



# Customer Engagement: The Next Frontier for the Marketers

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## ABSTRACT

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Customer engagement is emerging as next frontier for the marketers as there is imperative to go beyond communication and persuasion to customer experience and immersion. In fact, customer engagement is being touted as the prime functions of the Marketing. India with eclectic culture, having tech savvy, demanding urban customers on one extreme and customers deprived of good products and services in media dark places, provides unique marketing communication challenges to the marketers. Digital medium is being increasingly used for customer engagement for sharing, co-creation, problem solving, and participation, etc. This paper examines customer engagement strategies by brands involving usage of traditional media, digital media and sales promotion and events. Some of the campaigns include (Lifebuoy se haath dhoye kya?’, The Tata Mumbai Marathon, Surf Excel ‘Haar ko harao’, Kurkure Family express, Pepsi emoji campaign, etc. to name a few. Also, the present paper attempts to examine the customer perception and understand key dimensions using multiple correspondence analysis. The study found that brands are using excitement, education exhorting, co –creating, problem solving, etc., as various modes of engagement.

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Van Doorn et al. (2010) observed that customer engagement behaviors extend beyond transactions and may be specifically defined as a customer’s behavioral outcomes that have a brand or firm focus, beyond purchase, resulting from motivational drivers. Customer engagement also involves customer cocreation. According to Lusch and Vargo (2006, p. 284), customer cocreation “occurs when customer participates in the creation of the core offer, customized and personalized involves the (customer) participation in the creation of the core offering itself. It can occur through shared inventiveness, co-design, or shared production of related goods.” Hirschman’s (1970) the exit and voice components of customers are also part of engagement behavior.

There are several post purchase customer behaviors such as referrals, recommendations, blogging, posting and cross buying, etc., which are examined individually by several researchers. These are retention and cross-buying (Anderson & Sullivan, 1993; Bolton, 1998; Bolton, Lemon, & Verhoef 2004; Mittal & Kamakura, 2001; Zeithaml, Berry, & Parasuraman, 1996), sales and transaction metrics (Grace & O’Cass 2005; Gupta, Lehmann, & Stuart, 2004), word-of mouth (WOM); de Matos & Rossi 2008), customer recommendations and referrals (Jin & Su, 2009; Ryu & Feick, 2007; Senecal & Nantel, 2004), blogging and web postings (Chevalier & Mayzlin, 2006; Hennig-Thurau et al., 2004), and many other behaviors influencing the firm and its brands (Keiningham et al., 2007; Morgan & Rego, 2006; Verhoef, Franses, & Hoekstra 2002). Engaged customers are more likely to recommend or advocate a product or service to a friend.

To our limited knowledge, the studies examining the firm centric promotion actions impacting customer engagement are sparse in Indian context. The study attempts to fill gap based on secondary data and examines several brands which made attempts to engage customers.

### **Research Objectives**

1. To study the customer engagement activities done by the few select popular brands.
2. To examine the pattern in some of the customer engagement activities used by the brands.

### **Research Questions**

1. What is the similarity and dissimilarity in the customer engagement activities by the brands?
2. What is the role of customer engagement activities for brand building?

### **Method**

The data was collected from 300 respondents (working people in the age group of 25-35) who were familiar with the following BTL (below the line) and advertising activities. The respondents need to associate various BTL with the various attributes such as (advisory & fun, express feeling and bonding, advocacy and infotainment, fun and excitement and problem solving). Customers were asked to associate with each of brand engagement activities with the several corresponding parameters or actors with which they associate ex- advisory, problem solving. One customer may associate a single brand with multiple parameters. These attributes were decided by the judgment and in discussion with academic and industry experts. The data was used using correspondence analysis to develop perceptual map and observe the pattern of customer engagement activities vis- vis a BTL (below the line) and ATL (Above the line) activities. Correspondence analysis (CA) (Hoffman & Franke, 1986; Greenacre, 1984) explain CA as a technique used for reduction of exploratory data and portray categorical data in a joint space map. For multiple variables multiple correspondence analysis (MCA) is used.

Correspondence analysis technique was used to analyze the data. Correspondence analysis is a statistical technique widely used to establish association between two or more categorical variables. We investigated association between two categorical variables: Customer engagement campaigns and brands. Table 1 (input data) illustrates the two-way table also called correspondence table to be analyzed (the values are called frequencies or scores). This table shows a two-way cross tabulation matrix comprising Customer engagement campaigns (6 levels) and brands (11 levels).

## **Brands and Customer Engagement Activities Considered for Analysis**

### **Maggi**

Maggi one of the iconic Two-Minute Noodles brand was banned in India by FSSAI as the brand contained due to high levels of lead and MSG. The brand ran a campaign “we miss you too Maggi” to capture the sentiments and feelings of the customer. Post launch after eighteen months ban in 2016 the company initiated “Meri Maggi campaign with new flavours. Maggi engaged online followers to guess the four new flavours to be launched. Thus, the brand made sincere attempt to listen to the customer and was resilient following relaunch after taking corrective action. “Nestle back in 2016, highlights the performance of the brand post withdrawal.

### **Lava Money Back Challenge**

Lava company had offered a refund for purchases Lava smartphones and return it in 30 days in case of dissatisfaction with the product. The brand is offering based on product competency. Chakri (2017) outlined the process of money back challenge offered the brand Lava.

### **Pureit Challenge**

HUL for the brands Pureit Classic 14 litres and 23 litres, had offered challenge to that if they find in home and (non- electric) water purifier unit which is commercially manufactured and sold in India and satisfies the safety criteria part of the Pureit as per terms and conditions below, then Pureit will give you Rs. 10 Crores (after applicable taxes). The product competency is being highlighted by the challenge aspect. HUL in their website “describes the Pureit promise challenge offered by the brand.

### **Big Bazaar Price Challenge**

Big Bazaar price challenge involves the refunding the double amount of purchase, if customer finds the same brand at lower price at another place. This infuses the much-needed confidence among the customers to shop at Big bazaar.

### **Lifebuoy se haath dhoye kya? (Have you washed your hand with Lifebuoy?)**

The company had used 100 promoters to distribute fresh rotis with message “Lifebuoy se haath dhoye kya?” (Did you wash hands with Lifebuoy?). The message was imprisoned on the rotis using heat stands in the hundred kitchens. It is case of out of box thinking with unique branding of Lifebuoy through rotis now of consumption. This is unique way to engage the customers and asking them to wash hands in nearby makeshift stands.

### **Tata Jagore Campaign**

In year 2008, Tata Tea for the first time introduced its iconic **Jaago Re** campaign which created a strong impact in the minds of the viewers. Earlier Jaago Re campaigns had focused on topics of corruption and bribery, electoral and women empowerment. Voting campaign in the year 2009, was hugely successful resulting six lakh registrations on Jaagore.com. Suraj Ramnath (2017) observed that the Tata Jagore campaigns are proactive and not reactive. Nilofer D'Souza (2012) Observed that Tata Tea campaign for social awakening for voting was phenomenal and a huge success.

### **Kan Khajura Tesan (KKT)**

KKT is a 'mobile radio', a mobile platform based on missed call concept which provides infotainment (piloted in 201 in Bihar) has jokes songs, etc., interspersed with HUL ads to people

who live in the 'media dark' places of UP, Bihar, Jharkhand, India's Hindi- and Bhojpuri-speaking belt. The content is interspersed with ads for HUL's brands. KKT now has the capability to push personalized content as per the user preference in addition to voice recording and voice recognition technology. HUL's decided to offer the new marketing medium to brands of other organizations had transformed the organization to largest advertising spender to media owner. Ashwini Gangal (2014) observed that the (KKT) campaign was hugely successful.

### **The Tata Mumbai Marathon**

The Tata Mumbai Marathon (earlier known as Standard Chartered Mumbai Marathon) is an annual international marathon held in Mumbai, with a prize pool of \$405,000. The event is considered one of the top running events in the world with objective raising funds to fulfill social philanthropy and has undergone many innovations and is held in six categories comprising Marathon (42.194 Kms), Half Marathon (21.097 Kms), Dream Run (6 Kms), Senior Citizens Race (4.3 Kms), Champions with Disability category (2.4 Kms) and Timed 10K run. The marathon attracts people from all walks of life across such as sports, films, business tycoons an amateur athlete. TMM Website describes the origin and significance of the event.

### **Surf Excel 'Haar ko harao'**

Surf Excel's new advertising campaign 'dirt is good' is aimed at educating parents to accept defeats as they are steppingstone to success. Given huge achievement orientation prevailing in our country and failure is looked down, this tries to bring in attitudinal change among parents. The campaign is being promoted across multiple platforms television, print and digital this month.

### **Lenovo Service Live**

Lenovo ran 48-hour campaign called #LenovoService Live in 2017 to address queries live in various social media platforms such as (Twitter, Facebook, Instagram,) Lenovo launched a series of videos titled #BreakTheWait. The brand promised its customers to solve any problems under 30 minutes. They were asked to Tweet, Facebook, and Instagram or send a snap with queries related to their PC/Laptops.

### **Gaming Contest**

In the year 2016, PepsiCo Inc. launched Mountain Dew Game Fuel, had organized a nine-week gaming championship where the participants play games on Microsoft's gaming consoles, will have their profiles, including pictures, on the bottles of Mountain Dew Game Fuel bottles. The campaign of the gaming championship was promoted on television and digital media.

### **Kurkure Family Express**

PepsiCo started Kurkure Family Express, a train that travelled across 14 states for eight days. Forty families were chosen from one thousand entries. The train was designed by taking inputs from customers their affection towards the brand Kurkure.

### **Pepsi Emoji Campaign**

In 2016, when it launched mini cans of its flagship brand Pepsi, it started the emoji campaign. The packaging of Pepsi bottles was made with different emoji's and also changed the functioning of vending machine. Consumers purchased the Pepsi with specific emoji printed on bottles depending

on their mood. Instead of money, the fans were asked to pick an emoji displayed on the interactive machine's screen. Based on the mood they picked, they were then asked to perform fun activities.

## Hero

Through naye soch (new thinking) advocated 2-wheeler pooling like carpooling. Table 1 shows how customer engagement tools may influence brand personality which eventually might influence the customer journey stages of buying behavior.

Table 1

Correspondence Table (Input Data)

Correspondence Table								
Customer engagement Campaign	Advisory & Fun	Express feelings & Bonding	Advocacy	Infotainment	Fun & Excitement	Problem Solving	Active Margin	
Sunsilk gang of giril.com	250	200	10	10	15	250	735	
Mere maggi	15	250	10	5	10	10	300	
Tata jagore	150	50	250	10	10	255	725	
Hero nayasoch	250	55	275	10	10	150	750	
Kahn khajoortesan	15	10	10	250	175	155	615	
Tata Mumbai marathon	10	250	100	10	10	10	390	
Brand Surf excel har ko a haro	200	150	10	10	10	150	530	
Leneovi service live	150	150	10	10	15	200	535	
Mountain dew gaming contest	10	150	10	15	250	10	445	
Kurrure family express	10	200	10	10	250	10	490	
Pepsi emoji	10	200	10	10	250	10	490	
Active Margin	1070	1665	705	350	1005	1210	6005	

## Analysis

Table 2 shows number of dimensions drawn using correspondence analysis. With six customer engagement campaigns/strategies five dimensions were drawn from the analysis. In correspondence analysis, k-1 dimensions are drawn when k categories are in the column of the contingency table.

To determine the dimensionality of the solution, like in the case of factor analysis, the researchers examined the eigen values and cumulative proportion of variance explained by the dimensions. Table 2 describes the proportion of variance explained by each dimension. These proportion of variance are called singular values. The first two dimensions contributed approximately 74 percent of the total variance. Addition of a third dimension increases the explained variance by 15 percent. For the sake of display and interpretability, a two - dimensional solution is retained.

A statistical measure of association between categorical variables, Chi-square test statistics (6487.48) supported the hypothesis; there is significant association between Customer engagement campaigns, brands and number of dimensions extracted.

Table 2  
Summary of Model Fit

Dimension	Singular Value	Inertia	Chi Square	Sig.	Proportion of Inertia		Dimension	Confidence Singular Value	
					Accounted for	Cumulative		Standard Deviation	Correlation
1	0.707	0.5			0.463	0.463	1	0.008	0.154
2	0.549	0.301			0.279	0.742	2	0.014	
3	0.398	0.158			0.146	0.888	3		
4	0.325	0.105			0.097	0.985	4		
5	0.126	0.016			0.015	1	5		
Total		1.08	6487.488	.000 <sup>a</sup>	1	1	Total		

a. 50 degrees of freedom

Correspondence Analysis provides a very useful information about absolute contributions to the variances of each dimension and they indicate the percentage of variance explained by each row and column item i.e. customer engagement campaigns and brands in relation to each of the dimension. The larger the absolute contribution of an item to a dimension, the more important that item is in determining the underlying structure of that dimension. The decomposition of the variance based on individual contributions of column and row points are exhibited in Table 3 and Table 4. Table 3 shows customer engagement activities and how they contribute to the extracted two dimensions. Table 4 shows brands and how they contribute to the extracted two dimensions.

As shown in Table 3, in dimension 1, the dominant customer engagement campaigns are Fun and Excitement. This type of engagement campaign is very important for the brands to promote their products and to engage the customers with the fun and create excitement. In dimension 2, the dominant customer engagement campaigns are Infotainment. This information provides that to reach the customers, brands have to focus on various customer engagement activities which provides better information.

Table 4 reveals that the brands Hero with campaign “nayasoch”, Mountain dew gaming contest, Kurkure family express, Pepsi emoji are dominant brands in dimension 1, indicating that these brands are associated with the customer engagement activities Excitement. The brand Kahn khajooratesan is associated with dimension 2.

Table 3  
Overview Column Points<sup>a</sup>

image	Mass	Score in Dimension		Inertia	Contribution Of Point to Inertia of Dimension	Contribution			
		1	2			Of Point to Inertia of Dimension	Of Dimension to Inertia of Point	Total	
Advisory & Fun	0.178	-0.834	0.016	0.12	0.175	0.000	0.730	0.000	0.730
Express feelings & Bonding	0.277	0.343	0.793	0.161	0.046	0.318	0.144	0.597	0.740
Advocacy	0.117	-0.933	0.053	0.187	0.145	0.001	0.387	0.001	0.388
Infotainment	0.058	0.843	-2.402	0.238	0.059	0.612	0.123	0.776	0.899
Fun & Excitement	0.167	1.41	-0.01	0.278	0.471	0.000	0.848	0.000	0.848
Problem Solving	0.201	-0.606	-0.434	0.098	0.105	0.069	0.535	0.213	0.748
Active Total	1			1.08	1	1			

Table 4  
Overview Row Points<sup>a</sup>

website	Mass	Score in Dimension		Inertia	Contribution		Contribution		
		1	2		Of Point to	Of Point to	Of Dimension to Inertia of Point		
					Inertia of Dimension	Inertia of Dimension	1	2	Total
Sunsilk gang of giril.com	0.122	-0.522	0.076	0.061	0.047	0.001	0.387	0.006	0.393
Mere maggi	0.05	0.359	1.109	0.077	0.009	0.112	0.059	0.437	0.496
Tata jagore	0.121	-0.923	-0.2	0.107	0.146	0.009	0.678	0.025	0.703
Hero nayasoch	0.125	-0.971	-0.065	0.124	0.166	0.001	0.672	0.002	0.674
Kahn khajoortesan	0.102	0.794	-1.957	0.27	0.091	0.714	0.169	0.796	0.965
Tata Mumbai marathon	0.065	0.002	0.819	0.069	0.000	0.079	0	0.346	0.346
Surf excel har ko a haro	0.088	-0.515	0.115	0.044	0.033	0.002	0.378	0.015	0.392
Leneovi service live	0.089	-0.462	0.037	0.038	0.027	0	0.349	0.002	0.351
Mountain dew gaming contest	0.074	1.249	0.315	0.098	0.164	0.013	0.832	0.041	0.873
Kurrure family express	0.082	1.172	0.478	0.096	0.158	0.034	0.828	0.107	0.935
Pepsi emoji	0.082	1.172	0.478	0.096	0.158	0.034	0.828	0.107	0.935
Active Total	1			1.08	1	1			

a. Symmetrical normalization

### Perceptual Map

The biplot (Table 1) reveals association between customer engagement campaigns and brands and it uncovers the underlying structure and positioning of the various engagement campaigns and brands and how the brands are positioned as compared to the other brands. The brand Kahn khajoortesan carries a distinct imagery from the perspective of customers and is positioned far away from the other brands. The brands Mountain dew gaming contest, Kurkure family express and Pepsi emoji are clustered together. This is understandable because these activities evoke excitement. Also, the brands Sunsilks gang of giril.com, Surf excel har ko a haro, and Leneovo service live are clustered together. This is understandable because these activities are aimed at educating the customer about usage of the product and other aspects relating to parentage. The perceptual map also reveals that how various customer engagement campaigns are positioned. Infotainment and Excitement are the standalone engagement activities from the other engagement activities. As shown in Figure 1, other engagement activities are clustered together and in less distinct from each other. For instance, advocacy, advisory and problem solving are in close to each other.

Figure 1 also reveals that the brand Kahn khajoortesan is singularly positioned to the customer engagement activity Infotainment, and Mountain dew gaming contest, Kurkure family express and Pepsi emoji are positioned close to the customer engagement activity Excitement.

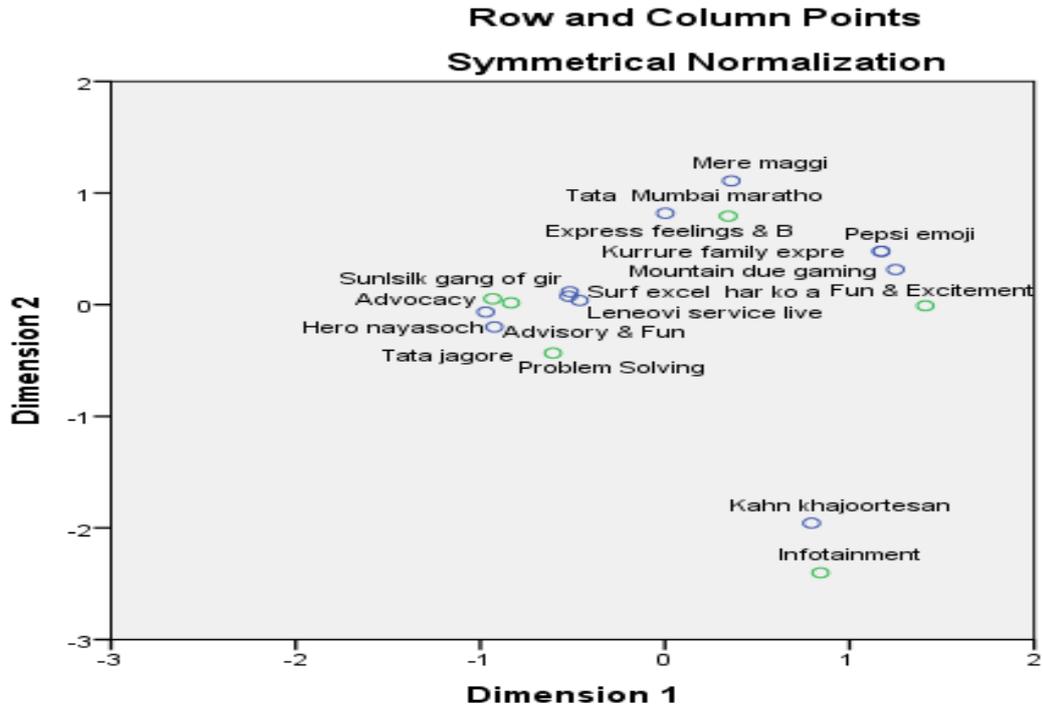


Figure 1. Normalization or position of the brands

## Discussion

Predominately the customer engagement activities are falling around Dimension 1 – Infotainment and Excitement and Dimension 2- Advisory & Advocacy, and the future brands may either choose one of them depending upon brand and category fit. Aaker (2013) observed that the everyday solutions on P&G site, offers expert advice on cleaning and other areas. It has also talked about host of promotions and local events which are of common interest to customers (Rogers, 2014). Red Bull creates and sponsors extreme sporting events and activities. Red bull associates with events which excite the audience and resonates with the brand personality of Red Bull. Joshi & Nema (2015) emphasized the need for emotional branding for creating brand loyalty. Thus, customer engagement activities (Advocacy and Infotainment) may influence attitude towards the brand. by striking emotional chord with the customers.

However, some of the brands such as Tata Tea, and Surf Excel, Lifebuoy, are going beyond tokenism and using customer engagement innovatively to address social issues, social inclusion, customer education, etc., both in urban and rural markets in India. Schmitt (1999) observed that customers increasingly make a choice based on experiential factors rather than on functional benefits. In the over communicated world, it becomes imperative for the marketers to engage customers in meaningful conversations, experiences with the customers which will eventually make customers happy, confident, and comfortable. Payne, Storbacka, Frow, and Knox (2009) asserted the importance of experience in the brand-building process.

## Conclusion

In the over communicated world with media proliferation, it becomes imperative for the marketers to engage in meaningful conversations, dialogues, and experiences with the customers. Eventually, these customer engagement activities are making customers feel happy, confident, comfortable, and helping society at large. However, to gain differentiation and strike emotional chord with

customers the engagement activities require creativity and careful execution. Customer engagement tools are such as contest, game, advertising, service camps, price challenge, etc. The activities convey that the brands are sincere, competent, sophisticated and create excitement. Firms need to offer experiential benefit to customers for brand differentiation and to gain brand loyalty. The impact of customer engagement activities on Brand personality can be taken for future scope of research.

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