MARKETING | RESEARCH ARTICLE

Customer Engagement Levels: Analysis of Behaviour, Emotional, and Cognitive Dimensions

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ABSTRACT

Customer engagement is vital in fostering long-term relationships between businesses and their customers, particularly in the café industry, where personal interaction and atmosphere are essential to the experience. While existing studies have explored customer engagement in large-scale or digital settings, limited attention has been given to small, service-based businesses like independent cafés. This study addresses that gap by examining the level of customer engagement at Gerbang Coffee Culture, a local café known for its cozy environment but lacking a formal system to evaluate customer involvement. Using a quantitative approach, data were collected through questionnaires distributed to café visitors. Customer engagement was measured across three core dimensions: cognitive, affective, and behavioral. The results provide a comprehensive overview of how customers engage mentally, emotionally, and behaviorally with the café. The findings are expected to assist the café in designing more personalized and targeted marketing strategies based on customer interaction patterns. The study also contributes to the academic discourse by applying a multidimensional engagement framework in a real-world small business context. By integrating systematic measurement, cafés like Gerbang Coffee Culture can better understand their customers and strengthen relationships that support sustainable business growth.

Keywords: Customer Engagement, Customer Involvement, Café, Consumer Behavior.
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I.   Introduction

Customer engagement is increasingly critical in building long-term relationships between consumers and businesses. It encompasses behavioral, emotional, and cognitive dimensions, reflecting the depth and quality of customer interaction with a brand (So, King, Sparks, & Wang, 2014). Engagement is not limited to purchase; it includes how customers think about, feel, and behave toward a brand across various touchpoints (Brodie, Hollebeek, Juric, & Ilic, 2011). Genuinely engaged customers tend to demonstrate higher loyalty, advocacy, and emotional attachment to the brand (Kumar & Pansari, 2016), making engagement a core strategic priority for businesses seeking sustainable growth. From a business perspective, customer engagement drives immediate revenues and long-term value through repeated interactions and word-of-mouth referrals (Beckers, Van Doorn, & Verhoef, 2018). Engaged customers contribute to brand equity by actively participating in brand communities, sharing feedback, and influencing other consumers through

social and digital platforms (Breidbach, 2020). As such, companies that succeed in fostering strong engagement often enjoy a competitive advantage in saturated markets.

Measuring engagement accurately, however, remains challenging, especially for service-based businesses such as cafés, restaurants, and hotels. In these settings, engagement is shaped by subjective and intangible elements, such as service quality, environmental ambiance, emotional response, and social interaction (Lemon & Verhoef, 2016). Therefore, a practical engagement measurement framework must incorporate more than just transactional data; it must include psychological and experiential factors that reflect the customer's internal state and perceptions. Although much has been written about customer engagement in large-scale retail and e-commerce contexts, fewer studies have explored how engagement manifests and can be measured in small, independent service businesses like cafés. This presents a gap in the literature, as micro-businesses often lack the resources and analytical tools larger companies use but still rely heavily on customer loyalty and repeat visits for survival. This study addresses this gap by focusing on Gerbang Coffee Culture, a local café that has identified customer engagement as a central challenge in its business operations. Despite offering a pleasant environment and good service, the café lacks a systematic approach to evaluate whether its customers are truly engaged, whether behaviorally, emotionally, or cognitively. The owner has acknowledged the difficulty distinguishing between casual visitors and deeply engaged customers. Without structured data and a clear measurement tool, it becomes challenging to identify behavioral trends, tailor services effectively, or adjust strategies in response to shifting customer needs.

This study aims to assess the customer engagement level at Gerbang Coffee Culture café by examining three core dimensions: behavioral, emotional, and cognitive engagement. This multidimensional approach seeks to provide a comprehensive understanding of how customers interact with the café and how their engagement can be evaluated systematically. The findings of this study are expected to contribute in two significant ways. Theoretically, the study enriches the existing literature by applying a multidimensional engagement framework in a real-world, small-scale service business context. Practically, the results offer actionable insights for business owners, especially those in the café and hospitality sector, to better understand customer behavior and design strategies that foster more profound and more meaningful customer relationships. By identifying key engagement drivers and patterns, the study will help Gerbang Coffee Culture and similar businesses develop data-driven strategies to increase satisfaction, loyalty, and customer lifetime value.

II.   Literature Review and Hypothesis Development

2.1.   Understanding Customer Engagement

Customer engagement is widely acknowledged as a multidimensional construct that reflects the depth of interaction between consumers and a company. It extends beyond mere transactions and includes ongoing behavioral, emotional, and cognitive connections between customers and a brand (So, King, Sparks, & Wang, 2014). In this view, engagement is not a one-time event but a dynamic and sustained process that shapes how customers perceive, interact with, and remain loyal to a business. Rather than treating consumers as passive recipients of services, customer engagement views them as active participants who co-create value with companies. Brodie et al. (2011) emphasize that this engagement occurs across various online and offline channels and touchpoints, affecting decisions, brand affinity, and long-term loyalty. While these perspectives are foundational, they also highlight a need to examine how engagement plays out in specific business contexts, such as small service-based environments, where personal interactions are central to the customer experience. Kumar and Pansari (2016) argue that deeply engaged customers are more likely to build emotional ties and exhibit repeated behaviors such as re-purchasing and recommending a brand to others. These benefits underscore the strategic importance of understanding and nurturing engagement, especially in industries where competition is high and brand differentiation is based on experience rather than price or product features.

2.2. Measuring Customer Engagement in Service-Based Businesses

Despite the consensus on its importance, measuring customer engagement remains complex, particularly in the café industry. Unlike retail, where purchases are easily tracked, cafés must rely on less tangible indicators such as atmosphere, staff interaction, and customer sentiment. According to So et al. (2014), customer engagement can be assessed across three key dimensions:

- Behavioral engagement, which includes observable actions like frequency of visits, time spent, purchases, and referrals
- Emotional engagement, which refers to feelings of satisfaction, pride, and emotional attachment to the brand
- Cognitive engagement, which reflects mental involvement, including awareness, interest, trust, and the desire to learn more about the business

This framework is particularly relevant to cafés, where the customer experience is shaped not only by products but also by the service environment and interpersonal interactions. While many studies describe these dimensions in theory, few apply them in practical, small-scale settings. The current research builds upon this model by applying it to Gerbang Coffee Culture, a local café aiming to understand how well it engages customers across all three dimensions. By operationalizing these constructs, the study tests their applicability and provides insights that could inform other small service businesses.

2.3. The Value of Engagement Measurement

Effectively measuring customer engagement allows businesses to track how customers interact, identify shifts in behavior, and develop more personalized marketing efforts (Kim & Drumwright, 2020). Especially in cafés, where the quality of experience is central to customer satisfaction, relying solely on visit frequency is insufficient. Instead, engagement measurement should capture quantitative and qualitative aspects, including emotional and environmental cues that shape how customers perceive their visit. Recent research supports including staff friendliness, ambiance, and personalization as core components of emotional engagement (Bijmolt, Leeflang, & Saffert, 2010). In addition, Jaakkola and Alexander (2014) highlight the role of value co-creation, where customers contribute to the brand by offering feedback, engaging in conversations, and influencing others through social media and reviews. These behaviors are not only signs of engagement but also valuable sources of insight for business improvement. By systematically measuring engagement, cafés can adapt to evolving customer expectations. For instance, analyzing emotional or cognitive engagement patterns may reveal gaps in service delivery or opportunities for innovation in menu offerings, loyalty programs, or physical layout. These insights empower businesses to shift from reactive to proactive strategies.

2.4. Engagement Measurement in the Café Context

The café industry is unique in that customers often seek more than just a product—they seek experiences. As Lemon and Verhoef (2016) observe, customer service engagement is deeply tied to experiential factors such as ambiance, comfort, and emotional fulfillment. This makes measuring engagement in cafés both challenging and essential. A relaxing environment, friendly staff, and consistent service quality can significantly influence customers' emotional and cognitive responses, thereby shaping their level of engagement. Beckers, Van Doorn, and Verhoef (2017) argue that measurement systems should extend beyond transactional data in such contexts. Instead, they should include tools that capture customer sentiment and behavioral intentions. For example, short surveys, digital feedback, or social media monitoring can reveal how customers perceive their experiences and what influences their desire to return. This study

adopts this expanded view of engagement measurement. It focuses on how behavioral, emotional, and cognitive dimensions play out in the daily operations of Gerbang Coffee Culture. In doing so, it aims to move beyond generalized engagement models and generate context-specific insights that can inform theory and practice.

2.5.   Implications for Practice and Research

Understanding how to measure and strengthen customer engagement has significant implications for small businesses, particularly those in the food and beverage sector. The findings of this study are expected to help café owners make informed decisions about service improvements, branding efforts, and customer relationship management. Furthermore, the research contributes to the academic literature by applying established engagement frameworks in a localized, real-world setting, bridging the gap between theory and practice. By identifying key drivers of engagement and assessing their impact on customer satisfaction and loyalty, this research provides a roadmap for cafés and similar service businesses to create more engaging, memorable experiences that foster not just repeat visits but lasting emotional connections.

III.   Research Method

3.1.   Research Design

This study employed a descriptive quantitative approach to examine customer engagement phenomena within a defined population systematically (Creswell, 2014). The aim was to capture objective, measurable patterns of emotional, cognitive, and behavioral involvement among café customers. The research was guided by the theoretical framework that Brodie et al. (2011) proposed, which conceptualizes customer engagement as a multidimensional construct encompassing behavioral, cognitive, and emotional elements. While this theory informed the construction of the research instrument, the study relied on empirical methods to measure these constructs in practice.

3.2.   Population and Sampling Technique

The population in this research consisted of all individuals who had visited Gerbang Coffee Culture café within the past two months. A purposive sampling method was used to select participants who met predetermined criteria aligned with the study's objectives (Sekaran & Bougie, 2016). This technique was chosen to ensure the inclusion of respondents capable of providing relevant insights. A total of 100 participants were targeted, in line with the Central Limit Theorem, which suggests that a sample size of at least 100 is sufficient for approximating a normal distribution in parametric analysis (Field, 2013). While purposive sampling allowed for targeted data collection, it is important to note the potential for selection bias, which may affect the broader generalizability of the findings.

3.3.   Data Collection Procedure

Data was collected using a closed-ended questionnaire distributed in person at the café. The researcher approached customers directly, briefly explained the study, and invited voluntary participation. Respondents completed the questionnaire onsite, ensuring contextual relevance and reducing nonresponse errors. This direct approach also allowed for immediate clarification of items, minimizing misinterpretation. The questionnaire measured customer engagement across three core dimensions—emotional, cognitive, and behavioral—using a five-point Likert scale, ranging from 1 ("Strongly Disagree") to 5 ("Strongly Agree") (Allen & Seaman, 2007). The items were developed to reflect the study's theoretical foundation and capture different aspects of customer engagement.

3.4. Instrument Validity and Reliability Testing

The questionnaire underwent rigorous testing for construct validity and internal consistency reliability before full deployment. Construct validity was assessed through Pearson's product-moment correlation, comparing each item's score with the total construct score. According to Hair, Black, Babin, and Anderson (2010), an item is deemed valid if its correlation coefficient (r) is ≥ .30 and statistically significant at $p < .05$. Based on analysis conducted using SPSS version 26, all items surpassed the minimum threshold, confirming acceptable construct validity. The study employed Cronbach's Alpha to measure internal consistency, with a minimum acceptable coefficient of .70 (Nunnally, 1978). The analysis showed a Cronbach's Alpha value of .763, indicating a high level of internal consistency across the 15 questionnaire items. These results confirm that the questionnaire reliably measures the intended engagement dimensions.

3.5. Data Analysis Techniques

Data analysis was performed using SPSS version 26. The analytical process consisted of three primary stages:

1. Descriptive statistics were used to summarize respondents' demographic characteristics and visit patterns.
2. Dimension-based analysis calculated mean scores for each engagement dimension: emotional, cognitive, and behavioral.
3. The overall engagement score was derived by averaging all item scores and interpreted using the following categories:

   a. Low engagement: 1.00–2.99
   b. Moderate engagement: 3.00–3.99
   c. High engagement: 4.00–5.00

These categories provided a basis for identifying strengths and weaknesses in the café's engagement strategy. Higher mean scores were interpreted as indicators of strong performance, while lower scores highlighted potential areas for improvement. Although the study followed a rigorous process, several methodological limitations must be acknowledged. While helpful in targeting specific respondents, purposive sampling limits the generalizability of the findings and introduces a potential for selection bias. Additionally, reliance on self-reported data increases the risk of social desirability bias, which could skew responses. These factors suggest the need for future research to employ mixed methods or probabilistic sampling to enhance validity and external applicability.

IV.   Results and Discussion

4.1. Respondent Characteristics

Table 1. Respondent Characteristic

Characteristic	Category	Frequency	Percentage
Gender	Women	33	33
	Men	67	67
Age (years old)	16–19	4	4
	20–24	26	26
	25–29	38	38
	30–34	22	22
	35–40	5	5
	> 40	5	5

This study surveyed 100 Gerbang Coffee Culture Café customers, focusing on their demographic background and engagement patterns. Regarding gender, 67% of the respondents were male, while 33% were female. This gender distribution suggests that the café may attract more male customers or that male visitors were more willing to participate in the survey. About age, the most dominant age group was 25–29 years (38%), followed by 20–24 years (26%) and 30–34 years (22%). The younger and older segments—ages 16–19 and over 35—represented smaller portions of the sample. This distribution indicates that the café is most frequented by individuals in their twenties and early thirties. It is consistent with previous findings that this demographic often seeks lifestyle-based experiences, such as coffee shops, to socialize or work in a casual environment. This insight provides a valuable reference for tailoring marketing strategies and service offerings that resonate with this core customer group.

4.2. Customer Purchase Behavior

Table 2. Customer Purchase Behavior

Aspect	Category	Frequency	Percentage
Frequency of Visit	1–2 times	35	35
	3–4 times	56	56
	More than 5 times	9	9
Time of Visit	Morning	21	21
	Noon	18	18
	Afternoon	18	18
	Evening	43	43
Reason for Visit	Doing tasks or discussions	31	31
	Meeting with friends	35	35
	Enjoying the ambiance or relaxing	26	26
	Attending an event	8	8

Customer purchase behavior was analyzed through visit frequency, time, and reasons for visiting. Most respondents (56%) reported visiting the café 3–4 times, suggesting a relatively steady level of customer retention. Meanwhile, 35% visited only 1–2 times, and 9% visited more than five times. Although the majority had visited multiple times, the relatively low proportion of frequent repeat visitors reflects a potential area for strengthening long-term customer loyalty. The most common visiting time was evening (43%), followed by morning (21%), noon (18%), and afternoon (18%). This pattern indicates that the café is a popular evening destination, possibly due to its relaxing ambiance or appeal as a post-work meeting place. The spread of visits throughout the day also shows that the café functions well across multiple use cases, such as a workspace or casual social venue. As for the reasons behind their visits, 35% of respondents stated they came to meet friends, 31% visited to do tasks or engage in discussions, 26% came to enjoy the ambiance, and 8% attended events. These results reinforce the idea that the café fulfills both social and functional roles, providing an environment for leisure and relaxation and a suitable space for informal productivity.

4.3. Customer Engagement by Dimension

Customer engagement was measured across three dimensions—emotional, cognitive, and behavioral—categorized into high, medium, and low levels. The cognitive dimension recorded the highest percentage of high engagement (98%), followed by emotional (92%) and behavioral (68%) (see Table 4). These findings suggest that customers are highly attentive to the café's brand identity and values and feel emotionally connected to the experience the café offers. Cognitive engagement reflects how much customers are mentally involved with the brand. The results indicate that customers understand the café's positioning, services, and identity. Emotional engagement, meanwhile, illustrates how customers feel about the café. With

92% in the high category, it is evident that customers experience positive emotions such as satisfaction, comfort, and pride during their interactions with the café.

Table 4. Customer Engagement by Dimension

Customer Engagement Category	Emotional	Cognitive	Behavioral	Total
High (4.00 - 5.00)	92	98	68	84
Medium (3.00 - 3.99)	8	2	32	16
Low (1.00 - 2.99)	0	0	0	0

Behavioral engagement, however, was comparatively lower, with 32% of respondents categorized as medium. This dimension refers to tangible customer actions, such as frequent visits, recommendations, and participation in café programs. The disparity between emotional/cognitive and behavioral engagement may suggest that while customers feel positively about the café and understand its value, not all consistently act on this engagement through repeat behavior. This gap also points to a subtle limitation of this study. Since engagement was measured through a cross-sectional self-reported survey, it is possible that behavioral intentions did not always align with actual behavior. Additionally, as the study focused on a single café within a specific time frame, broader generalizations should be made cautiously. Nevertheless, these patterns highlight the opportunity for the café to enhance behavioral engagement through more active strategies such as loyalty programs, referral incentives, or exclusive event offerings.

Table 5. Average Customer Engagement per Dimension

Dimension	Average Score (Mean)
Emotional	4,93
Cognitive	4,40
Behavioral	4,00
Total Customer Engagement	4,40

As shown in Table 5, the emotional dimension recorded the highest average score (4.93), followed by cognitive (4.40), and behavioral (4.00). All dimensions fall into the high engagement category, but the difference in magnitude reveals meaningful insights. The intense emotional connection suggests that the café has successfully delivered a customer experience that resonates deeply personally. The cognitive dimension also shows that the café's message and values are clearly communicated and well understood by its audience. However, while the behavioral score is still within the high range, its relatively lower value suggests that the café has not fully converted emotional and intellectual appreciation into consistent customer action. To address this, customer activation strategies need to be strengthened. Encouraging behaviors such as loyalty card usage, social media sharing, or attendance at café events could help close the gap between how customers feel and what they do. These efforts are significant in the café industry, where experiential and emotional factors often influence customer decision-making, but long-term loyalty requires tangible action.

4.4. Summary of Findings

In summary, the results demonstrate that customers of Gerbang Coffee Café exhibit strong emotional and cognitive engagement, showing that the brand is both emotionally appealing and intellectually compelling. However, behavioral engagement remains a dimension that requires further development. Customers feel connected and informed, but fewer actively express this engagement through repeat visits or brand advocacy. This distinction provides a focused area for improvement, especially as behavior is a key indicator of sustainable customer loyalty.

V.   Conclusion

This study aimed to measure the level of customer engagement at Gerbang Coffee Culture Café by analyzing emotional, cognitive, and behavioral dimensions. The results revealed that the café has successfully built strong emotional bonds and cognitive awareness among its customers. Visitors not only understand and appreciate the brand, but they also feel comfortable and satisfied, which contributes to a positive overall customer experience. However, the lower behavioral engagement suggests that emotional and cognitive connections do not always lead to consistent customer actions. Not all customers who feel positively about the brand actively return, recommend it, or participate in café initiatives. This highlights a strategic challenge for the café: to move beyond positive perception and foster active participation. The findings point toward practical implications for café businesses. To strengthen behavioral engagement, the café should introduce mechanisms that encourage repeat behavior, such as loyalty programs, member-exclusive promotions, or interactive experiences that invite customers to be part of a larger community. These initiatives can help transform emotional satisfaction and intellectual alignment into loyalty-driven action. Although the study provides valuable insights, it should be noted that its findings are based on self-reported data and a single-location sample, which may limit broader generalizability. Future research may benefit from incorporating longitudinal data, behavioral tracking, or expanding the geographic scope to test the consistency of these patterns. Ultimately, this study confirms that emotional and cognitive engagement form the foundation of a positive customer relationship. However, behavioral engagement is the key to turning that relationship into long-term value for the business. By understanding and addressing this gap, cafés can build loyal customers and brand advocates who support growth through active participation.

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