Effect of Social Networking Sites on Consumer Engagement through Electronic Word of Mouth (eWOM)

THESIS

SUBMITTED FOR THE AWARD OF THE DEGREE OF

DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY

IN

BUSINESS ADMINISTRATION

BY

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Preface

In last two decades, the world has changed dramatically in the context of proliferations Information Technology (IT) in the lives of people. India too has witnessed growth at a breathtaking pace and in fact it has been a powerhouse fueling the developments in this area. Apart from worldwide popularity of Internet, a large number of Indian netizens are regular users of social networking sites. This high usage of the SNSs has attracted the attention of the marketers worldwide and numerous researchers in the Western context have attempted to delve into the phenomenon. Around 25% of world’s population is using social media and three-quarter of this online population are using one or even more SNSs. India has become the third largest Internet user base in the world with about 230 million active Internet users. According to Subramani (2015), 75% of the Internet users in India are in the age groups of 18-35 years and Indian college students are the highest members of SNSs (Manjunatha, 2013). Therefore, such a huge number of SNSs users in India, garnered the attention of marketer to investigate this virtual platform to have a proper understanding of consumers.

Consumer engagement in today’s marketing is the strategy used by marketers as a process of creating content and delivering personalized and timely messages to the consumers (Schmitt, 2016). Social networking sites are no more just a phenomena, but it’s a part of our daily lives. Consumers’ experience on SNSs provides for marketers a way to increase loyalty and satisfaction of consumers. A good marketers has to find out all this opportunities to engage their consumer which is about how valuable is the content and creating shared experience that leads consumers to keep interacting with their preferred products (Chan, 2014).

This thesis provides review of extant literature focusing on variables related to electronic word of mouth, consumer engagement and social networking sites followed by proposed model for the study revolving around consumer engagement and electronic word of mouth, research methodology, theoretical framework of the study and hypotheses. Data which were gathered through structured questionnaire have
been analyzed to support the hypothesis of this study. Further, findings of the study from the model have been presented followed by chapter for managerial and theoretical implications of the study.

This dissertation is divided into six chapters and the brief overview of each chapter is presented as below:

**Chapter 1** provides the brief introduction about the study along with the research gap and the objectives of the study.

**Chapter 2** covers the review of the literature about the studies related to WOM, eWOM, Consumer Engagement and Social Networking Sites.

**Chapter 3** presents the research methodology and methods which have been used for this study added by research design, research process, research instrument of the study, pilot study. Sample, data collection and limitation of the study along with proposed the research model and key factors of this study.

**Chapter 4** covers data analysis of the study using CFA and AMOS 21.0. T- Test and ANOVA has been employed to understand the relation between constructs of the study and demographic data of the respondents.

**Chapter 5** highlights the finding and discussion of the study

**Chapter 6** discusses the contribution of the study, including theoretical and managerial implication as well as future research direction.
List of Tables

CHAPTER 1
Table 1.1 Tracing the Evolution of Social Media ........................................6
Table 1.2 Characteristic of New Media ......................................................15

CHAPTER 2
Table 2.1 Definitions of Word of Mouth (WOM) .................................18
Table 2.2 Definitions of e-WOM ..............................................................22
Table 2.3 Motives for WOM Communication Behavior Identified in the Literature ........................................................................28
Table 2.4 Definitions of Consumer Engagement ..................................39
Table 2.5 Facets of “Engagement” in Marketing Literature ..................47
Table 2.6 Consumer Engagement: Conceptual relationships ..............48
Table 2.7 Top 10 SNSs in the World .........................................................59
Table 2.8 Examples of Social Media Tools .............................................61

CHAPTER 3
Table 3.1 Measurement Items Used in this Study.................................75

CHAPTER 4
Table 4.1 Fit Indices of Measurement Model .........................................102
Table 4.2 Fit Indices of Structural Model ................................................103
Table 4.3 Standardized Regression Weights (CFA) ..............................105
Table 4.4 Standardized Regression Weights (Structural Model) ...........105
Table 4.5 Summary Results of Hypotheses Testing ...............................106
Table 4.6 Variable Studied by Other Researchers .................................107
Table 4.7 Demographic Characteristic of Respondents ......................109
Table 4.8 Results of T-test on Gender for Various Model Constructs ....110
Table 4.9  ANOVA Results for Various Model Constructs (Age) ..................112
Table 4.10  ANOVA Results for Various Model Constructs (Education) ..........113
Table 4.11  ANOVA Results for Various Model Constructs (Income) .............114
Table 4.12  ANOVA Results for Various Model Constructs (Occupation) ........116
Table 4.13  Summary of Results of Hypotheses Testing for Demographic Variables .................................................................117
Table 4.14  Summary of Reliability and Factor Loading for Retained Scale Items ..............................................................120
Table 4.15  Popularity of various SNSs in India ........................................121
Table 4.16  Popularity of Products on Social Networking Sites in India ..........121

CHAPTER 5
Table 5.1  Educational Level .........................................................124
Table 5.2  Summary results of hypotheses testing....................................126
Table 5.3  Standardized Regression Weights (Structural Model) .................127
Table 5.4  Summary of Hypotheses Testing for Demographic Variables ........127
List of Figures

CHAPTER 1
Figure 1.1 Social Media History ................................................................. 5
Figure 1.2 Schematic Representation of Evolution of Media in India ............ 10
Figure 1.3 Structure of the Study ............................................................... 16

CHAPTER 2
Figure 2.1 Scale Items, eWOM motives, and Motives factors .................... 27
Figure 2.2 Consumer Engagement Objects in a Virtual Brand Community .... 54
Figure 2.3 Consumer Engagement Process .............................................. 55

CHAPTER 3
Figure 3.1 Research Model .................................................................... 74
Figure 3.2 Research Process ................................................................... 77

CHAPTER 4
Figure 4.1 Measurement Model ............................................................. 99
Figure 4.2 Structural Model ................................................................. 101

CHAPTER 5
Figure 5.1 Structural Model ................................................................. 126
# Table of Contents

CERTIFICATE .......................................................................................... i

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS ........................................................................ ii

PREFACE .................................................................................................... ii

LIST OF TABLES ......................................................................................... iv

LIST OF FIGURES ....................................................................................... vi

## CHAPTER 1 INTRODUCTION

1. Introduction ........................................................................................ 1

1.1 Background of the Study ................................................................. 1

1.1.1 Media, Ecology, and Evolution ..................................................... 2

1.1.2 Social Media has been with us For Decades ................................. 3

1.1.3 Treating Social Media Marketing as a Mindset ............................ 3

1.1.4 Social Media and Social Business .............................................. 4

1.1.5 The Brief History of Social Media ............................................. 4

1.1.6 The Evolution of Media in India ................................................ 8

1.1.7 Facts and Statistics on Social Media: ....................................... 9

1.2 Needs & Scope of the Study .............................................................. 11

1.3 Research Gap ................................................................................... 12

1.4 Research Objectives ......................................................................... 12

1.5 Research Overview .......................................................................... 13

1.6 Overview of Social Network Sites and Social Capital Theory ........ 13

1.6.1 Characteristic of New Media ...................................................... 15

1.7 Organization of the Study ................................................................. 15

1.8 Concluding Remarks .................................................................... 16
CHAPTER 2 LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 Introduction ................................................................................................................. 17

2.2 Word of Mouth (WOM)............................................................................................. 17
  2.2.1 Word of Mouth Marketing (WOMM)................................................................. 19
  2.2.2 Electronic Word of mouth (eWOM)..................................................................... 21
  2.2.3 Traditional Word of Mouth (WOM) and Electronic Word of Mouth (eWOM)..... 22
  2.2.4 Consumer Motives for Articulation on Internet Enabled Platforms ............... 25
  2.2.5 Immediate and Ongoing Drivers of Word of Mouth ......................................... 29
  2.2.6 WOM Valence and Volume ................................................................................. 30
  2.2.7 Negative and Positive WOM ............................................................................. 31
  2.2.8 Opinion Leaders and Opinion Seeker............................................................... 33
  2.2.9 Social Networking Sites (SNSs) and Electronic Word of Mouth (eWOM)......... 35
  2.2.10 Social Relationships and Electronic Word of Mouth (eWOM) ....................... 35

2.3 Consumer Engagement ............................................................................................... 36
  2.3.1 Definitions of Consumer Engagement................................................................. 38
  2.3.2 Online Consumer Engagement ........................................................................... 40
  2.3.3 Similarities of Consumer Engagement with other Constructs............................ 41
  2.3.4 Customer Brand Engagement ............................................................................. 45
  2.3.5 Concept of Engagement in the Marketing Literature .......................................... 46
  2.3.6 Engaging Consumers on Social Networking Sites ............................................. 50
    2.3.6.1 Effort of Companies to Engage Consumers..................................................... 51
  2.3.7 Effect of Word of Mouth on Consumer Engagement ......................................... 52
  2.3.8 Consumer and Social Networking Sites ............................................................ 53
  2.3.9 Consumer Engagement and Engagement Objects ............................................. 54
  2.3.10 Consumer Engagement Process ....................................................................... 55
CHAPTER 3 RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

3.1 Introduction ................................................................................. 64

3.2 Research Methodology ............................................................... 64
    3.2.1 Quantitative and Qualitative Research ...................................... 64

3.3 The Scope of the Study .............................................................. 66

3.4 Objectives of the Study .............................................................. 67

3.5 Research variables and (primary) Hypotheses ........................... 67

3.6 Secondary Hypotheses ............................................................... 71

3.7 Research Model ......................................................................... 74

3.8 Research Design .................................................................... 74

3.9 Research Items ....................................................................... 75

3.10 Research Process .................................................................... 76

3.11 Sources of Data ...................................................................... 77

3.12 Measurement ....................................................................... 78
    3.12.1 Research Instrument ......................................................... 79
    3.12.2 Questionnaire Design ......................................................... 79
    3.12.3 Research Instrument Development .................................... 81

3.13 Reliability and Validity Analysis ............................................ 82

3.14 Data Collection Procedure ..................................................... 85
3.14.1 Primary Data Source ................................................................. 85
3.14.2 Pilot Study and Pre-Testing ....................................................... 85
3.15 Main Study .................................................................................. 86
3.15.1 Sample Design ......................................................................... 86
3.15.2 Sampling Frame ....................................................................... 87
3.15.3 Response Rate ......................................................................... 87
3.15.4 The Sample ............................................................................... 87

3.16 Data Editing and Coding ................................................................ 88
3.16.1 Missing Data and Outliers ......................................................... 88
3.16.2 Data Analysis ........................................................................... 88
3.16.3 Factor analysis .......................................................................... 89
3.16.4 Exploratory Factor Analysis (EFA) ............................................. 90
3.16.5 Confirmatory Factor Analysis (CFA) ......................................... 91
3.16.6 Structural Equation Model (SEM) ............................................. 92

3.17 Limitation of the Study .................................................................. 96

SUMMARY ......................................................................................... 97

CHAPTER 4 DATA ANALYSIS

4.1 Introduction .................................................................................. 98
4.2 Measurement Model ....................................................................... 98
4.3 Structural Model ........................................................................... 99
  4.3.1 Analysis and Findings ............................................................... 105
  4.3.2 Measurement Model (Confirmatory Factor Analysis) ............... 105
  4.3.3 Structural Model of the Study .................................................... 105
4.4 Demographic Analysis .................................................................. 108
4.5 T-test and one way ANOVA: ......................................................... 110
4.6 Reliability and Validity .................................................................. 118
  4.6.1 Scale Refinement and Validation .............................................. 119
CHAPTER 5 DISCUSSION AND FINDINGS

5.1 Introduction ................................................................. 123

5.2 Demographic Characteristics ........................................ 123

5.3 Result of Hypothesis Testing ........................................... 125
  5.3.1 Results of Hypotheses Testing Using SEM .................... 125
  5.3.2 Hypotheses Testing for Demographic Variables ................ 127

5.4 Summary of Finding and Discussion .................................. 128

5.5 Generalization from Findings .......................................... 131

CHAPTER 6 STUDY IMPLICATION AND FUTURE RESEARCH DIRECTIONS

6.1 Introduction ................................................................. 133

6.2 Theoretical Implications of the Study .............................. 133

6.3 Managerial Implications of the Study ............................... 135

6.4 Future Research Directions ............................................ 135

6.5 Summary ................................................................. 138

REFERENCES
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Abbreviation</th>
<th>Description</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>AGFI</td>
<td>Adjusted Goodness of Fit Index</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>AMOS</td>
<td>Analysis of Moment Structures</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ANOVA</td>
<td>Analysis of Variance</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CBE</td>
<td>Consumer Behavior Engagement</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CE</td>
<td>Consumer Engagement</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CFA</td>
<td>Confirmatory Factor Analysis</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CFI</td>
<td>Comparative Fit Index</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>EFA</td>
<td>Exploratory Factor Analysis</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>eWOM</td>
<td>electronic Word of Mouth</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>GFI</td>
<td>goodness-of-fit index</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>KMO</td>
<td>Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NWOM</td>
<td>Negative Word of Mouth</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PCA</td>
<td>Principal Factor Analysis</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PFA</td>
<td>Principal Components Analysis</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PWOM</td>
<td>Positive Word of Mouth</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>RMSEA</td>
<td>Root Mean Square Error of Approximation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SEM</td>
<td>Structural Equation Model</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SNSs</td>
<td>Social Networking Sites</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TVE</td>
<td>Total Variance Explained</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Chapter 1: Introduction

1. Introduction

“We are changing the world with technology” Bill Gates.

Technology has changed the way of our living. We are in an era where we find a job through different websites such as Naukri.com and Monster.com; we buy products via different available online shopping websites, like Snapdeal.com and Flipkart.com and so many other available portals. We identify ourselves with various social networks and make different profiles on LinkedIn, Facebook, Twitter and even make our own web pages on websites like Wix.com. We don’t need to book our hotel and flights through a travel agency as it is easier using different mobile apps like MakeMyTrip.com or Yatra.com. An online newspaper that is available on our mobile handsets is easier to ‘carry’, rather than the bulk of newspapers and communicating with numerous applications on mobile like WhatsApp, Viber, etc, have made our life easier as compared to decades back.

This chapter intends to provide a brief background of the study and identify research gaps. For undertaking, the present research study, research intent, and basic research framework have also been briefly discussed. The research outline of this study is also discussed in the present chapter.

1.1 Background of the Study

Today companies are working overtime to gain consumer loyalty and taking steps to promote their products through ever evolving marketing strategies. In order to not lose out on consumers, companies are embracing the use of technology in developing marketing strategies. Technology is in fact one of the most effective tools in defining
the marketing plans. Earlier tools of marketing are proving to be less effective in the context of the present day world. Forward looking companies in order to better their chances of survival are anticipating changes and immediately adopting them rather than operate in a reactive mode. One of the major developments in the marketing domain has been adoption of social media marketing by the companies wishing to target new age customer. Nevertheless, it is in its initial stage but clever marketing strategists have already started to step into the next big marketing revolution taking place in the shape of social media marketing.

The focus of social media marketing programs is to create content which attracts and encourages the consumers to share content on their social networks. In fact, the term ‘social media’ in the context of present day connected world refers to ‘digital content and interaction that is created by and between people.’ (Sam Decker as cited in Cohen, 2011). “Social media is not about what each one of us does or says, but about what we do and say together, worldwide, to communicate in all directions at any time, by any possible (digital) means” (Michelle Chmielewski as cited in Cohen, 2011). The emphasis today is more on personalized marketing rather than simply offer a differentiated product. In product differentiation, the effort is to distinguish your product from the competitor’s product while personalization tries to create a unique product to offer to each consumer (Roebuck, 2012). The most practical marketing in interactive media is personalized marketing through the medium of Internet. Through the website, it’s easy to track the consumer interest and provide suggestions for future too. In case of several websites, companies not only provide information but also prioritize it on the basis of individualized preferences which ultimately help consumers to have better choices (Roebuck, 2012).

1.1.1 Media, Ecology, and Evolution

There are complementary ways to interpret the application of the ecology metaphor in media: media as environment or species which are interacting together (Scolari, 2012). Previously researchers were analyzing how technologies can provide an environment that affects consumers who use them. According to McLuhan (2003) and Scolari (2012), the effects of technology does not occur at the level of opinions or concepts only, but it also alters sense ratios or patterns of consumer perception
steadily and without any resistance. For instance television “has changed our sense-
lives and our mental processes.” In the context of media as species which live in the
same ecosystem, the concentration of analysis is on the relationship with media.
Mcluhan & Mcluhan (1992) and McLuhan (2003) identified the second approach in
his book especially in the context of understanding media. He posited that medium
does not exist alone but has interaction with other media. For instance, radio changed
the shape of a news story which is quite different from film image in the talkies or a
movie theatre. Television has made drastic changes in the programming of radio.
According to this interpretation, the ecological metaphor is considered as an inter-
media dimension of media ecology. On many occasions, social sciences have
employed evolution models to technological development (Logan, 2007).

1.1.2 Social Media has been with us for Decades

According to Borges (2012) the emergence of social media can be traced to last
decade with the emergence of Social Networking Sites (SNSs) like Facebook,
Twitter, LinkedIn, and YouTube. In fact, it is said that these sites have been the
primary drivers of social media. But as a matter of facts, they are not the
representative of the original social networking platforms. The existence of social
media can be traced to 1969. Bulletin Board Service (BBS) and email ought to be
credited with providing the basic building blocks of the social media revolution that
started somewhere in 2000. Prior to that there were no digital platforms per se and the
people too did not have the ‘mindset’ of engaging and communicating through online
platforms as we see them today.

1.1.3 Treating Social Media Marketing as a Mindset

Social media marketing is redesigning yesterday’s marketing strategies. Borges
(2012) highlighted that the biggest barrier to achieving success in social media
marketing by any business is the shift in organizational mindset required to acquire
the ‘social culture’ and leverage on it. If the businesses don’t have the required
mindset to employ social media as channel to engage, connect, share and build trust
with current and potential consumers, they will totally miss the bus. Half-hearted
adoption of this social media mindset is also not going to serve the purpose and is unlikely to power the success of the business.

1.1.4 Social Media and Social Business

Companies that have embraced social media mindset understand what it means to be in social business and it is considered as a B2H (business to human) or sometimes H2H (human to human) activity. Borges (2012) stated that those businesses that use social media only as a platform for advertising and broadcasting are actually not social as they are ignoring its real social facet and using it to re-work on old marketing strategies without leveraging on the real power of social media.

Borges (2012) posited that a perfect social business being managed through digital channels at the executive level knows the significance of engaging with their consumers, suppliers, employees, local stakeholders, partners and even competitors via online digital channels. The social businesses appreciate and intrinsic value of credible engagement with the stakeholders and deliver a unique and pleasant and memorable experience.

1.1.5 The Brief History of Social Media

Social media are internet based platforms which give the ability to the people to interact with each other regarding certain information that can potentially contain a multimedia mix of personal words, pictures, audios, and videos (Curtis, 2013). In these websites individuals and groups keep exchanging and creating content and also engage with each other in conversations which include blogs and microblogs, message boards and forums, networks, social bookmarking, virtual worlds, wikis, tagging and news, writing communities, podcast portals, and data, content, image and, digital storytelling and scrapbooking, video sharing and collective intelligence. There are a large number of popular sites like Facebook, Twitter, MySpace, LinkedIn, YouTube, Flickr, Wikipedia, Live Journal etc..
Figure 1.1 History of Social Media

1969
1st Commercial Online Service by Compuserve

1971
First Email

1978
BBS Bulletin Board Systems

1979
NewsGroups

1989
World Wide Web Introduced

1994
First Blog Created by Swarthmore student

1997
1st Modern Social Network Launched
Six Degrees was the first modern social network. It allowed users to create a profile and become friends with other users. Had about 1 million members at its peak popularity.

1999
AOL Instant Messenger Introduced

2002
Friendster Launched
Friendster is still a very active social network, with over 90 million registered users and 600 million unique visitors each month.

2004
Facebook Launched
Facebook was created for Harvard. Today 1 out of every 15 people globally on Facebook. Half of them are logged in on any given day. While Facebook started out as a Harvard only social network, it quickly expanded to other schools, then to high schools, businesses and eventually everyone.

2005
YouTube Launched
At the first major video hosting and sharing site, users can upload videos up to 10 minutes long and share them through YouTube or by embedding them on other websites, social networks, blogs.

2006
SlideShare Launched
SlideShare launched. Today over 60 million users view online presentations.

2007
Mobile Apps Revolutionize Communication
Mobile apps (iPhone, iPad, and Android) can be largely credited for the rise in popularity of real-time updates. Prior to this, mobile browsers were clunky at best, and virtually unusable at worst.

2008
Video of Burger King employee bathing in sink sparks awareness; Groupon Launches

2009
Movie "Bruno" dies by word of mouth on the web within 3 days. Testimony that consumers do control brand.

2010
QR Code Standards Created

2011
Social Media Becomes Social Business
Social Media fast forwards news access and community action.

2012
NFC Ushers in Social Convergence

Source: Borges (2012)
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Development</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1969</td>
<td>First major commercial internet service was CompuServe. The technology is known as dial-up, it remained major players till mid of the 1990s.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1971</td>
<td>The first email was delivered.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1978</td>
<td>The invention of Bulletin Board System (BBS), by two Chicago computers which was the rudimentary stage of the small virtual community.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1979</td>
<td>Usenet was the very first bulletin board service connecting Duke University to the University of North Carolina.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1984</td>
<td>The Prodigy online service was introduced. It became the second-largest online service provider in 1990, with 465,000 subscribers compare to CompuServe’s 600,000.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1985</td>
<td>America Online (AOL) service</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1989</td>
<td>World Wide Web was created by British engineer Tim Berners-Lee began</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1992</td>
<td>The appearance of Tripod as an online community for college students and young adults.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1993</td>
<td>The WWW technology was donated by CERN to the world. Students at NCSA developed the first graphical browser, Mosaic, and Web pages displayed.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1994</td>
<td>The emergence of GeoCities by BII which allowed users to create their own websites, by 1997 had one million members. Thereafter, developed by 38 million users. The rise of Yahoo as a search engine and index in 1994 and owns GeoCities, which offers it just as a web hosting service for Japan. Internet was used as an information superhighway for people. EarthLink started up as an online service provider.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1997</td>
<td>One million websites. Startup of Blogging and SixDegrees.com helps users to create profiles and list friends. AOL Instant Messenger for chatting. The appearance of Blackboard is an online course management system for educators and learners.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1998</td>
<td>The opening of Google as a major Internet search engine and index.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1999</td>
<td>First, the social network is known as Friends Reunited.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2000</td>
<td>The dot.com came up and about Seventy million computers were connected to the Internet.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2001</td>
<td>The rise of Wikipedia as an online encyclopedia and world’s largest wiki and Apple started selling iPods.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2002</td>
<td>Friendster is a U.S social network site with the growth of three million users in three months. AOL had 34 million members.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2003</td>
<td>MySpace was launched as another social networking site. Linden Lab opened the virtual world “Second Life” on the Internet. LinkedIn came to exist as a business-oriented social networking site for professionals. And moreover three billion web pages. The online music service iTunes presented by Apple.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2004</td>
<td>Facebook, started at that time as the new version Friendster for Harvard college students. MySpace got the better page views than Friendster. Podcasting started on the Internet. Flickr image hosting website appeared. Digg was discovered as a</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Year</td>
<td>Event</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>------</td>
<td>-------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2005</td>
<td>The blog was started as another social networking site. MySpace has been purchased by Rupert Murdoch. Facebook started a version for high school students. Friends Reunited was sold to the British television company ITV. YouTube started storing and retrieving videos.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2006</td>
<td>MySpace emerged as the most popular social networking site. Twitter was introduced as another social networking and microblogging site. Facebook membership was opened to anyone over age thirteen. Google had indexed more than 25 billion web pages, 400 million queries per day etc.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2007</td>
<td>Microsoft bought a stake in Facebook. Facebook began Facebook Platform that allows third-party developers create applications and initiated its Beacon advertising system. iPhone multimedia and Internet smartphone released by Apple.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2008</td>
<td>Facebook overcame MySpace in the total number of monthly unique visitors. At the same time, Facebook tried unsuccessfully to buy Twitter. AOL bought Bebo.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2009</td>
<td>Facebook with more than 200 million ranked as the most-used social network. The New Oxford American Dictionary word of the year was Unfriend. Microsoft's Bing joined Yahoo and Google as major search engines on the Internet. Reunited social media site sold to Brightsolid Limited. After eliminating duplicate entries Google saw one trillion unique URLs. The Internet had at least 27 billion web pages.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2010</td>
<td>400 million users reported as Facebook users, 57 Million for MySpace. The appearance of Buzz via Google to compete with Facebook and Twitter. iPad released. Bebo sold to Criterion Capital Partners. The Democratic National Committee advertised for a social networks manager to supervise President Barack Obama's accounts on Facebook, Twitter, and MySpace. Internet had exceeded newspaper as a primary way for American to get news.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2011</td>
<td>Accessibility of social media from virtually anywhere and it became an integral part of daily lives, with 550 million Facebook users65 million daily tweets on Twitter and 2 billion video views on YouTube every day. Along with 90 million professional users which were on LinkedIn. The rise of mobile social media via smartphones and tablet computers. The Ping social network for music introduced by Apple and integrated with iTunes. MySpace and Bebo updated to compete with Facebook and Twitter.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2012</td>
<td>Around 2 billion people around the world use the Internet and social media, while 213 million Americans use the Internet via computers and 55 million use it via tablets and 52 million uses the Web via smartphone. People link to the Internet via handheld music players, game consoles, Internet-enabled TVs, and e-readers. The top ten social networks are Facebook, Blogger, Twitter, Wordpress, LinkedIn, Pinterest, Google+, Tumblr, MySpace, and Wikia. Advertisers search in social &quot;likes&quot; to enhance brand visibility. Facebook gained a billion users in 2012. Monthly YouTube has more than 800 million users. Apple closed the Ping social</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
network in 2012 and improved iTunes.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Description</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2013</td>
<td>YouTube has peaked one billion monthly users with 4 billion views per day. Facebook user total reached to 1.11 billion. Twitter got 500 million registered users. Over 50 billion apps downloaded by Apple's customers and company improved iTunes again. Tumblr blogging social media network has been purchased by Yahoo. Flickr with 87 million users stored 8 billion photos and Instagram 100 million users with storing of 4 billion photos. LinkedIn achieved 225 million users and MySpace with 25 million users. Pinterest, WordPress, Dropbox and respectively had 48.7 million, 74 Million, 100 million and 343 million users. Reddit had 69.9 million users per month.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2014</td>
<td>80% people in the world have access to the Internet. 25% world’s population is using social media and three-quarter of this online population are using one or even more SNSs. For customer services, social media is used and people friended a different brand on their Facebook.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Source: Özcan (25 December 2014)*

1.1.6 The Evolution of Media in India

India has made significant strides in communication and networking. India has been quick in embracing technological advancements in the arena of communications, both at the infrastructural and social level. It has witnessed the use of pigeons to telephones, TV, and now; computers and SNSs (Shukla, 2011). Figure 1.2 provides a summary of evolution of media in India

- **Pigeons**: Indians used pigeons as communication tools with each other in the old days. In fact they were used as communication medium until March 2002 in the state of Orissa in India.
- **Post Office**: The handwritten letter was another form of communication which was sent via the post offices and was adopted in India in 1764.
- **News Paper**: Bengal Gazette first published an edition of the newspaper in 1780. Newspaper even today is one of most popular communication medium.
- **Telecom**: The history of Telecom in India can be traced back to 1882.
- **Radio**: First started in 1927 in erstwhile Bombay (Mumbai). The reach of radio increased from 14 million in 1970 to 65 million in 2010. Presently, there are about 231 radio stations in India.
Computer: Introduced in Indian market in 1955 with initial price of 2 lakhs. Approximately 81 million internet users were Indian in 2009.

Television: Started in 1960s. India is known to be 4th biggest broadcasting nation.

Mobile: According to Internet and Mobile Association of India (IAMAI)-IMRB International (2016), mobile Internet user base in India has reached 371 million by June 2016. Interestingly, the user base in rural India went up by a whopping 93 per cent from December 2014 to reach 87 million at the end of December 2015.

The IAMAI-IMRB International Report (2016) found that subscribers in urban India use mobile Internet mostly for online communication (80%), social networking (74%), entertainment (30%), online shopping (13%) and online ticketing (11%). In rural India, 52% reported that they use Internet for entertainment, 39% use it for social networking, 37% for communication, and 1% for online shopping and 0.4% for online ticketing.

1.1.7 Facts and Statistics on Social Media

Quite unlike while watching TV, which has often also referred to as the “Idiot Box”, social media enables its patron to comment as also read the comments on their favorite shows. Out of 143 million users of social media across India, urban areas of the country witnessed a growth of 35% with 118 million users as of April 2015 (Bhargava, 2015). On the other hand, the number of users for rural India stood at 25 million, up from close to 12 million last year, showing a growth of 100%. Facebook emerged as the most popular social media website with 96% of urban users accessing it, followed by Google Plus (61%), Twitter (43%) and LinkedIn (24%). The largest segment of users was college-going students (34%), followed by young men (27%), the report said. The presence of Indian users in July 2010 on YouTube and Flicker respectively was about 15.5 and 1.91 million users. Social media started it’s significant role in the field of promotion for brands, movies, and TV shows and about 156 million blogs, online videos and podcasts started up to be staples for marketers (Shukla, 2011).
Figure 1.2 Schematic Representation of Evolution of Media in India

Source: Prepared by Researcher
1.2 Needs & Scope of the Study

The rapid growth in the popularity of the Internet, and advances in the field of information and communication technologies (ICTs) in general, have served as platforms facilitating interaction between consumers, and the formation of brand communities (Muñiz & O’Guinn, 2001; Muñiz & Schau, 2006). Internet has given ‘voice’ to the customer enabling them to provide their online feedback whether good or bad and share their experience with others too. In this context, since 2005, concept of consumer “engagement” has been used increasingly in the academic marketing literature. But, despite phenomenal growth and popularity of Internet, academic researcher into explaining the associated concepts and examining how it is different from similar related offline concepts like, “participation” and “involvement,” is still limited. Consumer engagement (CE) is considered as a vehicle for creating, building and enhancing consumer relationships with product, service or brand (Brodie, Ilic, Juric & Hollebeek, 2013).

CE is important in both strategic context to make and sustain a competitive advantage as well as valuable source to predict the future business performance (Sedley, 2008). According to Neff (2007), consumer engagement is a primary driver of sales growth, but Voyles (2007) defined consumer engagement as a tool to enhance profitability. MSI (2010) emphasizes that understanding of “customer engagement” is key to decoding consumer behavior in complex, interactive and co-creative environments.

Urban (2005) says that customer advocacy and increasing power of consumers should be at the forefront of marketing strategy. With the help of the internet and new cutting edge technologies, the consumer is aided in the decision-making process and can purchase products after searching for information through non-commercial social channels which are more trusted than information provided by companies. The control is in the hands of consumers. If the consumer were satisfied in the traditional way of marketing, they would tell to few people who are close to them i.e. engage in positive WOM but if they were to be dissatisfied with an offering of a company, they have the deadly potential to instantaneously bad mouth the product i.e. engage in negative word of mouth to a very large number of through the medium of Internet. This development will be highly detrimental for a company. In contrast, the positive
communications by a consumer can provide many opportunities for a company (Diffley, Kearns, Bennett, & Kawalek 2011).

According to Clarke (2008), Rust and Oliver (1994) development of a consumer–producer collaborative relationship is greatly facilitated by the use of information technology. According to them, consumers have less trust in companies which are insular; but trust will remain with those companies which are collaborating with them regarding products and services. Consumer’s network value and their potential to send a message, be it positive or negative in content, to a number of people should not be ignored, because they may not limit the flow to their immediate network and the message may hop from one network to another, based on the commonality of members of different networks (Domingos, 2005).

1.3 Research Gap

‘Engagement’ is a new term in the context of online marketing. Therefore, there is a pressing need for greater academic research in this area even though ‘engagement’ has been studied in different disciplines but not as a specific concept in online marketing. The dearth of academic literature in the context of emerging economies like India is all the more acute. There are some studies which are related to consumer engagement in countries like USA and UK (Vivek, 2009; Lewis, 2013; Chu, 2009; Reitz, 2012; Alkhateeb, Moussa & Ali, 2012) but as the researcher could not locate any significant work focusing on India. There are studies for instance on consumer loyalty, CRM, customer relationship, consumer retention but not specifically related to consumer engagement and online consumer engagement. In the existing researches which largely are US and UK centric, researchers primarily focused on university students but the present research attempts to cover not only students but also other occupational groups in different cities in India.

1.4 Research Objectives

Keeping in mind the lack of academic research in the domain, the study had the following broad objectives:
Objective 1: To study consumer usage patterns of Social Networking Sites (SNSs).

Objective 2: To study factors which effect the ‘consumer engagement’ (CE) in the context of Social Networking Sites (SNSs) leading to spread of electronic word of mouth (e-WOM).

Objective 3: To study the relationship of demographics with the factors that affect the consumer engagement in the context of Social Networking Sites (SNSs) leading to spread of electronic word of mouth (e-WOM).

1.5 Research Overview

The focus of the present study is on testing the framework to clarify the effect of social networking sites on consumer engagement through the electronic world of mouth. The study follows a descriptive research design and is divided into different sections such as the section on literature review, development of research framework, development of research instruments, data collection and data analysis and other relevant sections. For the literature review section different research papers and articles were collected from various databases such as Proquest, Sciencedirect, Emerald, EBSCO, Scopus and various newspapers and magazines published from India.

1.6 Overview of Social Network Sites and Social Capital Theory

Bourdieu and Pierre (1986) referred social capital as “resources embedded within, available through, and derived from the network of relationships possessed by an individual or social unit” which provide the basis for collective, cooperation, trust and action in social aggregates such as an organization. These sources of social capital possess structural, cognitive, and relational dimensions (Adler & Kwon, 2002; Nahapiet & Ghoshal, 1998). Structural dimension refers to the “rules, agenda, and network configuration” (Stewart & Pavlou, 2002) which provide “opportunities for interaction”; cognitive dimension directs to the shared frame of reference that produces motivations for purposive exchange (Nahapiet & Ghoshal, 1998); and
relational dimension is the “norms, obligations, and social identification that produce networking motivations” (Dholakia, Bagozzi & Pearo, 2004; Hung & Li, 2007). A significant effect of social capital is “its ability to pool, create, and disseminate knowledge”. Organizational studies show that “sources of social capital motivate a person to share his/her knowledge and bring new intellectual capital which causes organizational competitive advantages” (Adler & Kwon, 2002; Hung & Li, 2007).

According to Putnam (2000) and Liu, Liu & Sheng (2013), there are two kinds of social capital viz. bridging and bonding social capital. Bridging or weak ties are essentially helpful in providing information and new opinions but not of much help in providing emotional support. Bonding social capital or strong ties are usually between individuals and emotionally close relationships like families and close friends; those are emotionally supportive. But Ellison, Steinfield & Lampe (2007) brought a third kind of social capital into the consideration which is called as maintained social capital. It refers to those acquaintances from formerly inhabited communities that enables individuals to reconnect with the former friends after physical disconnection between them. It is in this context that SNSs can improve the communication and maintain the relationships particularly in case of physical disconnect. In fact, social capital is considered to be important outcome of use of SNS (Hampton & Wellman, 2003). Overall SNSs increase different types of social capital due to modalities involved in distribution of photos and search capabilities and the online connection with people (Liu et al., 2013).

Researchers such as Coleman (1988) and Hsu & Tran (2013) have presented social capital as a connection which links people and the factors that help tie them together. The intrinsic part of relations between people is called social capital; it is characterized by interaction in network, norms, ideas, resource information, emotional support, cooperation. According to Putnam (2000), social capital refers to the “connections among individuals, social networks and the norms of reciprocity and trustworthiness that arise from them”. Choi, Marina, Kim, Sung & Sohn (2008) believed that “strong connections can be strengthened by SNSs which make a channel for interaction with strong ties and eventually it leads to increase in bonding social capital”. Some studies have observed that Facebook can be as both bonding social capital and bridging social capital among its users (Ellison et al., 2007). People today
are getting involved with SNSs to interact with each other in scenarios of strong ties and weak ties of social capital.

1.6.1 Characteristic of New Media

New websites, digital communication and information channel in which consumers actively engage in behavior are called as new media. It can be used by others in real time and even long afterward irrespective of their spatial location (Thurau, Malthouse, Friege, Gensler, Lobschat, Rangaswamy & Skiera, 2010). Some interesting characteristics of new media are described below:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Characteristic</th>
<th>Description</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Digital</td>
<td>Due to the digital character of new media, there is no marginal cost to make extra copies of digital products. Anyone can blog, write and review, share a song and so on only by connecting to the internet.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pro-active</td>
<td>The reason for consumers to use the new media is to contribute in all parts of the value chain, articulation, and co-creation of products.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Visible</td>
<td>Activities of consumers on social media are visible for others and it can be tracked by other consumers as well as companies.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Real-time and memory</td>
<td>Consumers can have access to new media any time via chatting and blogging. And comments and reviews given by consumers are available, apart from that the memory is playing an important part in new media as consumers can go through the previous experience of consumers into futures.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ubiquitous</td>
<td>The reachability of new media is so important for consumers and companies, due to mobile devices almost everywhere at any time they can use SNS and review the products.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Networks</td>
<td>New media is a tool for the consumer to participate in social networks by which they can share, comment, create, and communicate with each other, even building a relationship with consumers (Libai et al. 2010).</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Thurau, Malthouse, Friege, Gensler, Lobschat, Rangaswamy & Skiera (2010)

1.7 Organization of the Study

The present doctoral thesis is organized into six chapters. This first chapter presents the background of the research and discusses the need of the study, objectives of research, research gaps, a final organization of the study followed by the outline of every chapter. Chapter 2 is deals with literature review of topics such as CE, SNSs, and e-WOM. Chapter 3 discusses research methodology and research framework. Chapter 4 discusses data interpretation and data analysis. Chapter 5 present discussion
and findings of the study and finally, Chapter 6 describes theoretical and managerial implication of the study and suggestions to future researchers.

**Figure 1.3 Structure of the Study**

![Structure of the Study Diagram]

*Source: Prepared by Researcher*

### 1.8 Concluding Remarks

This chapter discussed the objectives, gap, and need of the study, also presents a quick overview of social networking sites, and concepts such as social media, and social capital. Next chapter presents the Literature Review and deals with effect of social networking sites on consumer engagement through electronic word of mouth which later helped to develop research hypotheses and framework of the study.

16
Chapter 2: Literature Review

2.1 Introduction

The Internet and associated information technology tools provide the combined ability to have a great impact on consumer information search process at all levels, like the type of information sought, the amount of information searched and the relative importance of the information acquired (Klein, 1998; Kulviwat, Guo & Engehanil, 2004). In fact, Due to the enabling features of the Internet and e-commerce platforms, there is a marked shift in power at the marketplace from producers to consumers (Goldsmith & Horowitz, 2006; Steffes and Burgee, 2009).

2.2 Word of Mouth (WOM)

Word of mouth (WOM) is the information which passes from a person to another person about the specific subject through oral communication based on the personal experiences or opinions which can be as simple as a daily conversation. This conversation can be between two people or a number of people and according to the influence that person has, people or a group can get attracted and influenced by the person. It can be in the form of storytelling, oral tradition, oral history, word of mouth or even electronic word of mouth (e-WOM).

WOM is the world’s most effective but least understood method in marketing strategies. It is “informal, unpaid, oral, non-commercial and interpersonal communication between two or more people who are connected by any verbal communication channel” (Petrescu & Korgaonkar, 2011; Trusov, Bucklin & Pauwels, 2009). For nearly half a century, WOM has been designated as “one of the most important, if not the most important source of information for the consumer” (Ardnt, 1967). How it really works and maximizes the benefits for a brand is much more complicated, especially for companies who share a more modern, broad definitions of
the term "brand". Companies who subscribe to the idea that a brand contains all of an individual’s interactions with the company as well as the way those interactions affect his/her perception of the company are more likely to appreciate and recognize the value of WOM and are more likely to be open to the idea of allowing consumers to play a more pro-active role in the growth and development of the brand (Colvin, 2013).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Authors</th>
<th>Definition</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Arndt (1967)</td>
<td>&quot;Oral, person to person communication between a receiver and a communicator whom the receiver perceives as a non-commercial individual, concerning a brand, a product or a service.&quot;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Harrison-Walker (2001)</td>
<td>&quot;Informal person-to-person communication between a perceived noncommercial communicator and a receiver regarding a brand, a product, an organization, or a service.&quot;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>WOMMA (2008)</td>
<td>&quot;The act of consumers providing information to other consumers.&quot;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Westbrook (1987)</td>
<td>&quot;As informal communications directed at other consumers about the ownership, usage and characteristics of particular goods and services or their sellers.&quot;</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Prepared by Researcher

WOM plays a major role in customer buying decisions behavior and it is the process of exchanging information between people typically through conversation and usually between those who knows each other (Kawakami, Kishiya & Parry, 2013). It contains consumer sharing attitudes, reaction about businesses, opinions, products or services to people. Overall WOM marketing is influential and very hard to influence (Dellarocas, 2003; Phelps, Lewis, Raman, Perry, & Mobilio, 2004).

According to the previous study, WOM is stronger than information from commercial sources because it is unbiased (Herr, Kardes & Kim 1991). WOM communication is one of the most widely accepted notions of consumer behavior and it plays an important role in shaping consumers’ attitudes and behaviors. WOM has its influence more on product judgments rather than less vivid printed information (Herr, Kardes & Kim 1991). It was seven times as effective as magazines and newspapers, four times as effective as P’s and twice as effective as radio advertising in influencing consumers to switch brands. Therefore, according to research investigating the influence of
WOM about rituals is important in only from the managerial perspective but also theoretically.

Word-of-mouth (WOM) is an informal way of communication among private parties concerning the evaluation of goods and services (Dichter, 1966). WOM has facilitated the sale of a wide range of products, including professional services, movies (Mizerski, 1982), automobiles (Swan & Oliver, 1989), and travel (Chung & Darke, 2006). Researchers found that personal sources play a particularly influential role in selection of service providers (Keaveney, 1995; Price & Feick, 1984), affecting product choice (Kiel & Layton 1981; Price & Feick, 1984), and in the diffusion of information regarding new products and services especially when the information seeker perceives high risk (Cunningham 1964; Roselius, 1971), or when consumers are generally susceptible to interpersonal influence (Bearden, Netemeyer & Teel, 1989). When the purchase is important, consumer choice is especially likely to be influenced by WOM. Consumers seem to appreciate WOM because it is considered more reliable and trustworthy than other sources of information. Marketing practitioners understand the importance of WOM and is said to be “the most important marketing element that exists” (Alspop, 1984), and “the most powerful force in the marketplace” (Silverman, 1997).

2.2.1 Word of Mouth Marketing (WOMM)

OReilly & Marx (2011) said it is necessary to distinguish WOM from word-of-mouth marketing (WOMM) which involves “intentional influencing of consumer-to-consumer communications by professional marketing techniques” (Kozinets,Valck, Wojnicki, Wilner, 2010, p.71). It is also known as “buzz marketing, viral marketing, social media marketing and guerilla marketing”. Word of Mouth Marketing Association described it, as: “Giving people a reason to talk about your products and services, it makes easier for the conversation to take place. It is the art and science of building active, mutually beneficial consumer-to-consumer and consumer-to-marketer communications” (WOMMA, 2008). In this definition, word-of-mouth marketing (WOMM) becomes a common term, which includes tactics such as so-called viral or buzz marketing.
Word-of-mouth marketing (WOMM) is not just about making conversations between consumers, but encourage these conversations and to anchor them in the overall marketing strategy (WOMMA, 2008). Overall marketing focus is important because of the theory of communication practice often speaks about marketing when it means just marketing communication and not the entire marketing mix (Kotler & Bliemel, 2006).

Satisfied customers are self-involved in promoting the companies’ products. As these satisfied consumers spread their positive experience with other consumers, it helps companies’ promotional investments. Word of mouth in marketing is a conversation tool that carries relevant information based on consumer experience so that it affects consumer purchase decision making (Grewal & Davis, 2003). It is two-way communications and also effects on consumer’s attitudes and behavior (Brown & Reingen, 1987). Hence, it can be positive or negative: the negative WOM helps companies to improve themselves while positive WOM is unconsciously promotion done by customers for companies. The function of WOM is either spreading awareness for the new products in a market or in the case of the existence of awareness; it encourages inquiring about the products.

WOM is considered to be “more interesting, understandable, reliable, relevant, objective, credible and engaging” (Eccleston & Griseri, 2008; Breazeale, 2009) than any other form of marketing. That’s why it is so important for marketers to know who is generating WOM about their brand as well as why and how. Marketers have taken proactive measures to harness the power of WOM as well as incorporate WOM strategies into their marketing plans (Colvin, 2013). WOMM is “the intentional influencing of consumer-to-consumer communications by professional marketing techniques” (Kozinets, Valck, Wojnicki, & Wilner, 2010).

Noncommercial information practically is more effective in the case of consumer decision making rather than impersonal media to affect the opinions and decisions of consumers non-personal or commercial information and messages mostly act as an informative and developing awareness among the consumers for initial interest of products or services, while in the matter of innovations, consumers are affected by WOM sources which is defined as the act of exchanging information regarding products or services and has a very significant role in consumer attitudes, their
decision making and behavior related to products and services (Gilly, Graham, Wollinbarger & Yale, 1998; Grewal, Cline, & Davies, 2003).

Petrescu & Korgaonkar (2011) observed that there are other terms which are slightly different from the definition of WOMM, but it is common for many in the marketing industry to refer to it interchangeable with any of the following terms:

- **Viral marketing** defined as “online and offline marketing activities performed to influence consumers to pass along commercial messages to other consumers” (Petrescu & Korgaonkar, 2011, p.218).
- **Buzz marketing** is “peer-to-peer communications as a consequence on viral marketing” (Petrescu & Korgaonkar, 2011, p.218).
- **Viral advertising** “Unpaid electronic (e-mail, The Web, or social media) distribution of business or user-generated advertisements from consumer to consumer, based on ad content likeability, entertainment, and controversial characteristics” (Petrescu & Korgaonkar, 2011).

2.2.2 Electronic Word of Mouth (eWOM)

Internet facilitates the way people interact with each other, and with the rapid development of Internet, *electronic word of mouth* has gradually evolved from traditional WOM. Electronic word of mouth (eWOM) is a type of WOM with slight difference when considered in the context of online social channels and is manifested in the form of a product review, emails and discussion forums. It plays a pivotal role in the way consumers interact with each other on online platforms (Brown, Broderick, & Lee, 2007). Social networks are a great opportunity for online consumers for exchanging their information with their networks of friends, family (Petrescu & Korgaonkar, 2011) even their individual opinions and experiences about companies’ brands, products, and services (Ong, 2011; Colvin, 2013). The ability to exchange information online is known as eWOM (Liu, 2006). Social Networking Sites (SNSs) represent a perfect tool for eWOM where consumers freely 'create' and ‘distribute’ brand-related information over social networks with friends, classmates, and other acquaintances.
Table 2.2: Definitions of e-WOM

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Authors</th>
<th>Definition</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>(Petrescu &amp; Korgaonkar, 2011, p. 219)</td>
<td>“Electronic consumer to consumer communication regarding a brand or product.”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(Hennig-Thurau, 2004)</td>
<td>“Any positive or negative statement made by potential, actual, or former customers about a product or company, which is made available to a multitude of people and institutions via the Internet.”</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Prepared by Researcher

2.2.3 Traditional Word of Mouth (WOM) and Electronic Word of Mouth (eWOM)

Although eWOM was derived from traditional WOM as an extended information source via the Internet and has some characteristics in common with traditional WOM but it differs from traditional WOM in several ways. The most visible difference of eWOM is, the written format which is limited to the online environment (Petrescu & Korgaonkar, 2011) and allow consumers to share their positive and negative experience in an anonymous, asynchronous online platform (Chatterjee, 2001; Petrescu & Korgaonkar, 2011), while WOM is conducted by face-to-face communication process, like meetings and telephone conversations. But online discussion forums, blogs, and e-mails are often used for eWOM (Hoffman & Novak, 1996 Jung.Kim,2012). Online WOM has attracted researchers’ attention due to being a convenient, inexpensive, and a less intrusive venue for sharing interests and opinions in online communities. Another difference is that the information communicated by eWOM is often anonymous, unlike traditional WOM, which is usually communicated between people who know each other (Hoffman and Novak, 1996) thereby the credibility of the communicator and the message is known to the receiver.

Besides these differences, eWOM is more persistent and accessibility than WOM, which means that millions of people can reach each other and share their information (Jeong and Jang, 2011; Jung, Kim, 2012). Although sender and receiver of information can be separated by both space and time (Steffes & Burgee, 2009). Most of the text-based information presented on the Internet is recorded. Therefore, would
be made available for an indefinite period of time (Herr, Kardes & Kim, 1991; Hennig-Thurau et al., 2004; Sen, 2008; Park & Lee, 2009; Hung & Li, 2007; Lee, Park & Hen, 2008). Furthermore, written communication is also more logical than oral communication, because letter follows letter in a tidy line of writing (Sun, Tao, Youn, Wu & Kuntaraporn, 2006).

Unlike traditional WOM, due to the ease of transferring information online, eWOM has a faster diffusion effect and possesses unprecedented scalability (Prendergast, Ko & Yuen, 2010; Jung, Kim, 2012). Another characteristic of WOM communication, is that sharing of information is between small groups of individuals in the synchronous process (Li & Hitt 2008, Dellarocas 2003; Steffes & Burgee, 2009). Nevertheless, eWOM communications include multi-way exchanges of information and is infrequently an asynchronous process (Hung & Li, 2007). eWOM harnesses the bidirectional communication and unlimited reach of the Internet to share experiences and opinions on a world Internet platform rather than a one to one platform (Dellarocas, 2003).

Compared to traditional WOM, eWOM is measurable, since eWOM communication is directed on the Internet, which can be helpful for researchers to measure and trace (Lee, Park & Hen, 2008; Park & Kim, 2008). Word-of-mouth information available online is far more voluminous in quantity by contrast to information obtained from traditional contacts in the offline world (Chatterjee, 2001; Hanna & Wozniak, 2001).

The sharing of opinions by traditional WOM relies heavily on the altruistic nature of the sender to pass information on which the sender believes will be beneficial to the user. Moreover, the traditional WOM communication is not a profit motivation. But while the known source of information found in WOM is changed by the unknown, anonymous source of information in eWOM, there is a possibility of the existence of non-altruistic or profit-motivated communication. For example, authors of books could write favorable comments of their own book on Amazon.com (Steffes & Burgee, 2009) besides, by using search engines one can seek out the opinions of strangers. Rarely it happens in conventional interpersonal contexts that opinion providers are embedded in social networks (Sun et al., 2006).

The eWOM gives the consumer the power to reach a mass audience instantly. It is considered as relatively permanent and transcends space and time (Henning-Thurau &
Walsh, 2004). Additionally, eWOM is not as limited as traditional WOM because it is only effective within limited social contact and the influence quickly diminishes over the time and distance (Fudenberg & Ellison, 1995). eWOM is more influential which is due to its speed, convenience, reach and the absence of face to face peer pressure (Huang, Hsiao & Chen, 2012; Phelps et al., 2004; Chu & Choi, 2011). eWOM signifies less social anxiety, fewer inhibitions and less public self-awareness and also it looks to be more honest (Roed, 2003). This self-disclosure tendency might be due to the greater anonymity offered by the Internet (Sun, Tao, Youn, Wu & Kuntaraporn, 2006).

Overall WOM, whether online or offline is shaping the attitudes and behaviors of consumers, especially with the spread of innovation (Herr, Kardes & Kim, 1991). The most commonly investigated responses of eWOM communication studies are factors related to a receiver’s psychological state, such as purchase intention, attitude, information adoption, and trust. Both offline WOM and online eWOM will tend to be more effective when the sender is trustworthy and also it depends on the sender’s level of expertise and the receiver’s level of effort for seeking information and even receiver’s personal experience of a brand or product (Bansal & Voyer, 2000; Bickert & Schindler, 2001).

According to some researchers like (Marken, 2007), social media is simply eWOM that enables to reach a larger number of people than traditional WOM and it’s a yardstick that has become articulated and multidimensional. The findings of some researchers are conflicting due to inherent differences between WOM and eWOM. Sen (2008) claims that eWOM is not as effective as WOM but Steffes & Burgee (2009) posited that eWOM affects consumer purchasing behaviors more than WOM. As the online market continues to expand rapidly, the reach of eWOM is growing due to its characters like virtual community, anonymity, accessibility and a diffusive effect which provide consumers a better opportunity and environment for social interactions, although consumers still trust traditional WOM more than eWOM (Colvin, 2013).
2.2.4 Consumer Motives for Articulation on Internet Enabled Platforms

Hennig et al. (2004) studied the opinion-leader theory (Chan & Misra, 1990; Flynn, Goldsmith, & Eastman, 1996) and speculated on the communication motives of opinion followers. Drawing on Dichter’s motive typology for information givers, corresponding motives can be theoretically derived in the context of information-seeking behavior (Dichter, 1966). Schiffman and Kanuk (1987, p.560) stated risk reduction of search time and buying decision of consumers as “self-involvement motivations”. The outcome of the first motive can be directly traced from risk-related theoretical considerations. The second can be explained as an effort to save the time needed to provide a product which is related to consumer’s self-perceived lack of time (Dhar & Nowlis, 1999; Spears, 2001). Wiedmann, Walsh, and Mitchell (2001) provided support for the relevance of both motives, declaring, “as markets become saturated with information and products, it is increasingly difficult for consumers to know and process all alternatives. In such circumstances, competent advisors can help consumers become informed without their engaging in cognitively demanding and time-consuming search activities” (Wiedmann, Walsh & Mitchell, 2001, p.196).

The first motive related to on-line articulations was provided empirically by Granitz and Ward, who stated that 20 percent of the 204 customer articulations in a newsgroup "were devoted to discussions of how to use a product" (Granitz & Ward, 1996, p.164). Opinion platforms allow customers to search for information in an individualized manner, therefore, consumer articulations have a high degree of relevance for the reader's specific consumption situation. Due to the curiosity and novelty seeking consumers need to learn which products are new in the marketplace. Social function of consumption is known as “other-involvement motivations (Schiffman & Kanuk, 1987). Probably consumers read product-related information on opinion platforms to evaluate the product and its associated social prestige.

Another motive can be acquired from the theory of cognitive dissonance (e.g., Sweeney, Hausknecht & Soutar, 2000). In the context of decision on a specific product, consumers often experience cognitive incongruence related to information about the alternative offers that they have rejected. Cognitive incongruence may also be caused by conflicting information from other sources. Incongruence can be reduced by unbiased information which confirms the consumer's assessment of a
consumption situation or the soundness of the consumer's choice (Fischer, Bristor & Gainer, 1996). It is expected that virtual opinion platforms offer neutral information of products and serve as adequate information source for reducing cognitive incongruence after a purchase. Two other motives can be derived from the specific characteristics of virtual articulations. First, many opinion platforms directly or indirectly reward consumers, for reading contributions. Another motive can be derived by applying social-psychological Internet-related community research to readers of contributions those who are members of a virtual user community (Fischer, Bristor & Gainer, 1996).

Consumers are more likely to produce WOM for products which are relevant to self-concept than useful products. There is also evidence that that WOM can be prejudiced, in the sense that consumers exaggerate the benefits of self-relevant products compared to the utilitarian product (Day, 1971). Another research suggests when the purchase is important; consumer choice is influenced by WOM. Consumers seem to appreciate WOM at least partly because it is perceived more trustworthy and liable than any other source of information (Day, 1971). In order to satisfy their personal information needs consumers engage in WOM (Bloch, Sherrell & Ridgway, 1986; Chung, & Darke, 2006). Some limited amount of research suggests that WOM lends itself to the communication of subjective information like quality rather than objective types of information like the price.

Consumers give online WOM referrals to satisfy their desire for social interaction, concern for other customers, the potential to enhance one’s own self-worth, and the motivation for economic incentives. These have been established and accepted as primary motivations for engaging in eWOM (Hennig-Thurau et al., 2004). While “the marketplace is an important domain for everyday helping behavior” (Price et al., 1995, p. 262), “our willingness to share is motivated by our basic human need to be helpful by giving advice” (Smith, Coyle, Lightfoot & Scott, 2007, p. 387). Online consumers have trust in the validity of consumer generated online information, and enjoy interacting with other consumers online, and depend on a network of consumers with marketplace knowledge or expertise to guide their purchase decisions (O'Reilly & Marx, 2011).
**Figure 2.1: Scale Items, e-WOM motives, and Motives Factors**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Drive Motives (Theoretical)</th>
<th>Scale Items</th>
<th>Motives (Empirically Derived)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Risk reduction</td>
<td>Because contributions by other customers help me to make the right buying</td>
<td>Obtain buying related information</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>decisions</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reduction of search time</td>
<td>To benefit from others' experiences before I buy a good or use a service</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Determination of social position</td>
<td>Because here I get information on the quality of products faster than elsewhere</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Because one saves a great deal of time during shopping when informing oneself on</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dissonance reduction</td>
<td>Because I can see if I am the only one who thinks of a product in a certain way</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Because I like to compare my own evaluation with that of others</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Belonging to a virtual community</td>
<td>Because through reading one can get the confirmation that one made the right buying</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Because I feel much better when I read that I am not the only one who has a certain</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>To learn what products are new in market place</td>
<td>Because I really like being part of such a community</td>
<td>Community membership</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Because I enjoy participating in the experiences of other community members</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Remuneration</td>
<td>Because I am interested in what is new</td>
<td>Remuneration</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Because I get to know which topics are “In”</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>To learn how product is to be consumed</td>
<td>Because I get a reward for reading and evaluating contributions</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Because it allows me to earn a few more Deutschmarks</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Because I find the right answers when I have difficulties with a product</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>To find advice and solutions for my problems</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Source: Adapted from Hennig-Thurau and Walsh (2004)*

Other researchers report that variables such as “extreme satisfaction or dissatisfaction” (Bowman & Narayandas, 2001; Dichter, 1966; Maxham & Netemeyer, 2002), commitment to the firm (Dick & Basu, 1994), duration of the relationship with the marketer (Wangenheim & Bayon, 2004), and novelty of the offering (Bone, 1992) are the reasons that make consumers proactively spread word about products and services which they have experienced.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Author(s)</th>
<th>Motive</th>
<th>Description</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Dichter (1966)</td>
<td>Product-involvement</td>
<td>A customer feels so strongly about the product that a pressure builds up in wanting to do something about it, recommending the product to others reduces the tension by the caused consumption experience.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Self-involvement</td>
<td>The product serves as a means through which the speaker can gratify certain emotional needs.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Other-involvement</td>
<td>Word of mouth activity addresses the need to give something to the receiver.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Message involvement</td>
<td>Refers to the discussion which is stimulated by advertisements, commercials, or public relations.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Engel, Blackwell, &amp; Miniard (1993)</td>
<td>Involvement</td>
<td>The level of interest or involvement in the topic under consideration serves to Stimulate discussion.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Self-enhancement</td>
<td>Recommendations allow a person to gain attention, show connoisseurship, suggest status, give the impression of possessing inside information, and assert superiority.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Concern for others</td>
<td>A genuine desire to help a friend or relative makes a better purchase decision.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Message intrigue</td>
<td>Entertainment resulting from talking about certain ads or selling appeals.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Dissonance reduction</td>
<td>Reduces cognitive dissonance (doubts) following a major purchase decision.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Product involvement</td>
<td>Personal interest in the product, excitement resulting from product ownership and product use.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Self-enhancement</td>
<td>Enhancing images among other consumers by projecting themselves as intelligent shoppers, helping the company desire to help the company.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Altruism (negative WOM)</td>
<td>To prevent others from experiencing the problems they had encountered.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Anxiety reduction</td>
<td>Easing anger, anxiety, and frustration.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Vengeance</td>
<td>To retaliate against the company associated with a negative consumption experience.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Advice seeking</td>
<td>Obtaining advice on how to resolve problems.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Consumers with little expertise in a product category (Gilly, Graham, Wolfinbarger, & Yale, 1998), who perceive a high risk in decision-making (Bansal & Voyer, 2000; Kiel & Layton, 1981), or who are deeply involved in the purchasing decision (Beatty & Smith, 1987) are more likely to search the opinions of others for product advice. Researchers have identified factors such as source expertise (Bansal & Voyer, 2000; Gilly et al., 1998), tie strength (Brown & Reingen, 1987; Frenzen & Nakamoto, 1993), demographic similarity (Brown & Reingen, 1987), and perceptual affinity (Gilly et al., 1998) as important antecedents of WOM influence which make personal sources of information exert more influence than other sources (Bruyn, Arnaud & Lilien, 2008).


2.2.5 Immediate and Ongoing Drivers of Word of Mouth

According to Berger & Schwartz (2011) there are some drives which motivate WOM action as follows:

**Interest:** Word-of-mouth practitioners often believe that products need to be interesting to be talked about. For instance, Sernovitz (2006) suggested that the most important rule of WOM marketing is to “be interesting” and that “nobody talks about boring companies, boring products, or boring ads” (p.6). Hughes (2005) said that “unusual, outrageous, or remarkable things also generate conversation, and people love to talk about things that are different and surprising”.

**Accessibility:** WOM, particularly “ongoing WOM”, is driven more by accessibility, or whether products are on top of mind. Products that are used more frequently should be more on top of mind. For example, a product that can be eaten every day for breakfast should
be more accessible than one that is usually only eaten on a person’s birthday. More broadly, memory research has shown that conceptually related cues can make products accessible (Berger & Heath, 2005; Collins & Loftus, 1975).

2.2.6 WOM Valence and Volume

An important issue is to focus on how WOM information can affect product evaluations and purchase decisions. Exploratory findings argued that WOM communication may indirectly affect sales by influencing consumers’ level of engaging with the product category (Vitkauskaitė, 2011). Three metrics of online WOM have received special attention: *volume, valence, and dispersion*. The theory behind measuring volume or the number of online messages posted on a topic is when the more consumers discuss a product, the higher chances that other consumers will become aware of products. The theory behind valence or the fraction of negative and positive opinions in the mix of messages is that WOM carries important information about a product’s quality for building awareness. The types of products and markets being discussed (Gelb & Johnson 1995), the social networks involved (Alsop, Bassett & Hoskins 2007; Frenzen & Nakamoto 1993; Reingen 1987), the relative social class of the person (Hugstad, Taylor & Bruce 1987), the personality (Feick & Price 1987) and culture (Money, Gilly & Graham 1998) of the communicators effect the frequency and intensity of WOM (Lam, Lee, & Mizerski, 2009).

Another way to measure WOM also exist, such as duration, intensity, and dispersion (Eliashberg et al., 2000; Godes & Mayzlin 2004) although volume and valence are among the most important measures of WOM (Liu, 2006). Because WOM is considered as a relatively credible source of information, it is not surprising that the valence of WOM has a strong effect on consumer judgment and memory (Grewal, Rajdeep, Cline, & Davies, 2003). Valence considers the nature of the information, i.e. whether it is positive or negative, and volume refers to the number of posted messages (Liu, 2006; Lopez & Sicilia, 2014).
2.2.7 Negative and Positive WOM

WOM could be divided in positive WOM and negative WOM. Positive WOM is the satisfied behavior consumers feel after consuming and negative WOM is the dissatisfied behavior consumers experience after consuming. It’s also can manifest into complaint format or sharing of bad experiences with other consumers (Singh, 1990). The positive WOM encourages productivity of marketing because WOM often extends the effects of advertising (Hogan, Lemon & Libai, 2004). Moreover, Boulding, Kalra, Staelin, & Zeithaml (1993) declared that the positive WOM enhances the reputation of business and cause benefits. Day (1971) pointed that source reliability and the flexibility of interpersonal communication can attract new customers. He posited that in contrast to advertising, the effects of the negative attitude of customers or making a positive image of WOM is nine times larger than the effect of advertising. Many researchers focused on negative WOM. Singh & Pandya (1991) defined that negative WOM is about the time that customers with dissatisfied experience about the specific product or service sent a message through the Internet or recommended for others to stop purchasing the mentioned product. Negative information is often more valuable than positive information because negative information considers the characteristics of the products more and provide the detailed information (Lee, Park & Han, 2008) which causes the customers to have a better perception. Also, negative WOM greatly helps consumers in decision-making (Lin & Chang, 2013). As mentioned above, positive WOM are customers’ positive evaluation and praise of products or services. The communication of positive WOM is conducive to make positive image and reputation for business. It could increase the identification and potential purchasing power of the consumers. On the contrary, negative WOM are customers’ negative evaluation of products or services (Lin & Chang, 2013).

Positive WOM and negative WOM are similar behaviors, except for their opposing effects on brand purchase decision (East, Robert, Hammond & Lomax, 2008). WOM, either positive or negative, is a force that can influence the attitudes and predicted purchase behavior of consumers (Charlett, Garland & Marr, 1995). Few researchers have observed that negative WOM has stronger effects on consumers as compare to positive; although, these effects are lessened by brand information that stored in memory (Mahajan, Muller & Kerin, 1984).
Positive WOM typically gives either a direct or an indirect advice for product purchase which is known as a powerful marketing medium for companies to influence consumers (Jansen, Zhang, Sobel, & Chowdhury, 2009). Negative WOM may contain product denigration, rumor, and private complaining. Positive WOM increases expected quality while negative WOM reduces it (Liu, 2006).

Gremler, Gwinner & Brown (2001) empirically studied and tested that interpersonal relationship between employee and customers which can influence positive WOM communication. They have incorporated four variables that form relationships and lead to WOM communication. These are familiarity, personal connection, care, and trust. Positive WOM and its determinants are identified by (Dichter, 1966) more than three and half decades ago he identified four motives for engaging involvement. After three decades (Sundaram, 1998) identified motives for engaging positive and negative WOM (i.e. PWOM and NWOM) communication. There are as follows:

**PWOM:** altruism, product involvement, self-enhancement and helping the company.

**NWOM:** altruism, anxiety reduction, vengeance, and advice seeking.

While Richin (1983) identified “lack of appropriate handling mechanism by retailers, inadequate response to consumer complaints and inefficiency regarding product repairs” as the main motives for engaging NWOM by consumers (Datta, Chowdhury, Chakraborty & Bonya, 2005).

According to one study by US Office of Consumer Affairs, almost one dissatisfied consumer can be expected to spread NWOM to nine other consumers about his/ her experience while satisfied consumer expected to disseminate his story to five other consumers (Mangold, Miller & Brockway, 1999). Such communication drives a strong influence on consumer purchase behavior as well as both short-term and long-term judgments (Bone, 1995; Burzynski & Bayer, 1977; Herr et al., 1991). This influence is more significant when the communication is along with individual’s feeling towards the product (Grewal, Rajdeep, Cline, & Davies, 2003).

Previous research has claimed that “positive WOM accelerates new product and brand acceptance in new populations and also reduces brand promotional expenses in existing markets” (Graham & Havlena 2007; Keller 2007; Lam, Lee, & Mizerski, 2009). Most of the writers have discussed PWOM and not NWOM and it is usually
limited to informing other consumers about new market offerings rather than existing products (Dichter, 1966).

Most organizations, particularly those involved in services, recognize that consumer dissatisfaction can and will occur from time to time (Charlett et al., 1995). Consumer response to dissatisfaction with a product or service can take several forms:

- Direct complaints to the seller
- Private responses such as brand switching and negative WOM
- Third party responses such as taking legal action and complaining to consumer
- “Watchdog” groups.

### 2.2.8 Opinion Leaders and Opinion Seekers

According to Dollarocas (2003) in the virtual network, people create their social network with those whom they have never met in their life and they exchange their information regarding products and services with each other. This process happens when people are connected through their virtual communities having common interest or topics to discuss (Cheong & Morrison 2008; Fong & Burton 2006; Chan & Ngai, 2011). Growth in Internet usage and especially its important role in e-commerce, has been affecting people’s behavior and decisions (Lee et al., 2008). People count on other users’ information; and make a decision based on online information (Lee et al., 2008; Woodside & Delozier, 1976). According to Iyengar, Bulte, Eichert, West, Valente (2011), “heavy users are more influential and persuasive because prescribing more of the new product makes them more credible as a source of information”. In this matter company requires to know the most dynamic consumers in the recommendation activity that they can help to attract new consumers with a minimum economic investment.

Summers (1970) defined that people who like to enjoy experimenting new products are more likely to be opinion leaders. Opinion leadership is the process by which people penetrate the attitudes and behaviors of others. WOM includes both opinion leadership and opinion seeking (Flynn et al., 1996; Reynolds & Darden, 1971). The Internet not only provides opinion leaders with efficient ways to spread information but also facilitates information searching for opinion seekers (Sun et al., 2006).
Opinion leaders may be more willing to initially choose riskier alternatives among relatively low-risk products compared with non-leaders, and suggest information to non-leaders to accept the same strategy. Consumers initially perceive higher risks among high or medium risk product categories so they would start and lead group discussions to reduce the perceived risk (Woodside & Delozier, 1976).

Opinion leaders are more important in the actual decision to purchase a new product than introducing a new product. Opinion leaders are those individuals who have a higher level of product knowledge and communication ability than other social groups or communities. They are individuals who transmit information about a specific topic to other people through WOM communication. (King & Summer, 1970). Many opinion leaders may also be opinion seekers because they need more knowledge or expertise, due to their interest in a popular topic or product. However, information seekers are not always opinion leaders (Feick & Price, 1987). There is a direct relationship between Opinion leaders and Opinion seekers and they cannot exist without each other. Opinion seekers look for advice from others when they want to make decision or take an action, when they perceive a risk in a certain situation, not familiar with a topic or product and find others’ experience to be useful, actively they may search information or advice to make their decision (Murray, 1991; Rodgers & Chen, 2005).

Opinion seeking is an essential dimension of WOM communication because it facilitates information diffusion in the interpersonal communication process (Reynolds & Darden, 1971). Opinion leaders are influential members of their social network and they spread important information less experienced members (Chaney, 2001). Due to the less social pressure and constraint, it may possible for opinion seekers to become more confident online to share information through forwarding and chatting. (Sun, Tao, Youn, Wu & Kuntaraporn, 2006).

Opinion leaders who surface on electronic WOM websites are typically more involved in the environment and produce more explanatory information, in addition to using the Internet more frequently than others (Lyons & Henderson, 2005). In accordance with the quantity of rating individuals gain and on their helpfulness as judged by their peer's authority in Web 2.0 environments is bestowed on users (Tucker, 2011).
2.2.9 Social Networking Sites (SNSs) and Electronic Word of Mouth (eWOM)

The concept of social networks focuses on determining network centrality, identifying influential actors, and describing the connection between actors. These network attributes are helpful for measuring the effects of (WOM) communication because they have a considerable effect on the spreading of online word-of-mouth communication and its characteristics, which eventually affects purchase decisions. The concept of social networks can help and explain eWOM behaviors because its theoretical premise depends on the concept that the accumulation of mutual exchanges builds social networks, which ease the exchange of resources between social actors. This concept is particularly helpful for identifying the ways in which eWOM communication is spread because network characteristics have considerable influence on the level and intensity of communication between network actors. Therefore, network attributes may facilitate the diffusion of eWOM communication between network actors (Yoon, 2012).

2.2.10 Social Relationships and Electronic Word of Mouth (eWOM)

eWOM behavior in SNSs may initiate due to the user’s desire to make and keep the social relationships with their networks. Through sharing useful product information and experience, SNS users can help their social connections for the purchase-related decisions. Social connectivity is a core of SNSs, social relationship-related variables are crucial in understanding the underlying eWOM process, as these variables make insights into the properties of social relations by which eWOM behavior transpires. Tie strength (Brown & Reingen 1987), homophily (Gilly et al., 1998), trust (Nisbet 2006) and interpersonal influence (Bearden et al., 1989) have been considered to be core dimensions that characterize the nature of social relationships and influence WOM dynamics. These are the variables which have been specified in the marketing and consumer behavior research regarding their role in WOM behaviors (Brown et al. 2007; Chu & Choi, 2011). Key influences on the rating of marketing information that may explain how WOM effects on consumers’ decision making and attitude formation is tie strength and homophily (Brown, Broderick & Lee, 2007).
Research on WOM is becoming more and more popular. Previous researchers have tried out to clear why (Cheema & Kaikati, 2010), when (Berger & Schwartz, 2011; Zhao & Xie, 2011), and how (Kozinets Valek, Wojnicki & Wilner, 2010; Nair, Manchanda & Bhatia, 2010) WOM affect consumers’ purchasing decisions. For example, researchers have observed that consumers spread WOM for satisfying their impression goal, to raise their social status, or to seek for emotional support (Derbaix & Vanhamme, 2003). Key factors such as tie strength, homophily, involvement, or expertise have also been evidenced to have a strong relationship with WOM effects (Chen, Liu, Hsi, Lin, 2013).

2.3 Consumer Engagement

Consumer engagement (CE) is not a new topic and always comes under customer relationship, but not as a specific concept. With the emergence of social media and social networks, consumer engagement became more highlighted in contrast to the earlier scenario. This concept since last decade has become more popular in order to the number of conferences, seminars, group discussions which have conducted regarding the same. There is no way to define and measure the consumer engagement though it’s for the procedure to work on it (Brodie et al., 2011).

The main reason to have two-way communications is to improve information, knowledge and relationship between customers regarding brands. It is important to measure consumer engagement towards brands, therefore, companies are considering the number of posts and comments given by consumers as a tool for the measurement of consumer engagement, which also shows the effort of companies in stimulating consumer to engage with their brands.

The way to support the ongoing investment in products and services is to engage customer experience and generating their emotional rapport. Elspeth (2008) said that excellent service revolves around emotional people to people bonds. Customers care about how to solve their problems and they need to have quick effective responses to their questions. In the competitive and saturated market, the most important way to differentiate a company are those factors which either break or make emotional communication with the customer and consider them as individuals. Hence, companies should try to improve the communication and make a new channel engage
with customer and employee. As a result, consumers who were highly valued and treated as individuals are more tied up with company and brand.

For the success of companies, the satisfaction of the customer plays an important role and that can happen only when there is better understanding of customer’s needs and wants. These are vital for the success of new product development. Therefore, the active interaction of customer is necessary. According to Lagrosen (2005), customer involvement is happening in three different phases of product development: initial stage, final stage and continuously during the entire course of development.

Companies have started to pay more attention to understanding customers and their behavior. They have realized that by using the right information about their customers, they can gain a competitive advantage in their business surroundings (Hennig et al, 2010). This has given led to emergence of the concept of CE and its importance is being recognized by marketers in introduction and development of new products and services. CE concept is relatively new and with the help of digital marketing, communication between consumers and corporations is undergoing drastic changes. Social networks provide the new opportunity of two-way communication, and through the networks like Facebook, Twitter, and other networks, customer are able to give feedback and also articulate with other consumers about the same products/ services (Deighton & Kornfeld, 2009). Social media provides an environment for an individual customer to give his/ her voice to the other audience as well as companies. It is useful for the branding of the products because customer’s voice will reach faster and easier to rest of audience rather than other traditional media like TV, Newspaper and Radio (Hennig et al., 2010). Although traditional media plays a very important role in reaching out to customers, in the present day connected world, in order to manage consumer engagement, marketers are trying their best to use social media to their advantage. In fact, to engage their customers, companies have started using social media more vigorously since 2011. According to Reitz (2012), for engaging the customers, marketers have been making pages in different social media platforms to encourage and activate customer participations. Among all social networks, Facebook is more valuable because through Facebook, marketers provide a platform for engaging customers and there are able to view, discuss and upload their view about the brands. Consumer engagement is “an
outcome of repeated interactions that strengthen the emotional, psychological, or physical investment a customer has in a brand” (Mollen & Wilson, 2010, p. 919).

On the other hand, engagement means a considered action of the consumer in an online environment. In addition to measuring the success of online market, engagement of consumer is playing an important role. Engagement is not new in the field of business relationship and from last decade till today this concept got significant attention by the researcher. Also, it has been considered by different disciplines like sociology, political science etc. (Resnick 2001; Saks 2006). The American Association of Advertising Agencies and the Association of National Advertisers are trying to find out ways to define and measure consumer engagement (Brodie, Hollebeek, Juric & Ilic, 2011). CE represents imperative strategic advantage in a dynamic and interactive business environments, which enhances corporate performance like sale growth, profitability and superior competitive advantage (Neff, 2007). Consumer engagement helps in providing recommendations for specific brand, products, as also services to others.

2.3.1 Definitions of Consumer Engagement

Consumers are increasingly active participants in interactive processes of comprising multiple feedback loops, and highly immediate communication due to the emerging Internet environment (Hoffman, Novak, 1996; Prahalad, Ramaswamy, 2004). For instance, virtual interaction and communication tools such as electronic discussion forums, chat rooms, social networks and blogs, bulletin boards, newsgroups, email, personal Web pages, list servers (Valck, Bruggen & Wierenga, 2009; Hollebeek, 2011).

Bowden (2009) views “customer engagement” as a “psychological process” including cognitive and emotional aspects. Specifically, he defines the differences between the engagements of new customers, as opposed to existing customers. According to him CE is a continuous process beginning with consumer satisfaction and culminating into consumer loyalty, and affective commitment, involvement, consumer delight and trust.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Authors</th>
<th>Definition/Key Findings</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Appelbaum (2001)</td>
<td>CE consists of both rational loyalty (includes overall satisfaction, intent to repurchase, and intent to recommend) and an emotional attachment including confidence in a brand, belief in its integrity, pride in the brand, and passion for it.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Smith and Wallace (2010)</td>
<td>CE refers to the types of connections consumers make with other consumers, companies, and specific brands; CE is viewed as being conducive to the enhancement of brand loyalty.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PeopleMetrics (2010) ARF (2006): Blair</td>
<td>CE includes (a) retention; (b) effort; (c) advocacy; and (d) passion. Engagement behaviorally summarizes the impact of marketing/branding communications activities in the hearts and minds of consumers in a manner that leads to sales, margin, market share, market value, and cash flow.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Campanelli (2007)</td>
<td>CE is emotional connection and empowerment of consumers</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Foley (2006)</td>
<td>Engagement is a multidimensional concept, even a multidimensional process, with the end result defined as consumer connection in terms of cognitive, behavioral, emotional, and aspirational facets.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ghuneim (2006)</td>
<td>CE is a consumer-based measurement that relates to interaction with an aspect of a brand or media property.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Harris (2006)</td>
<td>CE is a multidimensional concept: a brand’s ability to connect meaningfully with the consumer.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Haven (2007)</td>
<td>They proposed a new metric, engagement that includes four components viz. involvement, interaction, intimacy, and influence.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Peppers and Rogers (2005)</td>
<td>Engagement is a series of customized informational and financial transactions that occur over time and increase both the consumer value to the company and the value of the company to the consumer.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ARF (2006): Plummer</td>
<td>Engagement occurs as a result of a brand idea/media context experience selected and attended to by a consumer involved in a category that leaves a positive brand impression.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sedley (2008)</td>
<td>Consumer engagement is repeated interactions that strengthen a consumer’s emotional, psychological, or physical investment in a brand. Consumer engagement is not a nirvana that can be reached; it is a process of developing and nurturing relationships.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ARF (2006): Hamill</td>
<td>Engagement is a measure of attention paid by a consumer to a piece of communication. There is a two-way flow of information resulting in easier measurement.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hcath (2007)</td>
<td>Consumer engagement is a subconscious emotional construct. Level of engagement is the amount of subconscious “feeling” going on when an advertisement is being processed.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ARF (2006): Laboric</td>
<td>Consumer engagement is a positive consumer attitude resulting from the communication of (a) a given brand, (b) a given category (product/service/etc.), which is delivered through (a) a contact/communication channel (e.g., mass media), (b) via a vehicle, e.g., magazine, etc. Engagement can turn into action/behavior, e.g., communication and/or purchase.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Shevlin (2007)</td>
<td>Consumer engagement is repeated and satisfying interactions that</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Source</td>
<td>Definition</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-------------------------</td>
<td>------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Owyang (2007)</td>
<td>Online engagement indicates the level of authentic involvement, intensity, contribution and ownership, summarized by “apparent interest.” Engagement Formula: Attention + Interaction + Velocity + Authority + Relevant Attributes (variable).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Peterson (2007)</td>
<td>Consumer online engagement is an estimate of the degree and depth of visitor interaction on the site, measured against a clearly defined set of goals. Each organization’s version of engagement will be unique. It will be derived from a number of root metrics, probably under a dozen. Common root metrics include frequency, recency, and length of visit, purchases, and lifetime value.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Brodie, Hollebeek, Juric & Ilie (2011)

2.3.2 **Online Consumer Engagement**

Although there are several studies on the subject in the context of different disciplines e.g. advertising, education, psychology, and sociology, but there is no universally accepted definition of ‘engagement’ especially in an online context. Scholars have defined engagement as being three dimensional i.e., cognitive, affective, or behavioral (Heath, 2007; Rappaport, 2007; Reitz, 2012), while others have defined as two-dimensional i.e., cognitive and affective (Mollen & Wilson, 2010; O’Brien & Toms, 2008). Some of the researchers even defined it as a multi-dimensional construct which includes cognitive, affective and behavioral dimensions but they have considered that engagement with the company as physical contact and dismissed the possibilities that engagement can be applicable in a mediated space. However, ‘consumer engagement’ is a new term within online marketing context therefore, it has to be established as a benchmark that how online consumer engagement will affect branding and marketing. Marketers believe that online consumer engagement can build relationship among consumers and companies as well have a positive impact on brand loyalty, advertising of brand, brand identification and sale (Rappaport, 2007; Reitz, 2012). Online consumer engagement can be initiated by social media like Facebook or via a website. According to Jakste and Kuvykaite (2012), for companies which are making efforts to build their brands and develop competitive advantage, online consumer engagement is playing and a significant role. Social media provides opportunities to reach out to consumers and engage the consumer by actively communicating with them, offering attractive content that is constantly updated. Consumer articulation in social media will be more active if the online consumer engagement is successful and it can lead to
encouraging and improving on attributes of a brand and convert consumers into loyal
and who would like to be brand advocates.

2.3.3 Similarities of Consumer Engagement with other Constructs

Vivek (2009) provided some constructs in her study which are similar to consumer
engagement and the same are explained below:

**Customer Participation:** In the recent studies, researchers are going through the
role of customer participation as an active co-producer (Prahalad &
Ramaswamy, 2004). According to the definition of Dabholkar (1990),
customer participation is “the degree to which the customer is involved in
producing and delivering the service.” While referring to the above
definition of customer participation, customer’s connection with the
organization has been observed through co-creation and co-production in
the exchange situation.

**Participation:** The first is the view of organizational about reasons for the
consumer to participate; emphasis is more on economic view related to the
benefit of substituting employees with consumers (Hsieh, Yen & Chin,
2004; Payne, Storbacka & Frow, 2008). Further, Bendapudi & Leone
(2003) discussed the significance of consumers’ psychological responses to
contribution and its effect on satisfaction. The second aspect is treating
consumer as a partial employee (Bendapudi & Leone, 2003). According to
Claycomb, Lengrich, & Inks (2001) continuous and active participation of
consumer in service provision enhances consumer socialization. This
increasingly leads to perceived service quality along with satisfaction
(Dabholkar 1990). The last one focuses on consumer’s perspective. It
concentrates more on motivation, abilities and willing of consumers to
adopt the technology (Dabholkar and Bagozzi 2002) and those factors
which will effect on early trial decisions in self-service technologies. Dong,
Evans & Zou (2006) studied the co-created service recovery and the effects
of customer participation on it. They highlighted that consumers are more
likely to have significance role, receive more value in future co- creation,
give higher intentions to provide value in future and more satisfied with the
value service recovery, and all are considered to be the result of consumer participation in service recovery process.

**Customer Co-Creation and Co-Production:** Always consumer participation has been reviewed in the term of co-creation and also expressed as a co-production by many of the scholars. The significance of operational efficiency and marketing strategy, commonly satisfying consumption, cross-functional steps and value of co-creating (Payne, Storbacka & Frow, 2008), value-chain management integrated and co-creating with the voice of consumer have been the focus of studies on co-creation. Payne et al. (2008) considered five types of co-creation circumstances viz. (1) to engage consumers emotionally with the advertising and promotional activities, (2) consumers being a part of experiences which is provided by the supplier, (3) self-service, (4) using supplier’s prescribed processes to self-select and (5) co-designing of products. The emphasis of consumer engagement is on experiences and not exchanges. It is not necessary that experience happens with an actual exchange. Furthermore, the focus of consumer engagement is not only inoperative dimension of participation but it is also concerned with the reflective dimension. Engaged consumers are not only actively interacting with offerings and businesses, but providing before and reflect on the later activities.

**Brand Communities:** On the basis of computer-mediated environment data and ethnographic research which was done in the context of brand communities, Muñiz and O’Guinn (2001) argued three key constituents of a community: (1) awareness of kind, the inborn connection members feel among each other, and the collective feeling of dissimilarity with those who do not belong to the same community; (2) existence of shared traditions, and (3) a feeling of ethical responsibility to the community as a whole.

On account of availability of relatively inexpensive communication methods, the concept of community is no longer limited by geographical boundaries. Necessarily community should not be limited in a specific geographical area and it can be extended to across geographical boundaries. People in these communities are
connected because they share common beliefs and ideas, not because of physical proximity.

It is on account of shared understanding that members are united as if belonging to a common religion, have common concerns, and common belief, “members feel part of a large unmet, but easily imagined community” (Muñiz & O’Guinn, 2001, p.419). Based on the suggestion of McAlexander, Schouten & Koenig (2002) initial basis for identification of brand communities are brands or consumptions activities. Based on their model product and brand are granted “Community member status” similar to consumer and marketer. Therefore, like another concept of marketplace communities, brand product consumption is at the core and a pre-condition to the development of a community.

In the context of brand community “product adoption is necessary to become fully situated in the experience” (McAlexander, Schouten & Koenig, 2002, p. 41). Consumption and not experience in the brand communities is considered as focal structure. The product is not an effective resource in such communities (Vargo & Lusch, 2004), but it is the center of the community. In contrast, consumption of a brand or product for the engaged consumer can be secondary and it is a useful instrument to create the experiences which can be searched. Consumer engagement concentrates on shared experience with others instead of concentrating on brand or product. Hence, for the brand communities, experiences in engagement can be personal or shared one while consumers are engaged organizations facilitate to absorb the engaged consumers (Schaufeli, Martz, Pinto, Salanova, & Bakker, 2002).

**Involvement:** In the field of new product development customer involvement has been shown as a key factor for product development (More, 1986). Consumer involvement and ultimately communication enhances the amount and variety of information, which eventually enhances the quality of development process (Brown & Eisenhardt, 1995). “The unique capacity of informal and generally face-to-face communication is to facilitate the transfer of complex, ambiguous and novel information and to provide the possibility to capitalize on surprising and unexpected answers” (Salomo Steinhoff & Trommsdorff, 2003, p. 46). Knowledge and information collected from consumers are useful for firms to develop their products and technologies according to preferences of the consumers and such
articulation considered to be valuable for companies (Svendsen, Haugland, Grnhaug & Hammervoll, 2011).

Zaichkowsky (1985) stated involvement as “a person’s perceived relevance of the object based on inherent needs, values, and interests”. This context in marketing has been used to moderate the customer responding to high and low involvement situation (Varki & Wong, 2003). Consumers’ active participation is considered necessary for the economic psychological contract. Consumer involvement for companies is the way to achieve a better favorable time and cost for product development curve and to reduce the unpredictable problem in the process of innovation (Lundkvist & Yakhlef, 2004). Overall traditional new product development is quite risky, while in situations where companies involve consumers, it is deemed to reduce the risks such as environmental risk and user requirement uncertainty risk. Regarding consumers involvement in activities such as innovation, the concept includes various suggestions, ideas, and feedback from consumers and firms that ultimately help the company in improvement of the product (Lundkvist & Yakhlef, 2004).

Vivek (2009) claimed involvement has been advanced as a psychological structure predictive of related consumer behavior (Funk, Ridinger & Moorman 2004), products and purchasing decisions (Keller 1987; Slama & Tashchian 1987). Overall there have been several studies in different disciplines about involvement. Antil (1984) tried to study of involvement in consumer behavior and later on Zaichkowsky (1985) visualized it as personal relevance Andrews, Durvasula & Akhter (1990) made an effort to make a framework of involvement related to the aspect of advertising.

**Attachment:** Attachment is a truly embedded structure in exchange. It is defined by Ball & Tasaki (1992) as “the extent to which an object which is owned...is used by that individual to maintain his or her self-concept.”

The attachment has been explained to be driven by self-expression of individual and identifies progress (Kleine, Allen & Kleine, 1995). Possession is significant in consumer’s retaining and supporting their feeling of identity and self-worth, even if it is not admitted by consumers (Ball & Tasaki, 1992, p.158). It has been observed that the objective of attachment is strongly influenced by the usage of products and may determine or strengthen the feeling of identity of consumers (Ahuvia,
Although attachment could lead to engagement in various situations but it is so different from consumer engagement because attachment is an effective structure and actively associated with ownership or possession of products or objects.

**Consumer Devotion:** Devotion has been defined as a declaration of identity, as an enhanced stimulus toward and attachment to an item which does not have geographic or temporal boundaries (Hunt, Bashaw & Bristol, 1999). According to the model of devotion which Pimentel & Reynolds (2004) suggested, sport related devotion is popularization of mainstream brands. Devotion to a brand is associated with proactive sustaining behavior, therefore, devoted consumers arrive at the level of loyalty so intense that the loyalty overshadows poor product performance, bad publicity, scandals, and absence of promotional efforts. This model explained that when there is product significance beyond utilitarian and commercial value then only consumer devotion exists.

Also, scholars have indicated the significance of devotion in self-identity expressing and self-concept (Hunt, Bashaw & Bristol, 1999; Ortiz, 2008). According to Ortiz (2008) consumer devotion is an enduring form of passionate dedication to the brand, product or even experience by which consumer defines him/herself. Thus key differentiators of consumer devotion are longer duration and self-identification. These elements of consumer devotion discriminate it from consumer engagement which is behavioral rather than enduring.

### 2.3.4 Customer Brand Engagement

According to Hollebeek *et al.* (2011) the *customer behavior engagement* (CBE) themes of ‘immersion’, ‘passion’ and ‘activation’ show the levels to which a consumer is ready to employ relevant cognitive, behavioral resources and emotion in certain interactions with the main brand, which is shown by applying certain levels of brand-related concentration, positive impact, and energy in certain brand interactions. Based on this analysis CBE is defined as: “The level of a customer’s cognitive, emotional and behavioral investment in specific brand interactions.” According to focus group conducted by Hollebeek *et al.* (2011) while researching the
customer brand engagement, he could identify three key factors for consumer brand engagement which are as follows:

**Immersion:** Respondents seemed to be immersed with their selected highly engaging brands that often were mentioned using description. Moreover, remaining absorbed and engaged in brands are the reflective of the immersion theme of CBE as well. Even in their conceptual analysis, Patterson, Yu & Ruyter (2006) stated Absorption as a consumer engagement dimension. Immersion is described as consumer's degree of brand related concentration in a certain brand interaction. Immersion is the act of consumer in contrast to the reflection of perceived brand related benefit.

**Passion:** All respondents felt strong and effectively positive for their selected engaging brands, for example, some being passionate, mad or obsessive for the brand and even loving and adoring it. Some of the users were feeling the pride to be associated with the brand. When consumers are using the brand they will be identified with that brand which makes them feel proud. Vivek (2009) observed that CE is conceptually similar to passion, but there won’t be any passion for those who are not engaged with brands. According to his study, passion is a “degree of a customer’s positive brand related affect in particular brand interactions” (Vivek, 2009).

**Activation:** Respondent’s tendency is to spend significant time to interact with their selected highly engaged brands. They mentioned four ways to engage with a brand such as watching shows, series after series, put effort to gain the missed episodes, being strongly activated while watching shows and they put effort to sharing brand-related shows on SNSs. At the same time, while highly engaged brands have a tendency to spend significant time to interact with brands, non-engaging brands show no tendency to invest a large amount of time to interact. Activation is considered as customer’s level of energy to spend time with particular brand and interact with it.

2.3.5 Concept of Engagement in the Marketing Literature

Patterson et al (2006) in their study about understanding customer engagement in services found that there are four specific consumer engagement components given below:
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Absorption</th>
<th>Which is the level of customer concentration on a focal engagement object like brand or organization, therefore, affects the cognitive dimension of engagement.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Dedication</td>
<td>A customer’s feeling of belonging to the organization or brand that has an effect in the emotional dimension of engagement.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Vigor</td>
<td>Interaction of consumer with a focal engagement objects in order to his/her level of energy and mental flexibility.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Interaction</td>
<td>Two-way communications between a focal engagement subject and object.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Note: The last two dimensions reflect the behavioral dimension of engagement.*

*Source: Patterson & Ruyter (2006)*

According to Brodie *et al.*, (2011) the terms “consumer engagement” and ‘customer engagement’ have penetrated the academic marketing and service literature during the last decades. In contrast to the social science, management, and business practice literature, which offer plenty of definitions of relevant engagement forms, relatively few attempts have been made at systematic conceptualization of CE in the context of marketing literature. These are summarized in Table (2.5).

### Table 2.5: Facets of “Engagement” in Marketing Literature

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Authors</th>
<th>Concept</th>
<th>Definition</th>
<th>Dimensionally</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Patterson <em>et al.</em> (2006)</td>
<td>Customer engagement</td>
<td>The level of a customer’s physical, cognitive, and emotional presence in their relationship with a service organization.</td>
<td>Multidimensional: Absorption (C), dedication (E), vigor/interaction (B)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Vivek, Beatty &amp; Morgan (2010)</td>
<td>Consumer engagement</td>
<td>The intensity of an individual’s participation &amp; connection with the organization’s offerings &amp; activities initiated by either the customer or the organization.</td>
<td>Multidimensional: C, E, B</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mollen &amp; Wilson (2010)</td>
<td>Online brand engagement</td>
<td>The customer’s cognitive and affective commitment to an active relationship with the brand as personified by the website or other computer-mediated entities designed to communicate brand value.</td>
<td>Multidimensional: Sustained processing (C), instrumental value (C), experiential Value (E).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bowden (2009a)</td>
<td>Customer engagement process</td>
<td>A psychological process that models the underlying mechanisms by which customer loyalty forms for new customers of a service brand as well as the mechanisms by which loyalty may be maintained for repeat purchase customers of a service brand.</td>
<td>Multidimensional: C, E, Ba</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Van Doorn <em>et al.</em> (2010)</td>
<td>Customer engagement behavior</td>
<td>Customers’ behavioral manifestation toward a brand or firm, beyond purchase, resulting from motivational drivers such as word of mouth activity, recommendations, helping other</td>
<td>Uni-dimensional: B</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
The CE process may range from short-term to long-term, or relatively stable to a highly variable, that can generate varying levels of CE complexity and intensity over time. Also, CE ultimately may consist of “commitment,” “loyalty,” “emotional brand attachment,” and consumers’ “self-brand connection” and “trust” (Brodie et al., 2011).

Table 2.6: Consumer Engagement: Conceptual Relationships

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Concept</th>
<th>Definition</th>
<th>Conceptual Relationship to CE</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Involvement</td>
<td>An individual’s level of interest and personal relevance in relation to a focal object/decision in terms of his or her basic values, goals, and self-concept (Mittal 1995; Zaichkowsky 1994).</td>
<td>CE antecedent required prior to the expression of a relevant engagement level</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Participation</td>
<td>goals, and self-concept (Mittal 1995; Zaichkowsky 1994) The degree to which customers produce and deliver service (Bolton and Saxena-Iyer 2009).</td>
<td>CE antecedent required prior to the expression of the individual’s CE level</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Flow</td>
<td>A state of optimal experience characterized by focused attention, clear mind, mind and body unison, effortless concentration, complete control, loss of self-consciousness, distortion of time and intrinsic enjoyment (Csikszentmihalyi 1990).</td>
<td>May act as a CE antecedent in specific contexts, including online environments</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rapport</td>
<td>Perceived level of harmonious, empathetic, or sympathetic connection to another, which is viewed in some way as congruent to the self (Brooks 1989); A sense of genuine interpersonal sensitivity and concern (Ashforth and Humphrey 1993).</td>
<td>May act as a CE antecedent for existing customers in specific contexts; May also act as a CE consequence for new customers</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(Cumulative) customer satisfaction</td>
<td>An overall evaluation based on the total purchase and consumption experience with a good/service over time (Johnson and Fornell 1991)</td>
<td>&quot;CE behavior&quot; antecedent (Van Doorn et al., 2010), i.e., for experienced and/or existing customers; By contrast, may act as a CE consequence for new customers</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Commitment</td>
<td>Valuing an ongoing relationship with a specific another party so as to identification dimension of engagement (cf. Saks 2006) maintain the relationship (Moorman, Rohit, and Gerald 1993; Morgan and Hunt 1994)</td>
<td>CE consequence of a potentially positive relationship with the warrant maximum efforts at maintaining it, i.e., a desire to CE antecedent for existing customers (Bowden 2009, 2009b). Van Doorn et al., (2010), by contrast, view commitment as a &quot;CE behavior&quot; antecedent (for existing customers)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Trust</td>
<td>Consumer-perceived security/reliability in brand interactions and the belief that the brand acts in consumers’ best interests (Delgado-Ballester, Munuera-Aleman, and Yague-Guille’n 2003; Rotter 1967).</td>
<td>CE consequence for new customers; CE antecedent for existing customers, (Bowden 2009a, 2009b). Van Doorn et al., (2010), by contrast, view trust as a &quot;CE behavior&quot; antecedent (for existing customers)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Self-brand connection</td>
<td>The extent to which individuals have incorporated brands into their self-concept (Eiscalas 2004; Eiscalas and Bettman 2005).</td>
<td>Potential CE consequence, which may develop based on customers’ specific interactive brand experiences</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Emotional brand attachment</td>
<td>Emotion-laden target-specific bond between a person and a specific brand (Thomson, Maclnnis, and Park, 2005).</td>
<td>Potential CE consequence, which may occur as the result of a consumer’s specific, interactive brand</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Loyalty</td>
<td>Repeated purchases (behavioral loyalty) prompted by a strong internal disposition (attitudinal loyalty; Day 1969) over a given period of time (Guest 1944).</td>
<td>experiences Potential CE consequence (Bowden 2009a, Patterson et al., 2006)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Source:* Brodie, Hollebeek, Juric & Ilie (2011)

CE states may reside on a continuum, ranging from non-engaged, marginally engaged, engaged, to highly engaged. Traditional relational concepts consist of "involvement" and "participation," but CE is based on the existence of a customer’s interactive and co-creative experiences about a specific engagement object. The concepts of "involvement" and "participation," are antecedents to CE rather than dimensions (Brodie et al., 2011).
2.3.6 Engaging Consumers on Social Networking Sites

It has been observed that Internet is more useful as a shopping avenue (Lokken, Cross, Halbert, Lindsey, Derby & Stanford, 2003). Internet provides a participatory and interactive environment which is always available. Shopping through the Internet is more comfortable and flexible for consumers (Suki & Suki, 2007). The Internet is assumed to create more value to consumers (Eng & Kim, 2006), like as effective ordering system, convenient method for collecting information in an online environment and so on. Many of companies are using the Internet as a multiple channel to offer more value to consumers (Cheng, Wang, Lin & Vivek, 2009).

Diffley et al. (2011) observed that advertising which does not take respondents to new web pages are more relevant to consumers’ needs and wants, more noticeable, trustworthy and interesting, which means for companies it’s a better way to catch and engage consumers in this way. Diffley et al (2011) conducted five focus groups with SNS users. Categories included the following age groups: 14–17, 18–24 student, 18–24 non-student, 25–34 and 35+. All of them mentioned that SNSs is over commercialized and advertisements are pushed to them which make them feel disturbed. Age groups of 14-17 and 35+ shared that advertisements should not disturb their online activities and it will be more effective if the advertisement is in a shape of mini windows that opened on the same page of the SNS. Therefore, it will help the users to stay where they were and can close the unnecessary advertisement. The 25-34 group believed that being familiar with the advertisement can be so effective to trust it and the age group of 25-34 comprising non-students argued that advertising on a medium like TV and radio can achieve this as these media are more reliable. To make the advertisement more effective and attention grabbing, it was suggested by age group 25-34 that it’s better to place the price on advertisement along with that offering a free gift or incentive. According to the non-student group, profile pages could be useful for respondents because personal profile pages are attracting the attention which can be different and funny too. Age group of 35+ considered that advertising should be permission based in case of using the profile information of SNSs users.
It is important for companies to put effort to integrate advertisement and engage consumers rather than interfere in their privacy. By engaging consumers it’s only possible to grab their attention and they will listen to messages and pass them to others as well as making comments when it’s required. Diffley et al. (2011) conducted focus group and the respondents like to use their information as relevant advertisements. Although respondents are aware of different advertisement on SNSs but still they are so conscious about the advertisements which are more related to them. Some of the users of SNSs were annoyed by the advertisements as they tend to use their personal information and for them it is nothing but interference in their personal life. But some may argue that for communicating with consumers it is required to get hold of such information, though it would be easier to provide relevant advertisements but they have to assure that related data of SNSs user will not be misused.

2.3.6.1 Efforts of Companies to Engage Consumers

Companies have different goals to get engaged in SNSs, these goals in SNSs would be linked with its general objectives (Jakste & Kuvykaite, 2012). The most important goal of companies is to have direct communication with consumers which helps to raise brand equity. Kidd (2011) noted that companies should be encouraged to get involved with social media due to the benefits of it. It brings popularity for the name/brand of the company and improves organization with insights or created personal histories and encourages building of online community. Providing different facilities and platforms aids in company -consumer interaction, enhances formation of brand communities with similar interest. For example, a company can develop into the interest and relations of communities by keeping its communication with consumers (Sicilia & Palazo, 2008).

Positive WOM between consumers can have positive effect on companies’ brands (Devasagayam, Buff, Aurand & Judson, 2010). Online activities of this community can also have a negative impact on brand and name of the company (Cova & Pace, 2006). Hence, companies should keep a close watch and control the situation and in the case of danger they can lead the communication towards the right direction. For a company to take proper decision and action, it’s really important to know when
consumers are getting engaged with the brand and when to contribute to the brand equity building by communication and other activities. Through the consumer’s inner motivation to get involved with company’s activities, consumer engagement in the brand equity building through SNSs is possible. To have a proper interaction with consumers, companies should observe and know their consumers. To engage with consumers, it’s required to creatively motivate them by the brand, also they will become engaged when they are encouraged by other customers or get particular benefit regarding the active communication in consumer opinion platforms (Jakste & Kuvykaite, 2012).

2.3.7 Effect of Word of Mouth on Consumer Engagement

Marketers have been experimenting with ways and means of transferring information to the customers (Mangold & Faulds 2009). Social networks which are part of Web 2.0 technology have been embraced as technological platform for consumers to connect, share content online (Boyd & Ellison 2008). Also according to Richter, Rieumer & Brocke (2011) brand’s owners provide the following aspects from their consumers;

- **Advertising**: by providing viral marketing
- **Product development**: through involving consumers in design process
- **Market intelligence**: by perceiving and analyzing user generated content

Continuous growth in social networks is important for companies because they can deliver their company’s marketing message to their consumers and interact with them by using WOM. Companies have evolved in their approach and shifted from traditional means of communication to two-way communication which is provided with the help of social network sites such as Facebook, Twitter etc. (Hanna Rohm & Crittenden, 2011; Cvijikj & Michahelles, 2013). These changes in marketing have led to emergence of new phenomenon which is being labelled as social media marketing and it is form of WOM marketing also referred to as viral marketing, guerilla marketing, and buzz marketing which provides the platform for influencing consumer to consumer communication by employing professional marketing techniques (Kozinets Valek, Wojnicki & Wilner, 2010). With the help of social networks,
communication between companies and consumers have become much easier, companies can receive feedback or even observe conversations on social media which at the end helps companies to learn about consumer’s need, and ultimately helps in involvement of community in the co-creation of given value by the generated ideas (Palmer & Koenig-Lewis 2009).

2.3.8 Consumer and Social Networking Sites

In today’s context, most of the people are aware of social networking sites (SNSs). And these SNSs have become so popular among consumers, that it is common for Internet users to have accounts on SNSs such as Facebook and Twitter. Out of 143 million users of social media across India, urban areas of the country have been witnessing a growth of 35% with 118 million users as of April 2015 (Bhargava, 2015). The number of users for rural India too has been steadily rising and stood at 25 million, up from close to 12 million in 2014, showing a growth of 100%. Facebook emerged as the most popular social media website with 96% of urban users accessing it, followed by Google Plus (61%), Twitter (43%) and LinkedIn (24%). Many of the social network users have integrated social network sites in their daily practice (Boyd & Ellison, 2008). These practices are such as joking around, hanging out, sharing information, flirting and gossiping (Boyd, 2008). According to Cassidy (2006) typical social network users are spending around twenty minutes per days on sites and two third of users at least once in a day log into these sites. SNSs nowadays are an integral part of lifestyle of modern day consumers; and the prime reason can be regarded to the values that modern day consumers are seeking for which that can be found SNSs. They offer mainly communication and entertainment facilities for their users. Boyd (2008) says that the value of sites is more about the presence of friends and peers which motivate consumers to use SNSs continuously. There are some users who are addicted to SNSs and they can even spend hours together each day on these sites; therefore, they can communicate with other consumers, update their status and share related information (Lim,Ting, Puspitasari, Prasetya & Gunadi, 2012).
2.3.9 Consumer Engagement and Engagement Objects

According to Brodie et al. (2011), consumer engagement is a multidimensional concept which includes; cognitive, emotional and behavioral dimensions which happen by the need of consumer for information. The degree of complexity of consumer engagement identifies by particular engagement objects. Particularly, consumers engage with certain themes which include; brands, products / services linked with exercise programs, organizations and industry; and with the online community, community roles and another community member. Initially, consumers get engaged with common interest objects and further on they start to have two way of communication with other members of the online community, therefore, help to effect on their certain consumer engagement levels. Brand and anything related to it is the most common topic to be discussed. Blogs to allow consumers to talk about the brands and share ideas on online platforms.

**Figure 2.2: Consumer Engagement Objects in a Virtual Brand Community**
2.3.10 Consumer Engagement Process

Consumer engagement is highlighted as an interactive, experimental process based upon the individuals’ engagement with specific object/brand or organization (Brodie et al.’s, 2011). Brodie, Ilie, Juric, Hollebeek (2013) have studied consumer engagement in a virtual brand community. They considered five terms, “learning,” “sharing,” “advocating,” “socializing” and “co-developing” which are the basis for a working definition of consumer engagement in the context of virtual brand community.

Figure 2.3: Consumer Engagement Process

![Diagram of Consumer Engagement Process]

Source: Brodie, Ilie, Juric, Hollebeek (2013)

Figure 2.3 depicts the dynamic conceptual model suggested by Brodie, Ilie, Juric, Hollebeek (2013) which derived from their analysis and interpretation of the blog posts. According to this model, it is required to reduce information search cost as well as perceived cost risk, which can accelerate the speed of individual to join or participate in online community. Other stimulus situation which propels a consumer to join the community can be a perceived lack of information regarding the
organization as well as customer perceptions of one-way communication-related to commercial information (Brodie et al., 2011).

Consumer engagement process creates consumer loyalty, satisfaction, empowerment, connection, commitment, and trust. Ultimately it may include unstable state of dormancy and termination at a particular point in time. “Dormancy is a temporary state of inactive, passive engagement by individual consumers who previously have been more actively engaged with the online community. Termination represents a state of more permanent disengagement, and as such, refers to the conclusion of a consumer’s engagement with a particular brand community. The analysis reveals that the consumer engagement process does not follow an orderly, sequential progression of phases over time” (Brodie et al., 2011).

2.3.11 Emergence of Empowered Consumer

Social media is ubiquitous and studies show that those who were born 1982 onwards are less interested in consuming newspaper, magazine, TV but more interested in online activities. People can easily use media through the Internet such as Youtube for watching TV shows as well as access web to read news (Gillin, 2008). Rust and Oliver (1994) defined that due to the emergence of the Internet, traditional advertising appears to be becoming obsolete. They posited that consumers become more empowered and even give suggestions leading to emergence of a new era of producer-consumer interaction. Consumers are no more satisfied with only listening to the company’s marketing message and they rather prefer to have a meaningful conversation and engage with companies and their products (McKinsey & Co., 2006).

Furthermore, in today market, the evolution of consumers into ‘Prosumers’ is distinctly visible (Kotler, Jain & Suvit, 2002). Prosumer is highly knowledgeable about products and they have an important role in improving the products and services (Diffley et al., 2011; Clarke, 2008). Prosumers are newly empowered consumers and according to Kotler, Jain & Suvit (2002), in the context of marketing and Internet; consumers are able to communicate with marketers about their requirements, hence, consumer specifies the need and business delivers it. Therefore, the role of consumer has changed from being simply a consumer to being a prosumer (Diffley et al., 2011).
2.4 Definition of Social Networking Sites (SNSs) and Underlying Concept

SNSs like Facebook have been of interest to researchers as well as marketers. Also, the SNSs have attracted a number of consumers by letting them articulate and share ideas on the social network and engage in social interactions in a dynamic, interactive, multi-modal form over the Internet (Boyd & Ellison 2008). McCann said, “Social media represents a big improvement over Web 1.0 as a term to describe the changes that have impacted the Internet in its most basic sense – a shift in how people discover, read and share news, information, and content” (p.10).

Social media has changed the way people communicate, interact, even in case of relationship between friends and family, colleagues, politician, media, companies. Social media can be called as a collaborative environment that not only focuses on receiving and exchange of content (McCann, 2008) but also provides us with environment where we can participate in the creation, development, and spreading of the content. Social media is a communication from monolog into dialog which helps people from content readers to publishers (McCann, 2008).

According to Boulos and Wheeler (2007), “the second incarnation of the Web i.e. Web 2.0 has been called the ‘Social Web’, because, in contrast to Web 1.0, its content can be more easily generated and published by users, and the collective intelligence of users encourages more democratic use” (p.2). Shirky (2009) states that because social media are “flexible enough to match our social capabilities” (p. 20), they are responsible for the rise of the “new ways of coordinating group action” (p. 20). Social media has changed the manner in which people engage in group communication, and even assemble and manage one another. Social media applications include social networking sites, video sharing sites, blogs, message boards, virtual communities, massively-multiplayer online games, and instant messaging applications (Bulik, 2008).

Social media will continue to grow at a hot pace. According to Idugboe (2012) it took radio 38 years, television 13 years, Internet four years, and Facebook six months to reach 50 million users. SNSs are essential for eWoM because it’s a tool for consumers to share their experience, ideas, and the information rapidly spread all over their networks regarding products and services (Raacke & Bonds-Raacke, 2008).
why marketers give importance and invest considerable sources in increasing positive eWoM in the social networks by making the brand profile pages and engage consumers who are helping them to make friends with the brand.

SNS is a tool which helps people to stay connected with each other and it is a virtual communication medium. It is one of the biggest trends in the 21st century with a large amount of information that users of SNS are revealing about themselves on sites that help marketers to use it for their benefit and make a relationship and offer advertising based on the needs of the market.

According to the type of users, there are varieties of SNS with different aims. The differences between the SNSs are according to their users, some just have the ability for sharing videos, photos but others may have instant messages as well like Facebook or MySpace that are supporting limited mobile interactions too. The target of each SNSs are very varied from others, some of the SNSs are just focusing on geographical regions or linguistics groups. For example, Orkut was English oriented interface but there are other SNSs which are designed with specific religious, sexual orientation, political or another kind of categories. There are social network sites also for animals like (Dogster) that is managed by the owner of animals (Boyd & Ellison, 2008).

SNS is web based services which allows the users to have profile privacy and provide the environment where different people can stay connected, articulate, share information and comment on each other. In addition, users can get to know and interact with new people (Boyd & Ellison, 2008). Each SNSs has different rules and different formats which have to be followed by users. A basic requirement like filling up some questions and giving some details about their age, location, job etc. and more details are required to be answered by users; those who are listed as their friends are able to check the details. Also, viewers from other social networking sites are not permitted to check the profile and details of the users. Depending on, setting that users are selecting for their profiles due to privacy and safety issues, those who are not on their list of followers, fans or friends have limited access to the profile even though they are from same social networks (Boyd & Ellison, 2008). In fact, Boyd & Ellison (2008) defined SN as “web-based services that allow individuals to (1) construct a public or semi-public profile within a bounded system, (2) articulate a list of other users with whom they share a connection, and (3) view and traverse their list of connections and those made by others within the system” (p.211). According to
Hennig (2010) social networking sites like Facebook, YouTube, Google and Twitter in recent years have enabled consumers to play an active role in the market and reach almost everyone, anytime and everywhere, it has also provided opportunities for growth of new adaptive strategies related to businesses.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Ranks</th>
<th>Sites</th>
<th>Estimated Unique Monthly Visitors</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Facebook</td>
<td>550,000,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Twitter</td>
<td>95,800,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>MySpace</td>
<td>80,500,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Linkedin</td>
<td>50,000,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>Ning</td>
<td>42,000,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>Tagged</td>
<td>30,000,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>Classmates</td>
<td>29,000,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>Hi5</td>
<td>27,000,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9</td>
<td>Myyearbook</td>
<td>12,000,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10</td>
<td>Meetup</td>
<td>8,000,000</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Source: Das & Sahoo (2011)*

Celli *et al.* (2010) argued SNSs have been utilized in several global events as an important source to diffuse the news and information; some like the terrorist attack in Mumbai in 2008 and the 2009 Twitter revolution in Iran. Overall, SNSs have proved that it’s a reliable way of communication which is quick and relatively efficient. ComScore which is considered as a leader in measuring the digital world stated that 84 percent of internet visitors in India are users of SNS and after the US, China, Germany, Russian Federation, Brazil and the UK. India is said to be seventh largest market worldwide for social networking (Das & Sahoo, 2011). In 2010, Facebook had 20.9 million visitors and considered as most popular among SNSs in India. Also during 2009-10, social networking visitors in India increased by 43 percent (ComScore, 2010).

Rizavi & Rizavi (2011) described social networking sites as a “platform to advertise and attract millions of people from different countries, languages, and demographics”. Trusov *et al.* (2009) believed that SNSs have a very significant impact on consumer retention and acquisition. Due to all the eminent qualities of Internet platforms such as being a cost effective marketing, employing e-mail campaigns, viral marketing, and website advertisements, marketers lately have decided to give more importance to
Internet and platforms like SNSs, blogs, and other social media. Also, these websites are giving more opportunities to consumers to explore business virtually and at the same time encouraging consumers to check the latest updates on products (Phillips, McFadden, & Sullins, 2010; Saxena & Khanna, 2013).

2.4.1 History of Social Networking Sites

Boyd & Ellison (2008) said the first social network site was started in 1997 (SixDegrees.com) which allowed users to create a profile and list their own friends and was supported users to surf their friend list; but primarily it was a popular dating site. Although this SNS attracted millions of people but in 2000 it failed and was shut down. Later, Classmate.com was launched, where people were affiliated with classmates and college mates without profile and friend lists for a long while. During 1997 to 2001, activities towards networks gather momentum and lots of social networks came up which offered facilities like designing and creating of own profile and pages. The examples of these networks are AsianAvenue, BlackPlanet, and MiGente which helped users to identify their friends through their own profiles without any approval for those connections. Other networks too started as social networking sites like LineJournal in 1999 which was single directional connection with user pages where people marked others as friends to follow their journals. In the meantime, Cyworld started in 1999 which was South Korea based virtual world site and in 2001 it added the SNS feature. LunarStorm was another SNS which was launched in 2000 and it was included friend list, guest books, and diary pages.

The next wave of SNSs emerged after 2001 and were more related to business purpose rather than chatter box or dating purpose like Ryze.com but they didn’t become popular. Ultimately other social networks like Tribe.net, LinkedIn and Friendster started and were more related to professionals. Among these social networks, LinkedIn is the most powerful business service and Friendster is a significant social network. Overall, the most popular SNSs that are more into the business, culture and research are Friendster, MySpace, and Facebook. MySpace grew rapidly due to spreading of rumors that Friendster would soon be charging their users; a large number of users switched to MySpace. The initial aim of Facebook was to attract the college networks but in 2004, Facebook started to support other groups and
eventually it expanded from catering to college groups to everyone. There is no dependable data regarding the exact number of SNSs users but the number of users is increasing day by day. According to Chaffey (2016), there are in all 3.419 Billion Internet users as on April 2016 of which 2.307 Billion are active Social Media Users. Undoubtedly, the growing reach and popularity of social media is helping marketers find newer innovative ways of marketing their products and services. The huge popularity of SNSs has also forced the marketers to invest their money on them and use them as a medium to advertise and promoting their offerings and companies (Boyd & Ellison, 2008).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Social Media Application Type</th>
<th>Examples</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Social Networking Sites</td>
<td>Facebook, MySpace, Google+, Pinterest, LinkedIn</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Online Publishing Tools</td>
<td>Blogger, WordPress, TypePad, TomatoCMS, Habari</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Photo Sharing</td>
<td>Flickr, Picasa, Photobucket, SmugMug, Shutterfly</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Audio Sharing</td>
<td>iTunes, Spotify, Pandora, Soundcloud, Rhapsody</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Video Sharing</td>
<td>YouTube, blip.tv, Vimeo, Ustream, Qik, Veoh</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Microblogging</td>
<td>Twitter, Tumblr, PingFM, Redmond, meemi, Plurk</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Livecasting (streaming radio, Webconferencing, webinars)</td>
<td>BlogTalkRadio, Shoutcast, Watchitto, red5, icecast</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Social Rating Networks</td>
<td>Epinions, Blipper, foursquare, Bizrate, retrevo</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Virtual Worlds &amp; Gaming</td>
<td>Second Life, Kaneva, World of Warcraft</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Productivity Applications</td>
<td>Dropbox, Evernote, Gmail, Tomboy, Cubby, Synclicity</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Aggregators (social news sites)</td>
<td>iGoogle, Reddit, NewsVine, Propeller, Digg</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Feed Management Providers</td>
<td>FeedBurner, feedblitz, Feedcat, Superfeedr, Atom, Feedbrite</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Search Engine</td>
<td>Yahoo, Google, dogpile, kayak, WebCrawler, bing</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mobile</td>
<td>Viber, Skype Mobile, Facebook Mobile, Instagram, Snapchat</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Interpersonal</td>
<td>AOL Instant Messenger, Google Talk, Trillian, imo</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Adapted from Colvin (2013)
2.4.2 Current Trends on Social Networking Sites

Nowadays marketers cannot ignore social media because the effect of social media on successful business marketing plan can be phenomenal. The Report by Eloqua as cited in McCoy (2014) shows that 78 percent of companies have a social media team. Hence, social media also are upgrading themselves according to the need of the particular market. Social network sites like Twitter has 232 million active users who send 500 million tweets per day or Facebook which is adding the video advertising on its platform and Instagram also has video and paid advertising program.

2.4.3 Futuristic Trends of SNSs

Considering the efforts and activities of social networks in 2013, there are some areas which require consideration as upcoming trends of social media for attracting consumers effectively (McCoy, 2014):

To understand the audience, services, and product entirely. People spending a large chunk of their time on social networks. According to the research by California University in 2009, almost 34 billion bits of published information is daily seen per user in social networks. Which means it’s required to have a better understanding of the audience. Therefore, marketers are interested understanding consumer behavior towards their on as also related products and services.

It’s important to mobilize the material. A large number of consumers are today accessing the Internet by using a smartphone. According to Chaffey (2016), around 1.968 Billion individuals access SNSs using mobile devices. With the rise in popularity of Internet and mobile computing, mobile marketing has become an important part of the current business strategy.

Out with analytic and in with predictive tools. We all are used to some simple tools which help us in obtaining for some basic information. Gradually the need is being felt that, we need to move to predictive tools, something which can see the difference of technologies from data mining, modeling,
machine learning to drive the analytical information of present and past.
Simple tools no longer excite. The new trend is to have diverse data at
fingertips.

In short the dominant trend is to understand and reach out to the audience more
effectively and wherever they possible. Consumers are preferring to be considered as
single unique individual and mobile technology is providing the avenue to the
marketer to reach out individually to the consumer. Consumers continually require to
be updated about the latest information about market. Further, based on their
requirements, they prefer to interact personally with companies and mobile
technologies, social network sites and Internet are together satisfying their needs.

2.4.4 Web2.0

Web 2.0 is an interactive and responsive social web that allows users to interact with
each other in the social media as user generated content in an online platform. Web
2.0 includes social networking sites, blogs, wikis, folksonomies, video
sharing sites, hosted services and Web applications (Amo, Romero & Borja, 2011).
Web2.0 is an open communication platform and emphasis is on web based
communication between users as a collaborative medium where people can meet,
read, write and share information in an online platform. It is the second generation
of World Wide Web. It has been used as a marketing term rather than computer
science based term. Web 2.0 tools are less expensive than traditional software and
some are even free. In fact, most of them are consumer applications tools
like YouTube, Flickr, and MySpace. Web 2.0 makes changes in a society as well as
the Internet platform as a technology. Today we are not using the Internet as a tool;
we are becoming a part of it. Emerging of web 2.0 in 21st century made revolution in
marketing field from the traditional marketing to internet base marketing (Riegner,
2007; Hsu & Tran, 2013).
Chapter 3: Research Methodology

3.1 Introduction

The purpose of this chapter is to provide comprehensive details regarding the research hypotheses, research process, research design, development of the research instrument, pilot study, sampling procedure and strategy adopted for data collection and analysis so as to investigate the effect of social networking sites through eWOM on consumer engagement. This chapter provides scope of the study and related conceptual framework of the study along and also delves into reliability and validity issues of the measurement scales employed in the study. This chapter is followed by discussion related to reliability and validity of the data, as well as statistical techniques used to verify the hypotheses.

3.2 Research Methodology

Solving the problem in a systematic way is referred to as research. Research methodology represents “all the basic aspects of belief and underlying concepts, ideas and methods for collection, evaluation and manipulation of data” (Saunders, Lewis & Thornhill, 2007).

3.2.1 Quantitative and Qualitative Research

There are two research methodologies, positivism, and interpretivism. In the positivist method, the central belief is that in the study consumers and marketing should be scientific and accordingly marketing researchers have increasingly been adopting a framework similar to that of the natural scientists. While interpretive researchers do not provide hypothesis and they rather explore the nature and
consider the interrelationships of marketing phenomena (Malhotra & Briks 2006). Qualitative and quantitative methods are two major research methodologies, though depending on the authors, they are also called deductive and inductive approaches or positivistic and phenomenological paradigms (Saunders et al., 2007).

According to Golafshani (2003), experimental methods and quantitative measures to test hypothetical generalizations are used by researchers who are employing logical positivism or quantitative research. It helps the researcher to familiarize with the concept or the problem which is s/he is going to study and subsequently test the hypotheses. Overall, it emphasizes on facts and causes of behavior and information that can be quantified and summarized in the numeric format. Therefore, the mathematic process is used for analyzing the numeric data and results are generally expressed using statistical terminologies.

It is important to understand a certain issue in-depth in the qualitative research. Usually it is used to understand perception, behavior and priorities of affected community and for describing provided information through qualitative data. The focus of this method is a holistic approach. The researcher doesn't know in advance what s/he is looking for. Unlike quantitative research which has a broad understanding of the situation and required socio-demographic characteristic of the population Thus, in case of quantitative approach, the researcher has the ability to compare the correlations between variables of interest. In quantitative research it is important to provide evidence regarding the type, size, and population. The researcher is clearly aware of what s/he is going through. In the context of studies of the type undertaken by the present researcher, the focus of such research is to study major determinants or variables that affect the consumer’s engagement or social networking sites from the aspects of marketing. Therefore, the quantitative research approach adopted was best suited as establishment of the relationship among different types of variables was essential. Certain variables are responsible for motivating the social networking site users to look for the opinion of their friends before deciding to purchase a product or hire a service. The plenty of information sources related to product, brand or service, which are available online in the form of reviews, comments, blogs, social networking discussion groups and product or brand pages.
3.3 The Scope of the Study

The scope of the present study can be best be presented from the point of view of various perspectives viz. temporal, operational, functional and geographical, consumer and genre perspectives. (Cite some references or studies where this categorization has been employed)

Temporal Perspective

The period from 2013 to 2016 is covered in this study to analyze the social networking sites as a tool for consumer engagement through electronic word of mouth (eWOM) and the data pertaining to this period has been considered whenever necessary.

Operational Perspective

In this context the study covers the following:

- Habits of consumers towards SNS and their purchase decision behavior.
- Change in consuming practices and preference Scope for outsourcing of social media and their time spend on it.

Functional and Geographical Perspective

Marketing methods and strategies change after every 100 years (???), and thus after experiencing the era of mass marketing and mass media, now the business world is embracing new methods and strategies including Social Media Marketing which need to be studied in-depth.

The Consumer Perspective

Social networking sites have been viewed as moneymaking machines; creating a need for benefit among young people causing them to spend their pocket money on extra features such as VIP profiles, widgets, gifts for friends and so on.
These interesting developments have been scantily researched especially in the context of emerging economies like India.

**The Genre Perspective**

Social networking sites are places where young people imitate and copy different genres, e.g. fashion magazines, music videos, song lyrics, commercials etc. that can be found in their profile texts. These dimensions too have been less researched. Cite some references or studies where this categorization has been employed.

**3.4 Objectives of the Study**

The three broad objectives considered for the study are listed below:

- **Objective 1**: To study consumer usage patterns of Social Networking Sites (SNSs).

- **Objective 2**: To study factors which effect the ‘consumer engagement’ (CE) in the context of Social Networking Sites (SNSs) leading to spread of electronic word of mouth (e-WOM).

- **Objective 3**: To study the relationship of demographics with the factors that affect the consumer engagement in the context of Social Networking Sites (SNSs) leading to spread of electronic word of mouth (e-WOM).

**3.5 Research Variables and (Primary) Hypotheses**

Keeping in mind the study scope and objectives, following two types of variables have been considered in the present study:

- Primary variables (Awareness, Trust, Satisfaction, Tie Strength, and Loyalty) and,
- Secondary variables/ Demographic variables (Gender, Age, Education, Occupation, and Income).
Operational definition of the Study Variables

Awareness: Engaged consumers apart from participating are conscious of the participation and think about the interaction and then only they make contrast and comparison between the situations (Acitelli, 1992). Therefore, awareness appears as a conscious participation because the activity is more like conscious and participative for engaging consumers. For the point of view of engagement, awareness is being conscious and having knowledge. Consumers think about their involvement with the focus of engagement; the more of the intensity of engagement, the higher is the extent to which consumers are thinking of their interactions with the focus of engagement (Vivek, 2009). While consumers are heavily engaged, they are more interested in getting information related to the focus of engagement. They are vigilant in observing things related to the engagement subject and actively they surmise from the observations.

Awareness used in this study has been used an independent variable that considered the awareness level of consumers about the online shopping through social networking sites. In the context of the present study, it has been conjectured that the higher levels of awareness of consumers will affect consumer satisfaction and satisfied consumers are the one who spread the positive electronic WOM.

**H1:** The level of awareness in users of SNSs has a positive and significant effect on consumer satisfaction resulting in CE through positive eWOM.

Trust: Trust is described as ‘a willingness to rely on an exchange partner in whom one has confidence’ (Moorman, Deshpande & Zaltman, 1993, p. 82). Pigg and Crank (2004) stated that trust has a significant role in exchanging of information and allows the individuals to evaluate their decision by providing more useful information. Consumers consider social media as a reliable source of information for the brands rather than commercial one through marketers. As SNSs provides the platform for the users to articulate with each other and build up real work relationships and eases the exchange of information. Therefore, the trust may extend to the other contacts in networks which result in a sense of trust in the online environment. Hereupon, enhanced trust in the social networking site contacts can affect the consumer’s desire to engage in eWOM through SNSs (Chu & Kim, 2011) and it’s an influential determinant which engages the consumers in all kinds of online activities related to
the products and services. Trust may be considered as a tool to evaluate the source and giving the value to the shared information on social network sites. Users of SNSs consider trust as a tool for evaluation of the truthfulness of the news and promotional content as well as information shared on SNSs which are related to products. According to Baines, Fill and Page (2008), trust between the members of social network sites motivates consumers to seek opinion, ask for advice or search for product-related information from their trustworthy members while they require purchasing a product that has heavy influences on the purchase decisions of consumers. The rate of shared information on SNSs increases while there are a high trust and dependence on the opinion of the trusted members (Alkhateeb, Moussa, Zahir, 2012).

Thus, trust is the other independent variable used for this study. Consumers with higher trust in SNSs have an enhanced tendency for adopting the online shopping process and trust is one of the pivotal motives to give a proper direction for positive word of mouth. Thus, the following hypothesis was considered for the present study:

**H2:** The level of trust in users of SNSs has a positive and significant effect on consumer satisfaction resulting in CE through positive eWOM.

**Satisfaction:** Satisfaction is an important construct which encourages consumers to articulate on social network sites, and consumers responses to the products and services. When consumers experience higher levels of satisfaction, it leads them to customer loyalty, intention to purchase, word of mouth recommendation, and increased profit, market share and return on investment (Bowden, 2009). The reason that marketing firms have been interested in consumer satisfaction is that consumer repurchase those products with which they are satisfied and tell others about their experience. Even they can affect the brand perceptions of those whom they are communicating with. Ultimately consumer satisfaction leads to positive word of mouth (Richins, 1983). WOM is often related to satisfaction or dissatisfaction of consumer regarding their previous purchase experience. Consumers have a tendency to engage in WOM to satisfy their personal information needs (Mangold, Miller, Brockway, 1999). While consumers reach to the extreme satisfaction they share their emotional experience with others and report greater WOM (Kim, 2012). WOM is
mediated by satisfaction levels. WOM as a function of satisfaction is actually a U-shaped relationship. It is between customer satisfaction and the inclination to engage in WOM transfers. Which means that extremely satisfied and dissatisfied consumers intend to initiate WOM rather than a customer with moderate experience (Anderson, 1988; Alon, 2005). According to Tang (2010), satisfaction is considered as the most important antecedent of WOM. Satisfaction is stimulus mediating variable for the consumer to engage in SNSs because satisfied consumers end up in positive eWOM and dissatisfied consumers end up in a negative one.

**Tie strength:** A social network is a structure that connects individuals, families, companies, or nations, and ties them together via some type of interdependencies such as friendship, shared values, financial interests, or religious views. Social network analysis considers not only the connections between network members, but also the different degrees of influence certain group members have on each other. In this later stage of research on WOM, a new theoretical concept for WOM appeared related to the strength and influence of personal ties (Granovetter, 1973; OReilly & Marx, 2011). The importance of the Internet for WOM communication is structured in the links between people in a social network. A recommendation is more valuable in groups that have stronger links together. People with closer relationships, married couples or friends like to interact more often than only acquaintances. Social ties are positively related to opinion leadership across a variety of concepts.

Sources of WOM recommendation can be categorized according to the similarity of the parties or closeness of the relationship between the WOM receiver who must make the decision and the WOM sender (Duhan, Johnson, Wilcox, & Harell, 1997). In other words, the tie strength of a relationship should be high when the sender knows the receiver personally (Casielles, Suárez Álvarez, Belén & Lanza, 2013). Furthermore, the tie strength includes closeness, intimacy, support, and association (Frenzen & Davis, 1990). The strength of the tie may range from strong to weak depending on the number and types of resources they exchange, the frequency of exchanges, and the intimacy of the exchanges together (Marsden & Campbell, 1984).

Tie strength is another independent variable used in this study, the strong tie between consumers make them communicate on social networking sites and they will suggest to their friends, family, and acquaintance about what so ever is their experience.
**H₃:** The nature of *tie strength* in users of SNSs has a positive and significant effect on consumer satisfaction resulting in CE through positive eWOM.

**Loyalty:** According to Bowden (2009) though satisfaction is a necessary step for the loyalty formation but it becomes less significant while loyalty begins to set through other mechanisms. According to (Reitz, 2012), when consumers are engaged in a brand cognitively, their knowledge, information and learning about the brand increases which lead to promoting consumer loyalty. The higher the level of brand commitment, the higher is the level of loyalty. Commitment shapes positive attitudes towards a company which results in positive loyalty towards the company as well. Therefore, commitment can be considered to be foundation of loyalty.

Previously loyalty was measured as consumers’ repurchase intent but later on it was defined as an attitudinal perspective which gained momentum because it is a psychological link between companies and consumers (Reitz, 2012). Therefore, it is considered to be a more stable measure of loyalty rather than the behavioral measure of loyalty. Several researchers have stated loyalty before repurchase intent because a loyal consumer consistently purchases the same brand in which they have a strong bond with (Bolton, Kannan, & Bramlett, 2000; Dick & Basu, 1994; Griffin, 2002; Shukla, 2009). According to Shukla (2009), brand loyalty has an influence on purchase decisions. While consumers have a higher level of thinking and experience strong feelings of connectedness from the positive attitude towards the brands, it leads them to real loyalty (Reitz, 2012).

Loyalty is a dependent variable used in this study, according to this study trust among the consumer’s results in consumer satisfaction which results in loyalty. Thus, the following hypothesis was considered for the present study:

**H₄:** The level of *satisfaction* in users of SNSs has a positive and significant effect on consumer *loyalty* resulting in CE through positive eWOM.

### 3.6 Secondary Hypotheses

The questionnaire used in this study has two sections; Section A is about the demographic status of the respondents and inquires about, gender, age, education, income and occupation of the respondents. In the present study, researcher has
studied each demographic variable along with each of the primary variables covered in the study.

**Hypotheses related to Demographic Variables**

The following hypotheses attempt to explore the differences in various study constructs in terms of demographic variable ‘gender’:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>H₁SG</th>
<th>Significant differences do not exist between the two genders on the construct tie strength.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>H₂CG</td>
<td>Significant differences do not exist between the two genders on the construct trust.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>H₃AG</td>
<td>Significant differences do not exist between the two genders on the construct Awareness.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>H₄SG</td>
<td>Significant differences do not exist between the two genders on the construct satisfaction.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>H₅LG</td>
<td>Significant differences do not exist between the two genders on the construct loyalty.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The following hypotheses attempt to explore the differences in various study constructs in terms of demographic variable ‘age’:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>H₁SA</th>
<th>Significant differences do not exist among the respondents belonging to various age groups on the construct tie strength.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>H₂TA</td>
<td>Significant differences do not exist among the respondents belonging to various age groups on the construct trust.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>H₃AA</td>
<td>Significant differences do not exist among the respondents belonging to various age groups on the construct Awareness.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>H₄SA</td>
<td>Significant differences do not exist among the respondents belonging to various age groups on the construct satisfaction.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>H₅LA</td>
<td>Significant differences do not exist among the respondents belonging to various age groups on the construct loyalty.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The following hypotheses attempt to explore the differences in various study constructs in terms of demographic variable ‘education’:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>H₁SE</th>
<th>Significant differences do not exist among the respondents belonging to various levels of education on the construct tie strength.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>H₂TE</td>
<td>Significant differences do not exist among the respondents belonging to various levels of education on the construct trust.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
**H_{AE}:** Significant differences do not exist among the respondents belonging to various levels of education on the construct *awareness*.

**H_{SE}:** Significant differences do not exist among the respondents belonging to various levels of education on the construct *satisfaction*.

**H_{LE}:** Significant differences do not exist among the respondents belonging to various levels of education on the construct *loyalty*.

The following hypotheses attempt to explore the differences in various study constructs in terms of demographic variable ‘income’:

**H_{TSI}:** Significant differences do not exist among the respondents belonging to various income levels on the construct *tie strength*.

**H_{TI}:** Significant differences do not exist among the respondents belonging to various income levels on the construct *trust*.

**H_{AI}:** Significant differences do not exist among the respondents belonging to various income levels on the construct *awareness*.

**H_{SI}:** Significant differences do not exist among the respondents belonging to various income levels on the construct *satisfaction*.

**H_{LI}:** Significant differences do not exist among the respondents belonging to various income levels on the construct *loyalty*.

The following hypotheses attempt to explore the differences in various study constructs in terms of demographic variable ‘occupation’:

**H_{TSO}:** Significant differences do not exist among the respondents belonging to various occupational groups on the construct *tie strength*.

**H_{TO}:** Significant differences do not exist among the respondents belonging to various occupational groups on the construct *trust*.

**H_{AO}:** Significant differences do not exist among the respondents belonging to various occupational groups on the construct *awareness*.

**H_{SO}:** Significant differences do not exist among the respondents belonging to various occupational groups on the construct *satisfaction*.

**H_{LO}:** Significant differences do not exist among the respondents belonging to various occupational groups on the construct *loyalty*. 
3.7 Research Model

The research model is based on thorough literature review and past empirical researchers (Vivek, 2009; Shu-Chuan Chu, 2009; Amy, Renee, & Reitz, 2012; Ali Alkhateeb, Wissam Moussa, Zahir Alli, 2012) and the hypothesized relationships between various study constructs i.e. awareness, trust, tie strength, satisfaction and loyalty were. The research model for the study is presented in Fig 3.1.

![Research Model Diagram]

Source: Prepared by Researcher

3.8 Research Design

Conceptual structure within which research is conducted is called as research design and it consists of advance planning for the methods that have to be used for the data collection, measurement and specifying techniques that have to be adopted in the analyses of data. The “research design is a general plan of answering the research question” (Saunder, Lewis & Thornhill, 2007). The research design is a 'specification of methods and procedures to gain the required information' (Green, Tull, and Albaum, 2007). According to Malhotra and Brik (2006), a ‘framework for conducting marketing research is research design’. Research design is the detailed necessary procedure to gain the required information for structuring and solving the business research problem. The major types of research designs are exploratory, descriptive and casual. Descriptive research is structured and preplanned and based on large samples.
Exploratory research is necessary for obtaining ‘background information related to the general nature of research problem while descriptive research is intended to get the answer to questions of who, what, when, where and how’. Descriptive research usually explains something such as ‘characteristics, populations or marketing function of the study and it’s classified as cross-sectional and longitudinal research’. Casual research is related to ‘gaining evidence of cause and effect relationship among variables which are considered for the study’ (Malhotra & Brik, 2006).

In this study descriptive research was undertaken to answer the research questions of the study and to address the research objectives. Descriptive research and single cross-sectional design have been used to obtain the precise insights into research area related to social network sites, consumer engagement and electronic word of mouth (eWOM). Moreover, cross-sectional research design was also suitable for the purpose of testing various hypotheses which are developed for this study.

3.9 Research Items

The measurement items which have been used in this study were adopted from various studies that were related to the objectives of the present study. The items were later factor analyzed. Also, reliability analysis was performed to determine if each item contributed to scale reliability.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Table 3.1: Measurement Items Used in this Study</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Measurement Items/Study Constructs</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Awareness</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I get information related to products/ brands on SNSs.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I get information related to shopping at SNSs.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I am very familiar with the brand of companies I “follow” on SNSs.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Satisfaction</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>In future I would buy products from the company I “follow” on SNS.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The company’s page that I “follow” on SNSs provides complete information.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>---</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The company’s page that I “follow” on SNSs allows me to be in control of what I want to see.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I feel connected to the company that I “follow” on SNSs.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Loyalty</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I’m very loyal to the company’s product/brands that I “follow” on SNS.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I have emotional feelings attached to the company that I “follow” on SNSs.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I frequently post messages and responses on the company’s page that I “follow” on SNSs.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Trust</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I can trust my SNS friends in deciding upon risky purchase decision.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>My contacts on my “friends” list on the SNS offer honest &amp; reliable opinions.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I have more trust on online comments of consumers about the products/brands rather than advertisements from companies.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Tie Strength</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Information shared on SNS regarding products/brands is reliable.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Friend list is very important for social networking on SNS.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Closeness of social relationship is an important factor in sharing of product/brand related information.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Source:* Prepared by the Researcher

### 3.10 Research Process

In this research, the information was obtained after the review of literature to identify how social networking sites, consumer engagement and electronic word of mouth have been studied by other researchers and nature of interrelationship that exists between them. According to the needs of the research, a research model was planned and in the next stage, hypotheses were framed to statistically validate the research model. The questionnaire was designed as a survey tool for collecting the responses
from students and those employed in the Information Technology (IT) companies. Collected data through the questionnaire was analyzed to understand factors which influence the consumer to get engaged in SNSs through eWOM and finally, results were interpreted to arrive at conclusions.

The research process outline followed in this research is given below in Fig 3.2

![Fig 3.2: Research Process](image)

**Source:** Prepared by the Researcher

### 3.11 Sources of Data

Data can be in the form of qualitative or quantitative variables. Quantitative data are based on meanings which are derived from numbers and collection results in numerical and standard data (Malhotra, 2006). Thus, the analysis is conducted through diagrams and statistics. Qualitative data are based on meaning expressed through the words. Collection result in non-standardized data which require
classifying into categories. So analysis is conducted by the use of conceptualization (Green, Tull & Albaum, 2007).

3.12 Measurement

Measurement is classified into four scales: Nominal Scale, Ordinal Scale, Interval Scale and Ratio Scale. Nominal scale is allocating number as a labels or tags to help for identifying and classifying objects (Malhotra, 2006). An ‘ordinal scale is a ranking scale which assigns the numbers to objects mostly used in qualitative phenomena’. Interval scale ‘contains all of the information of ordinal scale and allows the researcher to compare the differences between the objects’. There is an equal interval between the scale values. Ratio scale possesses the power of the nominal, ordinal and interval scales and is widely used in psychological sciences (Malhotra & Birk, 2006).

The questionnaire is a set of questions formalized to get information from the respondents. It should translate the required information into a set of particular question which help respondents to answer it. It must be motivating enough to encourage respondents to complete it and it has to minimize the response error (Malhotra, 2005). Questionnaire is about the technique of data collection in which respondent has to answer the same set of questions in a prearranged order (Saunders et al., 2007). In this study design of questionnaire is mainly based on various item of measurement derived from previous studies. However, keeping in mind the demands of the present study, some of the items were added, modified, and/or adapted with minor changes taking into consideration the cultural nuances.

Likert scale was primarily used in this study. Respondents were expected to respond to each of the statements based on their own degree level of agreement or disagreement. Five responses each were allocated from strongly disagree, disagree, neutral, agree and strongly agree. Specific answers to the items were combined, therefore the respondents with most favorable attitude had the highest score and those with the least favorable attitude had the lowest one. The research instrument was developed and refined using the following procedure:

- Identifying items based on previous studies
- Pilot study
- Questionnaire modification
3.12.1 Research Instrument

There are different tools for data collection which include Questionnaire, Interview, Observation, and reading. The researcher is required to select the right instrument and whatever instrument is selected by researcher should be examined to check up to which extent is likely to give the expected results (Godfred, 2015). In the present study, a questionnaire was used as a research instrument of the research for measuring the research variables. Steps to be followed are:

To compile the questionnaire
To check the validity of the compiled questionnaire
To check the reliability of the compiled questionnaire

The questionnaire was designed after scrutiny of the different questionnaire being used to measure the research variables.

3.12.2 Questionnaire Design

Developing the questionnaire is based on the review of literature which was carried out for conceptual constructs proposed in this study. A questionnaire is a pre-formulated written set of questions to which respondents record their answers, usually within rather closely defined alternatives (Sekaran, 2003). The rationales behind the use of questionnaire method as a major survey tool in this research are:

1) It was used because it is an efficient data collection mechanism when the researcher knows exactly what is required and how to measure the variables of interest. Field studies, comparative surveys and experimental designs often use questionnaires to measure the variables of interest (Sekaran, 2003).

2) It was used because quantified information is required concerning a specific population (Ticehurst & Veal, 2000).

Moreover, the advantage of the questionnaire method is that administering questionnaires to large numbers of individuals simultaneously is less expensive and less time consuming than other methods. It also does not require as much skill to administer a questionnaire (Sekaran, 2003). As already mentioned, questionnaire technique was used as the main technique to collect data for this study.
Pre-testing and pilot study was conducted in three rounds. Pre-testing is a trial run with a group of respondents for the purpose of detecting problems in the questionnaire instructions or design, whether the respondents have any difficulty understanding the questionnaire or whether there are any ambiguous or biased questions (Sekaran, 2003). A preliminary questionnaire was developed and tested to check the validity of the scale items which have been used in this study. The aim of pre-testing the questionnaire was to ensure that the content as well as the mechanics of compiling the questionnaire had been satisfactory. It establishes a content validity of the scales. Hair et al. (2003) pointed out that to establish a scale’s content validity is to ensure its ability to measure what it is designed to measure. This was fulfilled by asking respondents first to complete the questionnaire and then to comment on its length, scale, formats, wording, and instructions. Based on respondents’ feedback, slight modifications were made to items to correct some ambiguity in wording a pilot study was conducted. Respondents were asked to offer the suggestion if any to improve the questionnaire and edit the items. After taking into the consideration all the feedbacks and suggestions, second pilot study was conducted. Based upon feedback, the questionnaire was again modified and was now ready for use in the study.

The present study employed structured closed-ended questions for generating quantitative data where the respondents were to choose one or more responses from available option provided in the question. There are two groups of closed-ended questions viz. dichotomous and multiple choice. Both formats have been used for this study. Apart from demographics related questions, the research instrument comprised scales for measuring five constructs of interest i.e. awareness, satisfaction, loyalty, trust and tie strength. The scale items employed 5-point Likert scale, anchored by strongly disagree to strongly agree. Items used in this study were adopted from existing studies (Vivek, 2009; Reitz, 2012; Chu, 2009; Alkhteeb, Moussa & Alli, 2012). In the context of scale items, it is worth noting that there is no clear rule about the ideal number of the scale points, and many researchers acknowledge that opinion can be captured with five to seven point Likert scales (Maliotra, 2007). This study employed five-point Likert was presented as because according to the feedback obtained during pilot study, researcher found that five point Likert scale was more convenient and better suited for Indian respondents as some of the respondents in
pilot study were quite inconvenienced with the use of seven point Likert scale. Thus, it was thought appropriate to use five point Likert scale for this study.

This research instrument was divided into two sections. Section A contained questions related to demographics of the respondents such as gender, age, education, occupation, and income. Section B had scale items related to measurement of constructs of interest i.e. consumer awareness, trust, tie strength, satisfaction and loyalty related to SNSs and consumer engagement.

3.12.3 Research Instrument Development

Quantitative data was acquired in this research by using questionnaire based survey method. Data was collected from a researcher controlled sample of 500 students enrolled in educational institutions located in the national capital of India (i.e. New Delhi); Chandigarh which is bustling metro located in north India and Pune which is again a cosmopolitan city popular with students and businesses. Pune was also chosen because it is the seventh largest metropolis in India and second largest city in the state Maharashtra and also considered to the cultural capital of the region. The students enrolled in educational institutes located in these cities come from all parts of the country and hence are culturally diverse (Khan et al., 2012). Further, they exhibit cosmopolitan outlook, generally have a middle class background; and student samples have long been the preferred group in similar studies (Bamberg, 2003; Lee, 2008; Awad, 2011; Cho et al., 2012; Uddin & Khan, 2016). Hence, students enrolled in educational institutes of these cities can be taken as surrogates for the country as a whole for the purpose of this study. Moreover, they are more likely to be patrons of social networking sites which were of interest to the researcher. To get a broader picture and more representative picture, research instrument was also administered on 300 professionals belonging to Information Technology (IT) sector as also those from non-IT background. Another advantage in administering the questionnaire on these types of respondents was that the English version of the research instrument could be employed with ease as all of them were conversant with the language.

The research instrument was developed in different stages. In the first stage, the measurement instrument was shown to different subject experts for their opinion and feedback for checking the face validity. Based on feedback, the questionnaire was
slightly modified to suit the purpose of the study and optimum format for the questions was decided. The modified questionnaire was subjected to pilot test later on, and was further refined based on the feedback received during this phase.

The data from Delhi was collected from institutions like Jamia Milia Islamia University, Jamia Hamdard University, Indian Institute of Technology (IIT), New Delhi, Kamla Nehru College and Gargi College. Questionnaire was also administered on students at University of Panjab which has emerged as the topmost institution of higher education in the country in the Times Higher Education World Rankings 2014-15 (Mufti, 2014). Also, according to Gohain (2015) University of Panjab is India’s premier university and has been ranked 32 among top 100 according to Times Higher Education University Asia ranking for 2015.

Pune has been a hub for the engineering and IT industry. A large number of companies have their offices in Pune and employ lakhs of people. Also, there are a large number of MNCs based in Pune such as Tata Consultancy Services, Infosys Technologies, Mahindra, Capgemini India, and many more (Freshersweb, 2014). The IT sector employs people of varying backgrounds and age profiles.

Apart from personal administration of questionnaire, technologies which can be used in the data collection process are mail, phone, touchtone data entry, FAX, and the Internet (Mockovak, 2008). Mixed modes refer to approaches which used to contact and obtain data from the survey. Keeping in mind the nature of the study and study objectives, mixed mode approach was used in this study and questionnaires were administered both in the offline world as also through the Internet.

3.13 Reliability and Validity Analysis

In the quantitative research use of reliability and validity are common. Reliability is the level to which the data collection techniques or analysis procedure will provide consistent findings. Validity is to explain if the findings are really related to what they appear to be (Saunders et al., 2007).

The definitions of reliability and validity in quantitative research reveal two strands: Firstly, with regards to reliability, whether the result is replicable. Secondly, with regards to validity, whether the means of measurement are accurate and whether they are actually measuring what they are intended to measure. However, the concepts of
reliability and validity are viewed differently by qualitative researchers who strongly consider these concepts defined in quantitative terms as inadequate. In other words, these terms as defined in quantitative terms may not apply to the qualitative research paradigm. The question of reliability in the results does not concern them (Glesne & Peshkin, 1992), but precision (Winter, 2000), crediblility, and transferability (Hoepfl, 1997) provide the lenses of evaluating the findings of a qualitative research. In this context, the two research approaches or perspectives are essentially different paradigms (Kuhn, 1970).

Validity can be determined by examining content validity, criterion validity and construct validity. Content validity or face validity, though it is subjective but it’s a systematic evaluation of how the well content of scale shows the measurement task. It refers to the degree to which the measurement instrument entirely evaluates the construct of interest. Criterion validity refers to show whether a scale performs as expected in the relation to other selected variables as meaningful criteria. Criterion validity based on time period involved can have two forms of concurrent and predictive validity. Construct validity addresses the question of what is the construct or characteristic of the measurement scale. Construct validity needs a sound theory of the nature of the construct is being measured and the relation of it to other constructs. It is supposed to be the most sophisticated and difficult type of the validity (Malhotra & Brik, 2006).

**Reliability:** Joppe (2000) describes “reliability as the extent to which results are consistent over time and an accurate representation of the total population under study is referred to as reliability and if the results of a study can be reproduced under a similar methodology, then the research instrument is considered to be reliable” (p. 1). Reliability of a scale is the extent to which scale provides consistent results if repeated measurement are made (Malhotra & Birk, 2006). According to Kirk and Miller (1986), there are three types of reliability in a quantitative research: (1) the degree to which a measurement, given repeatedly, remains the same (2) the stability of a measurement over time; and (3) the similarity of measurements within a given time period.

Charles (1995) said that consistency with which questionnaire [test] items are answered or individual’s scores remain relatively the same can be determined by the test-retest method at two different times. This attribute of the
instrument is actually referred to as stability. If we are dealing with a stable measure, then the results should be similar. A high degree of stability indicates a high degree of reliability, which means the results are repeatable. Joppe (2000) detected a problem with the test-retest method which can make the instrument, to a certain degree, unreliable. She explained that test-retest method may sensitize the respondent to the subject matter, and hence influence the responses given. We cannot be sure that there was no change in extraneous influences such as an attitude change that has occurred. This could lead to a difference in the responses provided. Similarly, Crocker and Algina (1986) note that when a respondent answer a set of test items, the score obtained represents only a limited sample of behavior. As a result, the scores may change due to some characteristic of the respondent, which may lead to errors of measurement. These kinds of errors will reduce the accuracy and consistency of the instrument and the test scores.

**Validity:** Although the researcher may be able to prove the research instrument repeatability and internal consistency, and, therefore, reliability, the instrument itself may not be valid. The traditional criteria for validity find their roots in a positivist tradition, and to an extent, positivism has been defined by a systematic theory of validity. Within the positivist terminology, validity resided amongst, and was the result and culmination of other empirical conceptions: universal laws, evidence, objectivity, truth, actuality, deduction, reason, fact and mathematical data to name just a few (Winter, 2000). In other words, does the research instrument allow you to hit "the bull's eye" of your research object? Researchers generally determine validity by asking a series of questions, and will often look for the answers in the research of others. The validity of a scale can be explained as the extent to which differences in the observed scale scores reflect the true differences between the objects on the measured characteristic rather than a systematic or random error (Malhotra & Birk, 2006). If there is no measurement error, then the scale is deemed to have perfect validity.
3.14 Data Collection Procedure

This research is quantitative in nature and follows the positivist philosophy and primary research. Besides, the study finds a strong origin in existing literature. By considering the above facts, in this study deductive research approach was chosen. Saunders et al. (2007) say that deductive approach requires the collection of quantitative as well as primary data which ultimately aims at finding the relationship between the variables under study. For the purpose of this study primary data was generated, as already explained above.

3.14.1 Primary Data Source

In this study survey research methodology was adopted and data was collected from students of Jamia Millia Islamia University, Hamdard University, Delhi University (south campus) in Delhi and University of Punjab at Chandigarh, as also, IT professional located at Pune.

3.14.2 Pilot Study and Pre-Testing

Pilot testing is to refine the questionnaire by conducting the small scale study to test a questionnaire, interview checklist or observation schedule to reduce the respondents’ tendency of having problem in completing the survey and also enable to gain some assessments of the questions’ validity and the reliability of the data (Saunders, Lewis & Thornhill, 2007). According to Malhotra (2005), pilot testing is the test of the questionnaire on a small sample of the respondents similar to the actual population to recognize a potential problem. The aim is to ensure that the questions were eliciting the required response, identify ambiguous wording or error before the survey was carried out on a large scale (Malhotra, 2007)

A pilot study was necessary to validate the item as well as scales. Even though the scales used in research were validated scales previously used in the other researchers, but they were being used for the first time in India to the best of researcher’s knowledge.

In the present study, the pilot survey was initially conducted on 30 respondents. Respondents were requested to comment on the general aspect of questionnaire
design besides they were asked to give suggestion if they felt that any of questions had complicated or ambiguous words. Some overlapping and possible double answer questions were omitted from the list after the review process. In the second round, another pilot study was conducted on 30 respondents and further modifications were made based on suggestions given by respondents. The modified questionnaire seemed to be satisfactory from the perspective of respondents for the most of the constructs but for certainty and adequacy of the questionnaire again third pilot study was con 40 respondents and the research instrument was finalized and final data collected procedure was initiated. From the results of reliability tests & some basic data analysis, it was noted that no further changes were required at this stage.

3.15 Main Study

In this stage for data collection, the survey was conducted through a structured questionnaire which contained 16 items in the form of statements and five multiple choice questions. Responses to all the 16 items were measured using five point Likert Scale, ranging from strongly disagree=1, to strongly agree= 5).

3.15.1 Sample Design

Sampling design is a certain plan for determining the sample from a given population. It is related to those techniques and procedures which researcher chooses in selecting items for the sample. Sampling techniques are defined in two categories of probability and non-probability sampling. Probability sampling, random sampling or so-called chance sampling, is the technique that every item of the universe has a fixed probability of getting selected in the sample. Probability sampling is classified into various categories like Simple random sampling, Systematic sampling, Stratified sampling and Cluster sampling. While non-probability sampling is deliberately selected by researcher and is classified into convenience sampling, researcher controlled sampling, quota sampling, judgmental, and snowball sampling. In the present study, owing to absence of a reliable sample frame, nonprobability convenience sampling i.e. chain referral sampling employed. Chain referral sampling is akin to snowball sampling process and is useful in those studies where respondents may not be visible or hare hard to find (Bailey, 2008). This method is designed for
sociological research which allows sampling of natural interactional units. Chain referral sampling method is known as self-contained and self-propelled phenomenon. The reason researchers are using chain referral sampling is due to the problem of social visibility of the target population. Other reason can be due to the social sensitivities surrounding the behavior in question which results in low visibility and serious problem for contacting and locating the respondents (Blumackl & Waldorf, 1981).

3.15.2 Sampling Frame

The sampling frame for this study includes graduate, undergraduate and Ph.D. students of Delhi and Chandigarh who are pursuing MBA, Commerce, Mass Communication and IT professional of Pune. It was decided to collect data from the sample that included 500 offline and 300 online from the mentioned groups who are interested in using social networking sites.

3.15.3 Response Rate

As already discussed, questionnaire was administered on 500 offline and 300 online respondents who were patrons of social networking sites. Since some of the responses received from offline and online responses had some issues such as incomplete responses, legibility or comprehensibility and thus effective response rate was 77% was offline responses and around 31% for online respondents. In all, 478 questionnaires were suitable for further analysis.

3.15.4 The Sample

A total of 800 individuals were approached for the purpose of this study. The respondents were approached following the chain referral procedure suggested by (Bailey, 2008). As already discussed, around 500 subjects were approached offline and they were mainly students enrolled in courses of universities and educational institutions located in New Delhi and Chandigarh; while those contacted in Pune were mainly IT professionals. Thus, the present study is based on analysis of data from 384 offline and 94 online respondents and the final sample comprised 478 respondents. Of
these 298 were students and 94 were working individuals. According to Lindquist, Vida, Plank and Fairhurst (2001) for structural equation modeling, the recommended sample size is 100-200. Data was collected from March 2015 to July 2015.

3.16 Data Editing and Coding

Using SPSS software version 20.0, data was edited by checking and adjusting for errors, omissions, legibility and consistency in order to ensure completeness, consistency, and reliability of the data. Data was coded and edited before it was entered into SPSS. Each item in the questionnaire had a unique variable name. A coding sheet was used to maintain information about how each variable was coded. It comprised a list of study variables in the questionnaire, the abbreviated variable names that were used in SPSS and the way in which the responses were coded. In relation to data input into SPSS, screening and cleaning of data before proceeding to data analysis stage was necessary to make sure that there were no errors at the stage of keying of data. By using descriptive statistics in SPSS such as frequency analysis, the data was screened by checking each variable to see if the score was out of range for this category (checking frequencies), or for continuous variables (checking minimum, maximum, mean and standard deviation). After finding errors, it was necessary to go back to the questionnaires to confirm the data before correcting the error in the data file. Thus, after taking due care, researcher proceeded to the data analysis stage.

3.16.1 Missing Data and Outliers

Data cleaning procedure was performed before proceeding with the analysis. Outliers were detected with the help of box plots (also called box-whisker diagrams) in SPSS. Moreover, the missing values were replaced with the mean values in the database (Field, 2006).

3.16.2 Data Analysis

During initial stages, descriptive statistics like T-test and ANOVA was obtained by using SPSS. Data analysis involved testing the reliability (inter-item consistency)
and validity of the scales (convergent validity). In the next stage, the proposal 
research models were tested by Structural Equation Modelling through using 
AMOS. Statistical techniques which are used in this research were classified into 
four groups. The first set of techniques was used for descriptive purposes, second 
for Exploratory Factor Analysis (EFA), third for Confirmatory Factor Analysis 
(CFA) and fourth, Structural Equation Modelling (SEM) was used to estimate 
interrelated ensure independence relationships (Hair et al., 2006). This technique is 
helpful in generating a model of relationships among variables (Hayduk, 1987). 
Therefore, we began to test reliability and validity of the research instrument.

3.16.3 Factor Analysis

Factor analysis is a procedure used for determining the extent to which 
measurement overlap exists. Its main purpose is to determine if measures for 
different variables are measuring something in common. The mathematical 
procedure essentially takes the variance, as defined by the inter-correlations among 
a set of measures, and tries to allocate it in terms of a smaller number of underlying 
hypothetical variables. These underlying, hypothetical and unobservable variables 
are called factors (Malhotra, 2006). Factor analysis, then, is essentially a procedure 
of reducing variables by determining which variables "cluster" together, and factors 
are the groupings of variables which are measuring some common entity or 
construct. The main set of results obtained from a factor analysis consists of factor 
loadings, which is interpreted as the Pearson correlation coefficient of an original 
variable with a factor. Like correlations, loadings range in value is from -1.00 
(stating perfect negative association with the factor) through 0 to +1.00 (presenting 
perfect positive association). Typically variables will have loadings on all factors 
but usually have high loadings on only one factor (Aron & Aron, 1999).

Results of a factor analysis provide the list of communalities for each variable. 
Communalities indicate the proportion of variability for a given variable that is 
explained by the factors (Agresti & Finlay, 1997) and allows the researcher to 
examine how individual variables reflect the sources of variability. Also, it may be 
interpreted as the squared multiple correlations of the variable as predicted from the
combination of factors, or as the sum of squared loadings across all factors for that variable.

The process by which the factors are determined from a larger set of variables is known as extraction. Though the most commonly used empirical approaches are principal components analysis and factor analysis but several types of factor extraction techniques exist (Stevens, 1992). The term "factor analysis" is commonly used to represent the general process of variable reduction, regardless of the actual method of extraction utilized. In both principal components analysis and factor analysis, linear combinations (the factors) of the original variables are provided, and a small number of these combinations typically account for the majority of the variability within the set of inter-correlations among the original variables.

3.16.4 Exploratory Factor Analysis (EFA)

Exploratory factor analysis (EFA) is used for the situation where there is a link between the observed and latent variables and they are unknown or uncertain. Therefore, the analysis proceeds in an exploratory mode to determine how and to what extent, the observed variables are linked to their underlying factors. The researcher's tendency is to identify the minimal number of factors that underlie co-variation among the observed variables. Following the formulation of questionnaire items are designed to measure all different latent constructs and researcher would conduct an EFA to determine the extent to which the item measurements were related to the latent constructs. These relations are represented by factor loadings in the factor analysis, it is considered to be exploratory in the sense that the researcher has no prior knowledge that the items do, indeed, measure the intended factors (Byrne, 2005).

In the context of factor analysis, KMO measure quantifies the degree of inter-correlations among the variables and the appropriateness of factor analysis. KMO value has to be greater than 0.50 to conduct the factor analysis (Malhotra, 2005).

Another measure is Bartlett’s Test of Sphericity that measures the presence of correlations among the variables. It provides the statistical probability that the correlation matrix has significant correlations among at least some of variables. Therefore, a significant Bartlett’s Test of Sphericity is required (Malhotra, 2005).
Because \( p = 0.000 \) (its associated probability is less than 0.05) for all scales, we could proceed with factor analysis.

### 3.16.5 Confirmatory Factor Analysis (CFA)

When a researcher has some knowledge of the underlying latent variable structure confirmatory factor analysis (CFA) is used. Based on knowledge of the theory, empirical research, or both, the researcher assumes relations between the observed measures and the underlying factors a priori and then tests this hypothesized structure statistically. Then proposed model would be evaluated by statistical means to determine the adequacy of its goodness of fit to the sample data (Byrne, 2005).

While using of CFA measurement modeling in SEM there are also disadvantages and likely to have contributed to the poor application of SEM where there is doubt in believability and replicability of the final model. CFA requires strong measurement science which is often not available in practice. There are many small cross-loading in the measurement of instrument that is well motivated by substantive or the formulation of the measurements. The CFA approach to fix many or all cross-loadings at zero, therefore, force a researcher to specify a more parsimonious model than is suitable for the data. Because of this, models often do not fit the data well and there is a tendency to rely on extensive model modification for finding a well-fitting model. To search well-fitting measurement model is often aided through the use of model modification indices. According to Browne (2001) when there is a situation that we are uncertain about the model, exploratory approaches should be used rather than confirmatory approaches.

Confirmatory factor analysis procedures are often used for exploratory purposes and continuously a confirmatory factor analysis, with pre-specified loadings, is rejected therefore a sequence of modifications of the model is carried out in an attempt to improve fit. Therefore, the procedure becomes exploratory rather than confirmatory. In such situation, use of the exploratory factor analysis with the rotation of factor matrix appears to be suitable.

In summary, then, the factor analytic model (EFA or CFA) focuses merely on how, and the extent to which, the observed variables are linked and generated to their
underlying latent factors and thus strength of the regression paths from the factors to the observed variables (the factor loadings) are the primary interest.

3.16.6 Structural Equation Model (SEM)

Structural equation modeling (SEM) techniques are considered as a major component of applied multivariate statistical analyses. Though these techniques appeared decades ago, but it took a number of years for SEM to receive the actual attention which holds today. One reason for the recent attention is the availability of specialized SEM programs (e.g., AMOS, EQS, LISREL, Mplus, Mx, RAMONA, SEPATH) & the publication of several introductory and advanced texts on SEM (e.g., Hayduk, 1996; Bollen, 1989; Byrne, 2001; Schumacker & Lomax, 1996; Raykov & Marcoulides, 2000). Structural Equation Modelling (SEM) method, also known as covariance structure analysis or latent variable analysis, is an advanced multivariate statistical technique to examine multiple dependence relationships between variables, hypothesis and test a theoretical model simultaneously, it measures errors, and consider both direct, indirect and through other variables as intermediaries that influence of variables on one another. Latent variables are theoretical constructs which unite phenomena under a single term (Bollen, 1989). These structural equations are meant to signify causal relationships among the variables in the model.

Overall, SEM models represent translations of a series of hypothesized cause–effect relationships between variables into composite hypotheses which is concerning the patterns of statistical dependencies (Shipley, 2000). The relationships are described by parameters which indicate the magnitude of the effect (direct or indirect) that independent variables (either observed or latent) have on dependent variables (either observed or latent). By enabling the translation of hypothesized relationships into testable mathematical models, SEM presents researchers a comprehensive method for the quantification and testing of theoretical models. Once a theory has been proposed, then it can be tested against empirical data. The process of testing a proposed theoretical model is commonly referred to as the “confirmatory” aspect of SEM (Raykov & Marcoulides, 2000). Another aspect of SEM is “exploratory” mode. This aspect allows for theory development and often necessitates repeated applications of the same data in order to explore potential relationships between variables of interest.
Latent variables are theoretical or hypothetical constructs which cannot be observed directly. Latent variables are the major importance to the most disciplines but generally there is a lack of precise way of measuring their existence or influence.

SEM can also be used to test the plausibility of hypothetical assertions about potential interrelationships between constructs and their observed measures or indicators. Latent variables are hypothesized to be responsible for its outcome of observed measures. Researchers often use a number of indicators or observed variables study the influences of a theoretical factor or latent variable. It is generally suggested that researchers use multiple indicators (preferably more than two) for each latent variable considered to obtain a more complete and reliable “picture” than that provided by a single indicator (Raykov & Marcoulides, 2000).

- **Principal Components Analysis (PCA):** PCA seeks a linear combination of variables that the maximum variance is extracted from the variables. It then removes this variance and takes a second linear combination that helps to explain the maximum proportion of the remaining variance, and so on which is called the principal axis method and results in orthogonal (uncorrelated) factors. PCA analyzes total (common and unique) variance. When principal components analysis is used for extraction, the resulting linear combinations are often referred to as "components," as opposed to "factors."

- **Principal Factor Analysis (PFA):** which is known as principal axis factoring, PAF, and common factor analysis, CFA is a form of factor analysis which search for the least number of factors which can account for the common variance (correlation) of a set of variables, whereas the more common principal components analysis (PCA) in its full form seeks the set of factors which can account for all the common and unique (specific plus error) variance in a set of variables. PFA uses a PCA strategy but uses it to a correlation matrix in which the diagonal elements are not 1's, as in PCA, but iteratively-derived estimates of the communalities.

- **Other Extraction Methods:** In addition to PCA and PFA, there are other less-used extraction methods, such as image factoring and maximum likelihood factoring, alpha factoring, unweighted least squares factoring, and generalized or weighted least squares factoring.
- **Oblique Rotations** discussed below to allow the factors to be correlated, and so a factor correlation matrix is generated when oblique is required. Normally, however, an orthogonal method like varimax is selected and no factor correlation matrix is produced as the correlation of any factor with another is zero. The original, unrotated principal components solution maximizes the sum of squared factor loadings and creating a set of factors that explain as much of the variance in the original variables as possible. The amount explained is reflected in the sum of the eigenvalues of all factors. However, un-rotated solutions are hard to interpret because of the variables tendency to be loaded on multiple factors.

- **Varimax Rotation** is an orthogonal rotation of the factor axes for maximizing the variance of the squared loadings of a factor (column) on all the variables (rows) in a factor matrix, which has the effect of differentiating the original variables by extracted factor. It minimizes the number of variables which have high loadings on any of given factor. Each factor will have a tendency to have either large or small loadings of particular variables on it. A varimax solution yields results that make it as easy as possible to identify each variable with a single factor which is the most common rotation option.

- **Quartimax Rotation** is an orthogonal alternative that minimizes the number of factors which is required to explain each variable.

- **Equimax Rotation** is a compromise between Varimax and Quartimax criteria.

- **Direct Oblimin Rotation** is the standard method when one wishes a non-orthogonal solution -- that is, one in which the factors are allowed to be correlated and will result in higher eigenvalues but decreased interpretability of the factors.

- **Promax Rotation** is an alternative non-orthogonal rotation method which is computationally faster than the direct oblimin method and it is sometimes used for very large datasets.\(^1\)

In this study, Principal Component Analysis (PCA) was performed to check whether the items of each construct load on a single construct. Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin (KMO) and Bartlett’s Tests were used to determine if the data are likely to
factor well (Malhotra, 2006). KMO measure quantifies the degree of intercorrelations among the variables and the appropriateness of factor analysis. Another measure is Bartlett’s test of sphericity that measures the presence of correlations among the variables. It provides the statistical probability that the correlation matrix has significant correlations among at least some of the variables. Therefore, a significant Bartlett’s test of sphericity is required.

Major applications of structural equation modeling are as follow (Guttman, 1954):

- **Causal modeling**: which is so called path analysis; it hypothesizes causal relationships among variables and tests the causal models with a linear equation system. Causal models can involve either manifest variables, latent variables, or both.

- **Confirmatory factor analysis**: an extension of factor analysis in which specific hypotheses about the structure of the factor loadings and intercorrelations are tested.

- **Second order factor analysis**: a variation of factor analysis in which the correlation matrix of the common factors is itself factor analyzed for providing second order factors.

- **Regression models**: an extension of linear regression analysis in which regression weights may be constrained to be equal to each other or to specify numerical values.

- **Covariance structure models**: which hypothesize that a covariance matrix has a particular form. For instance, you can test the hypotheses that a set of variables all have equal variances with this procedure.

- **Correlation structure models**: which hypothesize that a correlation matrix has a particular form. For example, the hypotheses that the correlation matrix has the structure of a circumplex.
3.17 Limitations of the Study

While designing the study, the researcher has tried to be as methodical and scientific as possible, but yet the present study faced some limitations which are discussed below:

- This study relies on a sample comprising college students and IT professionals from three cities (Delhi, Chandigarh, and Pune) which may not realistically reflect the perception of the total population and especially Indian consumers who are users of social networking sites.
- The sample may not adequately be representative of the whole country as only selected cities were covered.
- The reliance on sample from these cities may give the study an up-market bias.
- Only a few SNSs were used in this research though there are more social networks.
- Physical, time and financial constraints of the individual researcher definitely created certain difficulties for research of this type.
- In this research consumer engagement was considered as an overall concept though studying about the specific brand or product would make it more interesting.
- In this research only some of the social relationship and consumer engagement factors were studied though there can be some other factors related to SNSs users and other aspects are also a concern which can affect consumer engagement and e-WOM through SNSs.
- Time constraint i.e. temporal scope of period ranging from 2013 to 2016 is itself a limitation. Yet researcher gathered latest data of the periods to use it wherever relevant and possible.
- Chain referral sampling procedure may limit the generalizability of findings.
- The sample may not adequately representative as all occupational groups have not been covered.
- Study results pertain to specific sample, location, and time horizon and thus may not be generalizable.
The study does not cover specific products/categories.

Despite these limitations, the researcher tried her level best for in-depth study and rational analysis of the sample, so that proper conclusion can be drawn.

**Summary**

This chapter presents the methodology followed in this research including steps involved in information gathering, the instrument development, pre-tests, pilot study, data collection and data analysis process. The research instrument was pre-tested thrice and the pilot study was conducted in India. In the data analysis section, the statistical techniques used in data analysis were examined for their purpose and benefits of users in this study. The results of the data analysis via these statistical techniques are discussed in the next chapter.
Chapter 4: Data Analysis

4.1 Introduction

The research methodology chapter discusses the methodology and methods which have to be used for this research. The current chapter also provides the theoretical framework of the model proposed for this study. This chapter also discusses the demographic variables and the outcome of the analyses.

4.2 Measurement Model

The measurement model is part of the model which examines the relationship between the latent variables and their measures. For testing the measurement model it is required to saturate the structural model by allowing each latent to correlate. Overall the variables of interest are often unobservable (latent) variables and they are modeled by specifying a measurement model as well as a structural model. In measurement model, the relationship between the observed indicators and the latent variables specifies while in the structural equation model, the relationship between the latent variables specifies.

It is very common to refine the measurement model before the model gets fitted to the data. Therefore, the reliability and validity of the indicators of the latent variables are assessed before fitting of the measurement to the data and sometimes modification indices are used to refine the measurement model.
4.3 Structural Model

In general structural equation modeling (SEM) is chiefly linear, cross-sectional statistical modeling technique. Factor analysis, path analysis, and regression all represent special cases of SEM. It is a largely confirmatory, rather than exploratory
technique. Researchers are using SEM to determine whether a certain model is valid, rather than using SEM for finding a suitable model. SEM usually concentrates on latent constructs, abstract psychological variables rather than on the manifest variables. It is recognized as difficult and errors prone. Also, SEM allows a single latent construct to be associated with multiple measures. (“What is Structural Equation Modeling (SEM),” n.d.)

When the structural model was tested, the results showed that, out of four hypotheses, two were statistically significant in the expected direction (p<0.05) while two were not.

Specifically, the relationship between awareness and satisfaction appeared to have significant relationship (p=0.000). Also, satisfaction and loyalty appeared to have significant and positive relationship (p=0.000). A non-significant relationship was found between trust and satisfaction (p= 0.160) and tie strength and satisfaction (p=0.837). Therefore these results show that H1, awareness appeared to have a positive, significant impact on satisfaction. Thus, H2 and H3 are rejected. As it is predicted H4 satisfaction was found to have a significant, positive effect on loyalty.

1 http://www2.gsu.edu/~mkteer/sem.html
Figure 4.2: Structural Model

(Source: Prepared by the Researcher)
The measurement model for ten constructs was assessed using confirmatory factor analysis (CFA) (Anderson & Gerbing, 1988). Figure 4.1 presents factor loadings of observed variables used in the measurement model.

All factor loadings exceeded 0.5 and for four items which are respectively related to loyalty, trust and tie strength, it was approximately 0.5. In this procedure five constructs were deleted since they had loadings less than 0.5, indicating that the items are strong measures of their associated constructs.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Fit Index</th>
<th>Recommended Values*</th>
<th>Observed Values</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Chi-square/df</td>
<td>&lt; 3.0</td>
<td>2.586</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>GFI</td>
<td>0.90</td>
<td>0.937</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>AGFI</td>
<td>0.90</td>
<td>0.909</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CFI</td>
<td>0.90</td>
<td>0.908</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>RMSEA</td>
<td>&lt; 0.70</td>
<td>0.058</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*(Hu and Bentler, 1999; Hooper, Coughlan, Mullen, 2008; Hair Black, Babin, & Anderson, 2010; Malhotra and Dash, 2011)*

(Source: Prepared by the researcher)

The chi-square/df (2.586) which is below the cut-off of 3.0 and other fit indices include the goodness-of-fit index (GFI = 0.93) and comparative fit index (CFI = 0.90). They were very close or exceeding the recommended cut-off level of 0.9 (Bagozzi & Yi, 1988). The adjusted goodness-of-fit index (AGFI = 0.90). The root mean square error of approximation (RMSEA = 0.058) is well below the cut-off level of 0.70. The combination of these results suggested that the measurement model exhibited a good level of model fit. For the purpose of data analysis, the Structured Equation Modeling (SEM) method has been adopted. SEM is a multivariate technique used to estimate a series of interrelated dependent relationships simultaneously (Hair, Anderson, Tatham, & Black, 1998).
Basically, a structural equation model consists of two models: a measurement model and a structural model. The measurement model represents the instrument used (observed variables or items) to measure the latent variables which are the conceptual model constructs shown in Figure 4.1. The measurement model will be examined first for instrument validation, followed by an analysis of the structural model for testing relationships hypothesized in the research conceptual model depicted in Figure 4.1.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Fit Index</th>
<th>Observed Values</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Chi-square/df</td>
<td>2.738</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>GFI</td>
<td>0.932</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>AGFI</td>
<td>0.905</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CFI</td>
<td>0.896</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>RMSEA</td>
<td>0.060</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

(Source: Prepared by the researcher)

The Chi-Square value is the traditional measure to evaluate overall model fit and, ‘assesses the magnitude of discrepancy between the sample and fitted covariances matrices’ (Hu & Bentler, 1999). A good model fit would give an insignificant result at a 0.05 threshold (Barrett, 2007). Therefore, the Chi-Square statistic is often referred to as either a ‘badness of fit’ (Kline, 2005) or a ‘lack of fit’ (Mulaik, James, Van Alstine, Bennet, Lind, & Stilwell, 1989) measure.

Root mean square error of approximation (RMSEA) was first developed by Steiger and Lind (1980, cited in Steiger, 1990). Its importance has grown over the years and is regarded as ‘one of the most informative fit indices’ (Diamantopoulos and Siguaw, 2000) because of its sensitivity to the number of estimated parameters in the model. In other words, the RMSEA favors parsimony in that it will choose the model with the lesser number of parameters. Recommendations for RMSEA cut-off points have been reduced considerably in the last fifteen years till the early nineties, an RMSEA in the range of 0.05 to 0.10 was considered an indication of fair fit and values above 0.10 indicated poor fit (MacCallum, Browne & Sugawara, 1996). Then it was thought that an RMSEA of
between 0.08 to 0.10 provides a mediocre fit and below 0.08 shows a good fit (MacCallum *et al.*, 1996). Though, more recently, a cut-off value close to .06 (Hu and Bentler, 1999) or a stringent upper limit of 0.07 (Steiger, 2007) seems to be the general consensus amongst authorities in this area.

*CFI* is the Comparative Fit Index (Bentler, 1990) and it is a revised form of the NFI which takes into account sample size (Byrne, 1998) which performs well even when the sample size is small (Tabachnick and Fidell, 2007). A cut-off criterion of $\text{CFI} \geq 0.90$ was initially advanced however, recent studies have shown that a value greater than 0.90 is required to ensure that misspecified models are not accepted (Hu and Bentler, 1999).

From this, a value of $\text{CFI} \geq 0.95$ is presently recognized as indicative of good fit (Hu and Bentler, 1999). Today, this index is included in all SEM programs and is one of the most popularly reported fit indices and this is the measures which is least affected by sample size (Fan, Thompson & Wang, 1999).

*Goodness-of-fit statistic (GFI)* and the *adjusted goodness-of-fit statistic (AGFI)* was created by Jöreskog and Sorbom (1993) as an alternative to the Chi-Square test and calculates the proportion of variance that is considered for the estimated population covariance (Tabachnick and Fidell, 2007). By looking at the variances and covariances accounted for by the model, we can determine how closely the model comes to replicating the observed covariance matrix (Diamantopoulos and Siguaw, 2000). This statistic ranges from 0 to 1 with larger samples increasing its value while there are a large number of degrees of freedom (df) in comparison to sample size, the GFI has a downward bias (Sharma, Mukherjee, Kumar & Dillon, 2005). Moreover, it has also been found that the GFI increases while the number of parameters is increasing (MacCallum and Hong, 1997) and also it has an upward bias with large samples (Bollen, 1990; Miles and Shevlin, 1998). Traditionally a cut-off point of 0.90 has been suggested for the GFI but simulation studies have shown that when factor loadings and sample sizes are low a higher cut-off of 0.95 is more appropriate (Miles and Shevlin, 1998). Related to the GFI is the AGFI which adjusts the GFI based upon (df), with more saturated models reducing
fit (Tabachnick & Fidell, 2007). Thus, more parsimonious models are preferred while penalized for complicated models. In addition to this, AGFI tendency is to increase with sample size. As with the GFI, values for the AGFI also range between 0 and 1 and it is generally accepted that values of 0.90 or greater indicate well-fitting models. Given the often detrimental effect of sample size on these two fit indices, they are not relied on as a stand-alone index, though given their historical importance they are usually reported in covariance structure analyses.

**Table 4.3: Standardized Regression Weights (CFA)**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Constructs</th>
<th>Estimate</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>AW_3_1</td>
<td>➔ Awareness</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>AW_2_1</td>
<td>➔ Awareness</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>AW_1_1</td>
<td>➔ Awareness</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SAT_5_1</td>
<td>➔ Satisfaction</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SAT_3_1</td>
<td>➔ Satisfaction</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SAT_2_1</td>
<td>➔ Satisfaction</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SAT_1_1</td>
<td>➔ Satisfaction</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>L_3_1</td>
<td>➔ Loyalty</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>L_2_1</td>
<td>➔ Loyalty</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>L_1_1</td>
<td>➔ Loyalty</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>T_3_1</td>
<td>➔ Trust</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>T_2_1</td>
<td>➔ Trust</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>T_1_1</td>
<td>➔ Trust</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TS_3_1</td>
<td>➔ Tie Strength</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TS_2_1</td>
<td>➔ Tie Strength</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TS_1_1</td>
<td>➔ Tie Strength</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Table 4.4: Standardized Regression Weights (Structural Model)**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Constructs</th>
<th>Estimates</th>
<th>p- value</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Satisfaction ➔ Awareness</td>
<td>0.540</td>
<td>.000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Satisfaction ➔ Trust</td>
<td>0.323</td>
<td>.160</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Satisfaction ➔ Tie Strength</td>
<td>0.054</td>
<td>.837</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Loyalty ➔ Satisfaction</td>
<td>0.747</td>
<td>.000</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

(Source: Prepared by the researcher)
4.3.1 Analysis and Findings

To understand interrelationships between the constructs considered in the present study, the proposed model was tested using Structural Equation Modeling which is a two-step model-building approach that involves testing the measurement model followed by testing of hypothesized linkages through the structural model (Hair et al, 2010).

4.3.2 Measurement Model (Confirmatory Factor Analysis)

All items loaded significantly on their corresponding factors and had loadings in the acceptable range (Figure 4.1 and Table 4.1, Table 4.3). The accepted and observed values for the fit indices are discussed in Table 4.1. The Chi-square value was 243.092 with 94 degrees of freedom (df) (p<0.05). The other fit indices were within the acceptable limits (Table 4.1).

4.3.3 Structural Model for the Study

The results of proposed structural model are shown in Figure 4.2 and Table 4.2. Table 4.4 shows the results for the four hypothesized relationships; two relationships (Awareness → Satisfaction & Satisfaction → Loyalty) were statistically significant in the expected direction (p<0.01) while the other two relationships (Trust → Satisfaction & Tie Strength → Satisfaction) were not found to be significant. Hence, out of the four hypotheses, two were supported and two were not supported (Table 4.5). The goodness-of-fit indices suggest that the proposed model fits the data well.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Hypotheses</th>
<th>Variables</th>
<th>Results</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>H1</td>
<td>The level of awareness in users of SNSs has a positive and significant effect on consumer satisfaction resulting in CE through positive eWOM.</td>
<td>Awareness → Satisfaction</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>H2</td>
<td>The level of trust in users of SNSs has a positive and significant effect on consumer satisfaction resulting in CE through positive eWOM.</td>
<td>Trust → Satisfaction</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>H3</td>
<td>The nature of tie strength in users of SNSs</td>
<td>Tie strength → Satisfaction</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Authors</td>
<td>Variables</td>
<td>Area</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>---------</td>
<td>-----------</td>
<td>------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Subramanian (2012)</td>
<td>Sat &amp; Awr</td>
<td>Cardholder of bank</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hashim &amp; Hassan (2013)</td>
<td></td>
<td>Social Networking</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Walter, Mueller &amp; Helfert (2000).</td>
<td></td>
<td>Impact of satisfaction, trust &amp; relationship value on commitment</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Carlos, Guinaliu &amp; Gurrea (2006)</td>
<td>Sat &amp; Trt</td>
<td>Consumer trust on website</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Shinu &amp; Chau (2015)</td>
<td></td>
<td>online group</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Author(s)</td>
<td>Context</td>
<td>Source</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>--------------------</td>
<td>--------------</td>
<td>--------------------------------------------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Han &amp; Hyun (2015)</td>
<td>Tourism</td>
<td>Satisfaction and trust are significant mediators.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chew &amp; Wirtz (2001)</td>
<td>Word of Mouth</td>
<td>“Satisfaction and tie strength had a significant</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>impact on the favorability of WOM generated”.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Petrick &amp; Backman</td>
<td>Sat &amp; Tie</td>
<td>Tourism industry</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(2002)</td>
<td></td>
<td>Consumers with higher levels of loyalty have</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>increased satisfaction.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Su, Lin &amp; Chang</td>
<td>Word of Mouth</td>
<td>Tie strength has a moderating effect on</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(2013)</td>
<td></td>
<td>satisfaction and WOM.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>website</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Luam &amp; Lin (2003)</td>
<td>E-service</td>
<td>Satisfaction has a stronger impact on loyalty</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>then trust in an e-service environment.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Eid (2011)</td>
<td>E-commerce</td>
<td>E-commerce customer satisfaction was found to</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>significantly influence customer loyalty.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Suh &amp; Yi (2006)</td>
<td>Brand</td>
<td>Consumer satisfaction has a direct as well as an</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>indirect impact on loyalty.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(Hong &amp; Yang, 2009)</td>
<td>Word of Mouth</td>
<td>High satisfaction can enhance customer loyalty</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>behavior and lead to positive word of mouth</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>(PWOM) or recommendations.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chen &amp; Cheng (2012)</td>
<td>Mobile phone &amp; service loyalty</td>
<td>Satisfaction has a positive relation on loyalty.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

(Source: Prepared by the researcher)

4.4 Demographic Analysis

Demographics are objective identifiers of consumers which contain traits or characteristics like; age, sex, income and educational levels. Such information is required for developing the product or service of the companies. Though companies only require knowing a few demographics information about consumers (Edmunds, n.d.).² Demographic variables hold important clues to consumer behavior. Consumers with common demographic profile usually exhibit the same purchasing behavior. Therefore, demographic analysis is an important component of marketing. Usually, it has been used

when there is a lack of knowledge about the market or when the market is changing (Sarkissian, 2015).

| Table 4.7: Demographic Characteristics of Respondents |
|-----------------|-----------------|-----------------|
| Variable        | Response  N(478) | (%)             |
| Gender          | Male           | 292             | 61.1            |
|                 | Female         | 186             | 38.9            |
| Age             | < 25           | 317             | 66.3            |
|                 | 26-35          | 148             | 31.0            |
|                 | >36            | 13              | 2.7             |
| Education       | Under Graduate | 171             | 35.8            |
|                 | Post Graduate  | 264             | 55.2            |
|                 | PhD            | 43              | 9.0             |
| Occupation      | Student        | 297             | 62.1            |
|                 | Working        | 93              | 19.5            |
|                 | IT             | 88              | 18.4            |
| Income (per month) | < 50,000     | 132             | 27.6            |
|                 | 51,000 - 1 Lakh| 132             | 27.6            |
|                 | >1 Lakh        | 214             | 44.8            |

The demographic profile presented in Table 4.7 shows that the majority of the respondents are males while 38.9% were females. Also, it was observed that the majority of the respondents were in the age groups of below 25, whom we can say, they are potential consumers, as it is easier for them to adopt the new technologies on account of being more curious and active compared to the other age groups. Besides these age group are not risk averse and experiment with new experience in contrast to the other age groups. In terms of the education, as it is mentioned in the Table, 55.2% were PG students while 35.8 were UG students and roughly 9% were Ph.D. level researchers. The majority of the respondents were students (62.1%), followed by working (19.5%) and those from IT sector (18.4%). Respondents with family income of above 1 lakh per month (44.8%) were in majority, while those with family income with below 50K and 51 k to 1 lakh per month were each 27.6%.

---

4.5 T-test and One Way ANOVA

The t-Test shows whether the means of two groups are statistically different from each other. This analysis is appropriate whenever one wants to compare the means of two groups. The t-test and one-way Analysis of Variance (ANOVA) are mathematically equivalent and would yield identical results (Trochim, 2006).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>S.No</th>
<th>Constructs</th>
<th>Gender</th>
<th>Sig</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1.</td>
<td>Tie Strength</td>
<td>Male 3.45</td>
<td>Female 3.35</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.</td>
<td>Trust</td>
<td>Male 3.30</td>
<td>Female 3.15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.</td>
<td>Awareness</td>
<td>Male 3.61</td>
<td>Female 3.48</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.</td>
<td>Satisfaction</td>
<td>Male 2.95</td>
<td>Female 2.90</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5.</td>
<td>Loyalty</td>
<td>Male 2.95</td>
<td>Female 2.90</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

One way ANOVA is a single independent categorical variable that interest lies in testing the null hypothesis where the category means are equal in the population. The total variation in the dependent variable may be decomposed into two components: variation related to the independent variable and variation related to error (Malhotra & Birks, 2006). A t-test was used if there is a significant difference between male and female respondents with regards to various constructs.

Table 4.8 demonstrates sample distribution by gender and the results of various hypotheses considered are presented below:

**H\textsubscript{TSG}: Significant differences do not exist between the two genders on the construct tie strength.**

From Table 4.8 it is clear that significant differences do not exist between the two genders on the model construct tie strength (sig=0.05). Hence, \( H_{TSG} \) is supported.
**H\textsubscript{TG}: Significant differences do not exist between the two genders on the construct trust.**

The mean score for males is 3.30 and the mean score for females is 3.15. T-test results show there is a significant difference as far as the construct trust is concerned in females test to compare to males (sig<0.05) and \( H\textsubscript{TG} \) is not supported.

**H\textsubscript{AG}: Significant differences do not exist between the two genders on the construct Awareness.**

T-test results show that there is a significant difference between males and females respondents vis-à-vis awareness, with the mean score for males being 3.61 and that for females being 3.48. Therefore, \( H\textsubscript{AG} \) is not supported (sig<0.05)

**H\textsubscript{SG}: Significant differences do not exist between the two genders on the construct satisfaction.**

Significant differences do not exist between the users of SNSs in terms of gender on the construct satisfaction (sig>0.05). Therefore, \( H\textsubscript{SG} \) is supported.

**H\textsubscript{LG}: Significant differences do not exist between the two genders on the construct loyalty.**

Significant differences do not exist between the two genders in terms of loyalty. The mean score of males was 2.95 while for females it was 2.90. Thus, \( H\textsubscript{LG} \) was supported (sig>0.05).
Table 4.9: ANOVA Results for Various Model Constructs (Age)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>S.No</th>
<th>Constructs</th>
<th>Age Range (in years)</th>
<th>Sig</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>&lt;25</td>
<td>26-35</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1.</td>
<td>Tie Strength</td>
<td>3.370</td>
<td>3.50</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.</td>
<td>Trust</td>
<td>3.160</td>
<td>3.439</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.</td>
<td>Awareness</td>
<td>3.557</td>
<td>3.595</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.</td>
<td>Satisfaction</td>
<td>3.217</td>
<td>3.326</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5.</td>
<td>Loyalty</td>
<td>2.950</td>
<td>2.925</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

One way ANOVA results are summarized in Table 4.9 which demonstrates sample distribution by age and results of hypotheses testing are given below:

**H_{TSA}:** Significant differences do not exist among the respondents belonging to various age groups on the construct *tie strength*.

Significant differences do not exist between users of SNSs in terms on age groups for *Tie strength* (sig>0.05). Thus, *H_{TSA}* is supported.

**H_{TA}:** Significant differences do not exist among the respondents belonging to various age groups on the construct *trust*.

Statistically significant differences were observed between age group 26-35 and the other two groups as far as *trust* is concerned (sig<0.05). Hence, *H_{TA}* was not supported.

**H_{AA}:** Significant differences do not exist among the respondents belonging to various age groups on the construct *awareness*.

Significant differences were not observed in the users of SNSs in terms of age group for *Awareness* (sig>0.05). Thus, *H_{AA}* was supported.

**H_{SA}:** Significant differences do not exist among the respondents belonging to various age groups on the construct *satisfaction*.

Significant were not observed in SNS users between those belonging to various age as far as the construct *satisfaction* was concerned (sig>0.05). Thus, *H_{SA}* was supported.
**H₁ₐ:** Significant differences do not exist among the respondents belonging to various age groups on the construct *loyalty*.

Significant differences do not exist in SNS users of different age groups on *loyalty* (sig>0.05) and thus $H_{₁ₐ}$ is supported.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>S. No</th>
<th>Constructs</th>
<th>Level of Education</th>
<th>Sig</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>UG</td>
<td>PG</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1.</td>
<td>Tie Strength</td>
<td>3.257</td>
<td>3.494</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.</td>
<td>Trust</td>
<td>3.100</td>
<td>3.323</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.</td>
<td>Awareness</td>
<td>3.473</td>
<td>3.615</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.</td>
<td>Satisfaction</td>
<td>3.159</td>
<td>3.280</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5.</td>
<td>Loyalty</td>
<td>2.734</td>
<td>3.083</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 4.10 demonstrates sample distribution by the level of education and results are as below:

**H₄ₜₑ:** Significant differences do not exist among the respondents belonging to various levels of education on the construct *tie strength*.

Significant differences were observed between SNS users belonging to different educational profiles on *tie strength*. Therefore, $H_{₄ₜₑ}$ was not supported (sig<0.05).

**H₄ₜₑ:** Significant differences do not exist among the respondents belonging to various levels of education on the construct *trust*.

The mean score for UG is 3.100, for PG is 3.323 and for Ph.D. is 3.388. Significant differences were observed as far as *trust* was concerned at the level of Ph.D. compared to UG and PG (sig<0.05). Hence, $H_{₄ₜₑ}$ was not supported.
\textbf{H}_{AE}: Significant differences do not exist among the respondents belonging to various levels of education on the construct awareness.

Significant differences were not observed between the SNS users based on education level as far as \emph{awareness} is concerned (sig $>0.05$). Therefore, \textit{H}_{AE} was supported.

\textbf{H}_{SE}: Significant differences do not exist among the respondents belonging to various levels of education on the construct \textit{satisfaction}.

From the Table it is clear that significant differences were observed between the SNS users in terms of education level for \textit{satisfaction} (sig $>0.05$). Therefore, \textit{H}_{SE} was supported.

\textbf{H}_{LE}: Significant differences do not exist among the respondents belonging to various levels of education on the construct \textit{loyalty}.

Statistically significant differences were observed between SNS users in terms of education level as far as \textit{loyalty} is concerned (Sig $<0.05$). Hence, \textit{H}_{LE} was not supported.

The Table 4.11 demonstrates sample distribution by income and results of hypotheses testing are also presented:

\textbf{Table 4.11: ANOVA Results for Various Model Constructs (Income)}

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>S.No</th>
<th>Constructs</th>
<th>Income Range (in Rupees)</th>
<th>Sig</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>&lt;50 Lakh</td>
<td>51-1 Lakh</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1.</td>
<td>Tie Strength</td>
<td>3.399</td>
<td>3.498</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.</td>
<td>Trust</td>
<td>3.195</td>
<td>3.320</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.</td>
<td>Awareness</td>
<td>3.512</td>
<td>3.591</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.</td>
<td>Satisfaction</td>
<td>3.193</td>
<td>3.351</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5.</td>
<td>Loyalty</td>
<td>2.909</td>
<td>3.020</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
**H_{TSI}:** Significant differences do not exist among the respondents belonging to various income levels on the construct tie strength.

Significant differences were not found to exist in term of income levels of SNSs users as far as tie strength is concerned (sig>0.05). Therefore, \( H_{TSI} \) was supported.

**H_{TI}:** Significant differences do not exist among the respondents belonging to various income levels on the construct trust.

Significant differences were not found to exist in terms of income levels of SNSs users as far as trust is concerned (sig>0.05). Therefore, \( H_{TI} \) was supported.

**H_{AI}:** Significant differences do not exist among the respondents belonging to various income levels on the construct awareness.

Significant differences were not observed in terms of income levels of SNSs users as far as awareness is concerned (sig>0.05). Therefore, \( H_{AI} \) was supported.

**H_{SI}:** Significant differences do not exist among the respondents belonging to various income levels on the construct satisfaction.

Significant difference was not found to exist in terms of income levels of SNSs users as far as satisfaction is concerned (sig>0.05). Therefore, \( H_{SI} \) was supported.

**H_{LI}:** Significant differences do not exist among the respondents belonging to various income levels on the construct loyalty.

Significant differences were not observed in terms of income levels of SNS users as far as loyalty is concerned (sig>0.05). Therefore, \( H_{LI} \) was supported.
The Table 4.12 demonstrates sample distribution by occupation and results of hypotheses testing are presented below.

**Table 4.12: ANOVA Results for Various Models Constructs (Occupation)**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>S.No</th>
<th>Constructs</th>
<th>Student</th>
<th>Working (Non-IT)</th>
<th>Working (IT)</th>
<th>Sig</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1.</td>
<td>Tie Strength</td>
<td>3.360</td>
<td>3.552</td>
<td>3.458</td>
<td>0.059</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.</td>
<td>Trust</td>
<td>3.169</td>
<td>3.358</td>
<td>3.402</td>
<td>0.007</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.</td>
<td>Awareness</td>
<td>3.559</td>
<td>3.607</td>
<td>3.526</td>
<td>0.724</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.</td>
<td>Satisfaction</td>
<td>3.232</td>
<td>3.306</td>
<td>3.237</td>
<td>0.642</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5.</td>
<td>Loyalty</td>
<td>2.928</td>
<td>2.953</td>
<td>2.924</td>
<td>0.959</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**H\text{TSO}: Significant differences do not exist among the respondents belonging to various occupational groups on the construct tie strength.**

Significant differences were not observed in terms of occupation of SNSs users as far as *tie strength* is concerned (sig>0.05) and hence $H_{TSO}$ was supported.

**H\text{TO}: Significant differences do not exist among the respondents belonging to various occupational groups on the construct trust.**

Significant differences were noticed in terms of the occupation of SNS users as far as *trust* is concerned (sig<0.05). The mean score for student was 3.169, for (non-IT) was 3.358 and for IT professional was 3.402. Thus, $H_{TO}$ was not supported.

**H\text{AO}: Significant differences do not exist among the respondents belonging to various occupational groups on the construct awareness.**

Significant differences were not observed in terms of occupation of SNS users as far as *awareness* is concerned. Therefore, $H_{AO}$ was supported.

**H\text{SO}: Significant differences do not exist among the respondents belonging to various occupational groups on the construct satisfaction.**
Significant differences were not observed in terms of the occupation of SNS users as far as satisfaction is concerned. Therefore, $H_{so}$ was found to be supported.

**H$_{lo}$:** Significant differences do not exist among the respondents belonging to various occupational groups on the construct loyalty.

Significant differences were not observed in terms of occupation of SNS users as far as loyalty is concerned. Therefore, $H_{lo}$ was supported.

The demographic analysis used in this study is to the understanding of the age, sex, occupation, level of education and income of a population and it helps to know how it will change over time. Many of the studies considered the demographic characteristics of online customers. For example, (Verchopoulos, Siomkos, & Doukidis, 2001) found the adopters of internet shopping in Greece have been a generally young male who are highly educated with high income. In Hong Kong, Sin and Tse (2002) found a similar demographic profile in addition to being more time conscious, self-confident and heavier user of the internet. Also, Muhmin and Al-abdali (2004) found that adoption of B2C commerce is more among older, highly educated, high-income users.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Hypothesis</th>
<th>Demographic Variables</th>
<th>Constructs</th>
<th>Rejected/ Non-rejected</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>$H_{TSC}$</td>
<td></td>
<td>Tie Strength</td>
<td>NR</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>$H_{TG}$</td>
<td></td>
<td>Trust</td>
<td>R</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>$H_{AG}$</td>
<td>Gender</td>
<td>Awareness</td>
<td>R</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>$H_{SC}$</td>
<td></td>
<td>Satisfaction</td>
<td>NR</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>$H_{LG}$</td>
<td></td>
<td>Loyalty</td>
<td>NR</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>$H_{TSA}$</td>
<td></td>
<td>Tie Strength</td>
<td>NR</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>$H_{TA}$</td>
<td></td>
<td>Trust</td>
<td>R</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>$H_{AA}$</td>
<td>Age</td>
<td>Awareness</td>
<td>NR</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>$H_{SA}$</td>
<td></td>
<td>Satisfaction</td>
<td>NR</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>$H_{LA}$</td>
<td></td>
<td>Loyalty</td>
<td>NR</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>$H_{TSE}$</td>
<td></td>
<td>Tie Strength</td>
<td>R</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>$H_{TE}$</td>
<td></td>
<td>Trust</td>
<td>R</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>$H_{AE}$</td>
<td>Education</td>
<td>Awareness</td>
<td>NR</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>HE</td>
<td>SE</td>
<td>Satisfaction</td>
<td>NR</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>----</td>
<td>----</td>
<td>--------------</td>
<td>----</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>LE</td>
<td></td>
<td>Loyalty</td>
<td>R</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>HTSI</td>
<td></td>
<td>Tie Strength</td>
<td>NR</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>HII</td>
<td></td>
<td>Trust</td>
<td>NR</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>HAI</td>
<td></td>
<td>Income</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>HSI</td>
<td></td>
<td>Awareness</td>
<td>NR</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>HLI</td>
<td></td>
<td>Satisfaction</td>
<td>NR</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>HISO</td>
<td></td>
<td>Loyalty</td>
<td>NR</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>HTO</td>
<td></td>
<td>Tie Strength</td>
<td>NR</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>HAO</td>
<td></td>
<td>Trust</td>
<td>R</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>HSO</td>
<td></td>
<td>Occupation</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>HLO</td>
<td></td>
<td>Awareness</td>
<td>NR</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Satisfaction</td>
<td>NR</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Loyalty</td>
<td>NR</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Source:** Prepared by the researcher; **Key:** R = Rejected, NR = Non Rejected

### 4.6 Reliability and Validity

Reliability is the consistency of the research results, which are judged by different observers or by the same observer on different occasions (Hammersley, 1992). Reliability evidence most often is described as a correlation coefficient. It is also defined as the ratio of the variation of the true and variation of the observed score. According to Davis and Bremner (2006), for justifying the reliability, the researcher can replicate the same research to check whether the same outcomes are obtained on the subsequent occasions. As reliability is correlated to consistency, validity is related to the truth (Silverman, 2000), to give the accurate account to the social phenomena (Hammersley, 1992) and having the reliable research results is not always attributed to valid outcomes (Davis & Bremner, 2006).

**Reliability:** As pointed by Cronbach (1951) and Nunally (1978) to measure the variables should check the validity and reliability for draw valid inferences from the research. Reliability shows how consistently similar measure provide similar results (Rosenthal & Rosnow, 1984) which have two dimensions of repeatability and internal consistency. Internal consistency is the ability of a scale item to correlate with other items in the scale that they are set to measure the same construct. A common way to measure the internal consistency of a measurement instrument is Cronbach’s alpha which was determined for each factor identified by review of literature and experts opinion and there is no consensus over its acceptable threshold value regarding the appropriate internal
consistency of the scales item. Cronbach’s alpha value of 0.5 and above was suggested by some of the researchers (Schuessler, 1971), Bowling (2002) recommended 0.6 and above as a satisfactory Cronbach’s alpha value. However, Cronbach (1951), Nunnally (1978), Leedy (1997), Howitt and Cramer (2003) and Hair et al. (2010) agreed that Cronbach’s alpha Values greater than 0.7 is supposed to be reliable.

Validity: researcher may be able to prove the research instrument repeatability and internal consistency and then reliability but the instrument itself may not be valid. In traditional criteria for validity find their roots in positivist tradition and it has been defined by the systematic theory of validity. It determines whether the research truly measures which was intended to be measured and how accurate the research results are (Joppe, 2000).

4.6.1 Scale Refinement and Validation

It is hard to standardize the measurement scales without reliability and validity and we are not able to know whether the scales actually measure what they are supposed to measure.

The validity of a scale takes three forms, content, criterion and construct validity. Face validity is used by simply checking the appearance of the scale to measure what it intends to (McDaniel & Gates, 2011). In terms of content validity, an exhaustive review of literature resulted in the set of variables that supposed to affect the dependent variable. Accordingly, the independent and dependent variables were chosen to ensure the content validity (face validity). Construct validity was established by using constructs from already established valid and the reliable scales. Though based on feedback provided by the experts, minor changes were made. The initial questionnaire was circulated to students, IT professionals and non-IT professionals and data were collected. At the next stage collected data was subjected to reliability analysis (Cronbach Alpha) and those constructs which did not show good reliability were discussed with experts and based on their opinion, the items were modified. And this procedure was repeated till a satisfactory reliable and valid questionnaire was developed.
### Table 4.14: Summary of Reliability Analysis and Factor Loading for Retained Scale Items

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Measurement Items</th>
<th>Abb</th>
<th>No. of Items</th>
<th>Inter-Item Correlation</th>
<th>Item-Total Correlation</th>
<th>$\alpha$</th>
<th>KMO</th>
<th>TVE%</th>
<th>Standardized Factor Loadings</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Awareness</td>
<td>AW</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>0.314- 0.337</td>
<td>0.328- 0.346- 0.416</td>
<td>0.552</td>
<td>0.609</td>
<td>52.82%</td>
<td>0.688- 0.711</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Satisfaction</td>
<td>Sat</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>0.315- 0.475</td>
<td>0.518- 0.531- 0.569- 0.414</td>
<td>0.719</td>
<td>0.751</td>
<td>54.48%</td>
<td>0.644- 0.761</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Loyalty</td>
<td>L</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>0.252- 0.469</td>
<td>0.288- 0.453- 0.463</td>
<td>0.590</td>
<td>0.592</td>
<td>55.15%</td>
<td>0.605- 0.800</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Trust</td>
<td>T</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>0.316- 0.362</td>
<td>0.316- 0.347- 0.435</td>
<td>0.550</td>
<td>0.604</td>
<td>53.32%</td>
<td>0.676- 0.720</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tie Strength</td>
<td>TS</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>0.218- 0.309</td>
<td>0.295- 0.324- 0.366</td>
<td>0.510</td>
<td>0.606</td>
<td>50.96%</td>
<td>0.671- 0.753</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

(Source: Prepared by the researcher)

**Key:**
- $\alpha$: Cronbach’s Alpha
- KMO: Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin Measure of Sampling Adequacy
- TVE: Total Variance Explained (Calculated dimension-wise)

**Note:** Extraction method: Principal component Analysis; Rotation Method: Varimax with Kaiser Normalization;
According to the findings of this study, it was observed that 90% of respondents had been using Facebook for more than two years. In fact, Facebook emerged as the most popular SNS among the respondents of this study followed by WhatsApp (82.2%). It is interesting to note that in the stricter sense, WhatsApp is a communication application, however while conducting the pilot study most of the respondents mentioned it as being an SNS. In fact, owing to its huge popularity, Mark Zuckerberg, CEO of Facebook bought WhatsApp in 2014 (Times of India, 2014). LinkedIn was the next popular SNS (43.9%) and Twitter had a following among 31% of the respondents. There were other applications too that people were mentioning as SNSs such as Pinterest, Instagram, and Google+ … etc.

Table 4.15: Popularity of various SNSs in India

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>SNS usage</th>
<th>Facebook</th>
<th>Twitter</th>
<th>LinkedIn</th>
<th>WhatsApp</th>
<th>Others</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>F</td>
<td>%</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>%</td>
<td>F</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>0</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>4.4</td>
<td>253</td>
<td>52.9</td>
<td>196</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>&lt;1year</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>5.6</td>
<td>77</td>
<td>16.1</td>
<td>72</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>&gt;1year</td>
<td>430</td>
<td>90.0</td>
<td>148</td>
<td>31.0</td>
<td>210</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>478</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>478</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>478</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

(Source: Prepared by the researcher); Key: F = Frequency, % = Percent

It was decided to explore the consumer preference towards the various products available online or were being sold through this e-medium. Table 4.16 presents the findings.

Table 4.16: Popularity of Products on Social Networking Sites in India

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Product</th>
<th>F</th>
<th>%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Entertainment</td>
<td>301</td>
<td>63.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Technology</td>
<td>286</td>
<td>59.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fashion</td>
<td>259</td>
<td>54.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Apparel/Accessories</td>
<td>220</td>
<td>46.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Automobiles</td>
<td>179</td>
<td>37.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Food and Beverages</td>
<td>177</td>
<td>37.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Books</td>
<td>172</td>
<td>36.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Personal Care</td>
<td>132</td>
<td>27.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Others</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>04.8</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

(Source: Prepared by the researcher); Key: F = Frequency, % = Percent

---

Entertainment emerged as the most popular product category and it was found to attract roughly 63% of online consumers. Technology was the second most attractive product category on SNSs with 59.8% popularity followed by Fashion with 54.2%. Apparel/Accessories with 46% and Automobile, Food and Beverage, Books and Personal care respectively with 37.4%, 37%, 36, 27.6% were less popular products. Also, there were few respondents who selected other products categories such as Sports goods, Tourism and insurance services on SNSs.
Chapter 5: Discussion and Findings

5.1 Introduction

This chapter summarizes and discusses the key findings of the study and it is divided into two parts. The first part of this chapter discusses the summary of the results of factor analysis, SEM, T-test, and ANOVA. The second part discusses the results and findings in the light of extant literature for deriving conclusions.

5.2 Demographic characteristics

The demographic analysis was performed in this study to deepen the understanding of effect of variables age, sex, occupation, level of education and income of target population on the study variables. Many of the earlier researchers to have considered the demographic characteristics of online consumers for similar type of analysis although in a different context. For instance, Verchopoulos, Siomkos, & Doukidis (2001) found that adopters of internet shopping in Greece have been generally young males who are highly educated and with high income. In Hong Kong, Sin and Tse (2002) found a similar demographic profile in addition to being more time conscious, self-confident and heavy users of the Internet. Also, Muhmin and Al-abdali (2004) found that adoption of B2C in commerce is more among older, highly educated, high-income users.

1) Gender

T-test has been used to understand the significant differences between male and female respondents in terms of the constructs of research. Out of 478 respondents, 292 respondents were males and 186 were females. Males were found to be having more trust and higher level of awareness and were more loyal as compared to
females. Further, significant differences were not observed in terms of tie strength and satisfaction.

2) Age

The present study considered three age groups: respondents below the age of 25, respondents in the age group of 26 to 35 and those above 36. Each of these groups comprised 317 (<25 years), 148 (26-35 years) and 13 (above 36 years) respondents, respectively. One way ANOVA was employed to study the relationship of age with the constructs of the study. Significant differences were observed in the context of trust for age group of 26 to 35 and 36 above respondents. Those belonging to the former age group had greater trust than the latter one.

3) Educational Level

One way ANOVA was employed to understand the significant differences considering education level of respondents in the context of tie strength, trust, awareness, satisfaction, and loyalty. In terms of education level, the sample was divided into three groups: undergraduates, postgraduates and those at the Ph.D. level and their numbers were 171 (undergraduates), 264 (postgraduates), and 43 (PhD level). The results are presented below:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Constructs</th>
<th>UG</th>
<th>PG</th>
<th>PhD</th>
<th>Sig</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Tie Strength</td>
<td>3.257</td>
<td>3.494</td>
<td>3.558</td>
<td>0.001</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Trust</td>
<td>3.100</td>
<td>3.323</td>
<td>3.388</td>
<td>0.003</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Loyalty</td>
<td>2.734</td>
<td>3.083</td>
<td>2.790</td>
<td>0.000</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The above table shows that significant differences exist in terms of education levels for constructs tie strength, trust, and loyalty. In terms of tie strength and trust, those at the Ph.D. level were on the higher side followed by PG students; while in terms of loyalty, PG students were more loyal followed by those at the Ph.D. level. Insignificant differences existed in terms of awareness and satisfaction.
4) Income range

Income range considered for this study on per month basis were below Rs 50,000 with 132 respondents; while 132 respondents were in the income range of Rs 51,000 to Rs 1,00,000 lakh and those above Rs 1,00,000 were 214 in number. One way ANOVA was used for the purpose and it was found that significant differences did not exist on any of the constructs of the study in terms of income of the respondents.

5) Occupation

One way ANOVA has been used to understand the significant differences in terms of occupation of consumers with regards to five constructs considered for the study. In this context, students and respondents working in the IT companies were considered though there were students who were working and they selected their occupation as a working in Non -IT sector. Overall, there were 297 students: 93 non-IT professionals and 88 were IT professionals. The study findings show that significant difference did not exist in terms of tie strength, awareness, satisfaction and loyalty from the point of view of occupation of the respondents. However, significant differences existed in for the construct trust. It was observed that IT professionals exhibited more trust followed by the Non -IT professionals with students demonstrating the least level of trust.

5.3 Result of Hypothesis Testing

Summary results of hypotheses $H_1$ (the level of awareness in users of SNSs has positive and significant effect on consumer satisfaction resulting in CE through positive eWOM), $H_4$ (the level of satisfaction in users of SNSs has positive and significant effect on consumer loyalty resulting in CE through positive eWOM), $H_2$ and $H_3$ (the level of trust and the nature of tie strength do not have positive and significant effect on consumer satisfaction resulting in CE through positive eWOM) are presented below.

5.3.1 Results of Hypotheses testing using SEM

The following section presents the results of hypotheses testing between main variables of the study as depicted in Figure 4.2 and Table 4.4 and Table 4.5 (in
Chapter 4). As already discussed firstly, factor analysis was employed to reduce the number of variables of a construct into preferably only one component for attaining this goal. Principal Component Analysis (PCA) method was used and then for this study Structural Equation Modeling techniques was also applied.

Figure 5.1 Structural Model

As is clear from Figure 5.1, Table 5.2 and Table 5.3 there exist significant and positive relationship between satisfaction and awareness, also between loyalty and satisfaction there is a significant and positive relationship (sig<0.05). Further it is amply clear that insignificant relationship emerged between trust and satisfaction, as well as tie strength and satisfaction (sig>0.05).

Table 5.2 Summary results of hypotheses testing

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Hypotheses</th>
<th>Variables</th>
<th>Results</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>H₁</td>
<td>Awareness</td>
<td>➔</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>H₂</td>
<td>Trust</td>
<td>➔</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>H₃</td>
<td>Tie strength</td>
<td>➔</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>H₄</td>
<td>Satisfaction</td>
<td>➔</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Table 5.3 Standardized Regression Weights (Structural Model)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Constructs</th>
<th>Estimates</th>
<th>p- value</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Satisfaction ← Awareness</td>
<td>0.540</td>
<td>.000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Satisfaction ← Trust</td>
<td>0.323</td>
<td>.160</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Satisfaction ← Tie Strength</td>
<td>0.054</td>
<td>.837</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Loyalty ← Satisfaction</td>
<td>0.747</td>
<td>.000</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

5.3.2 Hypotheses Testing for Demographic Variables

The following section presents the results of hypotheses testing for demographic variables which have been presented in Table 4.11 (in Chapter 4). These was analyzed using the T-test in terms of the study constructs and One Way Analysis of Variance (ANOVA) procedure was also employed for exploring differences in mean scores in the context of variables such as education level, income and occupation for various constructs of the study.

Table 5.4 Summary Results of Hypotheses Testing for Demographic Variables

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Hypothesis</th>
<th>Demographic Variables</th>
<th>Constructs</th>
<th>Results</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>H1G</td>
<td>Gender</td>
<td>Tie Strength</td>
<td>NR</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Trust</td>
<td>R</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>H2G</td>
<td></td>
<td>Awareness</td>
<td>R</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>H3G</td>
<td></td>
<td>Satisfaction</td>
<td>NR</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>H4G</td>
<td></td>
<td>Loyalty</td>
<td>R</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>H1A</td>
<td>Age</td>
<td>Tie Strength</td>
<td>NR</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Trust</td>
<td>R</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>H2A</td>
<td></td>
<td>Awareness</td>
<td>NR</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>H3A</td>
<td></td>
<td>Satisfaction</td>
<td>NR</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>H4A</td>
<td></td>
<td>Loyalty</td>
<td>R</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>H1E</td>
<td>Education</td>
<td>Tie Strength</td>
<td>R</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Trust</td>
<td>R</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>H2E</td>
<td></td>
<td>Awareness</td>
<td>NR</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>H3E</td>
<td></td>
<td>Satisfaction</td>
<td>NR</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>H4E</td>
<td></td>
<td>Loyalty</td>
<td>R</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>H1I</td>
<td>Income</td>
<td>Tie Strength</td>
<td>NR</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Trust</td>
<td>NR</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>H2I</td>
<td></td>
<td>Awareness</td>
<td>NR</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>H3I</td>
<td></td>
<td>Satisfaction</td>
<td>NR</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>H4I</td>
<td></td>
<td>Loyalty</td>
<td>NR</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>H1O</td>
<td>Occupation</td>
<td>Tie Strength</td>
<td>NR</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Trust</td>
<td>R</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>H2O</td>
<td></td>
<td>Awareness</td>
<td>NR</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>H3O</td>
<td></td>
<td>Satisfaction</td>
<td>NR</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>H4O</td>
<td></td>
<td>Loyalty</td>
<td>NR</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
5.4 Summary of Finding and Discussion

The summary of the key findings of the study and related discussion is presented below in terms of the objectives of the study and study constructs:

**Awareness**

Awareness is being conscious of and having knowledge about the focus of engagement. While the consumer is engaged, thinks about her involvement with the focus of engagement. The higher of engagement higher is the extent to which consumer concentrates about her interactions with the focus of engagement. A more heavily engaged consumer is more interested in getting information and knowledge regarding the focus of engagement (Vivek, 2009). Engagement won’t happen without satisfaction and if the consumer is not satisfied he/ she won’t get engaged and has no interest to gain information and knowledge regarding the focus of engagement.

In this study it was observed that the level of awareness in users of SNSs has a positive and significant effect on consumer satisfaction resulting in consumer engagement through positive eWOM. Awareness was studied in the context of various demographic variables (gender, age, level of education, income range and occupation) and significant differences were observed between the two genders and there existed no significant difference in terms of age group of the respondents, education level, income as well as occupation.

**Satisfaction**

Satisfaction is an important construct which encourages the consumers to articulate on social network sites. Consumer respond to the products and services, when they have higher level of satisfaction which leads them to consumer loyalty, intention to purchase, word of mouth recommendation, profit, market share and return on investment (Bowden, 2009).

From the analysis of results it was found that the level of satisfaction in users of SNSs has a positive and significant effect on consumer loyalty resulting in consumer engagement through positive eWOM. It also was found that consumer awareness has
significant and positive relationship with consumer satisfaction. Further, the relationship between satisfaction and various demographic variables such as gender, age, level of education, income range and occupation was also studied. It was found that significant differences do not exist between the two genders, age group of the respondents, the level of education, income, as also occupation.

**Loyalty**

According to Bowden (2009) though satisfaction is a necessary step for the formation of loyalty, it becomes less significant while loyalty begins to set through other mechanisms. According to (Reitz, 2012) when consumers are engaged in a brand cognitively, their knowledge, information and learning about the brand increases which leads to promoting consumer loyalty. The higher the level of brand commitment, the higher is the level of loyalty. Commitment is shaping positive attitudes towards a company which initiated in positive loyalty towards the company as well. Therefore, commitment can be treated as a foundation of loyalty. Shukla (2009) said brand loyalty has an influence on purchase decisions. While consumers have a higher level of thinking and experiencing strong feelings of connectedness from the positive attitude towards the brands, it leads them to real loyalty (Reitz, 2012). Also, Anderson and Lehmann (1994) stated that higher levels of satisfaction will lead to greater consumer loyalty. According to Eid (2011), consumer satisfaction has a significant influence on consumer loyalty. Satisfaction has a direct impact on consumer E-loyalty (Flavián, Guinaliu & Gurrea, 2006). It has also been posited that higher consumer satisfaction leads to the greater individual loyalty (Yoon & Kim, 2000).

From the structural model, it is quite evident that the level of satisfaction in users of SNSs has a positive and significant effect on consumer loyalty which results in consumer engagement through positive eWOM. Also, loyalty was studied in the context of various demographic variables like gender, age, level of education, income range and occupation. It was found that significant differences existed between respondents belonging to varying education levels. However, significant differences were not observed on loyalty between the genders, age groups, income levels and in terms of occupation of consumers.
Trust

Pigg and Crank (2004) stated that trust has a significant role in exchanging of information and allows the individuals to evaluate their decision by providing more useful information. Consumers consider social media as a reliable source of information for the brands rather than commercial one through marketers. According to Eid (2011) and Cyr (2008), trust and satisfaction are important precursors for the success of the online vendors and they are different across the cultures despite the level of country development. Shiau and Chau (2015) stated trust and satisfaction have significantly positive effect on the purchase intention of the online group. Flavián, Guinalíu and Gurrea (2006) found that website’s trust and satisfaction equally affect e-loyalty. They also found that partially user trust was dependent on the degree of consumer’s website satisfaction which meant that the degree of trust is a consequence of the capacity of a business for satisfying the need of its consumers, as of their observation the levels of consumer satisfaction improved while the level of trust improved in the website. Luarn and Lin (2003) stated that satisfaction has a stronger impact than trust on e-loyalty. Selnes (1998) declared that satisfaction and trust were concepts which refer to global evaluations/feelings or attitudes by one party with respect to another, though they are related but they are different variables.

However, in this study found that there is no positive and significant effect of trust on consumer satisfaction in the context of users of SNSs. In the present study, an attempt trust was made to study the effect of demographic variables such as gender, age, level of education, income range and occupation on formation of trust among users of SNSs. It was observed that significant differences existed between the genders and as well as between age groups, education levels, and occupation. However, no significant differences emerged on the demographic variable income range.

Tie Strength

According to Richins (1987), the strong social ties increased the consumer’s likelihood for negative word of mouth when they experienced post-purchase dissatisfaction. Takada and Jain’s (1991) study supported Richins by studying a cross-cultural context and found that as an outcome negative WOM in group members were
more likely due to post purchase dissatisfaction. They also posited that there was impact of tie strength on negative WOM. Therefore, the same principle goes for positive WOM and extremely satisfied consumers would share their positive feeling regarding product/service with those who are closer to him/her (Chew & Wirtz, 2001). Also, they found WOM generated owing to strong ties is more extreme in its valence which follows the consumer’s satisfaction evaluations more closely than WOM owing to weak ties.

From the structural model of present study it is clear that there is no positive and significant effect of tie strength on consumer satisfaction for users of SNSs. In the present study, an attempt was made to study the effect of demographic variables such as gender, age, level of education, income range and occupation on development of tie strength among users of SNSs. It was found that significant differences did not emerge between the genders as also for age, income and occupation. However, significant differences were observed in terms of education levels of respondents on tie strength.

5.5 Generalization from Findings

This chapter presents the key factors covered in the present study followed by the related discussion. If we look at the factor which have emerged as significant and compare them with factors which are not significant, certain findings can be generalized.

In this study from the outcome of demographic analysis, we can infer that male respondents have greater trust and are more loyal and higher on awareness; those with higher levels of education (i.e. Ph.D. and PG) are high on awareness, trust and loyalty. Income didn’t have any significant bearing on any of the five constructs of this study. Also, as it was observed that IT professionals have a higher trust as compared to the Non -IT professionals; and student respondents in this study. Respondents in the age range of 26 to 35 were found to be having higher trust. Therefore, we can safely conclude that educated male (Ph.D./PG) falling in the age range of 26 to 35 years and working in the IT sector were found to be more into using SNSs.
From the study it is clear that the relationship between Awareness $\rightarrow$ Satisfaction and Satisfaction $\rightarrow$ Loyalty were statistically significant and in the expected direction ($p<0.01$). However, the relationship between Trust $\rightarrow$ Satisfaction and Tie Strength $\rightarrow$ Satisfaction were not found to be significant. Hence, out of the four hypotheses, two hypotheses were supported and two were not supported.
Chapter 6: Study Implications and Future Research Directions

6.1 Introduction

This chapter discusses in detailed about how the finding of the present study shall add to the existing compendium of knowledge and how marketers, researchers and academics can make use of the findings of this research for their benefit. This chapter further suggests directions for the future researchers.

6.2 Theoretical Implications of the Study

From the research model of the study five factors were conjectured which are the elements of online consumer engagement in SNSs and each factor was studied from the point of view of five demographic variables of interest. This present study enhances the explanatory power of the factors considered from the point of view of the Indian market. In addition, all the hypotheses of this study were developed according to the findings from previous studies.

The contributions of this research are significant from both research and managerial perspectives. This study is among the first theoretical and empirical attempts on the subject in the Indian context. Many of the investigated effects were found to be significant as hypothesized based on an integrated literature review. Given below are the major theoretical and practical contributions of this study:

- Loyalty and awareness were found to have the strongest influence on consumer satisfaction while trust and tie strength had the least bearing on consumer satisfaction.
➢ In terms of demographic variables; gender and education were found to be strong influencers for constructs of the study while income had negligible influence.

➢ Influences of trust and awareness on gender were observed however the mean score of the female was found to be lower than that of males.

➢ The influence of education was observed on tie strength, trust, and loyalty while awareness and satisfaction had no significant relationship with education.

As already discussed gender emerged as the most influencing factors in the study. Two out of the five constructs from the model of the study i.e. trust & awareness were found to be influenced by gender. Although the other three constructs i.e. satisfaction and tie strength, & loyalty were not affected by gender. Also, mean scores of female respondents were found to be significantly lower than that of males. Education was found to have a significant bearing on three of the constructs of the study model i.e. tie strength, trust, and loyalty. The other two constructs i.e. awareness and satisfaction were not affected by education. The mean score for tie strength and trust was found to be significantly higher for those at the Ph.D. and PG level in comparison to UG students. In terms of loyalty, PG students were significantly higher than those at Ph.D. level.

This study has discussed the importance of the constructs including awareness, trust, satisfaction, tie strengths, and loyalty to engage online consumers in the context of viral marketing. Consumer engagement is all about developing a long-term relationship with the consumers and managing the processed of the company in such a way that it leads to a better understanding and conversion of potentials into consumers and to instill greater loyalty in existing consumers. While all the attention of the relationship marketing was into retaining the consumers, the focus for the acquisition of consumers got distracted. Engagement is the process of keeping your consumers satisfied and understanding her requirement, which can be online or offline. For example, some telecom companies such as Airtel provide better offers to its consumers which is so called Airtel Money that helps the consumers to get an idea about where the Airtel shops are located, consumers can charge their mobile by keeping some advance money in their prepaid SIM card to avoid consumers any
inconvenience while they are traveling or during emergency. Of course, these ideas must have come to the companies after they understood their consumers’ need and requirement or after receiving feedback from consumers. Some of the online shopping websites such as Myntra.com frequently employ surveys to know the needs of their consumers to their email for developing their website and updating their products according to the will of their consumers. The right engagement strategy used by marketers will bring the consumers and companies together to communicate and help them to have a better articulation of needs which promotes consumer engagement and help companies make better dovetailed offers.

6.3 Managerial Implications of the Study

Social networking sites (SNSs) are an interactive platform which help the marketers and firms to reach their targeted consumers and segment them in a more economical way compared to so call traditional media. Consumer engagement is not only regarding those people who are interacting with each other through online media but also offline. Most of the companies are making a platform for the consumers to come together but moreover they have to know how they are supposed to engage the consumers which cannot happen only by providing the online platform for them. Companies should try to enhance the level of consumers’ satisfaction, awareness, and trust in social interaction through increasing their participation and activity, and getting them connected with their businesses. Companies’ focus should not be on strategies such as enhancing their product quality or keeping prices low but to engage consumers with better offers than their competitors. Engaged consumers apart from building connections with companies will keep the long-term relationship with companies as well. Companies can engage the consumers by increasing their awareness, making them participate in the company, its offerings and providing opportunities for social interaction with the intention of focusing on the company’s products/ brands/ services. Companies should provide as many as possible opportunities to enhance the consumers’ interaction with the company as well as other consumers of their company. Marketers have to give importance to the social relationship while deciding about the marketing strategies in order to personalize communication strategy and find out the needs of the consumers who are using SNSs. While majority of people especially young generation are online marketing
consumers, targeting them online would be a better technique for marketers with the knowledge that they are more prone to the social influence and they will end up shopping which referred through any of their networks (Tie strength) but for this purpose marketers should recognize the social influencers in the SNSs and target them to avoid negative WOM and spread the positive WOM for the company, with their networks.

A marketer can access to the profile information of online consumers and their social connection to have effective marketing strategies and make long term relationship with their consumers. With the help of SNSs companies can follow their consumers, approach them and communicate with them. Available information which is exchanged in the online platform can be used by marketers for the better engagement strategy that ultimately lead consumers to the more online and offline interaction regarding the company’s product with their friend list, acquaintance and family depend on their tie strength. SNSs provided the enough information about the SNSs users, it depends on companies how to get advantages of available information to improve their companies towards their consumer’s will to achieve the higher share of the market or simply they can ignore this opportunity and let the other competitors collect the leftover information and using them for their own benefit. Today is not those old time that consumers hadn’t enough choice but to get the products from the only available brand, rather it’s a time of competitive advantages among the available companies which is providing better facilities and knows their consumers better for achieving companies goal. SNSs can help to identify consumer segmentation that improves the knowledge about their interest in the extensive category of their choice. Consumer engagement is helpful to have a better understanding of market and consumer behavior which is so important for developing a marketing strategy. Therefore, marketers should take the engagement strategy according to the combined effects of consumers’ characteristics and their interests.

6.4 Future Research Directions

Through the limitation of the study, following recommendations for the future research has come up to help the future researcher for designing their studies in a way that addresses these limitations and having the better insight about the theoretical
framework related to consumer engagement, social networking sites and electronic word of mouth.

- The scale used in this study was borrowed scale which used in various studies conducted in different countries followed by certain modifications and scale tested for validity and reliability but still the basic scale is from western studies. Subsequent researchers should look for the other scales which may fit best in Indian scenario with the mindset of Indian consumer right from the beginning.

- Collecting the additional data regarding specific products or brands can be useful to have a deeper analysis of consumer engagement in SNSs.

- Future research would be better if it can be a comparative study between two different occupations while using the same sort of scale.

- Similar research as the present study can be replicated in another country, different culture, and economic environment to have a better understanding regarding online engaged consumers in SNSs.

- This study was limited to three cities in India; similar study can be conducted with a number of cities of India which may bring a better understanding of consumer engagement and their effect on social networking sites via e-WOM.

- Future researchers can consider a sample with demographic variables different from the present study i.e. different income ranges, education levels, and occupational groups not covered in the present work.

- For the future research, it can be better if the researchers apply other methods apart from the questionnaire, such as focus group and case study.

- Future researchers may require going to a more representative sample using appropriate probability sampling procedures both at the level of respondents and the geographical coverage.

- Future researchers need to cover more occupational groups to get a better picture.

- Future researchers may cover SNSs that have not been covered in this study.

- The present study may be replicated after some time to validate the findings.
➢ There is a need to longitudinal studies in the domain to track changes with time.

➢ Studies need to be carried out on specific products and product categories.

➢ Future researchers can adopt case study methodology or qualitative research procedures for an in-depth understanding of the variables.

6.5 Summary

This chapter presents theoretical and managerial implication of the study. Finding of this study expected to provide valuable insights for marketing practitioners and academicians, especially for the companies to target their online consumers and provide them a better understanding regarding their brands and products.
References


145


148


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161


Websites Referred


APPENDIX A

QUESTIONNAIRE
Dear Respondent,

You are requested to provide responses to following questions as per your understanding. This information will only be used for academic purposes only.

**Section A: Please indicate your response using tick (√)**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Gender:</th>
<th>Age (Year):</th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Male</td>
<td></td>
<td>Upto 25</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Female</td>
<td></td>
<td>26 &amp; 35</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Above 36</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Please indicate your Education/class: ..........................................................................................
Please indicate your Occupation: ..............................................................................................

Please indicate your Family Income (Monthly): below 50K √ 51k-1 lakh √ above 1 lakh √

**Section B**

1. Which of the following Social Networking Sites (SNSs) do you use and for how long have you been using them?? (You can tick on more than one if needed).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>SNS</th>
<th>Less than a year (&lt;1 Yr)</th>
<th>More than a year (&gt;1 Yr)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Facebook</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Twitter</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>LinkedIn</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>WhatsApp</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Any Other___________ (Specify)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

2. Please indicate using tick (√) role played by you in discussing different products and services you come across on Social Networking Sites (SNSs):

   a) You seek opinion from others √
   b) You give your opinion to others √
   c) You share the information with others √

3. Please indicate using the tick (√) products that attract your attention on Social Networking Sites (SNSs)? (You can tick on more than one if needed).

   a) Automobile √ d) Apparel / accessories √ g) Personal care √
   b) Fashion √ e) Technology √ h) Entertainment √
   c) Food and beverage √ f) Book √ i) Other: (specify): _________

4. a) Do you spend time on the web pages of various companies available on Social Networking Sites?
   Yes √ No √
   b) If Yes, how much time approximately do you spend in a week?
   a) 15 to 30 minutes √ c) 1 hour to 2 hours √
   b) 30 minutes to 1 hour √ d) More than 2 hours √

5. Please indicate using tick (√) activities on which you spend time on Social Networking Sites (SNSs)? (You can tick on more than one if needed).

   a) Music/video √ d) Fashion news √ g) News √
   b) Rumors/Gossip √ e) Reading posts √ h) Product/Brand √
   c) Political issues √ f) Social events √ i) Sport √
6. Please indicate your level of agreement with the statements given below using tick (✓):

(Note: In following statements ‘SNSs’ stands for ‘Social Networking Sites’ such as Facebook, Twitter, LinkedIn etc.)

(1=Strongly Disagree, 2=Disagree, 3=Neutral, 4=Agree, 5=Strongly Agree)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>STATEMENTS</th>
<th>Please tick response below</th>
<th>STRONGLY DISAGREE</th>
<th>STRONGLY AGREE</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Friends list are very important for social networking on SNSs.</td>
<td></td>
<td>1 2 3 4 5</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I’m very loyal to the company’s products/brands that I “follow” on</td>
<td></td>
<td>1 2 3 4 5</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SNSs.</td>
<td></td>
<td>1 2 3 4 5</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The closeness of social relationship is an important factor in sharing</td>
<td></td>
<td>1 2 3 4 5</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>of product/brand related information.</td>
<td></td>
<td>1 2 3 4 5</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Information shared on SNSs regarding products/brands is reliable.</td>
<td></td>
<td>1 2 3 4 5</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>STATEMENTS</th>
<th>Please tick response below</th>
<th>STRONGLY DISAGREE</th>
<th>STRONGLY AGREE</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>I can trust my SNSs friends in deciding upon risky purchase decision.</td>
<td></td>
<td>1 2 3 4 5</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I am very familiar with the brand of companies I “follow” on SNSs.</td>
<td></td>
<td>1 2 3 4 5</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The company’s page that I “follow” on SNSs provides complete information.</td>
<td></td>
<td>1 2 3 4 5</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The company’s page that I “follow” on SNSs allows me to be in control of</td>
<td></td>
<td>1 2 3 4 5</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>what I want to see.</td>
<td></td>
<td>1 2 3 4 5</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>STATEMENTS</th>
<th>Please tick response below</th>
<th>STRONGLY DISAGREE</th>
<th>STRONGLY AGREE</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>I get information related to products/brands on SNSs.</td>
<td></td>
<td>1 2 3 4 5</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I feel connected to the company that I “follow” on SNSs.</td>
<td></td>
<td>1 2 3 4 5</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>In future, I would buy products from the company I “follow” on SNSs.</td>
<td></td>
<td>1 2 3 4 5</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I have emotional feelings attached to a company that I “follow” on SNSs.</td>
<td></td>
<td>1 2 3 4 5</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>STATEMENTS</th>
<th>Please tick response below</th>
<th>STRONGLY DISAGREE</th>
<th>STRONGLY AGREE</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>I frequently post messages and responses on the company’s page that</td>
<td></td>
<td>1 2 3 4 5</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I “follow” on SNSs.</td>
<td></td>
<td>1 2 3 4 5</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>My contacts on my “friends” list on SNSs offer honest &amp; reliable</td>
<td></td>
<td>1 2 3 4 5</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>opinions.</td>
<td></td>
<td>1 2 3 4 5</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I have more trust on online comments of consumers about the</td>
<td></td>
<td>1 2 3 4 5</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>products/brands rather than advertisements from companies.</td>
<td></td>
<td>1 2 3 4 5</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I get information related to shopping at SNSs.</td>
<td></td>
<td>1 2 3 4 5</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**THANK YOU**