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Scientific Societal & Behavioral Research Journal
Vol. 2, No. 2; 2026
DOI: 10.63329/av3nz12331 ISSN:3080-2466

From Consumption to Creation: Social Media Engagement and Visit Intention in Vietnamese Restaurants

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Cite this paper:

Pham, N., Nghiem, A. H., & Ho, P. (2026). From Consumption to Creation: Social Media Engagement and Visit Intention in Vietnamese Restaurants. *Scientific Societal & Behavioral Journal*. 2(2), 1-37. DOI: 10.63329/av3nz12331

Received: April 26, 2026
Revised: May 27, 2026
Accepted: June 26, 2026

Abstract

Customer engagement with brand-related content on social media is increasingly recognised as a multidimensional phenomenon. Drawing on the Consumers' Online Brand-Related Activities (COBRA) framework, this study examines how content consumption, contribution, and creation influence consumers' attitudes toward online reviews and ratings and their purchase/visit intentions in the restaurant industry. Existing research has largely focused on highly visible engagement behaviors, leaving fewer observable forms of engagement underexplored, particularly in emerging markets. A quantitative, cross-sectional design was employed using survey data from 509 social media users engaging with Golden Gate Restaurant Group brands in Vietnam. Measurement scales were adapted from established studies, and the proposed model was tested using Structural Equation Modelling (SEM) with AMOS. The findings show that all three engagement dimensions have significant positive effects on attitudes toward online reviews and ratings and on purchase/visit intention. Content consumption, often considered a passive behavior, produced stronger effects on both attitudinal and behavioral outcomes than content contribution and creation. These results demonstrate the importance of low-visibility engagement behaviors in shaping consumer perceptions and decision-making processes. The study contributes to the

literature by extending the COBRA framework to the restaurant context and providing evidence from an emerging market. From a managerial perspective, the findings suggest that restaurant marketers should develop social media strategies that encourage engagement across all behavioral levels rather than concentrating solely on content creation. Overall, the study highlights the strategic value of customer engagement in influencing review perceptions and visit intentions within the digital restaurant environment.

Keywords: *COBRA framework, Customer engagement continuum, Brand-related social media, Attitudes toward online reviews, Restaurant visit intention*

JEL Classification: D83, L83, M31, M37

Introduction

Customer engagement has become a central construct in contemporary marketing, particularly in social media environments where value is increasingly created through interactions with brand-related content rather than through direct transactions (Van Doorn et al., 2010; Brodie et al., 2011). Reflecting this shift, recent research conceptualises engagement not as a single act or outcome, but as a graded system of observable behaviors that range from passive content exposure to active co-creation (Xiao & Chen, 2025).

One of the most influential frameworks underpinning this behavioral perspective is the Consumers' Online Brand-Related Activities (COBRA) framework (Muntinga et al., 2011). COBRA distinguishes three interrelated engagement behaviors: content consumption, contribution, and creation that differ in visibility, effort, and psychological involvement. Recent empirical studies demonstrate that these engagement levels generate brand value in different ways (Dinh & Lee, 2024; Moghddam et al., 2025). Importantly, emerging evidence challenges the traditional assumption that passive consumption is merely a precursor to active engagement. Instead, content consumption has been shown to constitute a meaningful form of engagement, with significant downstream attitudinal and behavioral consequences (Albuhameed, 2024; Xiao & Chen, 2025).

Despite these advances, prior engagement research has focused disproportionately on high-visibility behaviors such as liking, commenting, and user-generated content. However, it has systematically overlooked content consumption activities such as viewing and reading (Muntinga et al., 2011; Schivinski & Dabrowski, 2016). This selective focus has constrained theoretical understanding of engagement as a holistic behavioral continuum and limited empirical insight into how different engagement levels shape consumer attitudes and behavioral intentions.

These limitations are particularly salient in experiential service contexts such as restaurants, where social media content plays a critical role in shaping expectations, evaluations, and visit decisions (Hutter et al., 2013; Harrigan et al., 2017). Despite growing scholarly interest in consumer engagement, extant research continues to be disproportionately focused on developed economies, with emerging markets receiving comparatively limited attention (Islam et al., 2018). This

imbalance is notable given that engagement processes are context-dependent and shaped by socio-cultural and technological conditions. Vietnam represents a particularly relevant yet under-examined setting, characterised by rapid social media adoption and increasing reliance on online reviews and brand-related digital content in restaurant decision-making.

Against this backdrop, there remains a lack of empirical evidence examining how different levels of engagement with brand-related social media content influence both attitudinal outcomes, such as attitudes toward online reviews and ratings. This gap is particularly evident with respect to behavioral outcomes, including restaurant visit intention, especially within service industries and emerging markets.

To address these gaps, this study applies the COBRA framework to conceptualise customer engagement with restaurant brand-related social media content as a behavioral continuum comprising consumption, contribution, and creation. Using survey data collected from 509 Vietnamese social media users and analysed through Structural Equation Modelling (SEM), the study empirically examines (1) how each engagement level influences consumers' attitudes toward online reviews and ratings, and (2) how these engagement behaviors affect restaurant purchase/visit intention.

By integrating a graded engagement perspective with an emerging-market, service-industry context, this study contributes to engagement theory by validating the behavioral relevance of low-visibility engagement and by extending the COBRA framework to restaurant social media environments.

Research objectives

RO1: To examine how different levels of customer engagement with restaurant brand related social media content (consumption, contribution, and creation) influence consumers' attitudes toward online reviews and ratings.

RO2: To investigate the effects of consumption, contribution, and creation level engagement with restaurant brand related social media content on consumers' purchase/visit intention.
Accordingly, six hypotheses are developed in the literature review to address the two research objectives presented above.

Literature Review

The COBRA Framework and Customer Engagement Continuum

Customer engagement with brand-related content on social media has increasingly been conceptualized as a multidimensional behavioral phenomenon rather than a single form of participation. One of the most influential frameworks in this stream of research is the COBRA framework (Consumers' Online Brand-Related Activities), introduced by Muntinga, Moorman, and Smit (2011). COBRA distinguishes three qualitatively different yet interrelated engagement

behaviors which are content consumption, content contribution, and content creation. They are conceptualised as a continuum of engagement intensity rather than discrete or binary states.

Within the COBRA framework, content consumption refers to passive interactions such as reading posts, viewing videos, or browsing reviews without direct interaction. Content contribution involves low to moderate levels of active participation, such as liking, sharing, rating, or commenting on existing content. Content creation, the most intensive form, encompasses the production of original content, including writing reviews, posting experiences, or generating brand-related narratives (Muntinga et al., 2011). These behaviors differ in visibility, effort, and psychological involvement, yet together form a comprehensive representation of how consumers engage with brand-related content in digital environments.

Despite the conceptual breadth of the COBRA framework, prior engagement research has frequently examined only one level of the continuum, most commonly contribution behaviors such as commenting or liking, thereby limiting theoretical insight into the full engagement spectrum (Dolan et al., 2016). By privileging visible and easily measurable actions, earlier studies often overlooked consumption behaviors or treated them as preliminary stages rather than meaningful engagement outcomes in their own right. This selective focus has constrained understanding of how different engagement levels shape attitudinal and behavioral responses.

Recent research has begun to address this limitation by empirically extending the COBRA framework across diverse digital contexts, including viral marketing campaigns, social commerce platforms, and influencer-driven environments (Cheung et al., 2021; Dinh & Lee, 2024; Moghddam et al., 2025). Collectively, these studies demonstrate that consumption, contribution, and creation behaviors are not only differentiated by their level of activeness but also by their antecedents, prevalence, and behavioral consequences. For instance, Cheung et al. (2021) show that lower-intensity COBRA behaviors, particularly content consumption and contribution, occur more frequently and play a substantial role in driving brand-related outcomes, challenging the dominance traditionally attributed to creation activities. On the other hand, Dinh and Lee (2024) show that campaign values such as aesthetic appeal and self-identity consistently influence all three COBRA behaviors. Similarly, Moghddam et al. (2025) demonstrate that consumption and contribution behaviors account for a substantial proportion of overall engagement volume in social commerce settings. Taken together, these findings contest the assumption that creation-level behaviors alone represent meaningful or valuable forms of consumer engagement.

The conceptual foundation of the COBRA framework is closely aligned with customer engagement behavior theory, which defines engagement as customers' behavioral manifestations toward brands that extend beyond transactions (Van Doorn et al., 2010). From this perspective, engagement behaviors form a hierarchy of interaction intensity, but higher intensity does not necessarily imply greater importance or impact. Instead, different engagement forms may generate distinct cognitive, emotional, and evaluative outcomes depending on context.

Nevertheless, many engagement studies continue to privilege high-visibility behaviors, maintaining an implicit hierarchical bias that prioritises contribution and creation while treating

consumption as marginal (Schivinski & Dabrowski, 2016). This bias has been increasingly contested. Albuhameed (2024), for instance, demonstrates that content consumption, often labelled as "lurking" is a strategic, intentional, and outcome-relevant behavior, characterised by distinct cognitive processing and evaluative mechanisms rather than disengagement. This reconceptualization positions consumption as an integral component of engagement rather than its absence.

Supporting this view, entropy-based engagement models further reveal that low-visibility behaviors contribute substantially to aggregate engagement value and downstream brand outcomes. Xiao and Chen (2025) show that consumption-level engagement plays a significant role in shaping brand experience, attachment, and financial performance, reinforcing the importance of examining engagement holistically rather than selectively.

Drawing on these recent extensions, the present study adopts the COBRA framework, as depicted in Figure 1, to conceptualise customer engagement with restaurant brand-related social media content as a behavioral continuum. Within this continuum, consumption, contribution, and creation represent increasing levels of interaction intensity but not necessarily increasing importance (Dinh & Lee, 2024; Xiao & Chen, 2025). In experiential service contexts such as restaurants, even passive engagement may meaningfully shape consumer attitudes, evaluations, and intentions due to the symbolic, sensory, and informational richness of social media content. This provides a strong theoretical foundation for examining how different COBRA engagement levels relate to consumers' attitudes toward online reviews and ratings.

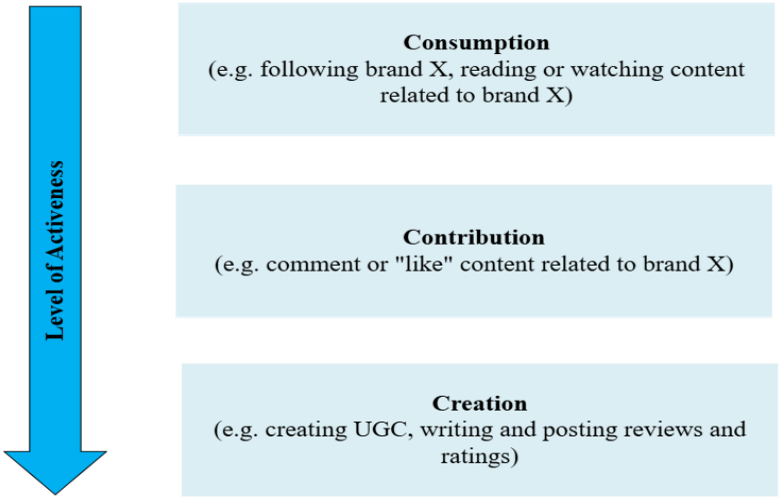


Figure 1: *Three levels of Customer engagement with Brand-related content on social media Source: authors' illustration based on the COBRA Framework*

Levels of Social Media Content Engagement and Attitudes Toward Reviews and Ratings

The growing prominence of online reviews and ratings reflects a broader shift in digital engagement, from firm-controlled communication to content centric and user driven interaction (Schivinski & Dabrowski, 2016). Within social media and review platforms, consumers interact

with content in diverse ways that go beyond simple participation or nonparticipation. Contemporary engagement research emphasizes that engagement occurs along a continuum of intensity, involving qualitatively different forms of cognitive, emotional, and behavioral involvement (Calder, Malthouse, & Schaedel, 2016; Calder et al., 2009). Understanding how these graded engagement behaviors influence consumers' attitudes toward reviews and ratings is therefore central to both engagement theory and review related research.

Drawing on the COBRA framework and subsequent engagement typologies, user engagement with online content can be conceptualised across three ascending levels: content consumption, content contribution, and content creation (Schivinski, Christodoulides, & Dabrowski, 2016; Carlson et al., 2018). These engagement forms differ in required effort, visibility, and psychological involvement, and are theorised to produce different attitudinal consequences. In review contexts, such engagement behaviors are particularly salient, as reviews and ratings depend on users' willingness to interact with, evaluate, and generate content.

Content Consumption and Attitude Toward Reviews and Ratings

Content consumption refers to passive or observational engagement, such as reading reviews, browsing ratings, or monitoring discussions without overt participation. Although traditionally labelled as "lurking," recent research challenges the notion that consumption is inactive or insignificant (Albuhameed, 2024). Instead, lurking is increasingly understood as strategic, reflective, and multi dimensional behavior, involving cognitive processing and evaluative judgement. Albuhameed's (2024) mixed methods work demonstrates that consumers engage deeply with content through consumption, even in the absence of visible interaction.

From an engagement perspective, consumption represents a foundational level of involvement that enables consumers to construct meaning and form evaluative beliefs (Calder et al., 2009). In the context of reviews, repeated exposure enhances familiarity with rating systems, increases perceived usefulness, and reinforces consumers' confidence in the informational value of reviews. Calder, Isaac, and Malthouse (2016) argue that such engagement experiences shape downstream attitudes by embedding content within users' everyday decision contexts.

Moreover, as platforms become increasingly content centric, consumers who consistently consume review information begin to perceive reviews and ratings as integral, reliable tools for evaluation rather than peripheral cues (Schivinski & Dabrowski, 2016). This suggests that content consumption alone can foster favourable attitudes toward reviews and rating mechanisms.

H1a: *Content consumption has a positive effect on attitude toward reviews and ratings.*

Content Contribution and Attitude Toward Reviews and Ratings

Content contribution reflects a higher level of engagement in which users interact with existing content through actions such as liking, sharing, rating, or commenting. This form of engagement requires greater cognitive and social involvement than mere consumption and signals partial participation in value co creation (Carlson et al., 2018). Contribution behaviors are particularly

important in review environments, as ratings and endorsements function as aggregative signals that shape collective evaluations.

Engagement scholars emphasize that contribution strengthens users' psychological connection to platforms by fostering a sense of participation and influence (Calder et al., 2009; Bilro et al., 2019). When consumers rate products or react to reviews, they become stakeholders in the review ecosystem, which enhances trust in the system and reinforces positive attitudes toward reviews and ratings themselves. This aligns with research showing that engagement behaviors generate affective and cognitive benefits, such as perceived empowerment and relevance (Carlson et al., 2018).

Additionally, Schivinski et al. (2016) highlight that contribution marks a transition from passive exposure to interactive engagement, reinforcing the perceived credibility and legitimacy of content mechanisms. As users contribute, they are more likely to view reviews and ratings as transparent, fair, and representative, leading to more favourable attitudes.

H1b: *Content contribution has a positive effect on attitude toward reviews and ratings.*

Content Creation and Attitude Toward Reviews and Ratings

Content creation represents the most intensive form of engagement, involving the production of original content such as detailed reviews, narratives, or recommendations. This behavior requires substantial effort and reflects strong cognitive, emotional, and identity-based investment (Schivinski et al., 2016; Carlson et al., 2018). In review contexts, content creators actively shape marketplace knowledge and influence others' decisions.

Research consistently shows that high intensity engagement behaviors are associated with stronger attitudinal and experiential outcomes. Calder et al. (2016) argue that content creation embeds engagement within personally meaningful experiences, which amplifies its attitudinal impact. Similarly, Bilro et al. (2019) demonstrate that deeper engagement is linked to stronger involvement, emotional states, and advocacy outcomes.

Recent advances in engagement measurement further highlight the strategic importance of content creation. Xiao and Chen (2025) demonstrate, using an entropy-based methodology, that customer engagement behaviors including content creation directly influence brand experience, attachment, and even financial performance. These findings underscore that active content creators are not only participants but also value generators, which strengthens their positive evaluation of the mechanisms enabling such engagement, namely reviews and ratings.
Given their investment and identity expression through content creation, these users are likely to hold the most favourable attitudes toward review and rating systems.

H1c: *Content creation has a positive effect on attitude toward reviews and ratings.*

Engagement with Brand-Related Social Media Content and Visit Intention

In service contexts, particularly hospitality and restaurants, visit intention represents a critical behavioral outcome reflecting consumers' readiness to convert evaluative judgements into actual marketplace behavior. Visit intention has been widely used as a proxy for future consumption because it captures the motivational state preceding service encounters (Brodie et al., 2013; Harrigan et al., 2017). Growing evidence suggests that social media engagement plays a central role in shaping such intentions by reducing uncertainty, enhancing experiential expectations, and strengthening the psychological connection between consumers and brands (Hollebeek et al., 2014).

Within the COBRA framework, engagement behaviors which include content consumption, contribution, and creation represent different degrees of interaction intensity with brand-related content, each of which may influence visit intention through distinct cognitive and affective pathways. Drawing on customer engagement behavior theory (Van Doorn et al., 2010) and engagement-based value creation logic (Hollebeek et al., 2014), the following sections develop hypotheses linking each engagement level to visit intention.

Content Consumption and Visit Intention

Content consumption involves passive engagement such as viewing social media posts, reading reviews, and watching food images or videos without observable contribution. In experiential service sectors such as restaurants, consumption-level engagement is particularly salient because social media content provides rich symbolic and informational cues related to ambience, food quality, and social experience (Harrigan et al., 2017).

Hollebeek et al. (2014) argue that engagement behaviors generate value by fostering cognitive and emotional responses that translate into behavioral intentions. Even at low levels of visibility, consumption enables consumers to develop favourable mental imagery, reduce perceived risk, and enhance familiarity with the service offering, all of which are known antecedents of visit intention. Recent empirical evidence supports this view. Albuhameed (2024) and Xiao and Chen (2025) demonstrate that consumption-level engagement contributes significantly to downstream outcomes, challenging the assumption that only active behaviors drive behavioral responses.

Industry and sector-specific evidence further underscores the importance of consumption. Cropink (2026) reports that 74% of diners use social media content to decide where to eat, highlighting how exposure to restaurant-related content directly informs visit decisions. In a related vein, Sarkis et al. (2025) demonstrate that exposure to social media advertising and electronic word-of-mouth in the food and beverage sector significantly enhances customer responsiveness by stimulating digital engagement. Complementing this, Sarkis et al. (2024) show that the persuasive impact of such content is strengthened through para-social relationships and perceived trustworthiness, indicating that engagement-driven responsiveness is not only content-dependent but also relational in nature.

Accordingly, content consumption is expected to positively influence consumers' intention to visit

a restaurant.

H2a: *Content consumption has a positive effect on visit intention.*

Content Contribution and Visit Intention

Content contribution reflects a moderate level of engagement, involving actions such as liking, sharing, rating, or commenting on restaurant-related social media content. These behaviors signal a transition from observation to interaction and indicate a higher degree of psychological involvement with the brand (Schivinski et al., 2016).

From a customer engagement perspective, contribution behaviors enhance perceived participation and co-creation, strengthening consumers' relational ties with brands (Brodie et al., 2013). Harrigan et al. (2017), in their study of tourism social media brands, demonstrate that customer engagement behaviors, particularly interactive forms have a direct and positive effect on intention-related outcomes. Similarly, Filieri and McLeay (2014) show that interacting with online reviews and ratings increases their diagnosticity, which in turn influences future behavioral intentions.

Empirical studies in restaurant and hospitality contexts provide further support. Recent studies demonstrate that engagement with restaurant brands on Instagram functions as a key mechanism linking online interactions to consumers' intentions to visit physical outlets. Specifically, Alboji et al. (2024) show that interactive engagement and contribution behaviors such as commenting and content sharing, translate digital brand encounters into offline behavioral intentions. Complementing this, Rasty and Filieri (2024) highlight that these contribution-oriented engagement activities strengthen relational outcomes, including brand trust and commitment, which in turn serve as strong predictors of visit intention within restaurant and service contexts. In addition, Katyal and Sehgal (2025) conceptualised online consumer reviews as credibility-driven contribution behaviors. When consumed by other users, these behaviors shape trust formation and purchase decisions, highlighting credibility as a critical boundary condition in the effectiveness of brand-related online engagement. Thus, consumers who actively contribute to restaurant-related content are more likely to develop stronger intentions to visit the restaurant.

H2b: *Content contribution has a positive effect on visit intention.*

Content Creation and Visit Intention

Content creation represents the highest level of engagement intensity and includes producing original content such as reviews, blog posts, or food vlogs. This form of engagement requires substantial cognitive, emotional, and identity investment, and consequently exerts a strong influence on downstream behavioral intentions (Hollebeek et al., 2014).

Creation-level engagement has been shown to foster deep relational bonds with brands and enhance behavioral loyalty. In hospitality research, Harrigan et al. (2017) and Brodie et al. (2013) demonstrate that highly engaged consumers are more likely to translate engagement into usage-

related intentions. Recent studies further underline the growing influence of creator-driven food vlog content in shaping restaurant-related consumer responses. Nguyen et al. (2024) show that food vloggers' content characteristics such as informational value, entertainment, and authenticity significantly affect consumers' attitudes and purchase intentions by enhancing engagement and perceived credibility. Similarly, Villanueva et al. (2024) demonstrate that exposure to food vlogs positively influences diners' attitudes toward restaurant selection and strengthens visit intention, highlighting the persuasive role of vlog-based content in restaurant decision-making.

Furthermore, evidence from the food and beverage context suggests that influencer-generated and user-created content plays a pivotal role in shaping consumer perceptions and behavioral responsiveness through digital engagement (Sarkis et al., 2025). Extending this insight, Sarkis et al. (2024) reveal that influencers and unpaid collaborators often act as highly engaged consumers themselves, whose trust-based para-social interactions amplify message credibility and behavioral influence. Taken together, these findings suggest that content creators are not merely information intermediaries but deeply engaged brand participants whose engagement simultaneously influences others and reinforces their own behavioral intentions.

Given the depth of involvement and personal meaning embedded in content creation, it is expected to exert a strong positive influence on visit intention among the three COBRA engagement levels.

H2c: *Content creation has a positive effect on visit intention.*

The 6 hypothesizes H1a-b-c and H2a-b-c have formed the conceptual framework as shown in Figure 2.

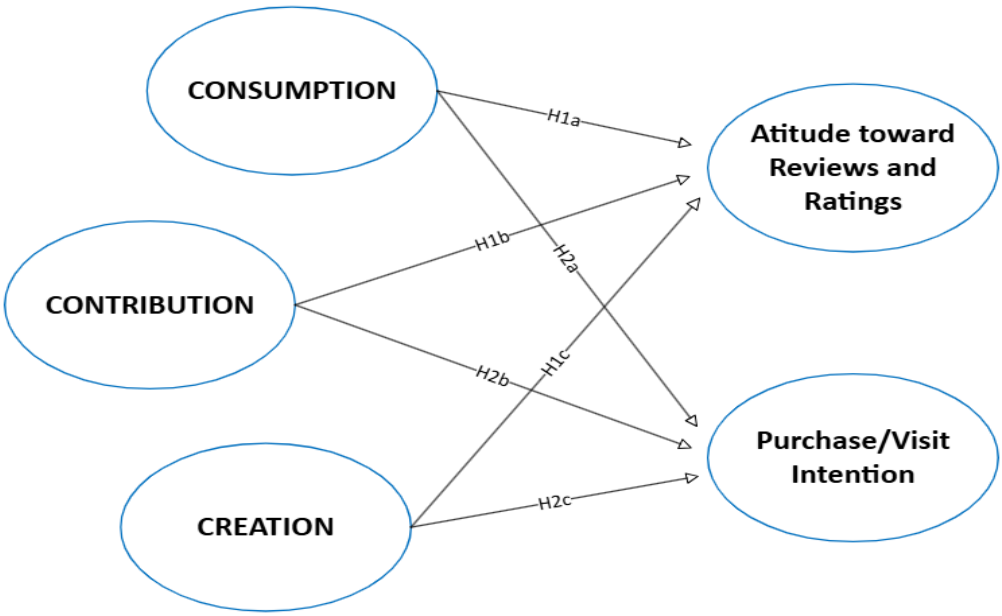


Figure 2: *Conceptual Framework with 6 proposed hypotheses*
Source: authors' own illustration

Table 1: Summary of the theories application in this study

Theory / Model	Core Logic	Application in This Study	Related Hypotheses	Key References
COBRA Framework (Consumers' Online Brand-Related Activities)	Conceptualizes customer engagement as a behavioral continuum comprising content consumption, contribution, and creation, differing in effort, visibility, and psychological involvement	Provides the primary structural framework for modelling graded engagement with restaurant brand-related social media content	H1a–H1c, H2a–H2c	Muntinga et al. (2011); Schivinski et al. (2016); Cheung et al. (2021); Dinh & Lee (2024)
Customer Engagement Behavior Theory	Engagement consists of behavioral manifestations beyond transactions and generates attitudinal and behavioral outcomes	Explains how different engagement behaviors translate into attitudes toward reviews and ratings and visit intention	H1a–H1c, H2a–H2c	Van Doorn et al. (2010); Brodie et al. (2013); Hollebeek et al. (2014)
Engagement as a Graded / Continuum Process	Engagement is non-binary; low-visibility behaviors such as consumption are intentional, meaningful, and outcome-relevant	Justifies treating content consumption as a substantive engagement behavior rather than a precursor or absence of engagement	H1a, H2a	Calder et al. (2009); Calder et al. (2016); Albuhameed (2024); Xiao & Chen (2025)
Engagement–Attitude Formation Mechanism	Repeated engagement enhances familiarity, trust, diagnostic, and evaluative confidence	Explains how engagement with brand-related content shapes attitudes toward online reviews and ratings	H1a–H1c	Filieri & McLeay (2014); Schivinski & Dabrowski (2016); Katyal & Sehgal (2025)

Engagement–Behavioral Intention Linkage in Service Contexts	Engagement reduces uncertainty, enhances experiential expectations, and strengthens psychological connection, driving behavioral intentions	Explains how engagement with restaurant social media content influences visit intention	H2a–H2c	Harrigan et al. (2017); Alboji et al. (2024); Rasty & Filieri (2024); Sarkis et al. (2025)
Content-Centric and Creator-Driven Engagement Perspective	Content, not the brand itself is the main engagement object; user-generated and influencer content shapes perceptions and behavior through credibility and parasocial interaction	Supports the inclusion of creation-level engagement and explains its strong influence on visit intention	H2c	Nguyen et al. (2024); Villanueva et al. (2024); Sarkis et al. (2024)
Emerging Market and Context-Dependent Engagement Perspective	Engagement processes vary across socio-cultural and technological contexts; emerging markets remain under-examined	Justifies Vietnam as an appropriate empirical context and highlights the contextual contribution of the study	All hypotheses	Islam et al. (2018); Thu (2020); Popy & Bappy (2022)

Source: authors' own illustration based on extensive literature review

In conclusion, this literature review has established a robust theoretical foundation for examining customer engagement with restaurant brand-related social media content by adopting the COBRA framework as a behavioral continuum comprising content consumption, contribution, and creation. Drawing on customer engagement behavior theory and recent empirical advancements, the review demonstrates that all three engagement levels are theoretically meaningful and behaviorally consequential, challenging the traditional emphasis on high-visibility engagement alone. Accordingly, six hypotheses (H1a–H1c and H2a–H2c) were developed to explain how graded engagement behaviors shape attitudes toward reviews and ratings and influence visit intention.

Table 1 summarizes the key theories and empirical studies underpinning this research, illustrating how the COBRA framework and customer engagement theory are applied to develop the study's conceptual framework (Figure 2). This synthesis highlights the importance of examining customer engagement holistically, particularly in digitally intensive and experiential service settings.

Importantly, the study is contextualized within Vietnam, an emerging economy characterized by rapid growth in internet penetration, social media usage, and digital consumer engagement. The Vietnamese restaurant industry provides a particularly suitable empirical context due to its high competitiveness and strong reliance on social media, online reviews, and electronic word of mouth in shaping consumer decision-making. Focusing on Golden Gate Restaurant Group, a leading and highly representative restaurant chain in Vietnam with a strong social media presence, further enhances the relevance and practical significance of the study by situating engagement behaviors within an information-rich and digitally active environment.

Building on this theoretical and contextual foundation, the following section outlines the research methodology adopted to empirically test the proposed hypotheses. It details the research design, sampling strategy, measurement instruments, data collection procedures, and analytical techniques used to examine the relationships between customer engagement behaviors, attitudes toward reviews and ratings, and visit intention.

Research Methodology

Research Context: Vietnam and the Restaurant Industry

This study is conducted in Vietnam, an emerging economy characterized by rapid growth in internet penetration, social media usage, and digital consumer engagement (Hootsuite, 2025). Vietnam has one of the fastest growing social media user bases in Southeast Asia, with platforms such as Facebook, Instagram, and YouTube embedded in consumers' daily lives for information search, social interaction, and consumption related decision making (Hootsuite, Statista, 2025). Prior research suggests that Vietnamese consumers rely heavily on user-generated online reviews and ratings, often accessed through review platforms and brand-related social media channels, to evaluate experiential services such as restaurants. These digital evaluations play a central role in shaping perceptions of service quality, satisfaction, and overall value, thereby informing consumers' judgement and choice of dining venues (Thu, 2020).

The restaurant industry provides an especially suitable empirical context due to its strong expansion, high competitiveness, and increasing dependence on social media marketing. Vietnamese restaurant brands actively use social media to disseminate content, stimulate customer engagement, encourage electronic word of mouth (eWOM) and influence visit intentions (Leung et al, 2015). This digitally intensive environment makes customer engagement with brand related content both observable and behaviorally consequential within the Vietnamese restaurant sector.

Research Design and Methodological Approach

DOI: 10.63329/av3nz12331 ISSN:3080-2466

This study adopts a positivist research paradigm and employs a quantitative, deductive research design Rehman & Alharthi (2016). Positivism is appropriate because the study seeks to empirically test theoretically derived hypotheses (Cohen et al., 2007) concerning the relationships between customer engagement behaviors (content consumption, contribution, and creation), attitudes toward reviews and ratings, and visit intention.

A cross-sectional survey design was used to collect primary data from social media users at a single point in time. Survey based quantitative methods are widely recognized as appropriate for customer engagement research, particularly when examining latent constructs and testing causal relationships derived from existing theory (Van Doorn et al., 2010; Hollebeek et al., 2014).

Research Instrument

Data was collected via a structured, self-administered online questionnaire, developed directly from the measurement framework validated in the conceptual framework Figure 2. An online, web-based questionnaire was employed due to its methodological advantages. Web-based surveys allow greater flexibility in questionnaire design through diverse question formats (Malhotra & Birks, 2006) and facilitate targeted access to specific respondent demographics (Evans & Mathur, 2005). In addition, online questionnaires reduce response errors by enabling automatic validation, conditional questioning, and mandatory responses, thereby improving data completeness and quality (Hair et al., 2010).

All constructs were operationalized using multi-item Likert type scales adapted from established literature. Specifically, customer engagement behaviors were measured using the COBRA framework in Figure 2 as conceptualized by Muntinga et al. (2011) and operationalized by Schivinski and Dabrowski (2016). Outcome variables included attitude toward online reviews and ratings and restaurant visit intention, both commonly examined consequences of engagement in hospitality and eWOM research.

The use of previously validated scales ensured strong content validity and consistency with prior empirical research. Minor wording adaptations were made to ensure contextual relevance to the Vietnamese restaurant industry, following the procedures documented in the thesis.

Table 2: Measurements of three levels of customer engagement with brand-related content on social media

	Measurement Items	
Consumption	CONS1	I read posts related to restaurant brand(s) on social media sites
	CONS2	I read fanpage(s) related to restaurant brand(s) on social media sites
	CONS3	I view pictures/graphics related to restaurant brand(s) on social media sites
	CONS4	I follow blog(s) related to restaurant brand(s) on social media
	CONS5	I follow restaurant brand(s)' page(s) on social media sites
Contribution	CONT1	I comment on video(s) related to restaurant brands on social media
	CONT2	I comment on post(s) related to restaurant brands on social media

DOI: 10.63329/av3nz12331 ISSN:3080-2466

	CONT3	I comment on picture(s)/graphic(s) related to restaurant brands on social media
	CONT4	I share restaurant brand related post(s) on social media sites
	CONT5	I "Like" picture(s)/graphic(s) related to restaurant brands on social media sites
	CONT6	I "Like" post(s) related to restaurant brands on social media sites
Creation	CREA1	I initiate post(s) related to restaurant brands on blogs
	CREA2	I initiate post(s) related to restaurant brands on social networking sites
	CREA3	I post picture(s)/graphic(s) related to restaurant brands on social media
	CREA4	I post video(s) that show restaurant brands
	CREA5	I write post(s) related to restaurant brands on forums
	CREA6	I write review(s) related to restaurant brands

Source: authors' own illustration

Sampling Technique and Data Collection

The target population comprised Golden Gate Restaurant Group social media users in Vietnam who actively interacted with restaurant brand related content online. Golden Gate Restaurant Group was selected as the target population due to its dominant position and representativeness within Vietnam's restaurant industry. Established in 2005, Golden Gate operates more than 20 restaurant brands across over 400 outlets nationwide, covering a broad range of cuisines and dining concepts. The group is widely recognized as a pioneer of the restaurant chain model in Vietnam and serves approximately 18 million customers annually, encompassing diverse demographic segments in terms of age, gender, and income (Golden Gate Group, 2022).

Importantly, Golden Gate maintains a strong and active social media presence across multiple platforms, with nearly one million online community members engaging regularly with brand-related content such as promotions, reviews, videos, and interactive campaigns. This breadth of brands, customer base, and digital engagement makes Golden Gate a particularly suitable and information-rich context for examining customer engagement behaviors with restaurant brand-related social media content. It is especially valuable for analyzing their attitudinal and behavioral outcomes (Golden Gate Group, 2022; Forbes Vietnam, 2022).

Because a comprehensive sampling frame of all social media users engaging with restaurant brands was not available, a non-probability sampling approach was adopted, combining convenience and voluntary sampling techniques.

Respondents were recruited through restaurant related social media platforms, online brand communities, and personal social media networks. This approach ensured that participants had direct and relevant experience with restaurant social media content, online reviews, and ratings, an essential requirement for testing the proposed conceptual model in Figure 2.

Sample Size Justification

The final sample consisted of 509 valid responses, which provides strong methodological support for the analytical techniques employed in this study. Methodological literature indicates that large

sample sizes are recommended for structural equation modelling (SEM) and multivariate analyses, particularly when models include multiple latent constructs and hypothesized relationships. Hair et al. (2010) suggest that sample sizes between 100 and 500 are appropriate for SEM, with larger samples increasing statistical power, parameter stability, and model fit reliability. Similarly, Haque (2024) argue that complex structural models benefit from samples exceeding 200 observations, while samples above 500 provide highly robust estimates.

The sample size of 509 therefore exceeds the minimum thresholds recommended for SEM based research and aligns with best practice in customer engagement and hospitality studies. The large sample size enables reliable estimation of parameters, enhances generalizability within the Vietnamese restaurant context, and reduces the risk of estimation bias or model instability. This sample size is sufficient to support both measurement model validation and structural model testing with high statistical confidence.

Reliability and Validity

Measurement reliability was assessed to ensure the precision and consistency of the measurement instruments. Reliability refers to the degree to which a measurement procedure yields stable and accurate results (Thorndike et al., 1991). Within the context of Confirmatory Factor Analysis (CFA), reliability reflects the internal consistency of the indicators used to measure each latent construct (Said et al., 2011).

Reliability was evaluated using three established indices: Cronbach's alpha (α), Composite Reliability (CR), and Average Variance Extracted (AVE). Following accepted methodological thresholds, constructs are considered reliable when Cronbach's alpha exceeds 0.70 and both CR and AVE values are greater than 0.50 (Hair et al., 2006; Nunnally & Bernstein, 1994). As reported in Table 3, Cronbach's alpha values ranged from 0.806 to 0.953, while all constructs demonstrated CR and AVE values above the recommended minimum levels. These results indicate strong internal consistency and satisfactory convergent reliability across all measurement scales.

Reliability is further strengthened by the use of measurement items adapted from previously validated scales employed in prior engagement research supporting the robustness and replicability of the measurement framework.

Common Method Bias (CMB)

Given that all variables were collected through a single self-report survey at one point in time, common method bias (CMB) was assessed, as recommended by Podsakoff et al. (2003). Following Malhotra et al. (2006), a three-item fantasy marker variable that was theoretically unrelated to the study constructs was employed using the CFA marker variable technique. Comparisons among the CFA, Baseline, Method-C, and Method-R models revealed no significant differences in factor loadings or correlation estimates, indicating that common method variance did not materially affect the results. Therefore, CMB is unlikely to be a serious concern in this study (Podsakoff et al., 2003).

In addition, procedural remedies such as ensuring respondent anonymity and reducing evaluation apprehension were applied during survey design, further mitigating potential CMB.

Table 3: Reliability checks in Confirmatory Factor Analysis

Factors	Cronbach's Alpha	CR	AVE
CONS	0.874	0.937	0.747
CONT	0.898	0.957	0.789
CREA	0.953	0.964	0.817
ARR	0.846	0.901	0.695
PI	0.885	0.863	0.678

Source: Field data

Construct validity was assessed using Confirmatory Factor Analysis (CFA) in accordance with established measurement validation procedures. Convergent validity was supported by statistically significant and substantial factor loadings, together with satisfactory Average Variance Extracted (AVE) values for all constructs, indicating that the indicators adequately represented their underlying latent variables.

Discriminant validity was evaluated using the Fornell–Larcker criterion (Fornell & Larcker, 1981). As shown in Table 4, the square root of the AVE for each construct (reported on the diagonal in bold) exceeded the corresponding inter-construct correlations, satisfying the recommended threshold for discriminant validity. Furthermore, additional evidence was provided by confidence interval analysis, where the confidence intervals for correlations between each pair of constructs did not include the value of one (Table 5).

Overall, the CFA results demonstrate satisfactory construct, convergent, and discriminant validity, confirming the adequacy of the measurement model and supporting the robustness of the study's empirical findings.

Table 4: CR – Composite Reliabilities, AVE – Average Variance Extract, Construct Correlations and Square Root of AVE

	CR	AVE	ENT	SFI	RE	SI	SP	CONS	CONT	CREA	ARR	PI
ENT	0.926	0.807	**0.899**									
SFI	0.893	0.736	0.014	**0.858**								
RE	0.725	0.571	0.018	0.285	**0.755**							
SI	0.978	0.917	0.013	0.198	0.106	**0.958**						
SP	0.957	0.847	0.099	0.084	0.088	0.075	**0.92**					
CONS	0.937	0.747	0.235	0.217	0.174	0.177	0.16	**0.864**				
CONT	0.957	0.789	0.109	0.186	0.179	0.14	0.127	0.155	**0.888**			

DOI: 10.63329/av3nz12331 ISSN:3080-2466

CREA	0.964	0.817	0.117	0.111	0.16	0.123	0.127	0.093	0.155	**0.904**		
ARR	0.901	0.695	0.17	0.313	0.184	0.154	0.119	0.234	0.192	0.159	**0.834**	
PI	0.863	0.678	0.16	0.191	0.262	0.134	0.207	0.293	0.161	0.157	0.387	**0.823**

Source: Field data

Table 5: Correlations between each pair of constructs, estimates and t-values

Parameter			Estimate (r)	S.E=SQRT((1-r^2)/(n-2))	t-value	P
CONS	<-->	CONT	0.155	0.043875	19.25934	0.00
CONS	<-->	CREA	0.093	0.044219	20.51151	0.00
CONS	<-->	ARR	0.234	0.043179	17.74029	0.00
CONS	<-->	PI	0.293	0.042462	16.65001	0.00
CONT	<-->	CREA	0.155	0.043875	19.25934	0.00
CONT	<-->	ARR	0.192	0.043585	18.53837	0.00
CONT	<-->	PI	0.161	0.043832	19.14119	0.00
CREA	<-->	ARR	0.159	0.043847	19.18051	0.00
CREA	<-->	PI	0.157	0.043861	19.2199	0.00
ARR	<-->	PI	0.387	0.040951	14.96911	0.00

Source: Field data

Ethical Considerations

Ethical approval for this study was granted by Nottingham Trent University. All procedures complied with institutional ethical guidelines. Participation was voluntary, and respondents were provided with clear information regarding the study's purpose prior to participation. Informed consent was obtained electronically at the start of the questionnaire. No, personally identifiable data were collected, ensuring anonymity and confidentiality.

All data were stored securely and used solely for academic research purposes. Participants were informed of their right to withdraw at any stage without penalty, in line with institutional ethical guidelines and established ethical principles in social science research.

Findings and Discussions

Demographic and Geographic Profile of Respondents and The Use of Social Media

The demographic characteristics of the respondents are presented in Table 6. Among the 509 respondents, 40.7% were male and 59.3% were female. The sample was predominantly comprised of individuals aged between 26 and 45 years, accounting for 97.2% of respondents. Specifically, 75.4% were aged 26–35, while 21.8% were aged 36–45. Only 2.8% of respondents were under the age of 25, and no participants were aged above 45.

DOI: 10.63329/av3nz12331 ISSN:3080-2466

This age distribution is not unexpected, as individuals aged 26–45 represent the most active users of social media platforms and are also the demographic group with the highest frequency of dining out in Vietnam (Vietcetera, 2018). In terms of income, more than 91% of respondents reported a monthly income at or above the average level, whereas only 8.3% fell into the lower-income category.

Table 6: Demographic Statistics of Respondents

Variable	Category	Frequency	Percentage (%)	Total Sample (N)
Gender	Male	207	40.7	509
	Female	302	59.3	509
	Prefer not to say	0	0	509
Age Category	18-25	14	2.8	509
	26-35	384	75.4	509
	36-45	111	21.8	509
	46-55	0	0	509
	Over 55	0	0	509
Monthly Income	Less than 10 million VND (relatively low)	42	8.3	509
	10 million - 20 million VND (lower average)	204	40.1	509
	20 million - 30 million VND (upper average)	132	25.9	509
	More than 30 million VND (relatively high)	131	25.7	509

Source: Field data

In terms of geographic distribution, Table 7 indicates that the majority of respondents (91.4%) were in Vietnam's three largest cities: Hanoi, Ho Chi Minh City, and Da Nang. Hanoi accounted for the highest proportion of participants (52.7%), followed by Ho Chi Minh City with 32%, while the remaining respondents were based in Da Nang.

Table 7: Geography Statistics of Respondents

City/Province	Frequency	Percent
Binh Duong	1	0.2
Can Tho	5	1
Da Nang	34	6.7
Hai Phong	28	5.5
Hanoi	268	52.7

HCM	163	32
Lao Cai	1	0.2
Quang Binh	8	1.6
Thai Nguyen	1	0.2
Total	**509**	**100**

Source: Field data

Table 8: Respondents' use of social media

Variable	Category	Frequency	Percentage (%)	Total Sample (N)
Time spent on social media each day	Less than 30 minutes	27	5.3	509
	30–60 minutes	190	37.3	509
	1–3 hours	206	40.5	509
	3–5 hours	81	15.9	509
	More than 5 hours	5	1	509
Number of restaurants SNS they are member of	None	63	12.4	509
	1–5 sites	237	46.6	509
	6–15 sites	125	24.6	509
	More than 15 sites	84	16.4	509

Source: Field data

The frequency distribution of respondents' daily social media usage is presented in Table 8. The majority of respondents reported spending between 30 minutes and 3 hours on social media each day. Specifically, 37.3% used social media for 30–60 minutes, while 40.5% reported usage of 1–3 hours per day. A smaller proportion of respondents spent less than 30 minutes daily on social media (5.3%), whereas 15.9% reported usage of 3–5 hours. Only 1% of respondents indicated spending more than 5 hours per day on social media.

Analysis of social media usage by gender reveals no notable differences, with both male and female respondents spending similar amounts of time on social media each day. However, differences emerge across age groups. Respondents aged 18–25 reported the highest level of social media usage, with 92% indicating that they spent between 3 and 5 hours per day on social media. In contrast, respondents in the 36–45 age group reported the lowest levels of daily social media usage (Table 9).

Regarding membership in restaurant-related social networking sites, Table 7 shows that 46.6% of respondents were members of between one and five restaurant social media pages. A further 34.6%

DOI: 10.63329/av3nz12331 ISSN:3080-2466

reported membership in six to fifteen sites, while 16.4% were members of more than fifteen restaurant-related social networking sites. Only a small proportion of respondents (2.4%) indicated that they were not members of any restaurant-related social media platforms.

Table 9: Respondents' use of social media by Gender and Age

Demographic Group	Less than 30 mins (N)	%	30–60 mins (N)	%	1–3 hours (N)	%	3–5 hours (N)	%	More than 5 hours (N)	%
Gender										
Male	10	4.8	76	36.7	82	39.6	37	17.8	2	1
Female	16	5.2	117	38.7	126	41.7	41	14	2	0.6
Age Group										
18–25	0	0	0	0	1	4	12	92	1	4
26–35	44	11.4	88	22.9	163	42.4	87	22	2	0.5
36–45	20	18	55	49.5	34	30.6	1	1	1	1

Source: Field data

Customer Engagement Behaviors with Brand-related Content on social media

When taking into consideration the 17 items in Question 9 of the questionnaire, it is evident that all consumption-related activities exhibit relatively high mean scores, ranging from 4.08 to 4.94. These values are noticeably higher than those reported for contribution and creation activities related to restaurant brands, as shown in Table 10.

Table 10: Descriptive Statistics – Customer Engagement behavior with Brand-related Content on social media

Item	N	Range	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std. Error	Std. Deviation	Variance
CONS1	509	6	1	7	4.94	0.062	1.392	1.938
CONS2	509	6	1	7	4.73	0.055	1.243	1.544
CONS3	509	6	1	7	4.97	0.05	1.135	1.288
CONS4	509	6	1	7	4.35	0.062	1.395	1.947
CONS5	509	6	1	7	4.08	0.055	1.245	1.551
CONT1	509	6	1	7	3.6	0.054	1.218	1.485
CONT2	509	6	1	7	3.47	0.049	1.096	1.202
CONT3	509	6	1	7	3.66	0.053	1.205	1.452
CONT4	509	6	1	7	3.33	0.056	1.263	1.596
CONT5	509	6	1	7	3.6	0.056	1.26	1.587

DOI: 10.63329/av3nz12331 ISSN:3080-2466

CONT6	509	6	1	7	3.62	0.056	1.253	1.571
CREA1	509	6	1	7	2.73	0.052	1.166	1.361
CREA2	509	5	1	6	2.62	0.042	0.947	0.898
CREA3	509	5	1	6	2.72	0.048	1.079	1.165
CREA4	509	5	1	6	2.52	0.044	1.003	1.006
CREA5	509	4	1	5	2.25	0.042	0.952	0.906
CREA6	509	5	1	6	2.43	0.043	0.975	0.951

Source: Field data

The most frequently reported consumption activity was viewing brand-related pictures or graphics on social media (CONS3; M = 4.97, SD = 1.135), followed closely by reading brand-related posts on social media platforms (CONS1; M = 4.94, SD = 1.392). These findings indicate a high level of passive engagement with restaurant brands.

In contrast, contribution activities exhibited moderate mean scores, ranging from 3.33 to 3.66. Among these, commenting on brand-related pictures or graphics was the most common form of contribution (CONT3; M = 3.66, SD = 1.205), while sharing restaurant brand-related posts was the least frequent (CONT4; M = 3.33, SD = 1.263).

Engagement at the content creation level was notably limited. Many respondents indicated little or no participation in creation-related activities associated with restaurant brands, resulting in comparatively low mean scores ranging from 2.25 to 2.73. Overall, these results suggest that respondents predominantly engaged in low-effort, passive consumption behaviors and were considerably less likely to participate in higher-effort activities, particularly content creation, which represents the highest level of engagement intensity.

Consequences of Customer Engagement with Brand-related Content on social media

Overall, all outcome-related items exhibit relatively high mean scores, indicating favourable respondent evaluations. In particular, the four items measuring attitude toward reviews and ratings (ARR) demonstrate mean values exceeding 5.00, with relatively low minimum values and limited variance, suggesting a consistently positive perception among respondents. These results indicate that consumers tend to value, trust, and perceive online reviews and ratings of restaurant brands on social media platforms as useful, positive, and favourable. Notably, the ARR construct recorded the highest mean scores among all constructs, ranging from 5.01 to 5.85, as shown in Table 11. This finding reflects an overall positive attitude toward online review and rating mechanisms.

With regard to purchase/visit intention, the mean values ranged from 4.63 to 4.77 (Table 11), indicating generally positive behavioral intentions toward the restaurant brands. The item with the highest mean was PI1, “I will definitely purchase products/services belonging to the restaurant brands and visit the restaurants in the future” (M = 4.77, SD = 1.174), while the lowest mean was observed for PI2, “I will continue to purchase products/services belonging to the restaurant brands and visit the restaurants in the future” (M = 4.63, SD = 1.206). Collectively, these results suggest

that favourable attitudes toward reviews and ratings are accompanied by strong intentions to revisit and patronise the restaurant brands.

Table 11: Descriptive Statistics – Consequences of Customer Engagement with Brand-related Content on social media

Item	N	Range	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std. Error	Std. Deviation	Variance
ARR1	509	4	3	7	5.7	0.061	1.052	1.106
ARR2	509	6	1	7	5.41	0.081	1.391	1.935
ARR3	509	6	1	7	5.05	0.068	1.16	1.346
ARR4	509	6	1	7	5.09	0.063	1.077	1.159
PI1	509	6	1	7	4.77	0.068	1.174	1.378
PI2	509	6	1	7	4.63	0.07	1.206	1.455
PI3	509	6	1	7	4.71	0.07	1.2	1.44

Source: Field data

Exploratory Factor Analysis

Several methodological considerations were addressed prior to conducting the Exploratory Factor Analysis (EFA). First, following the recommendations of DeVellis (2003) and Netemeyer et al. (2003), the dataset was deemed adequate for EFA, comprising 509 responses and 40 measurement items, thereby satisfying recommended sample size requirements.

Second, the suitability of the dataset for factor analysis was assessed using the Kaiser–Meyer–Olkin (KMO) measure of sampling adequacy. The KMO value was 0.871, which is considered meritorious, indicating that the data were appropriate for factor analysis (Vogt, 2005; Hair et al., 2010). In addition, Bartlett's Test of Sphericity yielded a statistically significant chi-square value of 10,038.162 ($df = 780$, $p < .001$), confirming the presence of sufficient intercorrelations among the variables (Hair et al., 2010) (Table 12).

Taken together, these results demonstrate that the dataset met all necessary assumptions and was well suited for subsequent exploratory factor analysis.

Table 12: KMO and Barlett's Test

Test	Statistic	Value
Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin (KMO) Measure of Sampling Adequacy	KMO	0.871
Bartlett's Test of Sphericity	Approx. Chi-Square	10038.162

DOI: 10.63329/av3nz12331 ISSN:3080-2466

	df	780
	Sig. (p-value)	0

Source: Field data

After addressing the preliminary assumptions, the factor extraction and rotation methods were selected. Principal Component Analysis (PCA) with promax rotation was employed to enhance interpretability while minimizing information loss, recognizing that the underlying factors were correlated (Ian & Jorge, 2016). The analysis was conducted on 24 items without restricting the number of factors extracted. Factor retention was guided by eigenvalues, the scree plot, and explained variance. Items with communalities below 0.50, factor loadings below 0.50, or cross-loadings exceeding 0.30 were eliminated (Hair et al., 2010). The results yielded a clean ten-factor structure (Table 13), explaining 72.5% of the total variance, with all loadings exceeding 0.50 and no cross-loadings. Cronbach's alpha values ranged from 0.806 to 0.953, indicating strong internal consistency (Nunnally, 1978; Netemeyer et al., 2003). Consequently, all 24 items were retained for subsequent analysis.

Table 13: Principal Component Analysis: Factor Loadings, Variance Extracted and Cronbach's Alpha

Item	F1	F2	F3	F4	F5	F6	F7	F8	F9	F10	Communalities
CREA3	0.94										0.884
CREA4	0.91										0.803
CREA6	0.90										0.893
CREA2	0.90										0.822
CREA1	0.89										0.824
CREA5	0.86										0.814
CONT2		0.93									0.907
CONT1		0.89									0.837
CONT6		0.89									0.861
CONT4		0.88									0.878
CONT5		0.87									0.864
CONT3		0.85									0.81
CONS1			0.89								0.81
CONS2			0.88								0.741
CONS3			0.86								0.786
CONS5			0.85								0.765
CONS4			0.82								0.777
ARR4						0.91					0.756
ARR3						0.83					0.712
ARR1						0.80					0.76
ARR2						0.77					0.789
PI2									0.84		0.859
PI1									0.82		0.841
PI3									0.80		0.832
% Variance Explained	**25.4**	**11.1**	**9.2**	**5.4**	**4.7**	**4.1**	**3.6**	**2.9**	**2.7**	**2.1**	

Cronbach's α	0.95	0.89	0.87	0.86	0.87	0.84	0.84	0.81	0.88	0.81	

Source: Field data

Testing the Hypotheses

This section evaluates the structural model used to test the hypothesized relationships among the latent constructs proposed in Figure 2. This section assesses the structural relationships between the three customer engagement dimensions: consumption, contribution, and creation, and their effects on attitudes toward reviews and ratings as well as purchase/visit intention. The structural model demonstrated satisfactory fit, indicating that hypothesis testing was appropriate. Consumption, contribution, and creation were each positively associated with attitudes toward reviews and ratings, which in turn influenced purchase/visit intention. These findings underscore the importance of customer engagement behaviors in shaping evaluative outcomes and behavioral intentions. Table 14 presents the structural model results, including the standardized path coefficients (β), standard errors (SE), t-values, and p-values for the hypothesized relationships.

To examine the outcomes of customer engagement with brand-related content on social media, hypotheses H1a-H1c proposed that content consumption, contribution, and creation positively influence consumers' attitudes toward reviews and ratings, while hypotheses H2a-H2c suggested that these engagement dimensions positively affect purchase/visit intention. The results provide support for all six hypotheses. Specifically, content consumption ($\beta = .212$, $SE = .038$, $t = 4.474$, $p < .001$), content contribution ($\beta = .145$, $SE = .036$, $t = 3.119$, $p = .002$), and content creation ($\beta = .120$, $SE = .037$, $t = 2.608$, $p = .009$) were found to have significant positive effects on attitudes toward reviews and ratings. Similarly, content consumption ($\beta = .276$, $SE = .046$, $t = 5.690$, $p < .001$), content contribution ($\beta = .106$, $SE = .042$, $t = 2.261$, $p = .024$), and content creation ($\beta = .119$, $SE = .038$, $t = 2.946$, $p = .003$) demonstrated significant positive effects on purchase/visit intention. These findings indicate that higher levels of engagement with restaurant brand-related content on social media are associated with more favorable attitudes toward online reviews and ratings, as well as stronger intentions to purchase from or visit the restaurant. A summary of the hypothesis testing results is presented in Table 15

Justification on Why Mediation Analysis is not Conducted

Although prior research frequently positions attitudes as a mediating mechanism linking customer engagement behaviors to behavioral outcomes, this study adopts a direct-effects modelling approach to isolate the distinct contributions of each engagement level. This decision is grounded in customer engagement theory, which conceptualizes engagement behaviors as observable manifestations that can independently influence both attitudinal and behavioral responses (Van Doorn et al., 2010; Brodie et al., 2011). Estimating direct paths therefore enables a more precise comparison of the relative explanatory power of consumption, contribution, and creation, without conflating their effects through intermediary constructs.

From a methodological perspective, this approach is consistent with best practice in early-stage or

context-extending research, where the primary objective is to establish robust baseline relationships and assess effect size differentials across multiple predictors (Hair et al., 2010; Kline, 2016). Incorporating mediation at this stage may reduce model parsimony and obscure the independent effects of engagement dimensions, particularly in contexts where the underlying causal mechanisms remain underdeveloped or contextually contingent. Furthermore, given the cross-sectional design of the study, mediation analysis would be limited in its capacity to support causal inference, as temporal precedence cannot be established (Maxwell & Cole, 2007).

Accordingly, the direct-effects approach adopted in this study enhances analytical clarity and theoretical interpretability, while providing a rigorous foundation for subsequent research. Future studies are encouraged to extend this model by formally testing attitudinal mediation pathways using longitudinal or experimental designs, which are better suited to capturing the dynamic and causal processes through which engagement behaviors translate into behavioral outcomes.

Table 14: Structural Modeling Results

Path Structural Relationships	**β**	**SE**	**t-value**	**p**
CONS (Consumption) ---> ARR (Attitude toward reviews and ratings)	0.212	0.038	4.474	< .001
CONS (Consumption) ---> PI (Purchase / Visit intention)	0.276	0.046	5.69	< .001
CONT (Contribution) ---> ARR (Attitude toward reviews and ratings)	0.145	0.036	3.119	.002
CONT (Contribution) ---> PI (Purchase / Visit intention)	0.106	0.042	2.261	.024
CREA (Creation) ---> ARR (Attitude toward reviews and ratings)	0.12	0.037	2.608	.009
CREA (Creation) ---> PI (Purchase / Visit intention)	0.119	0.038	2.946	.003

Source: Field data

Table 15: Summary of Hypothesis Testing Results

Hypotheses	**Result**
H1a: Content consumption has a positive effect on attitude toward reviews and ratings.	Supported
H1b: Content contribution has a positive effect on attitude toward reviews and ratings.	Supported
H1c: Content creation has a positive effect on attitude toward reviews and ratings.	Supported
H2a: Content consumption has a positive effect on visit intention.	Supported
H2b: Content contribution has a positive effect on visit intention.	Supported
H2c: Content creation has a positive effect on visit intention.	Supported

Source: Field data

Overview of the research findings

Consequences of customer engagement with brand-related content on social media in the restaurant industry

The objective of this study was to examine the effects of different levels of customer engagement with brand-related social media content namely consumption, contribution, and creation, on attitudes toward reviews and ratings and on purchase/visit intention within the restaurant industry. The empirical findings demonstrate that all three engagement levels exert significant positive influences on both attitudinal and behavioral outcomes. These results reinforce prior arguments that even the lowest level of engagement, content consumption, is valuable and meaningful for brands rather than passive or inconsequential (Edelman, 2013; Wang & Stefanone, 2013).

Notably, as illustrated in Table 14, consumption-level engagement was found to have a stronger impact on attitudes toward online reviews and ratings and on restaurant visit intention than higher-intensity engagement behaviors such as contribution and creation. This finding challenges the conventional emphasis on visible, high-effort engagement and highlights the strategic importance of low-effort, passive interactions in shaping consumer perceptions and behavioral intentions in the restaurant context.

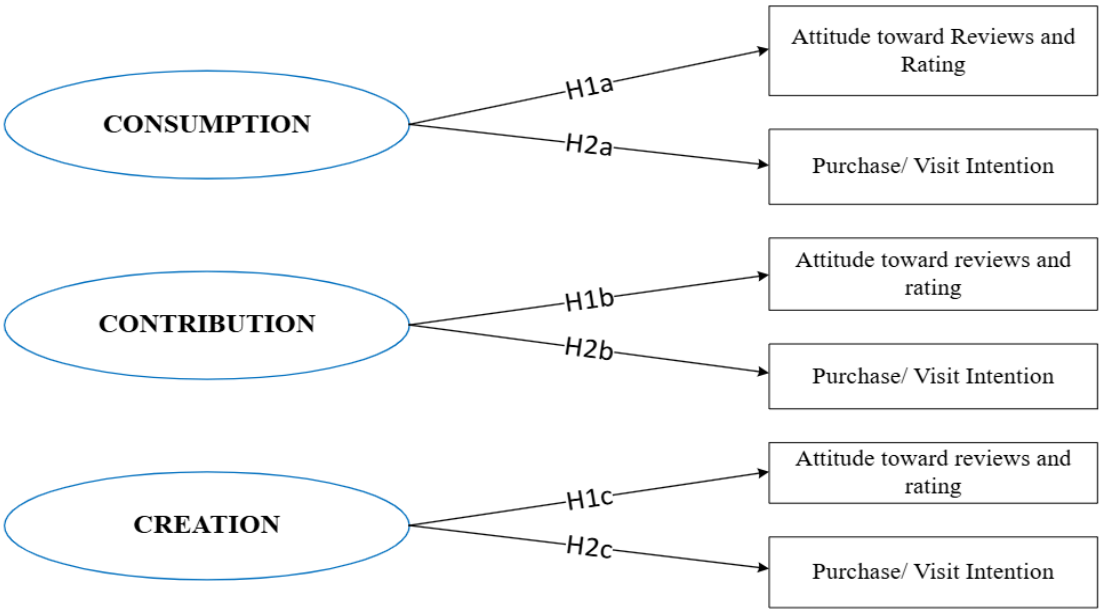


Figure 3: *Influence of three levels of Customer Engagement with Brand-related content on social media and the two consequences: Attitude towards Reviews and Ratings, and Purchase/Visit Intention*
Source: authors' own illustration

The Stronger Influence of Consumption Compared to Higher-Intensity Engagement Behaviors

A notable finding of this study is that content consumption exerted a stronger influence on both attitudes toward reviews and ratings and visit intention than higher-intensity engagement behaviors such as contribution and creation. This result diverges from initial expectations and warrants further theoretical explanation.

First, frequency effects may explain this pattern. As evidenced in the descriptive findings, consumption behaviors are substantially more frequent than contribution and creation activities. Within the COBRA framework, lower-intensity behaviors such as viewing and reading content typically dominate overall engagement volume (Muntinga et al., 2011; Cheung et al., 2021). Repeated exposure to brand-related content enhances familiarity, strengthens cognitive accessibility, and reinforces evaluative judgements over time (Calder et al., 2009; Schivinski & Dabrowski, 2016). Consequently, frequent consumption can accumulate both cognitive and affective effects, resulting in a stronger overall influence on attitudes and behavioral intentions than less frequent, higher-effort engagement behaviors.

Second, the lower cognitive and behavioral effort associated with consumption may enhance its effectiveness. Consumption-level engagement allows consumers to process information efficiently without the psychological, social, or reputational costs associated with publicly contributing or creating content. Engagement theory suggests that different forms of engagement generate distinct experiential outcomes, and higher intensity does not necessarily imply greater impact (Van Doorn et al., 2010). In routine, low-involvement decision-making contexts such as restaurant choice, consumers often rely on heuristics and readily available information (Filieri & McLeay, 2014). As such, passive exposure to reviews and visual content may be sufficient to shape attitudes and intentions, whereas effortful behaviors may not proportionally increase influence.

Third, contextual and cultural factors in Vietnam may further explain the stronger role of consumption. Engagement processes are known to be context-dependent and shaped by socio-cultural norms (Islam et al., 2018). In many emerging markets, including Vietnam, consumers may demonstrate greater caution in publicly expressing opinions or creating content due to concerns about social judgement, loss of face, or perceived lack of expertise. As a result, users may prefer observational participation, relying more heavily on existing reviews and shared content rather than actively contributing. This aligns with recent research conceptualising “lurking” not as disengagement but as a deliberate and meaningful form of engagement involving active cognitive processing (Albuhameed, 2024).

Finally, the findings may partly reflect measurement and methodological considerations. Engagement behaviors were self-reported, which may introduce social desirability bias. Prior research indicates that respondents are more likely to overreport socially visible or desirable behaviors (such as creating or sharing content) and underreport passive behaviors such as browsing or reading (Barger et al., 2016). This may attenuate the observed effects of higher-intensity engagement while reinforcing the apparent dominance of consumption behaviors in statistical models.

Taken together, these explanations suggest that engagement intensity does not necessarily correspond to impact. Consistent with emerging engagement research, low-visibility behaviors such as content consumption can play a central role in generating value and shaping consumer decision-making (Xiao & Chen, 2025; Brodie et al., 2013). In digital service environments, particularly those characterised by high information availability and routine decision-making,

frequent and cognitively efficient behaviors may exert a more substantial influence than less frequent, effortful forms of engagement.

Relationship between customer engagement with brand-related content on social media and customer's attitude toward online reviews and ratings

Regarding attitudes toward online reviews and ratings, the results indicate that customer engagement with brand-related social media content is strongly and positively associated with consumers' attitudes toward reviews and ratings. Higher levels of engagement with brand-related content are likely to foster more favourable evaluations of review and rating mechanisms. These findings are consistent with prior research suggesting that online reviews and ratings play a critical role in motivating consumers to engage with restaurant-related social media content (Lee & Ma, 2012; Mellet et al., 2014). As consumers become more engaged with brand-related content, their attitudes toward user-generated content, such as reviews and ratings, are strengthened.

The increasing prominence of social media has transformed consumers from passive recipients of marketing messages into active participants and brand advocates (Kotler et al., 2016). Recent evidence further demonstrates that frequent social media usage enhances consumers' perceived value of brands, which in turn strengthens purchase intention and brand loyalty, reinforcing consumers' active engagement roles within digital brand ecosystems (Yi, 2025). Smith (2013) reports that approximately 60% of consumers rely on reviews and ratings when evaluating products and services. In the restaurant industry in particular, online reviews and ratings constitute a vital element of customer participation and decision-making (Lee & Ma, 2012; Mellet et al., 2014). When selecting restaurants, consumers frequently depend on information provided by peers on social media platforms through reviews and ratings (Ho-Dac et al., 2013; Elmedulan et al, 2025; Baker et al., 2016).

Prior research consistently indicates that restaurant customers place greater importance on online reviews and ratings than consumers in many other industries (Nielsen Insight, 2019; Popy & Bappy, 2022). For example, ReviewTrackers (2019) report that 57% of diners discover restaurants through online reviews prior to visiting, while 33% of consumers indicate that they would avoid restaurants with ratings below four stars. Empirical evidence further shows that negative social media reviews significantly diminish consumers' willingness to visit restaurants (Sparks et al., 2013). Extending this line of enquiry, Popy and Bappy (2022) demonstrate that favourable attitudes towards social media reviews positively influence restaurant visit intention, highlighting the role of review credibility and trust in shaping consumer attitudes. Similarly, Wareebor et al. (2025) find that online restaurant promotions, when reinforced by positive review cues, significantly enhance behavioral intentions such as visit and purchase intention. Collectively, these findings underscore the importance for restaurant brands to actively manage not only the volume and valence of online reviews and ratings. They also highlight the need to integrate such content with promotional strategies to strengthen customer engagement and encourage favourable behavioral outcomes.
In line with prior literature and supported by the empirical results of this study, consumer engagement with brand-related social media content across consumption, contribution, and creation levels, positively influences attitudes toward online reviews and ratings. Accordingly,

hypotheses H1a (consumption), H1b (contribution), and H1c (creation) are all supported.

Relationship between customer engagement with brand-related content on social media and customer's purchase/visit intention

With respect to the second outcome of engagement with restaurant brand-related social media content, namely visit intention, the findings of the current study indicate that customer engagement exerts a strong and significant influence on consumers' intentions to visit restaurant brands. This result aligns with existing research suggesting a positive relationship between higher levels of content engagement and purchase intention (Ahn & Back, 2018; Jang et al., 2009). Although the direct consequences of engagement with brand-related content have received relatively limited attention in the literature. The importance of customer engagement more broadly in shaping purchase-related intentions has been well established (Vivek et al., 2012; Huang et al., 2013; Barger et al., 2016; Harrigan et al., 2017).

Purchase and visit intention represent critical outcomes for brands, as they directly precede consumption behavior and contribute to revenue growth. Consequently, fostering customer engagement has become a central strategic objective for brands seeking not only to attract but also to retain customers in competitive service sectors such as the restaurant industry. The results of this study demonstrate that all three dimensions of engagement—content consumption, contribution, and creation—positively influence consumers' purchase/visit intention.

In summary, the findings provide empirical support for H2a, H2b, and H2c, confirming that consumption level, contribution level, and creation level engagement with restaurant brand-related social media content each have a significant and positive effect on customers' visit intention.

Theoretical Contribution: Extending the COBRA Framework

This study makes a substantive theoretical contribution by advancing the application of the COBRA framework (Consumers' Online Brand Related Activities) to restaurant brand related social media contexts. While prior customer engagement research has predominantly focused on brands as the central engagement object (e.g. Hollebeek, 2011; Hollebeek et al., 2014; Malthouse et al., 2013), this study aligns with and extends the content-centric engagement perspective. This perspective posits that content, rather than the brand itself, is the primary object of engagement on social media platforms (Muntinga et al., 2011; Schivinski & Dabrowski, 2016; Calder et al., 2016). By operationalising engagement through the COBRA framework, this research contributes theoretically by offering a comprehensive and behaviorally grounded categorisation of customer engagement, encompassing content consumption, contribution, and creation. This tripartite structure captures the full spectrum of engagement intensity, from passive observation to active content production. In doing so, it addresses long-standing critiques that engagement research overemphasises visible, high-effort behaviors while neglecting low-visibility interactions (Calder et al., 2009; Schivinski & Dabrowski, 2016; Dolan et al., 2016). The findings reinforce recent theoretical arguments that consumption level behaviors constitute meaningful engagement rather than disengagement, contributing to attitudinal and behavioral outcomes (Brodie et al., 2013;

Carlson et al., 2018).

Furthermore, this study extends the theoretical utility of the COBRA framework by empirically demonstrating its relevance within an experiential service context, an area that has received limited attention in earlier COBRA based studies (Harrigan et al., 2017; Bilro et al., 2019). In doing so, it responds to calls for engagement research to be tested across different industries and contexts to assess the robustness and boundary conditions of engagement frameworks (Van Doorn et al., 2010; Islam et al, 2018). This study contributes by demonstrating that engagement frequency may be more influential than engagement intensity, offering a refinement to the COBRA framework. Overall, the study strengthens the framework's explanatory power by positioning engagement intensity as a theoretically meaningful predictor of attitudinal and behavioral outcomes, thereby extending the COBRA framework beyond descriptive categorisation toward deeper theoretical insight.

Managerial and Practical Contributions: Applying the COBRA Framework

This study offers important managerial and practical contributions by translating the COBRA framework (Consumers' Online Brand Related Activities) into actionable guidance for restaurant brand managers operating on social media platforms. By conceptualising customer engagement with brand related content as three distinct but related behaviors content consumption, contribution, and creation, the study provides managers with a clear and systematic tool for diagnosing, managing, and evaluating customer engagement intensity (Muntinga et al., 2011; Schivinski & Dabrowski, 2016).

From a practical perspective, the COBRA framework enables managers to recognise that engagement extends beyond visible actions such as commenting or content creation. Consumption level behaviors, such as reading posts or watching videos, represent meaningful engagement and should be strategically nurtured rather than overlooked (Calder et al., 2009; Brodie et al., 2013). This insight encourages restaurant managers to design content strategies that appeal to users across all engagement levels, rather than focusing exclusively on highly active customers.

The framework further offers guidance for progressive engagement strategies, whereby managers can design content that encourages customers to move from consumption to contribution and ultimately to creation. For example, users who consume branded content can be encouraged to like, comment, or share posts, while contributors can be motivated to produce user generated content such as reviews, photos, or restaurant related posts—activities that are particularly valuable for stimulating electronic word of mouth (eWOM) in hospitality contexts (Harrigan et al., 2017; Bilro et al., 2019).

Overall, by operationalising engagement as a graded and manageable behavioral continuum, this study demonstrates the practical value of the COBRA framework for restaurant marketers seeking to enhance social media effectiveness, optimise content strategies, and strengthen customer relationships through differentiated engagement pathways.

Conclusion and Recommendations

This study examined how different levels of customer engagement with restaurant brand related social media content consumption, contribution, and creation influence attitudes toward online reviews and ratings and restaurant visit intention. The findings confirm that customer engagement operates as a behavioral continuum and that all three engagement levels generate meaningful attitudinal and behavioral outcomes. Importantly, consumption level engagement emerged as the most influential, demonstrating that low visibility behaviors such as viewing posts and reading reviews play a critical role in shaping consumer perceptions and intentions.

These results challenge the dominant focus on visible, high effort engagement metrics and highlight the strategic value of passive engagement behaviors in digital restaurant environments. Consumers do not need to actively comment or create content for engagement to be impactful; instead, repeated exposure to brand related content and reviews can significantly shape evaluative judgments and visit intentions.

Several limitations should be acknowledged. The use of a cross-sectional survey design restricts causal inference, and the reliance on self reported measures may introduce response bias. In addition, the study is situated in a single emerging market and focuses on data from users of a single large restaurant chain and may not be generalizable to independent restaurants, smaller brands, or rural consumers. Future research could address these limitations by adopting longitudinal designs, incorporating behavioral or platform analytics data, and extending the model to other cultural and industry contexts.

The findings also open several avenues for future research. First, the substantial differences observed across engagement levels raise important questions about why some consumers remain at the consumption stage while others progress to active contribution or creation. This suggests the need for motivation-based investigations that examine how different psychological drivers influence engagement intensity. Second, the strong effects of engagement on attitudes toward reviews and ratings point to a potential mediating role of attitudes in the relationship between engagement behaviors and visit intention. Exploring these decision-making mechanisms would provide deeper insight into how social media engagement translates into offline consumption behavior.

From a practical perspective, restaurant managers should adopt engagement strategies that recognise the value of all engagement levels, particularly consumption, while designing content pathways that encourage deeper involvement and long-term customer relationships.

Overall, this study reinforces the importance of adopting a holistic and theoretically grounded view of customer engagement and provides a strong foundation for future research into motivational drivers and decision-making outcomes in digital service environments.

Acknowledgement

During the preparation of this work, the authors used CoPilot for language editing and proofreading of the final draft after peer-review.

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