

# Customer brand engagement in digital environments: A systematic review and synthesis



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**Abstract** Customer brand engagement (CBE) has emerged as a central construct in contemporary marketing, reflecting a shift from transactional exchanges toward sustained and value-laden consumer–brand relationships. Despite its rapid growth, the literature remains fragmented across theories, contexts, and methodological approaches. This study aims to consolidate and synthesize a decade of CBE research by applying the Theory–Context–Characteristics–Methodology (TCCM) framework. A systematic literature review was conducted following the PRISMA protocol, using Scopus as the primary database and complementary sources to enhance coverage. From an initial pool of 256 records, 74 peer-reviewed studies published between 2015 and 2025 were retained for final analysis. The findings reveal that customer brand engagement is jointly shaped by technological, experiential, and psychological antecedents, and frequently operates as a mediating mechanism linking brand-related stimuli to key relational outcomes. Engagement patterns are not homogeneous but vary across regions, digital platforms, and audience characteristics. Methodologically, the literature is dominated by cross-sectional, survey-based studies employing structural equation modelling, although more recent research has begun to incorporate big data analytics, machine learning techniques, and hybrid designs. In terms of geographical distribution, studies from developing economies contribute the largest share of publications, while research originating from Western contexts continues to exert greater citation influence. This review advances the literature by proposing an integrative framework that connects psychological determinants, technological enablers, and socio-cultural contexts of engagement. It highlights persistent imbalances between Asia and Western scholarship and extends Service-Dominant Logic through the incorporation of psychological ownership and cultural branding perspectives. From a managerial standpoint, the findings underscore the importance of adaptable omnichannel strategies that align cognitive, affective, and behavioural engagement across diverse cultural and technological environments.

**Keywords:** customer engagement, digital platforms, systematic literature review, TCCM framework

## 1. Introduction

Customer brand engagement (CBE) has emerged as one of the most influential constructs in contemporary marketing, marking a clear shift from transactional and short-term customer–brand interactions toward more durable and value-laden relationships (Hollebeek et al., 2021). Rather than being limited to observable actions, CBE reflects the extent to which consumers cognitively, affectively, and behaviorally invest in their interactions with brands, thereby contributing to value co-creation processes (Vargo & Lusch, 2004; Hollebeek et al., 2014). This multidimensional perspective underscores that engagement is not merely behavioral, but also rooted in deeper psychological mechanisms that shape how consumers perceive, evaluate, and relate to brands over time.

Early research highlighted experiential value and perceived benefits as primary drivers of engagement (Dwivedi, 2015; France et al., 2016), while subsequent studies extended the discussion to service settings by emphasizing the role of cognitive and affective processes (Ahn & Back, 2018). More recent contributions demonstrate that engagement does not develop uniformly across consumers and contexts. Demographic and situational moderators, such as age (Hazzam, 2022) and culture (Shahid et al., 2025), significantly influence how engagement is formed and expressed. In particular, cross-cultural evidence indicates that consumers in collectivist contexts tend to associate communication goals more strongly with brand identification, whereas consumers in individualist settings place greater emphasis on regulatory focus and identity expression (Chou & Chen, 2025; Gong, 2018; Shahid et al., 2025). These findings suggest that engagement processes are inherently contingent on socio-cultural and contextual conditions.

Despite the rapid growth of CBE research, existing reviews indicate that the literature remains fragmented across theoretical perspectives, methodological approaches, and geographical settings. For instance, Srivastava et al. (2023) employed bibliometric and meta-systematic techniques to examine electronic word of mouth, yet paid limited attention to cultural diversity and contextual variation. Similarly, Rather et al. (2018) identified a strong Western orientation in CBE research, a dominance of quantitative survey-based designs, and a relative under-representation of studies conducted in developing



economies. As a result, prior syntheses have provided valuable but partial insights, falling short of offering an integrative understanding of how customer brand engagement has evolved across platforms, regions, and technological environments.

In response to these limitations, the present systematic literature review offers a comprehensive synthesis of customer brand engagement research published between 2015 and 2025. By systematically analyzing 74 peer-reviewed studies, this review develops a hybrid thematic framework that integrates micro-level cognitive and affective dimensions with macro-level technological and socio-cultural factors. Unlike earlier reviews that focus on specific outcomes or isolated contexts, this study connects engagement antecedents, mediating mechanisms, and consequences within a unified analytical structure. The review therefore advances theoretical understanding across a range of digital environments, including social media platforms, brand-owned applications, and emerging immersive technologies. From a managerial perspective, it highlights the importance of adaptable omnichannel strategies that enable firms to align cognitive, affective, and behavioral engagement across diverse market contexts.

Accordingly, this review is guided by three research questions: (RQ1) What advances have been made in customer brand engagement over the past decade in terms of theory, context, characteristics, and methodology, including emerging technologies? (RQ2) How do cultural and platform-specific moderators shape the antecedents and consequences of customer brand engagement across different contexts? (RQ3) What future research directions can be identified for customer brand engagement in phygital (physical and digital) environments based on the further development of the Theory–Context–Characteristics–Methodology framework? Addressing these questions enables this review to maintain strong theoretical coherence while underscoring its practical relevance for both scholars and practitioners.

## 2. Methodology

This study employed a systematic literature review approach following the PRISMA (Preferred Reporting Items for Systematic Reviews and Meta-Analyses) flow model to ensure transparency, methodological rigor, and replicability of the review process (Moher et al., 2009; Siddaway et al., 2019). The review procedure consisted of four sequential stages, namely identification, screening, eligibility, and inclusion, as illustrated in Figure 1.

During the identification stage, Scopus was selected as the primary data source due to its rigorous indexing standards and broad coverage of high-quality peer-reviewed journals in the fields of marketing and consumer research (Lasda Bergman, 2012; Rocha et al., 2024). Scopus was used as the main database for advanced searches, while complementary sources were consulted to enhance the completeness of the literature corpus (Meho & Rogers, 2008; Norris & Oppenheim, 2007). The search was limited to publications published between 2015 and 2025 in order to capture contemporary developments in customer brand engagement research. The search strategy employed the keyword “customer brand engagement” within article titles, abstracts, and keywords. This process yielded an initial total of 256 records.

Following the identification stage, an initial screening was conducted to remove duplicate and irrelevant records. Eleven articles that did not meet the predefined inclusion criteria, eleven articles published outside the targeted journal tiers, and one article without an available abstract were excluded. This resulted in 233 records being retained for abstract-level screening. At the screening stage, all abstracts were reviewed to assess their thematic relevance to the research objectives. A total of 164 records were excluded because they did not align with the scope of customer brand engagement research. Consequently, 69 studies were selected for full-text retrieval, of which 11 could not be accessed.

The eligibility stage involved a detailed full-text assessment of the remaining articles to evaluate their conceptual and methodological relevance. After this process, 58 articles indexed in Scopus and 16 articles from non-Scopus sources met all inclusion criteria, resulting in a final sample of 74 studies included in the review. These studies were then subjected to systematic comparison and synthesis.

For data analysis, this review employed thematic analysis to identify, classify, and synthesize key patterns across the selected studies, following the procedures proposed by Braun & Clarke (2006). To ensure a structured and consistent synthesis process, the thematic comparison and classification were guided by a procedural framework adapted from the Watase Uake System. This approach enabled the mapping of theoretical foundations, contextual settings, key characteristics, and methodological approaches across the reviewed literature. The overall flow of study selection and inclusion is presented in Figure 1.

## 3. Results and Discussion

The data set includes 74 peer-reviewed CBE articles from the period 2015–2025. As illustrated in Figure 2, these publications demonstrate a significant increase in scholarly attention toward customer brand engagement research. Collectively, these articles indicate a recent surge, particularly after 2018, as digital/social platforms increasingly shaped consumer–brand interfaces. Publications reached their highest point in 2021 amidst the COVID-19 pandemic, as both firms and scholars sought to comprehend how digital affordances and online communities could sustain brand relationships within physical lockdowns (Hollebeek et al., 2021). After a relatively minor drop in 2022–2023, the overall research appeared to remain well above the average during the earlier pandemic years, and publications over recent years (2024–2025) began to

prominently include immersive technologies, such as augmented reality and metaverse environments (Agnihotri et al., 2024; Sinha & Srivastava, 2025).

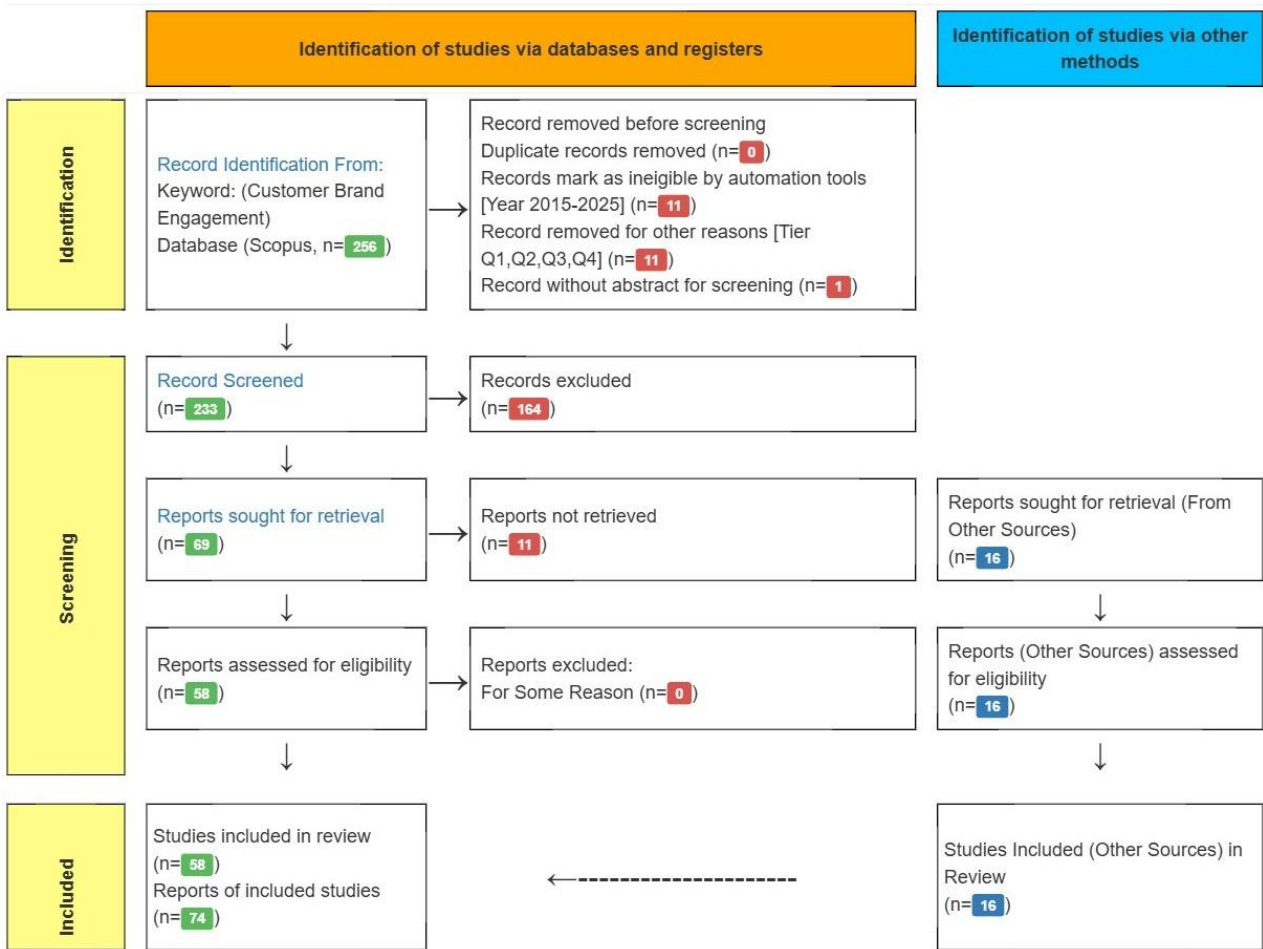


Figure 1 PRISMA Flow Diagram of the Study Selection Process. Source: Author’s compilation based on Scopus database.

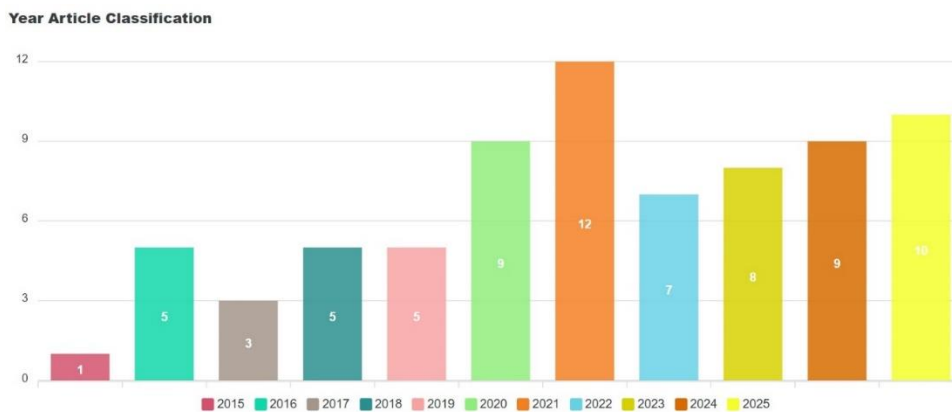
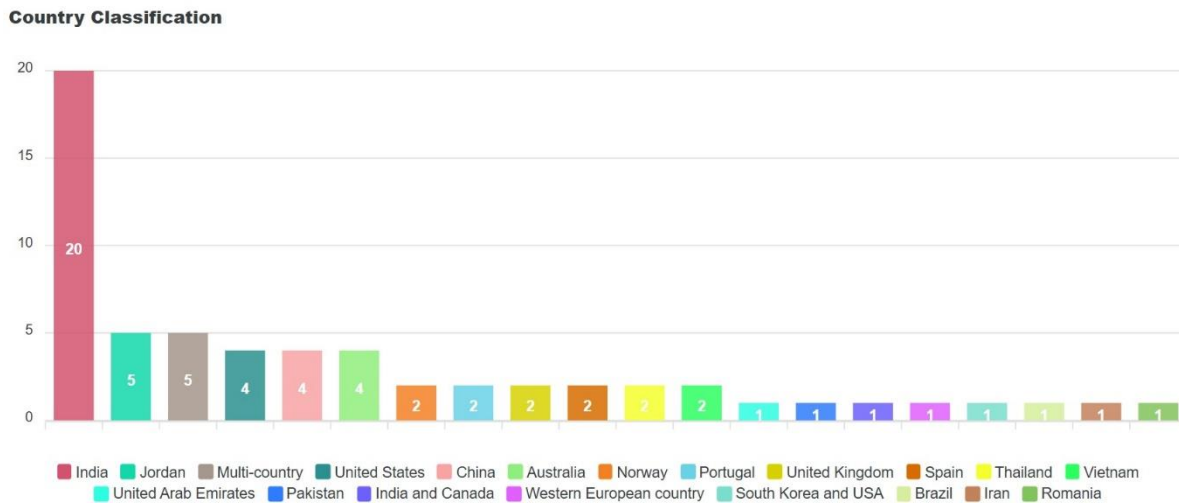


Figure 2 Articles classification by year. Source: Author’s compilation based on Scopus database.

The evidence base shows a clear imbalance across national contexts. Out of 74 studies, 57.5 percent are situated in developing economies, 32.9 percent are based in developed markets, and only 9.6 percent adopt comparative or multi-country designs. India alone contributes nearly one third of the corpus, followed by smaller clusters in China, Vietnam, and Jordan, together accounting for more than 70 percent of all publications. These emerging market settings reflect mobile-first adoption and utilitarian antecedents, such as price sensitivity, cashback, and accessibility, as dominant drivers of engagement (Khoi & Le, 2022; Rather et al., 2024). In contrast, developed market research places greater emphasis on experiential and psychological constructs, including brand love, identity expression, and trust (Machado et al., 2019). Although rare, comparative designs highlight cultural contingencies, where findings show that brand identity exerts greater influence in collectivist India, while



brand love plays a stronger role in individualistic Canada (Shahid et al., 2025). However, a second imbalance concerns visibility: Western studies, though fewer in number, dominate citation impact and remain central in defining the CBE discourse (Ahn & Back, 2018; France et al., 2016). This asymmetry underscores the need for cross-country collaboration to bridge empirical richness from the Global South with intellectual recognition from the West (Aljuhmani et al., 2023). The geographic distribution of the reviewed studies is illustrated in Figure 3.



**Figure 3** Geographic Study. *Source:* Author's compilation based on Scopus database.

### 3.1. Industry domain

As summarized in Table 1, the focus on CBE is skewed toward technology/telecom (26 studies) and retail/fashion (21 studies). This dual emphasis reflects the predominance of consumer-driven sectors in which digital platforms and branding activities are prominent. In tech studies, writers often focus on branded apps, fintech landscapes, and social interaction, while retail and fashion studies frequently address identity making, beauty content, and how brand authenticity helps drive engagement. All other sectors—hospitality (11 studies), finance/banking (seven studies), sharing economy/education (five studies), and automotive (two studies)—receive relatively little attention. These sectors illustrate unique dynamics, including the role of trust and service quality in hospitality and banking or peer-to-peer interaction on sharing economy applications, albeit on a smaller scale. The preceding lack of attention to sectors such as health care, not-for-profits, and education implies an opportunity for furthering CBE research in other more diverse and socially embedded domains.

### 3.2. Platform type

Based on platform, the classification reveals that Facebook is clearly the most populous context, with a total of 23 articles (Table 2). Its prevalence has to do with worldwide expansion and, in terms of user data, availability during the period of the greatest scholar interest. Apart from Facebook, branded apps and online communities (12 studies), as well as immersive technologies such as augmented reality, metaverse environments, chatbots, and gamification (12 studies), have also emerged as critical research areas for engagement. These latter research studies point to the ways in which interactivity and technology presence change the experience of customer brand engagement (Agnihotri et al., 2024; Sinha & Srivastava, 2025).

In contrast, emergent social platforms like Instagram (three studies) and Twitter (two studies) are underrepresented relative to their cultural and commercial significance. Interestingly, TikTok short-video platforms, which are widely used in contemporary digital advertising, are underrepresented in the dataset, which is a strong limitation to date. The platform-level distribution suggests reliance on legacy social media and early exploration of immersive media, while rapidly expanding short-video ecosystems that dominate current consumer attention are largely ignored.

### 3.3. Methodological and sampling approaches

The methodological direction of the included studies shows a heavy reliance on quantitative, survey-based designs. As shown in Figure 4, more than 90 percent of the corpus relies on cross-sectional surveys analyzed through Structural Equation Modelling (SEM), either covariance-based or variance-based (PLS-SEM) (Algharabat et al., 2020; Fang, 2017). While it enables rigorous hypothesis testing and validation of complex frameworks, this consistency also restricts the ability to capture temporal dynamics, as longitudinal and experimental designs are rarely undertaken. The use of qualitative, mixed-methods, or computational analysis is still uncommon. A few exceptions can be found in studies on AI-related engagement and in some B2B settings, which appear more open to methodological variety. For instance, several papers applied netnography or simulation when exploring experiential dimensions (Bazi et al., 2023; Hao et al., 2025; Sakas et al., 2024; Susanti & Samudro, 2024). A

similar imbalance can also be seen in the level of analysis. Roughly half of the studies are limited to the individual level, while dyadic consumer–brand, community-based, and macro-level perspectives are much less frequent (Matute et al., 2021). This tendency keeps the field concentrated on personal attitudes and behaviors, while broader group or institutional processes receive little attention.

**Table 1** Classification of studies by industry domain.

No.	Industry / Domain	Count	Countries	Authors
1	Technology / Telecom	26	Australia, Brazil, China, France, Hong Kong, India, Indonesia, Jordan, multiple countries, Pakistan, Portugal, South Africa, South Korea & the US, Spain, Thailand, Turkey, the US	Nyadzayo et al., 2020; Leckie et al., 2016; Cheung et al., 2020a; Fang et al., 2025; Chi et al., 2022; Qing & Haiying, 2021; Machado et al., 2019; Cheung et al., 2020b; Kumar, 2021; Kaur et al., 2020; Jayasingh, 2019; Nagaraj & Singh, 2018; Roy & Mandal, 2017; Dwivedi, 2015; Susanti & Samudro, 2024; Algharabat et al., 2020; Duong et al., 2020; Soomro et al., 2024; Carvalho & Fernandes, 2018; Ndhlovu & Maree, 2024; Gong, 2018; Matute et al., 2021; Sombultawee & Wattanatorn, 2022; Pongpaew et al., 2017; Arghashi & Yuksel, 2023; Obilo et al., 2021
2	Retail / Fashion	21	Australia, India, India & Canada, Iran, Jordan, multiple countries, Poland, Portugal, South Korea, Spain, the UAE, the UK, the UK & the US, the US, Western Europe	Acharya, 2020; Agnihotri et al., 2024; Bazi et al., 2023; Fernandes & Moreira, 2019; France et al., 2016; Hao et al., 2025; Hazzam, 2022; Jami Pour et al., 2021; Kumar et al., 2025; Kumar, 2025; Malik & Pradhan, 2025; Marmat, 2023; Molina-Prados et al., 2022; Park et al., 2023; Pereira et al., 2024; Razmus, 2021; Shahid et al., 2025; Sinha & Srivastava, 2025; Tarabieh et al., 2024; Wang et al., 2023; Xiao & Chen, 2025
3	Hospitality	11	India, Jordan, the US, Vietnam	Ahn & Back, 2018; Ali & Alquda, 2022; Aljuhmani et al., 2023; Khoi & Le, 2022; Kumar, 2020; My-Quyen & Hau, 2021; Rather et al., 2018; Rather et al., 2024; Samarah et al., 2022; Satar et al., 2023
4	Finance / Banking	7	Ghana, Greece, India, Norway, Romania	Amoako et al., 2025; Solem, 2016; Barbu et al., 2025; Hari et al., 2022; Khan et al., 2016; Sakas et al., 2024; Solem & Pedersen, 2016
5	Sharing Economy / Education	5	Australia, multiple countries, Peru, the US	Casidy et al., 2022; Hollebeek et al., 2021; Malik et al., 2025; Mujica et al., 2021; Tran et al., 2025
6	Automotive	2	China, India	Chou & Chen, 2025; Kumar & Nayak, 2019
7	NA / Unspecified	2	multiple countries, Taiwan	Fang, 2017; Srivastava et al., 2023

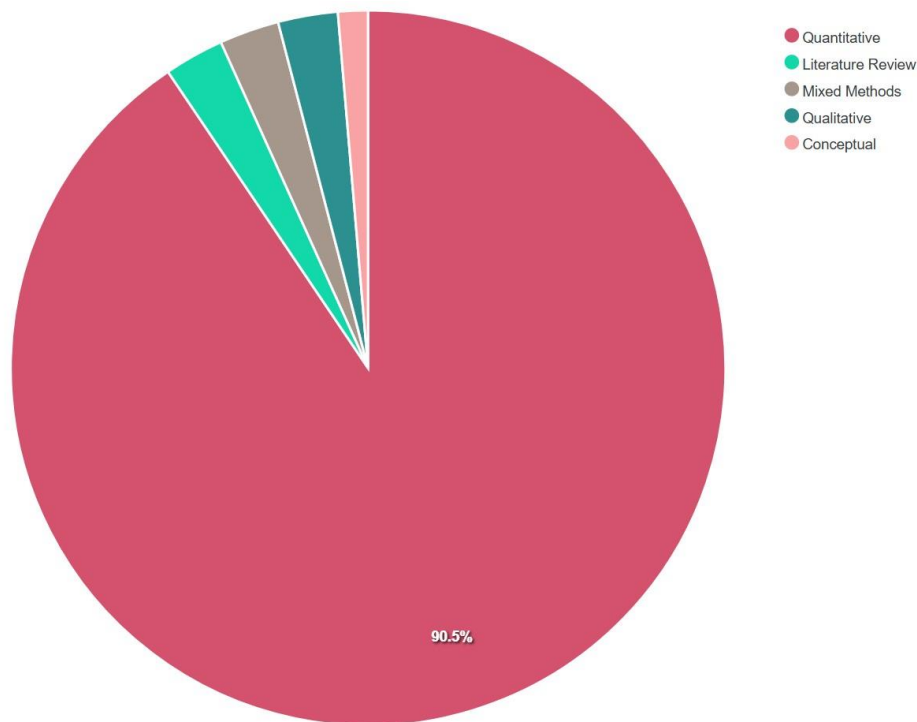
Source: Author's compilation based on Scopus database.

**Table 2** Classification of Studies by Platform Type.

No.	Platform Type	Count	Authors
1	Facebook	23	Solem & Pedersen, 2016; Solem, 2016; Pongpaew et al., 2017; Carvalho & Fernandes, 2018; Nagaraj & Singh, 2018; Duong et al., 2020; Algharabat et al., 2020; Kumar, 2021; Arghashi & Yuksel, 2023; Sombultawee & Wattanatorn, 2022; Ali & Alquda, 2022; Aljuhmani et al., 2023; Bazi et al., 2023; Rather et al., 2024; Kumar et al., 2025; Cheung et al., 2020a; Cheung et al., 2020n; Machado et al., 2019; Kaur et al., 2020; Jayasingh, 2019; Samarah et al., 2022; Ndhlovu & Maree, 2024; Obilo et al., 2021
2	Branded Apps/Communities	12	Chi et al., 2022; Chou & Chen, 2025; Dwivedi, 2015; Fang, 2017; Gong, 2018; Kumar & Nayak, 2019; Leckie et al., 2016; Matute et al., 2021; Nyadzayo et al., 2020; Qing & Haiying, 2021; Roy & Mandal, 2017; Soomro et al., 2024
3	Immersive Tech (AR, Metaverse, Chatbot, Gamification)	12	Agnihotri et al., 2024; Barbu et al., 2025; Casidy et al., 2022; Hari et al., 2022; Jami Pour et al., 2021; Malik et al., 2025; Malik & Pradhan, 2025; Mujica et al., 2021; Sakas et al., 2024; Sinha & Srivastava, 2025; Tran et al., 2025; Wang et al., 2023
4	Instagram	3	Hazzam, 2022; Molina-Prados et al., 2022; Tarabieh et al., 2024
5	Twitter	2	Hao et al., 2025; Xiao & Chen, 2025

Source: Author's compilation based on Scopus database.

The sample composition also reflects these methodological preferences. Many studies recruited heterogeneous groups of students, professionals, and general consumers, which supports generalisation but limits demographic specificity. There is still a paucity of cohort-focused work, particularly on Millennials and Gen Z, despite their centrality in digital ecosystems. For example, although Hazzam (2022) highlights Gen Z's receptiveness to gamified and hedonic content, studies similar to his work remain rare. Similarly, gender is most often treated only as a control variable, with little effort to examine pathways of involvement that could be specific to men and women, despite its role in differences in cognitive and emotional processing (Shahid et al., 2025). Overall, the methodological profiles of the studies show the predominance of survey-based and micro-level approaches, suggesting clear opportunities to broaden methodological designs, expand the level of analysis, and address demographic diversity for strengthened customer brand engagement research. The methodological distribution of the reviewed studies is summarized in Figure 4.



**Figure 4** Methods classification. *Source:* Author's compilation based on Scopus database.

### 3.4. Synthesis of customer brand engagement research

#### 3.4.1. Antecedents of customer brand engagement

As summarized in Table 3, antecedents of CBE coalesce around technological, experiential, and psychological factors. On social networks, interaction attributes such as likes, comments, and user-generated content enable authenticity and reciprocity to serve as triggers for engagement (Duong et al., 2020; Pongpaew et al., 2017). For younger buyers, playful tools and entertaining gamification tools trigger emotional arousal and behavioural involvement (Hari et al., 2022; Malik & Pradhan, 2025). While these are top of mind in mobile-first economies like India and Vietnam, several studies frame technology as an augmentation to brand experience rather than a necessity.

Experiential and psychological determinants are also involved. Authenticity, quality of service, and aesthetics are important in hospitality, retail, and fashion (Bazi et al., 2023; Rather et al., 2018). Psychological factors such as trust, value congruence, and brand–self congruence also shape engagement, with congruence positively linked to affective commitment and behavioural intentions (Kumar, 2021; Matute et al., 2021). Still, most of the literature considers single antecedents in narrow contexts. Only a few studies investigate new causes such as AI-based personalization (Agnihotri et al., 2024) and augmented reality applications (Sinha & Srivastava, 2025).

#### 3.4.2. Mediating mechanisms

As summarized in Table 3, CBE itself is positioned as the primary mediator linking antecedents to outcomes. Across multiple studies, CBE mediates brand-related stimuli to loyalty, equity, and advocacy (France et al., 2016; Rather et al., 2018; Kumar et al., 2025). Dimensions operate distinctly: affective engagement channels authenticity and hedonic cues into loyalty (Algharabat et al., 2020; Bazi et al., 2023); cognitive engagement transforms information quality into commitment (Aljuhmani

et al., 2023; Fang et al., 2025); activation engagement signals behavioral readiness triggered by gamified content (Park et al., 2023).

Secondary mediators appear in sequence with CBE. Brand love amplifies loyalty (Shahid et al., 2025), satisfaction connects service experiences with revisit intentions (Khoi & Le, 2022), and trust links interactivity to advocacy (Roy & Mandal, 2017). These constructs supplement rather than replace CBE, forming serial pathways. Yet the evidence is constrained by cross-sectional surveys and single-mediator models, limiting temporal and layered understanding.

### 3.4.3. Consequences of customer brand engagement

As summarized in Table 3, effects occur at attitudinal and behavioral levels. Loyalty is common across all sectors (Fang et al., 2025; Hazzam, 2022; Nagaraj & Singh, 2018). Advocacy and eWOM spread visibility and brand protection (Khoi & Le, 2022; Kumar et al., 2025). Engagement also stimulates brand equity and brand love (Ali & Alquda, 2022; Bazi et al., 2023; Tran et al., 2025), while trust and satisfaction are frequent companions, especially in service situations (Algharabat et al., 2020; Satar et al., 2023). In addition, engagement activates ecosystemic behaviors such as revisiting intention (Park et al., 2023; Rather et al., 2024), buying intention (Agnihotri et al., 2024; Sinha & Srivastava, 2025), and co-creation in brand communities (Matute et al., 2021). Yet research is heavily biased toward positive trajectories, and sector differences remain under-theorized.

### 3.4.4. Boundary conditions (moderators)

As indicated in Table 3, most studies ignore moderators and presume homogeneity in engagement paths. The most tested moderators are regulatory focus; promotion- versus prevention-oriented consumers process stimuli differently (Chou & Chen, 2025; Hazzam, 2022; Solem & Pedersen, 2016). Situational moderators, such as brand reputation and cultural values, are introduced sporadically and remain underdeveloped. Self-efficacy influences reactions toward immersive technology (Agnihotri et al., 2024), and gender distinctions regarding cognitive–affective processing are indicated (Shahid et al., 2025).

## 3.5. Integrative interpretation of findings using the TCCM framework

### 3.5.1. Theory

CBE has transformed from being viewed as a monolithic concept to being recognized as something with multiple dimensions that include cognitive, emotional, and behavioral aspects (Hollebeek et al., 2014; Dwivedi, 2015). Although Service-Dominant Logic (SDL) (Vargo & Lusch, 2004) prevails as a dominant paradigm, recent research studies illustrate its shortcomings when treated as a sole explanatory framework. Alternative frameworks such as psychological ownership (Kumar, 2021), self-construal (Fang, 2017), and social identity (Rather et al., 2018; Matute et al., 2021; Kumar et al., 2025) identify the psychological aspect that transactional or experiential approaches fail to explain. Finally, Attachment Theory and Cultural Branding Theory further broaden explanatory ease with greater applications in technologically mediated spaces, such as augmented reality and metaverse (Agnihotri et al., 2024; Sinha & Srivastava, 2025). An examination of these perspectives shows that CBE is not solely explained by SDL but also benefits from diverse contributions in terms of theory.

### 3.5.2. Context

A pronounced underdevelopment is observed in several regions and sectors. A significant part of the research is conducted in developing countries such as China, India, and Vietnam (Khoi & Le, 2022; Rather et al., 2024), where CBE is usually presented in a utilitarian manner, especially through online shopping incentives and functional benefits (Sinha & Srivastava, 2025). On the other hand, Western literature has focused on symbolic and affective orientations like brand love and identity (France et al., 2016; Machado et al., 2019; Bazi et al., 2023). This disparity reflects structural imbalance: publications from Asia are more abundant in volume, but Western studies are significantly more frequently referenced (Mujica et al., 2021; Amoako et al., 2025). By industry, hospitality/tourism and e-commerce are among the largest sectors (Ali & Alquda, 2022; Tran et al., 2025), while health care and education/non-profits are under-represented (Obilo et al., 2021). This is a threat to theoretical generalizability and restricts managerial implications.

### 3.5.3. Characteristics

Most scholars have investigated engagement at the individual attitude or behavior level, while less attention is paid to dyadic or community interactions (Obilo et al., 2021). However, digital platforms increasingly narrate collective dynamics, which include communities, fandoms, and cross-platform experiences (Hollebeek et al., 2014; Kumar et al., 2025; Shahid et al., 2025). Moderating variables also remain underdeveloped. Regulatory focus impacts stimulus–response pathways (Solem & Pedersen, 2016), generational cohorts demonstrate hedonic versus utilitarian preferences (Chou & Chen, 2025), and gender differences influence cognitive–affective processing (Shahid et al., 2025). However, these kinds of considerations are at best piecemeal and are rarely incorporated into systematic theorizing. More consideration to multi-level processes of engagement and demographic or cultural heterogeneity will help clarify when, where, and for whom engagement matters most.

**Table 3** Synthesized mapping of antecedents, mediators, consequences, and boundary conditions of customer brand engagement.

Component	Conceptual Focus	Core Synthesized Insights
A1. Technological Antecedents	Interactivity and social presence (Cheung et al., 2020a; Duong et al., 2020; Pongpaew et al., 2017); Branded mobile applications and personalization (Fang, 2017; Qing & Haiying, 2021); Chatbots and smart interfaces (Hari et al., 2022); Gamification mechanisms (Jami Pour et al., 2021; Malik et al., 2025; Malik & Pradhan, 2025); Augmented reality and metaverse environments (Agnihotri et al., 2024; Sinha & Srivastava, 2025); Smart retail technologies (Wang et al., 2023).	Digital technologies function as core engagement enablers that activate cognitive, affective, and behavioral dimensions of CBE. Their influence is most evident in digitally mediated and mobile-based environments, where technological affordances shape how consumers interact with brands.
A2. Experiential Antecedents	Brand experience in services and tourism (Ahn & Back, 2018; Kumar, 2020); Aesthetic quality and visual appeal (Bazi et al., 2023; Marmat, 2023); Authenticity and service encounters (Rather et al., 2018; Rather et al., 2024); Flow experience in virtual brand communities (Carvalho & Fernandes, 2018).	Experiential cues primarily strengthen affective and cognitive engagement, particularly in high-touch services and symbolic consumption contexts, fostering emotional attachment and meaning-based brand relationships.
A3. Psychological Antecedents	Brand trust and involvement (Algharabat et al., 2020; Roy & Mandal, 2017; Samarah et al., 2022); Value congruence and self-brand congruence (Kumar & Nayak, 2019; Rather et al., 2018); Psychological ownership and intrinsic motivation (Chi et al., 2022; Kumar, 2021); Motivational and cognitive values (Arghashi & Yuksel, 2023).	Psychological alignment between consumers and brands represents a stable driver of CBE, reinforcing affective commitment and engagement intensity across product, service, and community-based contexts.
M1. CBE as Primary Mediator	Multidimensional customer brand engagement (cognitive processing, affection, activation) mediating stimulus–outcome relationships (Fang et al., 2025; France et al., 2016; Kumar et al., 2025; Nagaraj & Singh, 2018; Nyadzayo et al., 2020).	CBE consistently operates as the central mediating mechanism linking brand-related stimuli to attitudinal and behavioral outcomes, with different engagement dimensions activating distinct pathways rather than functioning uniformly.
M2. Serial and Complementary Mediators	Brand love and satisfaction (Khoi & Le, 2022; Shahid et al., 2025); Trust and brand defense (Chou & Chen, 2025; Roy & Mandal, 2017); Authenticity and value co-creation (Tran et al., 2025).	These constructs operate alongside CBE in serial configurations, amplifying loyalty, advocacy, and relational outcomes rather than substituting the mediating role of CBE. Evidence is predominantly cross-sectional, limiting temporal inference.
C1. Attitudinal Consequences	Brand loyalty and commitment (Fernandes & Moreira, 2019; France et al., 2016; Leckie et al., 2016; Nyadzayo et al., 2020); Brand equity and brand love (Ali & Alquda, 2022; Bazi et al., 2023; Machado et al., 2019).	Customer brand engagement translates into durable attitudinal outcomes, strengthening brand attachment, commitment, and perceived brand value across industries.
C2. Behavioral and Ecosystemic Consequences	Advocacy and eWOM (Acharya, 2020; Duong et al., 2020; Nagaraj & Singh, 2018); Purchase and revisit intention (Park et al., 2023; Sinha & Srivastava, 2025; Tran et al., 2025); Co-creation and citizenship behaviors (Chi et al., 2022; Matute et al., 2021; Soomro et al., 2024).	Engagement activates behavioral and ecosystem-level responses beyond transactions, including advocacy, co-creation, and continued participation in brand communities and platforms.
B1. Individual Boundary Conditions	Regulatory focus and regulatory fit (Chou & Chen, 2025; Hazzam, 2022; Hollebeek et al., 2021; Solem & Pedersen, 2016); Age and generational cohorts (Hazzam, 2022; Park et al., 2023); Self-efficacy in immersive and digital contexts (Agnihotri et al., 2024); Gender-based affective processing (Shahid et al., 2025).	Individual characteristics condition how engagement stimuli are processed cognitively and affectively, yet are examined sporadically and remain under-theorized across models.
B2. Contextual and Cultural Boundary Conditions	Cultural value orientations (Gong, 2018; Shahid et al., 2025); Brand reputation and prominence (Rather et al., 2024); Platform affordances and social media features (Duong et al., 2020; Hazzam, 2022).	Engagement effects are context-sensitive rather than universal, but contextual moderators are applied inconsistently, leading many studies to assume homogeneity across cultures and platforms.

Source: Author's compilation based on Scopus database.

### 3.5.4. Methodology

More than 90 percent of the research studies use SEM in interpreting cross-sectional survey data, whether it be covariance-based or variance-based (Fang, 2017; Algharabat et al., 2020). This methodology increases statistical robustness but limits temporal and experiential depth. This dominance has been found in bibliometric analysis (Srivastava et al., 2023; Malik et al., 2025), but due to the absence of longitudinal or experimental work, understanding as to causality is limited. Recent contributions use entropy-related approaches (Hao et al., 2025; Xiao & Chen, 2025) and machine learning techniques (Sakas et al., 2024), suggesting that methodological innovation is emerging but remains limited. Future studies could extend design through longitudinal, experimental, and mixed-methods approaches that reflect the changing and dynamic nature of engagement (Bazi et al., 2023; Wang et al., 2023).

## 4. Future Perspectives

Building on the synthesis of the reviewed literature, several promising directions for future research on customer brand engagement can be identified. First, future studies should further expand the theoretical foundations of engagement by integrating perspectives beyond Service-Dominant Logic, including self-determination theory, psychological ownership, and socio-cultural identity frameworks. Such theoretical diversification may help explain deeper motivational and emotional mechanisms underlying engagement behaviors in digital environments.

Second, future research should broaden contextual coverage by examining underexplored sectors such as healthcare, education, and non-profit organizations, where engagement dynamics may differ from those observed in technology and retail industries. Comparative cross-cultural studies may also contribute to a more nuanced understanding of how engagement processes vary across cultural and institutional environments. Third, methodological innovation represents an important avenue for advancing engagement research. While cross-sectional survey designs have dominated the literature, future studies could employ longitudinal, experimental, and mixed-method approaches to better capture the temporal and causal dynamics of engagement.

Finally, emerging technological ecosystems—including augmented reality, virtual communities, artificial intelligence, and short-video platforms—provide fertile ground for investigating how evolving digital affordances reshape consumer–brand relationships. Examining engagement within these rapidly evolving technological contexts will help scholars develop more adaptive and future-oriented engagement frameworks.

## 5. Conclusions

This systematic literature review synthesised evidence from 74 peer-reviewed studies published between 2015 and 2025 to provide a comprehensive account of the evolution of customer brand engagement (CBE) in digital contexts. The findings demonstrate that CBE has developed into a genuinely multidimensional construct shaped by theoretical plurality, contextual diversity, and methodological concentration. Across the reviewed literature, engagement consistently emerges as a central mechanism linking technological, experiential, and psychological stimuli to key relational outcomes, including loyalty, advocacy, brand equity, and co-creation behaviours. However, the review also shows that engagement processes are not homogeneous and vary substantially across regions, platforms, and audience characteristics. From a theoretical perspective, this review highlights that although Service-Dominant Logic remains the dominant explanatory foundation, it is no longer sufficient as a standalone framework. Recent studies increasingly draw on complementary perspectives such as psychological ownership, attachment theory, cultural branding, and self-construal to explain deeper cognitive and affective mechanisms of engagement in digitally mediated environments. By integrating these diverse perspectives within a Theory–Context–Characteristics–Methodology framework, this review advances the literature by offering a more coherent and holistic understanding of how customer brand engagement operates across different technological and cultural settings. This integrative approach represents a key contribution of the study, as prior reviews have tended to examine isolated outcomes, platforms, or methods rather than engagement as a dynamic and systemic phenomenon.

The results further reveal pronounced geographic and industrial imbalances in CBE research. While studies conducted in developing economies, particularly in Asia, dominate in terms of publication volume, research originating from Western contexts continues to exert greater citation influence and plays a central role in shaping the dominant discourse. At the industry level, technology-driven sectors such as telecommunications, retail, and fashion receive disproportionate attention, whereas socially embedded domains including healthcare, education, and non-profit organisations remain underexplored. These imbalances limit the generalisability of existing insights and highlight the need for broader contextualisation in future engagement research. Methodologically, the review confirms a strong reliance on cross-sectional, survey-based designs analysed using structural equation modelling. Although this approach has contributed to the validation of complex engagement frameworks, it has also constrained the ability to capture temporal dynamics, causal mechanisms, and collective forms of engagement.

Several limitations of this review should be acknowledged. First, the analysis was restricted to peer-reviewed journal articles, which may have excluded relevant insights from practitioner-oriented or non-indexed sources. Second, the review

adopted a time-bounded scope, and emerging evidence published beyond the study period may further refine or extend the conclusions. Despite these limitations, the synthesis provides a robust and transparent overview of the current state of CBE research.

Overall, this review contributes to both theory and practice by clarifying the fragmented CBE literature and proposing an integrative framework that connects psychological antecedents, technological drivers, and socio-cultural boundary conditions. For practitioners, the findings underscore the importance of adaptable omnichannel strategies that align cognitive, affective, and behavioural engagement across diverse platforms and markets. For scholars, the review highlights clear opportunities to rebalance theory, context, characteristics, and methodology in future research, thereby strengthening the conceptual foundations and societal relevance of customer brand engagement scholarship.

## 6. Declarations

### 6.1. Ethical considerations

Not applicable.

### 6.2. Use of artificial intelligence (AI)

The author declares that ChatGPT (OpenAI) was used solely to assist with language editing and grammar refinement. The conceptualization, analysis, interpretation of results, and intellectual content of the manuscript were conducted entirely by the author. The author takes full responsibility for the originality, accuracy, and integrity of the work.

### 6.3. Conflict of interest

The author declares no conflicts of interest.

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