Reconciling the Brand Engagement Construct:
Developing a Grounded Definition and Conceptual Framework

Abstract

The internet and social networks have tremendously increased the variety of ways in which consumers can talk to, about, and with brands. In an era where consumers are tuning out advertisers and tuning in their social networks, marketers have been quick to develop strategies and metrics devoted to the new phenomenon of brand engagement. While academic research has followed suit, a split in perspectives on the definition of brand engagement exists, understandably confusing the development of theory and holding back research on this topic. Based on the literature and a four-stage qualitative investigation employing both consumer and expert informants, we reconcile the divide in the literature by building a grounded definition of brand engagement. We define brand engagement as the extent to which a consumer consciously performs brand-related, public, behaviors beyond purchase and consumption. We situate this definition within a conceptual framework, offering propositions for future research.

Keywords: brand engagement, customer engagement, brand experience, self-expression, brand equity, marketing strategy
“Engagement. For many, the word has become a cliché. It’s time to take it back.” Levy, 2013

Practitioner use of the terms engagement and brand engagement has been ongoing for some time (e.g. Elliott 2006; Story 2006; Olson 2012) and use of the terms has become commonplace within the marketing industry. This is reflected in new job titles such as Chief Brand Engagement Officer (New York Times 2008) as well as the emergence of entire marketing agencies devoted specifically to brand engagement. Leading social network sites such as Facebook, Twitter, LinkedIn all refer to engagement in their analytics tools. Market research firms ComScore and Nielsen also track engagement metrics for their clients. In 2013, Google, as part of a new Think Insights research portal, launched an online article series devoted to clarifying understanding of engagement (Levy 2013; Posner 2013). Such industry interest highlights that brand engagement is an area of ongoing relevance for practitioners, who, without clear evidence, seem to have an almost intuitive sense that brand engagement is of value to brands.

We are now in an era of conspicuous action. Those consumers entranced by a wonderful brand experience can share their delight with others through numerous channels such as social media, blogs, and YouTube. Likewise, no longer is a consumer who is upset with a company resigned to simply communicating with the company or their immediate friends. Now she can post a review on a site such as Amazon.com, comment or post on the firm’s social media presence where hundreds or thousands may read it, create a YouTube video, or even create a dedicated website. This incredible expansion of opportunities through which consumer activity can be seen, shared, and tracked places a newfound importance on the brand-related actions of consumers and the associated meanings they create. Further understanding of this area is of particular interest to marketers since it comprises a growing component of the increasingly
multidimensional nature of brand knowledge (Keller 2003; Keller and Lehmann 2006; Diamond, Sherry, Muniz, McGrath, Kozinets, and Borghini 2009).

Interest in brand engagement stems from recognition that the internet and its newfound multiplicity of interaction and sharing methods broadens the ways in which consumers can interact with, about, and using a brand. Given the potential value of these newly emerged brand-related activities to brands, brand engagement would be expected to have a clear definition, a richly developing set of theory, and a strong set of associated empirical research. This is unfortunately not the case. While there has been a recent growth of academic interest in brand engagement and related areas (Sprott, Czellar, and Spangenberg 2009; Hoffman and Fodor 2010; Parent, Plangger, and Bal 2011; Giamanco and Gregoire 2012; Lipsman, Mudd, Rich, and Bruich 2012; Teixera, Wedel, and Pieters 2012; Belk 2013; Malhotra, Malhotra, and See 2013), engagement as a marketing term remains largely limited to colloquial usage with multiple and various meanings in both practitioner and academic realms. A definition that adheres to construct development best practices and is empirically grounded has yet to emerge. Such confusion hampers understanding, comparison, and theory development (Churchill 1979; MacKenzie, Podsakoff, and Podsakoff 2011; Gilliam and Voss 2013), slowing future research efforts predicated on the establishment of an agreed and grounded conceptualization of the engagement construct (Hollebeek 2011; Mollen and Wilson 2010; Vivek, Beatty, and Morgan 2012). The aim of this paper is therefore to 1) develop a grounded definition of the brand engagement construct, and 2) create an associated framework to direct future research. In doing so we hope to unite practitioner and academic conversations on this important new topic.

We now provide a brief summary of our approach to defining engagement and constructing a propositional framework. As the nature of our paper is atypical, we depart from
the traditional section ordering to better reflect how our investigation was carried out. To construct understanding of the nature of brand engagement we relied on two sources of information: a review of the literature and data from a multi-stage qualitative inquiry. Both of these data sources were employed in the recursive process of building understanding of the brand engagement construct. We therefore begin our paper with a method section describing this approach in more detail. Next, to better reflect the interrelated nature of our literature review and qualitative data collections, we present insights from these data sources together in defining the brand engagement construct. Using this definition we then build a conceptual framework specifying antecedents, consequences, and moderators. We close by providing implications relevant to practitioners, and identifying areas of future research.

**Method**

Our method was designed to unite academic and practitioner perspectives on brand engagement. In order to do this we began with a literature review and then pursued a multi-stage qualitative investigation of the concept. We continued our literature review throughout the qualitative investigation, using both sources of data to triangulate our emerging understanding of brand engagement. The information and insights from the multi-stage qualitative investigation were used to develop a grounded definition and conceptualization of the brand engagement construct along with an associated conceptual framework.

While we began with a broad review of engagement conceptualizations, we focused our search on articles within the marketing realm for two reasons. First, existing research already offers extensive overviews and summaries of engagement’s meaning within different fields (see
Hollebeek 2011; Brodie, Hollebeek, Juric, and Ilic 2011; Brodie, Ilic, Juric, and Hollebeek 2011; Vivek et al. 2012). Second, we argue that marketer’s unique circumstances and differential use of the term now warrants a definition of engagement particularized to our field. Examination of the emerging literature on brand engagement within marketing reveals growing, but limited research on this new construct. To date, research focuses on 1) initial discussion of engagement’s definition and dimensionality (van Doorn, Lemon, Mittal, Pick, Pirner, and Verhoef 2010; Brodie et al. 2011a, 2011b; Vivek et al. 2012), 2) incorporation of brand engagement activities into customer valuation (Kumar, Aksoy, Donkers, Venkatesan, Wiesal, and Tillmanns 2010), 3) efforts to explore the evolution of the construct in relation to other fields (Mollen and Wilson 2010; Vivek et al. 2012), and 4) application of brand engagement within specific realms of marketing such as service brands (Bowden 2009), websites (Mollen and Wilson 2010), and media (Calder and Malthouse 2008). We employed insights from this research, along with research from the construct development and relevant wider marketing literatures, throughout our process of conceptualizing the brand engagement construct and enunciating its nomological network. Findings were used to inform questions and develop interim definitions of the brand engagement construct (MacKenzie et al. 2011). Throughout and, in particular, between each stage of the qualitative investigation the researchers employed the constant comparison technique (Glaser and Strauss 1967), conducting analysis both individually and in consultation with other researchers. Continual evaluation of incoming findings in relation to the literature allowed for the purposive narrowing of the investigation as knowledge of the construct grew.

Given our intended theoretical contribution of describing the brand engagement construct, a multi-stage qualitative investigation was conducted in conjunction with the ongoing literature review. Efforts paralleled the grounded theory approach given the theory-building
nature of our goal (Glaser and Strauss 1967). In order to tap diverse perspectives on the subject, two types of samples were employed: young adults and academic experts. While brand engagement is common to all age groups, young adults represent consumers most likely to partake in the behaviors related to brand engagement (Duggan and Brenner 2013). 89% of consumers aged 18-29 use social networking sites, in contrast to 43% of those aged over 65 and the adult average of 72% (Brenner and Smith 2013). So while brand engagement and social network use is a broad phenomenon, our use of young adults as a sample is consistent with the purposive sampling that characterizes grounded theory investigations (Glaser and Strauss 1967). Academic experts provided expertise in theory development and construct refinement. To summarize, we reviewed the literature on brand engagement and collected all of the different definitions and conceptualizations used. We also asked both consumers and experts to tell us what they thought brand engagement was. We then triangulated between all of these data, using the recursive nature of our study to arrive at ever more precise understanding. We now briefly describe each of the four stages of our investigation.

The first stage of investigation focused on better understanding the broad nature and dimensions of brand engagement. A young adult sample consisting of twenty-three senior undergraduate marketing students participated in exchange for a gift card. Participants individually completed a series of open-ended questions (see Appendix A) before engaging in a further investigator-led, group discussion. Results were open coded before being collapsed into groupings during subsequent selective and theoretical coding, a process that continued during all four stages. In conjunction with the literature, intermediate results helped refine our working definition of the construct. In the second stage of our investigation, we turned to academic experts for critique, comment, and insight. To ensure experts were free from possible bias, they
were screened to ensure they did not have an existing stance on brand engagement’s meaning. Eight academics were provided with a brief background of the extant literature, our working definition, clarification of key aspects of the definition, and several associated questions. The experts’ feedback provided further insight and refinement.

With a working definition of the construct, in the third stage we again returned to a sample of young adults, nineteen marketing master’s students who participated for extra credit. Master’s-level students were employed in order to better answer the more challenging questions asked at this stage. The procedure echoed that of our first stage, with students first filling out an open-ended questionnaire before engaging in investigator-led discussion. However, questions differed from stage one (see Appendix A). Participants were provided with a definition of brand engagement, asked for their critique of the definition, and asked to categorize their engagement with a chosen brand along emerging dimensions of interest. Findings were again used to inform our emerging conceptualization of the construct.

In the fourth and final stage of data collection we returned to academic experts. The procedure matched that of stage two, with ten academics participating. We again ensured that these experts were free from preexisting views on brand engagement. A conceptualization of the brand engagement construct and related questions for comment were provided. Findings were analyzed and again used to inform the questions at hand.
Brand Engagement: The Construct

Findings from the Literature: Conceptual Confusion and Contradictions

We use the term brand engagement broadly to refer to all instances of brand-related consumer or customer engagement. Considerable confusion exists over the definition and conceptualization of engagement. We use this section to explore existing efforts to understand engagement. Approaches to conceptualizing brand engagement in the marketing literature can be divided into two general groupings. We term these two groups behavioral and psychological, reflecting characteristics of their respective conceptualizations. Please see Table 1 for an overview of key features of selected papers from each group.

(Insert Table 1 about here)

Behavioral conceptualizations of brand engagement share a common focus of defining engagement purely in terms of consumer actions. While actions provide a precise lens through which to understand engagement, researchers in this area do not share a common definition nor have developed a detailed conceptual model. The most concise behavioral definition is provided by the MSI (2010, pg. 4) which describes engagement as a “customer’s behavioral manifestation toward a brand or firm beyond purchase”. The domain of this definition is restricted to pure consumer actions, excluding purchase, that are directed toward a brand. While concise, no insight on engagement’s antecedents or consequences is provided. Likewise it is unclear why engagement is restricted to customers and also to actions directed at a brand rather than all actions concerning a brand. Other research provides wider scope to the realm of included actions.
Investigating engagement in terms of its effect on a customer’s lifetime value, Kumar et al. (2010, pg. 297) define customer engagement as “active interactions of a customer with a firm, with prospects and with other customers, whether they are transactional or nontransactional in nature”. Kumar et al.’s (2010) definition not only differs through the inclusion of transactions, but more importantly by articulating that brand-related actions encompass more than actions solely with the brand. Customer actions are seen as having an impact on both fellow and future customers of a brand. An interesting aspect of Kumar et al.’s (2010) definition is that engagement is defined as originating from a customer, as opposed to a general consumer. While this may seem minor, restricting engagement to a customer excludes those that have yet to purchase from the firm from being considered as sources of engagement. This excludes a significant portion of brand-related consumer actions. Their proposed definition also does not formally restrict actions to those that are brand-related. As the focus of their research is on describing the concept of customer engagement value, they do not offer antecedents or consequences of engagement. The final behavioural definition we detail differs from Kumar et al.’s (2010) inclusion of transactions, but supports the idea that engagement has a wider focus than customer actions directed at the brand. van Doorn et al. (2010, pg. 254) argue that “customer engagement behaviors” are those “behavioral manifestations that have a brand or firm focus, beyond purchase, resulting from motivational drivers”, can be positive or negative, and “may be targeted to much broader network actors including other current and potential customers, suppliers, the general public, regulators, and firm employees.” While also restricting actors to customers, van Doorn et al.’s (2010) definition is otherwise the broadest within the behavioral approach and recognizes valence differences as well as the multiple audiences engagement can target. They also provide a conceptual model. Their model groups antecedents
within three categories - customer-, firm-, and context-based - although acknowledges uncertainty as to which are pure antecedents, moderators, or both and calls for “deeper conceptualization and empirical research” to provide needed clarity (van Doorn et al. 2010, pg. 256). Consequences are grouped within the categories of customer, firm, and others and are very broad in nature (please see Table 1). For instance, customer consequences are listed as “cognitive” and “emotional” rather than more specific constructs. Likewise, under the ‘others’ category, engagement’s consequences include the broad concepts of “consumer welfare” and “economic surplus.” While a valuable step towards understanding engagement, their model raises many questions – a fact that the authors readily acknowledge in stating that further “theoretical and empirical work in this area is necessary” (van Doorn et al. 2010, pg. 259). For instance it is not clear how the attitudinal antecedents listed are distinct from those listed as attitudinal consequences. Likewise, consumer identity is listed as both an antecedent and consequence. The dimensions of brand engagement offered – valence, form/modality, scope, nature of impact, and customer goals – are useful in considering engagement’s nature but do not offer operational insight into the concept’s meaning. Taken as a group, while behavioral conceptualizations share a focus on the importance of actions in defining engagement, a shared definition has yet to emerge. Questions and uncertainty remain at the conceptual level as well, with increased understanding of engagement antecedents, consequences, and moderators explicitly called for in the literature.

A parallel stream of research considers engagement to be more integrated with a consumer’s psychological processes and thus we group these conceptualizations under the term psychological. Earlier research in this stream examines engagement through specific contexts. For instance, Bowden (2009, pg. 65) defines engagement in a service context as “a psychological
process” through which customer loyalty develops toward a service brand. Despite presenting a ‘conceptual framework for the process of engagement’, her conceptualization includes neither an engagement construct nor dimensions. She does indirectly offer four antecedents to loyalty, which Bowden describes as a parallel to engagement, and are thus implied to also affect engagement. Turning to a website context, engagement research also shows few similarities. Mollen and Wilson (2010, pg. 923) define online engagement as “a cognitive and affective commitment to an active relationship with the brand as personified by the website or other computer-mediated entities designed to communicate brand value” and is characterized by two dimensions: cognitive processing and value congruence. Their definition stresses a relational aspect of brand engagement. Calder, Malthouse, and Schaedel (2009, pg. 322) take a different approach and define consumer engagement with a website as “a collection of experiences with the site”. Their experiential view of engagement has two dimensions: personal and social-interactive. Turning to antecedents, Mollen and Wilson (2010) propose telepresence – “the psychological state of ‘being there’ in a computer-mediated environment” (pg. 921) – as the sole antecedent of engagement while Calder et al. (2009) argue that engagement stems from a consumer’s experience with a website. In terms of antecedents, Mollen and Wilson broadly suggest “optimal consumer attitudes and behaviors” (pg. 924) while Calder et al. (2009) propose three similar outcomes: usage and attentiveness, affective responses, and reactions to an ad. Engagement conceptualizations in service and website contexts have yet to be reconciled.

Other engagement research in the psychological realm builds on earlier work by constructing more broadly applicable conceptualizations. Nonetheless considerable ambiguity on the definition, causes, and effects of engagement is still evident. For instance, some research characterizes engagement as a ‘psychological state’ or ‘state of mind’ (Hollebeek 2011; Brodie
While another perspective considers engagement to be “the intensity of an individual’s participation in and connection with an organization’s offerings and/or organizational activities” (Vivek et al. 2012, pg. 133). While both perspectives regard engagement as residing within a consumer’s head, defining engagement as a state of mind views it almost as an end goal, similar to marketing constructs such as satisfaction or trust. Vivek et al.’s (2012) more participatory and connection-centric definition reflects an active, recursive, and relational view of the engagement construct.

Research taking a psychological perspective on engagement finds more agreement on engagement’s dimensionality. Cognitive, emotional, and behavioral dimensions are mentioned in several conceptualizations (Hollebeek 2011; Brodie et al. 2011a, 2011b; Vivek et al. 2012). A fourth dimension – social – is included by Vivek et al. (2012, pg. 133) who do not offer an explicit definition of this dimension but instead define it jointly with the behavior dimension as “the participation by current and potential customers, both within and outside of the exchange situations.” Description of how this social dimension differs from the behavioral expression dimension is not offered. It is similarly unclear how the social dimension differs from or does not encapsulate word-of-mouth or brand community involvement, which are both listed as consequences of engagement (Vivek et al. 2012). Looking across these psychological conceptualizations, while there is agreement on involvement being an antecedent and trust and loyalty as consequences, some confusion exists on where other constructs fit in relation to engagement (Hollebeek 2011; Brodie 2011a, 2011b; Vivek et al. 2012). For instance, one study includes commitment, trust, customer satisfaction and rapport as both antecedents and consequences of engagement, switching positions in some cases dependent on whether a customer is new or returning (Brodie 2011a). Relatedly, some frameworks consider rapport an
antecedent (Hollebeek 2011) while others view it as a consequence (Brodie 2011a, 2011b). Such confusion concerning the conceptualization of engagement hinders understanding and the eventual operationalization of the construct.

In sum, current understanding of the engagement concept within marketing is limited. Two streams of research are developing, but they differ markedly in their approaches. Research within the behavioral stream does not agree on a definition and has yet to explore engagement’s dimensionality in an operational sense. Research in the behavioral stream also has yet to offer a rich and conceptual definition of engagement rather than more operational definitions based on observed behavior. Absence of a grounded conceptual definition precludes efforts to situate engagement within a wider nomological network as well as conceptualize its antecedents and consequences. This may be one reason the behavioral conceptualization of engagement’s antecedents and consequences remains limited. While more developed, engagement research within the psychological stream is similarly conflicted. Consensus has yet to be reached on a definition, although some agreement on engagement’s dimensions is evident. The psychological approach to understanding engagement takes a broad perspective of what engagement represents. As a result, delineating engagement from related constructs becomes difficult and has yet to be fully addressed within the literature. Such confusion is evident when examining the multitude of sometimes conflicting engagement antecedents and consequences proposed within the psychological stream (see Table 1). Most importantly, research does not seem to be progressing toward a reconciliation of the two approaches to understanding engagement. Neither conceptualization offers an operational definition of brand engagement, nor sheds light on the specific behaviors that reflect enactment of brand engagement. Such ambiguity does little to
clarify which approach should be used to further understanding amongst academics and practitioners.

**Findings from the Qualitative Studies: Support for a Behavioral Conceptualization**

We approached the multi-stage qualitative investigation as an opportunity to confront the questions concerning engagement evident within the literature in light of fresh data. Our first aim was using data to reconcile between the behavioral and psychological perspectives on engagement’s definition. A related aim was to refine engagement’s definition while taking into account the existence of related constructs, so as to clarify engagement’s uniqueness. Our final aim was to situate engagement within a larger framework – namely its antecedents and consequences. We now describe our findings, arranged according to the dimensions – behavioral, emotional, and cognitive – common to the literature. Our findings support a behavioral conceptualization of engagement.

Support for the behavioral dimension of brand engagement existed across findings from each stage of our inquiry. Both samples of young adults easily provided numerous examples of behaviorally based ways in which they partook in brand-related actions. This view was also clearly evident in their definitions of brand engagement, which centered on actions consumers might take either towards or about a brand. A wide range of examples was offered, and these grouped into two categories of brand-related behaviors: creation and interaction. Similarly, academic experts supported brand-related consumer behaviors being considered as a dimension of brand engagement. Several experts stated that brand-related actions comprised the uniqueness of this construct.
The emotional dimension was largely absent from the responses garnered from our samples. Emotion and affect were not evident as a component of brand engagement, but instead regarded as a precursor to engagement with a brand. In particular, respondents reported brands that could elicit emotions within consumers were more likely to be engaged with. Likewise, academic experts also found issue with this dimension. Concern was expressed that existing constructs such as brand love (Carroll and Ahuvia 2006) or brand relationship (Fournier 1998) already capture the emotional connection between consumer and brand. This is also consistent with emerging research on the role of activating emotions as a precursor to consumer activity (Berger and Milkman 2012; Teixera 2012; Teixera et al. 2012). Our findings thus help to refine the domain of engagement by shifting the emotional dimension to consideration as a possible antecedent of brand engagement.

Support for the cognitive dimension of brand engagement was also absent from both our young adult and expert samples. Beliefs and brand knowledge were regarded as influencers on brand-related actions, not as a dimension of the focal construct. This was evident in comments related to consumers acting as brand advocates. Respondents recognized that thoughts and opinions were a factor in deciding to engage with or about a brand, but did not consider such thoughts or opinions as comprising part of brand engagement itself. Consumer actions instead constituted engagement. Experts echoed this view, again concerned that a cognitive dimension strayed from brand engagement’s core uniqueness and also ran together with other constructs. In particular, the three-dimensional psychological conceptualization of engagement was seen as very similar to classic conceptualizations of consumer attitudes (Azjen 2005), again bringing into question the uniqueness of the brand engagement construct. Our investigation thus finds that cognitions instead exist as a possible influence on brand engagement.
Integration of our findings results in a definition of brand engagement expressly focused on consumer behaviors. Our data also allows for an operational definition of the construct to emerge based on greater understanding of the dimensionality that exists within these behaviors. Findings point to brand engagement as being behavioral and comprised of the brand-related actions of interaction and creation. We now describe each of these types of behavior in more detail.

**Synthesis: Explicating the Brand Engagement Construct**

We now build on our finding that brand engagement is behavioral by describing its dimensions and proposing a grounded conceptual definition. We begin by first describing the two types of behavior – interaction and creation – that comprise brand engagement. These dimensions are grounded in our review of the literature as well as our qualitative investigations.

**Interaction**

A predominant theme amongst participants was mention of brand-related interactions. These interactions could take on multiple forms and be either with a firm or with other consumers. The dimension of interaction subsumes the construct of word-of-mouth (WOM), defined as utterances “personally motivated, spontaneous, ephemeral, and informal in structure – that is, they are not paid for by a sponsor; they are not composed and revised over time; they disappear as soon as they are uttered; and they are not consciously structured” (Stern 1994, pg. 7). Word-of-mouth is primarily evaluative in nature and is limited to consumer-to-consumer interactions. Engagement interactions constitute a much larger domain including carefully constructed asynchronous consumer-to-consumer communications as well as interactions
between a consumer and a brand. Likewise, in the consumer-to-brand dyad engagement interactions can include product suggestions and ideas, product feedback, questions, complaints, and congratulations.

The subjects of interactions comprising engagement also move beyond product and brand evaluations related to consumption which typify WOM (Arndt 1967; Stern 1994; Kozinets, De Valck, Wojnicki, and Wilner 2010) to include brand-related conversations, experiences, recommendations, and advocacy. A further differentiator is that these brand-related consumer interactions do not necessarily need to be verbal. Using any of a number of online mediums, consumers are able to like, retweet, repost, pin, or favorite brand-related content they are exposed to. While in some cases this activity can mirror WOM by acting as an implicit endorsement of a brand, in many other instances it can be fundamentally different. Consumers might check-in to a brand’s location in order to gain social prestige, to alert friends to their location, or simply to receive a promotion. Likewise, there are a multitude of possible reasons why a consumer might interact with another consumer about a brand. While it may be to solicit a review, but it could also be to comment on an experience, express delight, or support a friend.

The issue of interaction and its subsuming of WOM was present in discussions with academic experts. A common view was that this was an unavoidable aspect of the widening of consumer activities due to the internet. Many of the online activities that comprise engagement have offline mirrors. However, the cost of executing the same behaviors along offline is often prohibitive. Additionally, the limited sharing opportunities available offline further make online alternatives more attractive. Brand-related interactions can thus occur both offline and online, but are expected to be more prevalent online due to lower costs and increased sharing potential.
In addition to action that is interactive in nature, consumers can also act in ways that create brand-related content. This can include content such as reviews, commentaries, and microblog or blog posts. It also extends to situations where consumers create media such as photos, podcasts, or videos that include a brand. The area of consumer generated advertising is another example (Berthon, Pitt, and Campbell 2008). These activities are consistent with a broader shift toward brand meaning being created by consumers rather than marketers (Deighton and Kornfeld 2009).

Interestingly, creation was a dimension commonly brought up amongst academic experts, who viewed the activity as a central and powerful indicator of brand engagement. Young adults were not as direct in acknowledging the importance of creation, but cited numerous examples of such activities. These included “posting on YouTube”, “sending photos to [the brand’s] Facebook page”, “posting photos to Facebook”, and “writing reviews on Yelp”. These activities require more effort, and in some cases specialized technical abilities (although such requirements are decreasing).

We recognize that in some cases, particularly online environments, both the interaction and creation dimensions can be simultaneously present. A consumer might, for instance, post a picture on Facebook showcasing all the beverage containers they and their friends drank last night. This would exhibit both creation – through the posting of the picture – and interaction – through the posting of the photo to a social network. Similarly, a consumer might post a photo or short video of them wearing a new dress they have just tried on in store, soliciting comments from friends on its possible purchase. This would constitute both creation through the generation of content and also interaction through the act of asking friends for assistance.
Integrating the results of our multi-stage qualitative investigation, we define *brand engagement* as the extent to which a consumer consciously performs brand-related, public, behaviors beyond purchase and consumption. Results of the qualitative analysis also lead us to dimensionalize brand engagement into two types of behavior: interaction and creation. *Interaction* refers to brand-related public communications directed at any party, be it fellow consumers or the brand itself. *Creation* refers to the generation of brand-related content visible to others. Brand engagement is therefore conceptualized as the enactment of brand-related behaviors. We use the term conscious to limit engagement to include only those actions in which a consumer is aware of a brand’s inclusion in the activity.

Several aspects of this definition are worth noting. Firstly, brand engagement is not limited to activities solely with a focal brand. Rather brand engagement concerns activities about a brand, which may or may not include direct interaction with a brand. Secondly, brand engagement is not limited to current customers, but also includes both non-customers and potential customers. We consider this feature particularly important in an online context, where brand social media presences often include consumers considering a first purchase as well as those who might hold negative opinions. Having explicated our definition of brand engagement, we now turn to grounding the construct within a conceptual framework.

A Grounded Conceptual Framework for Brand Engagement

We next develop a conceptual framework for brand engagement, summarized in Figure 1. Our conceptualization includes three sections: 1) antecedent conditions enabling brand engagement, 2) consequences of brand engagement, and 3) moderators that operate to either
enhance or weaken the relationship between brand experience and brand engagement. This framework is developed based on data from both the existing literature and conducted qualitative investigations.

(Insert Figure 1 about here)

**Antecedents to Brand Engagement**

*Brand experience*

Brand experience is defined as “subjective, internal responses (sensations, feelings, and cognitions) and behavioral responses evoked by brand-related stimuli that are part of a brand’s design and identity, packaging, communications, and environments” (Brakus, Schmitt, and Zarantello 2009, pg. 53). A brand experience stems from stimuli such as specific colors, logos, or characters. Brand experiences are generally positive, and vary in intensity, valence, spontaneity, and duration (Brakus et al. 2009).

Brand experience is conceptualized and demonstrated to have a behavioral impact. Further research on the construct’s behavioral outcomes has been called for and although not presumed to be present in all instances, a brand experience can include a motivational state (Brakus et al. 2009). It is reasonable to conceive that the stronger a brand experience, the more likely a consumer will respond with a behavioral response. For instance, research links the creation of strong emotions such as joy and surprise to increased interest in and sharing of advertisements (Teixera 2012). Content that arouses emotions is also shown to inspire consumer action (Berger 2011; Berger & Milkman 2012). Beyond the emotional dimension of brand
experience, it is reasonable to assume that brand experiences engendering stronger sensations, cognitions, and behavioral responses within a consumer will lead to increased brand engagement.

While it might be argued that the behavioral response aspect of brand experience appears similar to our behavioral definition of brand engagement, the two constructs differ in their use of the term. Behavior in the context of brand experience refers to “physical and bodily actions and behaviors” related to the physical effects of consumption or physical experiences such as being in a particular store. Brakus et al. (2009, pgs. 57, 60) measure the behavioral dimension with three items: “I engage in physical actions and behaviors when I use this brand”, “This brand results in bodily experiences”, and “This brand is not action oriented (reverse-coded)” (Brakus et al. 2009, pgs. 57, 60). None of these items, or any other on the brand experience scale, concern actions involving brand-related creation or interaction. Given the description and items, the behavioral dimension of the brand experience construct assesses the extent to which using or consuming a brand involves physical actions or physical co-location. This is qualitatively different from how we define the brand engagement construct’s brand-related behaviors of creation and interaction. To further clarify, brand experience refers to brand-related actions on or towards a consumer, while brand engagement creates outward action stemming from a consumer. The domain of brand experience thus does not overlap with brand engagement. In fact, we argue that brand experience is a cause of brand engagement.

Extending Brakus et al.’s (2009) construct to encompass consumer-generated content, we argue that the source of a brand experience is not limited solely to the brand itself (Fournier and Avery 2011). Consumers create experiences involving brands in numerous ways. The effect of one consumer’s public engagement with a brand can also often be the trigger for another consumer’s brand experience. This includes content such as consumer-generated advertisements
(Berthon et al. 2008; Muniz and Schau 2007), consumer-generated spoof advertisements (Berthon and Pitt 2012), brand communities (McAlexander, Schouten, and Koenig 2002), word of mouth (Berger and Schwartz 2011), product reviews (Chevalier and Mayzlin 2006), and blog posts (Kozinets et al. 2010). In recognition of the growing importance of consumer-generated content to brands, we include it as a possible source of brand experience.

The concept of consumer experience resonates strongly with managerial advice commonly given to firms in response to the internet and social media. Academics suggest that brands looking to increase consumer engagement provide consumers with “reminders of their experiences” (Muniz and Schau 2011, pg. 214), propose that engagement “begins with the company and content it creates” (Parent et al. 2011, pg. 221), and highlight that in a world where brands are “uninvited crashers” those “managers that create branded artifacts, social rituals, and cultural icons issue invitations to their own ‘parties’ rather than waiting patiently for consumer hosts to invite the brand in” (Fournier and Avery 2011, pgs. 193, 205). In short, brands that are able to create strong brand experiences and move consumers are those that will reap the benefits of greater brand engagement. As such, we argue brand experience is a cause of brand engagement and posit:

P1. Greater perceived brand experience leads to greater brand engagement.

**Consequences of Brand Engagement**

*Consumer self-expression*

At a general level, the products that consumers choose to consume play a constant role in defining and redefining both consumer self-concept as well as external identity (Belk, 2013). Consumers are motivated to obtain, consume, and display products in order to create and
communicate particular meanings about themselves (Grubb and Grathwohl 1967; Belk, 1988; McCracken 1988). Escalas and Bettman (2005, pg. 379) state that “brands can be used to meet self-expression needs, publicly or privately” and “may act as symbols of personal accomplishment, provide self-esteem, allow one to differentiate oneself and express individuality, and help people through life transitions.” Consumers link a product with their self-concept by appropriating, creating, or intimate knowing of the object (Sartre 1943; Belk 1988). Brands, due to their rich meaning, play an important role in communicating consumer identity (McCracken 1988). The active control of communicated meanings is often referred to as impression management (Goffman 1959).

In an online environment brands continue to play an important role in constructing consumer identity. In fact, since the functional use of a brand is inhibited, a brand’s only use in an online context lies in its symbolic value (Schau and Gilly 2003). Research exploring how consumers construct identity using websites finds that “as in real life, site creators use brands as a shorthand for describing to others who they are, as well as who they are not” (Schau and Gilly 2003, pg. 400). Consumers are less inhibited online and experience a more fluid sense of self where ideal and imaginary selves can more freely emerge (Belk 2013). “Digital association blurs the distinctions among the material, the immaterial, the real, and the possible” (Schau and Gilly 2003, pg. 401). The online realm liberates consumers from the constraints related to consumption in the real world, most importantly making otherwise financially inaccessible brands suddenly accessible. With the internet “consumers’ brand associations are limited only by their imaginations and computer skills. They can literally associate themselves with any brand by digital appropriation and manipulation of digital symbols” (Schau and Gilly 2003, pg. 400).
Social networks represent a heightened form of personal website, with increased abilities to upload content, share it with others, and receive immediate public feedback and affirmation. Consumers can friend, follow, fan, and like particular brands, whose content then appears in the consumer’s online news feeds in the same manner as updates from friends and family. Consumers can also easily create and share their own content documenting brand experiences, as well as interact with those created by others on their social network. The interactions that others have with their posted content further creates a consumer’s sense of self (Turkle 2011; Levy 2013). Posner (2013, pg. 9) writes that “when we ‘like’ or comment on a picture or video sent to us, we’re sending a gift of sorts back to the sender. We’re affirming them.” Belk (2013, pg. 14) further notes that “the aggregate self can no longer be conceived from only a personal perspective and is not only jointly constructed but shared, that is, a joint possession with others”. Interactions with a brand online are also potentially richer as consumers are not only able to converse directly with a brand, but such interactions automatically become part of a consumer’s online profile or page, visibly indicating “not only a commitment to the message, but also to the brand” (Malhotra et al. 2013, pg. 20). As such, in a social network the symbolic role of brands in crafting identity is expected to be strengthened. This is supported by research showing that consumers share advertisements with others in order to “to display their own taste, media savvy, and connectedness” (Teixera 2012, pg. 27) and that when a consumer shares “a video or an image, they’re not just sharing the object, they’re sharing the emotional response it creates” (Levy 2013, pg. 3). Each brand-related interaction or piece of content created by a consumer represents an important artifact of these processes. Virtual goods have demonstrated impact on consumers (Belk 2013) and online artifacts from brand engagement represent an additional type. A demonstrative example is research showing that analysis of solely the pages that a consumer
likes on Facebook can be used to accurately predict a wide range of personal attributes including sexual orientation, personality traits, age, gender, ethnicity, political views, and substance abuse (Kosinski, Stillwell, and Graepel 2013). Thus, whether offline or online, brand engagement plays an important role in the construction of consumer self-concept and its expression to others. More specifically, the more a consumer engages with a brand, the more likely the consumer is to incorporate the brand into their self-concept, and the more likely that brand is used for self-expression. In short:

P2: Consumers who perform brand engagement activities will be more likely to perceive the brand as enabling their self-expression.

*Perceived membership in brand community*

Consumers are social and actively seek to be a part of communal groups. Just as consumers employ brands to self-express, consumers also use brands as a means of perceiving and participating in communities with other consumers. Posting a photo to a brand’s Facebook page, engaging in brand-related Twitter conversations with people who share a common interest, or commenting on a public blog are all actions that not only reveal who a consumer is, but also invite – if not beg for – reciprocation. Through brand engagement, a consumer’s brand-related creations and interactions can be a means for a consumer to form and maintain connection with brand communities. These communities often go beyond admiring or building relationships with brands to using them as instrumental tools to build relationships and a sense of community with other consumers (Cova 1997; Cova and Cova 2002; Fournier and Avery 2011). Levy (2013, pg. 2) notes that for today’s generation, growing up as digital natives has “fundamentally changed their relationship with media and technology – and with brands. They don’t want to be talked at,
but they do want to be invited in to the discussion. They thrive on creation, curation, connection and community.”

Brand communities can range from strong (Muniz and O’Guinn 2001) to weak (Cova 1997; Cova and Cova 2002), but share a perceived link between consumers based on a common brand. Strong brand communities are “based on a structured set of social relationships” and are “marked by a shared consciousness, rituals and traditions, and a sense of moral responsibility” (Muniz and O’Guinn 2001, pg. 412). Strong brand communities involve a range of twelve different value-creating practices (Schau, Muñiz, and Arnould 2009). Brand engagement also enables participation in much looser communities, or tribes, that now form in large part due to social media interactions. Tribes are defined by the absence of a central power and revolve around a fuzzy sense of community driven by “locality, kinship, emotion, passion” (Cova and Cova 2002, 598; Kates 2004), existing “in no other form but the symbolically and ritually manifested commitment of their members” (Cova 1997, pg. 301). Brands provide “linking value” by enabling consumers to signal characteristics and thus connect with like-minded individuals (Cova 1997, pg. 307). Brands high in linking value create and support community to a greater extent than those low in linking value, and are valued as such (Cova and Cova 2002). Irrespective of whether a consumer’s motivations for seeking out a brand community are consumption-driven (Muniz and O’Guinn 2001) or more social (Fournier and Lee 2009), brands provide a valuable foundation for such interactions. As Belk (2013 pg. 10) notes, “digital sharing online foster[s] feelings of community and aggregate sense of self, even with others we would not recognize in person.” As a public behavior, brand engagement provides consumers with a means of both creating and signaling affiliation with a brand, thus enabling membership in a brand community. As such we argue that:
P3: Consumers who perform brand engagement activities will be more likely to perceive themselves as members of a brand community.

*Brand equity mediated by brand image*

In addition to individual consumer outcomes such as self-expression and brand community membership, brand engagement also results in consequences at the aggregate level. Consumer-based brand equity is principally comprised of two components: brand awareness and brand associations (Keller 1993; 2006). Consumers are more familiar with, and hold stronger, more favorable, and more unique associations of brands with higher equity (Keller 1993; 2006).

Brand image, defined as brand perceptions stemming from brand associations held in consumer memory (Keller 1993), is likely to be shaped by the brand-related behaviors of engaged consumers. By creating brand-related content as well as carrying out brand-related interactions, consumers are both strengthening and creating new associations for the brand. These associations can stem from the objective content being communicated about the brand. For instance, reviews of a product or service can create or alter the brand associations of those who subsequently read such reviews. Associations can also emerge based on the characteristics of those consumers doing the actual engagement. Since the identity of consumers performing brand engagement activities is often public, others are apt to associate the characteristics of such consumers with that brand. For instance, in the early 2000’s the luxury brand Burberry became popular amongst a group of underclass and uneducated consumers known as “chavs”, whose association with the brand dampened sales to its target customers (Berthon, Pitt, and Campbell 2009).
The notion that brand-related consumer actions actively create and shape brand meaning has been present in the literature for some time. For an individual using brands to create and sustain their self-concept, brands necessarily take on new associations and meanings particular to that individual (Fournier, 1998). In aggregate, such individual brand engagement actions can collectively associate particular places, events, and types of people with a brand. When a consumer chooses to post a particular photo or video on a social network, source and content are necessarily linked for those who are exposed to it. This process is recursive, with consumers appropriating brands for their own needs, and through such acts also changing the meaning of the brand itself (Diamond et al. 2009). Deighton and Kornfeld (2009, pg. 9) note that “culture is needed to read a brand, and reading a brand makes culture”. Consider, for instance, the image of a stereotypical Birkenstock wearer, a typical Harley-Davidson owner, or the purchaser of an Armani suit. As much as each consumer employs the rich brand meaning of each product to structure a sense of sense through consumption, their own use itself shapes the associations fellow consumers have of the same brand. As public brand-related behaviors, brand engagement will also add new associations to a brand’s image, thus increasing its brand equity:

P4: Greater brand engagement will, in aggregate, lead to a more richly developed brand image, increasing brand equity.

Brand equity mediated by brand awareness

Brand awareness is defined as the strength of a brand’s node in consumer memory (Keller 1993). Any actions that reinforce consumer recognition or recall of a brand increase brand awareness. Since brand engagement is composed of public creation and interaction behaviors, it is likely to increase a brand’s conspicuousness, thus resulting in increased brand
awareness amongst consumers. The more consumers create brand-related content and partake in brand-related conversations, the greater will be a brand’s visibility amongst consumers in general, therefore increasing brand equity. Stated formally:

P5. Greater brand engagement will cause greater brand awareness, increasing brand equity.

Finally while we do not offer a formal proposition, we make note of the recursive nature of brand engagement. One consumer’s brand engagement can act as the impetus for another consumer’s brand experience.

**Moderators of Brand Engagement**

We next briefly examine consumer-level constructs that increase or decrease a consumer’s brand engagement or its resulting effects. These moderators include but are not limited to the following:

*Brand attachment*

Brand attachment is defined as the “the strength of the bond connecting the brand with the self” and is composed of two dimensions: brand-self connection and brand prominence (Park, MacInnis, Priester, Eisingerich, and Iacobucci 2010, pg. 2). Brand-self connection refers to the cognitive and emotional link that a consumer has with a brand. This link is motivated by either identity or instrumental concerns. Brand prominence refers to the ease and frequency with which consumers can summon positive thoughts and feelings about the brand. It is a consumer’s salience of the brand-self linkage. Taken together, brand attachment results in a “rich and
accessible memory network”, develops over time as relationship with a brand grows, and is often associated with strong emotions (Park et al. 2010, pg. 2).

Based on self-expansion theory Park et al. (2010, pg. 14) demonstrate that brand attached consumers are driven to multiple types of actions including “difficult behaviors – those that require investments of time, money, energy, and reputation – to maintain (or deepen) a brand relationship”. In contrast, brand attitude strength was a weaker predictor of behaviors, with no significant effect found on difficult behaviors. With richer knowledge structures and keener awareness of the brand, highly attached consumers are likely to exhibit stronger responses to brand experiences, particularly in the form of behaviors that support continued attachment with the brand. Brand attachment can thus be regarded as a catalyst on brand experience, acting to both strengthen the likelihood and intensity of brand engagement. We posit:

P6. Greater brand attachment strengthens the relationship between brand experience and brand engagement.

Product category involvement

Product category involvement is defined as “a person’s perceived relevance of the object based on inherent needs, values, and interests” (Zaichowsky 1985, pg. 342). The construct implies consumer motivation to process information and engage in behavior. Consumers highly involved in a product category engage in greater search, are more sensitive to brand differences, are more likely to have preferred brands, and process messages more extensively (Zaichowsky 1985; 1986; Giese, Spangenberg, and Crowley 1996). In sum, consumers highly involved in a product category have qualitatively different experiences when exposed to the same stimuli. Paralleling this logic, and given that brand experience is defined as a consumer’s response to
brand-related stimuli, we argue that high involvement in a product category will affect brand experience. Stated formally:

P7. Greater product-category involvement strengthens the relationship between brand experience and brand engagement.

Brand engagement in self-concept

Consumers use brands to construct their self-concepts (Escalas and Bettman 2005; Schau and Gilly 2003; Belk 2013). While we earlier explored brand-supported self-concept as a consequence of brand engagement, this discussion was in the context of a single brand. We argued that engagement with a focal brand leads to that same brand being used by the consumer to construct self-concept and ultimately self-express. Brand engagement in self-concept (BESC) instead operates at a broader level and refers to a consumer’s general tendency to use brands to construct their self-concept (Sprott et al. 2009). More specifically, BESC is defined as “an individual difference representing consumers’ propensity to include important brands as part of how they view themselves” (Sprott et al. 2009, pg. 92).

While it may seem appropriate to conceptualize BESC as a moderator of the effect of brand engagement on brand-related self-concept, doing so obscures the true nature of BESC. By capturing a consumer’s tendency to include brands in their self-concept, BESC is a measure of consumer sensitivity towards and awareness of brands. Empirical results support this view. Consumers higher on BESC are shown to exhibit stronger consumer-brand memory links, are better able to recall brands they own, pay more attention to brands they are incidentally exposed to, and prefer brands with more overt brand logos (Sprott et al. 2009). Thus, rather than heightening the effect of brand engagement actions in forming a consumer’s self-concept, we
argue BESC instead affects how consumers experience brands and, in turn, respond to these experiences. In essence, BESC facilitates brand experience, making it more likely not only that brand-related stimuli are noticed, but also enhances recall of associated memories, changes processing of branded stimuli, and ultimately impacts behavioral response to the experience (Sprott et al. 2009). In sum, consumers high on BESC will have stronger and more impactful brand experiences that result in brand engagement which in turn constructs self-concept. By affecting brand experience, BESC operates through brand engagement rather than heightening the effect of brand engagement.

We argue the BESC trait will moderate the link between brand experience and brand engagement, with consumers high on BESC being more likely to engage with a brand. Specifically:

P8. Greater brand engagement in self concept strengthens the relationship between brand experience and brand engagement.

General Discussion

Summary and Implications

This paper develops a theoretically grounded definition and associated conceptual framework for the brand engagement construct, a topic of demonstrated importance to practitioners and of growing interest amongst academics. We construct our definition following a grounded theory approach (Glaser and Strauss 1967). Our investigation comprises a review of the relevant literature along with an associated multi-stage qualitative data collection employing both young adults and academic experts. Research on construct development best practices
informed the development of our conceptualization so as to maximize its future potential. Our proposed definition of brand engagement not only provides a missing link between academic and practitioner understanding of the subject, but brings reconciliation to questions concerning brand engagement’s meaning. We also contribute by situating the construct within a research framework with explicated antecedents, consequences, and moderators. This provides direction to future research in this area.

In addition to fostering future academic research, our work provides several implications for managers. First, from an instrumental perspective, our proposed model suggests that managers interested in increasing brand engagement should take a renewed interest in the brand experiences they provide. Such experiences can be either created and managed by a brand itself (c.f. Pine and Gilmore 1998) or, as is increasingly the case, driven by other consumers. Brand managers seeking to foster either type of experience should consider what their brand can do to create unique, interesting, and notable experiences that consumers will want to engage with directly (Oliver, Rust, and Varki 1997; Berger and Schwartz 2011). Examples of firm-generated brand experiences include Old Spice’s series of more than 180 YouTube response videos to consumer tweets\textsuperscript{b} and a Honda campaign of responding to tweets through personalized 6-second Vine videos (Nudd 2013). Careful consideration should also be given to how consumer-generated brand experiences can be inspired. One option is to create unique brand experiences that propel consumers to organically create social media content. Voodoo Doughnut\textsuperscript{x} is an eclectic Portland purveyor of donuts of such exotic flavors as the “Miami Vice Berry”, “Old Dirty Bastard”, “Maple Blazer Blunt”, and “Memphis Mafia”. By elevating an otherwise mundane indulgence to a form that warrants discussion and sharing, the Voodoo Doughnut enjoys a Facebook fan base of over 114,000 and perpetual lineups outside their locations.
A second managerial implication lies in the importance of curating a brand’s “linking value” for consumers (Cova 1997; Cova and Cova 2002). In many cases a brand is consumed as much for the social capital it offers as its utilitarian value. Restaurants provide an example. With rich brand cachet and elaborately plating, high-end restaurants can attract so much patron photography that some chefs have now banned cameras (Stapinski 2013). While such a rule preserves the experience of adjacent diners, without an alternative means of providing badge value for patrons the practice reduces the value of the experience. To appeal to “foodies” (as well as their followers), a restaurant must provide brand experiences that help those very consumers identify and participate in the wider “foodie” community. Brands that recognize consumer’s inherent desire to participate in online conversations and provide fodder from which consumers can construct content of interest to their networks will be rewarded. Brands should think carefully about how their brand helps create meaning both for individual consumers as well as acts as signaling value amongst wider consumer tribes.

Our proposed model also explicitly liberates the generation of brand meaning from firm control. Consumers are apt to see, be impacted, and respond to consumer-generated brand experiences just as much as those that are brand-generated. Brand engagement is by its very nature reciprocal and viral, with one consumer’s action potentially seeding the brand experiences of many others. Such findings are consonant with a general shift toward participatory and inclusive marketing whereby consumers assume greater responsibility for the creation of meaning (Deighton and Kornfeld 2009). This shift suggests the need for a reconceptualization of traditional marketing performance metrics such as reach to include the effects of brand engagement activities (Levy 2013).
Finally, our conceptualization of brand engagement aids in understanding an emerging shift toward native and newsroom-style advertising (Joel 2013; Campbell, Cohen, and Ma 2014). Our proposed framework suggests more relevant, timely, and personalized brand communications yield deeper and more powerful consumer experiences, thus making it more likely a consumer will in turn engage. This highlights the importance of these new ad types. At the same time, brand experience is an expansive concept with other drivers that might be adjusted in order to deepen eventual engagement.

**Future Research**

While our brand engagement definition and associated framework provide clarity in understanding this important new construct, they also raise important areas for future research. One clear next step is the development of a brand engagement measurement scale based on our grounded definition. This would enable not only testing of our proposed conceptual framework, but also exploration of brand engagement and many other constructs.

There is value in research specifically exploring negative forms of brand engagement given that research indicates negative relationships are a component of online self-presentation (Schau and Gilly 2003). While we have consciously constructed our proposed framework to account for negative or oppositional forms of brand engagement – and believe it to operate equally well under such conditions – these were not a primary focus of our study. Finally, our proposed brand engagement framework also calls for research further exploring the role of brand engagement in contributing to brand meaning and brand equity (Keller 1993, 2003).
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doi:10.1108/03090560210423023


Joel, M. (2013). *We Need a Better Definition of ‘Native Advertising’*. Retrieved February 13, 2013 from [http://blogs.hbr.org/cs/2013/02/we_need_a_better_definition_of.html](http://blogs.hbr.org/cs/2013/02/we_need_a_better_definition_of.html)


http://www.nytimes.com/2008/04/14/business/media/14adnewsletter3.html?pagewanted=print&r=0


For example: 


https://www.facebook.com/help/355635011174004/

https://support.twitter.com/articles/20169896-understanding-advertiser-analytics

http://help.linkedin.com/app/answers/detail/a_id/8261

http://www.comscore.com/Products/Audience_Analytics/Social_Essentials


http://www.google.com/think/collections/engagement-project.html

For example: http://www.dellhell.net and www.untied.com

http://www.youtube.com/playlist?list=PL484F058C3EAF7FA6

http://voodoodoughnut.com
Figure 1 - A Grounded Conceptual Framework for Brand Engagement
## Table 1 - A Comparison of Selected Engagement Conceptualizations in Marketing

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Engagement</th>
<th>Approach</th>
<th>Engagement Dimensions</th>
<th>Engagement Antecedents</th>
<th>Engagement Consequences</th>
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<td>Van Doorn, Lemon, Mittal, Nass, Pick, Pirner, and Verhoef (2010)</td>
<td>Customer engagement behaviors (CEB) go beyond transactions, and may be specifically defined as a customer's behavioral manifestations that have a brand or firm focus, beyond purchase, resulting from motivational drivers. The behavioral manifestations, other than purchases, can be both positive (i.e. posting a positive brand message on a blog) and negative (i.e. organizing public actions against a firm). It is also important to recognize that even though CEBs have a brand/firm focus, they may be targeted to a much broader network of actors including other current and potential customers, suppliers, the general public, regulators, and firm employees.</td>
<td>1. Valence; 2. Form or modality; 3. Scope; 4. Nature of its impact; 5. Customer goals; 6. Firm goals; 7. Perceived costs/benefits</td>
<td>1. Satisfaction; 2. Trust/commitment; 3. Identity; 4. Consumption goals; 5. Resources; 6. Perceived costs/benefits</td>
<td>1. Brand characteristics; 2. Firm reputation; 3. Firm size/diversification; 4. Firm information usage and processes; 5. Industry context; 6. Competitors; 7. P.E.S.T. factors (political, economic/environmental, social, technological)</td>
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**Note:** in a computer-mediated environment, consumer's engagement with a website is a collection of experiences. Consumer engagement with a website is a psychological process that models the underlying mechanisms by which customer loyalty forms for new and existing customers of a service brand as well as the mechanisms by which customer loyalty forms for new and existing customers of a service brand. Consumer engagement with a website is a multidimensional concept comprising cognitive, emotional, and/or behavioral dimensions. Consumer engagement with a website is a specific expression of relevant behaviors and or stakeholder orientations within a context of direct brand interactions. (Peter and Schaedel, 2009)
Appendix A -
Open-Ended Questions used in Stage 1 and Stage 3 of the Qualitative Investigation

*Questions Used in Stage 1 (N = 23)*

1. What do you think engagement means?
2. Give some examples of engagement
3. How would you define engagement in one sentence
4. How would you describe brand engagement?
5. Consumers engage with some brands more than with others. What general characteristics of a brand make consumers more likely to engage with or about a brand?
6. Think about engaged consumers: Describe them.
7. What do engaged consumers do? Describe some of their possible actions.
8. Thinking back to your definition, which brand do you engage with/about the most?
9. Why do you engage with/about brands?
10. Think about other brands in the same product category. Why don’t you engage with/about them as much?
11. How do you feel towards the brand that you engage with/about?
12. Give some examples of actions that you take when engaging with/about your brand

*Questions Used in Stage 2 (N = 19)*

Please think about the definition of brand engagement provided. What is your opinion of this definition? Are there any inconsistencies or missing attributes?

Thinking about the definition provided, please name several brands you engage with online. Looking back to the listed brands from the last question, what do these brands have in common? Please use as many attributes as you can think of.

Please write down name of the brand you engage with the most: ___________. Let’s now turn to thinking about this brand.

How have you engaged with this brand in a consumption sense? Please give examples. How have you engaged with this brand in an interaction sense? Please give examples. How have you engaged with this brand in a creation sense? Please give examples.