

Explicating engagement: An exploratory mapping and critical discussion of a contested concept

Jacob Ørmen,
University of Copenhagen, Denmark

Abstract:

With the diffusion of the internet, media and communication research witnessed the emergence of a new term, 'engagement'. Although, the term is widely used it is poorly defined and in need of explication. Through semantic network analysis, the analysis shows how traditions, as varied as audience research, political science, science communication, marketing studies and media psychology, have put the concept to use for very different purposes. Clusters in the network map demonstrate clear demarcations between traditions and perspectives on the ontology of engagement. Following from this mapping, the article evaluates the different perspectives and outlines key issues that scholars need to deal with to advance engagement as an analytical concept in media and communications research. In the end, the article argues that engagement should foreground the reflexive capacities of individuals rather than instrumental interactions or societal participation. In this way, the concept can retain its specificity and richness rather than turn into a colloquial term with vague and indistinct connotations.

Keywords: Engagement, concept explication, semantic network analysis, audience research, political communication, user studies, marketing, science communication, media psychology, reflexivity

Introduction

In June 2020, a discussion arose on Twitter around reports from Crowdtangle, the tool that outsiders can use to study Facebook pages, that showed the most engaging pages on Facebook to be operated largely by conservative media and pundits. Facebook's head of news feed John Hegeman (@johnwhegeman) weighed in on the debate by sharing some

internal Facebook data indicating a different trend (<https://twitter.com/johnwhegeman/status/1285359446273622017>). Hegeman showed that the top pages on Facebook varied substantially based on whether one considers how many people had commented, liked or shared content ('interactions') or how many people that had seen the posts ('reach'). The conservative pundits saw high levels of interactions from a smaller crowd, while traditional mainstream US news media reached a far larger public through the platform. In the end, the discussion documented that what one could consider 'most engaging' on Facebook depending on whether the basis was interactions, audiences or a third category (such as click-through rates on posts). This article departs from this conceptualization issue to understand how communication research uses the concept of engagement.

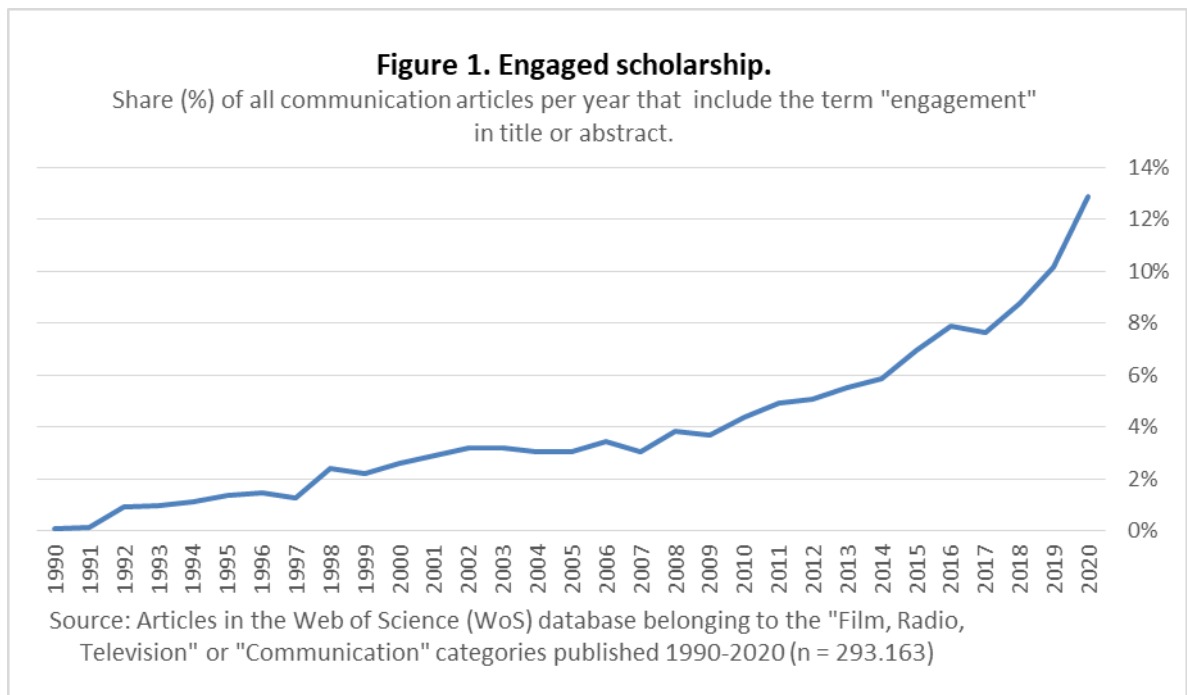
In recent years, the use of engagement in media and communications publications has grown steeply, outmatching the general increase in research output within the field.¹ However, the concept is 'stretched' thin (Sartori, 1970) across research fields and disciplines, often with vague connotations and little conceptual ground in common. With the drastic growth in usage, there is a risk that the concept turns into an elusive and vague term. Therefore, there is a need to explicate (Chaffee, 1991) engagement to make it analytically useful for media and communication research.

The article proceeds by mapping notions of engagement in the literature. This is done using semantic network analysis (Waltman et al., 2010) whereby it is possible to identify the dominant perspectives on a given topic across thousands of journal articles and books. Following from this mapping, the article discusses the relative strengths and weaknesses of different perspectives originating in audience and users studies, political communication, science communication, marketing research as well as media psychology. The article then outlines key issues that scholars need to deal with to advance engagement as an analytical concept in media and communications research. In the end, I do not offer a definitive account of engagement – as I don't think such a position is attainable not a fruitful endeavour – but argue that for engagement to retain a position as a key concept, rather than turn into a colloquial term, it must be based on the reflexive capacities of individuals to make meaning of and take action in the world.

Explicating concepts

Providing sound and precise concepts is a crucial goal for any scientific discipline or field of study. In his influential book *Concept Explication* (1991) Stephen H. Chaffee proposed a strategy for developing concepts that could bridge the 'real-life perceptions' we all have of communication and the theories of communication that scholars build (1991, p. 1). By explication, Chaffee meant a series of distinct steps: clarify the origin and different uses of the concept, compare and contrast definitions, evaluate and modify these, and propose new conceptual and operational definitions for further research (1991, p. 2). The crucial step in the explication process is to narrow down the, often massive, amount of studies that

touch upon or offer definitions of the concept under scrutiny (Chaffee, 1991, p. 22). Chaffee presents a range of approaches to do this from the largescale overview characteristic of *Diffusion of Innovations* (E. M. Rogers, 1962) to the focused analysis of critical cases in the literature on selective exposure (Sears & Freedman, 1967).



In recent years, communication scholars have pursued other strategies. Some have followed a narrative approach contrasting significant contributions on a subject (e.g. Grabe et al., 2001; Marchionni, 2013; Nah & Armstrong, 2011). Others have used theoretical models to structure the review of the existing literature (Evans et al., 2017; Kioussis, 2002, 2004). And a few have departed from empirical cases to distinguish between alternating perspectives in the literature (Papacharissi, 2016; Shah & Scheufele, 2006). Thus, previous approaches have taken theoretical models, empirical studies or predefined notions of the relevant literature as the starting point. Rather than taking such a top-down approach, it would be fruitful to first gain an overview of the research on a given subject by employing a bottom-up perspective on the various definitions and uses of the concepts.

Semantic network analysis

To conduct a mapping of the dominant perspectives in the engagement literature, I rely on semantic network analysis. This is an inductive approach to the study of content, where an algorithm goes through a body of documents and situates the terms in a network based on their relationship to each other such as how often they occur together in the documents (for an application in media research, see e.g. L. Guo et al., 2016; R. Rogers, 2013). Specifically, I rely on a bibliometric technique that compares co-occurrences of words in a

text corpus (such as academic journals) and then maps words in a network according to their frequency and co-occurrence in the corpus (Waltman et al., 2010). A team of researchers in the Netherlands have developed an open-licensed tool, VOSviewer (<http://www.vosviewer.com/>), that makes it possible to conduct a semantic network analysis in simple ways (van Eck & Waltman, 2010). It involves three steps: text mining, network visualisation, and cluster analysis.

Text mining

VOSviewer relies on a text mining technique, which is a variant of Natural Language Processing (NLP), to compare abstracts across thousands of articles. For each text (in this case, academic publications), all the words in the abstract, headline and keywords are identified. Then all nouns and combinations of adverbs and nouns, 'noun phrases', are selected (for a technical discussion of this operation, see van Eck et al., 2010). In a third step, all noun phrases are ranked according to a relevance criterion, namely co-occurrence. Noun-phrases that tend to co-occur often with all other noun-phrases are given a low relevancy score since they are assumed to be general phrases used across the literature (such as 'article', 'conclusion', 'article', 'media research'). Conversely, noun phrases that often co-occur with some phrases and less so with others are indicative of the specialised use that is important for understanding the different positions in the field. This technique is particularly suitable for concept explication as the algorithm should be able to detect pronounced noun phrases that include the key term, in this case, 'engagement'. The resulting sub-selecting, called terms, is now ready to be mapped in a network.

Network visualisation

In co-occurrence analysis, it is important to consider how to weigh the various noun phrases when visualising the associations in a network. VOSviewer operates with two different approaches: binary (each noun phrase counts for the number of publications it appeared in) and full counting (noun phrases are weighted according to the number of times they appear across all publications). The former option equals out differences in frequency and is thus a measure of how widespread a term is used (how many publications it appeared in). By contrast, the latter gives primacy to words that feature centrally in the texts and is therefore a better measure of central a given term is for the texts (how often it is used in publications). Since the goal here is to map engagement terms, the full counting method is a better suit.

The network visualisation produces a map with nodes and edges. The nodes represent keywords (either single terms or a combination of words) that frequently occur in the title or abstracts of the sample. The size of the node is determined by the frequency of the keyword in the headlines or abstracts (counted as unique instances, meaning that words that occur several times in one article are only included once in the analysis).

Co-occurrence relationships are illustrated in two ways: position and links. Those terms that occur together frequently in articles are positioned closer to each other than those that more rarely occur in the same article. Links between words show the most pronounced relations, that is those terms that have the most frequent overlap in articles.

Cluster analysis

Based on the network, it is possible to group terms into clusters. A cluster is a group of objects that share greater similarity internally than with objects in another cluster. In this context, similarity is operationalised as co-occurrence, which means that terms that frequently occur together in publications are grouped in one cluster and terms that rarely (or never) occur together appear in different clusters. It is important to notice here that, as with all statistical techniques, there is no objectively correct model. Instead, the number and constellation of clusters will have to be decided by the researcher based on statistical interpretation (for a critical discussion, see Uprichard, 2009). As a rule of thumb, a parsimonious solution is more desirable, that is one that produces the clearest cut between groups with the fewest number of clusters needed. VOSviewer relies on an algorithm, smart local moving (SLM), to cluster terms, which is particularly suitable for detecting communities in large networks with thousands or millions of nodes (van Eck & Waltman, 2010).

For the present purposes, VOSviewer is useful primarily for detecting relevant noun phrases (such as audience engagement, political engagement and public engagement). The network and cluster visualizations constitute secondary objectives as the goal here is not to map a scientific field as such but to identify contributions to a discussion of a concept.

Mapping the engagement literature

The study relies on the Web of Science (WoS) database to construct a sampling frame that covers essential publications in communication studies. WoS is one of the most comprehensive scientific databases covering all major scientific fields as well as publications formats (academic journal and book publishers and open-access venues). Furthermore, human editors categorise journals according to their general field or discipline using overlapping codes (called **Web of Science** Categories) and update the list regularly to keep up with developments in academic research (<https://clarivate.com/webofsciencegroup/article/new-web-of-science-categories-reflect-ever-evolving-research/>). This makes it possible to confine searches to journals and publications within a field of interest rather than rely solely on keywords (as is the case for Google Scholar). In that way, WoS is a rich source for identifying trends and developments within the broader literature on media and communication research. However, the database is not without its limitations. Most importantly, there are several open access journals (such as *First Monday* and, unfortunately, *Participations*) that are not categorised, giving the database a bias in favour of journals from established publishing houses (notably, Sage, Elsevier, and Oxford University Press). Nonetheless, compared to the alternatives

(such as Scopus or Semantic Scholar), WoS remains the database with the best coverage within the general field of media and communication.

To delimit the literature search to communication studies, the search was restricted to all publications with the *Web of Science Category* as 'Film, Radio, Television' (belonging to the arts and humanities general category) or 'Communication' (belonging to the social science general category).² In total, this categorisation includes 176,911 publications. To identify those articles that focus on engagement rather than use it as a more colloquial term, I restricted the search to those publications that mention the term in the title of the publication either as a noun (engagement), a verb (engage/engaging) or as an adjective or adverbial (engaged/engaging). This results in a sample of 1789 publications.³

This sample was then imported into VOSviewer for text mining, visualisation and clustering. Using NLP, the software identified 21,902 unique noun phrases (following the procedure described above). To make the visualisation more interpretable, it was necessary to reduce the full list of terms to a smaller group of the most relevant phrases. As a first step, noun phrases that appeared in less than 15 publications were excluded reducing the list to 480 terms. Then each term was assigned a relevance score based on weighted frequency. Since the distribution of terms in the dataset is heavily skewed with a few terms appearing frequently (such as 'information') some once in a while (such as 'education') and many rarely (such as 'editorial'), some terms will have a much higher likelihood to be related to all other terms simply because they occur much more frequently in the dataset. Therefore, to be able to compare co-occurrences across terms with different frequencies, the data needed to be weighted. VOSviewer applies probabilistic normalisation (Eck & Waltman, 2009), where the overall frequency of each term is compared to the specific co-occurrences between terms. Terms that have a high overall frequency but low co-occurrence with any one term is giving a low relevance score and vice versa (for a similar technique applied in hyperlink analysis, see Taneja et al., 2017). After all terms have received a relevancy score, 288 terms (the standard setting of the 60% most relevant terms) are visualised in a network of co-occurrences (**Figure 2**).

Figure 2 shows the network visualisation and clustering solutions for the engagement literature. The overall frequency determines the size of each node (the bigger, the more publications the term appears in), proximity show similarity in co-occurrences between term, edges show the most expressed links between terms (min. strength of 10), and colours indicate the clusters that each term belongs to. The network and cluster visualizations are the result of the default settings in VOSviewer, with only one minor modification (setting the min. cluster size to 20 items). Altering the settings for the visualisation or cluster algorithms (such as start seed, number of iterations, stepwise reduction, convergence) does not alter the solution in any substantial way.

The visualisation demonstrates a network of terms that are organised into five distinct clusters: a red (on the bottom), a green (to the left), a yellow (somewhat on top), a blue (in the centre), and a purple (to the right). The terms coloured grey could not be fitted into distinct clusters. As mentioned previously, the goal here was not to conduct a structural

analysis of the network, but to explore different perspectives on engagement in the network. Nonetheless, the visualization does suggest that the map might be indicative of different perspectives as the network is dispersed around distinct terms in the outer edges (e.g. ‘public engagement’ in the red cluster and ‘civic engagement’ in the green cluster) in contrast to being organized around a few common key terms in the centre. Therefore, I start the discussion from the various clusters by qualitatively demonstrating key differences through a few emblematic examples.

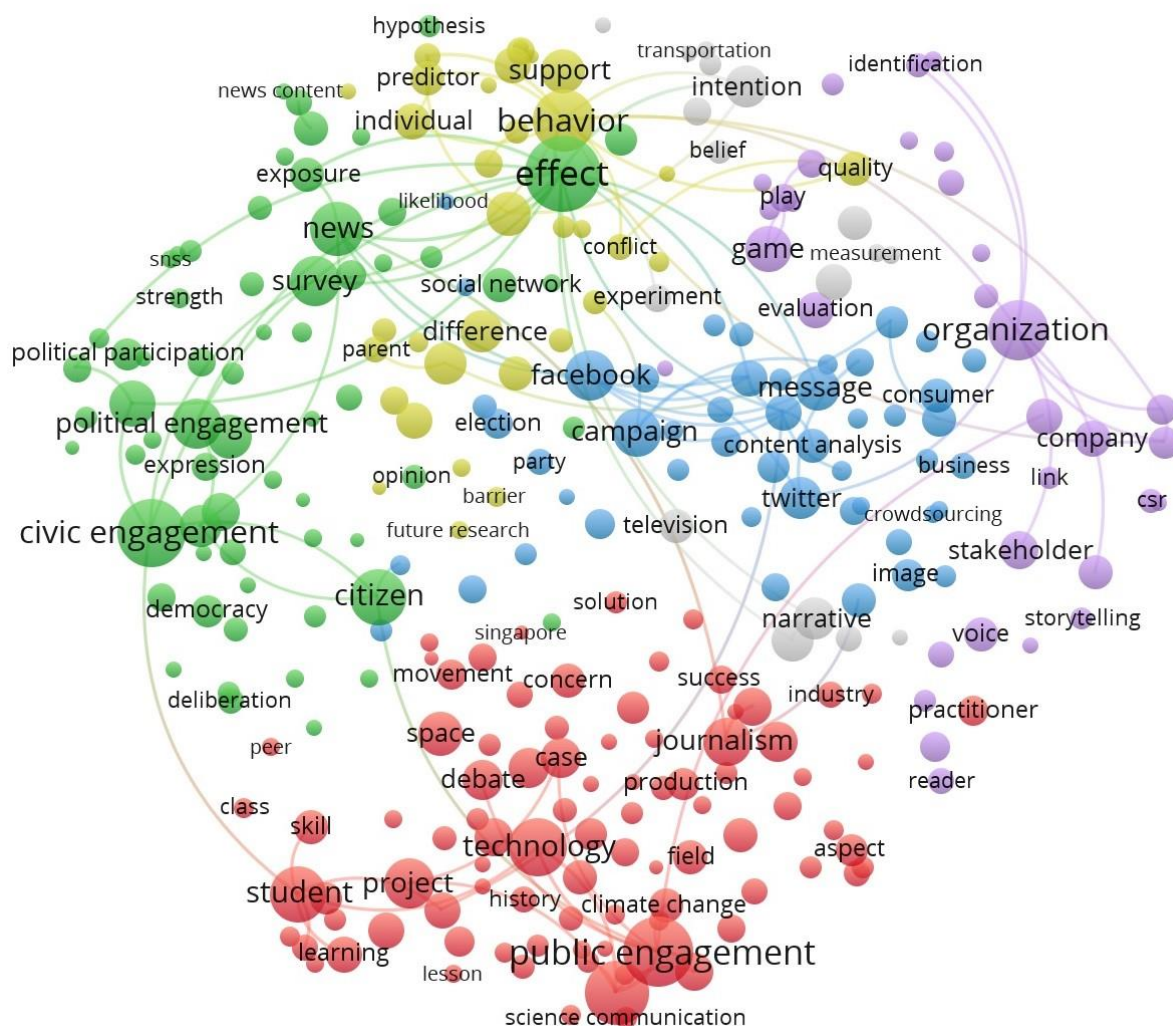


Figure 2: Co-occurrence network of the most relevant terms (n = 288).

To help us gain an overview **Table 1** shows all the noun phrases that include the word ‘engagement’ placed according to the cluster each belongs to. These noun phrases illustrate the connotations that various perspectives tend to associate with engagement. There are 17 engagement phrases dispersed across all clusters apart from the yellow cluster and one phrase, ‘narrative engagement’, which is outsider clusters. In the remainder of the analysis, I discuss the engagement phrases in the relation to central co-occurring phrases in their cluster thus leaving out the yellow cluster but including a section covering narrative

engagement. To guide the exploration, I rely on seminal studies that have achieved visibility in the field (notably, through citations) and offer clear conceptualizations.

Cluster	Engagement terms (by frequency)	Strongest co-occurring terms (<i>links</i>)
Red cluster	Public engagement Community engagement Student engagement	science, technology, scientist university, organization, project university, technology, teacher
Green cluster	Civic engagement Political engagement News engagement Democratic engagement Social engagement	internet, effect, student polit. particip., survey, polit. interest social network, post, survey data effect, polit. particip., internet young pers., soc. media enga., youth
Blue cluster	Audience engagement User engagement Citizen engagement Social media engagement Consumer engagement Digital engagement	journalism, brand, news video, visitor, voice local govern., comment, technology youth, survey, social media platform intention, effect, quality effect, local govern., skill
Purple cluster	Employee engagement Stakeholder engagement	organization, trust, public relation Twitter, university, variable
No cluster	Narrative engagement	transportation, scale, story

Table 1: Engagement terms distributed across clusters

Red cluster: Engagement as public involvement

The red cluster is the most distinct cluster located in a separate space to the bottom of the network. It includes four engagement terms, notably the central term ‘public engagement’, and key terms like ‘technology’ ‘science’ (not visible in the map due to phrase overlap but it is located just to the left of ‘public engagement’), and ‘student’. The cluster is characterised by studies within science communication but includes also more traditional media studies.

The term ‘public engagement’ occupies an important space on the map. It is located far away from most other terms on the map, signalling that it is a distinct concept for the red cluster, and it is a widely used term in the literature overall (it is among the most prominent nodes in the network). The explanation for this position is that it is a central concept in science communication, in particular.

In science communication, the focus is on how people in collectives engage with *issues* (such as climate change and GMOs). Public engagement in this context links how people understand (cognition) and relate to (affection) issues (in the media), and

subsequently how they act (behaviour) on their understanding and beliefs (O'Neill & Nicholson-Cole, 2009, p. 356). The public should not only care about issues but also be actively involved in shaping discussions, generating new ideas and crafting policies (Macnaghten et al., 2005; Stilgoe et al., 2014). In the media studies literature, public engagement is used similarly to denote the orientation people have towards issues of common concern. For instance, in a central contribution to audience research, 'Media Consumption and Public Engagement' (Couldry et al., 2007/2010), public engagement covers a wider array of activities related to acting both in public (such as taken part in demonstrations), as publics (such as signing petitions and joining movements) and with a public purpose (such as voting and conscientious consumption). In these accounts, 'public engagement' mirrors terms like political participation.

Likewise, the two other engagement terms (located towards the left of the cluster) have similar connotations. 'Community engagement' is related to the management literature on organizational affiliation in particular with a focus on university life. A highly cited contribution sees community engagement as activities that organizations, such as educational institutions, carry out to establish partnerships and involve themselves with local communities such as vulnerable or underrepresented groups (Dempsey, 2010). 'Student engagement' is a narrower concept coming from educational communication that captures the cognitive and social outcome that various learning activities facilitate (Dixson et al., 2017). Thus, both perspectives emphasize the involvement of organizations or individuals in their local communities or groups.

Taken together, the engagement terms in the red cluster circulate around public involvement. The unifying aspect is that people *en masse* emerge as (a) public(s) that care about issues of common concern (such as climate change) as well as the communities they are part of (notably as students). Engagement is seen primarily as the outcome of a process rather than the distinct acts people carry out. It is the orientation and cognitive investment of people and organizations that is the focus *prima facie*.

Green cluster: Engagement as societal actions

The green cluster integrates studies of sociological and political consequences of media use. This cluster is characterised by five engagement terms, notable 'civic engagement' and 'political engagement', as well as the general terms 'effect', 'news', 'survey' and 'political participation'. Civic engagement encompasses various activities that people can carry out in society such as voluntary work, fundraising, attending community meetings, conscious consumption (Gil de Zúñiga et al., 2012). Likewise, political engagement is conceptualised primarily as interest in and knowledge of politics as well as actions taken to influence municipal, regional or national government (Xenos & Moy, 2007). Democratic engagement is associated closely with civic and political behaviour (Hampton et al., 2010), although some authors take care in differentiating between cognitive (e.g. political knowledge) and behavioural (political participation) dimensions (see, e.g. Östman, 2012). In a similar vein, scholars perceive news engagement as distinct activities that people carry out with news

content from consumption to production. A recent contribution outlines a model with levels of engagement ranging from exposure to content at the lowest level over active selection and curation from the user side to sharing and co-production of news-related content at the highest level (Ha et al., 2018).

The last term, social engagement, stands out from the rest in the green cluster. In journalism and audience research, the concept is used sporadically as another term for civic or political engagement (see e.g. Drok et al., 2017). However, a few publications develop the concept to understand how people interact with media content. For instance, one article focusing on viewers' engagement with TV content develops a model that includes 'vertical involvement' (social media usage about the program), diagonal interaction (the extent of social interaction through social media), horizontal intimacy (the emotional response and affectionate relationship viewers develop), and horizontal influence (the identification and belonging) (M. Guo, 2018).

Thus, in this cluster engagement is more or less synonymous with – and sometimes conflated with – participation (Gil de Zúñiga et al., 2012; Mihailidis, 2014). Media such as television or the internet play a role primarily as a stepping-stone toward behaviour in society of the political, social or civic kind. Engagement is perceived as a consequence rather than an expression of media use. Civic, political and democratic engagement is typically operationalised as lists of activities people can carry out as community members or citizens to create social bonds, organise around joint courses, and influence formal politics. These activities tend to be studied through surveys and linked to media use and sociodemographic characteristics through statistical measures of association.

Blue cluster: Engagement as mediated interaction

The noun phrases 'message', 'campaign', and 'Facebook' and 'Twitter' characterise the blue cluster. The cluster encompasses the largest number of engagement terms circulating how people act as audiences (to media), users (of media) and consumers (through media). It is evident that what separates studies in this cluster from the others is the distinct focus on digital platforms and services as places where users interact with each other, politicians, brands, and content. This cluster draws heavily on work across the field of communication with an emphasis on journalism and marketing research.

Audience engagement is used widely by media and communication scholars to understand how people use, relate to and participate in media (Moe et al., 2016). Thus, the emphasis is often on the combination between how people experience media both physically (through interactions such as clicks on news articles), emotionally (as they respond to content and form opinions) as well as socially (in the relationships people develop with others in mediated encounters) (see *inter alia* Livingstone, 2005; Takahashi, 2010). In recent years, much work has gone into understanding how news organizations and social media sites measure audience engagement and how these quantifications affect audience behaviour (see e.g. Nelson, 2018). Now the majority of work on audience engagement seems to be moving toward a more narrow focus on digital metrics (e.g. clicks,

shares) as proxies for audience engagement (Steensen et al., 2020). I return to this issue in the discussion.

A close corollary can be found in the literature on digital inequalities. Here, digital engagement refers to the capabilities people have to make technical use of the internet (such as protecting their personal information), be critical of information, socialize with others (notably through social network services) and create content on their own (Helsper & Eynon, 2013). Thus in audience and digital engagement, there is an emphasis on interpretive as well as critical reflection.

By contrast, user engagement has emerged as somewhat of a buzzword in marketing and industry research covering ways consumer activity can be measured and turned into value for media organizations and advertisers. In communications research, user engagement has been operationalized as digital interactions such as likes and comments (Heiss et al., 2019) or as continua from exposure to content, to various ways to interact with content online (notably Ksiazek et al., 2014). Here, the emphasis is more on the external, and measurable, activities that people carry out with media and less on the internal contemplative practices.

For ‘citizen engagement’, the focus has been on ordinary peoples interactions with each other in online and offline settings. One influential article defines citizen engagement as three dimensions: a *discursive* (formal and informal conversations), a *partisan* (activities carried out on behalf or support of political actors), and a *civic* dimension (collaboration in communities) (Vaccari et al., 2015). This builds on work in political engagement that extends the realm of politics to everyday social encounters among ordinary citizens (Jacobs et al., 2009).

In contrast, the two latter adjectives are interested in the commercial aspects of user interactions. ‘Social media engagement’ for instance denotes the likes, shares, and comments that users give content on the service (Saxton & Waters, 2014). Likewise, ‘consumer engagement’ describes various ways people as consumers discuss products on social network services (Chu & Kim, 2011). This understanding mimics the terminology used by social network services and marketing agencies to describe aggregate user behaviour. Engagement in these accounts equals measurable interactions.

In short, in the blue cluster the engagement terms are more dispersed but with a common denominator in digital interactions. Engagement terms here circulate the way people interact with media, in particular digital media, as audiences, users, and consumers to navigate and socialize in daily life.

Purple cluster: Engagement as invested relationship

The purple cluster is organized around key terms such as ‘organization’, ‘company’ and ‘stakeholder’. As these terms indicate, the research comes primarily from public relations and organizational research. The two engagement terms, ‘employee engagement’ and ‘stakeholder engagement’, refer to different areas of research but draw on similar understandings.

PR researchers use the concept of ‘employee engagement’ to clarify the relationship employees (or members) have to their place of employment or organizational affiliation. Building on Erwin Goffman’s sociology, a recent contribution develops employee engagement ‘as the enactment and presentation of employees’ selves at work; such expressions manifest in physical, cognitive, and emotional forms’ (Shen & Jiang, 2019). Here, engagement encompasses both the way people act in a given organizational setting, but also the affective relationship they develop with the organization.

From an organisational perspective, one prominent study (Lovejoy & Saxton, 2012) develops a hierarchy of stakeholder engagement that involves disseminating *information* (e.g. through social media), building *community* (e.g. by establishing networks and groups), and taking *action* (e.g. through marketing, promotion, and mobilisation). Receiving information stands at the lowest level of engagement, whereas participating in activities marks the high end.

Thus, the two concepts mirror each other and are sometimes integrated as components of the same meta-process (see e.g. Dhanesh, 2017).

Outside the clusters: Engagement as cognitive immersion

The fifth constellation of terms is the smallest, yet also the most distinct. The terms do share a meaningful affinity, although the clustering algorithm did not group them as such. I say this since the media psychology literature on ‘narrative engagement’ is included here. The terms in this group share some similarity with the first cluster, in particular, the focus on narratives and affective aspects of audiencing. However, there is a critical distinction to be made. In contrast to the first cluster, engagement is not inferred theoretically from studies of texts or empirically through qualitative studies of audiences but instead quantified through experimental studies with viewers. The focus is on viewers’ experiences of media texts at the particular moments of reception. To do this, the literature operationalises engagement as various cognitive processes that include narrative understanding, attentional focus, emotional engagement, and narrative presence (see e.g. Busselle & Bilandzic, 2009). Engagement is linked to concepts such as transportation (viewer involvement with the story), enjoyment (viewer satisfaction) and recall (viewer recollection). Thus, engagement with media in this sense is primarily conceptualised as a person’s cognitive and affective involvement with story elements and characters in media texts.

As the network map and cluster analysis has demonstrated, ‘engagement’ has taken on a range of different and disparate meanings in the communication literature. I have summed up key perspectives in **Table 2** following the cluster characterizations (one perspective per cluster). They illustrate prototypical positions, as there are no strict boundaries between them nor uniform definitions within each box. The list is also not exhaustive but marks important contributions. To move forward, I sketch the contours of some of the critical issues at stake departing from these prototypical perspectives.

	Engagement as public orientation	Engagement as societal actions	Engagement as mediated interactions	Engagement as invested relationship	Engagement as cognitive involvement
Scope	Orientation to a community	Participation in civic life	Interactions with media	Belonging to an organization	Immersion in media content
Focus	Connections with others through media	Behaviour (as a consequence of media use)	Activities carried out with (and through) media	Feelings toward companies/ organizations	Moments of media encounters
People as...	Publics	Citizens	Audiences/Users	Members	Readers/Viewers
¹ As cluster colours are arbitrary, I have excluded them from this table. The perspectives correspond to the clusters in the following way, Engagement as: public orientation (red), societal actions (green), mediated interactions (blue), invested relationship (purple), cognitive involvement (no cluster/colour).					

Table 2: Prototypical perspectives on engagement based on the clusters¹ in **Figure 2**

Evaluating the prototypical perspectives

Although it has not been the core concern in this exploration to measure the usage patterns, the distribution of terms in **Figure 2** merits a few remarks. It is clear that the communication literature operates with widely different understandings and conceptions of engagement. At the same time, there is a wide gap between the widely and scarcely used terms. Public engagement is used by 231 publications (approx. 13% of the sample), whereas civic engagement is included in 191 (approx. 11%). By contrast, ‘student engagement’ and ‘narrative engagement’ only appears in 20 and 21 publications (approx. 1%, respectively). Thus, when evaluating the conceptualizations it is important to remember the two first perspectives (public orientation and societal actions) are represented more widely in the literature than the rest. I return to this issue in the end.

First, the mapping exercise demonstrated that there is ontological disagreement on what constitutes engagement. For some researchers, engagement is fundamentally a cognitive-affective process; a way of relating to the world (typical of studies on public involvement), establishing relationships in groups (invested relationship) or responding to stimuli (cognitive involvement). For others, engagement covers actions taken in the world, either to interact with media and socialise with friends (mediated interaction) or to influence public opinion and political participation (societal action). It is fruitful to retain cognitive, affective and behavioural dimensions as essential dimensions of engagement. At the same time, to not overstretch the concept it is crucial to clarify how civic and political *participation* (such as voting, taking part in organised protests or movements, signing petitions, contacting politicians, and donating money to causes, parties or campaigns) relate to more mundane activities and orientation to the public world. Ontologically speaking,

reading the news and taking part in a protest might belong to the same domain, but there are certainly very different dimensions of that domain.

Second, studies that do move across various dimensions of engagement tend to organize activities in hierarchies going from passive (or lower) to active (or higher) forms of engagement (see e.g. Ksiazek et al., 2014; Lovejoy & Saxton, 2012; Zúñiga et al., 2013). This is not a fruitful strategy as it emphasises some forms of engagement (such as action-oriented) at the expense of others (notably, critical and interpretive practices). Such a view contradicts research that finds everyday media use, sociable conversations and contemplative practices to be highly important instigators of more civic and political actions (notably Couldry et al., 2007/2010). Instead, it would be more fruitful to align various forms of engagement on the same analytical level without any *a priori* hierarchical structure e.g. as various *modes* of engagement (Keinonen et al., 2018; Ørmen, 2016). It is an empirical rather than theoretical question which kinds of activities people find most engaging.

Third, there is a discrepancy considering levels of analysis. Whereas some studies operationalize engagement as processes in the moment of media use (notably in the mediated interaction and cognitive investment perspectives), others see it as long-term involvement with issues (notably, public orientation and societal actions). This raises the question of whether engagement can span discrete activities of media use on the micro-level to continuous deliberations of social and political importance on the macro level. Naturally, narrative and public engagement map different ways of relating to media. This does not mean, however, that they cannot be aspects of the same underlying phenomena. On the contrary, it is arguably in the space in-between micro-level media use and macro-level public opinion and collective action that engagement has the most to offer. Thus, the concept should play a mediating role linking the mundane everyday activities (captured by humanistic studies of audiences and users) with the development of beliefs and participation in public life (captured by the more sociological and political research).

Lastly, researchers operating within strong research traditions (such as political communication or media psychology) are well-advised to read contributions from other perspectives. As we saw earlier, there is a great discrepancy between the popularity of engagement terms and conversely, the different perspectives illustrated by the five clusters. In particular, engagement is transforming more and more into a term that captures distinct activities that people carry out with media (such as social sharing online as epitomized by 'mediated interaction' perspective) and with each other in society (notably in the 'public orientation' and 'societal actions' perspectives). This pushes perspectives that emphasize more contemplative practices (such as work in the 'public orientation' and 'cognitive involvement' perspectives) into the background. This is a conceptual loss. If we wish to understand how people develop ideas, form identities, and eventually participate in civic and public life, we should pay close attention to not only the media people use but also the role media play in their daily life. It is notable that a key contribution in the scholarly debate on the election of Donald Trump has been an anthropological account of the narratives circulating among Tea Party supporters in the rural south (Hochschild, 2016). The stories

people tell themselves and each other might matter just as much (or more) for their public engagement than the digital interactions they carry out online.

In sum, the different perspectives are important contributions in their own right. They are also compatible with each other, often overlapping, in many respects. Thus, I believe it is more productive to consider ways to integrate the perspectives rather than to promote one at the expense of the others. After all, they address similar phenomena in the same empirical world.

Critical issues going forward

Departing from the discussion on the empirical mapping of the concept, we can now turn to a forward-looking discussion of issues that research into engagement should address. In the end, I offer remarks on how a more integrated view on engagement could develop.

One issue that needs more attention is the relationship between voluntaristic and structural accounts of engagement. Largescale analyses of audience engagement that relies on metrics such as clicks, likes and shares risk overemphasizing the voluntaristic aspect of media use. It is well documented how structural features such as popularity scores (trending, most viewed) as well as personalized measures such as recommender systems (others like you, your friends liked this) and adaptive rankings (based on prior behaviour) influence the media we use, the content we see and the interactions we engage in (Messing & Westwood, 2014; Webster, 2014). Conversely, accounts that deduce user patterns from the theoretical workings of algorithms (such as news feeds, search rankings) or media structures (such as program and content flows) underemphasize the agency of the individual user. People do navigate options that are presented to them and interpret media structures critically, on occasion, oppositionally (Lomborg & Kapsch, 2020). Research into engagement should deal with this issue of structuration (Giddens, 1984) in practical studies that are embedded in people's daily life (typical of qualitative research) or situated in infrastructural and national-level contexts (typical of quantitative research).

Furthermore, research needs to unpack the relationship between different forms, or modes, of engagement. While much research has looked into sequential patterns, (e.g. how media use relates to public, civic or political participation) we need more research on the simultaneous relationship. For instance, on social network sites people are both attentive (reading, listening, or watching content) and expressive (articulating thoughts or signalling opinions through programmable features). We know that most 'listen in' on conversations more than they speak up (Crawford, 2009), but we know less about in which situations people shift between the invisible audience (formerly known as lurking) and the visible participant. Likewise, while we may derive pleasure from bingeing a TV series in the moment, we might experience cognitive and emotional fatigue and displeasure afterwards. If this happens too often, we might start to feel bad about ourselves and our media habits (without necessarily changing them). Likewise, frequent discussions of political issues on social network sites might be associated with a higher interest in politics in the short run.

However, such expressive forms of engagement might also be exhaustive lead to disengagement (as alluded to by Eliasoph, 1998). Thus, it remains important to understand the immediate as well as long-term relationship between modes of engagement.

Following from this, it is instrumental that we consider negative cases, when people consciously *disengage*, as equally important as the positive ones. The conscious choice to refrain from leaving visible traces (such as likes and comments) when interacting with content (Ellison et al., 2020) or a decision to disconnect from services altogether (Natale & Treré, 2020) are not necessarily signs of disengagement, but rather indicative of alternative forms of engagement (such as critical reflections on how to protect one's privacy or activist participation in a collective endeavour to reclaim ownership of one's own data and life). In the age of datafication, it is increasingly important to retain the key insight from traditional audience research, namely that an essential component of engagement is the reflexive process happening in the mind of the individual members of a public, audience, citizenry (Corbett & Wessels, 2017; Livingstone, 2018). I believe a richer discussion of reflexivity could inform conceptions of engagement.

Engagement as reflexivity

Essentially engagement encapsulates what people care about. Following the political scientist Ben Berger, engagement requires 'a combination of attention and energy' (Berger, 2011, p. 3). Attention without energy entails passivity, whereas energy without attention translates into mindlessness. Even though Berger works within a framework of political and civic engagement, I believe his formulation captures the allure of engagement in the right way. As communication scholars have noted, we can hardly infer strong intentionality from superficial analyses of engagement metrics from digital services (Steensen et al., 2020). Sometimes, clicking, scrolling or sharing takes the form of more or less mindless activities (energy without attention). Meanwhile, often people fail to show up for demonstrations or elections because they feel they cannot make a difference or they refrain to stand up for their beliefs due to fear of social repercussions (attention without energy). If we wish to understand how and when attention translates into action or vice versa, we should focus on engagement as primarily a reflexive process.

Engagement as reflexivity concerns itself with the continuing cognitive and emotional processing of our mediated and communicative encounters. Throughout daily life, we face expectations, opportunities and demands (based on norms, rules, hierarchies, etc.) that we have to deal with in order to function on both a personal, social, and professional level. It is through our continued ruminations, our 'internal conversation' (Archer, 2008), that we make decisions on how to manage daily life. In the 21st century, for many people, media play an essential role in presenting expectations, opportunities and demands. Yet, it is not certain that the media we attend to the most also play the largest role in shaping our views on a subject; that might just as well happen as a result of a specific mediated encounter or casual conversation with a friend. Even our political ideologies take

shape from the range of different, often distinctly non-journalistic – dare I say – entertaining content that we engage with (for a nice exposé of this, see Curran, 2019). How media inform us and shape our views, including the narratives we tell about ourselves, depend on this reflexive process.

By emphasizing reflexivity it also becomes clearer in which ways the more contemplative practices relate to outward-facing actions (such as public participation). Instead of subsuming all possible activities related to media under one term, I believe it would be wise to delineate the various activities more clearly. As reflexivity is an ongoing process within the individual, it plays the role of the central mediator between what we pay attention to and how we act as social beings as well as in civic and public life. Thus, in this respect engagement cannot be easily deduced from interactions on social media platforms, nor from intentions to participate in events, demonstrations and the like. Instead, it can only really be accessed from the vantage point of the individual. However, this should not be read as an invitation to methodological individualism. On the contrary, it is important to recognize, and study, the social, technical and institutional aspects that influence which kind of media we see, what we engage with/refrain from, and how our possibilities for expression (e.g. in public life) are in various social and political contexts. My position also does not disregard the perspectives summarized in **Table 2**. Rather, it is an attempt to re-integrate observations from pre-internet audience research into the present-day focus on digital interactions. In particular, I advise that we pay more attention to the value of media in people's lives and the links that they draw between mediated encounters and conversations on the one hand and the beliefs they hold and actions they are willing to take on the other; in short, the reflexive process that guides their engagement with the world.

Notes on limitations

As this article has attempted a novel approach, at least in media and communications research, for explicating concepts, some reflections on the limitations of the approach is warranted. One key challenge in dealing with semantic mapping tools like VOSviewer is to identify proper databases. As discussed above, there are currently no curated databases that capture all the relevant publication venues in the field(s) of media and communications. While many researchers might turn to Google Scholar for their literature reviews, this is not a feasible option for field-specific studies as there are few parameters to delimit queries apart from search strings and year of publications. This leaves the researcher to choose among the lesser of evils. In the present study, this challenge entailed a bias toward established publication houses (notably Sage, Harvard, Routledge and Elsevier) at the expense of independent and open access venues (such as *Participations*).

A strong motivation for this study was the idea to map the scholarly discourse around a key concept inductively from the bottom up rather than from pre-specified criteria. Text mining operations and network visualization were employed to manage this process. The downside of this approach is two-fold: first, although the semantic approach is

well-documented and tested in research, it can appear black-boxed; second, as the full list of terms will be too massive to handle in a meaningful visualisation (in this study, more than 21,000 terms), the researcher has to narrow the set of terms to a manageable size through a series of analytical steps (such as term frequency cut off, relevancy criteria, and how to weight term frequencies). I have sought to make the workings of the algorithms, as well as my choices, clear throughout, but I believe that what this process has shown more than anything is the ingrained challenges in concept explication more generally. While researchers often do not make their choices explicit for choosing one concept over another, the semantic mapping approach at least forces you to consider all the steps in the process.

Conclusion

With the diffusion of the internet, media and communication research witnessed the rise of a new catch-all term, engagement. Or to put it another way: although engagement had been a living concept for years⁴, communication researchers only started to use the term widely after the spread of the internet and, in particular, social media (revisit **Figure 1**). This is irrespective of the value the concept holds, and has held, for more traditional forms of experiencing media in daily life, such as viewing, reading and audience practices (as demonstrated by scholars above). Although, the term is popular in media and communications research it is often poorly defined and in need of explication. This analysis has shown how traditions as varied as audience studies, political communication, marketing research, and media psychology have put the concept to use for very different purposes. A semantic network analysis demonstrates clear demarcations between traditions and perspectives on the ontology of engagement. Following from this mapping, the article has evaluated the different perspectives and outlines key issues that scholars need to deal with to advance engagement as an analytical concept in media and communications research. In the end, the article argues that engagement should take the reflexive capacities of individuals as a starting point rather than instrumental interactions or societal participation. In this way, the concept can retain its specificity and richness rather than turn into a colloquial term with vague and indistinct connotations.

Biographical note:

Jacob Ørmen is a tenure-track assistant professor at the Department of Communication, University of Copenhagen. He studies audience engagement, digital economy, and research methods. Recently, he has published empirical studies in *New Media & Society* and *European Journal of Communication* as well as a chapter on quantitative methods in *A Handbook of Media and Communication Research*. Contact: Jacob.oermen@hum.ku.dk.

References:

- Almond, G., & Verba, S. (1963). *The Civic Culture: Political Attitudes and Democracy in Five Nations*. Princeton University Press.
- Archer, M. S. (2008). *Structure, Agency and the Internal Conversation*. Cambridge University Press.

- Arendt, H. (1958). *The Human Condition* (Vol. 2). University of Chicago Press.
- Busselle, R., & Bilandzic, H. (2009). Measuring Narrative Engagement. *Media Psychology, 12*(4), 321–347.
- Chaffee, S. H. (1991). *Communication Concepts I: Explication*. SAGE.
- Chu, S.-C., & Kim, Y. (2011). Determinants of consumer engagement in electronic word-of-mouth (eWOM) in social networking sites. *International Journal of Advertising, 30*(1), 47–75.
- Corbett, S., & Wessels, B. (2017). Active audiences and reflexivity: How film audiences form in northern English regions. . . *Participations: Journal of Audience and Reception Studies, 14*(2), 63–79.
- Couldry, N., Livingstone, S., & Markham, T. (2010). *Media Consumption and Public Engagement—Beyond the Presumption of Attention* (2nd ed.). Palgrave Macmillan. (Original work published 2007)
- Crawford, K. (2009). Following you: Disciplines of listening in social media. *Continuum, 23*, 525–535.
- Curran, J. (2019). Democratic Functions of Entertainment. In J. Curran & D. Hesmondhalgh (Eds.), *MEDIA AND SOCIETY* (6th ed., pp. 281–302). Bloomsbury.
- Dempsey, S. E. (2010). Critiquing Community Engagement. *Management Communication Quarterly, 24*(3), 359–390.
- Dhanesh, G. S. (2017). Putting engagement in its PRoper place: State of the field, definition and model of engagement in public relations. *Public Relations Review, 43*(5), 925–933.
- Dixon, M. D., Greenwell, M. R., Rogers-Stacy, C., Weister, T., & Lauer, S. (2017). Nonverbal immediacy behaviors and online student engagement: Bringing past instructional research into the present virtual classroom. *Communication Education, 66*(1), 37–53.
- Drok, N., Hermans, L., & Kats, K. (2017). Decoding youth DNA: The relationship between social engagement and news interest, news media use and news preferences of Dutch millennials. *Journalism, 19*(5), 699–717.
- Eck, N. J. van, & Waltman, L. (2009). How to normalize cooccurrence data? An analysis of some well-known similarity measures. *Journal of the American Society for Information Science and Technology, 60*(8), 1635–1651.
- Eliasoph, N. (1998). *Avoiding politics: How Americans produce apathy in everyday life*. Cambridge University Press.
- Ellison, N. B., Triêu, P., Schoenebeck, S., Brewer, R., & Israni, A. (2020). Why We Don't Click: Interrogating the Relationship Between Viewing and Clicking in Social Media Contexts by Exploring the 'Non-Click.' *Journal of Computer-Mediated Communication, 25*(6), 402–426.
- Evans, S. K., Pearce, K. E., Vitak, J., & Treem, J. W. (2017). Explicating Affordances: A Conceptual Framework for Understanding Affordances in Communication Research. *Journal of Computer-Mediated Communication, 22*, 35–52.
- Giddens, A. (1984). *The Constitution of Society: Outline of the Theory of Structuration*. University of California Press.
- Gil de Zúñiga, H., Jung, N., & Valenzuela, S. (2012). Social Media Use for News and Individuals' Social Capital, Civic Engagement and Political Participation. *Journal of Computer-Mediated Communication, 17*(3), 319–336.
- Grabe, M. E., Zhou, S., & Barnett, B. (2001). Explicating Sensationalism in Television News: Content and the Bells and Whistles of Form. *Journal of Broadcasting & Electronic Media, 45*(4), 635–655.

- Guo, L., Vargo, C. J., Pan, Z., Ding, W., & Ishwar, P. (2016). Big Social Data Analytics in Journalism and Mass Communication: Comparing Dictionary-Based Text Analysis and Unsupervised Topic Modeling. *Journalism & Mass Communication Quarterly*, 93(2), 332–359.
- Guo, M. (2018). How Television Viewers Use Social Media to Engage with Programming: The Social Engagement Scale Development and Validation. *Journal of Broadcasting & Electronic Media*, 62(2), 195–214.
- Ha, L., Xu, Y., Yang, C., Wang, F., Yang, L., Abuljadail, M., Hu, X., Jiang, W., & Gabay, I. (2018). Decline in news content engagement or news medium engagement? A longitudinal analysis of news engagement since the rise of social and mobile media 2009–2012. *Journalism*, 19(5), 718–739.
- Hampton, K. N., Livio, O., & Sessions Goulet, L. (2010). The Social Life of Wireless Urban Spaces: Internet Use, Social Networks, and the Public Realm. *Journal of Communication*, 60(4), 701–722.
- Heiss, R., Schmuck, D., & Matthes, J. (2019). What drives interaction in political actors' Facebook posts? Profile and content predictors of user engagement and political actors' reactions. *Information, Communication & Society*, 22(10), 1497–1513.
- Helsper, E. J., & Eynon, R. (2013). Distinct skill pathways to digital engagement. *European Journal of Communication*, 28(6), 696–713.
- Hochschild, A. R. (2016). *Strangers in their own land: Anger and mourning on the American right*. New Press.
- Jacobs, L. R., Cook, F. L., & Carpini, M. X. D. (2009). *Talking Together: Public Deliberation and Political Participation in America*. University of Chicago Press.
- Keinonen, H., Jensen, P. M., Lemor, A. M., & Esser, A. (2018). Modes of engagement with musical talent shows: Studying audience engagement as a set of experiences. *Participations*, 15(2). <https://www.participations.org/Volume%2015/Issue%202/5.pdf>
- Kiousis, S. (2002). Interactivity: A concept explication. *New Media & Society*, 4, 355–383.
- Kiousis, S. (2004). Explicating Media Salience: A Factor Analysis of New York Times Issue Coverage During the 2000 U.S. Presidential Election. *Journal of Communication*, 54(1), 71–87.
- Ksiazek, T. B., Peer, L., & Lessard, K. (2014). User engagement with online news: Conceptualizing interactivity and exploring the relationship between online news videos and user comments. *New Media & Society, Online Fir*.
- Livingstone, S. (2005). On the relation between audiences and publics. In S. Livingstone (Ed.), *Audiences and Publics: When Cultural Engagement Matters for the Public Sphere* (pp. 17–41). Intellect Books.
- Livingstone, S. (2018). Audiences in an Age of Datafication: Critical Questions for Media Research. *Television & New Media*, 20(2), 170–183.
- Lomborg, S., & Kapsch, P. H. (2020). Decoding algorithms. *Media, Culture & Society*, 42(5), 745–761.
- Lovejoy, K., & Saxton, G. D. (2012). Information, Community, and Action: How Nonprofit Organizations Use Social Media*. *Journal of Computer-Mediated Communication*, 17(3), 337–353.
- Macnaghten, P., Kearnes, M. B., & Wynne, B. (2005). Nanotechnology, Governance, and Public Deliberation: What Role for the Social Sciences? *Science Communication*, 27(2), 268–291.
- Marchionni, D. M. (2013). Journalism-as-a-Conversation: A Concept Explication. *Communication Theory*, 23, 131–147.

- Messing, S., & Westwood, S. J. (2014). Selective Exposure in the Age of Social Media. *Communication Research, 41*, 1042–1063.
- Mihailidis, P. (2014). A tethered generation: Exploring the role of mobile phones in the daily life of young people. *Mobile Media & Communication, 2*(1), 58–72.
- Moe, H., Poell, T., & van Dijck, J. (2016). Rearticulating Audience Engagement: Social Media and Television. *Television & New Media, 17*, 99–107.
- Morley, D. (1980). *The nationwide audience: Structure and decoding*. British Film Institute.
- Nah, S., & Armstrong, C. L. (2011). Structural Pluralism in Journalism and Media Studies: A Concept Explication and Theory Construction. *Mass Communication and Society, 14*(6), 857–878.
- Natale, S., & Treré, E. (2020). Vinyl won't save us: Reframing disconnection as engagement. *Media, Culture & Society, 42*(4), 626–633.
- Nelson, J. L. (2018). The Elusive Engagement Metric. *Digital Journalism, 6*(4), 528–544.
- O'Neill, S., & Nicholson-Cole, S. (2009). 'Fear Won't Do It': Promoting Positive Engagement With Climate Change Through Visual and Iconic Representations. *Science Communication, 30*(3), 355–379.
- Ørmen, J. (2016). *A Public Conversation in Private Settings: Engaging with News across Media* [PhD Dissertation]. University of Copenhagen.
- Östman, J. (2012). Information, expression, participation: How involvement in user-generated content relates to democratic engagement among young people. *New Media & Society, 14*(6), 1004–1021.
- Papacharissi, Z. (2016). Affective publics and structures of storytelling: Sentiment, events and mediality. *Information, Communication & Society, 19*(3), 307–324.
- Rogers, E. M. (1962). *Diffusion of innovations*. Free Press.
- Rogers, R. (2013). *Digital Methods*. The MIT Press.
- Sartori, G. (1970). Concept Misinformation in Comparative Politics. *American Political Science Review, 64*, 1033–1053.
- Saxton, G. D., & Waters, R. D. (2014). What do Stakeholders Like on Facebook? Examining Public Reactions to Nonprofit Organizations' Informational, Promotional, and Community-Building Messages. *Journal of Public Relations Research, 26*(3), 280–299.
- Sears, D. O., & Freedman, J. L. (1967). Selective Exposure to Information: A Critical Review. *Public Opinion Quarterly, 31*(2), 194.
- Shah, D. V., & Scheufele, D. A. (2006). Explicating Opinion Leadership: Nonpolitical Dispositions, Information Consumption, and Civic Participation. *Political Communication, 23*(1), 1–22.
- Shen, H., & Jiang, H. (2019). Engaged at work? An employee engagement model in public relations. *Journal of Public Relations Research, 31*(1–2), 32–49.
- Smith, M. (1995). *Engaging characters: Fiction, emotion, and the cinema*. Oxford University Press.
- Steensen, S., Ferrer-Conill, R., & Peters, C. (2020). (Against a) Theory of Audience Engagement with News. *Journalism Studies, 21*(12), 1662–1680.
- Stilgoe, J., Lock, S. J., & Wilsdon, J. (2014). Special Issue: Public Engagement in Science. *Public Understanding of Science, 23*(1), 4–15.
- Takahashi, T. (2010). MySpace or Mixi? Japanese engagement with SNS (social networking sites) in the global age. *New Media & Society, 12*(3), 453–475.
- Taneja, H., Wu, A. X., & Edgerly, S. (2017). Rethinking the generational gap in online news use: An infrastructural perspective. *New Media & Society, 14*6144481770734.

- Uprichard, E. (2009). *Introducing Cluster Analysis: What Can It Teach Us about the Case?* (D. Byrne & C. C. Ragin, Eds.; pp. 132–148). SAGE Publications Ltd.
- Vaccari, C., Chadwick, A., & O’Loughlin, B. (2015). Dual Screening the Political: Media Events, Social Media, and Citizen Engagement: Dual Screening the Political. *Journal of Communication*, 65(6), 1041–1061.
- van Eck, N. J., & Waltman, L. (2010). Software survey: VOSviewer, a computer program for bibliometric mapping. *Scientometrics*, 84(2), 523–538.
- van Eck, N. J., Waltman, L., Noyons, E. C. M., & Buter, R. K. (2010). Automatic term identification for bibliometric mapping. *Scientometrics*, 82(3), 581–596.
- Waltman, L., van Eck, N. J., & Noyons, E. C. M. (2010). A unified approach to mapping and clustering of bibliometric networks. *Journal of Informetrics*, 4(4), 629–635.
- Webster, J. G. (2014). *The Marketplace of Attention: How Audiences Take Shape in a Digital Age*. The MIT Press.
- Xenos, M., & Moy, P. (2007). Direct and Differential Effects of the Internet on Political and Civic Engagement: Direct and Differential Effects of the Internet. *Journal of Communication*, 57(4), 704–718.
- Zúñiga, H. G. I. L. D. E., Bachmann, I., & Brundidge, J. (2013). Expressive Versus Consumptive Blog Use: Implications for Interpersonal Discussion and Political Participation University of Texas at Austin. *International Journal of Communication*, 7, 1538–1559.

Notes:

¹ A simple search in the Web of Science catalogue reveals that approx. 98% of all articles that mentions the term ‘engagement’ in the title, abstract or keywords engagement in communication, film or media journals have been published post-2000 with the last five years accounting for approx. 50% of all of these. In contrast, about approx. 75% of the communication, film and media literature has been published after 2000 and only approx. 33% since 2015

(<https://apps.webofknowledge.com/>, accessed January 8, 2021).

² This includes 364 journals across the social science, arts and humanities. For a full list of publications associated with the ‘communication’ and ‘film, radio and television’ categories, see <https://mjl.clarivate.com> (accessed January 8, 2021).

³ The final query in the advanced search function in Web of Science (conducted January 8, 2021): ‘WC=(Film, Radio, Television OR Communication) AND TI=(engag*)’. The search covered all years and all indexes in ‘Web of Science Core Collection’.

⁴ Naturally, engagement had been influential in parts of the field before the advent of the internet. At least since the second world war, scholars have studied civic/political engagement (see e.g. Almond & Verba, 1963; Arendt, 1958). Likewise, in audience studies, David Morley among others made use of the concept early on to understand the active part played by audiences in the reception process (see e.g. Morley, 1980). In film and aesthetic research, people like Murray Smith had been developing theories of engagement before the popular diffusion of the internet (Smith, 1995). Nonetheless, this does not diminish the striking popularity of the term post-2000.