first introduced related concepts and strategies in their book 'Inbound Marketing: Get Found Using Google, Social Media, and Blogs,' published in 2010 by John Wiley & Sons. Yet, the very foundation and core principles of Inbound Marketing already emerged over a century ago. Marketing Guru Peter F. Drucker (1974, p.49) stated that "the aim of marketing is to know and understand the customer so well that the product and service fits him and sells itself." Inbound marketing inherits this thinking by making the user or customer the center of marketing operations and naturally driving interested prospects to the business who are actively seeking solutions to their problems. Thereby, the primary objective of Inbound Marketing is to generate increased customer and business value by leveraging a set of integrated digital marketing activities for sustainable customer acquisition at a lower cost (Halligan & Shah, 2010).

2.2.2 The inbound methodology

The Inbound Marketing framework serves the purpose to attract, convert, close, and delight customers with the help of relevant, targeted, and engagement-based marketing tactics designed to address their information needs along the buyer's journey. Hence, inbound marketing well-resonates with the shift in B2B buying behavior, which diverts towards digital channels and self-directed, holistic customer brand experiences. A recent study concluded that more than 70% of today's B2B buyers conduct the majority of their product-related research online before actively reaching out to a supplier (Hoar et al., 2015). In this new setting, B2B customers are especially seeking the same online experiences they encounter as consumers, which makes inbound marketing one of the most popular approaches to engage B2C and B2B customers alike in a sustainable manner (Andersen, Archaki, De Bellefonds, & Ratajczak, 2017).

Concerning the overall framework, there is a fundamental difference between inbound marketing methods and traditional outbound marketing means. Outbound marketing is based on interruptive forms of advertising (e.g., print, billboard, television, etc.), which uses an active push-approach in marketing communication. In contrast, inbound methods rely on a softer and natural pull approach focused on educating rather than selling to customers. Compared to outbound marketing, inbound initiatives provide increased marketing efficiency gains at a lower cost and higher return on marketing investment through maximized targeting options and user-driven analytics. Nowadays, Inbound Marketing methods are gaining increasing popularity and significance also in the B2B sector as they provide a cost-effective alternative to traditional tactics such as print advertising, direct mail, or trade shows (HubSpot Research, 2018).

The inbound methodology is a well-found strategy framework introduced by HubSpot. It describes a simple but powerful marketing concept based on a cycle of three dedicated phases, such as Attract, Engage, and Delight. According to HubSpot Inc. (2019), tailoring marketing activities to these phases is an effective way to turn strangers into customers and promoters of a firm. Given this, the inbound methodology is designed to meet the characteristics of the modern customer journey, which often starts with a simple online search. In each stage, different marketing tactics are applied, such as Content Marketing, Email

Marketing, Social Media Marketing, as well as Search Engine Marketing. Yet, the very basis and integral part of every successful inbound marketing strategy is the provision of helpful and relevant content that guides prospects through the acquisition funnel until they become customers and ultimately turn into evangelists (Halligan & Shah, 2010). As such, a successful inbound marketing framework is built on a strategic content marketing approach. In essence, a content marketing strategy is a framework for designing and conceptualizing content efforts, along with the inbound methodology. The main goal is to attract and retain a clearly defined audience by "creating and distributing valuable, relevant, and consistent content" (Content Marketing Institute, 2017). This content strategy is embedded in the inbound methodology to structure and integrate marketing means into a holistic 360 marketing degree approach that is aligned with business objectives. Given this, the inbound methodology focuses on different marketing activities throughout the dedicated phases, such as Attract, Engage, and Delight, which are described in detail in the following sections and visualized in figure X.

FIGURE 7: INBOUND METHODOLOGY BY HUBSPOT
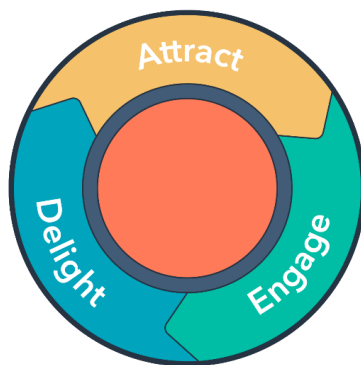
(Hubspot Inc., 2019)

Attract

The main goal of the attract stage is to get people's attention and drive prospects to a specific website, landing page, or blog. This is done by creating tailored content pieces such as blog articles, ebooks, or white-papers and making them readily available to a specific target audience. To attract the right people, the content must address the particular needs or challenges of the desired target group or distinct buyer personas (a cluster of specific customer profiles). At the same time, it should be compelling enough to draw visitors in and keep them on

the website to convert them to leads in the next stage. The primary tactics to attract prospects cover blogging (content marketing), social media marketing, and search engine marketing (Halligan & Shah, 2010).

Engage

Once visitors are attracted to a website in response to a compelling content offer, the next step is to convert them into leads and gather first data such as contact information. This is done by using relevant call-to-actions (CTAs) and lead capture forms to encourage people to take action. Contact information and lead data are the very currency of inbound marketing. However, obtaining this is a significant challenge and requires practice, testing, and optimization. Yet, incentivizing page visitors by offering them something in return (e.g., free ebook download, webinar registration, or a video tutorial), which is of value to them, serves as an action trigger.

The essential tactics in this stage are typically lead generation practices based on landing page optimization, placement of compelling lead magnets (content offers), user-friendly lead forms, and actionable CTAs (call to action) (Halligan & Shah, 2010). After a successful conversion, the next step involves closing leads obtained by turning them into happy customers. The latter is highly customer-focused and requires a joint marketing and sales approach. First, marketing generates and develops leads from prospects to marketing qualified leads (MQL) with the help of lead nurturing tactics such as lead scoring, email marketing, and marketing automation. Then, sales take over by thoroughly researching and evaluating MQLs provided by marketing and eventually identifying sales-ready opportunities to create and close profitable deals. This interface between marketing and sales responsibilities requires close alignment and a solid feedback-loop to improve processes on both sides (Halligan & Shah, 2010). However, mere customer acquisition is not the end. Continuously engaging both prospects and customers becomes crucial in this phase to develop long-term and profitable relationships that provide sustainable value contributions to the business (Hubspot Inc., 2019).

Delight

The delight phase is the final but equally important stage in the inbound methodology. Because new customers matter as much as sales-ready leads for inbound marketing success, they won't be abandoned. Instead, the goal is to establish long-lasting customer relationships and loyalty to the business by turning clients into advocates. The latter can be defined as those customers who act as spokespersons to a company and may actively recommend the offering to others. To continuously delight customers and build sustainable as well as profitable customer relationships, firms can develop a new yet promising approach called customer engagement marketing (CEM). The latter covers a series of tactics such as content-, social media- as well as highly personalized email marketing, which can help firms to establish frequent interactions as well as helpful conversations with their most valuable customers (Bernazzi, 2019).

2.2.3 Customer engagement marketing

Engagement as a construct has gained increasing attention in the marketing domain nowadays. Already a century ago, the Marketing Science Institute (Marketing Science Institute, 2006) brought up the topic in its 2006-2008 research priorities and called for a better understanding of the term 'engagement.' In fact, today's highly competitive and increasingly global marketplace dominated by rapid changes in technology and consumer behavior requires a different approach to connect with customers and engage them in long-term relationships.

According to the Marketing Science Institute (2006, p. 4), customer engagement (CE) can be described as "customers' behavioral manifestation toward a brand or firm beyond purchase." The definition suggests that organizations build relationships while engaging customers throughout their lifetime, characterized by a certain level of participation and contribution that goes beyond transactional means such as purchases. Therefore, it is substantially different from relationship marketing, which has been discussed extensively in the early 1980s to focus on customer acquisition and retention (Berry & Parasuraman, 1991) through establishing, enhancing, and maintaining relationships (Morgan & Hunt, 1994). In contrast, engagement-driven relationships are said to evolve based on a more emotional and experience-driven perspective. Vivek, Beatty & Morgan (2012) argue that these relationships are built on experiences and feelings that

customers associate with a firm or brand, which may eventually result in a level of affective commitment driven by intense participation, involvement, and reciprocal value generation. Together with trust as an assumed consequence of CE, affective commitment is proposed to be associated with a higher willingness to promote and recommend the company in their own right. By passing positive word of mouth, customers are turning into brand advocates of the business and tend to express positive behavioral responses such as increased loyalty to the organization. In this context, Vivek et al. (2012, p. 133) delimit the nature of CE to 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." Thus, emphasis is put on the cognitive, behavioral, affective, and social experiences that customers form throughout the interaction (or participation) with the firm or brand. Bagozzi & Dholakia (2006) further state that this interaction can lead to higher levels of enthusiasm and, ultimately, greater engagement. Yet, an individual's willingness to interact and get involved with a brand also depends on the overall motivation and perception of the value obtained in return. The theory of consumption values (Sheth, Newman & Gross, 1991) as well as the consumer value perspective (Holbrook, 2006) further stresses the role of intrinsic or extrinsic value expectations, which can also be applied to the concept of motivation.

Furthermore, research suggests that opportunities for interaction between customer and firm also underlie a macro-level feedback loop (Garber, Hyatt & Boya, 2009), which is clarified in the reciprocal action theory. The latter suggests that the action of one party reciprocates another action or response from the other party in a relationship to return good for good that is proportionate to the value of the actual investment (Li & Dant, 1997; Bagozzi, 1995). Moreover, the model of relational exchange proposes that trust becomes especially relevant to provide reassurance of non-opportunistic behavior in such a relationship. The latter creates a feeling of reliability about the expected partner reciprocity in an exchange situation (Morgan & Hunt, 1994). Additionally, studies suggest that positive interactions contribute to the generation of trust (Parkhe, 1993; Ganesan, 1994), which is assumed to serve as both an antecedent and consequence of CE (Hollebeek, 2011a). Vivek et al. (2012), for instance, argue that satisfying interactions can increase trust in a customer-firm relationship while evoking the

described sense of affective commitment. The latter can be defined as "the psychological attachment of an exchange partner to the other and is based on feelings of identification, loyalty, and affiliation" (Verhoef, Franses, & Hoekstra 2002, p. 204). In other words, it creates a psychological, primary emotional bond, in this case, between customer and brand/firm, which appears to be pivotal to develop high levels of CE that are associated with positive business outcomes. The importance of the emotional dimension is mainly discussed by Kumar et al. (2010), Vivek et al. (2012), and (Brodie, Hollebeek, Jurić, & Ilić, 2011) in contemporary marketing literature.

Generally, engagement appears to be an essential concept in various fields, including social psychology and education. Additionally, it gained substantial attention in the marketing domain as marketing academicians, and practitioners expect increased sales, customer loyalty as well as brand equity from focusing on customer engagement strategies and tactics (Alvarez-Milan, Rauschnabel & Hinsch, 2018). In particular, businesses are seeing enormous potential to decrease customer churn by focusing on engaging customers continuously and sustainably over time. While many companies nowadays struggle with customer retention by keeping attrition low, recent studies have shown that, on average, around 15% of customers churn. Consequently, firms tend to lose a considerable number of customers each year, often due to macro-economic factors (e.g., commoditization of products and services, market slow-down). To ensure stably growing revenues to maintain organizational health, it's no surprise that lost customers need to be replaced by new ones. Yet, the cost of acquiring new customers turns out to be much higher than the cost of retaining existing customers (Singh, Kumar & Singh, 2010). While the actual reasons behind customer attrition are often beyond the control of firms and marketing professionals, there are possibilities to mitigate churn effects by shaping the micro-environment of the organization (e.g., value addition through quality improvements, R&D processes, price competition, promotion, etc.). However, as these strategies are usually directed at the short- to mid-term, more and more businesses seek to invest in long-term approaches to tackle the problem of customer churn sustainably. Building strong customer relationships through customer engagement may be the route to go to help firms to retain customers

more effectively. Likewise, it can also support businesses to attract new ones by turning satisfied customers into spokespersons of the firm (Singh et al., 2010).

A recent study by Rosetta Consulting conducted in 2014 (as cited in Alvarez-Milan et al., 2018) showed that engaged customers do not only spend, on average, 60% more on each transaction but also make more frequent purchases (ca. 90%). Besides, these customers are more likely to spread positive word of mouth and become advocates of the brand (Rosetta Consulting, 2014, as cited in Alvarez-Milan et al., 2018). These considerable and meaningful insights have created a shift in how firms treat their customers in the digital age (Palmatier, Kumar & Harmeling, 2017). Transactional information is no longer the single source of truth for decision making. Instead, firms are capable of extensively leverage big data such as demographic and behavioral insights that allow them to gather customer intelligence. As a result, it is no surprise that the concept of engagement has gained increasing relevance in the marketing landscape. It transforms what was once called relationship marketing into customer relationship management (CRM) which is now slowly evolving into a new, yet highly conceptual marketing philosophy called Customer Engagement Marketing (CEM).

Palmatier et al. initially discussed the subject in their 2017 publication "Customer Engagement Marketing" and consolidated a substantial amount of research by well-known academicians in the field of CE. According to them, CEM provides a new and relevant perspective on customer centricity that has the potential to disrupt fundamental and conventional aspects of marketing as a function. Palmatier et al. (2017, pp. viii-ix) further argue that "customers are no longer mere consumers of value but contributors to key marketing functions, products are no longer 'offerings' from the firm, but 'co-creations' between the firm and the customer, and salespeople are more appropriately knowledge brokers." Accordingly, they clarify that especially the role of customers has transformed from a transactional function into a value-contributing necessity.

The idea of CEM further taken up by Marketo (2019), a leading marketing automation software company, in their book "The 5 Principles of Engagement Marketing". They take up an old but relevant paradigm that a company's primary

mission is to maximize value while a firm's employees are the most critical resource to deliver on that value promise. Marketo (2019), however, argues that many successful companies excel in their field because they treat their customers as the most valuable asset. These companies seem to focus on each stage in the customer lifecycle while investing in growing overall customer lifetime value. In fact, today's digital marketplace that is characterized by information abundance and an incredibly wide choice of products and alternatives has brought up buyers and customers that are more empowered than ever before. Provided with instant information gratification, constant product availability at a click of a button, and growing social power through online communities and social media, consumers/customers can form opinions and draw conclusions before they even choose to reach out and interact with a brand. As a consequence, Marketo (2019) proposes that businesses and particularly marketers need to act as stewards of the customer journey by making interactions more meaningful, personalized, and tailored to their customers on every touchpoint in a growing omnichannel setting. In this challenging setting, engagement marketing should thus provide the secret ingredient to build long-term value-driven customer-firm relationships around unique brand experiences.

A recent Forrester research states that engagement marketing should be viewed as a continuous process as opposed to interruptive or interceptive one-off marketing campaigns. In this respect, Haven (2007) further suggests that marketing communication should evolve into a natural continuation of the conversation between customer and firm. Devoting time to individual customer conversations, especially allows companies to gather substantial customer insights and knowledge while keeping their counterpart engaged at each stage of the customer lifecycle. As a result, companies can retain customers more effectively while benefiting from repeat purchases and stable customer loyalty (Singh et al., 2010). A study conducted by Bain & Company (cited in Marketo, 2019) also shows that successful engagement strategies can provide a higher return on investment than tactics focusing on new-customer acquisition. These findings are again in line with the notion that retaining customers appears to be considerably cheaper than attracting new ones. Despite that, the critical aspect of engaging customers throughout their lifetime is based on the intention to build a loyal customer base. As a result, it can have a multiplier effect on direct and

indirect contributions to the firm through growing lifetime value and the value of their networks (i.e. spreading positive word of mouth) (Marketo, 2019).

In summary, the definition provided by Harmeling, Arnold & Carlson (2017, p. 312) thus provides a clear and understandable explanation of the very essence of engagement marketing. In that sense, they describe it as "the firm's deliberate effort to motivate, empower, and measure a customer's voluntary contribution to its marketing functions, beyond a core, economic transaction." Unlike the concept of CE, which is previously discussed as an outcome, engagement marketing can be viewed as an instrument or set of strategies and tactics that support businesses to engage their customers regularly over time at each stage of the customer lifecycle. Thereby, the ultimate goal is based on creating meaningful and relevant opportunities for customer interactions through an integrated set of marketing tactics such as inbound marketing means.

2.2.4 Strategies and tactics

Providing opportunities for interaction is pivotal to encourage customers to connect and engage with a brand or firm beyond purchase and throughout the customer lifetime. Eventually, frequent interactions can create unique experiences. On the one hand, these may be chiefly driven by behavioral engagement (behavioral dimension of CE - referred to as BCE) such as the direct involvement with brand-related activities. On the other hand, resulting experiences may ultimately shape brand perceptions, which translate into psychological customer engagement (emotional and cognitive dimension of CE - referred to as PCE) by contributing to the formation of loyalty. This is also supported by Hollebeek (2011b, p. 787) who emphasizes the notion that engagement, in its broadest sense, can be described as an "individual-specific, motivational, and context-dependent variable emerging from two-way interactions between relevant engagement subject(s) and object(s)."

In terms of CEM, firms can create brand touchpoints through tailored marketing tactics that allow for interaction possibilities and stimulate behavioral engagement. Thereby, research mainly distinguishes between customer interaction that takes place in online and offline environments. Yet, many studies

have predominantly concentrated on digital channels (i.e., social media platforms, website, blog, and email) (Brodie, Ilić, Jurić & Hollebeek, 2013; Hollebeek, Glynn & Brodie, 2014; Alvarez-Milan et al., 2018). Nevertheless, the very foundation and likewise, the main challenge to create a platform for interaction and ultimately drive behavioral engagement is the provision of marketing engagement channels as well as platforms and media. To encourage behavioral engagement through a variety of given brand touchpoints, respective communication must convey tangible benefits (e.g., monetary value, goods/services, information). Ultimately, behaviors may transpire into the development of affective attributes such as cognitive involvement and emotional connectedness that shape brand perceptions and may sustain the growth of psychological engagement (Alvarez-Milan et al., 2018).

Given that, engagement marketing, as described by Marketo (2019) and Palmatier et al. (2017), does just that by leveraging strategic and resourceful inbound marketing techniques (e.g., content, social media, and email marketing) to connect and interact with both prospects and customers in a meaningful way. To do this, marketers need to cut through the noise by differentiating and adapting the communication with their audiences. Therefore, Marketo (2019) proposes five principles of engagement marketing that businesses need to adopt and integrate into their overall marketing approach. Mostly, these principles are based on the notion that firms, even in a B2B setting, are talking to individuals who best respond to a human-to-human approach (rather than a one-to-many approach) in marketing communication. Despite that, communication is no longer restricted to a one-way setting but instead largely open to allow for an interactive two-way format. As such, it must be personalized, relevant, continuous, and directed to a clear outcome. Furthermore, communication should happen wherever a firm's customers are and should be addressed accordingly based on what they do. As many customer encounters nowadays happen on digital channels, touchpoints are increasingly scattered across different platforms and media alike. Consequently, firms need to devise an integrated approach to engagement marketing that accounts for a seamless and consistent customer experience anytime and anywhere across a multitude of channels.

Inbound marketing means are predominantly used as critical components of an integrated marketing communication approach, which is just as relevant for successful customer engagement marketing (Marketo, 2019). Thereby, common tactics like content marketing, social media, and email marketing can be applied in all stages of the customer lifecycle to connect with customers and provide meaningful and relevant interaction possibilities to strengthen and develop sustainable customer relationships. In the context of this thesis, content marketing, social media, and email marketing are further viewed as the most essential inbound means to drive behavioral customer engagement (BCE) due to their interactive nature.

In chapter 2.1.2, BCE has been defined as the totality of direct, observable, and thus measurable actions that an individual performs when interacting with a company's marketing resources. Correspondingly, it is assumed that inbound marketing acts as a driving force to stimulate behavior-based engagement, which eventually forms unique experiences that shape psychological engagement, such as emotional and cognitive brand perceptions. Given this, the following sections provide a brief overview of each inbound marketing tactic previously touched upon in chapter 2.2.2 while depicting possible engagement behaviors and scenarios.

Content marketing

Recent conceptualizations of the term 'content marketing' describe it as the process of "creating, distributing and sharing relevant, compelling and timely content to engage customers at the appropriate point in their buying consideration processes, such that it encourages them to convert to a business building outcome" (Wang, Malthouse, Calder & Uzunoglu 2017, pp. 1–2). Another definition is provided by Vollero & Palazzo (2015, p. 37) who suggest that content marketing is about "creating and sharing relevant and valuable content to position a company as a 'thought leader' in its sector to develop engagement and trusted relationships with customers." In contemporary marketing literature, content marketing is referred to as a primary relationship marketing tool that is aimed at providing the means to connect and interact with consumers and customers across different channels.

Unlike traditional advertising, content marketing is based on the development of trust, engagement, and, ultimately, relationships with a targeted audience. As an inbound marketing technique, content marketing provides an alternative to the declining effectiveness of interruptive, traditional marketing nowadays (e.g., advertising and mass media). Instead, it is aimed at attracting and retaining customers by consistently generating and developing relevant and valuable content in various forms while establishing a sustainable relationship by initiating a conversation between customer and firm. As such, it revolves around continuous communication and interaction with both prospects and customers without directly selling to them but intending to deliver consistent and ongoing information, education as well as comprehensive solutions to their problems (Ahmad, Musa & Harun, 2016). The latter is crucial as B2B buyers become more self-directed in searching for solutions to their problems and engaging with vendors (Hoar, Bernoff, Johnson & Evans, 2015). In B2B, content marketing has evolved into a popular and cost-effective approach to drive brand awareness and generate leads. As a result, many firms are allocating increasing marketing budgets and resources to content creation and distribution (Content Marketing Institute, 2017). Furthermore, Kotler, Kartajaya & Setiawan (2017) state that content marketing can deliver a substantial return on investment as one of the most effective approaches in digital marketing these days.

In the scope of CEM, content marketing is utilized to nurture and engage with customers in various ways, such as through a company's website and blog, dedicated landing pages, as well as through other third-party channels (e.g., social media and other platforms). As such, content can come in various forms, such as relevant and helpful articles, videos, infographics, ebooks, and whitepapers, as well as slideshows and podcasts (Jefferson & Tanton, 2015). Given this, it is primarily about story-telling that can be educational, promotional, but also transactional. Customer nurturing is crucial for firms that seek to develop and intensify customer relationships. Thereby, content marketing can provide the means to interact and engage with an audience through various channels such as social networking sites, blogs, video platforms and other media that allow for social dialogue (e.g., email). According to Hollebeek & Macky (2019), engagement and interaction with content marketing prompt a certain level of cognitive, emotional, and behavioral engagement. The latter is further supported

by Schamari & Schaefers (2015). While emotional engagement is based on an individual's hedonic and authenticity motives, cognitive and behavioral engagement with content resources stems from functional and knowledge related motivations that inspire brand-related activity and interaction (Hollebeek, Glynn & Brodie, 2014).

With the right technology in place (e.g. marketing automation tools such as HubSpot, Marketo and Salesforce), companies can measure and track behavioral engagement with content resources across different channels. Further, they can uncover optimization possibilities and ultimately devise the right strategies to improve their content marketing efforts at scale and provide substantial contributions to marketing ROI (Martin, 2016). With the help of marketing automation technologies, firms also can leverage big data that is collected through a variety of customer interactions. Ultimately, this can provide marketers with measurements such as a variety of engagement metrics and user analytics (e.g., website behavior, conversion actions, etc.) to evaluate and optimize their marketing initiatives continuously and gather actionable insights to drive profitable customer action. Finally, it can be concluded that content marketing acts as a significant driver for behavioral engagement with brand-related resources.

Social media marketing

With the emergence of Web 2.0, social media is a phenomenon that disrupted not only today's society but also the business landscape by offering new opportunities for firms and/or brands to connect with their target audience (Ahmad et al., 2016). Today, platforms such as Facebook, Twitter, and Co. enable individuals and organizations alike to communicate in real-time, share easily accessible bits and pieces of information, and build personal relationships. As such, social media is a broad term often used these days. It can be described as a set of online communication means and platforms that are used to share information and create connections (Merriam-Webster, n.d.). Evans (2008) states that social media fosters self-generated, authentic conversations between people who share a common interest while Touchette, Schanksi & Lee (2015) emphasize the collaborative and interactive aspect of it. Ahmad et al. (2016) further concluded that social media is all about connecting with others in various ways.

In recent years, social media has thus evolved into a crucial tool for marketers and businesses to promote their products and services, increase brand awareness, drive sales and build customer relationships (Strauss & Frost, 2014). In contemporary marketing practice, social media is particularly leveraged as a platform to interact with both prospects and customers while engaging and enticing them with helpful content. Thereby, social media covers everything from social networks to bookmarking sites, wikis, blogs and microblogs, rating sites as well as video and other media platforms (Miller, 2012). Hence, it provides valuable outlets for marketers to share information in the form of relevant, engaging content e.g., articles, whitepapers, videos, podcasts, webinars etc.) to establish brand conversations (Scott, 2013; Charlesworth, 2015).

As of today, Facebook remains the largest social networking site with more than 2.41 billion active monthly users worldwide in Q1 2019, closely followed by Instagram and Twitter (Clement, 2019). Furthermore, business networks such as LinkedIn and Xing are also gaining increasing relevance for both B2C and B2B organizations seeking to get in contact with prospects, customers as well as potential hires. As a result, it is no surprise that social media has evolved as an essential marketing channel as it provides global outreach and simplicity to get into a conversation with a company's target audience. Consequently, social media marketing is a widespread business practice these days that is predominantly used as a communication and promotion channel in conjunction with other marketing means.

Social media provides valuable content distribution and user engagement platform and is often discussed in combination with content marketing (Ahmad et al., 2016). Especially an integrated social media content marketing mix has proven to be a cost-effective inbound marketing technique and a fundamental part of the overall digital marketing strategy for many organizations. As a result, more and more firms in the B2C and B2B domain alike embrace the benefits of social media to gather market intelligence by collecting audience insights, increase brand awareness, generate qualified leads and nurture customer relationships in a more interactive and humanized fashion (Gillin & Schwartzman, 2011). Firms can get in contact with prospects and customers at the push of a button while fostering an interactive two-way communication. The latter is crucial

for relationship building among members of social networks as well as between individuals and organizations, which often results in the emergence of so-called virtual brand communities.

Virtual brand communities can be described as digital forums or gathering of people who share common interests around a focal topic. They serve to pool resources, interact and share knowledge and experiences while seeking entertainment, friendship as well as other socio-emotional support among a group of like-minded individuals (Jin, Lee & Cheung, 2010). According to Relling, Schnittka, Sattler, & Johnen (2016), the phenomenon of online communities has to spawn substantial research studies and conceptualizations exploring business and organizational capacities to generate interactive experiences and evoke brand engagement among its members. In fact, relating literature discussing the determinants of customer integration and the concepts of active participation as well as engagement in social networks has considered the underlying motivators (e.g. benefit sought vs. benefit received) for community involvement (Cotte, Chowdhury, Ratneshwar & Ricci, 2006; Mathwick, Wiertz & De Ruyter, 2007; Wang, Baker, Wagner & Wakefield, 2007) as well as its behavioral manifestation (Brodie et al., 2011; Hollebeek et al. 2014). In this regard, the main findings conclude that an individual's motivation to engage in virtual brand communities is influenced by utilitarian and hedonic experiential values, which in case of a positive disconfirmation, prove a stronger incentive to participate in the conversation (Jin et al., 2010). Further support is provided by Loureiro, Pires & Kaufmann (2015) who emphasize the role of satisfaction based on previous experience and argues that a satisfied member is more likely to engage more deeply.

Zhou et al. (2013) further suggest that community members who actively participate in these communities (e.g., liking, sharing, commenting social posts) and hence experience respective content and related conversations as informationally and socially valuable, are developing an even stronger motivation to engage. The latter may be driven by the desire to feel a sense of belonging and the experience of 'flow' as an effect of the involvement in activities that are perceived to be enjoyable, entertaining, and useful (Novak, Hoffman & Yung, 2000). Consequently, it can be noted that the level of engagement, particularly

on social media, might be closely related to the experimental value obtained by community members. The latter is again affected by the relationship and interaction to the engagement object, which in this case is represented by a firm or brand.

Summarizing, customer engagement in the social media environment is primarily viewed from a behavioral perspective. It covers various means of digital, social interaction such as online communication (e.g. blogging, posting, commenting), information search and other forms of participation in online communities (e.g. liking, sharing and contributing) (Van Doorn et al., 2010, Dolan, Conduit & Fahy, 2016, cited in Brodie, Hollebeek & Conduit, 2015). Correspondingly, firms can leverage social media by posting news and other information, sharing pictures and videos while promoting their offerings, and ultimately encouraging brand-related conversations (Luarn, Lin & Chiu, 2016). Finally, social media can be used to gather feedback and derive valuable customer insights while building and sustaining social customer relationships that positively contribute to business outcomes (Jahn & Kunz, 2012). As a result, social media marketing can be viewed as an outlet to drive behavioral engagement with brand-related content.

Email marketing

Email marketing, in its broadest sense, can be defined as "the process of using email to advertise and sell products and services" (Cambridge University Press, 2019). Thereby, it represents a form of direct marketing communication that uses email as a primary channel to deliver messages to a specific and selected audience such as prospects and customers who reside in a company's database. Email marketing usually serves as a commercial tool that typically involves a form of advertising (e.g., promotion of products and services) for demand generation and new customer acquisition. Yet, it can also be used as an informational and educational medium to nurture leads, enhance customer relationships while encouraging repeat business (Fariborzi & Zahedifard, 2012). Email marketing is generally based on a one-to-many communication approach where one email is sent out to a particular group of recipients, thus providing substantial cost and time efficiencies (Dua, 2017).

In comparison with social media and content marketing, email is often viewed as a conventional rather old tactic that has gained increasing popularity with the rise of the internet over two decades ago. Yet, contrary to discussions about the declining relevance of email in today's marketing landscape, which is predominantly shaped by new technological advancements in communication such as instant micro-messaging applications and platforms (e.g., chat and social media), recent studies have proven otherwise. Email remains one of the most effective marketing channels in terms of ROI these days, and the majority of businesses continue to invest in email marketing as a significant channel in their integrated marketing mix (Del Rowe, 2018; Hudák, Kianičková & Madleňák, 2017). The reasons behind that are based on the concept of permission marketing, which assumes that email subscribers have actively consented to receive emails from a particular firm, thus indicating their willingness and interest to receive information.

Permission marketing, as such, has gained tremendous attention lately due to new data privacy regulations (primarily in the EU), which have imposed considerable restrictions on the usage of email as a previously intrusive and spammy mass marketing tool (Meyer, 2018; Holtzman, 2016). In response, email has evolved into a more targeted and relevant marketing medium that is increasingly benefiting from automation and personalization technologies that support businesses in delivering personalized communication at scale. Furthermore, companies see advantages concerning cost-effectiveness, time-savings, as well as user engagement, especially when email marketing is integrated with other tactics such as content marketing and social media (Holtzman, 2016).

However, for email marketing to work, it must be targeted and deliver value in terms of relevant content that is distributed through email messages. Holtzman (2016), for instance, argues that companies should avoid a hard-selling approach in email marketing. Instead, emphasis should be placed on the provision of helpful and actionable information which relates to problem-solving as suggested by the inbound marketing methodology. On top of that, email marketing services are often integrated into full-blown marketing automation software packages (e.g., HubSpot, Marketo, Salesforce and Co.). These especially support

organizations in managing and optimizing their email marketing campaigns while providing a substantial set of email analytics to track engagement behavior (Holtzman, 2016). In this sense, marketers measure email performance by looking at metrics such as delivery- open- and click-rates to detect deficiencies and optimization potential (Hudák et al., 2017). Del Rowe (2017) further suggests that it is equally important to devise an email marketing strategy based on parameters such as email frequency and targeting. The latter becomes increasingly important to help ensure relevance and subsequently engagement in the form of email interaction (e.g., opening and reading an email and clicking on email call-to-actions). In this regard, successful email marketing can be seen as a driver of behavioral engagement with brand-related content, which is especially vital for relationship building and customer nurturing (Del Rowe, 2018).

Conclusion

A few decades ago, firms invested little effort to truly connect, engage, and build relationships with their overall audience and customer base alike. Companies mostly failed to understand the concept and robust nature of engagement. Certainly, the latter is not about mass marketing using traditional and conservative marketing practices that rely on a strong push approach based on siloed, one-way communication. In the past, businesses have mainly focused on proclaiming their greatness and/or superiority over competitors instead of seeking to deliver customer value through unique brand experiences. The digital age, however, has disrupted this old way of thinking by initiating a paradigm shift from outbound to inbound marketing strategies and tactics to adapt to fundamental changes in customer behavior. As today's consumers and customers are constantly flooded with promotional messages, they often tend to become indifferent and ignore interruptive, less targeted, and dull advertising attempts. Consequently, marketing has to find ways to cut through the noise by meeting people at eye level and engage them in meaningful conversations. By applying inbound tactics, businesses aim to do just that by seeking to drive interested customers to the business - just like a metaphoric magnet - and providing added value through information, insight, and inspiration. As described in the previous chapters, the core idea behind inbound marketing is to attract, engage, and delight customers with a set of relevant and highly targeted marketing tactics across the buying journey and customer lifecycle. In this context, the essence of

marketing has transformed from selling to storytelling to create unique brand experiences and relationships which ultimately rely on the premises of both behavioral as well as cognitive and emotional (psychological) engagement. Given this, the concept of engagement has slowly but steadily transcended into the marketing domain, while latest research promises considerable contributions to business outcomes such as customer loyalty and bottom-line profitability.

Summarizing, it can be concluded that businesses can especially drive behavioral customer engagement (BCE) through meaningful customer interactions with the help of inbound marketing tactics. Subsequently, firms can build sustainable customer relationships that form and develop based on a set of unique brand experiences. Further, it is assumed that these experiences eventually translate into individual brand perceptions that inherit both cognitive and emotional attributes (referred to as psychological engagement). Ultimately, the latter may affect the quality of the customer-firm relationship and trigger the formation of loyalty. In the context of CEM, this association is fundamental to understand the role of customer engagement and apply marketing strategies and tactics accordingly to achieve desired results. Thereby, it is equally important to measure customer engagement levels from both a behavioral and psychological perspective to identify and detect optimization potential and evaluate whether current customer engagement marketing (CEM) practices pay off and deliver on the expected returns.

2.2.5 Evaluation and measurement

Today's data-driven and digital world provide various opportunities to analyze, measure, and evaluate an organization's operational activities but also overall business performance. In terms of marketing and customer relationship management, companies are exploiting big data (e.g., using the firm's CRM system, marketing automation tools, and other analytics applications) to derive valuable insights about their prospects and customers throughout the buying journey and customer lifecycle. In the context of CEM, Yu & Yang (2015, p. 329) argue that "almost all organizations use some metrics to understand how their customers think and behave toward their brands and products." In fact, retaining customers is vital to any organization. Hence, one of the most critical concerns for organizations today is to gather and develop customer intelligence that can

be translated into profitable business outcomes by devising the right strategies and tactics to optimize relevant customer metrics. These metrics have been subject to considerable discussion by both scholars and practitioners who have studied KPIs such as satisfaction (Morgan & Rego, 2006), intent to repurchase (Reynolds & Arnold, 2000), likelihood to recommend (Mattila, 2001), service quality (Zeithaml & Parasuraman, 2004), customer engagement (Hollebeek, 2011a; Fleming & Asplund, 2007) and ultimately loyalty (Oliver, 1999).

As customer engagement is the main focus area of this thesis, respective measurements to analyze and evaluate CE are discussed in subsequent sections. Other customer metrics presented above are not considered further as they fall short on explaining and quantifying the various dimensions, such as behavioral, emotional, and cognitive attributes involved in the overall CE construct (as described in chapter 2.1). Concepts such as quality, satisfaction as well as loyalty are primarily viewed as antecedents and/or consequences to CE. Furthermore, there is no distinction made between B2C and B2B customers concerning the respective measurement instruments presented. Although research suggests that there are substantial differences between customer relationships (Lilien & Grewal 2012; Yu, Harter & Fleming, 2014) in a B2C and B2B context (i.e., buyer and firm characteristics, nature of sales process and purchasing cycles, number of touchpoints, elements in the marketing mix and communication), it can be noted that the suggested measurements in the scope of CEM may be applicable to both B2C and B2B customers.

Furthermore, a recent study by Yu & Yang, who investigated the 'measurement equivalence of a concise customer engagement metric across country, language, and customer types,' no clear indication of a significant difference between B2C and B2B customers was detected when it comes to CE dimensions. This finding again emphasizes the notion that despite functional and structural differences within the buying process and overall customer management, both B2C and B2B relationships mainly form between individuals rather than organizational constructs. More so, they are subject to human features such as behaviors and emotional attributes (Yu & Yang, 2015; Singh et al., 2010). Given this, the following chapters provide an overview of possible means to measure both the

behavior aspect of CE (previously referred to as BCE) and the psychological part of CE (referred to as PCE).

Behavioral customer engagement (BCE)

As defined in chapter 2.1.2, behavioral customer engagement (BCE) primarily refers to the totality of physical, observable, and quantitatively measurable actions that a customer performs throughout the participation and interaction with brand-related activities initiated by the firm. To get insights on customer behavior and draw relevant conclusions about the way customers engage with a brand from a behavioral perspective, companies can quantify, measure and analyze customer brand encounters with a variety of analytics tools (e.g., marketing automation platforms like HubSpot, Marketo, and Co). Today's marketing technologies enable firms to report on various interaction-based KPIs to facilitate reporting, aid in decision making, and evaluate the performance of business activities such as the effectiveness of marketing channels and campaigns. In consideration of the variety and multitude of possible customer touchpoints in today's digital world, sufficient reporting can be paramount to business success. Consequently, the first step to measure BCE (as defined in the context of this thesis) in a structured and systematic fashion requires to be aware of all the potential actions an individual can perform when engaging with a company's marketing means.

Table 2 provides a consolidated overview of possible brand touchpoints which are driven by relevant CEM tactics as well as respective engagement behaviors and the associated quantitative metrics (Cvitanović, 2018; Martin, 2016; Dolan et al., 2016, as cited in Brodie et al., 2015; Ahmad et. al., 2016).

TABLE 2: ONLINE BRAND ENGAGEMENT BEHAVIORS AND MEASUREMENTS

Brand touchpoints (CEM tactics)	Engagement Behaviours	Metrics
Social media marketing • Social media platforms (e.g. Facebook, Twitter, LinkedIn etc.) • Brand posts	*Interacting* with brand-related content on social media platforms (liking, commenting/contributing to and/or sharing)	→ Number of likes, shares, comments → Social media clicks → Click-rate → Impressions
Content marketing • Website • Blog • Landing pages • Content resources	1. *Accessing/visiting* a company's website, blog and/or landing pages (e.g. through search, social media or referrals) 2. *Consuming* (e.g. skimming, scanning, actively reading etc.) an article/blog post, and/or ungated content on a web- or landing page (e.g. video, webinars, podcasts, etc.) 3. *Converting* on a landing page/website by purchasing of products/services, downloading gated content (e.g. ebooks, papers), submitting a form(e.g. contact, newsletter sign-up etc.)	→ Visits/pageviews → Sessions → Clicks, click-rate → Bounce/Exit rate → Duration/time on page → Pages/session → Page/scroll depth → Clicks, hits → Conversion rate → Data collection (e.g. personal and demographic data)
Email marketing • Distributed content embedded in email as a communication medium	*Interacting* (opening, reading, clicking) with marketing emails (i.e. 1:many communication) such as newsletters and promotional offers.	→ Number of emails opened, clicked → Open-rate, click-rate → Number of bounces, unsubscribes

As depicted in table 2, each brand touchpoint that allows for customer engagement behavior is associated with a set of different measurements that can be applied to track and evaluate a specific activity or interaction. These interactions, however, do not necessarily follow a logical order but are primarily affected by how a customer is exposed to brand-related content through nurturing campaigns or general promotion tactics initiated by the firm. As such, customers tend to jump between several channels and media, which is especially encouraged using an integrated inbound marketing approach.

A possible customer journey that involves a large variety of touchpoints can be described as follows: The customer browses through her newsfeed on social media and recognizes a post by the brand he has just purchased or finds himself in a contractual relationship. She quickly scans the content of the post and is attracted by a particular bit of information that prompts for a compelling call to action. The latter can be a special offer or a valuable resource such as an ebook that the brand is promoting and which is ideally tailored to a problem that the customer is currently facing (e.g., product usage and training, educational information, etc.). As she becomes interested to learn more about the offer, she clicks a link that is provided in the post and is guided to the company's website or a particular landing page. Now she's able to satisfy her information need by consuming the content provided to her. Meanwhile, she is confronted with

another call to action to engage more deeply with the content provided by downloading an additional content piece, watching a video, submit a form to contact the company or complete a purchase. Eventually, she will receive an email from the company that asks for feedback or recommends additional content material that is tailored to her needs and encourages further engagement behavior such as opening and clicking the email only to be guided to another brand touchpoint.

In summary, it can be noted that there are several possibilities of driving customer interactions and, thereby, behavioral engagement through a variety of firm-initiated brand touchpoints. The latter may form a continuous and increasingly integrated journey to engage customers across digital channels and media.

Psychological customer engagement (PCE)

Complementary to behavioral customer engagement (BCE), psychological customer engagement looks at both the emotional and cognitive manifestation of CE, which takes place in a customer's mind. As described in chapter 2.1.2, PCE is defined as a set of intangible, psychological brand perceptions towards a brand (as engagement object) which are shaped throughout the customer-firm relationship. Despite a few isolated measurement instruments such as NPS (Net Promoter Score), customer satisfaction (CSAT), and loyalty, a literature review revealed only few considerable conceptualizations of a metric that especially accounts for the emotional aspect of CE.

One of the most commonly referenced instruments is the so-called CE11 Customer Engagement metric, which was developed by the Gallup Group and represented a consulting-led, proprietary measure of rational and emotional attributes (Hollebeek, 2011a). The CE11 framework incorporates both the cognitive and emotional dimensions of CE by measuring rational formulations of customer loyalty as well as the emotional attachment to a brand or firm. While rational loyalty as a component includes satisfaction, intent to repurchase as well the general likelihood to recommend the brand or firm (similar to NPS), the emotional attachment comprises a set of distinct attributes such as perceived confidence, pride, passion as well as integrity which are associated with brand or firm. These perceptions are assumed to contribute to the emotional disposition of

a customer towards a brand and capture mental processes within a customer's mind, which are shaped by the overall customer experience (Appelbaum, 2001).

With the CE11 framework, firms are provided with a simple yet powerful measurement to quantify a customer's rational loyalty (L3) and emotional attachment (A8) with the help of 11 distinct questions (L3 + A8 = CE11). The questionnaire uses a five-point Likert scale to rate a customer's position or attitude regarding a set of statements that relate to the assessment of loyalty and states of emotional connectedness (Appendix 3 - CE11 Questionnaire). Therefore, the measurement scale for each question ranges from one to five, and the final CE score is computed by taking the mean of the total sum of all questions (Yu & Yang, 2015). The final score allows firms to categorize their customer base into four distinct segments, such as:

- Fully engaged customers who display both strong rational loyalty and emotional attachment and thus represent a firm's most valuable customers.

- Engaged customers who show a medium score and are on the verge of developing stronger emotional connectedness. A company must nurture this customer segment to move customers further up on the engagement ladder.

- Disengaged customers who have rationally and emotionally neutral disposition towards the brand or firm. Hence, a firm needs to invest substantial efforts in eliciting desired engagement levels through targeted means such as creating a superior product or service experience and delighting customers throughout their lifetime.

- Actively disengaged customers who may show a substantial risk of churning by being actively antagonistic and emotionally detached from the brand or firm.

According to Appelbaum (2001), the goal of every business should be to drive customers up the ladder from provisionally satisfied to rationally loyal and ultimately emotionally engaged to succeed in the long run. Given this, the CE11 measurement should present a macro-level indicator of psychological engagement. Moreover, it may also provide insights into the health of a firm's customer base by enabling businesses to measure engagement levels from fully

engaged to actively disengaged. Gallup (2009) reported that the majority of organizations today have more actively disengaged than fully engaged customers based on an average engagement ratio of 0:8:1 (fully engaged to actively disengaged).

Furthermore, an extensive study where Gallup surveyed more than 3500 customers from different industries, as well as product and service categories, provided evidence for the significant role of emotional attachment, which is considerably existent in every brand encounter, no matter the industry or customer type. The study also revealed that service features often become a driver of emotional experiences, while both rational and emotional attributes can be linked to key business performance metrics (Appelbaum, 2001). In this respect, Gallup (2009) emphasizes the association of CE with favorable business outcomes by stating that fully engaged customers tend to display on average a more than 20% percent premium in terms of profitability, revenue, the share of wallet as well as relationship growth in comparison to the average customer.

In contrast, highly disengaged customers tend to show almost more than a 10% decrease in the same measures. However, recent criticism of the CE11 measurement framework questions the predictive capabilities as well as correlations to quantitative and monetary business outcomes. Sauro (2019) annotates that there is no data or scientific evidence that indicates a powerful linkage between the CE11 dimensions and a firm's financial performance.

Nevertheless, it can be noted that the CE11 measurement is closely related to the proposed CE conceptualizations in contemporary marketing literature, which have been described in chapter 2.1.5 (Hollebeek, 2011a). According to Appelbaum (2001), the instrument can provide a powerful predictor of customer loyalty while Gallup (2009) further explains that the metric is straightforward and useful since it leverages the psychology of human emotions and the science behind behavioral economics. The latter was led by famous scientists such as Richard Thaler, Angus Deaton, Nobel Prize winner Daniel Kahneman and others who concluded that rational considerations trigger around 30% of human decision-making. The remaining two-thirds of behaviors are thus said to be based on emotional factors that guide human actions and translate into behavioral

manifestations of emotional and cognitive responses. Given this, it can be concluded that the CE11 framework represents a suitable measurement tool that was applied in further primary research, as described in subsequent chapters of this thesis.

3. Research Methodology and Conceptual Model

Based on the research questions and objectives described in chapter 1.3, this chapter outlines the research methodology, including the overall research scope and design. Further, it provides an overview of the guiding research assumptions combined in a conceptual model as well as the limitations of this study.

3.1 Research design

Following a primarily deductive and explanatory research approach, the research design incorporated both secondary (desk) and primary (field) research with a major focus placed on a profound literature review on the topic of customer engagement in contemporary marketing and business literature. Popular journals, articles, books, and research papers were reviewed. Particularly the work and insights provided by Pansari & Kumar (2017) as well as Hollebeek (2011a) turned out to be highly beneficial to get a well-found overview on the topic of customer engagement in a conceptual manner.

The applied research design can be described as both descriptive and explanatory, whereas the main goal was to detect causal relationships between two primary concepts and/or variables (Saunders, Lewis, & Thornhill, 2009). Since descriptive research seeks to describe further a certain phenomenon or idea which has been explored or conceptualized in previous research, the main part of this thesis, however, was based on explanatory research. The latter is also referred to as causal research, which focuses on "the relationship between an event (the cause) and a second event (the effect) when the second event is a consequence of the first" (Mooi & Sarstedt 2011, p.17). Yet, the scientific meaning of causality suggests that a cause may only present one of many possible influencing factors when a change in one variable (independent) triggers a change to another (dependent) while especially the linkage between cause and effect tends to be probabilistic (Malhotra, 1993).

One of the main research objectives guiding this thesis was to study the relationship and covariance of two or more variables, which are represented by behavioral customer engagement (BCE) and psychological customer engagement (PCE). In contrast to exploratory research, descriptive, and causal research methods offered a more rigid, standardized, and structured approach designed to test and explain phenomena which originated from exploratory research. In fact, this type of research can serve to be essentially valuable to both academicians and practitioners in a given field by not only describing but also validating and explaining real-world events and developing practical recommendations to make well-informed decisions (Lynn, 2002). Correspondingly, a combination of both deductive and inductive elements, was applied to answer the given research questions and meet respective research objectives. As such, secondary (desk) and primary (field) research were required to study and practically validate the conceptual nature of the engagement construct in a contemporary marketing context based on a structured research process.

First, secondary research served to explore and describe the existing conceptualizations of customer engagement. In addition, relevant literature, as well as recent benchmark studies and industry reports, provided a thorough baseline for connecting the subject of customer engagement with contemporary marketing strategies and tactics (i.e., Inbound marketing methodology). As secondary research provided an exploratory baseline and theory foundation, the most important part of this thesis consisted of primary research activities. The latter covered quantitative data collection and the application of empirical methods such as descriptive and inferential statistics. In terms of data collection, two methods were applied, such as quantitative observations/ or database analysis as well as quantitative surveys.

In the scope of conducting quantitative observations, the objective was to analyze behavioral customer engagement (BCE) based on online interaction data, which was retrieved from the case company's CRM system. Thereby, a given convenience sample was analyzed by applying a preliminary customer behavior scoring model. The model was designed to consolidate and summarize

behavioral customer data and thus served as a prerequisite to compute a behavior-based customer engagement (BCE) score. In subsequent research steps, the so-called BCE score was then used as the independent variable in a regression model.

Second, quantitative online surveys were conducted among the same group of customers. The goal was to measure and quantify psychological customer engagement (PCE) with the help of the CE11 questionnaire developed by Gallup Inc. (2009). The latter was selected as the most suitable tool to assess rational loyalty and emotional attachment towards the case company and its offering. Additional information on the questionnaire design is provided in chapter 4.1.2. The primary objective was to gather and quantify insights about the (emotional and cognitive) brand perceptions of the respective customer groups, which were consolidated into a psychological customer engagement (PCE) score. Given this, the PCE score served as the dependent variable in the regression model.

Third, descriptive and inferential analysis was performed by applying basic statistics (measures of centrality and dispersion) as well as correlation and regression techniques. Thereby, the aim was to validate a set of research propositions around the relationship between BCE and PCE scores, which are further consolidated in a conceptual model in the following chapter. Finally, respective findings from the empirical analysis were presented in a and summarized in a structured manner which led to the development of a holistic two-dimensional Customer Engagement Marketing (CEM) Framework. Based on that, practical recommendations for the case company (that can be adapted by other B2B firms) were provided together with a discussion of respective implications and future research.

A brief recap and overview of the research process are provided in figure 7, which includes the main research objectives and milestones. The latter serves to efficiently address the main research questions (formulated in chapter 1.3) with clear and actionable research steps that account for the trackability and attainability of the research project.

FIGURE 8: RESEARCH MILESTONES
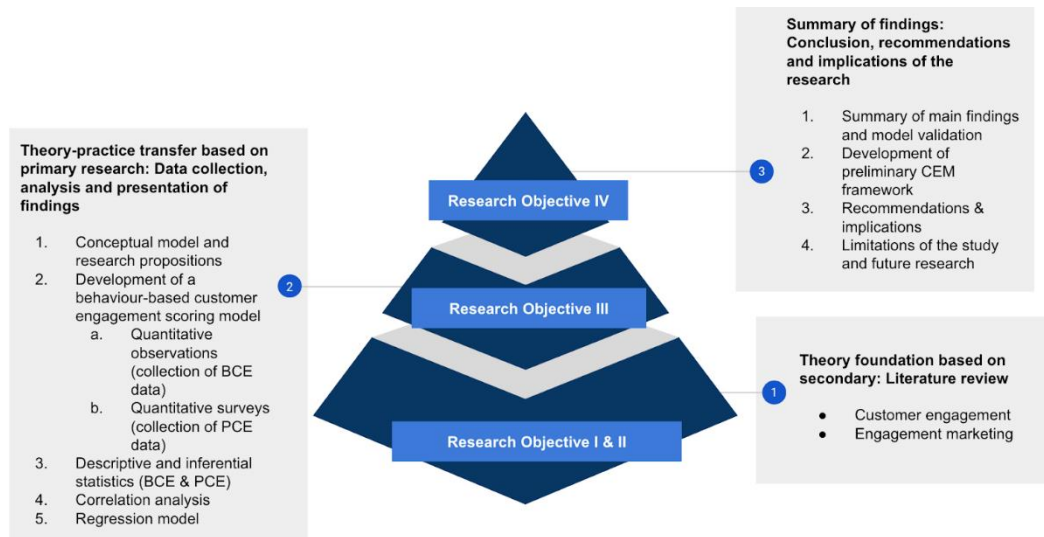
3.2 Research propositions and conceptual model

Based on the findings and insights retrieved from the literature review and discussion in the previous chapters, this chapter introduces a conceptual model, as shown in figure 8, which guides subsequent primary research activities. The so-called Customer Engagement Triad combines a set of structured research propositions based on which correlation, and regression analysis was performed.

FIGURE 9: CONCEPTUAL MODEL
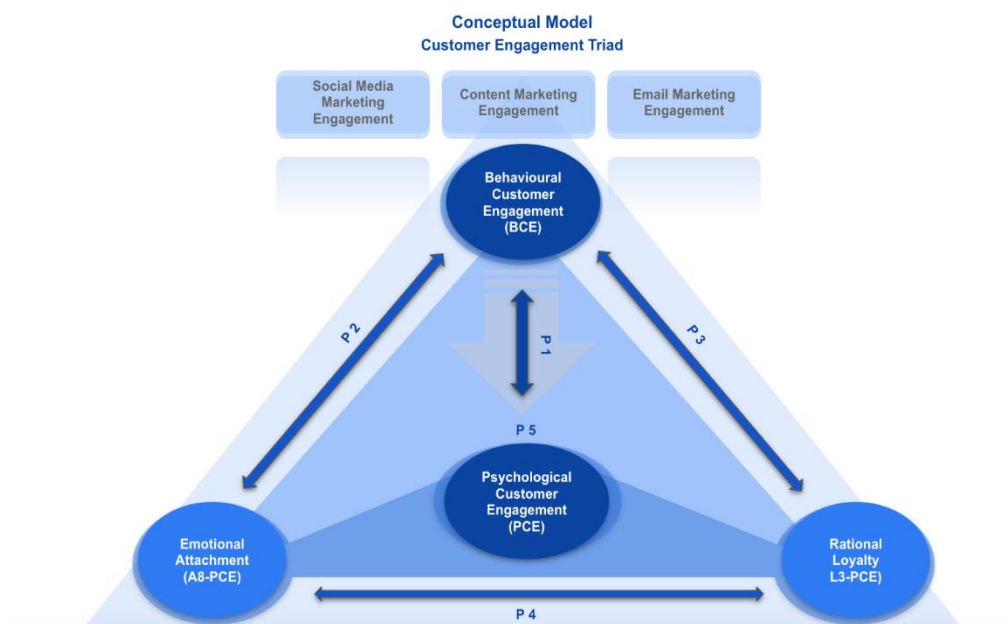
The conceptual model illustrated in figure 8 shows three primary, interrelated concepts based on the assumed relationships between the CE dimensions. As such, a causal relationship between behavioral customer engagement (BCE) and psychological customer engagement (PCE) is proposed. Furthermore, PCE as a dimension is separated into two major areas, such as rational loyalty and emotional attachment. This categorization is also suggested by Gallup (2009) in the context of their CE11 methodology. While rational loyalty covers measurements of satisfaction, intent to repurchase, and intent to recommend, emotional attachment seeks to quantify a customer's perceived emotional connection or attitude toward a firm or brand (Appelbaum, 2001). Rational loyalty thus considers the rationa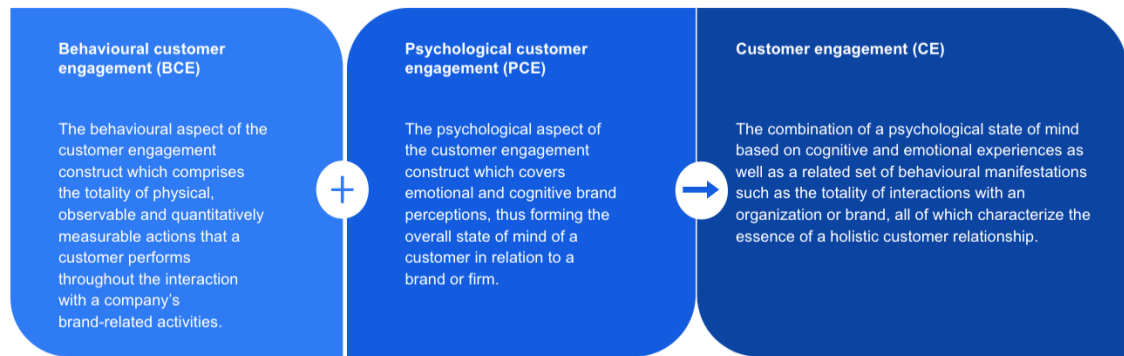l disposition towards a brand. This contention is related to the interpretation of the cognitive and behavioral dimensions of the CE construct, as discussed by Brodie et al. (2011), Hollebeck (2011a), Bakker & Schaufeli (2008) and Salanova et al. (2005).

In contrast, emotional attachment focuses on the emotional connection or bonding that evolves as part of delightful customer experiences. Hollebeck (2011b) describes this 'emotional activity' as an expression of positive feelings such as pride, inspiration, or excitement. Appelbaum (2001) further suggests that when both rational loyalty and emotional attachment are significant, customers tend to prefer a product or brand beyond the mere fulfillment of a need.
In support of this notion, it was assumed that customers might develop a brand preference as well as loyalty based on a delightful experience. The latter might be shaped by emotional and cognitive perceptions (psychological engagement), which are primarily influenced and manifested through a set of brand-related interactions (behavioral engagement). Furthermore, it was suggested that these brand-related behaviors could be encouraged by customer engagement marketing initiatives (i.e., content-, social media- and email marketing tactics), which provide an outlet for enabling online brand touchpoints.

To explain and describe related dimensions and the assumed relationship in a comprehensible context, figure 9 recapitulates the guiding definitions of BCE and PCE, which are central to the conceptual model and related research assumptions.

Behavioural customer engagement (BCE)

The behavioural aspect of the customer engagement construct which comprises the totality of physical, observable and quantitatively measurable actions that a customer performs throughout the interaction with a company's brand-related activities.

Psychological customer engagement (PCE)

The psychological aspect of the customer engagement construct which covers emotional and cognitive brand perceptions, thus forming the overall state of mind of a customer in relation to a brand or firm.

Customer engagement (CE)

The combination of a psychological state of mind based on cognitive and emotional experiences as well as a related set of behavioural manifestations such as the totality of interactions with an organization or brand, all of which characterize the essence of a holistic customer relationship.

The underlying propositions of the Customer Engagement Triad visualize the nature of the assumed relationship between the different dimensions of CE and can be described as follows:

1. *Proposition: Higher BCE scores are associated with higher PCE scores. (Positive Correlation)*

It was assumed that high levels of customer interaction with online marketing resources such as website, blog and landing pages as well as other means of delivering and/or distributing branded content (i.e., content-, email- and social media marketing) are positively associated with higher psychological customer engagement (PCE) scores. Correspondingly, customers who actively engage and interact with firm-initiated marketing activities and brand-related content assets in a frequent manner are more involved with a brand. The level of involvement and/or participation can be driven by a specific motivation and interest to dedicate time and effort to the customer-firm relationship. Thus, it was proposed that these customers tend to display somewhat positive emotional and cognitive perceptions towards the firm or brand as opposed to customers who are actively disengaged from a behavioral perspective.

2. *Proposition: Higher BCE scores are associated with higher Emotional Attachment (A8-PCE). (Positive Correlation)*

It was further hypothesized that the level of behavioral customer engagement provides insights on the peculiarity of emotional attachment in the form of brand

pride, confidence, passion as well as integrity as defined in the CE11 framework provided by Gallup Inc. (2009). As one of two dimensions that contribute to the formation of psychological customer engagement, especially the emotional component, was assumed to be a critical factor that drives customer involvement and, thus, behavioral engagement. For instance, customers who are passionate about a brand are more likely to engage with brand-related content as compared to those who are indifferent and thus not willing to invest time or effort in interacting with the company.

3.   Proposition: Higher BCE scores are associated with higher Rational Loyalty (L3-PCE). (Positive Correlation)

It was further proposed that customers who tend to show active behavioral engagement with a firm's brand-related resources and marketing activities are likewise more inclined to form dispositions of rational loyalty. The latter carries cognitive stimulation which evokes an inner satisfaction resulting from perceived meaningful interaction and delightful experiences. Furthermore, increased behavioral engagement and thus, participation in the brand relationship may encourage customers to repurchase or even recommend the brand to others.

4.   Proposition: Higher Emotional Attachment (A8-PCE) is associated with higher Rational Loyalty (L3-PCE). (Positive Correlation)

The two main dimensions that are incorporated into the psychological engagement measurement (CE11 framework) were presumed to be intercorrelated. This notion is also supported by Gallup Inc. (2009) and Appelbaum (2001), who states that customers who score high on one dimension also tend to have higher scores on the other dimension. Consequently, customers who are emotionally attached to a brand or firm tend to be more rationally loyal than those customers who have neutral or negative brand perceptions.

5.   Proposition: An increase in BCE scores leads to a rise in PCE scores. (Causal Relationship)

The last but in fact, the most essential proposition in the course of this thesis focused on the potential causal relationship between behavioral customer engagement and psychological customer engagement. Given the premise of causality, this means that a change in the independent variable (in this case, BCE) triggers a difference in the dependent variable (in this case, PCE). Hence, it is suggested that the behavioral manifestation of customer engagement can be viewed as an observable, physical expression of the state of mind a customer finds herself in. As a result, customers who are highly engaged with a brand and thus show regular and continuous interaction with a firm's brand-related activities form stronger brand perceptions that are naturally shaped throughout their experiences with that brand or firm. These may, in fact, not only be product-related but also happen on various channels and touchpoints in the customer journey.

Finally, this led to the assumption that a customer's behavioral engagement with brand-related resources provides a considerable contribution to psychological meeting. The latter carries both cognitive and emotional attributes that shape a customer's overall brand perception or image. In this context, brand image is especially crucial when it comes to the formation of loyalty due to the association with profitable business outcomes, which is discussed in contemporary literature. In conclusion, the last research proposition should provide evidence for the predictive power of the behavioral engagement dimension.

3.3 Research scope and limitations

The primary motivation of this thesis was to understand and explore the concept of customer engagement as well as how its behavioral manifestation relates to and influences the psychological perceptions towards a B2B brand or firm. In the context of customer engagement marketing (CEM), it was assumed that brand-related touchpoints throughout the customer lifecycle provide an essential outlet to drive behavioral engagement, which eventually affects the formation of emotional and cognitive dispositions towards the brand relationship. The main objective, therefore, was to validate whether the extent of behavioral customer engagement (BCE) can predict psychological customer engagement levels by applying a simple linear regression model.

Concerning the overall scope, it should be pointed out that the research conducted within the course of this thesis was especially applied to the example of the case company. Thus, preliminary research findings are limited since they cannot be significantly extrapolated to the broader industry. Instead, results are situational by nature and specific to the case company and its customer base. However, the main findings presented in the conclusion may still provide useful insights, whether similar investigations on behavioral and psychological customer engagement across companies and industries can be of further interest and relevance.

Furthermore, it must be noted that the research project focused on one company division (injixo) only due to its strategic importance and operational business focus. Research is thereby restricted to one product brand in the company's portfolio and the respective customer base. Despite a potentially large data set, it can also be noted that the actual convenience sample of customers subject to correlation and regression analysis was limited to the number of final responses that were collected from the quantitative survey. Hence, it can be stated that the limited generalizability of findings was accepted due to the absence of statistical inferences about the sample size. Also, it should be considered that the primary purpose of the study was to gather preliminary insights about the relation of the behavioral and psychological dimensions of customer engagement among a specific group of customers while respective findings were intended to trigger future research. Therefore, ensuring the statistical significance of research findings appeared to be a trivial concern as the primary goal was to provide a first step in the right direction by validating the research propositions for the situation or scope in which the study was conducted. In this respect, it is worthwhile to point out that an analysis of the current inbound tactics and related marketing effectiveness at the case company was beyond the scope of this thesis.

In conclusion, the research scope is mainly restricted by the context (i.e., case company), data collection, but also the respective time frame in which the research was performed. Additionally, time, budget, and accessibility of data mainly affected the extent and depth of primary research activities. In particular, participant recruitment for the quantitative questionnaire turned out to be difficult as it strongly depended on the willingness of customers to participate in the online

survey despite various invitation attempts. A monetary incentive in return for taking the survey may be a good instrument to encourage response rates for future research initiatives. Furthermore, due to the nature of the research design, this thesis concluded with a set of recommendations and a preliminary conceptualization of a practical Customer Engagement Marketing Framework. Correspondingly, the research did not cover a real implementation case and respective evaluation of the proposed recommendations at the case company. More so, it was not evaluated/assessed whether the contribution of devised marketing strategies and tactics to provide an impact on customer engagement levels as well as business outcomes such as ROI and customer loyalty. Consequently, strategic and operational suggestions for driving customer engagement through targeted inbound marketing practices require further testing and investigation. The latter also applies to general recommendations to the broader B2B industry. Therefore, it is strongly suggested to perform future in-depth research to cross-validate the findings and investigate whether and how they may apply to other B2B firms across industry sectors and geographies.

4. Data Collection, Analysis and Research Results

This chapter describes the overall data collection approach and provides insights on the preparation and modeling of behavioral and psychological customer engagement data using descriptive as well as inferential statistics. Ultimately, the main findings are presented and discussed in relation to the research propositions previously defined in chapter 3.

4.1 Data collection

As laid down in the research methodology of this thesis, primary data was gathered by making use of data collection techniques such as quantitative observations as well as online questionnaires in two dedicated research phases. Subsequent analysis steps such as data modeling and overall empirical analysis led to the final research phase, which involved the presentation and discussion of the research results. Following this, the main findings were ultimately integrated into a preliminary practical framework. Figure 10 provides a brief overview of the general time frame for data collection and subsequent research steps.

FIGURE 11: DATA COLLECTION TIMEFRAME AND PROCESS
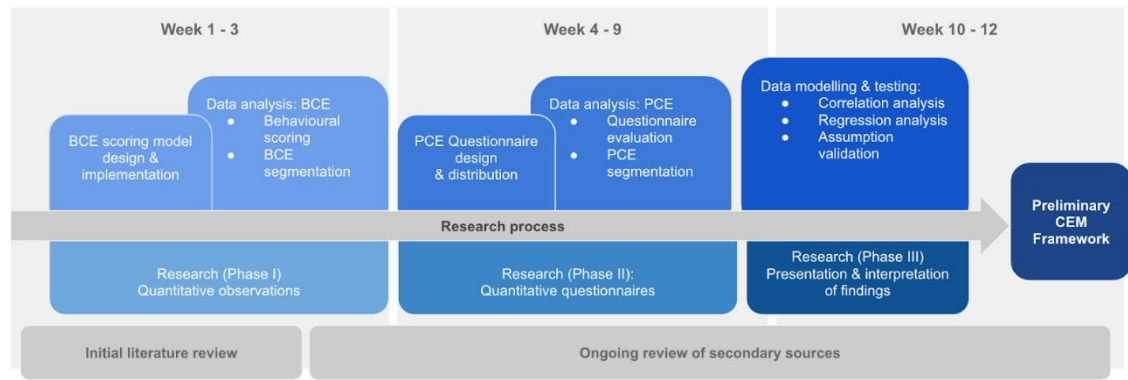
4.1.1 Quantitative observations

As part of the research phase I, quantitative observations were the first step in the research process during and after an initial but substantial literature review. In scientific research, observation is a broad term that can describe a variety of techniques and practices, whereas observed data generally represents any sort of empirical data regardless of the collection method (Suen & Ary, 2014). Especially direct behavioral observations are often stated to be superior to other means of data collection (e.g., using questionnaires, experiments, etc.) as it requires relatively little conceptual inference of the researcher to connect corresponding data to a particular phenomenon that is being studied. Suen & Ary (2014) further argue that "what is being observed is in fact what is being studied /and/ what is being studied is "there" as plainly as the eyes can see." Hence, the data collection process can be described as systematic and less prone to bias given an environment where observations are rigidly controlled and recorded, the nature of the information is well-defined, and the assessment of data quality as well as subsequent analysis can be performed diligently (Suen & Ary, 2014).

Consequently, the main advantage of this approach is based on its objectivity and replicability, which can lead to more credible and reliable results. However, the disadvantages might as well exist, primarily when a complex behavioral phenomenon is studied and reduced to a few quantifiable variables. Subsequently, this may limit insights gathered and can overly simplify the analysis subject. As a result, findings may turn out to be incomplete or superficial at times and can only partially explain the underlying phenomenon or occurrence of real events (Suen & Ary, 2014).

In the context of this thesis, the main focus was set to the collection of direct quantitative observations of customer engagement behavior within a systematic and controlled environment. More precisely, online interaction data were gathered using an existing information management platform that was the case company's CRM system and marketing automation tool (i.e., HubSpot). Appendix 4 (Interaction data categories and types) provides an overview of the available interaction data that were reviewed and utilized to generate initial insights about the behavioral customer engagement (BCE) dimension. In general terms, the collected data are based on an individual contact-level and can be categorized into primary demographic and geographic identifiers (i.e., name, email address, country, and company) as well as behavioral observations or variables. The latter specifically covered various online interaction data (i.e., website analytics, conversion activities, email- and social media interaction) recorded in the company's CRM system. Thereby, it is essential to note that the information collected is limited by the data properties provided by the technical tracking options of the CRM system and a recording period starting in February 2017 when the system was introduced. Furthermore, the totality of observations only provided a snapshot of the time until the data was ultimately exported for subsequent analysis steps on October 15, 2019.

The customer group for which the data was collected is made up of a population subset of 630 customer contacts (English speaking customer segment) that are stored and tracked in the company's CRM system. In respect of subsequent empirical analysis, it needs to be pointed out that random sampling techniques were not applied at this stage. Instead, a customer set that met specific criteria and specifications during the analysis phase (similar to convenience or purposive sampling) was selected as the data set for analysis. In this context, customers were further defined as individual person-related contacts (i.e., lifecycle stage = customer) that have dedicated touchpoints with the products and services as well as brand-related activities of the case company, regardless of their persona (which is based on role and job title), type and level of usage. The latter can vary across the population cluster and is not subject to the analysis due to limited insights that can be extracted from the company's CRM system to date. The following criteria were considered in the selection procedure:

1. Availability and accuracy of customer data records in the case company's CRM system (i.e., HubSpot) for a timeframe of minimum one year (became a customer date is before 01/06/2018). Customer data in this sense primarily refers to verifiable information on contact identifiers (i.e. name, email, company, country) as well as the availability of interaction data (i.e. website-, email-, conversion- and social media interaction) which provide insights on a contact's behavioral customer engagement (BCE) with brand-related assets and activities.

2. Geographic segmentation based on country and location (United States, Canada, United Kingdom, Ireland). The latter was chosen since these English-speaking countries represent the company's primary target regions for marketing operations.
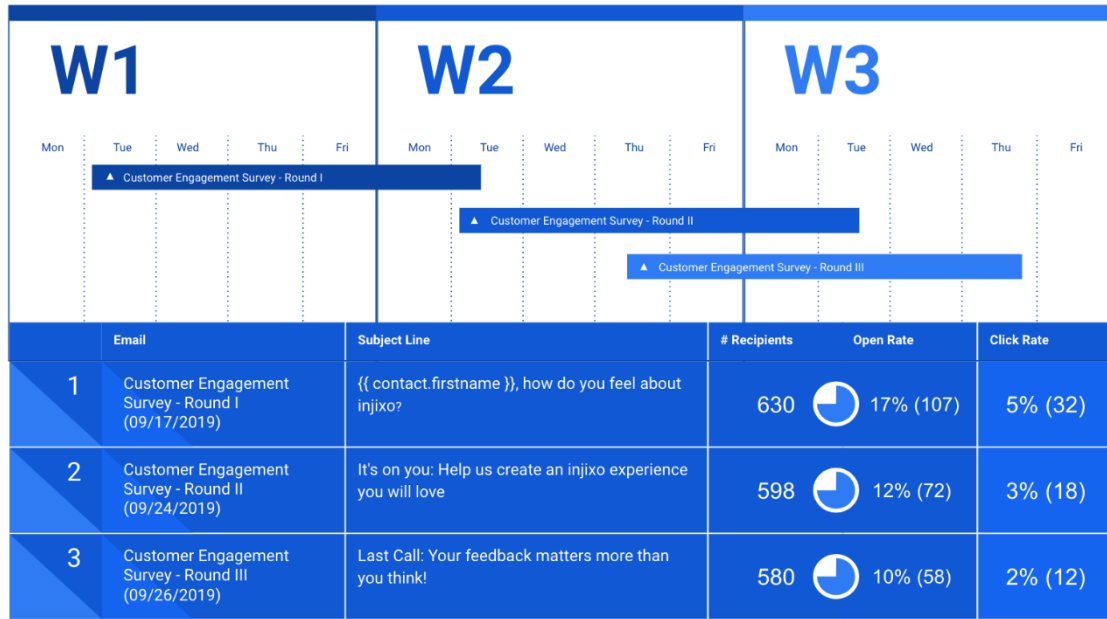
4.1.2 Quantitative questionnaire

In research phase II, online surveys were conducted among the same group of customers (sampling frame) previously selected for quantitative observation in research phase I. Surveys are particularly useful in non-experimental and descriptive research designs, to collect information on attitudes and behavior to understand and describe real events (Mathers, Fox & Hunn, 1998). They are the most common research method to collect quantitative data through a set of questions that can be closed- or open-ended. Moreover, questionnaires usually follow a standardized design and are provided either in digital or print form to a selected group of participants (Lavrakas, 2008). As such, this data collection method is used in a variety of research areas such as market research, customer feedback, opinion polls, and general social science (O'Leary, 2014).

In the context of this thesis, cross-sectional surveys (carried out at a given point in time) were conducted within a timeframe of four weeks. The actual questionnaire was standardized quantitative, and based on closed-end questions. These were further adapted from the CE11 framework provided by Gallup Inc (2009) with a pre-existing questionnaire design composed of 11 distinct questions. Thereby, the questionnaire design followed a simple logic and was structured into two parts. The first part comprised three questions to assess a customer's rational loyalty (referred to as L3) based on satisfaction, intent to repurchase, and intent to recommend the brand. The second part covered a set

of eight questions to evaluate a customer's emotional disposition or attachment (referred to as A8) in terms of distinct attributes such as confidence, integrity, pride, and passion associated with the brand (Appelbaum, 2001). The measurement scale of the questionnaire was based on a five-point Likert scale, which typically serves to advise respondents to rate the accuracy of a given statement based on an individual assessment. Moreover, the Likert scale is an attitudinal measurement with five response alternatives: (i.e., strongly agree, agree, neither agree nor disagree and strongly disagree) and represents a popular instrument that is widely used among extension professionals to measure character and personality traits (Boone & Boone, 2012). An overview of the adapted questionnaire design tailored to the respective audience of customers at the case company can be retrieved from Appendix 5 (Online survey design).

As mentioned earlier, online surveys among the given population subset (or customer segment) of 630 English speaking customers was conducted to increase the likelihood of gathering a suitable amount of survey responses. To collect questionnaire responses, a structured survey distribution plan was followed, as illustrated in figure 11. The distribution plan involved a dedicated email campaign that was sent to the respective customer segment to invite them to participate in the online survey.

	Email	Subject Line	# Recipients	Open Rate	Click Rate
1	Customer Engagement Survey - Round I (09/17/2019)	{{ contact.firstname }}, how do you feel about injixo?	630	17% (107)	5% (32)
2	Customer Engagement Survey - Round II (09/24/2019)	It's on you: Help us create an injixo experience you will love	598	12% (72)	3% (18)
3	Customer Engagement Survey - Round III (09/26/2019)	Last Call: Your feedback matters more than you think!	580	10% (58)	2% (12)

Over a period of 3 weeks (September - October, 2019), the author scheduled various email sent-outs to UK and US-based customers using different subject lines and call to actions to increase email open rates and likewise encourage survey responses. To complement the survey distribution plan, Appendix 6 (Survey email invitation template) shows the email template that was used for survey invitations. Thereby, each email contained a campaign link directing to the survey landing page which was set up using an online survey tool. In this respect, SurveyMonkey was chosen since the company already owned a premium subscription and the required technical and analytical capabilities to integrate the survey application with the company's CRM system. The integration especially offered the benefit to access, record and report on survey completions in one single analytics platform which turned out to be valuable in further analysis steps.

4.2 Data preparation and analysis

Today's age of big data can leave businesses overwhelmed with information. However, to translate this information into meaningful and actionable insights, firms need to make sense of the data available to them by applying certain techniques which can facilitate analysis and support in decision making by uncovering patterns, connections and/or relationships in the data. Based on the data collection process and respective methods as described in the previous chapter, this chapter serves to explain the procedures that were undertaken for

data preparation and analysis. Particularly data preparation and treatment are essential to ensure data validity, accuracy and completeness. In quantitative research, the latter can be accomplished by following dedicated pre-processing steps to prepare data for analysis such as data entry, cleaning and formatting or coding (MacIntosh & Gorman, 2015).

In the context of this thesis, particularly data cleaning was used to anonymize parts of the data gathered through quantitative observations and questionnaires by removing personal information such as name and email address of customers to comply with data privacy regulations of the case company. Furthermore, techniques such as data aggregation and segmentation were applied to consolidate respective insights gathered from both data collection instruments into two variables of interest (behavioral and psychological engagement data sets). Eventually, both data sets were used in subsequent inferential or multivariate analysis.

The application of inferential statistics served to identify relationships between the variables (i.e. regression, correlation). It generally represents one out of two common data analysis techniques. The other approach which is often utilized in quantitative studies is descriptive statistics (or univariate analysis). It aims to summarize and discover relevant patterns of single variables using basic statistical instruments such as mean, median, mode, percentages, frequency and range). However, means of descriptive statistics were only applied in a limited manner (i.e. evaluation of survey results) since the focus of the study was to validate a set of research propositions assessing the relationship between behavioral customer engagement (BCE) and psychological customer engagement (PCE). Hence, the main instruments such as correlation and regression analysis applied fall in the category of inferential statistics. Given this, the following sub-chapters focus on each data set (Data set I: BCE & Data set II: PCE) and describe how the data was prepared, aggregated and ultimately analyzed using data modelling techniques (aggregation and segmentation) as well as basic descriptive statistics to establish a well-found basis for the inferential analysis in chapter 4.2.3.

4.2.1 Descriptive statistics: Behavioral dimension

As mentioned earlier, insights on behavioral customer engagement (BCE) were collected by gathering quantitative observations among a segment of 630 customer contacts in the case company's CRM system. The outcome (Data set: I) was a bunch of online interaction data based which were clustered in predefined set of recorded online behaviors as previously specified in Appendix 4 (Interaction data categories and types). Given this, a specified process depicted in figure 12 was followed to prepare and model the data using both the CRM system of the case company and the spreadsheet tool Microsoft Excel.

FIGURE 13: BCE DATA PROCESSING
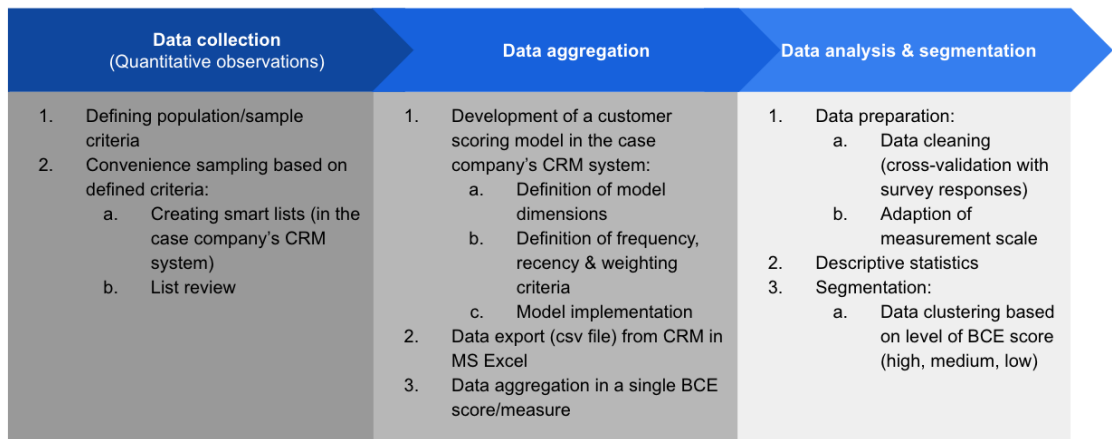
Data aggregation

The respective data set (referred to as BCE sample) covered a large variety of several numerical, historical data points which can be characterized as continuous variables that specify a customer's online behaviors/brand-related interaction (i.e., website analytics, conversion actions, email as well as social media interaction). To develop a holistic assessment of a customers' overall online activities and, thus, behavioral engagement level, it was crucial to aggregate the data in a systematic and structured fashion. Hence, a single measure of behavioral customer engagement was developed by using the methodology behind basic scoring models.

In general business practice, scoring models are often applied in various fields and sectors. They primarily serve to predict future outcomes by using statistical

procedures to model historical data and are based on the premise that past behavior can be a good predictor of future performance (Malthouse, 2002). In contemporary marketing practice, scoring models are popular analysis instruments that are often used to derive valuable insights about user-profiles and respective behavior patterns. Many marketers, for instance, apply lead scoring as a technique to predict the likelihood of sales or detect ideal customer profiles that can be targeted at higher marketing efficiency and effectiveness (Shacklett, 2017). Thereby, points are assigned to every interaction or activity that a prospect has with a particular brand. The allocation of points allows for a ranking scheme that can be useful in segmenting a contact database and prioritizing leads based on specific criteria such as a prospect's stage in the buying journey and overall fit for the business (Divakaran, 2018).

Furthermore, scoring models are also used in direct marketing to quantify and accordingly classify customer behavior based on recency, frequency, and monetary value. The latter is referred to as RFM scoring and represents a viable tactic that can be especially useful in driving better segmentation decisions (Miglautsch, 2000). To develop a scoring model, a predefined catalog of quantitative variables must be selected and subsequently included in the model design by defining a set of scoring rules and criteria. These should be naturally customized to given business objectives and mainly modeled in a way to closely match the data to be analyzed (Divakaran, 2018).

To analyze behavioral customer engagement levels in the given data set (I), a custom scoring model was designed to consolidate the collected customer interaction data into a single BCE score. Therefore, the model did not only allow for data aggregation and segmentation but served to prepare the data set for subsequent inferential analysis. Subsequently, the BCE score was used as the independent variable in the regression model explained in chapter 4.2.3. To account for accuracy, validity and comparability of online (behavior) interaction measures among the selected customer segment, the scoring model (from now on referred to as BCE scoring model) was directly implemented in the company's CRM system. The latter provided useful technical capabilities to leverage and adapt existing scoring models that were previously used in lead scoring initiatives. Appendix 7 (BCE Scoring Model Design) provides an overview of the selected

model dimensions as well as scoring criteria and rules, which constituted the overall model design visualized in figure 13.

FIGURE 14: BCE SCORING MODEL DESIGN
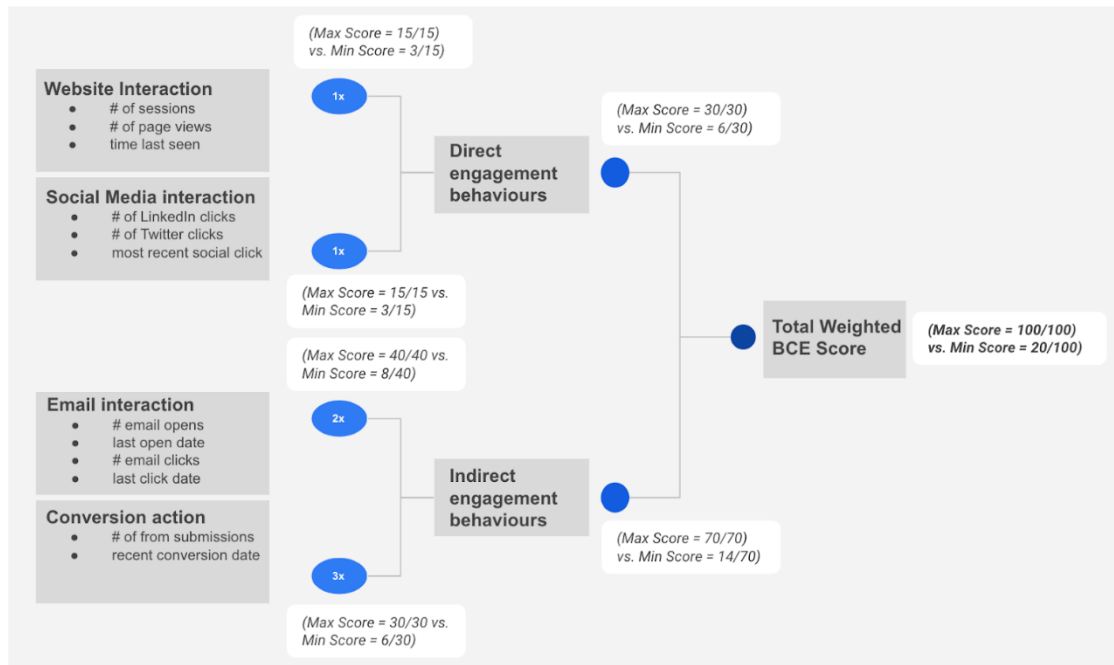
The model depicted in figure 13 uses an interval scale to assess different behavioral dimensions (previously classified as website analytics, conversion actions, email- and social media interaction) based on frequency and recency criteria.

First, each behavioral dimension was measured separately, whereas corresponding interaction data were consolidated and assigned with a numerical value ranging from one to five. The allocation of points thus followed a simple rating scheme, whereas a value of 1 indicates that a customer is not engaged, and a value of 5 relates to a high engagement level. Yet, it is essential to note that the engagement classification was mainly exemplary and subjective based on best-guess estimates as well as previous experiences with lead scoring campaigns at the case company. Since the BCE scoring model focused on rating customer behaviors only, the application of the model was solely limited to assessing interaction data that cover the selected brand touchpoints and data properties (see Appendix 4 (Interaction data categories and types). Furthermore,

the model was specific to the case company and its customer base and cannot be reliably applied in another business context or scenario.

Second, given the individual and distinct nature of certain behaviors and the number of observations (recorded data points) that can occur at different brand touchpoints, numeric thresholds and thus scores varied across each behavioral dimension. By applying additional weighting criteria for each dimension depending on the perceived relevance and contribution to customer engagement levels, a total BCE score was computed, which ranged from 11 (Min. score) to 100 (Max. score). Thereby, the given brand touchpoints or BCE categories (i.e., website behavior, conversion actions, email- and social media interaction) were classified into direct and indirect engagement behaviors depending on the level of involvement that a customer demonstrated. As such, it was assumed that especially conversion actions and email interaction indicate a stronger engagement behavior than website or social media interaction since they require direct participation with brand-related activities. Finally, the total BCE score represented the ultimate measurement quantifying all relevant online interaction behaviors with brand-related marketing activities.

With regard to the research propositions formulated in chapter 3.2, it also served as the predictor variable of psychological customer engagement (PCE) levels in subsequent analysis. However, before presenting preliminary findings, it is essential to note that the initial data set of 630 customer contacts was further reduced in further analysis to a convenience sample with a size of n = 40. This was done by matching respective contacts with survey respondents that completed the quantitative questionnaire (see data collection phase II and Data set II: PCE).

Data analysis and segmentation

To analyze the convenience sample concerning the BCE dimension (using the computed BCE score), basic descriptive statistics (measures of central tendency and dispersion) were applied to summarize and discover preliminary patterns in the univariate data. Table 3 shows a summary of the results after implementing the BCE scoring model and exporting the data from the company's CRM system to Microsoft Excel. As mentioned earlier, the set of descriptive measures such as mean, mode, median, range as well as percentage and frequency were applied

to the convenience sample of 40 customer contacts that also responded to the quantitative survey. As a result, no generalization of sample findings can be extrapolated to the population/segment of 630 customers. Given the nature of the research, which predominantly focused on inferential analysis among the specified convenience sample, tests of normality were not conducted. Furthermore, the data was cleaned, classified, and tabulated before analysis.

TABLE 3: DESCRIPTIVE STATISTICS SUMMARY: BCE SCORES

Variable	Total Range	N	Mean	STDev	Median	Mode	Min	Max
BCE scores	20 - 100	40	58.625	17.6485	57	48	32	92

As shown in table 3, it can be noted that the sample size N accounts for 40 observations, whereas a rule of thumb indicates that samples should have at least 20 observations to represent the distribution of a given data set appropriately. The mean represents the center of the distribution and a central measure of statistical analysis and is given at a BCE score of 59. The latter indicates the average BCE score tends to be around that particular value with a data variance or dispersion of around +/- 9 standard deviation to the mean. Consequently, it can be stated that the values in the given sample tend to be spread out over a broader range, which covers a minimum BCE score of 32 and a maximum score of 92. Since the mean is slightly higher than the median, the data appears to be skewed to the right while following an asymmetric shape. However, further evidence on the skewness and shape of the data can be given by visualizing the frequency distribution of BCE scores in terms of the histogram shown in figure 14.
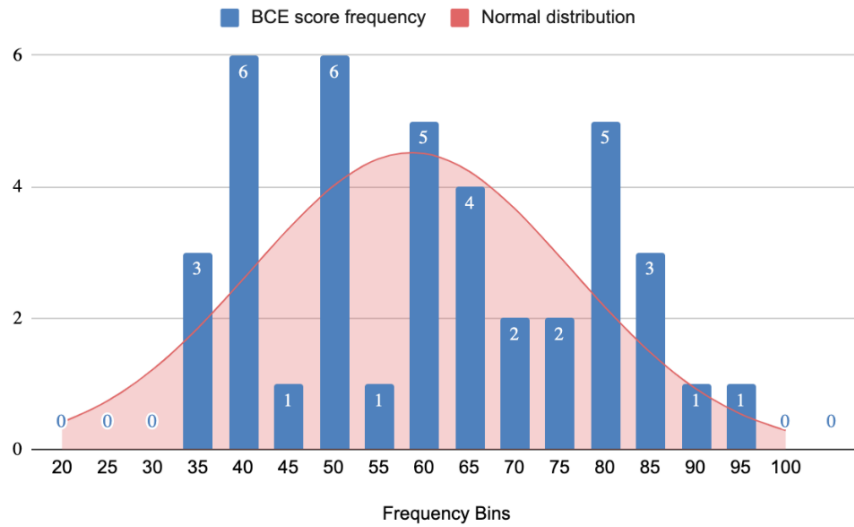
First, the frequency distribution of the data shows that the sample does not follow a normal distribution (as highlighted in the red area). Second, the histogram clarifies that the sample is not particularly subject to skewness but is characterized by multiple peaks, also called modes. Therefore, it can be concluded that the sample contains multi-modal data, which may indicate that important variables are not yet accounted for. To investigate this, observations were further classified into two groups to detect whether the group variable justifies the peaks in the data. These groups were established by structuring the BCE scores in ascending order and clustering observations based on scores above 60 (labeled as Group 1) and below 60 (labeled as Group 2). Table 4 gives a summary of descriptive statistics computed for both BCE clusters.

TABLE 4: DESCRIPTIVE STATISTICS SUMMARY: BCE CLUSTERS

| Variable	Total Range	Cluster	N	Mean	STDev	Median	Mode	Min	Max
BCE scores	> 60	Group 1	18	75.167	9.513	76.5	61	61	92
	< 60	Group 2	22	45.091	8.874	47	36	32	59

While the standard deviations of both groups appear to be closer to the mean due to the limited variance in the data, both variable groups can still be characterized by multi-modal data mainly due to outliers in the data set. To get a better picture of how the variance of BCE scores among the sample can be

interpreted based on percentages, observations were clustered into four distinct BCE segments defined as follows:

1. Actively engaged: BCE score >/= 80
2. Engaged: 80 > BCE score >/= 60
3. Neutral: 60 > BCE score >/= 40
4. Disengaged: 40 > BCE score > 20
5. Actively disengaged: BCE score = 20

Figure 15 shows a pie-chart with the described segments and associated percentages in terms of size in comparison to the entire sample.
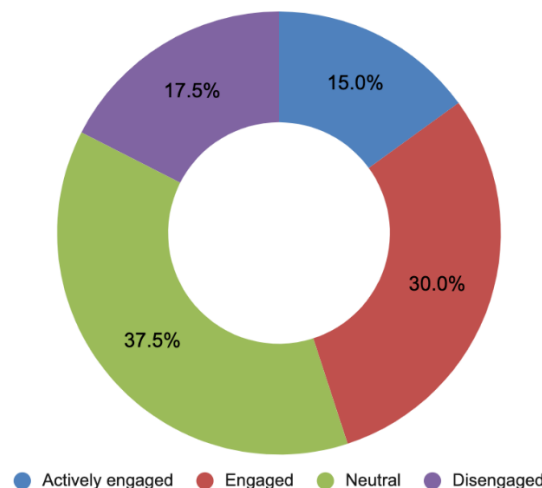
As such, it can be noted that the majority of customers in the convenience sample are labeled as 'Neutral' and have a BCE score ranging between 40 and 59. This customer segment seems to be neither engaged nor disengaged from a behavioral perspective. Yet, one-third of the observations indicate a BCE score between 60 and 79 and thus are labeled as engaged, whereas 15% percent of the customer contacts in the sample even indicate a high behavioral engagement level. In contrast, around 17% appear to be disengaged based on a BCE score ranging between 20 and 39, while not a single observation falls into the last bucket defined as 'actively disengaged'. As a result, it can be concluded that despite considerable differences in BCE scores, all customer contacts in the sample show at least a certain degree of interaction (predominantly email and

conversion interactions) with the specified brand touchpoints or BCE dimensions.

4.2.2 Descriptive statistics: PCE

As described in chapter 4.1.2, insights on the psychological dimension of customer engagement (PCE) were collected employing online surveys following a pre-defined quantitative questionnaire design based on the CE11 measurement framework. The survey was sent to the same customer segment previously subject to quantitative observations (chapter 4.1.1). Prior to the distribution of the survey by means a dedicated email campaign, the questionnaire was adapted to the case company and its customer base (see Appendix 5 - Online Questionnaire Design). After the initial data collection time frame of three weeks, a total of 40 completed survey responses were gathered at an overall response rate of 6% (considering a population of 630 customer contacts that were asked to participate). The resulting non-probabilistic sample (n = 40) was used in further preliminary data processing depicted in figure 16.

**FIGURE 17: PCE DATA PROCESSING**
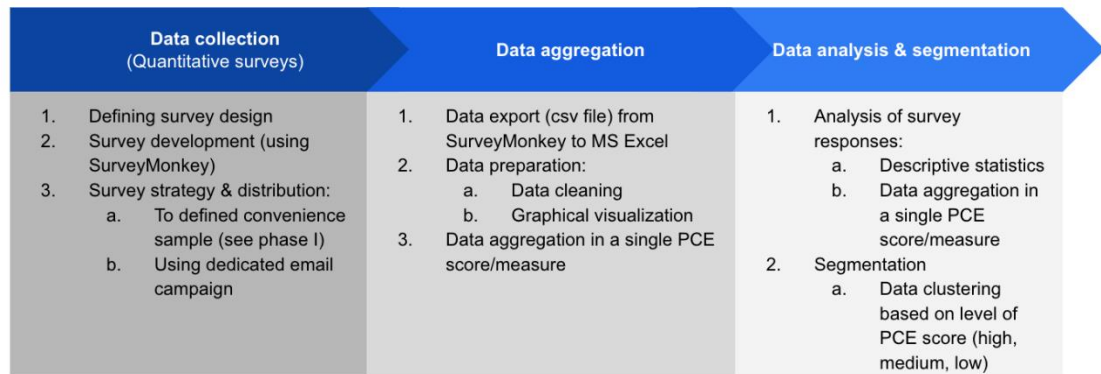
Data aggregation

First, the entire data set (referred to as PCE sample), which mainly covers numerical discrete response values for each of the 11 questions ranging between one to five (i.e., 5-point Likert scale) was exported from the survey tool (SurveyMonkey) to Microsoft Excel. To structure, analyze as well as visualize the main findings, descriptive measures such as mean, percentages, and frequency distributions were used together with charts such as tables and pie-charts to present survey responses for each of the 11 questions graphically. Appendix 8 (Survey results) provides a full overview of all question results in a structured and

visual manner. The most relevant findings are described in the following paragraphs and can be structured into the two main dimensions (L3 - rational loyalty and A8 - emotional attachment) as proposed by the CE11 methodology. Following this, individual survey response data were aggregated into an overall numerical result by computing the mean from the numerical values associated with each of the 11 questions. Hence, the final outcome provided a single variable or measure to quantify customer engagement (in this case referred to as psychological customer engagement - PCE). In respect of the research propositions formulated in chapter 3.2, the PCE score likewise served as the dependent variable in the subsequent inferential analysis. However, no detailed analysis of survey demographics is shown, while the following findings mainly served to provide consolidated insights on trends and patterns concerning the two initial questionnaire categories (L3 & A8) and the overall computed PCE score.

L3 - Rational Loyalty

As previously described, rational loyalty covers a set of three distinct questions covering customer satisfaction, intent to repurchase, and likelihood to recommend to quantify rational formulations of customer loyalty. Figure 17 shows a consolidated view of the overall survey results for each of the three associated questions.

FIGURE 18: SURVEY RESULTS ON RATIONAL LOYALTY (L3)
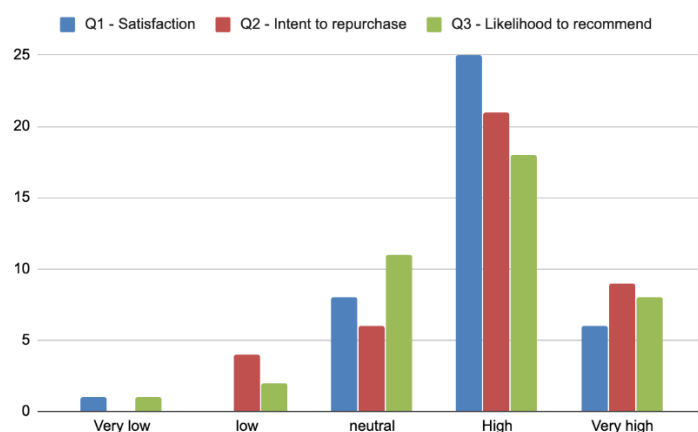
As depicted in the bar chart, it can be noted that the majority of customers tend to rate their satisfaction, intent to repurchase, and overall likelihood to recommend the case company as high. Furthermore, the average ratings for

each L3 question or 'loyalty attribute' seem to be similar and carefully matched, which leads to the conclusion that satisfied customers are also likely to repurchase the brand and recommend it to fellow customers. Moreover, figure 18 provides further insights by showing the associated percentage values.
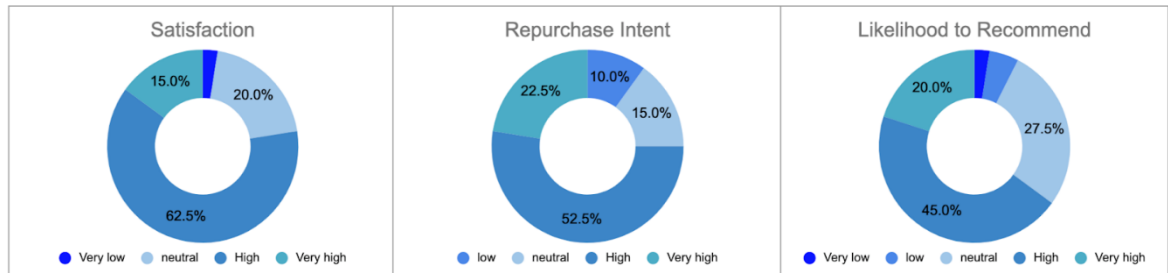
As such, it can be concluded that more than 60% of customers in the convenience sample indicated that they are satisfied with the firm, while more than half of the sample stated that they are likely to repurchase the product brand. Additionally, 20% of the surveyed customers further showed a strong likelihood to recommend the brand, thus signaling a strong sense of brand preference and, loyalty.

A8 - Emotional Attachment

The second dimension of the CE11 questionnaire focuses on a customer's emotional disposition towards a brand and serves to measure brand perceptions such as confidence, pride, passion, as well as integrity using eight questions. Figure 19 provides a consolidated view on the survey results for each of the eight questions, which represent specific statements that were rated by survey participants on a scale from 1 = strongly disagree to 5 = strongly agree. To simplify the graphical illustration and show aggregated results across all brand attributes which are rated among the emotional attachment dimension, the essence of each of the eight statements was extracted and described in terms of certain brand characteristics such as passion, pride, service, fairness, reliability, fit and so on.
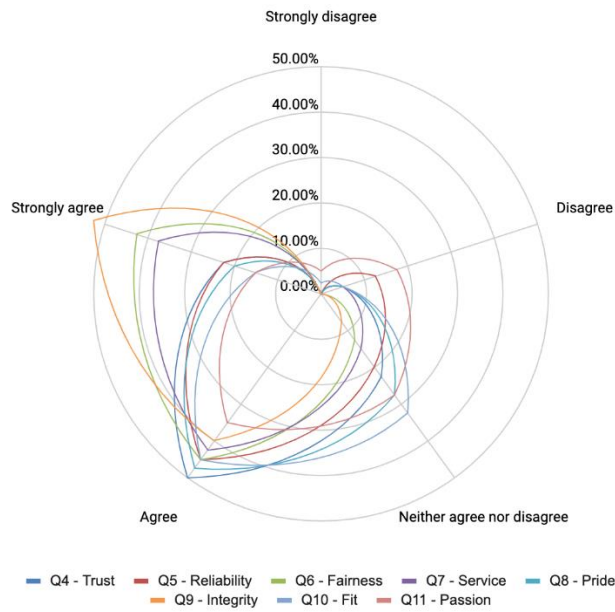
The radar chart depicts which of the eight characteristics or attributes is strongly emphasized in the given customer-brand(firm) relationship. Perceived brand attributes such as integrity, fairness, and service were rated in a very positive manner. For instance, more than 50% of customers surveyed stated that they strongly agree with the statement that the case company treats them with respect. Additionally, around 50% of customers indicated that they could trust the brand while more than 40% agreed to the statement that they feel proud to be a customer of the case company. Generally, it can be concluded that despite a few outliers (especially concerning ratings of the characteristic or attribute defined as 'passion'), overall responses appeared to show very positive or high ratings in relation to the emotional attachment dimension.

Data analysis and segmentation

The total PCE score comprises the assessments of both rational loyalty (L3) and emotional attachment (A8) without assigning a weighting on the respective dimensions. As defined in the previous chapters, psychological customer engagement (PCE) was described as a set of intangible, psychological brand perceptions towards a brand (as engagement object) which are shaped throughout the customer-firm relationship. The main findings in terms of

descriptive statistics such as mean, median, standard deviation, and the range of PCE scores among the convenience sample (n = 40) are shown in table 5.

TABLE 5: DESCRIPTIVE STATISTICS SUMMARY: PCE, L3 & A8 SCORES

Variable	Total Range	N	Mean	STDev	Median	Mode	Min	Max
PCE scores	1 - 5	40	3.873	0.701	4	4	2.18	5.00
L3 scores	1 - 5	40	3.792	0.742	4	4	2.33	5.00
A8 scores	1 - 5	40	3.903	0.725	4	4	2.13	5.00

As shown in table 5, it can be noted that the sample size N accounts for 40 survey responses with a mean PCE score of 3.87 at a standard deviation of 0.7 assuming normal data. In contrast to L3 and A8 scores, the PCE variable tends to have a slightly smaller variance in the data set. Concerning the PCE dimensions, the A8 variable shows a considerably higher mean score (3.9) as compared with the L3 variable. This finding may indicate that customers in the sample appeared to have a stronger engagement perception when it comes to emotional attachment (regarding the case company and its product brand) as opposed to rational loyalty. Generally, all scores range between the values of two to five, which can lead to the conclusion that customers tended to be more psychologically engaged than disengaged. Figure 20 provides further insights into the frequency distribution of overall PCE scores across the customer sample.

FIGURE 21: FREQUENCY DISTRIBUTION OF PCE SCORES
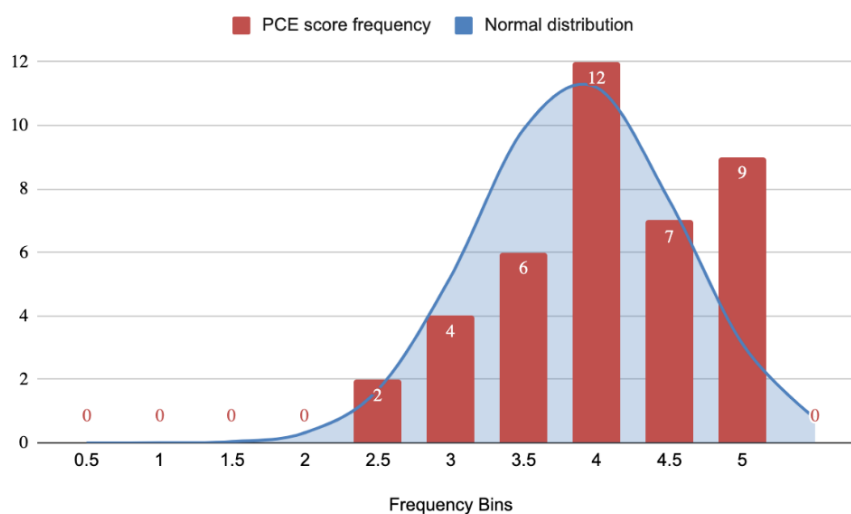
First, the frequency distribution shows a shape close to a normal distribution (as highlighted in the red area) that is slightly skewed to the right. The majority of scores are around the median, while a considerable amount of observations show a PCE score of 4.5 and higher. The latter indicates a considerably high level of psychological engagement. To detect how the rational or emotional dimension and thus, L3 and A8 scores affect the distribution of the total PCE variable, figure 21 further illustrates the respective frequency distributions for both PCE dimensions.

FIGURE 22: FREQUENCY DISTRIBUTIONS OF L3 & A8 SCORES
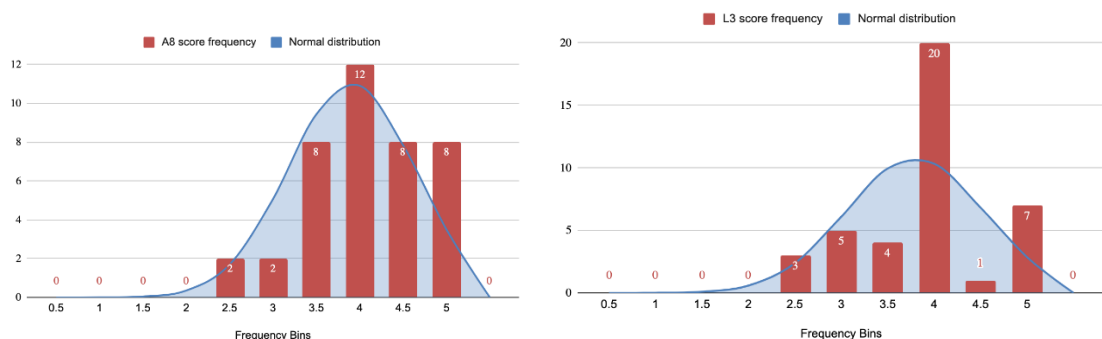
It can be noted that the frequency distribution of L3 scores shows a sharp peak around the value of 4, whereas A8 scores appear to be more equally distributed. As such, the distribution of A8 scores displays a similar shape to the frequency distribution of the overall PCE score. This phenomenon might be associated with a higher amount of questions and, thus, data points that account for the calculation of the final A8 score.

To analyze the variance of psychological customer engagement among the respective survey respondents and interpret results based on percentages, four distinct PCE segments were created to group customers in terms of their overall PCE score. The latter are defined as follows:

1. Actively engaged: PCE score />= 4
2. Engaged: 4 > PCE score >/= 3
3. Disengaged: 3 > PCE score >/= 2
4. Actively disengaged: 2 > PCE score >/= 1

These PCE clusters are in line with the proposed engagement segments by Gallup Inc (2009) within their CE11 methodology. As such, the first segment covers actively engaged customers who are characterized by very high engagement levels. This customer group can further be described as fully engaged concerning their emotional and rational disposition towards a particular brand and thus are viewed as a firm's most valuable customers. The second segment focuses on customers who are on the verge to become actively engaged whereas the third segment is made up of emotionally and rationally neutral customers. Lastly, actively disengaged customers tend to be emotionally detached from a brand and display an antagonistic attitude in terms of rational loyalty. Figure 22 visualizes the respective segments and their size in terms of percentages of the entire sample.

FIGURE 23: PCE SEGMENTS
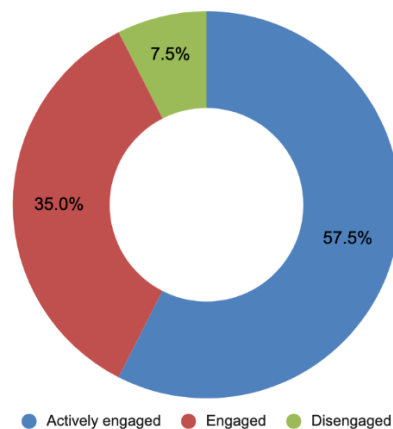
The pie chart shows that the surveyed customers generally reside in three major PCE segments, such as actively engaged, engaged, and disengaged. Furthermore, it can be noted that the 'actively engaged' segment comprised the majority of customers in terms of their overall PCE score, which appeared to be four or higher. Thus, it can be concluded that more than half of the customers in the convenience sample showed very positive perceptions about the brand and the case company in general. However, 8% of customers surveyed also indicated a sense of indifference or negative attitude. Yet, there are no customers in the sample that fall into the category of 'actively disengaged', which can generally be viewed as preferable state and especially a good sign for the case company and related business outcomes. Finally, it can be concluded that PCE customer

clusters indicate a considerable level of engagement concerning the psychological (emotional and cognitive) dimension, which seems to relate to the level of behavioral engagement (BCE). Correspondingly, further evidence on a potential relationship between BCE and PCE scores should be determined by assessing the linkage or association between the two variables through correlation and regression analysis.

### 4.2.3 Inferential statistics

Inferential statistics is referred to as a statistical method that is commonly applied in bi-variate or multivariate analysis. Different from descriptive statistics, which primarily allows performing univariate analysis by analyzing one variable at a time, inferential statistics serve to assess the relationship between two or more variables using methods of correlation and regression (Chin & Lee, 2008). In this sense, a variable is defined as a measured characteristic or attribute which may assume different values by following a nominal, ordinal, or interval scale (Phillips & Speedwell, 2018). In regression analysis, these variables are categorized into either independent (value is assumed to be not affected by any other variable in the data set) or dependent variables (value is assumed to be affected by other variables) (Chin & Lee, 2008). As such, inferential statistics provide insights about the association or causal relationship between these variables by also determining the likelihood that a hypothesis about a sample is correct. The latter requires the application of statistical tests such as assessments of probability and significance (Wisniewski, Jones, Weeda, Pilch & Picone, 2019). Thereby, the selection of the statistical measures (i.e., t-tests and measures of correlation) is generally governed by the types of data that is subject to analysis.

In the scope of this thesis, mainly interval data was collected among the given customer sample using a continuous scale for two variables, such as BCE scores (range: 20 - 100) and PCE scores (range: 1 - 5). To make inferences and draw conclusions on a set of assumed relationships between these two variables (see research propositions in chapter 3.2), this section focuses on the application of inferential statistics using correlation and regression analysis. Yet, it is important to note that inferential statistics can only suggest rather than absolutely prove an explanation about a given association or cause-effect relationship between certain variables. Therefore, calculations frequently involve estimations of a set

of characteristics from a sample and, respectively, hypothesis testing to validate assumptions about certain phenomena (Chin & Lee, 2008).

To conduct both correlation and regression analysis for the respective variables (BCE and PCE), a dedicated process was followed and visualized in figure 23.

FIGURE 24: INFERENTIAL ANALYSIS PROCESS
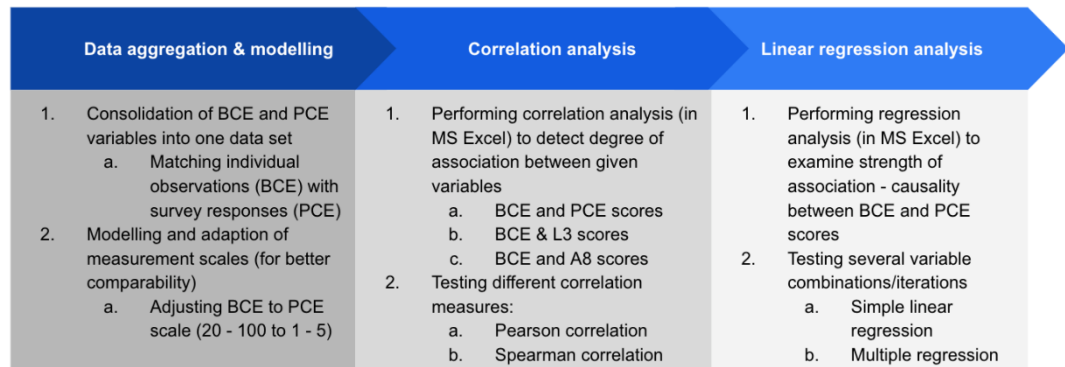
First, the BCE (Data set: I) PCE (Data set: I) data was consolidated by matching individual observations of respective BCE scores with the survey responses and their constituted PCE scores (as well as L3 and A8 dimensions). As a result, a combined data set comprising the main variables of interest (BCE and PCE scores) was created. To perform correlation and regression analyses, the measurement scale of the BCE scores were adjusted to match the same range as given for PCE scores (from Min. 20 to Max. 100 → Min. 1 to Max. 5). To model the data, each BCE score was divided by 20 and is accordingly referred to as 'adjusted BCE score. This adjustment of measurement scales eventually served for better comparability of scores in subsequent analysis.

Second, the data aggregation phase was followed by the actual analysis phase using inferential statistics. The first step involved the performance of correlation analysis in examining and detecting the degree of association between the given variables in the consolidated data set. In this respect, the goal was to validate the research propositions (I - IV). Table 6 consolidates the main findings from the correlation analysis that was conducted in Microsoft Excel.

TABLE 6: CORRELATION ANALYSIS

Research Propositions	Variables in Correlation	Pearson's R	Spearman's Rank	Finding
Proposition (I): Higher BCE scores are associated with higher PCE scores.	Adjusted BCE Score vs. PCE Score	0.4653	0.4702	Positive Correlation
Proposition (II): Higher BCE scores are associated with higher Emotional Attachment (A8-PCE).	Adjusted BCE Score vs L3 Score	0.4381	0.4024	Positive Correlation
Proposition (III): Higher BCE scores are associated with higher Rational Loyalty (L3-PCE).	Adjusted BCE Score vs A8 Score	0.4502	0.4494	Positive Correlation
Proposition (IV): Higher Emotional Attachment (A8-PCE) is associated with higher Rational Loyalty (L3-PCE).	L3 Score vs A8 Score	0.8059	0.7572	Positive Correlation

As shown in table 6, it can be noted that both Pearson's R (Correlation Coefficient) and Spearman's Rank correlation method were used to determining the degree of the associations between the respective variables. This was primarily due to the different characteristics of each correlation measurement. While Pearson's R is most commonly applied for interval scale data and respective samples that follow a normal distribution, Spearman is also recommended for non-normal data and ordinal scales as it applies to ranks by providing a measure of a monotonic relationship between two continuous random variables (De Winter, Gosling & Potter, 2016). Yet, Pearson's R is a widely used and sufficient measure of assessing the strength of a linear relationship between two variables without assuming finite variances and covariance (Greener, 2008). Given the respective data set, which seems to show an asymmetric data distribution, it was decided to test both correlation measures to further account for reliable outcomes. The latter, however, indicated similar values showing only slight deviations.

Given the correlation results for each of the four tested research propositions, it can be concluded that all constructs or tested variables in the data set showed a medium to a strong degree of (positive) association. In particular, it can be noted that high scores in the behavioral engagement (BCE) dimensions related to

higher scores in the psychological engagement (PCE) dimension as well as its respective emotional (A8) and rational (L3) attributes. Furthermore, the scores of rational loyalty (L3) and emotional attachment (A) show a strong positive correlation. There latter is not surprising given the fact that both variables constituted to the same dimension (PCE).

As a third and final analysis step using inferential statistics, a simple linear regression model was developed to examine further whether a cause-effect relationship can be tested despite correlational measures among the respective data set (BCE & PCE scores). In general terms, regression analysis is commonly used to identify trends in the data by modeling a hypothesized relationship between a response variable and one or more predictor variables, which eventually supports researchers in predicting specific outcomes (Kleinbaum, Kuppler, Muller & Nizam, 1988).

In the context of this thesis and given the main research assumption formulated in research proposition (V), a regression model was used to examine the relationship between BCE scores and PCE scores by assessing whether a change in behavioral engagement (independent variable) causes a respective change in psychological engagement (dependent variable). First, the two variables of interest were plotted on a scatter diagram to make legitimate judgments about the nature of the relationship. Figure 24 visualized the result by showing a linear relationship depicted by means of the red regression line on the graph.

FIGURE 25: LINEAR REGRESSION MODEL: BCE AND PCE SCORES
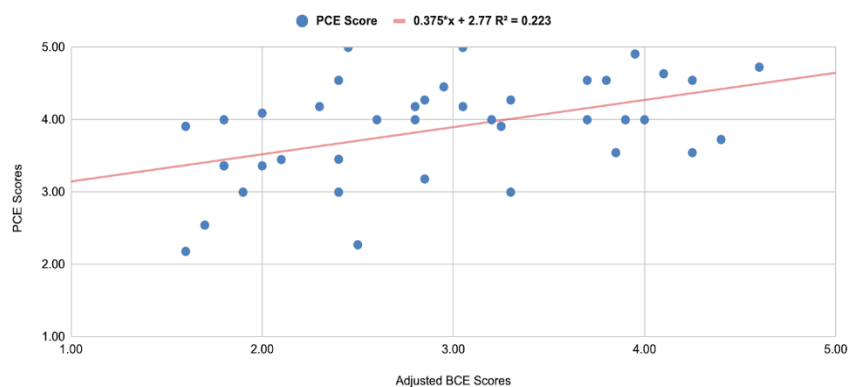
The general formula behind a linear regression equation is as follows:

$$y = bx + a + \varepsilon$$

where:

- x refers to the independent variable (in this case, adjusted BCE scores)
- y is the dependent variable (in this case, PCE scores)
- a defines the Y-intercept and the expected mean value of y when x = 0.
- b describes the slope of the regression line, also referred to as the rate of change for y as x varies.
- ε provides a random error term which denotes the difference between the actual value of y and its predicted value.

Since the regression analysis was conducted in Excel using the least square method, the regression formula can be further simplified to $y = bx + a$ whereas the error calculation is conducted behind the scenes. Table 7 shows the respective values for each component in the equation.

TABLE 7: LINEAR REGRESSION EQUATION (LEAST SQUARES METHOD)

Regression equation	y = 0.3754x + 2.7723
b (slope)	0.3659803745
Covariance (x,y)	0.2849808239
Variance (x)	0.7786778846
a (constant or y-intercept)	2.799833663
mean (x)	2.93125
mean (y)	3.872613636

First, the value of the dependent variable (PCE) is a function of the independent variable BCE. Second, the y-intercept (a) suggests that the expected PCE score would still be at a value of 2.78 when the BCE score is zero. Third, it can be concluded that for every one unit increase adjusted BCE scores, the level of PCE changes by +0.38 (slope). Nevertheless, it is essential to point out that the regression line in tailored explicitly to the variables in the existing data set and thus cannot be extrapolated to different situations.

To get further insights to the strength of the relationship by especially considering the significance of the regression model, table 8 provides a summarizes of relevant regression statistics.

TABLE 8: REGRESSION STATISTICS BCE AND PCE

Regression Statistics	
Multiple R	0.4726008796
R Square	0.2233515914
Adjusted R Square	0.2029134754
Standard Error	0.6257348013
Observations	40

ANOVA

	df	SS	MS	F	Significance F
Regression	1	4.278867227	4.278867227	10.92818884	0.002074655833
Residual	38	14.87867358	0.3915440415		
Total	39	19.15754081			

	Coefficients	Standard Error	t Stat	P-value	Lower 95%	Upper 95%	Lower 95.0%	Upper 95.0%
Intercept	2.772326485	0.3472308263	7.984102433	1.20E-09	2.069394426	3.475258543	2.069394426	3.475258543
Adjusted BCE Score	0.3753644867	0.1135478946	3.305781125	0.002074655833	0.1454987916	0.6052301819	0.1454987916	0.6052301819

The regression statistics output can be interpreted as follows: While Multiple R (Correlation Coefficient) is at 47% and shows a medium positive relationship (as previously denoted in table 6 - correlation analysis), R Square (Coefficient of Determination) is at 22% which indicates that 22% of data points fall on the regression line. The Coefficient of Determination further quantifies the ratio between SST (total sum of squares = 19.16) and SSR (sum of squares due to regression = 4.28) as a percentage. The latter also serves to determine the goodness of fit of the regression model. In this particular case, it can be noted that 22% of the variation in PCE scores is explained by the level of adjusted BCE scores. As a result, 22% of the total number of squares can be explained using the estimated regression equation to predict the level of PCE scores while the remainder is due to error. As shown in the regression statistics, the Standard Error of Regression is slightly high, whereas a lower level would indicate a more accurate prediction capability of the model. Furthermore, given a Significance below 1% (0.0021 = 0.21%), it can be concluded that the regression model is highly significant at a level of 1% and a confidence level of 99%. Generally, a regression model is deemed significant if Significance F < 0.05 given a confidence level of 95%, whereas a p-value of 5% is the most commonly accepted point at which to reject the null hypothesis.

In the case of the tested relationship between adjusted BCE and PCE scores, it can be stated that a p-value below 0.01 applies to both regression coefficients

(the intercept and the slope b of the independent variable) which leads to the conclusion that the null hypothesis associated with the research proposition (V) can be rejected at 99% confidence level and a p-value of below 1%. Although the overall goodness of fit of the given regression model could be better, it is still suitable in the context of this research. In fact, the intention was to validate the given research assumption about whether an increase in BCE scores leads to a rise in PCE scores. The latter can be proven without further assessment of the actual strength of the relationship.

Finally, the above assessment provided sufficient evidence that the related research assumption (V), which assumed a causal relationship between the BCE and PCE dimension for the particular sample could be validated. However, additional regression analysis was performed to test the relationship between other variables in the data set (such as BCE scores, L3, and A8 scores). As such, several iterations were conducted which involved simple linear and multiple regression models to determine the most influential relationship in the data. Table 9 provides a summary of relevant regression statistics for all simple linear regression models.

TABLE 9: REGRESSION ITERATIONS

Independent variable: BCE	Main model (Assumption V)	1. Iteration I (Assumption III)	2. Iteration (Assumption II)
Dependent variable	PCE	L3	A8
Multiple R (Coefficient of Correlation)	47.26%	44.61%	45.69%
Regression equation	y = 0.3754x + 2.7723	y = 0.3753x + 2.6916	y = 0.3753x + 2.8031
R Square (Coefficient of Determination)	$R^2 = 0.2234$	$R^2 = 0.199$	$R^2 = 0.2088$
Significance F	< 0.01	< 0.01	< 0.01
P-value	< 0.01	< 0.05	< 0.05

In the first iteration, an adjusted version of the research proposition (III) was tested to validate the assumption that higher levels of BCE are not only positively associated with higher PCE scores in the L3 (Rational Loyalty) dimension, but further indicate a causal relation. Likewise, the second iteration focused on

assessing the strength of the relationship between BCE and the PCE dimension A8 (Emotional Attachment). Figure 25 shows the respective regression models visualized in scatter plot charts.

FIGURE 26: LINEAR REGRESSION MODELS ITERATIONS
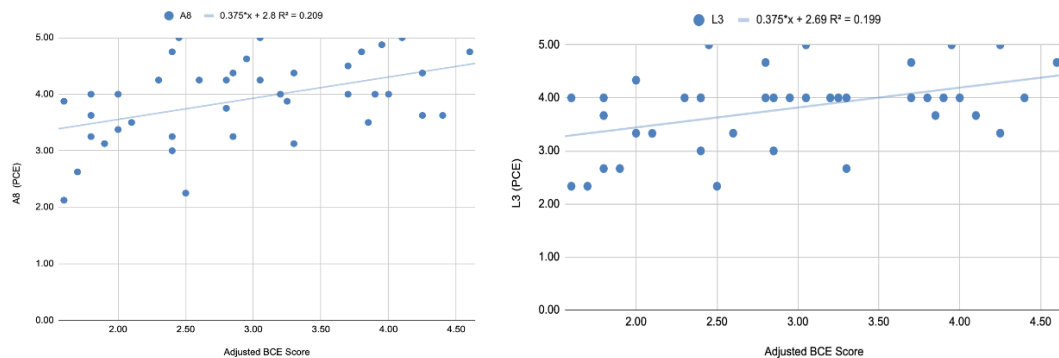
Given the main findings in table 9 as well as the detailed regression statistics in Appendix 9 - Regression statistics, it can be concluded that the null hypothesis can be rejected due to a p-value below 0.05 for all coefficients. The model is deemed to be significant at a 99% confidence level showing a significance F below 0.01. As a result, both regression models validate the assumption that an increase in BCE scores (1 unit) is expected to lead to an increase in L3 and respectively A8 scores (at b = 0.38) for the given customer sample.

Lastly, the author conducted a final assessment of the impact of individual BCE dimensions (Website, Conversion, Email, Social Media) on the total PCE score. Thereby, the goal was to determine which BCE dimension provides the most considerable contribution to a potential increase in PCE. As multiple independent variables were subject to the test, a multiple linear regression model was developed with PCE as the dependent variable and all 4 BCE dimensions as the independent variables. The results of the analysis, however, provided no indication of the significance of the model (Significance F > 0.05), whereas the p-value for all coefficients except for the intercept was considerably higher than 5%. Although the correlation coefficient (Multiple R) indicated a medium positive association at 47%, the coefficient of determination (Adjusted R Square) showed that only 14% of the variation of y-values around the mean is explained by the x-values. In other words, 14% of the values fit the model, which also leads to the conclusion that the goodness of fit is not sufficient. The full regression table can be retrieved from Appendix 9 (Regression statistics).

4.3 Key findings

This chapter summarizes the key findings in relation to the main research propositions, which were defined and explained in chapter 3.2. Thereby. The emphasis is put on the interpretation and translation of research results with respect to the conceptual model (previously referred to as the Customer Engagement Triad). Furthermore, additional explanations on the reliability and validity of results are given.

4.3.1 Validation of the conceptual model

As laid down in chapter 3.2, the conceptual model consolidated a set of distinct research propositions (1-4) based on the assumed association and or relationship between several customer engagement dimensions such as the behavioral component (BCE) and the psychological component (PCE) with its respective rational (L3) and emotional (A8) attributes. Following this, it was assumed that the level of behavioral customer engagement is not only associated but especially causally related to the level of psychological customer engagement. The latter was tested using a convenience sample of 40 customers from the case company, which are subject to current customer nurturing campaigns as well as overall engagement marketing (CEM) initiatives. Thereby, the overall goal of the empirical study was to investigate the suggested relationship between the behavioral and psychological engagement dimensions at the example of the case company.

Given the guiding research proposition which assumed a reciprocal and linear relationship, it was further intended to provide evidence on the predictive power of brand-related behaviors towards understanding the psychological disposition in the context of customer engagement (CE). Contemporary literature on the subject suggests that the behavioral dimension of CE is a manifestation of a set of emotional and cognitive perceptions towards a focal engagement object such as a firm or brand. Thus, an exploration of how this behavioral manifestation of customer engagement might relate to the overall state of mind of a customer can provide preliminary insights to estimate customer brand perceptions and assess the quality of the customer-firm relationship. Table 10 presents an overview of the main findings regarding each research proposition in a structured and systematic manner.

Research Propositions		Research Results	Main Findings	Validation
I	Higher BCE scores are associated with higher PCE scores.	• Positive correlation is validated for the given customer sample • **Correlation Coefficient of 47%**	Higher levels of BCE are associated with higher PCE scores.	✓
II	Higher BCE scores are associated with higher Emotional Attachment (A8-PCE).	• Positive correlation is validated for the given customer sample • **Correlation Coefficient of 45%**	Higher levels of BCE are associated with higher PCE scores in the Emotional Attachment Dimension (A8).	✓
III	Higher BCE scores are associated with higher Rational Loyalty (L3-PCE).	• Positive correlation is validated for the given customer sample • **Correlation Coefficient of 44%**	Higher levels of BCE are associated with higher PCE scores in the Rational Loyalty Dimension (L3).	✓
IV	Higher Emotional Attachment (A8-PCE) is associated with higher Rational Loyalty (L3-PCE).	• Positive correlation is validated for the given customer sample • **Correlation coefficient of 85%**	Higher Emotional Attachment (A8) is associated with Higher Rational Loyalty (L3).	✓
V	An increase in BCE scores leads to an increase in PCE scores.	• Causal relationship is validated for the given customer sample • Highly significant regression model at a **Confidence level of 99%**	An increase in BCE scores leads to an increase in PCE scores.	✓

In consideration of the main findings shown in table 10, it can be concluded that the conceptual model (Customer Engagement Triad) is justified in the context of this thesis and specifically for the given customer sample subject to the study. Furthermore, while positive associations were tested among the respective CE dimensions, additional iterations on the individual research propositions further clarified a linear relationship between the respective variables. Yet, the most striking relationship was identified in terms of BCE and PCE scores based on a highly significant regression model. Consequently, it can be noted that the guiding research assumption was justified given the restricted scope in which the study took place. As a result, there is evidence that the behavioral dimension of customer engagement is not only a mere manifestation of a customer's psychological perception towards a brand but, more importantly, shapes the emotional and cognitive engagement disposition. The latter further suggests a certain predictive power of BCE towards PCE.

4.3.2 Reliability and validity of results

In terms of the presented research findings, certain concerns regarding the reliability and validity of results must be addressed prior to the conclusion and recommendation section to account for limitations of the study in explaining the discussed phenomena. On the one hand, reliability refers to the extent to which means of data collection and analysis yield consistent findings by avoiding researcher bias and errors. On the other hand, validity ensures that results are

correct by accurately reflecting the situation they are supposed to describe (Saunders, 2009).

Given the research limitations of this study previously described in chapter 3.3, further notice should be directed to the possibility of statistical errors, which are common in scientific literature and often occur when conducting empirical studies based on statistical procedures such as correlation, regression, and other parametric tests. In fact, most of these methods are based on the assumption that respective data that is analyzed follows a normal distribution. The normality assumption is a prerequisite to extrapolate research findings, which are usually based on a sample, to an entire population, thus ensuring reliable and accurate conclusions about reality. Although the central limit theorem suggests that samples of size n > 30 or 40 tend to be close to normal regardless of the shape of the data, this research was based on a (non-probabilistic) convenience sample at a size of 40 observations. Therefore, it is essential to point out that no credible judgment could be made on data normality. As a result, findings are reliable in the scope of the situational analysis conducted and the scope of research given. Yet, preliminary results are not sufficient or suitable to account for generalizability, such as extrapolating findings to the entire customer population at the case company and especially to other companies.

5. Conclusion, Recommendations, and Implications

This final chapter provides a summary of the principal research findings concerning the research questions and objectives defined at the beginning of the thesis. Furthermore, a set of recommendations is given and consolidated in a preliminary Customer Engagement (CEM) Framework, which is discussed in the recommendation section. The CEM conceptualization serves as an extension of the customer engagement matrix that was developed by Pansari & Kumar (2017) and provides a combined CE marketing segmentation approach based on the behavioral (BCE) and psychological customer engagement (BCE) dimension. Subsequent sections in this chapter, therefore, focus on presenting and discussing the proposed framework, including several recommendations. Finally, relevant theoretical and managerial implications are provided together with a discussion of the limitations of the study and opportunities for future research.

5.1 Summary of findings and conclusion

In today's increasingly competitive and digital marketplace, B2B marketing underwent fundamental changes in response to the paradigm shift from outbound to inbound marketing methodologies. The latter focuses on a strongly personalized and human approach in communicating and building value-driven relationships with prospects and customers alike. In response to the proven effectiveness and considerable benefits in terms of business outcomes such as ROI, B2B marketers worldwide adopt and implement inbound marketing tactics to generate leads, acquire new clients and build relationships with existing customers at higher marketing efficiency and lower cost. In this context, the inbound marketing methodology provides a simplified framework to attract, engage, and ultimately delight customers throughout their lifetime through a tailored mix of marketing means along the customer journey.

However, many companies in the B2B sector struggle to design, plan and implement a successful 360-degree inbound marketing approach in order to generate sustainable value contributions for both customer and firm consistently. In this regard, a major problem arises in terms of the notion of marketing as a primary acquisition-driven business function. In other words, marketing tends to be commonly viewed as an operational endeavor that provides the means to facilitate customer acquisition rather than customer retention. Hence, many companies seem to fail to acknowledge the role of engagement marketing as a powerful tool to develop and sustain long-term customer relationships, which eventually translate into superior business performance. In fact, firms have just started to experience the eroding effectiveness of conventional marketing practices (e.g., outbound marketing tactics such as mass advertising, trade shows, and print) on their bottom line while operating in a fast-paced and increasingly complex environment. More so, nowadays, a variety of environmental forces profoundly affect overall business performance, such as the disrupting nature of technological advancements, cultural and economic influences, as well as the ongoing evolution of globalization and digital transformation. In these times of uncertainty and change, firms face the pressing need more than ever before to become proactive in adapting to the new rules of today's customer-dominated marketplace. Consequently, firms must develop and sustain competitive advantage through innovation, customer-centricity, and

operational efficiency to stay ahead of the game. Focusing on customer retention and loyalty can be a first and promising starting point for firms to sustain profitability in the long run. And this is where the concept of customer engagement becomes a primary concern for companies that seek to develop lasting and meaningful relationships with their most valuable customers. Companies that invest in customer lifetime and act as stewards of the customer journey can retain their customers more effectively and thus manage to build a loyal customer base sustainably.

In this respect, this thesis essentially served to explore and investigate the concept and multidimensional construct of customer engagement in a business context. Moreover, related research activities sought to quantify and measure the behavioral (BCE) and psychological (PCE) dimensions of customer engagement to assess the quality of the customer relationship at the example of a case company. First, a conceptual model was developed based on a set of dedicated research propositions that were formulated to test and validate the perceived association/relationship between the two engagement dimensions. Second, an empirical study based on correlation and causal research was conducted among a convenience sample of 40 customers at the given case company to gather preliminary insights on the accuracy of the model. Finally, the central research assumption about the predictive power of behavioral customer engagement and how it translates into a psychological disposition of specific brand perceptions could be validated.

Given the specific situation in which the study was conducted, it was concluded that the behavioral dimension of CE could be viewed as a manifestation of a set of emotional and cognitive perceptions towards a brand. As such, the main findings from the inferential analyses showed that behavioral customer engagement relates to the overall state of mind or image that a customer develops based on previous brand experiences. Likewise, it was validated that the behavioral manifestation of CE indicates certain predictive power on assessing a customer's rational loyalty and emotional attachment towards a brand. With reference to the case company, it can be noted that customers who showed regular and continuous interaction with the firm's brand-related activities formed stronger and more positive brand perceptions. These may be driven by

observable and physical experiences (brand interactions) on various channels and touchpoints throughout the customer journey, which ultimately transforms into a certain brand image. Consequently, a positive brand image may evolve into brand preference, which can influence the formation of loyalty, thus relating to favorable business outcomes.

In terms of the research problem, preliminary findings further emphasize the importance of driving and measuring (tangible) customer engagement behavior to assess, understand, and potentially predict (intangible) psychological dispositions that customers develop in the course of the customer firm relationship.

With this information at hand, companies can estimate and evaluate the nature and quality of the relationship and subsequently devise the right strategies for improving it in the long-term by building a loyal customer base. To increase engagement and transform customers into brand ambassadors, it becomes crucial to provide an engagement platform or outlet with dedicated brand touchpoints to initiate and encourage frequent customer interaction. The latter requires businesses to adopt specific engagement marketing tactics to start a conversation and connect with customers in meaningful and value-driven ways. To do this, especially B2B firms like the case company can leverage inbound marketing techniques (i.e., content, social media, and email marketing) to delight their clients and build sustainable customer relationships.

As a general approach, customer engagement marketing (CEM) initiatives can be used to continually nurture existing customers to gather feedback, provide helpful resources, and accordingly intensify customer relationships. However, businesses can also go on step further and develop a well-found CEM strategy, which may involve the development of dedicated engagement campaigns and respective targeting of marketing means to identified customer segments. To increase the overall effectiveness of engagement campaigns, firms can devise different CEM tactics to different customer segments by categorizing them into distinct engagement clusters based on their CE level. The latter was already proposed by Pansari & Kumar (2017) in their customer engagement matrix. The following section builds on that idea and introduces an extension to the model by

combining an engagement-based segmentation approach with a marketing communication concept. The so-called preliminary CEM Framework should serve as a valuable tool to guide firms in their customer engagement initiatives and provide a set of practical recommendations to nurture and engage customers in a targeted and effective manner.

5.2. CEM framework and recommendations

The Customer Engagement Marketing (CEM) Framework evolved out of the main research findings that were presented in the course of this thesis. As a preliminary extension to the conceptual customer engagement matrix developed by Pansari and Kumar, the CEM framework likewise involves an engagement-based segmentation approach based on the two dimensions studied, such as behavioral (BCE) and psychological customer engagement (PCE). Additionally, it devises a set of suitable inbound marketing tactics that are tailored and mapped to the respective CE segments. These tactics are primarily selected based on the perceived impact/contribution to increasing customer engagement levels on both dimensions.

The CEM framework can be used as a strategic management tool that provides a structured approach to customer engagement marketing based on a predefined segmentation and communication concept. It can be applied by the case company as well as marketing scholars and practitioners who seek to understand, explore, and devise dedicated marketing tactics to turn customers into brand advocates. Ultimately, the model can support both B2C and B2B companies in targeted marketing and campaign planning as part of a business' customer engagement approach. Figure 26 provides an overview of the preliminary CEM framework based on which a set of practical recommendations can be formulated.

Figure 27: CEM framework
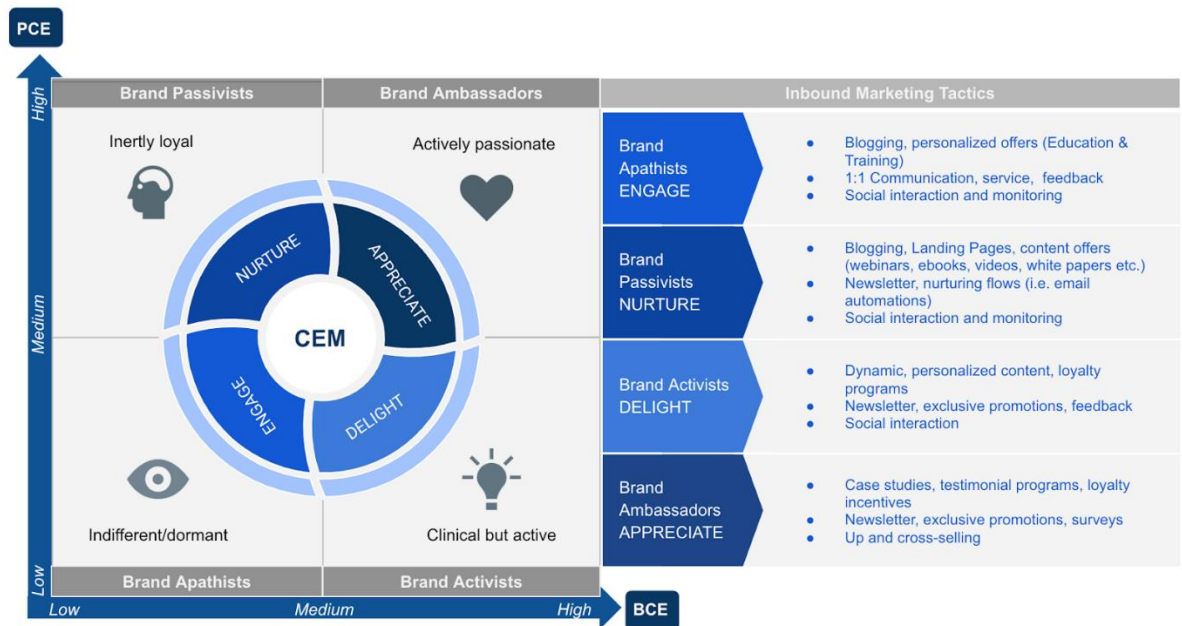
As depicted in figure 26, the CEM framework shows a matrix with four engagement segments/clusters based on a customer's overall BCE level (behavioral customer engagement) on the vertical axis and PCE level (psychological customer engagement) on the horizontal axis. Thereby, the level of both engagement dimensions can be quantified into an overall score and measured on an interval scale (e.g. 1 - 5 —> 1 - 2 = low, 3 - 4 = medium, 5 = high) using online interaction/behavior-based customer scoring (to determine the level of BCE) and the CE11 measurement (to calculate the degree of PCE). According to the model, customers can then be categorized into four major engagement segments, such as Brand Apathists, Brand Passivists, Brand Activists, and Brand Advocates.

'Brand Apathists' can be characterized by low behavioral and psychological engagement levels. They are further described as customers that appear to be dormant in the customer-firm relationship and thus seem to be indifferent. It is also assumed that this customer segment tends to be disengaged with a firm's brand-related content and displays a neutral disposition (emotional and cognitive) towards a firm or brand. Especially in B2B industries, which focus on product categories based on attributes such as high-convenience and low involvement (e.g., manufacturing, food and beverage industry), customer's might be less engaged with a brand or firm due to the nature of the offering. However, firms can

employ specific marketing tactics to engage these customers by initiating a conversation and providing opportunities for interaction based on which personal relationships can be developed. Marketers may, for instance, leverage content marketing techniques such as blogging to accompany a dull offering with a creative, educational story-telling that gets customers excited and motivated to become more active. Apart from that, firms should also identify and understand the actual reasons for indifference to optimize their offering and adapt marketing communication accordingly.

While 'Brand Apathists' score low on both (BCE and PCE) dimensions, 'Brand Activists' usually display medium to high engagement in the behavioral dimension but low psychological engagement. When it comes to observable and physical interaction, this customer segment tends to actively responsive or contributing to a firm's brand-related activities, yet indicate a lack of positive emotional attachment and cognitive involvement. Correspondingly, they can be defined as active but clinical, which in the worst case, can evolve into a strong sense of dissatisfaction that is actively voiced in the form of complaints and negative feedback. To mitigate or avoid this effect, firms can focus on delighting customers utilizing a variety of engagement marketing tactics that especially provide a sense of exclusivity and superior value (e.g., dynamic and personalized content creation, exclusive promotional offers or loyalty campaigns/programs). Furthermore, firms can conduct regular feedback surveys among this customer segment to identify and counteract notions of dissatisfaction while providing outstanding customer service to shape the overall customer experience positively.

Customers in the 'Brand Passivists' segment indicate an imbalance between the behavioral (BCE) and the psychological (PCE) engagement dimension. As such, they are characterized by considerably passive behaviors when it comes to brand-related interactions but still tend to be loyal and emotional attached to the brand. Although the segment possesses somewhat positive brand perceptions, it tends to show a certain degree of laziness concerning behavioral involvement. Thus, firms should focus on nurture 'Brand Passivists' with relevant engagement content and compelling call to actions to encourage meaningful interactions to strengthen the brand/firm relationship. Thereby, marketers can make use of

engaging content offers (e.g., ebooks, webinars) that require a customer's behavioral contribution and involvement. Additionally, email nurturing and automated communication/messaging in response to specific events (e.g., ebook downloads, page visits, etc.) can serve as promising instruments to enable a constant flow of interaction.

The last and most valuable segment covers the so-called 'Brand Advocates'. Customers that fall in this high BCE vs. high PCE engagement cluster are especially likely to engage in repeat purchases and thus provide a sustainable source of long-term revenue. Furthermore, they can be described as brand ambassadors who are open to recommend a brand or firm by spreading positive word of mouth. In particular, 'Brand Advocates' tend to be actively passionate and excited about the brand by displaying active behavioral involvement with a firm's brand-related activities. The latter is rooted in an inner drive and interest to invest in the relationship with the firm in return for perceived added value. As a result, firms can leverage the positive vibe of these customers in various ways in terms of promotional purposes such as referrals/references (e.g., testimonials, case studies) as well as cross- and upselling. Likewise, 'Brand Advocates' can also be used for R&D initiatives by providing a valuable source for collecting feedback, conducting user research/testing, and gathering input for new product development. Hence, marketers must focus on several engagement strategies and tactics around exploiting but also appreciating this customer segment to benefit from the addressed direct and indirect value contributions to business outcomes.

With regard to the case company, it was concluded that the majority of customers show some degree of interaction with brand-related touchpoints and marketing means. While around 37% of customers subject to the study were classified as 'neutral' in terms behavioral engagement (BCE), approximately 30% of customers were categorized into the 'engaged' segment. In summary, it can be noted that the majority of customers in the study showed a medium BCE level ranging between an initial score of 40 - 80 or an adjusted BCE score of 2 - 4. In the context of the developed CEM framework, this constitutes to low to medium behavioral engagement assessment on the x-axis of the matrix. Concerning the psychological engagement dimension, data collected from the online survey

revealed that approximately 60% are actively engaged (constituting to a PCE score higher than 4) while more than 30% can be classified as 'engaged' (constituting to a PCE score between 3 and 4). Thus, it can be stated that customers surveyed tend to display medium to high levels of psychological engagement and therefore can be categorized in the medium to high quadrant on the y-axis of the matrix accordingly. As a result, it can be concluded that the majority of customers subject to the study can be classified into the 'Brand Passivists' segment. Following this, related marketing strategies and tactics should focus on nurturing these customers with relevant engagement content to further strengthen the brand/firm relationship. In other words, the case company should set the focus on tailored content and email marketing tactics to encourage meaningful interactions, which may ultimately shape positive brand perceptions. Thus, providing a regular and continuous outlet to engage customers behaviorally and interactively throughout the customer lifetime becomes key for the case company in future marketing operations. Ultimately, this may not only improve the quality of the customer firm relationship but notably support the case company to sustainably delight their clients over time while turning their valued customers into genuine brand advocates of the business. Finally, this may supposedly transpire into favorable business outcomes such as loyalty and long-term profitability.

5.3 Managerial implications

Preliminary research results provided in the scope of this thesis showed that not only an association but a medium-strong causal relationship exists between the behavioral and psychological dimensions of customer engagement (for the specific customer sample). Thus, the strength of the linear relationship indicates that the behavioral manifestation of engagement is closely linked to the psychological disposition of a customer. The latter is based on emotional and cognitive perceptions about a particular engagement object such as a brand or firm. Related findings further suggest that brand-related activities and touchpoints particularly shape the formation of emotional attachment and rational loyalty that a customer actively or passively experiences throughout the customer lifetime. As a result, it can be suggested that brand-related engagement behaviors may serve as an indicator to predict the degree of psychological engagement. While the latter can be challenging to quantify and continually evaluate for a company's

entire customer base, being aware of the association/link between the two dimensions can be useful for firms who seek to build meaningful relationships with their customers. In this regard, the preliminary CEM framework can provide relevant guidance to devise and implement the right marketing strategies and tactics to help organizations drive behavioral engagement in a targeted manner to strengthen the customer-firm relationship.

Furthermore, companies can generate valuable insights about the quality of these relationships by constantly measuring engagement levels and paying attention to early warning signals in case engagement drops significantly. The latter can be an indicator of the declining health of the relationship and may serve to advise firms to determine risks of decreasing customer loyalty and potential churn. In response, companies can proactively tackle deficiencies in the customer relationship by not solely driving but also frequently observing engagement levels. Therefore, it becomes fundamentally important to have the instruments and marketing means in place to focus on engagement marketing initiatives in a structured and efficient manner.

First, companies must realize that marketing should take up a holistic and customer-centric approach to effectively support the entire customer lifecycle from acquisition to retention.

Second, this requires organizations to acknowledge the paradigm shift from traditional views of marketing as a top of the funnel responsibility to 360-degree function. Thus, CEM strategies and tactics must become a central priority and core responsibility of today's marketing operations to provide valuable contributions to customer relationship management efforts and ultimately drive sustainable business outcomes.

Third, companies may generate valuable learnings from applying, testing, and evaluating particular engagement marketing tactics to benefit customer loyalty and retention. The CEM framework thus provides a set of actionable recommendations that can serve as a viable starting point to transform customers into brand advocates.

5.4 Limitations and future research

This thesis covered substantial research in the field of customer engagement and related marketing constructs and practices. Preliminary empirical investigations at the example of the case company further provided additional explanatory insights into the phenomenon by validating a set of research propositions for a particular customer sample. Finally, a preliminary customer engagement marketing (CEM) framework was developed which combined the main research findings with a set of practical recommendations for the case company, other B2B companies as well as marketing scholars and practitioners. However, there are certain limitations to the study, which should be considered prior to adapting the recommendations provided.

First and foremost, the research scope was explicitly restricted to the case company in question. Hence, primary findings cannot be extrapolated or generalized to the broader industry but only apply to the particular context in which the study was conducted. Second, the primary focus of the analysis was based on exploring the behavioral and psychological dimensions of customer engagement. Thereby, special emphasis was laid on the behavioral perspective, which was limited to the investigation of a set of direct, observable, online interactions with brand-related activities of the case company. Third, the study served to explore the concept of CE in a contemporary marketing context by focusing on the inbound marketing methodology as a marketing practice that has gained increasing relevance and adoption in the B2B sector. Last but not least, preliminary research findings can only provide a superficial perspective on the actual association and relationship between different dimensions as well as the contribution of marketing initiatives on CE. The latter was also not part of the investigation and might trigger future research steps to assess and quantify the actual impact of inbound marketing tactics on customer engagement levels.

Generally, it is assumed that CEM activities (as discussed in this thesis) can only provide an indirect contribution to customer engagement and, eventually, the formation of customer loyalty as a CE consequence. Given the complex nature of CE as a holistic and multidimensional construct, there are a variety of other factors (e.g., product/user experience, service quality, value for money, etc.) that influence a customer's behavioral engagement and psychological (emotional and

cognitive) disposition towards a brand. These may arise from a series of cognitive, behavioral, and emotional encounters with the brand as a whole - and not only its online marketing presence. Hence, it is hypothesized that the behavioral manifestation of customer engagement forms the tip (ca. 10%) of a metaphoric iceberg, whereas the psychological part makes up the invisible rest (ca. 90%) below the surface. This is further supported by the notion that marketing can only provide indirect contributions on CE as opposed to a holistic, integrated, and neat brand experience. The latter involves a combination of touchpoints such as marketing, product, sales, and customer service that serve as the foundation on which companies develop meaningful and profitable customer relationships.

Consequently, future research initiatives and CE conceptualizations should focus on consolidating and integrating the remaining factors into a holistic, empirical model to provide a more accurate picture of the drivers, motivators, and influences of CE. Furthermore, additional research should be directed at the cross-validation of the research propositions formulated in this thesis among a more substantial customer sample across different companies, industries, and geographies. Thereby, it might also be interesting to explore the role of customer engagement in relation to customer loyalty and retention. Accordingly, the research could be directed at discussing and validating the assumption of whether the level of CE can predict customer churn. Further, it is recommended to conduct additional empirical studies to investigate the validity of the CEM framework by measuring and analyzing the actual contribution of individual marketing activities on CE levels. Ultimately, an empirical assessment of the overall impact of increased CE levels on business outcomes may provide valuable insights for organizations to decide whether they should invest in CEM initiatives in the future.

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Appendices

Literature	Definition	Study	Scope
Kumar & Pansari (2015; 2017)	The mechanics and combination of a customer's indirect and/or direct value contribution to the firm whereas direct contribution consider purchase behavior and indirect contribution looks at customer referrals, customer influence, and knowledge. Based on conceptualizations by Kumar et al. (2010)	Empirical/ conceptual	• Applicability: B2C & B2B • Behavior-based conceptualization • Development of a conceptual framework focusing on the antecedents and consequences of CE (Pansari & Kumar, 2017) • Provision of 16-item measurement scale to segment customers into 4 quadrants of disengaged, somewhat engaged, moderately engaged and super-engaged (Kumar & Pansari, 2015)
Vivek et al. (2012)	The level and intensity of participation and connection between an individual and an organization specifically focused on its offering and activities initiated by either the firm or the customer.	Conceptual	• Applicability: B2C • Attitude and behavior-based conceptualization • Multi-dimensional construct • Value, trust, word-of-mouth, affective commitment, loyalty and brand community involvement as primary CE consequences.
Hollebeek (2011a)	An individual customer's motivational and brand-related state of mind that is context-dependent and characterized by certain levels of emotional, cognitive and behavioral activity in brand interactions.	Conceptual	• Applicability: B2C • Attitude & behaviour-based conceptualization • Multi-dimensional construct • The main CE components are cognitive, emotional, and behavioral activity.
Brodie et al. (2011)	A multi-dimensional construct described as a psychological state that occurs and is shaped by co-creative customer experiences in the focal service relationship which is subject to a context-specific expression of emotional, cognitive and behavioral dimensions.	Conceptual	• Applicability: B2C • Attitude-based conceptualization • Multi-dimensional construct • Illustration of the conceptual domain of CE through service-dominant logic and integration of relational concepts such as customer loyalty and involvement as the antecedents or consequences that play a role in iterative CE processes.
Van Doorn et al. (2010)	The behavioral manifestation of a customer towards a brand or organization that goes beyond purchasing and which results from motivational drivers shaped by brand interactions, customer referrals, community involvement, and knowledge transfer.	Conceptual	• Applicability: B2C • Behavior-based conceptualization • Multi-dimensional construct • Valence, modality, scope, impact and customer goals as the main dimensions of the CE framework.

Kumar et al. (2010)	A set of distinct customer behaviors such as purchasing behavior, referral behavior, influencer-driven by extrinsic and intrinsic motivational drivers that shape the nature of the relationship between customer and organization.	Conceptual	• Applicability: B2B and B2C • Attitude and behavior-based conceptualization • Multi-dimensional construct • The main components of the CE framework are customer influence, customer lifetime value, customer referral value and customer knowledge value.
Bowden (2009)	A psychological process that shapes underlying mechanisms that contribute to the development and retention of customer loyalty of customers towards a service brand.	Conceptual	• Applicability: B2C • Attitude and behavior-based conceptualization • Multi-dimensional construct (inferred from relational concepts) • Various measures such as satisfaction, calculative commitment, involvement and trust, emotional bonding and brand loyalty are used to explain the process of CE.
Ilić (2008)	A contextual process consisting of distinct interactions with so-called 'engagement objects' which happens over time and forms at different levels in the customer-firm relationship.	Empirical	• Applicability: B2C • Attitude and behaviour-based conceptualization • Multidimensional construct focusing on cognitive, behavioral, emotional, aspirational and social attributes.
Patterson, Yu & De Ruyter (2006)	The extent or level of a customer's cognitive, physical and emotional presence within the relationship to a service organization.	Conceptual	• Applicability: B2C • Attitude and behaviour-based conceptualization • Multidimensional construct focusing on four dimensions such as vigor, dedication, absorption, and interaction.

Relationship	Construct	Definition
Antecedents	Involvement	The level of personal relevance and interest demonstrated by an individual towards a focal object such as a brand or organization, related to personal goals, values and self-concept (Mittal, 1995).
	Interactivity	A set of reciprocal activities undertaken in a specific context that usually follow a clear objective and characterize a degree of interaction between customer and firm (Bolton & Saxena-Iyer, 2009).
	Flow	A higher state of mind describing an optimal experience that is characterized by focused attention, clarity, effortless concentration, complete control, distortion of time, loss of self-consciousness and overall intrinsic enjoyment (Csikszentmihalyi, 1990).
Consequence	Co-created Value	The perceived value which arises from joint, interactive and personalized experiences made with or created for stakeholders (Prahalad & Ramaswamy, 2004).
	Brand Experience	An individual emotional, cognitive and behavioral consumer/customer response triggered by brand-related stimuli such as product or service design, packaging, image/identity and communication (Brakus et al., 2009)
	Perceived Quality	A consumer's or customer's perception or appraisal of the overall superiority of a product or service with regards to its intent relative to alternatives (Parasuraman, Zeithaml & Berry, 1988)
	Customer Value	The value often expressed as satisfaction experienced by a consumer/customer after making a purchase for goods and services which is relative to what is received in return for what is given. Also defined as the overall assessment of product/service perceived utility from the perspective of the consumer/customer (Zeithaml, 1988).
	Brand Loyalty	A tendency or attitude demonstrated by consumers/consumers towards a brand or set of brands in terms of repeat purchase actions (behavioral loyalty) that is evoked by an internal disposition or mindset (attitudinal loyalty) (Day, 1969).
Antecedent & Consequence	Trust	A consumer's/customer's perception of security and reliability related to a brand or product to perform its intended purpose or function (Rotter, 1967).
	Rapport	The connection or relationship between individuals, groups or parties characterized by harmony and empathy which serves to build mutual understanding and effective communication through perceived congruence of values, behaviors and mental models (Brooks, 1989).
	Customer Satisfaction	Overall evaluation of the performance of an offering such as a product or service experience to date from the perspective of a customer (Gustaffson, Johnson & Roos, 2005).
	Commitment	The level of dedication or desire expressed within a relationship between two or more parties which translates into certain cognitive and behavioral activity/efforts aimed at continuing and maintaining it (Morgan & Hunt, 1994).

APPENDIX 3: CE11 QUESTIONNAIRE

Pre-existing questionnaire originally from Gallup Inc. (2009) to measure CE:

(11 Questions, 2 dimensions: L3 + A8 = CE11)

L3 (Rational Loyalty): measures rational disposition toward a brand (satisfaction, intent to repurchase, intent to recommend):

1. Overall, how satisfied are you with [brand]?
2. How likely are you to continue to choose/repurchase [brand]?
3. How likely are you to recommend [brand] to a friend/associate?

→ *Rating: 5-Point Likert Scale:*

- Very satisfied - / - very likely
- Somewhat satisfied - / - somewhat likely
- Neither satisfied nor dissatisfied - / - neutral
- Somewhat dissatisfied - / - somewhat unlikely
- Very dissatisfied - / - very unlikely

A8 (Emotional Attachment): measures emotional attachment to a brand:

Confidence:
1. [Brand] is a name I can always trust.
2. [Brand] always delivers on what they promise.

Integrity:
3. [Brand] always treats me fairly.
4. If a problem arises, I can always count on [brand] to reach a fair and satisfactory resolution.

Pride:
5. I feel proud to be a [brand] customer.
6. [Brand] always treats me with respect.

Passion:
7. [Brand] is the perfect company for people like me.
8. I can't imagine a world without [brand].

→ *Rating: 5-Point Likert Scale:*

- Strongly agree
- Agree
- Neither agree nor disagree
- Disagree
- Strongly disagree

APPENDIX 4: INTERACTION DATA CATEGORIES AND TYPES

BCE classification	Data category	Data type	System data property	Description
Content engagement (part 1) Web analytics	Frequency	Interaction data • Site visits • Pageviews	• Number of sessions • Number of page views	*Number of sessions:* the total number of pages a contact has viewed. *Number of page views*: The total number of pages a contact has viewed.
	Recency	Time-based data • Date • Days/weeks	• Time last seen	The last time the contact has viewed a page.
Content engagement (part 2) Conversion activities	Frequency	Interaction data • Conversions and/or form submissions	• Number of form submissions	*Number of form submissions:* The number of forms/conversions a contact has submitted/performed.
	Recency	Time-based data • Date • Days/weeks	• Recent conversion date	*Recent conversion date:* the date the contact last submitted a form.
Email engagement: Email interaction	Frequency	Interaction data • Email opens • Email clicks	• Marketing emails opened • Marketing emails clicked	*Marketing emails opened:* The number of marketing emails opened for the given email address. *Marketing emails clicked:* The number of marketing emails opened for the given email address.
	Recency	Time-based data • Date • Days/weeks	• Last marketing email open date • Last marketing email click date	*Last marketing email open date:* The date of the most recent email open for any marketing email. *Last marketing email click date:* The date of the most recent email open for any marketing email.
Social media engagement: marketing:	Frequency	Interaction data • Social media clicks	• LinkedIn clicks • Twitter clicks	*LinkedIn clicks:* The number clicks on marketing posts/links shared on LinkedIn. *Twitter clicks:* The number of marketing emails opened for the given email address.
	Recency	Time-based data • Date • Days/weeks	• Most recent social click	*Most recent social click:* The date of the most recent email open for any marketing email.

injixo Customer Engagement Survey

Your perception is our reality

Help us understand you better to create a product brand that you love.

Take this short **2-minute survey** and tell us how you feel about injixo.

The data that we collect in this survey will remain private and subject to internal use only.

We personally thank you for every second that you invest in this survey and are incredibly grateful for your feedback.

Lots of love.

Your injixo team

* 1. **To get started:** Please enter your business email address. Make sure to use the business email to which we sent the survey invite.

Email Address   [_____]

* 2. Overall, how satisfied are you with injixo?

◯ Very dissatisfied   ◯ Dissatisfied   ◯ Neither satisfied nor dissatisfied   ◯ Satisfied

◯ Very satisfied

* 3. How likely are you to continue using/choosing injixo over other WFM solutions on the market?

◯ Very unlikely   ◯ Unlikely   ◯ Neither likely nor unlikely   ◯ Likely

◯ Very likely

*4. How likely are you to recommend injixo to other CC professionals, business partners, or colleagues who consider buying a WFM solution for their contact center operations?

◯ Very unlikely ◯ Unlikely ◯ Neither likely nor unlikely ◯ Likely

◯ Very likely

Please let us know how you feel about the following statements.

[OK]

*5. injixo is a brand I can always trust.

◯ Strongly disagree ◯ Disagree ◯ Neither agree nor disagree ◯ Agree

◯ Strongly agree

*6. injixo always delivers on what they promise.

◯ Strongly disagree ◯ Disagree ◯ Neither agree nor disagree ◯ Agree

◯ Strongly agree

*7. injixo always treats me fairly.

◯ Strongly disagree ◯ Disagree ◯ Neither agree nor disagree ◯ Agree

◯ Strongly agree

*8. If a problem arises, I can always count on injixo to reach a fair, timely and satisfactory resolution.

◯ Strongly disagree ◯ Disagree ◯ Neither agree nor disagree ◯ Agree

◯ Strongly agree

*9. I feel proud to be an injixo customer.

◯ Strongly disagree ◯ Disagree ◯ Neither agree nor disagree ◯ Agree

◯ Strongly agree

*10. injixo always treats me with respect.

◯ Strongly disagree ◯ Disagree ◯ Neither agree nor disagree ◯ Agree

◯ Strongly agree

* 11. injixo is the perfect WFM brand for people like me.

○ Strongly disagree   ○ Disagree   ○ Neither agree nor   ○ Agree
                                            disagree

○ Strongly agree

* 12. Working in my current job, I can't imagine a world without injixo.

○ Strongly disagree   ○ Disagree   ○ Neither agree nor   ○ Agree
                                            disagree

○ Strongly agree

APPENDIX 6: SURVEY EMAIL INVITATION TEMPLATE

injixo

Hi ,

As an injixo customer, you and **your feedback matters** to us and can help a great deal in improving our products and services, marketing communication and entire brand experience.

With this **short 2-minute survey** , we'd really like to find about **how you feel about our brand.** We realize how precious your time is, which is why we tried to keep this survey as short as possible.

We will ask you to answer 11 distinct questions that will teach us about your satisfaction, rational loyalty and emotional attachment of injixo as a B2B brand. For us, all three aspects are important to create sustainable, long-term customer relationships and superior products that are of value to you.

We personally thank you for every second that you invest in this survey and are incredibly grateful for your feedback. Thanks in advance for completing the survey.

>> Start the survey

All the best,
Lara

InVision AG, Speditionstraße 5, Dusseldorf, North Rhine-Westphalia 40221, Germany
Unsubscribe Manage preferences

APPENDIX 7: BCE SCORING MODEL DESIGN

Point accreditation/Value allocation:

- Using simple 5 point Likert scale to rate/score customer interaction/engagement with marketing content

    - 1 Point = not engaged
    - 2 Points = slightly engaged
    - 3 Points = engaged
    - 4 Points = very engaged
    - 5 Points = strongly engaged

BCE Dimension	Scoring/Rating
1. Website interaction (Max Score = 15/15 vs. Min Score = 3/15)	Frequency: **Number of sessions** (the total number of pages a contact has viewed) (S_f): • 5 Points: $S_f >/= 10 \rightarrow$ (S_f = 10;11;12; … ∞) • 4 Points: $10 < S_f > 6 \rightarrow$ (S_f = 9;8;7) • 3 Points: $7 < S_f > 3 \rightarrow$ (S_f = 6;5;4) • 2 Points: $4 < S_f > 0 \rightarrow$ (S_f = 3;2;1) • 1 Point: $V_f = 0 \rightarrow$ (S_f = 0)
	Frequency: **Number of page views** (the total number of pages a contact has viewed) (V_f): • 5 Points: $P_f >/= 20 \rightarrow$ (P_f = 20;21;22; … ∞) • 4 Points: $20 < P_f > 13 \rightarrow$ (P_f = 19;18;17;...;14) • 3 Points: $14 < P_f > 7 \rightarrow$ (P_f = 13;12;11;...;8) • 2 Points: $8 < P_f > 1 \rightarrow$ (P_f = 7;6;5;...;2) • 1 Point: $V_f </= 1 \rightarrow$ (P_f = 1;0)
	Recency: **Time last seen** (the last time the contact has viewed a page) (V_r): • 5 Points: V_r is less than 15 days ago (so that it includes $V_r >/= 14$ days) • 4 Points: V_r is more than 14 days ago & less than 30 days ago • 3 Points: V_r is more than 29 days ago & less than 60 days ago • 2 Points: V_r is more than 59 days ago & less than 90 days ago • 1 Point: V_r is more than 89 days ago (so that it includes $V_r >/= 90$ days) OR unknown
2. Conversion actions (Max Score = 10/10 vs. Min Score = 2/10)	Frequency: **Number of form submissions** (the number of forms/conversions a contact has submitted/performed) (C_f): • 5 Points: $C_f >/= 5 \rightarrow$ (C_f = 5;6;7; … ∞) • 4 Points: $C_f = 4$ • 3 Points: $C_f = 3$ • 2 Points: $C_f = 2$ • 1 Point: $C_f = </= 1 \rightarrow$ (C_f = 1;0)
	Recency: **Recent conversion date** (the date the contact last submitted a form) (C_r): • 5 Points: C_r is less than 15 days ago (so that it includes $C_r >/= 14$ days)

	4 Points: Cr is more than 14 days ago & less than 30 days ago 3 Points: Cr is more than 29 days ago & less than 60 days ago 2 Points: Cr is more than 59 days ago & less than 90 days ago 1 Point: Cr is more than 89 days ago (so that it includes Cr >/= 90 days)
3. Email interaction (Max Score = 20/20 vs. Min Score = 4/20)	Frequency: ***Marketing emails opened*** (The number of marketing emails opened for the given email address.) (EOf): 5 Points: EOf >/= 5 → (EOf = 5;6;7; … ∞) 4 Points: EOf = 4 3 Points: EOf = 3 2 Points: EOf = 2 1 Point: EOf= </= 1 → (EOf = 1;0)
	Recency: ***Last marketing email open date*** (the date of the most recent email open for any marketing email) (EOr): 5 Points: EOr is less than 15 days ago (so that it includes EOr >/= 14 days) 4 Points: EOr is more than 14 days ago & less than 30 days ago 3 Points: EOr is more than 29 days ago & less than 60 days ago 2 Points: EOr is more than 59 days ago & less than 90 days ago 1 Point: EOr is more than 89 days ago (so that it includes EOr >/= 90 days)
	Frequency: ***Marketing emails clicked*** (The number of marketing emails opened for the given email address.) (ECf): 5 Points: ECf >/= 5 → (EOf = 5;6;7; … ∞) 4 Points: ECf = 4 3 Points: ECf = 3 2 Points: ECf = 2 1 Point: ECf = </= 1 → (ECf = 1;0)
	Recency: **Last marketing email click date** (the date of the most recent email open for any marketing email) (ECr): 5 Points: ECr is less than 15 days ago (so that it includes ECr >/= 14 days) 4 Points: ECr is more than 14 days ago & less than 30 days ago 3 Points: ECr is more than 29 days ago & less than 60 days ago 2 Points: ECr is more than 59 days ago & less than 90 days ago 1 Point: ECr is more than 89 days ago (so that it includes ECr >/= 90 days)
4. Social Media Interaction (Max Score = 15/15 vs. Min Score = 3/15)	Frequency: ***LinkedIn clicks*** (The number clicks on marketing posts/links shared on LinkedIn) (LCf): 5 Points: LCf >/= 5 → (LCf = 5;6;7; … ∞) 4 Points: LCf = 4

	• 3 Points: LCf = 3 • 2 Points: LCf = 2 • 1 Point: LCf = </= 1 → (LCf = 1;0)
	Frequency: ***Twitter clicks*** (The number of marketing emails opened for the given email address.) (TCf): • 5 Points: TCf >/= 5 → (TCf = 5;6;7; … ∞) • 4 Points: TCf = 4 • 3 Points: TCf = 3 • 2 Points: TCf = 2 • 1 Point: TCf </= 1 → (TCf = 1;0)
	Recency: ***Most recent social click*** (the date of the most recent email open for any marketing email) (SCr): • 5 Points: SCr is less than 15 days ago (so that it includes SCr >/= 14 days) • 4 Points: SCr is more than 14 days ago & less than 30 days ago • 3 Points: SCr is more than 29 days ago & less than 60 days ago • 2 Points: SCr is more than 59 days ago & less than 90 days ago • 1 Point: SCr is more than 89 days ago (so that it includes SCr >/= 90 days)

Accumulated BCE Score per Dimension:

→ Max Score = 60/60 vs. Min Score = 12/60

1. **Website interaction** (Max Score = 15/15 vs. Min Score = 3/15)
2. **Online conversion actions** (Max Score = 10/10 vs. Min Score = 2/10)
3. **E Mail interaction** (Max Score = 20/20 vs. Min Score = 4/20)
4. **Social Media Interaction** (Max Score = 15/15 vs. Min Score = 3/15)

Total Weighted BCE Score:

→ **Final Scoring Scale: Max Score = 100/100 vs. Min Score = 20/100**

1. **Weighted: 1x Website interaction Score** (Max Score = 15/15 vs. Min Score = 3/15)
2. **Weighted: 3x Online conversion actions** (Max Score = 30/30 vs. Min Score = 6/30)
3. **Weighted: 2x E Mail interaction** (Max Score = 40/40 vs. Min Score = 8/40)
4. **Weighted: 1x Social Media Interaction** (Max Score = 15/15 vs. Min Score = 3/15)

Link to access survey results: **https://www.surveymonkey.com/results/SM-R39K3XHQ7/**

Q1: Overall, how satisfied are you with injixo?

Answered: 40   Skipped: 0
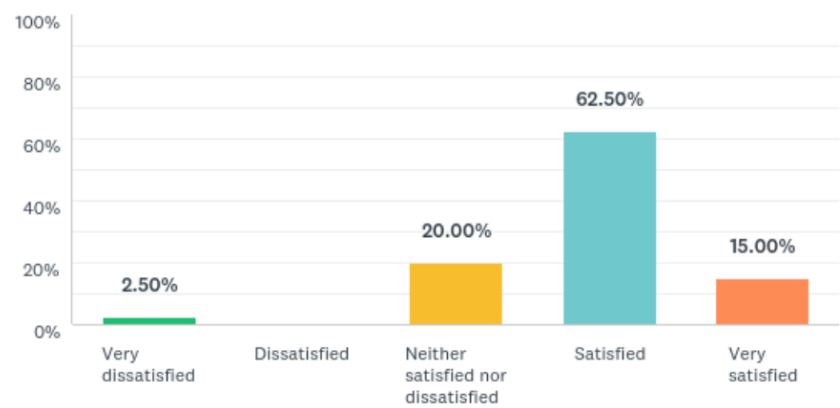
ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES	
Very dissatisfied (1)	2.50%	1
Dissatisfied (2)	0.00%	0
Neither satisfied nor dissatisfied (3)	20.00%	8
Satisfied (4)	62.50%	25
Very satisfied (5)	15.00%	6
TOTAL		40

BASIC STATISTICS				
Minimum	Maximum	Median	Mean	Standard Deviation
1.00	5.00	4.00	3.88	0.75

Q2: How likely are you to continue using/choosing injixo over other WFM solutions on the market?

Answered: 40   Skipped: 0
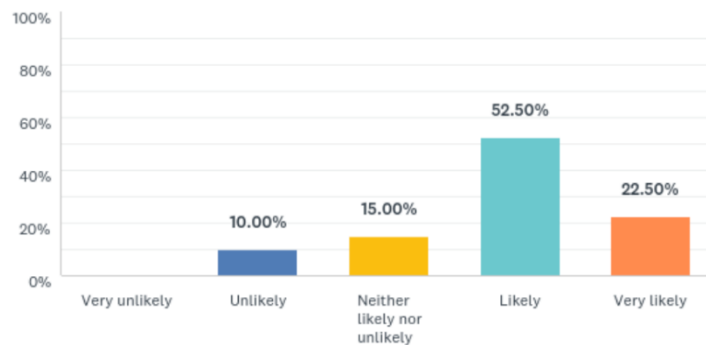
ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES	
Very unlikely (1)	0.00%	0
Unlikely (2)	10.00%	4
Neither likely nor unlikely (3)	15.00%	6
Likely (4)	52.50%	21
Very likely (5)	22.50%	9
TOTAL		40

BASIC STATISTICS				
Minimum	Maximum	Median	Mean	Standard Deviation
2.00	5.00	4.00	3.88	0.87

Q3: How likely are you to recommend injixo to other CC professionals, business partners, or colleagues who consider buying a WFM solution for their contact center operations?
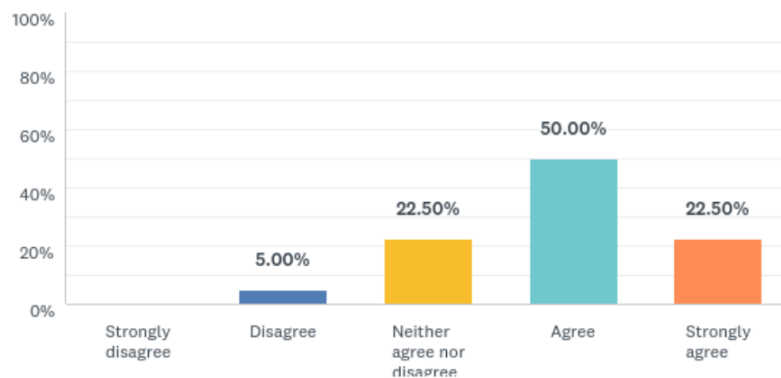
Answered: 40   Skipped: 0
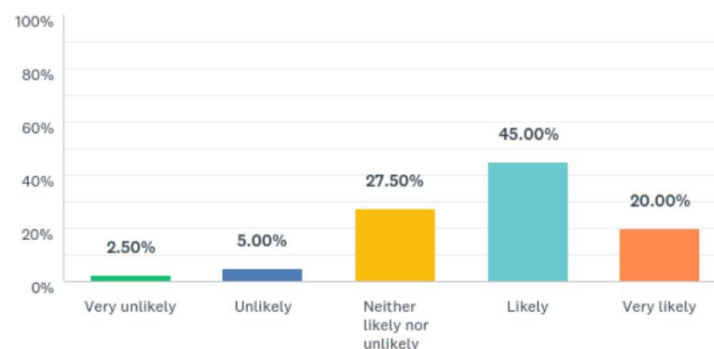
ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES	
Very unlikely (1)	2.50%	1
Unlikely (2)	5.00%	2
Neither likely nor unlikely (3)	27.50%	11
Likely (4)	45.00%	18
Very likely (5)	20.00%	8
TOTAL		40

BASIC STATISTICS				
Minimum 1.00	Maximum 5.00	Median 4.00	Mean 3.75	Standard Deviation 0.92

Q4: injixo is a brand I can always trust.

Answered: 40   Skipped: 0

ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES	
Strongly disagree (1)	0.00%	0
Disagree (2)	5.00%	2
Neither agree nor disagree (3)	22.50%	9
Agree (4)	50.00%	20
Strongly agree (5)	22.50%	9
TOTAL		40

BASIC STATISTICS				
Minimum 2.00	Maximum 5.00	Median 4.00	Mean 3.90	Standard Deviation 0.80

Q5: injixo always delivers on what they promise.

Answered: 40   Skipped: 0
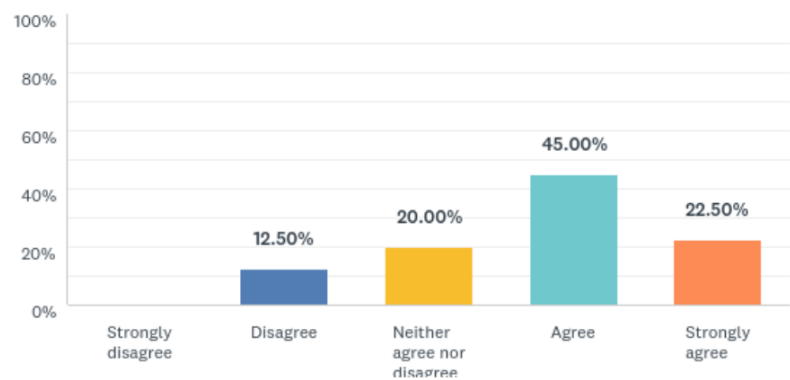
ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES	
Strongly disagree (1)	0.00%	0
Disagree (2)	12.50%	5
Neither agree nor disagree (3)	20.00%	8
Agree (4)	45.00%	18
Strongly agree (5)	22.50%	9
TOTAL		40

BASIC STATISTICS				
Minimum 2.00	Maximum 5.00	Median 4.00	Mean 3.78	Standard Deviation 0.94

Q6: injixo always treats me fairly.

Answered: 40   Skipped: 0
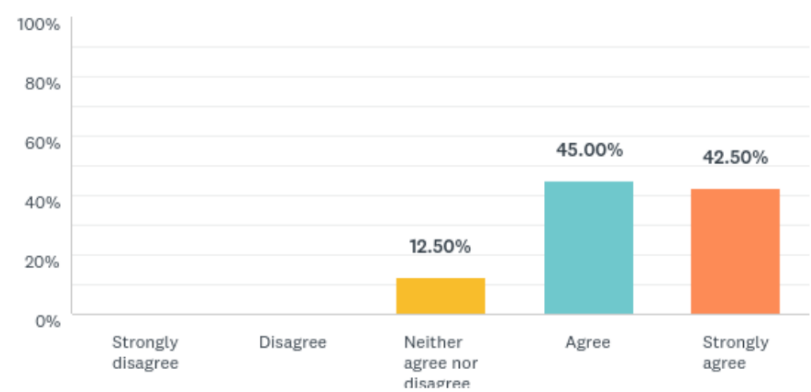
ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES	
Strongly disagree (1)	0.00%	0
Disagree (2)	0.00%	0
Neither agree nor disagree (3)	12.50%	5
Agree (4)	45.00%	18
Strongly agree (5)	42.50%	17
TOTAL		40

BASIC STATISTICS				
Minimum 3.00	Maximum 5.00	Median 4.00	Mean 4.30	Standard Deviation 0.68

Q7: If a problem arises, I can always count on injixo to reach a fair, timely and satisfactory resolution.

Answered: 40   Skipped: 0
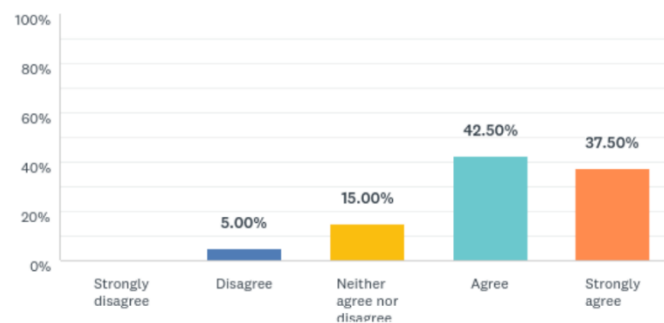
ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES	
Strongly disagree (1)	0.00%	0
Disagree (2)	5.00%	2
Neither agree nor disagree (3)	15.00%	6
Agree (4)	42.50%	17
Strongly agree (5)	37.50%	15
TOTAL		40

BASIC STATISTICS				
Minimum 2.00	Maximum 5.00	Median 4.00	Mean 4.13	Standard Deviation 0.84

Q8: I feel proud to be an injixo customer.

Answered: 40   Skipped: 0
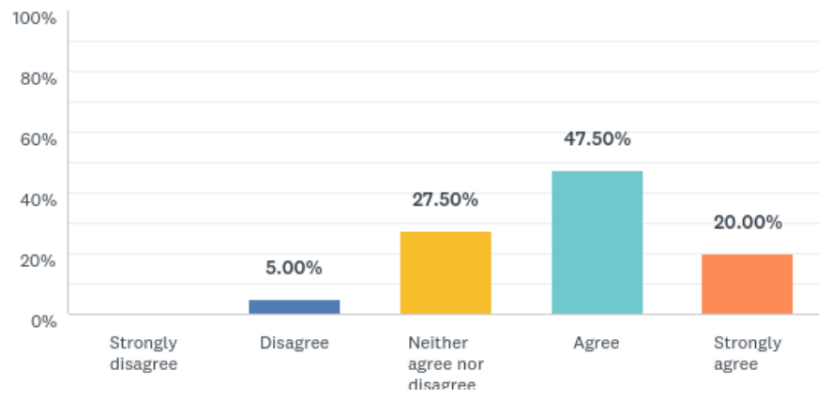
ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES	
Strongly disagree (1)	0.00%	0
Disagree (2)	5.00%	2
Neither agree nor disagree (3)	27.50%	11
Agree (4)	47.50%	19
Strongly agree (5)	20.00%	8
TOTAL		40

BASIC STATISTICS				
Minimum 2.00	Maximum 5.00	Median 4.00	Mean 3.83	Standard Deviation 0.80

Q9: injixo always treats me with respect.

Answered: 40   Skipped: 0
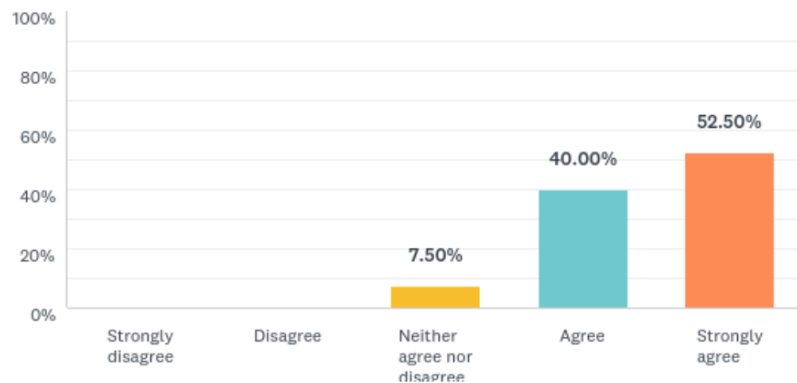
ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES	
Strongly disagree (1)	0.00%	0
Disagree (2)	0.00%	0
Neither agree nor disagree (3)	7.50%	3
Agree (4)	40.00%	16
Strongly agree (5)	52.50%	21
TOTAL		40

BASIC STATISTICS				
Minimum 3.00	Maximum 5.00	Median 5.00	Mean 4.45	Standard Deviation 0.63

Q10: injixo is the perfect WFM brand for people like me.

Answered: 40   Skipped: 0
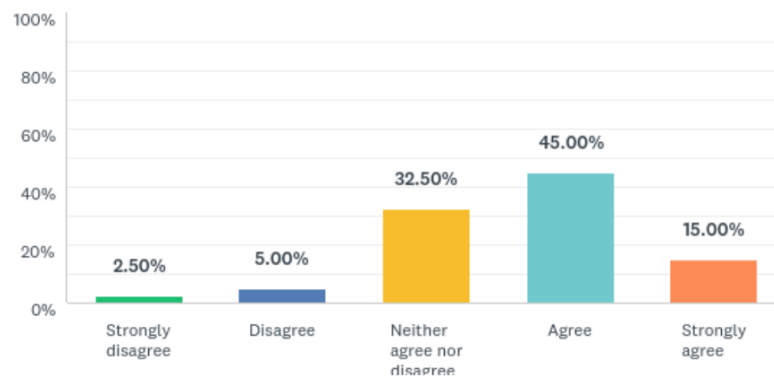
ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES	
Strongly disagree (1)	2.50%	1
Disagree (2)	5.00%	2
Neither agree nor disagree (3)	32.50%	13
Agree (4)	45.00%	18
Strongly agree (5)	15.00%	6
TOTAL		40

BASIC STATISTICS				
Minimum 1.00	Maximum 5.00	Median 4.00	Mean 3.65	Standard Deviation 0.88

Q11: Working in my current job, I can't imagine a world without injixo.

Answered: 40   Skipped: 0
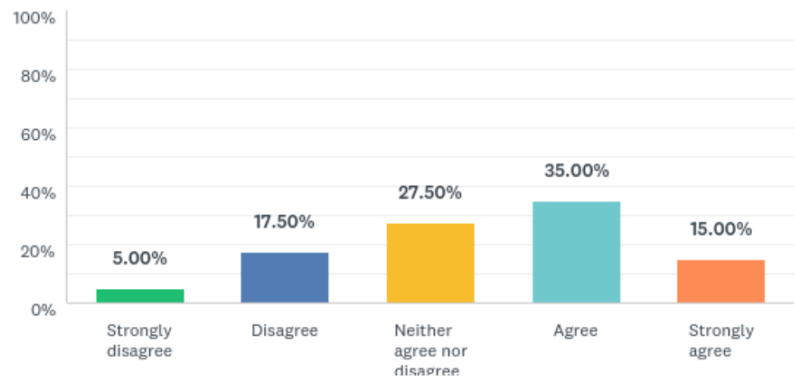
ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES	
Strongly disagree (1)	5.00%	2
Disagree (2)	17.50%	7
Neither agree nor disagree (3)	27.50%	11
Agree (4)	35.00%	14
Strongly agree (5)	15.00%	6
TOTAL		40

BASIC STATISTICS				
Minimum 1.00	Maximum 5.00	Median 3.50	Mean 3.38	Standard Deviation 1.09

APPENDIX 9: REGRESSION STATISTICS

Simple linear regression

1. Hypothesis/Assumption (V). An increase in BCE scores leads to an increase in PCE scores.

- Dependent variable: PCE Score
- Independent variable: Adjusted BCE Score

Regression Statistics

Multiple R	0.4726008796
R Square	0.2233515914
Adjusted R Square	0.2029134754
Standard Error	0.6257348013
Observations	40

ANOVA

	df	SS	MS	F	Significance F
Regression	1	4.278867227	4.278867227	10.92818884	0.002074655833
Residual	38	14.87867358	0.3915440415		
Total	39	19.15754081			

	Coefficients	Standard Error	t Stat	P-value	Lower 95%	Upper 95%	Lower 95.0%	Upper 95.0%
Intercept	2.772326485	0.3472308263	7.984102433	1.20E-09	2.069394426	3.475258543	2.069394426	3.475258543
Adjusted BCE Score	0.3753644867	0.1135478946	3.305781125	0.002074655833	0.1454987916	0.6052301819	0.1454987916	0.6052301819

2. Iteration on Hypothesis/Assumption (III). An increase in BCE scores leads to an increase in L3 scores (Rational Loyalty dimension of PCE).

- Dependent variable: L3 Score (PCE Dimension)
- Independent variable: Adjusted BCE Score
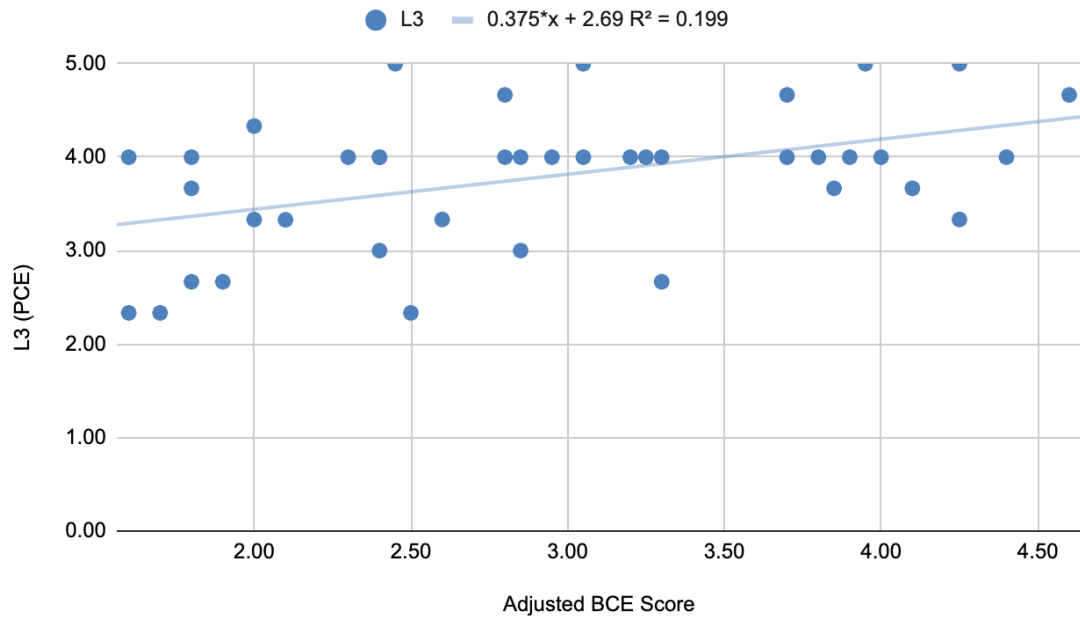
Regression Statistics	
Multiple R	0.4461194606
R Square	0.1990225732
Adjusted R Square	0.1779442198
Standard Error	0.673020413
Observations	40

ANOVA

	df	SS	MS	F	Significance F
Regression	1	4.276831401	4.276831401	9.442036101	0.003910564421
Residual	38	17.2123461	0.4529564763		
Total	39	21.4891775			

	Coefficients	Standard Error	t Stat	P-value	Lower 95%	Upper 95%	Lower 95.0%	Upper 95.0%
Intercept	2.691557963	0.3734704121	7.20688407	0.00000001293156	1.935506641	3.447609286	1.935506641	3.447609286
Adjusted BCE score	0.3752751795	0.1221284972	3.072789628	0.003910564421	0.1280389625	0.6225113964	0.1280389625	0.6225113964

3. Iteration on Hypothesis/Assumption (IV). An increase in BCE scores leads to an increase in A8 scores (Emotional Attachment dimension of PCE).

- Dependent variable: A8 Score (PCE Dimension)
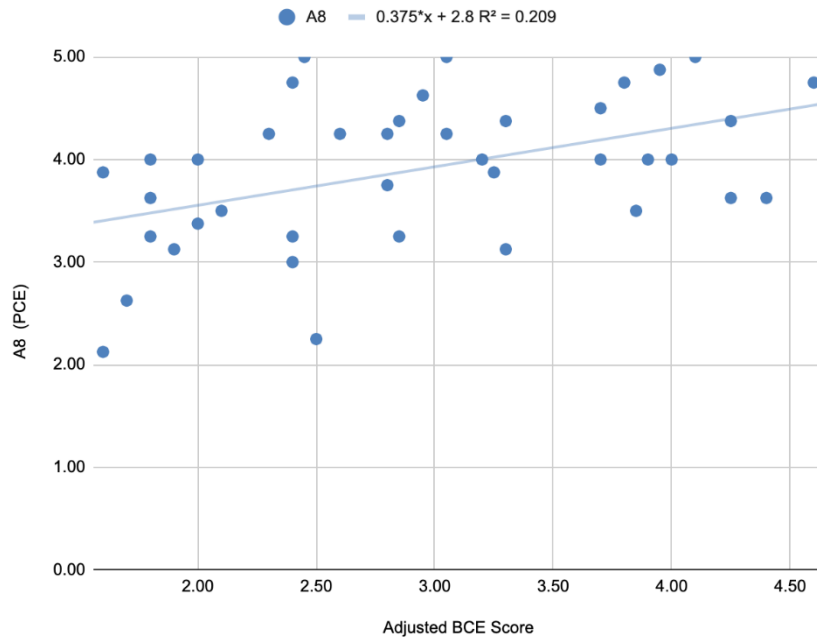- Independent variable: Adjusted BCE Score

Regression Statistics	
Multiple R	0.4569172683
R Square	0.20877339
Adjusted R Square	0.1879516372
Standard Error	0.6530792149
Observations	40

ANOVA

	df	SS	MS	F	Significance F
Regression	1	4.27651086	4.27651086	10.02669617	0.003038058177
Residual	38	16.20747352	0.4265124609		
Total	39	20.48398438			

	Coefficients	Standard Error	t Stat	P-value	Lower 95%	Upper 95%	Lower 95.0%	Upper 95.0%
Intercept	2.803140853	0.3624047039	7.734835732	0.0000000254936	2.069490886	3.536790821	2.069490886	3.536790821
Adjusted BCE Score	0.3752611161	0.1185099018	3.166495882	0.003038058177	0.1353503625	0.6151718697	0.1353503625	0.6151718697

Multiple linear regression:

Additional model: Testing the relationship/impact of individual BCE scores on PCE

- Dependent variable: PCE Score
- Independent variable: 4 BCE Dimensions
  - Website Score
  - Conversion Score
  - Email Score
  - Social Media Score

Regression Statistics	
Multiple R	0.4738494545
R Square	0.2245333055
Adjusted R Square	0.1359085404
Standard Error	0.6515045191
Observations	40

ANOVA

	df	SS	MS	F	Significance F
Regression	4	4.301505962	1.075376491	2.533527793	0.05756298015
Residual	35	14.85603484	0.4244581384		
Total	39	19.15754081			

	Coefficients	Standard Error	t Stat	P-value	Lower 95%	Upper 95%	Lower 95.0%	Upper 95.0%
Intercept	2.764158939	0.4700512582	5.880547899	0.00000110931792	1.809904153	3.718413725	1.809904153	3.718413725
Website Score	0.02562793056	0.03389985254	0.7559894407	0.4547138949	-0.04319242885	0.09444828997	-0.04319242885	0.09444828997
Conversion Score	0.04979442518	0.06871702139	0.7246301451	0.4734956443	-0.08970854476	0.1892973951	-0.08970854476	0.1892973951
Email Score	0.03587026591	0.02994340356	1.197935493	0.2389917489	-0.02491807505	0.09665860687	-0.02491807505	0.09665860687
Social Media Score	0.01718845306	0.06471746901	0.2655921705	0.7921115112	-0.1141949939	0.1485719	-0.1141949939	0.1485719

Curriculum Vitae

Lara Klinkenberg

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in http://de.linkedin.com/pub/lara-klinkenberg/92/a67/a88

https://www.xing.com/profile/Lara_Klinkenberg

Date of birth: 20.10.1992

Place of birth: Düren

SUMMARY

Aspiring and ambitious Digital Marketer with diversified practical experiences in SEM, Content Marketing, Inbound Marketing, B2B Marketing, and Analytics in an international scope. What I offer: Cross-functional skills, structured and result-oriented way of working, experiences and knowledge of agile methodologies and a high level of motivation paired with the inner drive to go the extra-mile.

EDUCATION AND QUALIFICATIONS

02/17 – today
Steinbeis University Berlin & Post University (USA)
General Management – Double-Degree Program
M.B.A. - Master of Business Administration
M.A. – Master of Arts

09/12 – 07/16
Fontys University of Applied Sciences, Venlo (NL)
International Marketing – UK
Propaedeutic Diploma - 2013
Bachelor of Business Administration B.B.A. – 2016

09/14 – 12/14
ISM International School of Management, Dortmund
International Business Certificate
- *International Business & Management*
- *Strategic Controlling*
- *Global Economics*
- *Crisis Management & Intercultural Communications*

09/02 - 6/12
Städt. Rurtal Gymnasium, Düren
University Entrance Diploma – 2012
Higher level courses: English, Biology, Social Sciences

WORK EXPERIENCE

09/16 – today
InVision AG, Düsseldorf
Global Marketing Manager
- Managing marketing activities on digital channels in key regions (US & CA, UK & IE, D-A-CH)

- Inbound Marketing strategy development & execution
- Project owner for SEO & SEA on a global scale
- Development and coordination of promotional activities & media partnerships
- Taking care of Content Marketing (blog), Email Marketing and Lead Generation activities
- Event management and organization of Inbound Marketing & Growth-Hacking Meetups
- Tools: Hubspot Marketing & Sales Platform, Google Adwords, Google Analytics, Wordpress, Mailchimp, Wishpond, Trello, Slack, Evernote etc.

02/16 – 08/16

Nespresso Deutschland GmbH, Düsseldorf

Intern – B2B Marketing & Bachelor Thesis

- Organisation and coordination of new product launches
- Development and coordination of promotional activities (B2B)
- Market analyses and reporting
- Active support & involvement in Event Management
- Creation of presentations, MS Office, Excel
- Bachelor Thesis: Inbound Lead Generation to Accelerate B2B Marketing Growth

09/15 – 03/16

KPMG AG Wirtschaftsprüfungsgesellschaft, Düsseldorf

Student Trainee – Business Development/Markets

- CRM SAP Project – family owned businesses
- Master data management & analytics
- Market research and analysis
- Tools: Excel, SAP
- SAP Seminar

01/15 – 07/15

Metro AG (Metro Group), Düsseldorf

Intern - Corporate Marketing, CRM / Campaign Management

- Creation of and assistance in reporting (Pivot)
- Support and active Involvement in campaign management
- Set up of articles and PP-presentations (Corporate und MCC)
- Development of a Business Case, autonomous project lead and planning
- Work Placement Report: Big Data, Bigger Marketing

10/13 – 12/14

Trivago GmbH, Düsseldorf

Student trainee - Online Marketing /SEO - (UK & IE)

- Search engine optimization and link-building
- Public relations, negotiations and cooperation with partners + clients
- Optimization of Google-ranking, keywords and overall visibility
- Content Marketing und Social media marketing

03/10 – 04/10

PACT Communication Group, Munich

Intern - Internal Communication

- Press work & market research
- Active support in internal communication
- Collaboration in texting, art design/graphics and production
- Working with MS Office

FURTHER PRACTICAL EXPERIENCES

09/15 – 01/16   **Online Marketing Consultant – Scheuten Glas Nederland B.V., Venlo (NL)**
- Consulting services in the Online Marketing field for an international glass manufacturing firm
- Analysis and Interpretation of online presence (website and digital marketing activities)
- Task: Increasing website traffic, generating leads, improving CTR + overall website visibility, ranking and awareness on google.co.uk

02/14 – 07/14   **Market Researcher & Consultant - Artista GmbH, Leverkusen (DE)**
- Client: kautionsfrei.de (Budget: 3000)
- Tasks: Planning + Implementation of a quantitative and qualitative research design In terms of desk and field research
- Topic: Acceptance of rental bond securities on the German market
- Website creation with WordPress (http://akzeptanz-mietkautionsbuergschaft.de/)
- Conduction of surveys and expert-interviews

09/13 – 07/14   **CEO & General Manager - Start-up Fifteen S.C., Venlo (NL)**
Supported by Jong Ondernemen, Den Haag
- Founding a Start-up business on the Dutch/German market
- Set up of a well-found business plan and annual report
- Creation and implementation of an innovative product concept
- Product: sustainable and personalized bracelets made from flip-flop waste
- Success: BEP after 4 months, profits donated to "Nepal Kinderhilfe e.V."

09/12 – 03/13   **Business Consultant - Essence Digital, London (England)**
- Development of a detailed company analysis
- External + internal analysis based on profound research (expert interviews)
- Practical application of theory and marketing models (McKinsey, BCG, Porter etc.)

SKILLS AND KOWLEDGE

Personal Skills   Communication Skills, Problem Solving, Team spirit, Numeracy, Reliability, Resilience, Proactive & Solution-Orientation, Critical Thinking, Creativity, Leadership

Languages

German	Native language
English	Full professional proficiency
Dutch	Limited working proficiency
French	Elementary proficiency
Italian	Elementary proficiency

IT-Skills

Hubspot	Expert
Google AdWords	Expert
Google Analytics	Expert
MS Office	Expert
SEO	Advanced
Excel	Advanced
SAP CRM	Advanced
Adobe Photoshop CC	Advanced
Gimp	Advanced
Internet, Google	Advanced
WordPress	Advanced
SPSS	Intermediate
HTML / HubL	Intermediate

CERTIFICATES

Hubspot Inbound Marketing
Hubspot Email Marketing
Hubspot Marketing Software
Adobe Photoshop – Certificate
International Business Certificate
Propaedeutic Diploma – International Marketing
Mini Company Certificate
Letter of reference - Business English

SOCIAL COMMITMENT

Voluntary tutor for students – Foreign Language: English
- Grammar
- Vocabulary
- Creative writing

HOBBIES & INTEREST

Motorsports, Foreign Cultures, Music, Entrepreneurship, Fitness, Painting, Kitesurfing

Lara Klinkenberg   Düsseldorf, 19.11.2019