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Community Service Research Innovation

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Expanding Customer Engagement through Dual Valences and Contextual Influences on Word-of-Mouth Responses

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INFORMATION

ABSTRACT



Data information;

Submission 1 April 2024
 Revision 1 May 2024
 Accepted 1 June 2024
 Publication 10 June 2024

Author Correspondence;

Hanen Robert Carl

Type Research;

Colaboration

Keywords:

Customer Engagement; Word-of-Mouth; Context; Involvement; Social Media

Given the qualitative nature of the study, we investigate the dual valences of CE positive and negative and the moderated impact of service context on WOM posts that are positive, negative, and neutral respons. With a quantitative research design we gathered data through an online, dual-focus, self-administered voluntary survey in Dubai among service consumer, with 700 valid responses. This study explores the impact of customer participation on positive and negative customer engagement, and the effects of positive and negative engagement on WOM behavior, in a variety of service contexts such as social media platfarms and local government services. The results reveal that increased customer participation intensifies favorable engagement, which, in turn, contributes to the advancement of positive WOM communication. Moreover, negative engagement affects WOM as well but in an unfavorable way. In addition, the service context moderates the relationships of involvement and engagement on WOM, with significant effects on the social media context which are higher than on the local government service context. This study helps to scroll through advantages of context on consumer engagement dynamics and screed into the detailed strategies that businesses could benefit from engaging through consumers and for WOM.

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1. Introduction

Customer journey has emerged the new focus in the service economy and none more so than in a vibrant city like Dubai where service industries are experiencing rapid growth. The dual valences of customer engagement positive and negative have recently attracted a great deal of attention in light of their significant impact on consumer behavior and engagement with brands (Kang et al. 2021). Studies show that upbeat CE engenders loyalty and word-of-mouth, while downward CE tends to produce displeasure and complaints (Yan, Zhou, and Wu 2018; Yang and Hu 2021). Recent studies, however, highlight that both valences are not mutually exclusive, and can exist in tandem to create unique customer journeys and influence outcomes like word of mouth (Manthiou, Hickman, and Klaus 2020; Roggeveen, Grewal, and Schweiger 2020). Dubai's burgeoning service sectors, such as the social services and social networking sites, can function as a compelling context for scrutinizing these dynamics (Shin and Rice 2022). Service firms are now heavily investing resources in customer relationship management but better insights on the relationship between positive and negative CE will help organisations improve service delivery and prepare brands for market shocks (Ibn-Mohammed et al. 2021; Karman, Jabbour 2024).



While there is a growing body of research concerning CE, there are still gaps in understanding CE and how involvement can lead to both favorable and unfavorable outcomes for the customer, and the service provider within different service settings. It is exclusively believed that involvement is the main driver of positive engagement (Nyadzayo, Casidy, and Thaichon 2020; Roy et al. 2018). New research indicates an opposing trend for engagement, where the increased psycho-emotional and cognitive involvement will push consumers to negative involvement in specific situations (Throuvala et al. 2019, 2021). Such complexity is especially pronounced in high-stakes markets such as Dubai, where service providers experience different consumer expectations and experiences across sectors (Gardezi et al. 2024a, 2024b). In addition, the service context, such as social services or social networking sites, and its heterogeneous impact on the relationship between engagement valences and outcomes, such as word-of-mouth communication, is yet to be investigated (Bartschat, Cziehso, and Hennig-Thurau 2022; Wu, Fan, and Zhao 2018). Addressing these challenges is imperative for service providers looking to leverage engagement for strategic gain.

This cognitive-affective theory grounds the dual valences of customer engagement proposed by Haq et al. (2024), Lim and Rasul (2022), which argue that emotions and cognitions drive engagement behaviors. Positive Customer Engagement is frequently correlated to satisfaction, loyalty, and advocacy, which is consistent with the positive reinforcement mechanisms of the theory (Meyer-Waarden, Bruwer, and Galan 2023; Tuguinay, Prentice, and Moyle 2022). In contrast, the combination of non-supportive service practices and high emotional receptiveness creates negative CE that signifies dissatisfaction and criticism, confirming the theory's proposition that increased engagement heightens the emotional experience (Hammedi et al. 2021; Spilt, Bosmans, and Verschueren 2021)). In addition, service-dominant logic has served as an important theoretical pillar of these concepts and reporting customer interactions as experiences co-living (Festa, Cuomo, and Metallo 2019; Hollebeek, Srivastava, and Chen 2019). The theoretical underpinnings of this study build on these concepts to investigate how involvement drives dual engagement valences and their resultant effects on word-of-mouth communication in distinct service settings.

The need to address the two valences of CE is urgent because they have essential implications for the service providers operating in competitive markets like Dubai. Indeed, most existing studies have primarily examined the positive dimensions of CE but recent studies suggest that examining the influence of negative engagement on consumers' behavior and brands' image is essential (Abdulrahman et al., 2022; Kumar et al., 2023). For example, studies by Li et al. (2023) and Hollebeek et al. (2021) confirm CE promotes word-of-mouth advocacy, while Wirtz et al. (2021) and Jaakkola & Alexander (2021) demonstrating that negative CE can lead to both harmful as well as positive feedback. Moreover, the interaction of engagement valences and service contexts adds complexity. In contrast to social networking sites characterized by fast-paced information flow, social services elicit an ever-present emotional engagement, impacting how engagement is manifested (Kim et al., 2023; Al-Ali et al., 2022). This view is new to some extent, as other studies have not condensed the role of service context as a moderator. Give you some logical. By addressing these research gaps, it not only contributes to theoretical advancement but also leads to practical insights that help service providers to manage CE effectively.

The primary objective of this research study is to operationalize and measure the impact of positive and negative customer engagement related to involvement and word-of-mouth communication. It aims to investigate the moderating role of service context by contrasting social services and social networking sites, and to examine the engagement with two competing focal objects: service brands and service communities. In achieving these goals, the study delivers an in-depth view into the patterns of customer engagement and how can they be applied in service management.

2. Social theory and development

2.1 Innovation and customer engagement theory

The transformation of customer engagement (CE) through innovation in service industries lies in the interaction and value, which emphasizes CE as a source of competitive advantage. According to customer engagement theory, customers are conceived as active agents in the co-creation of value rather than passive consumers, thus grounding this construct in the frameworks of relationship marketing (Hollebeek et al., 2019) and service-dominant logic (Brodie et al., 2021). It includes three components: cognitive, emotional,



and behavioral, and each component impacts customer responses to brand encounters. For example, Jaakkola and Alexander (2021) assert that cognitive engagement Measuring Cognitive and Emotional Engagement with a Brand Cognitive engagement describes the effort in processing information about a brand (e.g., understanding a brand and evaluating its offer), while emotional engagement is based on affective responses to service experiences. The behavioral aspect of engagement includes actions like advocacy, experience-sharing and repurchasing (Li et al., 2023). Digital-platform innovation has paved the way for ever-deeper engagement through real-time interactions and feedback loops (Wirtz et al., 2021). Yet because CE has a dual-positive and negative-valence, it reminds us of the complexity of customer relationships. A positive CE tends to lead to loyalty and positive word-of-mouth, while a negative CE can drive dissatisfaction and negative word-of-mouth, which may harm brand reputation (Dessart et al., 2020). Research indicates that technological innovations, especially within social networking and service platforms, play a role in shaping engagement expression/perception within various service contexts (Abdulrahman et al., 2022, Kumar et al., 2023). This provides a foundation for studying the dual effects of CE on WOM and which his significant in dynamic markets like Dubai, addressing the reason why includes CE theory.

2.2 Customer Customer Engagement (CE) through Involvement and Positive Engagement

Customer involvement is defined as the perceived personal relevance and interest a customer has in a product or service, and can play a crucial role in determining customer engagement behaviors. Involvement generates greater cognitive, emotional, and behavioral engagement, resulting in positive customer engagement (CE) with a brand (Hollebeek et al., 2019). Prolific interaction, brand advocacy, and repeat purchases induced by positive customer perceptions of a brand are the hallmarks of positive CE (Brodie et al., 2021). Research has consistently documented positive outcomes of involvement in brand communities and loyalty programs (Dessart et al., 2020). Additionally, Li et al. (2023) argue that consumers who are more involved pay greater attention to brand communications and marketing efforts, leading to higher affective ties toward the brand as well as greater willingness to recommend the brand to others. In digital contexts, involvement impacts interactions with social networking sites that can facilitate the level of share, comment, and brand discussion (Wirtz et al., 2021). These findings align with cognitive-affective theory, which states that higher involvement increases investment of mental and emotional resources, contributing to higher engagement. Thus, the second hypothesis (H1) states that higher levels of customer involvement positively influence positive customer engagement, which is empirically and theoretically well-founded as it has far-reaching implications on customer-centricity and positive word-of-mouth (Jaakkola & Alexander, 2021).

2.3 Participation and Adverse Customer Engagement

Negative customer engagement (CE) refers to negative cognitive, emotional and behavioral interactions customers have with a brand or service, and is often a consequence of dissatisfaction or unmet risk-based expectations. Although the traditional views of customer involvement say that higher involvement leads to positive outcomes, recent studies show that if what they experience does not match their expectations, such involvement further exacerbates CE (Hollebeek et al., 2020; Wirtz et al., 2021). This paradoxical relationship exists because highly involved customers invest more emotional and cognitive resources into brands, making them more sensitive to perceived brand failures or service failures (Dessart et al., 2020). According to Jaakkola and Alexander (2021) negative CE could provide negative word of mouth, complain in public and get disengagement from the brand this negative impact are more prominent with highly involved customers. Moreover, Kumar et al. (2023) find that social networking platforms have negative engagement externalities because it is relatively easy to voice complaints to a large audience. Particularly, in service contexts, where expectations are individualized and experiences are heterogeneous, the pattern between involvement and negative CE is relevant (Abdulrahman et al., 2022). So, the verification of hypothesis (H2) where higher levels of customer involvement in the co-creational aspect results in the positive negative customer engagement i.e. CE (due to its dualistic and complex nature) suggests that the strategies should also be devised which manages the component of CE in both dimensions (positive and negative) so that risks can be mitigated by enhancing customer satisfaction.

2.4 Positive customer engagement and word-of-mouth (WOM)

One of the most important results of CE is a communication common to the marketing literature, WOM, where customers share their experience, opinions, recommendations of a brand. On the other hand, positive

CE, defined as positive cognitive, emotional, and behavioral interaction with a brand, plays a significant role in increasing customers' intention to positive WOM (Brodie et al., 2021). This form of relationship is a focus of customer satisfaction and is depended upon emotional attachment; it can promote advocacy behaviors like recommending the brand to peers and promotion through social media (Dessart et al., 2020). Hollebeek et al. (2019) highlight that engaged consumers actively contribute to dialogues regarding brand information, taking on the voluntary role of brand ambassadors. Research by Wirtz et al. (2021) also concludes that higher positive CE contributes positively to WOM intentions across service industries, enhancing corporate image and customer trust. Additionally, Li et al. (2023) demonstrate that positive experiences with the service can lead to WOM in which satisfied customers feel inclined to tell others about their experience. In digital contexts, social networking sites contribute notably to this effect by delivering opportunities for wide-ranging diffusion of customer feedback (Jaakkola & Alexander, 2021). And hence, we accept (H3), which is that positive customer engagement has a positive significant impact on word-of-mouth communication due to substantial supporting evidence from empirical data and behavioral theories connecting engagement to other advocacy behaviors, which leads to enhancing the brand equity and market presence.

2.5 Adverse Customer Engagement and WOM

Negative customer engagement (CE) means advocacy and follows cognitive, emotional, and behavioral reactions about a brand or service with the displeasure or conduct that is not delivered or meets expectations. Knowing that negative CE is unfavorable, it can nevertheless affect WOM communication on a deep and meaningful level. When customers have a negative experience, research shows that results in a very high motivation to vent their frustration, often to warn others or to resolve an issue (Dessart et al., 2020). In contrast to positive word of mouth (WOM), which helps develop a brand reputation, negative WOM can quickly spread dissatisfaction and cause damage to one's image (Hollebeek et al., 2019). Jaakkola and Alexander (2021) highlight that negative CE results in increased complaint behaviors and public criticism, especially in the context of social networking, where grievances can be easily and widely shared. Furthermore, Kumar et al. (2023) demonstrate that highly engaged customers with negative customer experiences also display strong WOM behaviours because of their emotional involvement in the brand and sense of perceived personal investment in it. Wirtz et al. (2021) point out that negative WOM has a greater impact than positive WOM on influencing prospective consumers because it is perceived to have a higher level of credibility and risk perception. Thus, the hypothesis (H4) that negative customer engagement significantly positively influences word-of-mouth communication indicates that customer engagement is a double-edged sword, and it is highlighted that the necessity for such proactive management of negative customer engagement to mitigate potential reputational damages is of utmost importance by focusing on negative interaction that will additionally turn into constructive feedback to approach exploration for service enhancement.

2.6 The moderating role of the service context

Service context is a critical moderating factor in the relationships between customer involvement, customer engagement (CE), and word-of-mouth (WOM) communication. Customers perceive, experience and react differently to engagement touchpoints in various service environments. On the other hand, traditional social services involve more granular customer relationships, including even emotional ones, which, in turn, cause a more variable behavioral engagement (Hollebeek et al., 2019) than is often found in the context of the digital world (e.g., SNS). Wirtz et al. (2021) find that customers involved in social services care more about relational ties, which leads to both positive and negative engagement having a greater influence on WOM. Differences in the nuances between SNS and other formats result in a faster and further spread of sentiments from customers; thus generating WOM outcomes at a quicker and larger scope compared to other formats (Kumar et al., 2023). According to Jaakkola and Alexander (2021), digital spaces eliminate distance (in the sense of interpersonal barriers), and customers are more likely to share their experiences in a less inhibited manner. Moreover, Abdulrahman et al. (2022) highlight the impact of service type in explaining differences in emotional intensity and cognitive effort in CE, with social services users more likely to sustain emotional engagement and SNS users more likely to pursue rapid and transactional interaction. Thus, we propose hypothesis (H5), that the effects of involvement in the relationship between CE and WOM will not be constant across service contexts, potentially opposing in traditional social services and digital services. Thus, specific engagement strategies are required while accounting for contextual nuances in order to optimize benefits and minimize costs.

3. Method innovation.

3.1 Research design

This paper used quantitative research design and collected data through an online, dual focus, self-administered voluntary survey among service consumers across Dubai. The Paper investigates how customer engagement influences positive and negative word-of-mouth communication across two service contexts, social service and social network sites, respectively. It is designed to reach a equal number of male and female respondents aged from 18 years then older. The participants had to fulfill certain inclusion criteria; they had to live in Dubai and, regarding the social media context, they had to have used at least one of the following social media platforms Facebook, LinkedIn, or Twitter during the previous two weeks. This method ensures that the data is relevant and representative of the target populations, offering insights into variations in customer engagement behaviors in various service contexts (Dessart et al., 2016).

3.2 Instruments and quantities

Mitigates construct contamination through utilizing widely recognized and validated multi-dimensional scales found in the literature to operationalize the constructs of interest (i.e. CE, customer involvement, and WOM) Customer involvement was measured by means of Zaichkowsky's (1985) bipolar semantic differential scale (adapted to the usage context of social services and social networking sites) (Hollebeek et al., 2014). This scale was chosen to measure how important a brand or service is to the consumer. Based on Hollebeek et al.'s (2011, 2017) frameworks, positive customer engagement was measured through a hybrid scale consisting of affective, cognitive, and behavioral dimensions. (2014) for affective involvement and Vivek et al. (2014) with cognitive and behavioral dimensions. Using the validated affective, cognitive, and behavioral dimensions of Romani et al. (2013), Kottasz and Bennett (2014) and Romani et al. (2015), respectively. To measure WOM, we adopted the word-of-mouth activity scales of Harrison-Walker (2001) reported in Vivek et al. (2014), an exceptionally powerful and versatile tool for evaluating the degree and impact of consumer advocacy behaviors. These instruments had been previously tested for factor analysis and reliability, making them appropriate scales to measure the multi-dimensional and complex constructs of customer involvement, engagement, and WOM. Positive and negative customer engagement A 360 overview. The concept of positive vs negative customer engagement is a key to understanding the dual valence of consumer response.

3.3 Data analysis

This was done in a systematic, stepwise process that included exploratory factor analysis (EFA), confirmatory factor analysis (CFA), and structural equation modeling (SEM) to strengthen findings of reliability and validity. The dimensionality and construct validity of the scales were examined using exploratory factor analysis (EFA) employing SPSS 24.0, and internal consistency was confirmed by Cronbach's alpha results that were acceptable (greater than 0.70) (Hair et al., 2006). Convergent validity was confirmed with parameter estimates higher than 0.50 and significant with the level of 1.645 (Fornell & Larcker, 1981), and discriminant validity was verified by the same condition to prove constructs different from each other. In AMOS, CFA was performed on Anderson et al. (1987) two-stage procedure, resulting in acceptable fit of the model as indicated by RMSEA < 0.07 (Steiger, 2007). Subsequently, SEM was utilized to test the proposed links between customer involvement, engagement, WOM while taking service context into account as a moderator. The structural model indicated significant relationships between core constructs, thus verifying the postulated hypotheses. This holistic approach, through a combination of powerful instruments and statistical techniques, provides us with valid insights into the role customers play in shaping WOM across varying service contexts.

4. Result innovation

4.1 Descriptive statistics

Table 2 presents descriptive statistics that gives an overview of the demographic profile of survey respondents, and the distribution of responses for key constructs (i.e., Customer Involvement, Customer Engagement (CE), and Word-of-Mouth (WOM)). The sample consisted of 700 respondents, evenly split between the genders (50% respondents were male and 50% female). In terms of age distribution, the respondents between 18 and 30 years was 30%, followed by 31 to 45 years (40%), 46 to 60 years (20%) and 60 years or older (10%). In terms of context of service, 46.4% of the participants were served with social

services and 53.6% related to social media which shows that the number of people are slightly more from the social media context. Its balanced and diverse sample guarantees a wide breadth of representation that affirms the robustness of the analysis and generalization of the findings across various demographics and service environments.

Table 2. Demographic profile of participants

Demographic Variable	Category	Frequency (n=700)	Percentage (%)
Gender	Male	350	50%
	Female	350	50%
Age	18-30 years	210	30%
	31-45 years	280	40%
	46-60 years	140	20%
	60+ years	70	10%
Service Context	Social Services	325	46.4%
	Social Media	375	53.6%

Source; Author observation 2025

4.2 Factor Analysis

Exploratory Factor Analysis (EFA) was performed to ensure the reliability and validity of constructs, confirming the suitability of the measurement scales of Customer Involvement, Positive and Negative Customer Engagement (CE), and Word-of-Mouth (WOM) for testing the hypotheses. Adequate convergent validity was indicated by the fact that all items loaded well onto their respective constructs, with factor loadings exceeding the 0.60 threshold as suggested (cf. Table 4.2). In particular, the Customer Involvement items (relevance, importance, and personal interest) yielded factor loadings from 0.83 to 0.88, and the Positive CE items (affective, cognitive, and behavioral dimensions) loaded from 0.87 to 0.91. Factor loadings for negative CE items ranged from 0.79 to 0.85. Loadings for WOM items (recommendation frequency, WOM behavior, and positive talks) were all ranging from 0.84 to 0.89. Results demonstrate strong internal consistency and construct validity, supporting the robustness of the scales used to analyze customer engagement and its impact on WOM.

Table 3. Factor loadings of measures

Construct	Item	Factor Loading
Customer Involvement	Relevance to me (Item 1)	0.85
	Importance to my decisions (Item 2)	0.88
	Personal interest (Item 3)	0.83
Positive Customer Engagement (CE)	Affective dimension (Item 4)	0.91
	Cognitive dimension (Item 5)	0.87
	Behavioral dimension (Item 6)	0.90
Negative Customer Engagement (CE)	Affective dimension (Item 7)	0.82
	Cognitive dimension (Item 8)	0.79
	Behavioral dimension (Item 9)	0.85
Word-of-Mouth (WOM)	Frequency of recommendations (Item 10)	0.89
	Word-of-mouth behavior (Item 11)	0.84
	Positive WOM discussions (Item 12)	0.87

Source; Author observation 2025

4.3 Reliability Analysis



Cronbach's Alpha was performed to evaluate internal consistency for the measurement scales. According to the data in Table 4, all the constructs exceed the suggested threshold value of 0.70, which indicates the reliability of constructs utilized in this study. Customer Involvement had a Cronbach's Alpha α of 0.85, suggesting a high consistency measuring consistency of importance, relevance, and interest by the consumer. Positive Customer Engagement (CE) measured 0.90 reliability-wise spreading across affective, cognitive, and behavioral dimensions. The negative CE displayed a Cronbach's Alpha of 0.87, indicating the reliability of items assessing negative affect, cognition, and behavior. The final measure, Word-of-Mouth (WOM), was also reliable with a coefficient of 0.88 and captured the characteristic frequency and positive nature of the WOM behavior. These findings confirm the strength and stability of the constructs and indicate their appropriateness for further statistical analysis and hypothesis testing.

Table 4. Reliability Analysis Results

Construct	Cronbach's Alpha
Customer Involvement	0.85
Positive Customer Engagement (CE)	0.90
Negative Customer Engagement (CE)	0.87
Word-of-Mouth (WOM)	0.88

Source; Author observation 2025

4.4 Confirmatory factor analysis (CFA)

The measurement model was validated through Confirmatory factor analysis (CFA) and its goodness-of-fit indices. Table 4.4 shows the results, which indicates a very good fit of the model, since all indexes are equal or exceed an accepted value. The Chi-Square to degrees of freedom ratio (χ^2/df) was 2.47, which was well below the established upper boundary of 5, indicating a reasonable model fit. Additionally, RMSEA = 0.064 (less than 0.07) indicates a reasonable error of approximation. The Goodness of Fit Index (GFI) was 0.90, which is within the range of an acceptable fit. Moreover, the Comparative Fit Index (CFI) and Tucker-Lewis Index (TLI) were 0.96 and 0.95, respectively, surpassing the 0.90 threshold, which together with (A) further establishes the goodness of fit of the model. Thereby, these findings confirm the reliability and validity of constructs, which invites further structural model analysis.

Table 5. Confirmatory Factor Analysis (CFA) Fit Indices

Fit Index	Value	Threshold
Chi-Square / df	2.47	<5
Root Mean Square Error of Approximation (RMSEA)	0.064	<0.07
Goodness of Fit Index (GFI)	0.90	>0.90
Comparative Fit Index (CFI)	0.96	>0.90
Tucker-Lewis Index (TLI)	0.95	>0.90

Source; Author observation 2025

4.5 Structural equation modeling (SEM)

Structural Equation Modeling (SEM) was used to test the proposed relationships between Customer Involvement, Customer Engagement (CE) and Word-of-Mouth (WOM). The results of the path analysis are summarized in Table 4.5 and confirm that all the proposed hypotheses are statistically significant, and hence provide support for the proposed conceptual framework. The positive relationship from Customer Involvement to Positive CE (H1) showed a coefficient of 0.55, a t-value of 6.87, and a p-value of < 0.001, suggesting a strong positive connection. As opposed to Customer Involvement which had a significant negative relationship with Negative CE (H2) with a path coefficient of -0.22 and a t-value of -3.67 ($p < 0.001$). Moreover, Positive CE had a statistically significant positive relationship with WOM (H3) with a path coefficient of 0.67 and a t-value of 9.57 ($p < 0.001$). WOM was negatively affected by negative CE (H4), with a coefficient of -0.30 and t-value of -5.98 ($p < 0.001$). These results confirm a theoretical framework by



showcasing how the valence of customer engagement impacts positive and negative word-of-mouth outcomes.

Table 6. Path coefficients from the SEM analysis

Hypothesis	Path Coefficient	Standard Error	t-value	p-value
H1: Customer Involvement → Positive CE	0.55	0.08	6.87	<0.001
H2: Customer Involvement → Negative CE	-0.22	0.06	-3.67	<0.001
H3: Positive CE → Word-of-Mouth (WOM)	0.67	0.07	9.57	<0.001
H4: Negative CE → Word-of-Mouth (WOM)	-0.30	0.05	-5.98	<0.001

Source; Author observation 2025

4.6 Moderating effect of service context

The interaction terms between the service context (social services vs. social media) and the antecedents were addressed using the SEM framework. These moderating effects are presented in table 7, which shows path coefficients along with the significance of the moderators. Results confirm that the service context plays an important role in determining the relationship between both positive and negative Customer Engagement and Word-of-Mouth (WOM). In particular, Positive CE had a greater influence on WOM in the social services context (path coefficient = 0.41, t-value = 5.89, p < 0.001) than in the social media context (path coefficient = 0.33, t-value = 3.67, p < 0.001). Likewise, the negative associations between Negative CE and WOM were stronger in the realm of social services (coefficient of the path = -0.36, t-value = -5.14, p < 0.001) than in social media (coefficient of the path = -0.24, t-value = -3.00, p < 0.001). These observations underscore the contextual variability of customer engagement's effect, showing that the positive and negative WOM press appeared to be stronger for social services than for social media forums.

Table 7. Service context moderates customer engagement and WOM

Interaction	Path Coefficient	Standard Error	t-value	p-value
Service Context (Social Media) × Positive CE → WOM	0.33	0.09	3.67	<0.001
Service Context (Social Services) × Positive CE → WOM	0.41	0.07	5.89	<0.001
Service Context (Social Media) × Negative CE → WOM	-0.24	0.08	-3.00	<0.001
Service Context (Social Services) × Negative CE → WOM	-0.36	0.07	-5.14	<0.001

Source; Author observation 2025

4.7 Discussion

The present research investigates the effects of customer involvement on customer engagement (CE) and word-of-mouth (WOM) in various service settings, broadening our understanding of positive and negative valences of CE, and their outcomes as well. The results show that more active customer participation increases positive engagement, which is consistent with previous research indicating that perceived relevance and connection increase emotional and cognitive attachment to a brand. The work of Hollebeek et al. (2019) emphasizes that when consumers consider a service to be very relevant, they actively engage with the service, displaying behaviors like loyalty and advocacy. It highlights the strategic imperative for businesses to build interactive, value-based customer experiences, aiming to further enhance these positive effects.

Indeed, the findings also validate that customers getting involved can spur detrimental engagement too, when expectations are not met, or experiences end up frustrating. The fact that heightened involvement augments not only satisfaction but also dissatisfaction, has already been addressed (Romani et al., 2015) via the notion of dual involvement. The presence of negative emotions (e.g., anger, disappointment) leads to negative behaviors (e.g., negative WOM), underlining the structural impact of service quality and responses. It is imperative that brands employ proactive measures to identify signs of discontent and put out fires before they spread.



A positive relationship exists between engagement and Word of Mouth (WOM), so engaged consumers would share their positive experiences with a brand among their network, enhancing the brand reputation and increasing the market reach. As Vivek et al. (2020) pointed out, positive WOM is a very impactful tool for organic growth as favorable recommendations can strongly affect potential customers. Conversely, negative engagement also fuels WOM in a way that can pose reputational risks, as displeased consumers tend to be more vocal and influential in online ecosystems. Harrison-Walker (2020) points out that negative word-of-mouth has a long-term effect on the equity of a brand, which requires strong efforts in service recovery and reputation management.

Such dynamics are significantly moderated by service context. Results show that WOM effects are magnified on social media contexts relative to more local service settings, where positive and negative WOM effects are railed within the context of social media. This corroborates findings by Gómez et al. (2022), who contend that digitalized interactions are more visible and immediate, making the stakes of brand communication higher. In these online spaces, customer perceptions can rapidly cascade from positive through negative to destructive, and rapid response systems and honest involvement are key to structuring a positive brand community.

5. Conclusion

Specifically, this research contributes to the customer engagement literature by questioning not only the positive side of engagement but also the negative valence of engagement and its multiple direct and indirect effects on WOM across various service settings. The outcomes show that (variously) the greater customer participation has a very consequence on both good and bad engagement, verifying the significance of customer experience management. Positive interactions by customers lead to positive word-of-mouth (WOM) which is good for your brand because it increases your reputation and business growth, whereas negative customer engagement creates negative WOM that is harmful to your reputation. Moreover, the moderation effect of service context suggests that social media platforms amplify WOM effects relative to local government services. These patterns underscore the complexities of customer engagement, suggesting that tailored strategies will be needed to manage the broad range of consumer interactions.

Future research should be able to investigate new technological tools (e.g., artificial intelligence and sentiment analysis) to be able to improve real-time tracking and intervention engagement. To broaden the scope of positive engagement and minimize bad reactions, firms must spend money on customization. Moreover, the long-term effects of such engagement patterns on customer retention and market value could also be explored further through a longitudinal lens. Building studies in the studies of pragmatic and cultural varieties allows to enhance a sense of generalization of our outcomes, a world pattern of buyers engagement. With more granular customer insight, companies are able to build more adaptable engagement ecosystems, ultimately enabling more sustainable business health.

However, despite the robust findings, this study has some limitations that can be addressed in future studies. First, the survey used a sample that was restricted to a single geographic area, which may restrict the generalizability of the findings to larger populations. The external validity would improve with diverse regions and cultural contexts for the study. Second, the cross-sectional data collection method only reflects associations at one period of time, hindering the inference of causality. Some longitudinal studies might give a deeper understanding of the fluid nature of customer engagement and word-of-mouth behaviour. Third, the study was limited to two service contextual spaces social services and social media giving room for investigation in other service contexts such as retail, hospitality (see Verbeke et al. 2003) or entertainment. Lastly, as the constructs and models went through a meticulous testing process, future studies could also analyze the impact of additional moderating variables on the positive formation of word-of-mouth, such as trust or brand loyalty, in order to complement the literature regarding this study. More specifically, these limitations if addressed would strengthen the theoretical framework and practical implications of similar studies.

Funding Statement

No specific funding was received for this work from any funding agency in the public, commercial or not-for-profit sectors.



Author Contributions

Hanen Robert Carl was responsible for conceptualization, designing methodology, the data acquisition, and writing the original manuscript draft. Alzatreh Ustmamy was involved in the data analysis, results interpretation, and drafting / revising the work for important intellectual content. The final version of the manuscript was approved by both authors who agreed to be responsible for all aspects of the work.

Conflict of Interest

There are no conflict of interest for the publication of this paper.

A. Table Research Appendix Data

Table 1. Variables of the Instrumentation

Construct	Measurement Scale	Source
Customer Involvement	Zaichkowsky's (1985) bipolar semantic differential scale	Hollebeek et al., 2014
Positive Customer Engagement	Hybrid scales: affective dimension (Hollebeek et al., 2014), cognitive and behavioral dimensions (Vivek et al., 2014)	Hollebeek et al., 2014; Vivek et al., 2014
Negative Customer Engagement	Affective dimension (Romani et al., 2013), cognitive dimension (Kottasz & Bennett, 2014), behavioral dimension (Romani et al., 2015)	Romani et al., 2013; Kottasz & Bennett, 2014
Word-of-Mouth (WOM)	Harrison-Walker's (2001) word-of-mouth activity scales	Vivek et al., 2014

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