

**EMPLOYEE ENGAGEMENT: MANAGING THE
RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN EMPLOYEES AND
THE ORGANISATION. A VALIDATED
MEASURE AND MODEL.**

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Signed Certification of Sources

This thesis is submitted to Bond University in fulfilment of the requirements for the Degree of Doctor of Philosophy.

This thesis represents my own work and contains no material which has been previously submitted for a degree or diploma at this University or any other institution.

Signature.....

Date.....

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Table of Contents

Acknowledgements	iii
List of Tables	ix
List of Figures	x
List of appendices.....	xi
Abstract	xii
Chapter 1: Engagement: A construct worthy of investigation	1
Timeliness of engagement research.....	2
Project relevance	2
Study overview	4
Research program and outline.....	6
Engagement defined	7
Engagement and related constructs	13
Positive psychology and the value of engagement research	16
The cost of disengagement	18
A global perspective on engagement	19
Chapter 2: A review of the main engagement models and related theory.....	21
Academic based models.....	21
The burnout / engagement model.....	22
The demands and resources engagement model.....	28
Consultancy based models.....	34
The Gallup engagement model.....	34
The Hewitt engagement model.....	41
Engagement model summary.....	49

Engagement and relevant demographics.....	51
Project purposes.....	53
Project aims: Summary of research questions and hypotheses.....	56
Chapter 3: The case in context: Walkabout and the Australian travel industry....	59
Benefits and limitations of applied research.....	59
The Australian travel industry.....	60
Walkabout Limited.....	62
Chapter 4: Research design.....	73
Study description.....	73
Formulating the study's main purposes.....	73
Mixed methods framework.....	74
Data collection methods.....	76
Study feasibility and limitations.....	83
Administration procedures: Internal and external.....	85
Ethics clearance.....	86
Chapter 5: Project one. A qualitative assessment of engagement and its drivers..	87
Qualitative data collection.....	88
Company documents and reports.....	88
Participant observation.....	89
Employee interviews.....	90
Qualitative analysis findings: Main themes identified.....	94
Themes relating to engagement and its definition.....	95
Ten main driver themes at Walkabout.....	98
What did Walkabout do differently?.....	137
Applying the twelve engagement themes.....	137

Engagement theory development.....	139
Chapter summary: Main findings.....	141
Chapter 6: Project two. Survey development and engagement construct clarification.....	142
Developing the engagement survey.....	143
Step one: Item generation.....	144
Step two: Questionnaire Administration.....	146
Step three: initial item reduction: Exploratory factor analysis.....	150
Part one: The engagement scale.....	151
Part two: The drivers scale.....	158
Chapter summary: Main findings.....	165
Chapter 7: Project three. Engagement survey and model confirmation.....	167
Assumptions.....	168
Engagement scale confirmation.....	171
Engagement model confirmation.....	173
Direct effects.....	175
Indirect effects.....	176
Subgroup analysis.....	177
Chapter summary: Main findings.....	181
Chapter 8: Project findings: Applications, limitations, and further research.....	183
Main project outcomes.....	183
Main findings.....	184
1. Engagement as a construct.....	184
2. Engagement and its drivers.....	188

3. The engagement survey.....	192
4. The relationship between engagement and specific engagement outcomes.....	193
5. The engagement model.....	195
6. Engagement at Walkabout.....	197
7. Engagement and its nomological network.....	198
Study limitations, improvement and possibilities for further research.....	200
References	204
Appendices.....	224

List of Tables

Table 5.1	The 10 main driver themes summarised from the qualitative data.
Table 5.2	Changes made to the proposed drivers
Table 6.1	Correlations between test battery scales and two versions of the engagement scale
Table 6.2	Mean and standard deviation scores for engagement across company divisions
Table 6.3	Driver definitions
Table 6.4	Correlations between engagement and drivers
Table 6.5	Correlations between test battery surveys
Table 6.6	Correlations between engagement and the 3 components of commitment
Table 6.7	Correlations between the eight drivers of engagement and continuance commitment
Table 7.1	Comparison of the eight driver coefficient values in each subgroup
Table 7.2	Structural model coefficient values for all three divisions
Table 7.3	Chi squared comparison and fit Indices for the divisional models

List of figures

- Figure 1.1 Project framework illustrating the sequential nature of the study, the methodology used, and outcomes achieved.
- Figure 2.1 Leiter and Maslach's burnout / engagement continuum
- Figure 2.2 Schaufeli and Bakker's research model
- Figure 2.3 Gallup's Business Performance Pathway
- Figure 2.4 Service Profit Chain – case study example
- Figure 2.5 Hewitt Associates employee engagement drivers
- Figure 2.6 The basic structure of the proposed engagement model
- Figure 2.7 The proposed engagement model
- Figure 3.1 Walkabout's share price over the last five years
- Figure 4.1 Instrument building model
- Figure 4.2 The sequential nature of data collection and analyses
- Figure 5.1 The proposed and revised engagement themes / drivers
- Figure 6.1 Mean engagement scores across generational groups
- Figure 6.2 Mean engagement scores across tenure categories
- Figure 6.3 Mean engagement scores across position levels.
- Figure 7.1 The measurement model of engagement
- Figure 7.2 The revised structural model
- Figure 7.3 The confirmed engagement Model
- Figure 7.4 The structural model and coefficient values for all three divisions
- Figure 8.1 Engagement driver development: The sequential process of driver confirmation

List of Appendices

- Appendix A: Interview schedules, explanatory statements and consent forms
- Appendix B: Original coding trees
- Appendix C: Final coding tree
- Appendix D: Survey Invitation
- Appendix E: Survey Explanatory Statement
- Appendix F: Demographic Statistics
- Appendix G: Means and Standard Deviations for Demographics
- Appendix H: Demographic Interaction Effects
- Appendix I: Determinants for the Number of Factors Extracted
- Appendix J: Pattern and Structural Matrix for Exploratory Factor Analysis
- Appendix K: Engagement Survey (drivers and engagement)
- Appendix L: Driver Scores across Divisions
- Appendix M: Internal Reliability Statistics for Driver Variables
- Appendix N: EQS Statistics for the Measurement Model Including the EQS Diagram, the Goodness of Fit Summary, and the Covariance Matrix
- Appendix O: EQS Statistics for the confirmed engagement theory model including the EQS diagram, the goodness of fit summary, and the covariance matrix.
- Appendix P: EQS Statistics for Sub Group Analysis including EQS diagrams, the goodness of fit summaries, and the covariance matrixes.

Abstract

This thesis contributes to engagement literature by clarifying what engagement is for employees in a large Australian travel retail organisation, how it can be measured, and the expected benefits for both employees and the organisation. With claims that disengagement costs the Australian economy over \$30 billion annually (Hooper, 2006), the focus on engagement, particularly within the practitioner community, has grown exponentially. However, there is a lack of empirical research providing construct definition and measurement, ensuring credibility of this construct (Saks, 2006). The two main purposes of this study aimed to address this research gap by firstly producing a valid engagement survey which measured engagement and its predictors, and secondly producing a statistically tested engagement model which explained engagement, its antecedents, and consequences. The study was conducted using a mixed methods sequential design involving three projects.

Project one involved the collection and analysis of 3 forms of qualitative data from which 12 main engagement themes were established and survey items generated. Document analysis, participant observation, and interviews (26) of current and former employees all served to identify themes and contextualize engagement within the organisation under study.

Project two involved the development and testing of the initial engagement survey. Survey items were refined through a pilot study. The remaining items were reviewed by an expert panel, before being administered company wide returning 419 completed surveys. Exploratory factor analysis was used to refine the survey items and identify the engagement construct structure.

Project three involved the validation of the engagement survey and confirmation of the engagement model. Structural equation modelling was used

for this purpose. The engagement *survey*, which included eight driver subscales and an engagement subscale, was validated. Factors measured within the survey were similar to others cited in the literature signalling potential survey generalizability. The engagement *model* which included causal links between engagement, its drivers (antecedents), and outcomes (consequences) was confirmed. As anticipated, all eight engagement drivers (senior leadership, team leadership, work demands, work support, employee empowerment, continuation, customer focus and financial rewards) functioned as positive predictors of engagement. However, mixed results were found concerning engagement outcome variables. Engagement showed a positive causal relationship with personal outcomes (continuance commitment), but a negative casual relationship with organisational outcomes (customer satisfaction, and company financials). Such results question an overwhelming theme within the literature which claims a positive casual effect of engagement for both personal and organisational outcomes. Further investigation is recommended to clarify these results and explore the possibility of other variable influences.

The research of this thesis incorporated both consultancy and academic literature, marrying both perspectives to produce a measure and model relevant to each orientation.