

CUSTOMER ENGAGEMENT WITH TOURISM BRANDS: SCALE DEVELOPMENT AND VALIDATION

Kevin Kam Fung So
Griffith University

Ceridwyn King
Temple University

Beverley Sparks
Griffith University

Although customer engagement (CE) has emerged as a widely used term in many industries, including tourism and hospitality, academic research lacks a clear conceptualization and rigorous measurement of the construct. This study develops and validates a 25-item CE scale that comprises five factors: identification, enthusiasm, attention, absorption, and interaction. The scale, developed from a survey of hotel and airline customers, demonstrated strong psychometric properties across multiple samples and showed CE to exert a positive significant influence on behavioral intention of loyalty for both hotel and airline customers. The scale offers a framework for future empirical research in this increasingly important area, and it provides a useful tool for tourism practitioners to collect insights into customer psychological and behavioral connections with their brands beyond the service consumption experience.

KEYWORDS: *customer engagement; brand loyalty; brands; hotels; airlines; scale development*

The concept of customer engagement (CE) is attracting increasing attention from both practitioners and academics (Brodie, Hollebeek, Juric, & Ilic, 2011), in part owing to the growth of the Internet as an effective platform for customer interaction. In particular, the online environment has led to a range of new media channels that enable tourism and hospitality firms to develop and maintain connections with customers beyond the service encounter. To engage with their customers through interactions beyond purchase, many tourism brands, such as Marriott and Cathay Pacific, have established their presence on social network sites, such as Facebook and Twitter as well as in online discussion boards. The Internet empowers tourism operators and consumers to share information, opinions,

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and experiences, not only from business to customer but also from customer to customer (Litvin, Goldsmith, & Pan, 2008). Such interactions have highlighted the significance of engaging with customers to build loyalty beyond the transaction, particularly in the highly competitive landscape of the tourism industry.

The relevance of nontransactional customer interactions is widely documented. For example, online user-generated reviews can influence the number of online bookings in a hotel (Ye, Law, & Gu, 2009) as well as intentions to book and perceptions of trust in the hotel (Sparks & Browning, 2011). In an off-line environment, opinion or advice from existing customers influences the consumer's purchase decisions (Crotts, 1999). Collectively, such interactions form the behavioral manifestation of CE (Marketing Science Institute [MSI], 2010; van Doorn et al., 2010; Verhoef, Reinartz, & Krafft, 2010). Additionally, tourism organizations can leverage CE behaviors to attract and retain more customers and gain additional insight into their business (Wang & Fesenmaier, 2004). From a consumer perspective, the benefits for engaging in CE activities include financial gains or incentives as well as emotional fulfillment, such as enjoyment and positive affect (van Doorn et al., 2010).

Although the benefits of CE are increasingly apparent, empirical research into this emerging concept has been very limited, with previous studies on CE being largely restricted to conceptualized relationships without empirical testing (e.g., Hollebeek, 2011; van Doorn et al., 2010; Verhoef et al., 2010). More specifically, despite the increasing adoption of CE strategies by many tourism firms, very little is known about the conceptualization and measurement of CE with tourism and hospitality brands. This study addresses this knowledge gap through the development of a CE scale.

Increased competitiveness of the tourism and hospitality industry (King, 2010), together with the proliferation of new brands (Kim, Jin-Sun, & Kim, 2008; So & King, 2010), have led many tourism firms to compete solely through loyalty programs and price discounts. However, the rising costs associated with these practices make these strategies unsustainable in the long run. For this reason, tourism and hospitality brands need to foster customer allegiance from a psychological attachment perspective, where price or loyalty points become less relevant to future purchase decisions. CE is emerging as a construct that may enhance loyalty and purchase decisions (e.g., Hollebeek, 2009; Patterson, Yu, & de Ruyter, 2006) through a strong, enduring psychological connection accompanied by interactive brand experiences beyond purchase. CE with a brand influences important aspects of consumer brand knowledge, brand perceptions, and brand attitudes, and hence brand loyalty (Spratt, Czellar, & Spangenberg, 2009).

As this discussion indicates, the development of a scale to capture CE with tourism brands is important to brand managers who strive to develop truly loyal customers, as such a scale facilitates discrimination between genuinely committed or engaged customers and those with a more tenuous psychological connection with the brand. This differentiation is essential, given that less committed customers tend to be more susceptible to switching than engaged customers and therefore may require more attention from managers.

Although several researchers have attempted to conceptualize CE (e.g., Brodie, Hollebeek, et al., 2011; Hollebeek, 2009, 2011; Patterson et al., 2006; van Doorn et al., 2010), empirical investigation is still limited and knowledge of how the concept should be measured is currently lacking (Bolton, 2011; Hollebeek, 2011). Furthermore, despite CE's relevance to tourism and hospitality, research in this area is sparse. This article contributes to the literature by providing a comprehensive conceptualization of CE within the tourism context, by developing a scale to effectively measure a customer's engagement with a tourism brand, and by using CE to predict brand loyalty.

The article has the following structure. The first section establishes a theoretical foundation through a review of the organizational behavior and marketing literature on engagement and proposes a conceptualization of CE consisting of five distinct dimensions. The second section describes the development and validation of a CE measurement scale, including the testing of hypothesized dimensions of CE and assessment of their psychometric properties. The final section discusses the study's findings, implications, and limitations and suggests directions for future research.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Conceptualization of Customer Engagement

The term engagement in a business-related context originally referred to employee engagement (EE), which seems to enjoy a consistent conceptualization and operationalization. However, the conceptualization of CE, which is still in its infancy, lacks consensus. For this reason, the stability of the EE construct may provide insight for CE.

In the organizational behavior literature, EE refers to "the simultaneous employment and expression of a person's preferred self in task behaviors that promote connections to work and to others, personal presence, and active, full role performances" (Kahn, 1990, p. 700). EE appears to be a motivational construct comprising attention and absorption (Rothbard, 2001) and may include an identification dimension (Bakker, Schaufeli, Leiter, & Taris, 2008; Demerouti & Bakker, 2008). Consistent with this emphasis on the psychological elements, engagement is "a positive, fulfilling, work-related state of mind that is characterized by vigor, dedication and absorption" (Schaufeli, Salanova, González-Romá, & Bakker, 2002, p. 74), suggesting that EE is a persistent and pervasive affective-cognitive state (Schaufeli & Bakker, 2004). These definitions indicate that EE conceptualizations focus on psychological aspects.

In contrast, marketing scholars have conceptualized CE to include a strong behavioral focus. In identifying CE as a priority research topic, the Marketing Science Institute (MSI, 2010) defines CE as "customers' behavioral manifestation toward a brand or firm *beyond purchase*, which results from motivational drivers including: word-of-mouth activity, recommendations, customer-to-customer interactions, blogging, writing reviews, and other similar activities" (p. 4). Such a focus is evident

in the literature streams of both academics (e.g., Bijmolt et al., 2010; van Doorn et al., 2010; Verhoef et al., 2010) and practitioners (e.g., Shevlin, 2007).

In seeking to establish a conceptual understanding of CE, researchers have argued that the knowledge of EE is applicable to CE (Patterson et al., 2006). Feelings of passion, energy, and enthusiasm characterize both EE and CE (Hollebeek, 2009, 2011; Macey & Schneider, 2008; Patterson et al., 2006). However, the focus of those feelings differs (workplace vs. consumer brand). In addition, in building on the EE literature, the conceptualization of CE tends to go beyond an attitudinal perspective, reflecting both psychological and behavioral dimensions (e.g., Patterson et al., 2006). From this perspective, Brodie, Hollebeek, et al. (2011) present the following general definition of CE:

Customer engagement (CE) is a *psychological state* that occurs by virtue of *interactive, cocreative* customer experiences with a *focal agent/object* (e.g., a brand) in focal service relationships. It occurs under a specific set of context dependent conditions generating differing CE levels; and exists as a *dynamic, iterative process* within service relationships that *cocreate value*. CE plays a central role in a nomological network governing service relationships in which other relational concepts (e.g., involvement, loyalty) are antecedents and/or consequences in iterative CE processes. It is a *multidimensional concept* subject to a context- and/or stakeholder-specific expression of relevant cognitive, emotional and/or behavioral dimensions. (p. 9)

While Brodie, Hollebeek, et al.'s (2011) definition suggests that CE may require consideration be given to both the psychological aspects of engagement as well as behavioral participation, it appears that there remains a diversity of views in respect to the conceptualization of the concept. For example, some researchers consider CE to be a behavioral construct (i.e., interaction) resulting from a range of motivational drivers (Bijmolt et al., 2010; MSI, 2010; van Doorn et al., 2010; Verhoef et al., 2010), whereas others propose CE to be a multidimensional construct comprising both psychological and behavioral aspects (Brodie, Hollebeek, et al., 2011; Hollebeek, 2009, 2011; Patterson et al., 2006; Vivek, 2009).

Support for the adoption of a multidimensional approach is evidenced in the conceptualization of composite loyalty (i.e., behavioral and attitudinal), which suggests that behavioral measures alone may lack a conceptual basis (Jacoby & Chestnut, 1978) and provide insufficient insight into the factors underlying repeat behavior. This is equally true in defining the conceptual domain of CE, whereby participation in CE activities does not guarantee a truly engaged customer. For example, participation in a brand discussion forum may result from factors, such as the need for product information or reduction of perceived risks (Brodie, Ilic, Juric, & Hollebeek, 2011), rather than from being engaged or connected with the brand. The truly engaged customer must have an enduring psychological connection with the brand in addition to behavioral participation. While a behavioral approach may provide an indication of customers' participation level in CE activities, a multidimensional approach will capture the full complexity of CE.

Dimensions of Customer Engagement

A review of the literature reveals several dimensions that, collectively, constitute a comprehensive understanding of the CE concept, namely, *enthusiasm* (or *vigor*), *attention*, *absorption*, *interaction*, and *identification*.

Enthusiasm. Enthusiasm represents an individual's strong level of excitement and interest regarding the focus of engagement, such as a brand (Vivek, 2009). Several researchers have captured enthusiasm as a positive affective state in the context of both work engagement and CE. For example, in a work context, engagement encompasses the employee's sense of significance, enthusiasm, inspiration, and pride (e.g., Salanova, Agut, & Peiro, 2005; Schaufeli & Bakker, 2004). This finding suggests that an engaged employee feels enthusiastic and passionate about his/her work and role in the organization. From this perspective, enthusiasm is consistent with the dimensions of vigor (Patterson et al., 2006) and activation (Hollebeek, 2009), given that these dimensions signify a high level of energy while playing one's role, reflecting the feeling of enthusiasm.

The energy and enthusiasm differentiate the construct of engagement from other similar constructs, such as satisfaction (Macey & Schneider, 2008). Satisfaction represents a customer's overall evaluation of the performance of an offering (Johnson & Fornell, 1991) and is based on past experience, whereas enthusiasm is characterized by a strong feeling of excitement (Bloch, 1986), which is an enduring and active state. As an example at the brand level, an engaged customer of Qantas Airways can be characterized by his/her strong sense of excitement when seeing an e-newsletter pop up in the e-mail inbox. The literature suggests that the feeling of enthusiasm as a positive affectivity is a central indicator of a customer's engagement with a brand.

Attention. Investigators have consistently highlighted attention as a key dimension of engagement. As a dimension of EE, attention is the duration of focus on, and mental preoccupation with, work (Rothbard, 2001). In this respect, attention represents an invisible material resource that a person can allocate in multiple ways. Individuals who are highly engaged tend to focus a great deal of attention, consciously or unconsciously, on the object of engagement. Similarly, personal engagement is associated with feeling attentive, connected, integrated, and focused in one's role performance (Kahn, 1992), highlighting the relevance of attention in work engagement.

Marketing theory also supports the inclusion of attention as an aspect of CE. For example, regulatory engagement theory defines engagement as sustained attention, where behaviorally turning attention away from something lowers the level of engagement (Scholer & Higgins, 2009). Engagement is equivalent to focused attention (Lin, Gregor, & Ewing, 2008), and the notion of attention is consistent with the construct of conscious participation (Vivek, 2009), which captures a consumer's level of attention toward a brand. A customer who is engaged with a brand is attracted to information related to the brand. For instance, a highly engaged customer of Marriott Hotels is likely to focus a greater level of attention toward its brand information, such as news, advertising, or product

information. Therefore, attention, representing a consumer's attentiveness and focus on the brand, is considered to be an important dimension of CE.

Absorption. Researchers have recognized absorption as an indicator of both EE (e.g., Hakanen, Schaufeli, & Ahola, 2008; Rothbard, 2001; Salanova et al., 2005; Schaufeli & Bakker, 2004) and CE (Hollebeek, 2009; Patterson et al., 2006). For example, in a work context, absorption partially defines engagement (Hakanen et al., 2008), which is characterized by being so fully concentrated and engrossed that time passes quickly and one has difficulty detaching from his/her role. Absorption is a high level of concentration and engrossment, extending beyond feeling efficacious and coming close to what has been called "flow," a state of optimal experience (Csikszentmihalyi, 1990; Schaufeli, Salanova, et al., 2002). Absorption represents effortless concentration, loss of self-consciousness, distortion of time, and intrinsic enjoyment.

In the marketing domain, scholars have also argued that strong engagement extends beyond concentrating on something to being absorbed or engrossed with it (Scholer & Higgins, 2009). Absorption is a pleasant state in which the customer is fully concentrated, happy, and deeply engrossed while playing his role (Patterson et al., 2006), and an absorbed customer interacting with the brand or other customers perceives time as passing quickly. For example, an engaged customer of Disneyland can easily lose track of time when reading or writing customer reviews on the Internet. The engagement literature indicates that a deep level of concentration and total immersion in one's role while interacting with the firm, its offering, or other customers, signifies a strong level of CE.

Interaction. Another characteristic commonly identified in the CE literature is interaction, which refers to a customer's online and off-line participation with the brand or other customers outside of purchase. Interaction involves sharing and exchanging ideas, thoughts, and feelings about experiences with the brand (Vivek, 2009) and constitutes an important part of the conceptualization of CE. For example, some researchers promote CE as manifesting in behaviors, such as customer interactions (Bijmolt et al., 2010; MSI, 2010; van Doorn et al., 2010; Verhoef et al., 2010), and others include customers' participation with the firm or other customers in exchanging information (e.g., Wagner & Majchrzak, 2007).

The significance of the behavioral aspects of engagement is also evident in the organizational behavior literature, which views EE behaviors as adaptive, typically not prescribed, and causing individuals to go beyond preserving the status quo of their role (Macey & Schneider, 2008). This notion is equally germane to CE behaviors, where engaged consumers actively participate in activities that extend beyond being a passive receiver of a product or service. The relevance of customer interaction at the brand level is supported by the well-established notion of brand community, which represents a structured set of social relationships among admirers of a brand (Muniz & O'Guinn, 2001). As the intensity of engagement increases, the probability that a customer will participate in these activities is likely to increase. For these reasons, interaction constitutes an

important dimension of CE, representing the behavioral manifestation of a consumer's relationship with the brand beyond traditional consumptive behavior.

Identification. In addition to enthusiasm, attention, absorption, and interaction—the four dimensions consistently identified as comprising engagement, identification is also a key aspect of CE. While the CE literature contains few discussions of identification, from an employee perspective it forms a foundational dimension of engagement (Bakker et al., 2008; González-Romá, Schaufeli, Bakker, & Lloret, 2006). For example, work engagement is characterized by a strong identification with one's work (Bakker et al., 2008), and identification is a key aspect of definitions of what the engaged person might experience (Macey & Schneider, 2008).

The concept of identification originates from social identity theory, which maintains that the self-concept comprises a personal identity and a social identity (Ashforth & Mael, 1989; Tajfel & Turner, 1985). Individuals tend to develop a social identity by classifying themselves and others into various social categories, as in the case of organizational membership (Mael & Ashforth, 1992).

In a similar vein, identification can help explain consumers' relationships with companies or brands. Strong consumer–company relationships are based on consumers' identification with the companies that help them satisfy one or more important self-definitional needs (Bhattacharya & Sen, 2003). From a consumer perspective, identification is an individual's "perceived oneness with or belongingness to an organization" (Bhattacharya, Rao, & Glynn, 1995, p. 46), and at the brand level, identification occurs when the consumer sees his or her self-image as overlapping the brand's image (Bagozzi & Dholakia, 2006). For example, customers may identify with the Virgin Airlines brand because of its young, innovative, and edgy brand value image. Identification is active, selective, and volitional and motivates consumers to engage in company-related behaviors (Bhattacharya & Sen, 2003) and extra–role behavior, such as recommending products to others (Bhattacharya et al., 1995), which have been recognized as CE behaviors. Therefore, identification, as a cognitive component that justifies consumers' engagement behaviors, is central to the conceptualization of CE.

Conceptual Framework

As the preceding discussion demonstrates, the concept of CE has emerged as an important topic for marketing scholars, and researchers have called for a focus on the measurement of the CE construct as well as its place in a wider nomological net (Hollebeek, 2011). In response to this call, this research directly aims at the development of a measurement scale for CE. This section outlines the conceptual framework for CE.

CE is proposed as a multifaceted construct comprising the five distinct dimensions of identification, enthusiasm, attention, absorption, and interaction, which reflect the psychological and behavioral aspects of CE (see Table 1). On the basis of the previous discussion, CE is defined as *a customers' personal connection to a brand as manifested in cognitive, affective, and behavioral actions*

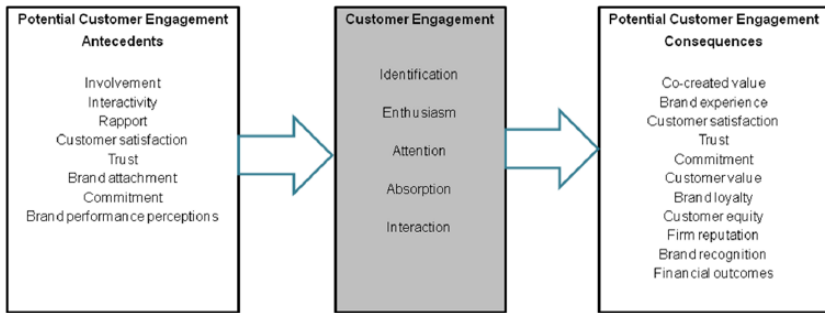
Table 1
Potential Dimensions of Customer Engagement

Dimension	Conceptual Definition	Relevant Literature
Identification	The degree of a consumer's perceived oneness with or belongingness to the brand (Bhattacharya et al., 1995)	Ashforth and Mael (1989); Bakker et al. (2008); Demerouti and Bakker (2008); González-Romá et al. (2006); Hollebeek (2009); Macey and Schneider (2008); Mael and Ashforth (1992); Tajfel and Turner (1985)
Attention	The degree of attentiveness, focus, and connection that a consumer has with the brand	Hollebeek (2009); Kahn (1990); Rothbard (2001); Vivek (2009)
Enthusiasm	The degree of excitement and interest that a consumer has in the brand (Vivek, 2009)	Harter, Schmidt, and Hayes (2002); Macey and Schneider (2008); Patterson et al. (2006); Salanova et al. (2005); Schaufeli and Bakker (2004); Schaufeli, Martinez, Pinto, Salanova, and Bakker (2002); Schaufeli, Salanova, et al. (2002); Vivek (2009)
Absorption	A pleasant state which describes the customer as being fully concentrated, happy, and deeply engrossed while playing the role as a consumer of the brand (Patterson, et al., 2006)	Hollebeek (2009); Patterson et al. (2006); Rothbard (2001); Salanova et al. (2005); Schaufeli and Bakker (2004); Schaufeli, Bakker, and Salanova (2006); Schaufeli, Martinez, et al. (2002); Schaufeli, Salanova, et al. (2002)
Interaction	Various participation (both online and offline) that a customer has with the brand organization or other customers outside of purchase	Bijmolt et al. (2010); Erat, Desouza, Schäfer-Jugel, and Kurzawa (2006); MSI (2010); Patterson et al. (2006); van Doorn et al. (2010); Verhoef et al. (2010); Wagner and Majchrzak (2007)

outside of the purchase situation. Examples of behavioral manifestation include participation in activities, such as customer-to-customer interactions, blogging, writing reviews, as well as other similar activities that are centered on the brand.

Although the construct of CE can be interpreted using its five components, it is proposed as a second-order construct where the five components collectively represent the more abstract construct of CE. CE is a broader abstraction that accounts for the covariation among the five dimensions. The proposed second-order model is supported in both the EE (Rich, Lepine, & Crawford, 2010) and CE (Patterson et al., 2006) literature. Recent reviews of the conceptual foundation and relationship of CE provide useful guidance on potential antecedents and consequences of CE. Possible antecedents of CE include involvement, interactivity, rapport (for existing customers), commitment (of existing customers), trust, brand attachment, and brand performance perceptions (Hollebeek, 2011; van Doorn et al., 2010). Consequences of CE include cocreated value, brand experience,

Figure 1
Conceptual Model of Customer Engagement



Source: Partially adapted from Hollebeek (2011) and van Doorn et al. (2010)

satisfaction, trust, commitment, customer value, brand loyalty, customer equity, firm reputation, brand recognition, and financial outcomes (Hollebeek, 2011; van Doorn et al., 2010). In addition, such a psychological connection may depend on various situational factors (Funk & James, 2001), such as age, computer experience, and degree of socialization. Although our study does not test the full nomological framework, the development of the CE measure does examine its inherent structure and relationship to brand loyalty. Specifically, behavioral intention of loyalty (BIL) was used as the outcome variable because it has been widely used in previous loyalty studies (e.g., Mattila, 2001; Sparks & Fredline, 2007) and therefore was considered appropriate. Figure 1 provides a conceptual model of CE and its relationship to other constructs.

In measuring a latent construct such as the CE concept, consideration of the construct nature is required (i.e., reflective vs. formative; Netemeyer, Bearden, & Sharma, 2003). According to Hair, Black, Babin, Anderson, and Tatham (2006), the issue of causality affects measurement theory. In a reflective model, the latent factor causes the indicators, whereas a formative model assumes that the indicators cause the construct. With this in mind, the concept of CE, similar to other social science constructs, such as attitudes, personality, and behavioral intention (Hair et al., 2006), is thought to cause its specific dimensions, such as *identification*, *enthusiasm*, *attention*, *absorption*, and *interaction*, and as such, a reflective model of CE is proposed. The five proposed dimensions are expected to covary with each other, meaning that changes in one are associated with proportional changes in the other constructs (Hair et al., 2006). For example, a strong enthusiasm for the brand is likely to increase level of the attention focused on the brand as well as customer participation in online discussion centered on the brand.

Before presenting the empirical component of this study, we distinguish CE from involvement. Engagement and involvement appear to be similarly based on consumer needs/values motivating the individual toward a specific object, such as a brand (Hollebeek, 2009). Within the marketing literature, involvement most

frequently refers to the perceived personal relevance or importance of the product or brand (Mittal, 1995; Zaichkowsky, 1985). However, engagement requires more than the exercise of cognition. CE entails an active relationship with the brand, and the intention to act makes CE distinct from involvement's more passive allocation of mental resources (Mollen & Wilson, 2009). Nevertheless, the emergence of specific customer brand engagement levels requires some level of involvement with a focal brand (Hollebeek, 2011). These characteristics make the multi-faceted concept of CE conceptually distinct from involvement. In addition, Hollebeck (2009, 2011) and Patterson et al. (2006) provide extensive reviews of how CE is different from other similar constructs, such as commitment, satisfaction, cocreation, and brand loyalty.

METHOD

Consistent with previous tourism studies (e.g., Choi & Sirakaya, 2005; Kim, Ritchie, & McCormick, 2010), in developing and validating a multi-item measure of CE, this study adopts the scale development guidelines recommended by Netemeyer, Bearden, and Sharma (2003) and Churchill (1979). Generation of the initial item pool and assessment of the content validity of the item were followed by Study 1, which aimed to refine the measurement scale. In Study 2, we tested and validated the refined scale with confirmatory and validation subsamples (Kim et al., 2010). The confirmatory sample was used to examine the psychometric properties of the measurement model, whereas the validation sample was used to test the generalizability of the scale. To test the predictive validity of the scale, in Study 2 we also measured BIL as an outcome variable of CE. The selection of the construct was motivated by the emerging discussion that CE is potentially a superior predictor of brand loyalty (e.g., Hollebeck, 2009; Patterson et al., 2006), a conceptualization in-line with the notion that CE is a psychological process of loyalty development (Bowden, 2009). Four additional items were adapted from Zeithaml, Berry, and Parasuraman's (1996) scale of BIL.

Item Generation and Content Validity Assessment

A review of the literature identified conceptual definitions considered appropriate for the constructs under investigation and led to generation of an initial pool of 28 suitable items (26 drawn from existing literature and 2 developed for this study; see Table 2). We then assessed the items for content validity through two separate panels. We gave the first panel of 11 graduate students the construct definitions and a list of scale items and asked them to assign each item to the one construct that the item best indicated. The majority of items were sorted under their respective constructs, with the exception of the four absorption items, which were subsequently reverse-worded to improve clarity.

The items were then subjected to a second review in which we asked six tourism, hospitality, and marketing faculty members to rate how representative of the construct definition each item was on a 3-point scale (i.e., *not representative*,

Table 2
Source and Description of Initial Item Pool

Construct	Source and Item Description	Total Items
Identification	Five items adapted from Ashforth and Mael (1989) ID1. When someone criticizes this brand, it feels like a personal insult ID2. I am very interested in what others think about this brand ID3. When I talk about this brand, I usually say we rather than they ID4. This brand's successes are my successes ID5. When someone praises this brand, it feels like a personal compliment	5
Enthusiasm	Four items adapted from Vivek (2009) EN1. I spend a lot of my discretionary time thinking about this brand EN2. I am heavily into this brand EN3. I am passionate about this brand EN4. My days would not be the same without this brand Two items generated for this study EN5. I am enthusiastic about this brand EN6. I feel excited about this brand	6
Attention	Three items adapted from Vivek (2009) AT1. I like to learn more about this brand AT2. I pay a lot of attention to anything about this brand AT3. Anything related to this brand grabs my attention Three items adapted from Rothbard (2001) AT4. I concentrate a lot on this brand AT5. I spend a lot of time thinking about this brand AT6. I focus a great deal of attention on this brand	6
Absorption	Six items adapted from Schaufeli et al. (2002) AB1. When I am interacting with the brand, I forget everything else around me AB2. Time flies when I am interacting with the brand AB3. When I am interacting with brand, I get carried away AB4. When interacting with the brand, it is difficult to detach myself AB5. In my interaction with the brand, I am immersed AB6. When interacting with the brand intensely, I feel happy	6
Interaction	Four items adapted from Wiertz and de Ruyter (2007) IT1. In general, I like to get involved in brand community discussions IT2. I am someone who enjoys interacting with like-minded others in the brand community IT3. I am someone who likes actively participating in brand community discussions IT4. In general, I thoroughly enjoy exchanging ideas with other people in the brand community One item adapted from Algesheimer, Dholakia, and Herrmann (2005) IT5. I often participate in activities of the brand community	5
	Total Items	28

somewhat representative, or clearly representative). On the basis of the panel's comments, six additional items were included in the item pool, resulting in a total of 34 items, all of which the majority of the experts had indicated were either clearly or somewhat representative of the definition.

Study 1: Item Purification

Study 1 involved pilot testing the items with a convenience sample of 110 faculty members and postgraduate students in a large Australian university. An online pilot survey was developed and administered through a survey hosting company, Qualtrics. We sent an invitational e-mail to potential respondents encouraging participation in the survey and randomly assigned respondents to a service category of the tourism sector (hotels or airlines) and asked them to nominate a brand they had most recently used. These two tourism services were selected because in Australia, accommodation and air transport account for a significant share of the tourism industry's economic output (Australian Bureau of Statistics, 2010). We then asked respondents to indicate on a 7-point Likert-type scale (1 = *strongly disagree* and 7 = *strongly agree*) the extent to which they agreed or disagreed with the 34 items with respect to the nominated brand.

Of the 250 potential respondents, 110 respondents completed the survey, a response rate of approximately 45%. To ensure the adequacy of the sample size as well as the appropriateness of the EFA, both the Kaiser–Meyer–Olkin (KMO) measure of sampling adequacy and Bartlett's test of sphericity were performed. KMO values for identification, attention, enthusiasm, absorption and interaction were .82, .90, .89, .90, and .90, respectively, with all exceeding the recommended level of .60 (Tabachnick & Fidell, 2001). In addition, the Bartlett's test of sphericity was 4324.80 ($p < .01$), suggesting that the factor analysis was appropriate. An EFA was performed on the data, resulting in deletion of nine items owing to cross-loadings or factor loadings of below .40. Subsequently a factor analysis was conducted on the remaining 25 items using the maximum likelihood estimation method with oblique rotation, as the resultant factors were expected to be correlated. Using eigenvalues of greater than 1.0 and Cattell's (1966) scree test as guidelines for factor extraction, a final five-factor model emerged with 25 items explaining 79.17% of the total variances. As Table 3 shows, all five dimensions exceeded the Cronbach's alpha criterion of .70 (Hair et al., 2006) and all items loaded on the intended factor, with no cross-loadings in excess of .40. Respondents were also asked a series of open-ended questions about the conceptualization of CE, but no new themes emerged.

Study 2: Reliability and Validity Assessment

To refine the measurement items, a national database of individuals who had opted in to participate in research projects was used to access respondents. The database contains detailed demographic data on consumers from Australia and is a comprehensive online membership portal with over 500,000 members. The database is one of the largest consumer lists in the country and therefore considered

Table 3
Exploratory Factor Analysis Results for Initial Measurement Items (Study 1)

Dimension and Item Description	Enthusiasm	Interaction	Absorption	Attention	Identification	α
Enthusiasm						.92
EN2. I am heavily into this brand.	.48					
EN3. I am passionate about this brand	.45					
EN5. I am enthusiastic about this brand	.92					
EN6. I feel excited about this brand	.93					
EN8. I love this brand	.52					
Interaction						
IT1. In general, I like to get involved in brand community discussions		.74				
IT2. I am someone who enjoys interacting with like-minded others in the brand community		.86				.94
IT3. I am someone who likes actively participating in brand community discussions		.91				
IT4. In general, I thoroughly enjoy exchanging ideas with other people in the brand community		.90				
IT5. I often participate in activities of the brand community		.74				
Absorption						.93
AB1. When I am interacting with the brand, I forget everything else around me			.82			
AB2. Time flies when I am interacting with the brand			.85			
AB3. When I am interacting with brand, I get carried away			.90			
AB4. When interacting with the brand, it is difficult to detach myself			.76			
AB5. In my interaction with the brand, I am immersed			.81			
AB6. When interacting with the brand intensely, I feel happy			.44			
Attention						.93
AT1. I like to learn more about this brand				.43		
AT2. I pay a lot of attention to anything about this brand				.90		
AT3. Anything related to this brand grabs my attention				.80		
AT4. I concentrate a lot on this brand				.46		
AT7. I like learning more about this brand				.50		
Identification						.86
ID1. When someone criticizes this brand, it feels like a personal insult					.53	
ID3. When I talk about this brand, I usually say we rather than they					.71	
ID4. This brand's successes are my successes					.84	
ID5. When someone praises this brand, it feels like a personal compliment					.69	

reasonably representative of the population of this study. A qualifying criterion ensured that only individuals who had traveled domestically or internationally participated in the survey. A systematic random sampling method was used whereby the market list firm was instructed to calculate a sample interval to obtain a list of 5,000 potential respondents from the database. Over a 2-week period, data collection procedures similar to those of Study 1 resulted in survey completion by 556 respondents, a response rate of approximately 11.12%. Sixty cases were removed from the sample owing to incomplete responses, resulting in a total of 496 usable surveys. As a forced-response option was used in developing the survey, the data had no missing values.

Within the sample, 70% were female and the majority of the respondents (66%) were between 30 and 60 years old, with 25% older than 60 years, and 9% younger than 30 years. Annual income levels varied, with 24% of the sample earning under AUD\$20,000, 38% earning between AUD\$20,000 and AUD\$50,000, and 38% earning over AUD\$50,000.

Following the approach suggested by Armstrong and Overton (1977), nonresponse bias was assessed by comparing early and late respondents on the demographic variables and the scale measures. The chi-square tests indicate no significant differences between early (top 10%) and late (bottom 10%) respondents in terms of respondent characteristics. In addition, the *t* tests results show that all measured items were not significantly different ($\alpha = .01$) between early and late respondents. These analyses indicate the study evidenced no serious nonresponse bias.

Confirmatory Sample

The overall sample was randomly split into two subsamples (i.e., confirmatory and validation) using SPSS random case selection. In assessing the measurement model, a confirmatory factor analysis (CFA) was conducted on the confirmatory sample ($n = 248$) data using AMOS 19.0. The initial CFA, with all latent factors modeled simultaneously as correlated first-order factors, indicated a reasonable fit, with $\chi^2 = 813.29$, $df = 362$, $\chi^2/df = 2.25$, $p < .05$, goodness-of-fit index (GFI) = .81, comparative fit index (CFI) = .95, Tucker–Lewis index (TLI) = .94, normed fit index (NFI) = .92, root mean square error of approximation (RMSEA) = .07, and standardized root mean square residual (SRMR) = .0452. Table 4 presents the results.

Construct Validity

As Table 4 shows, standardized factor loadings for all items achieved the suggested threshold of .70 (Hair et al., 2006). The *t* values for all loadings were greater than 2.57 (Netemeyer et al., 2003) providing evidence for convergent validity. In addition, all average variances extracted (AVEs) were greater than .50. Discriminant validity was also supported as the square root of the AVE for each factor is greater than its correlations with other factors (Fornell & Larcker, 1981; see Table 5).

Table 4
Confirmatory Factor Analysis Results for Refined Measurement Items (Confirmatory Sample)

Dimension and Item Description	SL	TV	CR	AVE	SMC
Identification ($M = 3.44, SD = 1.58$)			.92	.74	
ID1. When someone criticizes this brand, it feels like a personal insult	.76	N/A			.58
ID3. When I talk about this brand, I usually say we rather than they	.83	13.92			.69
ID4. This brand's successes are my successes	.91	15.73			.83
ID5. When someone praises this brand, it feels like a personal compliment	.93	16.06			.86
Enthusiasm ($M = 3.44, SD = 1.44$)			.95	.80	
EN2. I am heavily into this brand	.90	N/A			.81
EN3. I am passionate about this brand	.93	24.09			.86
EN5. I am enthusiastic about this brand	.88	20.72			.77
EN6. I feel excited about this brand	.94	24.60			.88
EN8. I love this brand	.83	18.05			.69
Attention ($M = 3.69, SD = 1.35$)			.95	.79	
AT1. I like to learn more about this brand	.84	N/A			.71
AT2. I pay a lot of attention to anything about this brand	.94	20.24			.88
AT3. Anything related to this brand grabs my attention	.90	18.96			.81
AT4. I concentrate a lot on this brand	.87	17.65			.76
AT7. I like learning more about this brand	.89	18.30			.79
Absorption ($M = 2.82, SD = 1.36$)			.97	.84	
AB1. When I am interacting with the brand, I forget everything else around me	.93	N/A			.86
AB2. Time flies when I am interacting with the brand	.88	22.93			.77
AB3. When I am interacting with brand, I get carried away	.94	29.00			.88
AB4. When interacting with the brand, it is difficult to detach myself	.97	33.03			.94
AB5. In my interaction with the brand, I am immersed	.97	32.02			.94
AB6. When interacting with the brand intensely, I feel happy	.80	18.42			.64
Interaction ($M = 3.41, SD = 1.44$)			.97	.86	
IT1. In general, I like to get involved in brand community discussions	.89	N/A			.79
IT2. I am someone who enjoys interacting with like-minded others in the brand community	.96	26.34			.92
IT3. I am someone who likes actively participating in brand community discussions	.96	26.14			.92
IT4. In general, I thoroughly enjoy exchanging ideas with other people in the brand community	.95	25.33			.90
IT5. I often participate in activities of the brand community	.87	20.32			.76
Behavioral intention of loyalty ($M = 5.19, SD = 1.09$)			.93	.78	
PI1. I would say positive things about this brand to other people	.91	N/A			.83
PI2. I would recommend this brand to someone who seeks my advice	.96	27.31			.92
PI3. I would encourage friends and relatives to do business with this brand	.88	21.87			.77
PI4. I would do more business with this brand in the next few years	.77	16.32			.59

Note. $\chi^2 = 813.29$ ($p < .05$, $df = 362$); $\chi^2/df = 2.25$; goodness-of-fit index = .81; comparative fit index = .95; normed fit index = .92; Tucker-Lewis index = .94; root mean square error of approximation = .07; standardized root mean square residual = .0452; SL = standardized loadings; TV = t value; CR = composite reliability; AVE = average variance extracted; SMC = squared multiple correlation; N/A = not applicable.

Table 5
Discriminant Validity Analysis From Confirmatory Factor Analysis

	Identification	Enthusiasm	Attention	Absorption	Interaction	BIL
Identification	.86					
Enthusiasm	.77	.90				
Attention	.65	.82	.89			
Absorption	.67	.74	.75	.92		
Interaction	.55	.59	.66	.64	.93	
BIL	.34	.51	.54	.37	.46	.88

Note. The boldfaced diagonal elements are the square root of the variance shared between the constructs and their measures. Off-diagonal elements are the correlations between constructs. BIL = behavioral intention of loyalty.

Table 6
Model Comparisons for Dimensionality

Competing Models	χ^2	<i>df</i>	<i>p</i> Value	GFI	NFI	TLI	CFI	RMSEA
One-factor model	3350.68	275	.00	.39	.61	.59	.62	.21
Four-factor model	1078.46	269	.00	.69	.87	.89	.90	.11
Five-factor model (confirmatory)	698.41	265	.00	.81	.92	.94	.95	.08

Note. GFI = goodness-of-fit index; NFI = normed fit index; TLI = Tucker–Lewis index; CFI = comparative fit index; RMSEA = root mean square error of approximation.

Reliability

All five factors achieved the recommended level of construct reliability of .70 (Hair et al., 2006), with composite reliability values ranging from .92 to .97, as shown in Table 4. Furthermore, the AVEs of all constructs are well above the .50 cutoff recommended by Fornell and Larcker (1981), demonstrating strong indicator reliability. Overall, the preceding statistical tests suggest that the scales were valid and reliable measures of the latent constructs.

Dimensionality

To confirm whether the five-factor model was the more appropriate conceptualization of CE, we conducted a CFA with all items of the five CE components loading on one factor. As Table 6 shows, the one-factor model provided a significantly worse fit than the five-factor model, $\Delta\chi^2(10) = 2652.27$, $p < .001$. Next, a four-factor model was estimated by combining the two most highly correlated factors (i.e., attention and enthusiasm) into one factor and leaving the other three factors unchanged. Table 6 shows that the four-factor model was a significantly worse fit than the five-factor model, $\Delta\chi^2(4) = 380.05$, $p < .001$. This dimensionality test provided evidence to support the five-factor model.

Validation Sample

Table 7 presents the CFA results of the validation sample ($n = 248$). Standardized factor loadings were strong and ranged from .80 to .98 and *t* values for all loadings were above the critical value of 2.57. Furthermore, all five factors exceeded the recommended composite reliability of .70, and the AVEs for the five constructs

Table 7
Confirmatory Factor Analysis Results for Refined Measurement Items (Validation Sample)

Dimension and Item Description	SL	TV	CR	AVE	SMC
Identification ($M = 3.51, SD = 1.42$)			.93	.78	
ID1. When someone criticizes this brand, it feels like a personal insult	.83	N/A			.69
ID3. When I talk about this brand, I usually say we rather than they	.86	16.83			.74
ID4. This brand's successes are my successes	.91	18.79			.83
ID5. When someone praises this brand, it feels like a personal compliment	.93	19.53			.86
Enthusiasm ($M = 3.58, SD = 1.50$)			.96	.84	
EN2. I am heavily into this brand	.89	N/A			.79
EN3. I am passionate about this brand	.93	24.11			.86
EN5. I am enthusiastic about this brand	.92	23.50			.85
EN6. I feel excited about this brand	.94	24.97			.88
EN8. I love this brand	.89	21.19			.79
Attention ($M = 3.87, SD = 1.30$)			.93	.72	
AT1. I like to learn more about this brand	.80	N/A			.64
AT2. I pay a lot of attention to anything about this brand	.88	16.39			.77
AT3. Anything related to this brand grabs my attention	.85	15.42			.72
AT4. I concentrate a lot on this brand	.86	15.67			.74
AT7. I like learning more about this brand	.85	15.51			.72
Absorption ($M = 2.93, SD = 1.40$)			.97	.86	
AB1. When I am interacting with the brand, I forget everything else around me	.90	N/A			.81
AB2. Time flies when I am interacting with the brand	.91	23.46			.83
AB3. When I am interacting with brand, I get carried away	.96	27.48			.92
AB4. When interacting with the brand, it is difficult to detach myself	.96	27.17			.92
AB5. In my interaction with the brand, I am immersed	.96	27.01			.92
AB6. When interacting with the brand intensely, I feel happy	.86	20.25			.74
Interaction ($M = 3.61, SD = 1.48$)			.97	.88	
IT1. In general, I like to get involved in brand community discussions	.91	N/A			.83
IT2. I am someone who enjoys interacting with like-minded others in the brand community	.95	27.71			.90
IT3. I am someone who likes actively participating in brand community discussions	.98	30.55			.96
IT4. In general, I thoroughly enjoy exchanging ideas with other people in the brand community	.96	29.02			.92
IT5. I often participate in activities of the brand community	.88	22.04			.77
Behavioral intention of loyalty ($M = 5.20, SD = 1.18$)			.95	.83	
PI1. I would say positive things about this brand to other people	.94	N/A			.88
PI2. I would recommend this brand to someone who seeks my advice	.98	36.22			.96
PI3. I would encourage friends and relatives to do business with this brand	.93	28.60			.86
PI4. I would do more business with this brand in the next few years	.77	17.31			.59

Note. $\chi^2 = 923.34$ ($p < .05$, $df = 362$); $\chi^2/df = 2.55$; goodness-of-fit Index = .80; comparative fit index = .94; normed fit index = .91; Tucker-Lewis index = .94; root mean square error of approximation = .08; standardized root mean square residual = .0464; SL = standardized loadings; TV = t value; CR = composite reliability; AVE = average variance extracted; SMC = squared multiple correlation; N/A = not applicable.

Table 8
Results for Factor Invariance Test Across Samples

Model	χ^2	df	p Value	GFI	NFI	TLI	CFI	RMSEA
Unconstrained	1460.14	530	.00	.81	.92	.94	.94	.06
Full metric invariance	1478.04	550	.00	.81	.91	.94	.94	.06

Note. GFI = goodness-of-fit index; NFI = normed fit index; TLI = Tucker–Lewis index; CFI = comparative fit index; RMSEA = root mean square error of approximation.

were above .50. The measurement model again yielded satisfactory model fit, with $\chi^2 = 923.34$, $df = 362$, $\chi^2/df = 2.55$, $p < .05$, GFI = .80, CFI = .94, TLI = .94, NFI = .91, RMSEA = .08, and SRMR = .0464, further validating the CE scale.

Factor Invariance Test

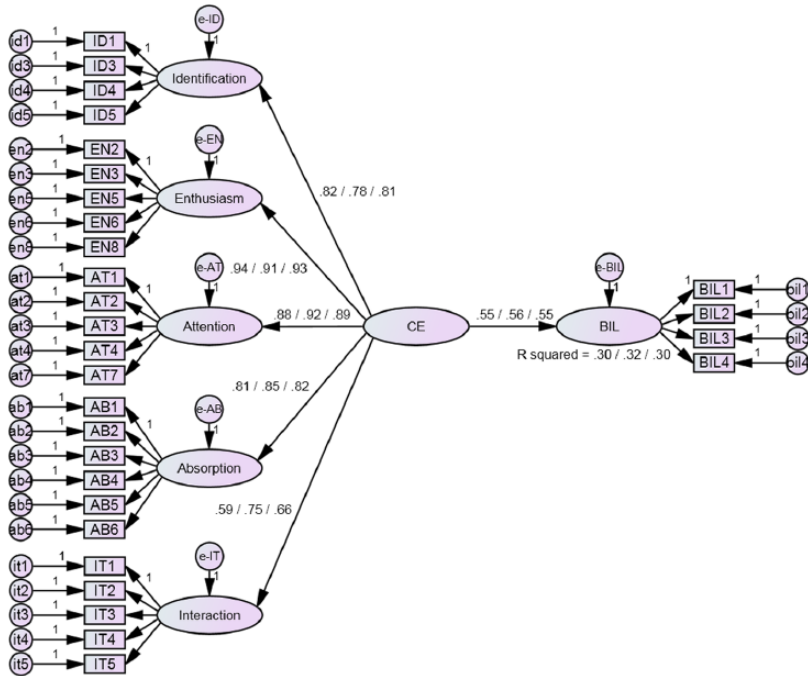
To develop a valid measurement scale, the equality of the factor loadings across groups needs to be assured (Kim et al., 2010). We conducted a measurement invariance test using CFA to assess whether the measurement model of the five CE dimensions is equivalent across the confirmatory and validation samples. As Table 8 indicates, the chi-square difference between the unconstrained model and full metric invariance model was not significant, $\Delta\chi^2(20) = 17.90$, $p > .05$, suggesting that the factor loadings are invariant across samples.

Testing the Effect of Customer Engagement on Behavioral Intention of Loyalty

In testing the predictive validity of CE, we combined the confirmatory sample and validation sample to estimate a structural model for each category (hotels and airlines) with a path from CE to BIL (see Figure 2). The fit indices suggested that the model fit the data reasonably well for both the airline group ($n = 289$; $\chi^2 = 951.31$, $df = 371$, $\chi^2/df = 2.56$, $p < .05$, GFI = .81, CFI = .94, TLI = .94, NFI = .91, RMSEA = .07, and SRMR = .0564), and the hotel group ($n = 207$; $\chi^2 = 912.47$, $df = 371$, $\chi^2/df = 2.46$, $p < .05$, GFI = .76, CFI = .94, TLI = .93, NFI = .90, RMSEA = .08, and SRMR = .0541), with the exception of GFI. The results suggested that CE is a significant predictor of BIL ($\beta = .55$, $t = 9.08$, $p < .001$), explaining 30% of the variance in BIL of airline customers. CE was also significant ($\beta = .56$, $t = 7.61$, $p < .001$) for hotel customers, accounting for 32% of the variance in BIL. We further tested the model using the whole sample and results indicated a satisfactory fit ($n = 496$; $\chi^2 = 1276.94$, $df = 371$, $\chi^2/df = 3.44$, $p < .05$, GFI = .84, CFI = .95, TLI = .95, NFI = .93, RMSEA = .07, and SRMR = .0519). CE was found to be significant ($\beta = .55$, $t = 11.84$, $p < .001$), accounting for 30% of the variance in BIL. Therefore, the results provide preliminary evidence to suggest that CE may play a role in a tourism brand's success.

Given that all pathways are significant, we estimated an alternative model with pathways from each of the five factors to BIL as a first-order model. The results revealed that when modeled directly to BIL, two of the five dimensions were not

Figure 2
Structural Model Tested in AMOS



Note. Airline/hotel/overall. CE = customer engagement; BIL = behavioral intention of loyalty.

significant (identification and interaction), supporting the predictive validity of the second-order model. Furthermore, to test whether CE level has an impact on the dimensional structure of the proposed CE model, we computed an overall CE score and divided the sample into two groups (high CE vs. low CE) using the median score. The results of a factor invariance test suggest that the factor structure of the measurement model of CE was invariant across the two groups.

DISCUSSION AND IMPLICATIONS

This study provides insight into the conceptualization and measurement of the CE concept and identifies five underlying dimensions that constitute a customer’s engagement with a tourism brand. Through the multi-stage scale development process, a five-dimensional CE construct demonstrating reliability and validity was developed and validated. Comparison of the three competing models lends strong support to the proposed five-factor model, which achieves the best fit for the data and reveals that CE predicts BIL toward a tourism brand. The CE scale resulting from this study can be used with confidence to gain insight into relationships with other important constructs of interest.

The tourism and marketing fields recognize CE as a strategic imperative for building customer-brand relationships (MSI, 2010; Wang & Fesenmaier, 2004). However, to date, no meaningful measurement mechanism has been available to empirically examine such assertions. This study provides a theoretically sound scale that can be used to examine the effects of CE on other key consumer behavior outcomes. In addition, this study demonstrates that CE predicts the customer's BIL toward the brand, highlighting the significance of fostering CE. While previous research demonstrated the importance of purchase-related loyalty antecedents, such as service quality and satisfaction (Clemes, Gan, & Ren, 2010), the findings of this study suggest that CE beyond purchase can also enhance brand loyalty.

From a theoretical perspective, the CE scale provides a foundation for building future knowledge of CE and extending theoretical understanding of the CE concept by empirically exploring the determinants of CE. For example, van Doorn et al. (2010) proposed that one of the most important factors influencing CE includes attitudinal antecedents, such as customer satisfaction, trust, brand attachment, brand commitment, and brand performance perceptions, whereas Hollebeek (2009) includes involvement and interactivity as antecedents of CE in her conceptual model. These relationships can be empirically examined using the CE scale presented in this study. Additionally, CE addresses customer-brand relationships, which investigators have traditionally captured using measures such as brand loyalty (e.g., Back, 2005; Back & Parks, 2003), in association with current or future transactions with the brand (Vivek, 2009). However, such measurement is inherent in purchase-specific actions, and given the rise of new media channels, this approach may not be sufficient to understand a consumer's various connections with the brand beyond the purchase transaction. In contrast, CE encapsulates behavioral manifestations of a customer with a less direct impact on brand performance (Bijmolt et al., 2010). The results of this study provide another means for assessing the customer-brand relationship, which has been generally considered purchase specific. The measurement scale also assists in further incorporating CE into the brand loyalty discussion, thus expanding on the existing theory.

Several practical implications arise from the research findings. This study provides a valuable tool for tourism and hospitality managers to effectively measure the effectiveness of marketing strategies developed to engage with their customer base. This measurement can be achieved by surveying customers to assess their level of CE before and after launching a marketing program, allowing marketing managers to present a measurable justification for their future CE investments, such as maintaining a customer discussion forum. In the absence of such measurable insights, marketing efforts often focus on areas where indicators of success can be easily measured, such as sales promotions. Consequently, the development of the CE scale represents significant value to marketing managers who are pressured by their organization to justify their CE strategies. In addition, managers can collect insightful information by using this scale. For instance, they can evaluate the performance of their brands against the competition by comparing their customers' level of engagement with that of competing brands. Such insights will help managers determine whether they need to modify or change their marketing programs to achieve expected objectives.

This study demonstrates that CE, as a higher abstraction of its five dimensions, has a positive influence with BIL. When modeled directly to BIL, two dimensions (identification and interaction) were not significant. However, this result does not negate the importance of identification and interaction but instead provides support for considering these dimensions as components of CE, which does have a significant positive effect on BIL. Furthermore, both factors were found to have a significant moderate correlation with BIL.

Collectively, all five dimensions were found to be significant in representing CE. This result suggests that, when attempting to develop CE, managers should focus on the enhancement of each of the five CE dimensions, with particular emphasis on attention and enthusiasm, given their high factor loadings. For example, to increase attention, managers need to provide information their customer groups may find relevant and interesting, as personal, relevant knowledge or information can induce attention (Celsi & Olson, 1988). While CE is manifested beyond the service transaction, enthusiasm may be enhanced by outstanding service delivery, features that thrill customers, and a positive brand image (cf. Bhote, 1995). In building strong customer brand identification, brand managers must create a unique and clear identity that is desired by the target customer segments because it allows a sustainable differentiation of the offering and helps to enhance customers' identification with the brand (Baumgarth & Schmidt, 2010). Additionally, firms need to provide opportunities for customer interaction as well as incentives, such as recognition and reward schemes to encourage customer participation (Sawhney, Verona, & Prandelli, 2005). Collectively, these actions help customers to immerse themselves in the interactive experience with the brand, thereby developing their engagement with the brand.

LIMITATIONS, FUTURE RESEARCH, AND CONCLUDING THOUGHTS

This study offers an important contribution to the tourism and marketing literature by providing a reliable and valid CE measure to gain further insights into customer psychological and behavioral connections with brands beyond the service consumption experience. However, in evaluating the findings, a number of inherent limitations need to be highlighted. First, as this study uses a cross-sectional design, which does not involve cause and effect relationships, the results can only imply an association between CE and BIL rather than a causal relationship. Second, in order to measure the dimensions of CE, the sample of this study only comprised customers who have had experience with the indicated brands, limiting the generalization of the results. Third, the relatively low response rate may affect the validity of the study's findings. Furthermore, 70% of the 496 respondents were female. Therefore, the sample may not be completely representative of the population of the study.

Despite its limitations, this investigation suggests several areas for future research. As the importance of the level of CE and the cocreation of value have been highlighted in the literature (Libai et al., 2010), future research should examine the correlation between the level of CE and the level of cocreation required in a **service experience for the consumer to derive value**. Higher levels

of CE can be expected in service experiences, where the nature of the product deems value, and its cocreation, to be more involved. For example, when flying with a budget airline or staying in a three-star hotel, the customer has low value expectations and requirements for cocreation owing to the limited services provided. In contrast, when flying first class or staying in a five-star hotel, the customer experiences many service touch points and superior perceived quality, and expectations are high. As a result, the cocreation of value is high, which may in turn affect the customer's CE level.

In addition, consistent with much of the CE discussion in the literature, this study has investigated CE from a positive perspective. However, CE can also be manifested in negatively valenced expressions, such as antibrand activities. As such, future research should examine how negatively valenced CE expressions may influence CE outcomes. Future research can also investigate factors that might be affected by CE. For instance, CE may lead to various consequences, such as customer equity, long-term reputation of the firm, brand recognition, and financial outcomes (van Doorn et al., 2010). The effects of CE on these consequences can be tested using the scale developed in this study. For these reasons, the development of the CE scale constitutes an important step in the advancement of brand management knowledge.

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Kevin Kam Fung So (k.so@griffith.edu.au) is a PhD candidate with the Department of Tourism, Leisure, Hotel and Sport Management, Griffith Business School, Griffith University, Gold Coast Campus, Australia. **Ceridwyn King**, PhD (ceridwyn.king@temple.edu), is an assistant professor in the School of Tourism and Hospitality Management at Temple University, in the United States. Dr. King has successfully published several papers in the area of internal brand management and continues to pursue this area of research in line with both academic and practitioner interest. Her research can be found in leading international journals such as the *International Journal of Contemporary Hospitality Management*, *International Journal of Hospitality Management*, *Journal of Hospitality and Tourism Research*, *European Journal of Marketing*, *Journal of Services Marketing* and the *Journal of Brand Management*. **Beverley Sparks** is a Professor with the Department of Tourism, Leisure, Hotel and Sport Management at Griffith University and Director of the Tourism, Sport and Service Innovation Research Centre. She is an active researcher, with a strong track record of grants and journal publications. Beverley has an international reputation as a marketing researcher and educator in the tourism/hospitality field. Her research work is published in a range of international journals such as *Tourism Management*, *Journal of Travel Research*, *Journal of Service Research*, *Journal of Business Research* and the *Journal of Hospitality and Tourism Research*. She is also on the editorial board of several journals.