

MODELLING AND MEASURING OF CUSTOMER PARTICIPATION IN SOCIAL MEDIA BRAND COMMUNITIES

Ph. D. THESIS

by

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**DEPARTMENT OF MANAGEMENT STUDIES
INDIAN INSTITUTE OF TECHNOLOGY ROORKEE
UTTARAKHAND – 247667 (INDIA)
JANUARY, 2018**

MODELLING AND MEASURING OF CUSTOMER PARTICIPATION IN SOCIAL MEDIA BRAND COMMUNITIES

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Submitted in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the award of the degree

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DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY

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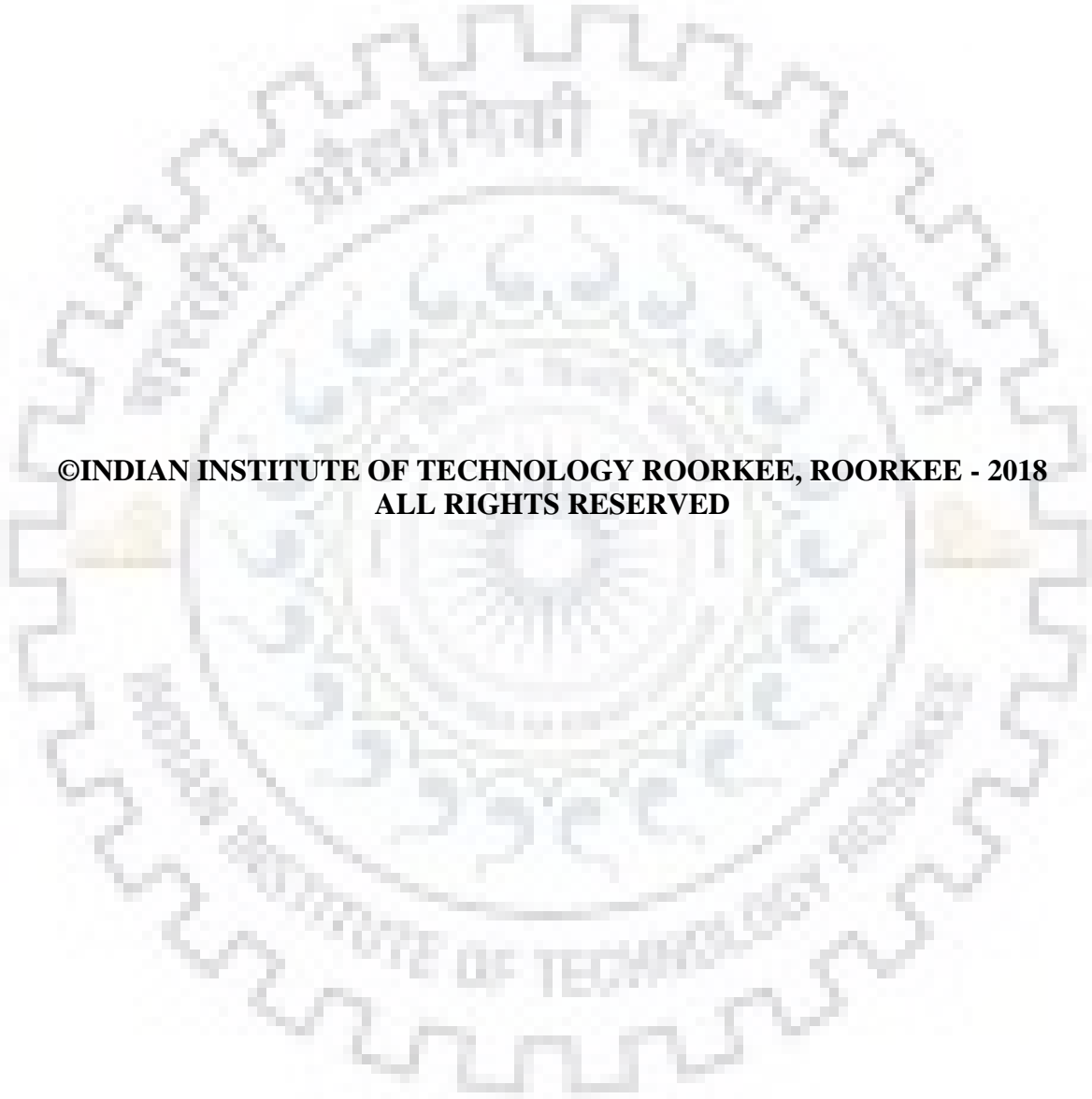
MANAGEMENT STUDIES

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CANDIDATE'S DECLARATION

I hereby certify that the work which is being presented in the thesis entitled “**MODELLING AND MEASURING OF CUSTOMER PARTICIPATION IN SOCIAL MEDIA BRAND COMMUNITIES**” in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the award of the Degree of Doctor of Philosophy and submitted in the Department of Management Studies of the Indian Institute of Technology Roorkee, Roorkee is an authentic record of my own work carried out during a period from July, 2013 to January, 2018 under the supervision of Dr. Zillur Rahman, Head & Associate Professor at the Department of Management Studies, Indian Institute of Technology Roorkee, Roorkee.

The matter presented in the thesis has not been submitted by me for the award of any other degree of this or any other Institution.

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This is to certify that the above statement made by the candidate is correct to the best of my knowledge.

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ABSTRACT

In the era of social media, a growing number of companies have begun to establish their online brand communities to strengthen their relationships with customers. The emergence of social networking sites (SNSs) on social media platforms have transformed the way individuals communicate with and stay in touch with their social circles. These SNSs have also started to influence the activities of companies including promoting missions, current tasks, achievements of companies, and involving as well as engaging customers. SNSs are not just a platform for connecting with loved ones, but also an online space for brand lovers to interact with each other as well as with the brand. As large number of persons use some form of SNSs, companies are launching their brand pages on these SNSs to get access to their customers in easiest way. These social media brand pages on SNSs attract people who are either devoted to some specific brands or are interested in offerings of that brand in future. Companies have identified the significance of involving customers into their activities and have begun using social media brand communities for connecting with their customers and involving them in their operations. Despite the popularity of social media brand communities, it is still a major challenge for companies to build a successful online brand community due to the nature of customers' voluntary participation.

According to Rapp et al. (2013), around 88 percent of the companies including Media, Travel & Leisure, IT & Telecommunication, FMCG & Retail have already initiated to use various social media platforms and among them approximately 42 percent have fully incorporated different social media sites into their marketing strategies. In addition, approximately 39 percent of customers use social media platforms to obtain information about different offerings of the companies, which makes social media sites to be considered as one of the best prospects by various companies to remain in touch with customers directly. Additionally, Fortune 500 companies are extensively adopting different social media platforms and online communities to make possible direct interactions with their customers. According to some recent findings from 'Marketing research centre' about 63 percent of millennials either follow or like different brands on social media platform like Facebook and around 19 percent of the millennials follow them on Twitter also.

However, while the importance of customer participation has been acknowledged widely, it has received comparatively less attention from the researchers, specifically in context of social

media brand communities. Customer participation on social media is known as customer social participation. The online travel communities are one of the important one among all established on social media, where continuous customer participation is of greatest significance. Customer social participation in travel communities plays an important role in building trust and spreading word of mouth towards travel service brand. Despite this, there is a dearth of studies, which have investigated the customer social participation concept in travel communities' context, which leaves a relevant research gap in the literature.

This research attempts to investigate customer participation in social media brand communities, specifically in context of online travel communities. For this purpose, this research capitalizes on literature from various streams such as social media marketing, consumer behaviour, and travel, tourism & hospitality management. Based on the research in these streams, the present research proposes a research model of customer social participation in travel communities and examines it through empirical data. The research model comprises of SNSs participation motivations (building interpersonal relationship, brand likeability, entertainment, information seeking and incentive) as predictor variable which are inevitable for customer participation on social media brand communities and acts as an important antecedents for customer social participation which finally influences brand trust, brand commitment and word-of-mouth in context of travel communities. In addition, brand trust is proposed to act as a mediating variable between customer social participation and its consequences (brand commitment, word of mouth).

The study adopts a mixed-method research design that combines both qualitative and quantitative research methods in two phases. The objective of the first qualitative phase is to gain a better understanding of customer social participation in travel communities' context and propose a research model explaining customer social participation. In the second phase, the proposed research model was empirically tested by developing a measurement instrument for the customer social participation construct. Customer social participation (CSP) is supposed to be a multidimensional construct and a scale was constructed to measure it. For the final validation during the quantitative phase, data were collected from the hotel guests situated in Delhi (India) using survey method. The eligibility of respondents were ensured based on they have either subscribed, liked or joined any e-travel service companies' community brand page using any social networking site or have ever posted or considered reviews and ratings of any e-travel

service companies' via their official site or via mobile app while planning their tour or travels. The survey was conducted through self-administrated questionnaires Exploratory factor analysis (EFA), confirmatory factor analysis (CFA) and structural equation modeling (SEM) were used to analyze responses.

Findings of the study confirmed a 9-item three-dimensional scale for measuring customer social participation in travel communities. The developed scale revealed sound psychometric properties based on the results from various reliability and validity tests, and from the use of two different samples (student sample for item reduction and initial validation phase and non-student sample i.e. hotel guests for final validation phase). Findings also confirmed that customer social participation in travel communities has a significant and positive influence on brand trust, brand commitment and word-of-mouth behavior of the hotel guests, establishing nomological validity of the developed scale.

The key contribution of present research is the formulation of a robust model that explains the customer social participation concept in travel communities' context and demonstrates that SNSs participation motivations have a significant and positive effect on CSP, which in turn have significant positive influence on brand trust, brand commitment and word-of-mouth behavior of guests. This research proposes an instrument for measuring customer social participation in travel communities' context; such a scale has not been provided before. In addition, findings of this research also confirmed that brand trust is a key mediating variable in CSP model. It was found that brand trust act as a partial mediator between customer social participation and brand commitment as well as between CSP and word of mouth. Additionally to providing novel perspectives on CSP (particularly in context of online travel communities), the research presents directions for future research. Several managerial implications are also provided.

Keywords: Brand communities, Customer social participation, Social media, Hotel, Online travel communities, Scale development, Brand trust, Brand commitment, Word-of-mouth

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*Those I met on this journey who feel compelled to live their lives as examples,
With reflective and passionate consideration for other, themselves,
And the world around them*

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At times our own light goes out and is rekindled by a spark from another person. Each of us has cause to think with deep gratitude of those who have lighted the flame within us.”- Albert Schweitzer



(SHAMPY KAMBOJ)

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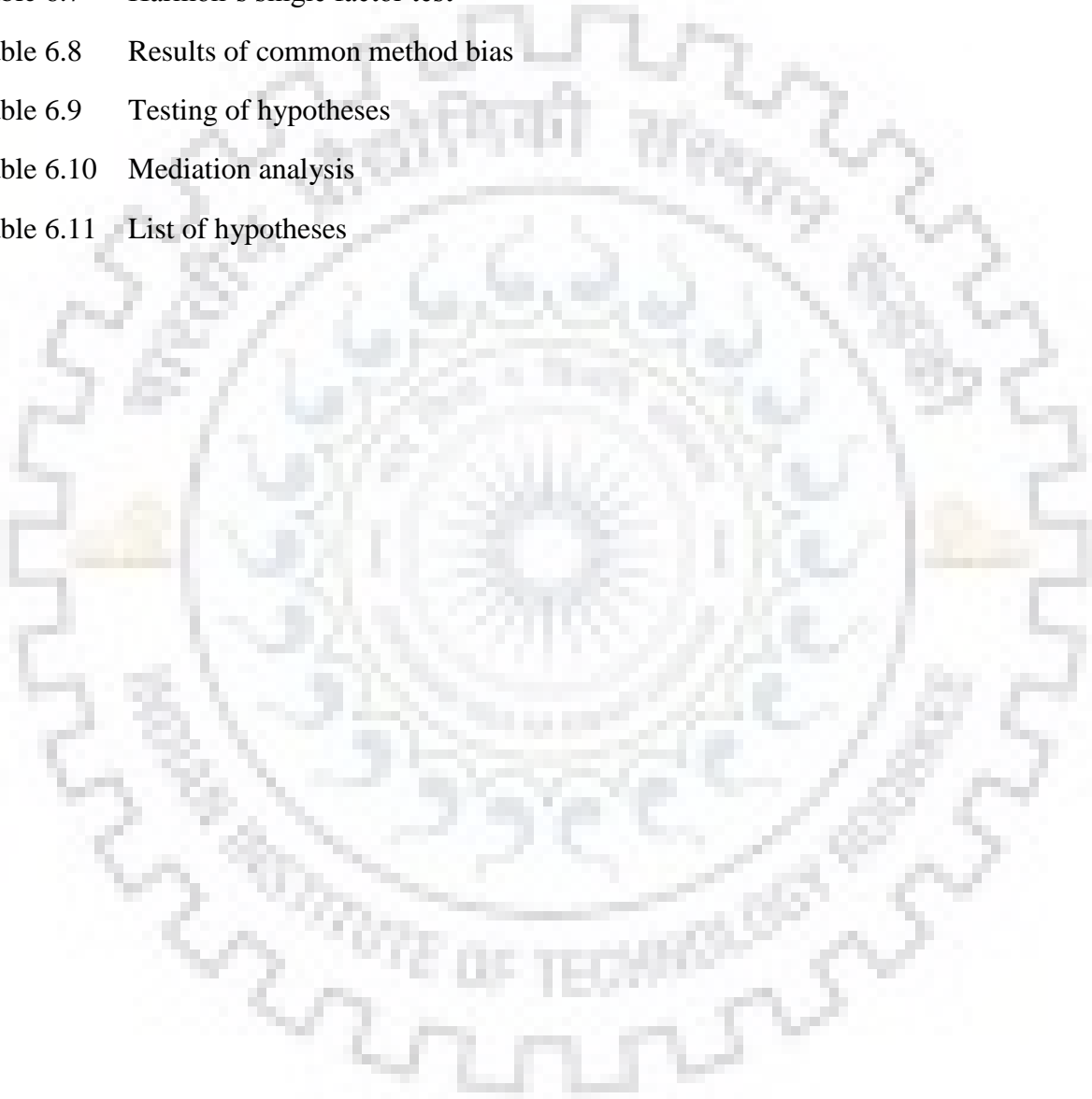
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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

Abbreviations	Full Form
AMOS	Analysis of Moment Structures
ANCOVA	Analysis of Covariance
ANOVA	Analysis of Variance
AVE	Average Variance Extracted
BT	Brand Trust
BC	Brand Commitment
CFA	Confirmatory Factor Analysis
CFI	Comparative Fit Index
CR	Construct Reliability/Composite Reliability
CSP	Customer Social Participation
EFA	Exploratory Factor Analysis
GFI	Goodness of Fit Index
IBEF	India Brand Equity Foundation
IFI	Incremental Fit Index
KMO	Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin
MANCOVA	Multivariate Analysis of Covariance
MANOVA	Multivariate Analysis of Variance
NCR	National Capital Region of Delhi
NFI	Normed Fit Index
OBCs	Online Brand Communities
PCA	Principal Component Analysis
RMSEA	Root Mean Square Error of Approximation
SEM	Structural Equation Modeling

SNSs	Social Networking sites
SPSS	Statistical Package for Social Sciences
UGC	User Generated Content
U&G	Uses and Gratifications
UK	United Kingdom
USA	United States of America
WOM	Word of Mouth



This chapter is an introduction to the present thesis. The chapter commences with an introductory note on the research undertaken followed by a problem statement. Next, it presents the research scope and motivation for the present research along with the purpose, research questions, definition of key constructs, and research methodology adopted. The chapter closes with an overview of the present research and organization of chapters in the thesis followed by a brief conclusion. Outline of this chapter is described in Figure 1.1.

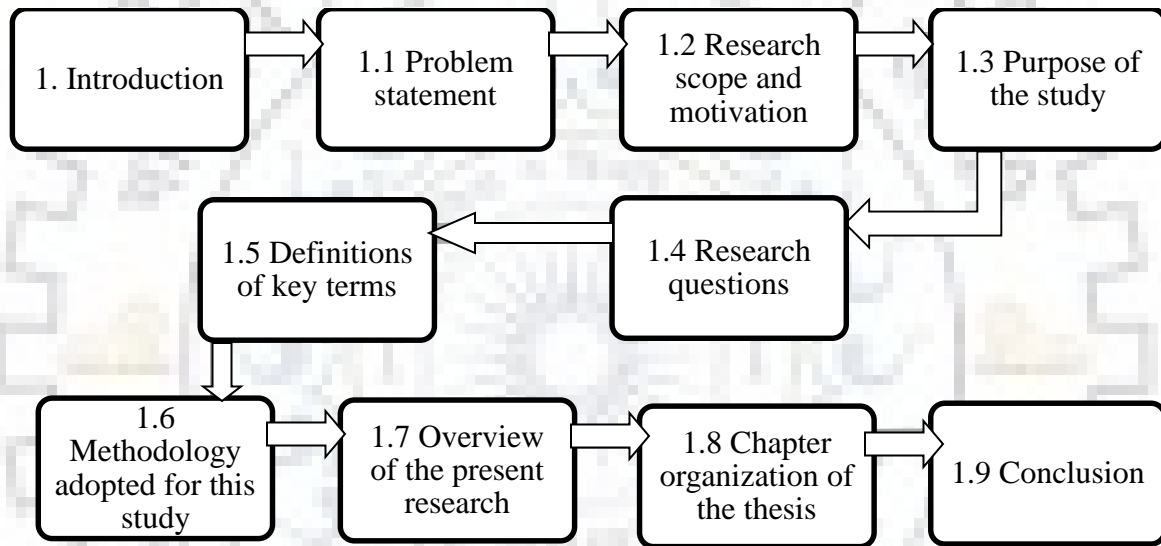


Figure 1.1: Structure of Chapter 1

1. INTRODUCTION

The Internet has transformed the mode of communication, which allows companies and their customers to connect across the globe at any time and geographical location (Harris & Rae, 2009). Recent years have witnessed the increasing use of internet as billions of users browse the net to access multimedia services and content (Mishra et al., 2016). With the emergence of social media, the Internet has evolved as a “participatory platform” rather than broadcasting medium, and allow individuals to become “media” themselves for connecting and sharing user generated contents (Stamati et al., 2015; Thevenot, 2007). Ulusu (2010, p. 2949) defined social media as, “Web-based services that allow people to create a public profile, share the connection

with other users, and view and traverse their list of connections in common network.” Social networking sites (SNSs) on social media have provided a platform that significantly contributes to building relationship with customers (Shen et al., 2010). According to Kang et al (2014, p. 145), “social networking sites are defined as a second generation of web development and design features that facilitate communication, information sharing, and collaboration on the World Wide Web.”

The recent emergence of social media technologies has renovated the way of interaction between companies and individuals (Rathore et al., 2016). It has been put on a platform across diverse streams for facilitating participatory interaction amongst societies, consumers, businesses, organisations, communities, groups, forums etc (Dwivedi et al., 2015). A large number of monthly active social media users is in itself evidence of the growing importance of various social media platforms (Wamba et al., 2017). There are various social networking sites available on social media platforms; among all the most eminent are Facebook, Twitter, and LinkedIn (Jain, 2010). In the third quarter of 2016, a total number of monthly active users of Facebook was 1.79 billion and daily active users on average was 1.18 billion (Facebook, 2016). Similarly, as of June 2016, a total number of monthly active users of Twitter were 313 Million (Twitter, 2016). The online messaging social media app WhatsApp has similarly seen fourfold growth, from 200 million monthly active users in April 2013 to 800 million monthly active users in April 2015 (Ralph, 2015). Owing to the growing use of social media sites, these are considered as important tools for building online communities of customers who share common objectives, interests, and activities (Bolotaeva & Cata, 2010).

A brand community is a group of customers who are admirer of a specific brand (Jang et al., 2008). Muniz and O’Guinn (2001, p. 412) defined brand community as a “specialized, non-geographically bound community, based on a structured set of social relations among admirers of a brand.” The past few decades has aroused the interest of academicians and practitioners regarding online brand communities (Habibi et al., 2014a; Luo et al., 2015; Zhang & Luo, 2016). The contribution of these online brand communities in strengthening the relationship with customers has been seen as a significant academic concern (Dessart et al., 2015; Manchanda et al., 2015). With the emergence of new technologies (e.g., social media), brand communities are no longer bound by geographical constraints (Muniz & O’Guinn, 2001). Recently, the conventional role of customers has been transformed into the socially networked marketplace

(Labrecque et al., 2013; Weinberg et al., 2013). Most of the brands across the globe have established their brand communities on social media sites to communicate and promote their offerings to the customers (Kamboj & Rahman, 2016; Zaglia, 2013) and make use of social media for businesses (Sahay & Prashar, 2016) via developing social media campaigns (Prashar et al., 2013). The intersection of social media and brand communities leads to the concept of social media brand community. These communities are a subset of the broad concept of “virtual brand communities” or “online brand communities,” but are differentiated by their platforms. The central platform of brand communities on social media is “Web 2.0” and “user-generated content.” Approximately, individuals spend more than 5.5 hours in a day participating on social media sites (Nelsonwire, 2010).

Social media as a part of information communication technologies is leading to enormous developments in the tourism sector (Buhalis & Law, 2008). It has emerged as a new way of selling and communication for travel companies (Llach et al., 2013). Due to the emergence of the information communication technologies, drastic changes have been initiated in social interactions, which led to providing implications for the creation of online travel communities (Wiertz & Ruyter, 2007). The brand pages of these communities have been widely liked, joined and shared with travelers to search, share and explain their travel experiences and stories via social networking sites (e.g., Facebook), social knowledge sharing sites (e.g., Wiki travel), blogs, microblogs (e.g., Twitter) and media sharing sites (e.g., YouTube) and another tools in a collaborative manner.

Online travel communities are advantageous for both travel companies and travel searchers. For travelers, these communities facilitate to search what others believe about the offered facilities, for instance restaurants, hotels etc, the traveler may obtain information quickly, which allow them to extract extra value from a travel company (Qu & Lee, 2011). On the other hand for travel companies, these communities assist them to create and maintain customer relationship (Bagozzi & Dholakia, 2002) and reduce consumer service costs (Wiertz & Ruyter, 2007).

In spite of the substantial importance of online travel communities for travel companies (Qu & Lee, 2011), little consideration has been given to the modeling and measurement of customer participate in these communities using social media (Kamboj & Rahman, 2017). Despite the popularity of online brand communities on social media, it is becoming a challenge

for companies to create a successful online community for their brands due to the nature of customers' voluntary participation (Liao et al., 2017). A number of researchers have argued that community members' participation is an important element to ensure the continued existence of community (Kang et al., 2014). Indeed, if nobody will participate in a particular community, it will cease to exist (Agag & El-Masry, 2016). Therefore, understanding the customers participation has become an important aspect in social media brand community studies (Agag & El-Masry, 2016; Casaló et al., 2010a) and draws significant attention from both practitioners and researchers (Wu et al., 2015). More research in varied contexts is needed to understand online participation (Casaló et al., 2010b), specifically in the communities built on a social media based platforms (Chae & Ko, 2016). Customer participation on social media is known as customer social participation (Chae et al., 2015; Chae & Ko, 2016).

This research attempts to fill these research gaps and develops a research model as well as provides a scale to measure customer participation in online travel communities on social media. This lacuna in research supported by Indian tradition to treat the guests as God (*"ATITHI DEVO BHAVA"*), provide support and encouragement to develop a model and scale to measure online participation into this community. First, the hospitality and tourism sector in India is expected to grow at 7.5 percent in near future (India Tourism Statistics, 2015). This particular trend signals more scope for customer interaction, participation, and customer-firm co-creation through social networking sites in travel communities. Second, various online travel and tour operators have emerged in India which offers cheap prices with more options to the customers (IBEF, 2016). According to Octane Research e-Travel report, (2015), 30% of India's Trip Advisor users are coming to the site using their mobile devices and search hotels". Thus, it indicates that majority of Indian leisure travelers selected their hotels and travel plans through online communities such as (Trip Advisor, MakeMyTrip, Booking.com, goibibo, Yatra.com, Expedia, and Cleartrip) created on social networking sites like Facebook (IBEF, 2016). Finally, Internet and Mobile Association of India (IAMAI) annual report (2014-15) has found that the majority of digital commerce pie i.e. 61% covered by online travel in India. India is studied in this research because it is one of the biggest customers base worldwide, following China and the U.S. (Shahbaz et al, 2017). India is world's second largest and fastest growing economy (Arouri & Roubaud, 2016), with an emerging market and one of the "BRIC countries" (Brazil, Russia, India, and China) (Song et al., 2016). Thus, it is important for travel marketers to identify and

understand their online customers and to ensure their participation towards their social media based travel brand communities.

1.1 PROBLEM STATEMENT

Tough competition, increasing costs of marketing, and ever changing technology have forced researchers to study that marketing efforts which facilitates continuing relationships with customers. Consequently, relationship marketing has been considered as leading paradigm in the domain of marketing (Morgan & Hunt, 1994). The central theme of relationship marketing is to communicate directly with customers. Thus, customers involvement in the area of marketing is becoming a mandatory requirement for achieving brand improvement, which consequently influences the perspective of establishing positive relationships with customers (Andersen, 2005). Many companies these days are identifying the relevance of social media brand communities as a tool for building relationship with their customers. These brand communities in addition to providing a marketing communication channel to the companies also facilitate establish connection to current and potential customers of their brand who are social media users. These users participated in communities activities via their engagement and share their brand related knowledge with other members.

So far, as the commencement and development of brand communities has needed the group of enthusiastic users, accordingly activities related to brand community have been few. Recently the companies have recognized that, through the social media, they may overcome the different constraints (space and time), which have so far restricted their customers involvement within their online brand communities activities. As a result, there is a reason to consider that social media brand communities will rise in significance and unleash a potential for increasing market value for customers and companies alike.

Previously, limited research has been conducted with respect to social media brand communities and their usefulness in the domain of marketing (Kozinets, 1999; Rothaermel & Sugiyama, 2001). At present the center of attention of research has been on consumption communities (McAlexander et al., 2002), but the concept of brand communities with respect to customer participation using social media platforms has considered a little (Kang et al., 2014).

Companies that do well in finding customers to join and participate within their brand community on social media can get benefit over their competitors (Thompson & Sinha, 2008).

For example, the trust and commitment created through customers participation could result into positive word of mouth communication towards the brands. However, there is little research, which directly relating customer participation in social media brand community to brand related behavior of customers. Thus, whether and how customer participation in social media brand community affect brand related behavior of customers remains an open question.

The past few decades have noticed a rising interest of researchers concerning online brand communities (Zhang & Luo, 2016), specifically social media based communities (Habibi et al., 2014b; Kang et al., 2016). The contribution of online brand communities in creating, strengthening customer relationships and engaging customers is also seen as an important academic interest (Manchanda et al., 2015). Indeed, various larger brands in the world have set up their own brand communities on different social media sites to communicate, advertise, and promote their marketing offerings to their customers, in order to develop enduring relationships with customers (Zaglia, 2013).

Despite the widespread acceptance of social media brand communities and companies concern for participating customers therein, there is a dearth of studies regarding what actually motivates customers to actively participate and interact in these communities (Baldus et al., 2015). It is valuable to investigate customers' motivation in participating in online brand communities, as customers in large number spend their time in these communities (Baldus et al., 2015).

The urge for customer participation research in social media brand communities is broadly adopted in the marketing literature (Chae & Ko, 2016; Kang et al., 2014). Indeed, Marketing Science Institute (MSI) also highlights academic interest towards customer participation and social media (MSI, 2012, 2014, 2016). Similarly, recently the research on customer participation, especially in domain of social media has gained a considerable attention (Chae & Ko, 2016; Habibi et al., 2014a; Kang et al., 2014), the empirical investigation regarding this emerging concept is still limited. Earlier research on customer participation in social media being mainly restricted to conceptualized the associations without empirical testing (Khan, 2017).

Recently an immense body of knowledge in topics related to social media has increased in the latest hospitality and tourism literature (Law et al., 2017). Regardless of the increased use of online brand communities as new marketing strategy by various tourism companies and

growing customer participation in online brand communities, knowledge about the conceptualization and measurement of customer participation in online brand communities is currently lacking (Wang et al., 2015) especially in tourism and travel brands on social media (Law et al., 2017). Therefore, the research that resolves the dearth of empirical data to explain the role of social media in the travel industry may contribute to filling an important research gap in the literature (Oz et al., 2015).

The existing research has highlighted the need to study brand related or brand community-related determinants (Bruhn et al., 2014, Munnukka et al., 2015, Shim et al., 2015) and further exploration and empirical validation of causal relationships between customer participation and other related constructs in online brand communities (Agag & El-Masry, 2016, Bruhn et al., 2014, Tsai et al. , 2012). A number of studies have demonstrated consumer participation benefits and their impact on customer participation on social media and its subsequent impact on brand trust, brand loyalty, and brand equity (Chae & Ko, 2016; Kang et al., 2014, Laroche et al., 2013). However, the studies investigating customer participation motivations and the paths through which these motivations cause customer participation on social media are rare (Chae et al., 2015).

The present research attempts to fill this gap in the literature by investigating a number of customer participation motivations to participate in social media brand communities and the resulting effect of customer participation on brand trust, brand commitment and word of mouth in the context of e-travel communities on social media. Thus, the present research mainly examines whether and how the participation motivations of customers on social media brand communities predict customer participation in social media i.e. customer social participation.

Additionally, previous studies also suggest to investigate the existence of constructs that have some mediating effects associated with customer participation or other constructs in social media brand communities (Bruhn et al., 2014, Laroche et al., 2012, 2013, Zhou et al., 2013). Thus, considering the dearth of understanding concerning the mediating effects in relation to social media brand communities, this research further examines how brand trust influence the relationship between customer social participation and its outcome variables (brand commitment and word of mouth).

By addressing the above-stated research gaps, the present research significantly contributes to the literature in marketing as existing studies have not considered how SNSs

participation motivations of customers on social media brand communities influence customer social participation, specifically in the context of online travel communities. Hence, this research is an attempt to understand the customer participation in social media i.e. customer social participation concept in online travel communities context, by developing a model and scale for measuring the influence of customer social participation on brand related and consumer behavioral outcomes.

1.2 RESEARCH SCOPE AND MOTIVATION FOR THE PRESENT RESEARCH

This research is firstly motivated by Marketing Science Institute (MSI) research priority areas 2016-2018, 2014-2016, 2012-14 and 2010-12 (MSI, 2010, 2012, 2014, and 2016). MSI research priorities with some interesting topics for research are described in Figure 1.2 to provide the base of motivation for the entire research work undertaken.

In this research, researcher has proposed a research model considering MSI research priorities, and literature on social media, consumer behaviour, brand communities and empirically, tested the relationship between (SNSs participation motivations) as predictors of customer social participation (CSP) in online travel brand communities, CSP and its outcome variables (brand trust, brand commitment and word of mouth). The detail regarding proposed research model is mentioned in Chapter 3. Secondly, based on the gaps identified in Chapter 2 of the present research, it is evident that there is ample scope for further research in this domain.

Some of the key issues that motivated the researcher to undertake the present research are discussed as follows:

- Customer participation in online brand communities on social media is comparatively a new area of study in Indian context. The literature review presented in Chapter 2 shows that only two studies on this topic have been conducted in India. This highlights the need for studies on customer participation in social media brand communities, specifically in India. Hence, there exists a need to understand customer participation in social media brand communities concept so that Indian companies are able to get engaged customers and ensure their more participation in their brand communities on social media.
- One of the key gaps identified from the extensive review of literature is that no prior study has developed any scale to measure customer participation in online travel communities on social media.

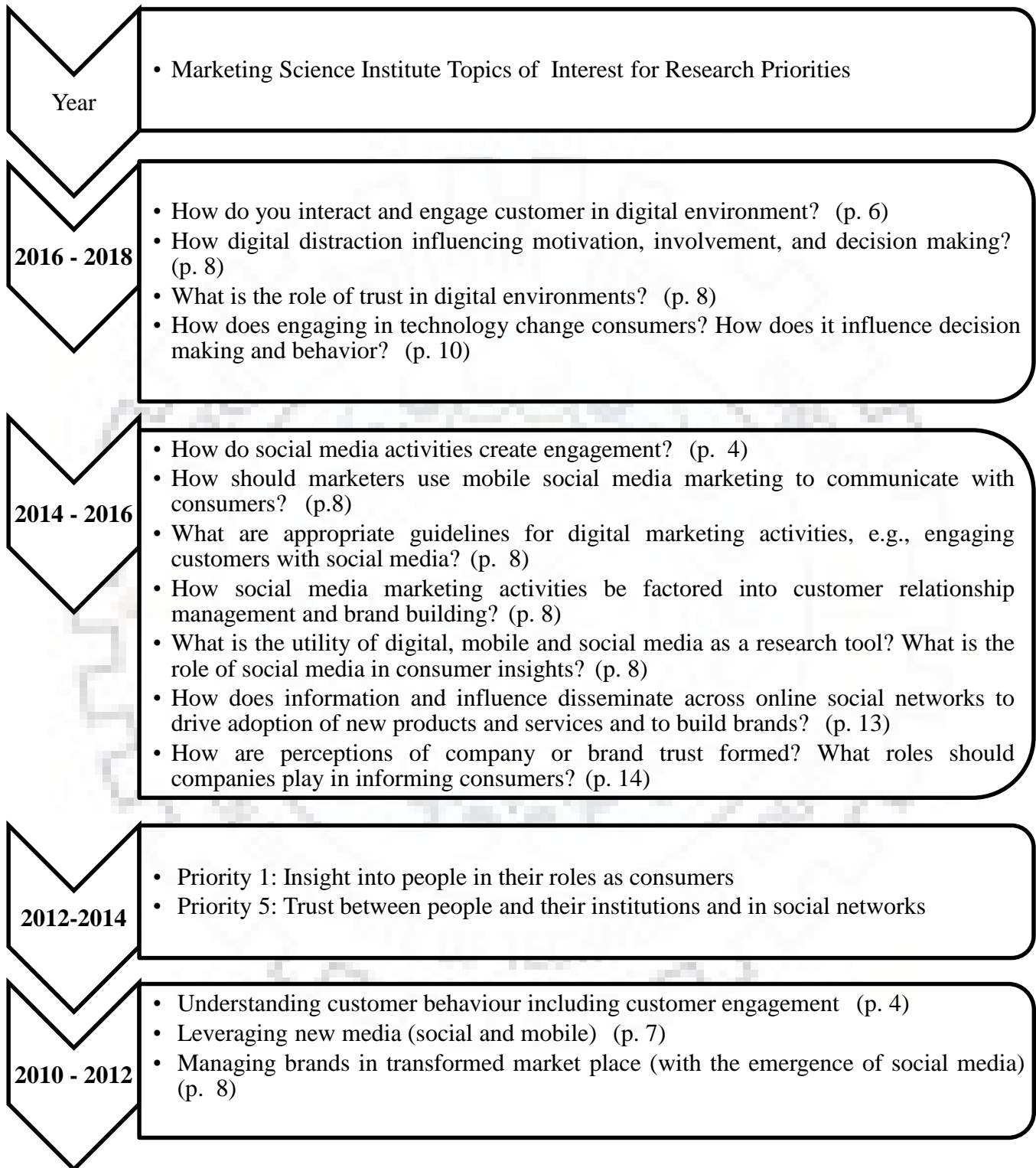


Figure 1.2: Marketing Science Institute (MSI) research priority

The researcher found that a well-accepted scale development procedure suggested by Churchill (1979) could be employed to bridge this gap. There are several studies that have followed this scale development procedure (e.g., Baldus et al., 2015; Hollebeek et al., 2014; Leo & Russell-Bennett, 2014).

- No reliable and validated model has been developed that may be utilized to examine the customer participation in social media brand communities, especially in the Indian context. Relatively, customer online participation related studies are at a growing stage in service organizations in India. Thus, a deliberate need for a model exists which may be able to bridge the stated gap effectively.
- The motivations for participating in social media communities is paramount for e-travel service companies, as several scholars have argued that active participation of community members is the prerequisite for a successful online community (Preece et al., 2004). Consequently, such a study is required that could identify customers participation motivations on social media brand communities and evaluate their significant influence on CSP construct (Chae & Ko, 2016).
- Brand trust, brand commitment, and word-of-mouth have prime significance to the e-travel service companies. But, in the context of the online travel communities, there is a lack of studies that have examined the influence of customer participation on brand trust, brand commitment and customers willingness to spread word-of-mouth. Recently an immense body of knowledge in topics related to social media has increased in the latest hospitality and tourism literature (Law et al., 2017). However, less number of research have been carried out on the factors, which can contribute to the proliferation of e-WOM via social media and content created by users in the hospitality and tourism perspective (Law et al., 2017). To this end, an instrument can be developed to measure the customer participation in online travel communities on social media, and examine the influence of measured customer participation in social media travel communities on brand trust, brand commitment, and word-of-mouth.

1.2.1 Why Customer Participation in Brand Communities on Social Media?

In social media environment, customer participation is entirely different from offline interaction, on which the participation focus is limited to brand and customer versus customer-customer (Chae et al., 2015). In an online environment, customers participation process vary from

accessing social media sites with the mobile device, seeking and obtaining product and services related information given by a brand, customer service center or product assessment on a bulletin and other customers word of mouth activities of desired products to one's network.

The gist of a company's marketing activity is to identify and satisfy its customers' needs that are very important to creating an enduring relationship between the company and its current as well as potential customers. In order to know the customers participation behavior, how they actually engage in the process of decision-making and what is their participation motivations for undertaking specific behavior require to be examined (Kontu & Vecchi, 2014). The social networking sites mediated environment that facilitates forming of relationship, the exchange between customer and brand indirectly may cause the feelings of distrust in building relationships, which obstruct in creating enduring mutual relationships or enhancing performance. Thus, this research finds the requirement for a comprehensive investigation of how customers participation in brand communities on social media sites builds trust and whether this influences brand commitment and word of mouth communication in a manner to maintain a relationship with the brand.

1.2.2 Why E-Travel Service Companies Communities?

In order to achieve the research objectives mentioned in the next section of this Chapter, it was not feasible to investigate the customer participation in social media brand communities concept in more than one kind of services due the time constraint. In addition, the context-specific nature of customer participation in social media brand communities directs the researcher to decide same (one) kind of brands that would be more appropriate to the nature of studied construct (i.e., customer participation in social media brand communities). Hence, to develop a model for measuring the influence of customer participation in social media brand communities on consumer behavior, this research has used e-travel service companies brand communities, as the growing presence of e-travel communities is important to great developments in the travel industry (Agag & El-Masry, 2016). In addition, the importance of customer participation in travel brand communities on social media has been highly acknowledged in the hospitality literature (Kang et al., 2014; Kunz & Seshadri, 2015). Hence, online travel brand communities were found relevant as a context for this research because of the fact that social media

significantly changed the travel industry during the last few decades, and the increasing trend of online travel communities connects travelers worldwide (Kunz & Seshadri, 2015).

Moreover, India, as an emerging service economy has earned international recognition for its growing tourism and hospitality sector (India Tourism Statistics, 2015). The hospitality and tourism sector is expected to grow at 7.5 percent in near future (IBEF, 2016). This particular trend signals more scope for customer interaction, participation, and customer-firm co-creation through social networking sites in travel brand community in hospitality. According to Octane Research e-Travel report, (2015) majority of Indian leisure travelers selected their hotels and travel plans through online communities such as (TripAdvisor, MakeMyTrip, Booking.com, goibibo, Yatra.com, Expedia, and Cleartrip) created on social networking sites like Facebook, Instagram, and Twitter etc. Internet and Mobile Association of India (IAMAI) annual report (2015) has found that the majority of digital commerce pie i.e. 61% is covered by online travel service companies in India. Thus, it is important for the hospitality industry and travel marketers to identify and understand their online customers and to ensure their participation towards their social media brand communities (Kamboj & Rahman, 2017). Consequently, online travel communities form a relatively better context to study the concept of customer participation in social media brand communities.

1.3 PURPOSE OF THE STUDY

The purpose of the present research is to develop a model for measuring the influence of customer social participation on brand related and consumer behavior outcomes in e-travel communities context. To this end, the present research first seeks to develop a conceptual model with some identified antecedents (SNSs participation motivations) and consequences (brand trust, brand commitment, and word-of-mouth) of customer social participation. Next, it attempts to develop and validate a scale for measuring customer social participation in online travel communities, and then measure the influence of customer social participation on brand trust, brand commitment, and word-of-mouth. This comprehensive investigation of customer social participation in online travel communities may assist the formulation of travel and tour management strategies, and provides an opportunity to e-travel service providing companies in building long-term relationships with their customers by facilitating their more participation in social media brand communities.

Hence, the main objectives of this research are:

Objective 1: To develop a conceptual model of customer participation in social media brand communities.

A number of researcher call for examining and empirically validating the associations between customer participation and other related constructs (Bruhn et al., 2014; Casalo et al., 2007, 2008, 2010 a,b; Gebauer et al., 2013; Madupu & Cooley, 2010a; Nambisan & Baron, 2010; Tsai et al., 2012) for the future progress of this area. Similarly, Tsai et al. (2012) suggest for the investigation of community participation factors includes a number of constructs that may be significant in customers participation decisions i.e. to examine whether and how other factors might affect customer participation in online community. Few researchers are also encouraged to analyze other effects derived from customer participation in online brand communities such as the influence of fellow consumers' recommendations on customer participation behavioral intentions (Casaló et al., 2010a). It would be better to investigate in detail the antecedents of participation in the online community (Casaló et al., 2008), and additional constructs for instance purchase intention, positive emotions, brand loyalty and brand equity (Kang et al., 2014) word of mouth and actual purchase behavior (Chang et al., 2013; Zheng et al., 2015) could be considered as consequences of community participation.

This research intends to develop a conceptual model of customer participation in social media brand communities. The proposed model comprises of various antecedents and consequences of customer participation in social media brand communities. The research question for defining the conceptual boundaries of customer participation in brand communities of SNSs are: (1) what are the key antecedents and consequences of customer participation in brand communities of social media sites and how they are related?

Objective 2: To develop and validate a customer social participation scale in online brand communities.

Since customer social participation, i.e. customer participation on social media is an emerging phenomenon, existing literature in this area at the various point has mentioned the need for better operationalizations of the construct. Efforts have been made by researchers to establish a reliable measure of customer participation. Several researchers (Casaló et al., 2010b; Madupu & Cooley, 2010a) have called for the measurement of customer participation construct in online

communities context, as the existing scales differ in dimension and are restricted to a few contexts only, thus leaving a large number of areas untouched. Casaló et al. (2010b) emphasized the need for industry specific online participation measurement scale.

Consequently, there is a requirement to develop a more valid and reliable measure of customer participation in online brand communities (Bruhn et al., 2014; Madupu & Cooley, 2010a,b; McAlexander et al., 2002; Wang et al., 2015). Further, the literature suggests that customer plays a significant role via their participation in the value process and consequently there is an important question that needs to be addressed as how customer participated in brand communities on social media, specifically in e-travel companies communities.

Objective 3: To empirically examine the relationship between predictor and outcomes variable of customer participation in social media brand communities.

Chae and Ko (2016) highlighted the need to examine the construct of customer participation in a social media context. This research investigates the causal relationship between predictors of customer social participation and customer participation in brand communities on social media. It also examines the effect of customer participation in social media brand communities on brand trust, brand commitment and word of mouth.

Bruhn et al. (2014) point out the need to explore brand related determinants more deeply. Shim et al. (2015) suggested the need to identify the potential antecedents and outcomes related to the brand communities. Similarly, Kang et al. (2014, p.153) suggested that there is a need to investigate how brand trust and other variables together influence the relationship between community participation and brand commitment.

Thus, the research question in this respect was:

- (a) Does SNSs participation motivations lead to customer participation in social media brand communities?
- (b) If yes (or no), how does customer participation in social media brand communities is related to brand trust, brand commitment and word of mouth?

Objective 4: To determine whether brand trust mediates the relationship between customer social participation in brand communities and the outcome variables (brand commitment, word of mouth).

The last objective is to understand the mediation effect if any, produced by brand trust between customer social participation and its two outcomes variables (brand commitment and word of mouth). A number of researchers call for investigating the existence of constructs that have some mediating effects associated with online participation or other constructs in brand communities (Bruhn et al., 2014; Laroche et al., 2012, Laroche et al., 2013). Literature provides evidence in favor of the fact that brand trust has a significant influence on both brand commitment (Kang et al., 2014) and word of mouth (Agag & El-Masry, 2016; Hur et al., 2011).

Existing literature also suggest that customer participation in brand communities on social media has a significant influence on brand trust (Kang et al., 2014; Laroche et al., 2012, 2013), brand commitment (Ha, 2004; Jahn & Kunz, 2012; Kang et al., 2014) and word of mouth (Agag & El-Masry, 2016; Jahn & Kunz, 2012; Woisetschläger et al., 2008; Yeh & Choi, 2011). Therefore, it is considered that brand trust acts as a mediating variable between CSP and its outcome variables. It means in reality, it is the brand trust that defines brand commitment and word of mouth. All the research objectives are depicted in Figure 1.3.

1.4 RESEARCH QUESTIONS

Keeping in view the gaps identified from existing body of customer participation in social media brand communities literature, the present research has been entitled “*Modelling and Measuring of Customer Participation in Social Media Brand Communities*”. To achieve the research objectives mentioned above in Section 1.3 of this Chapter, four research questions have been formulated (Figure 1.4). These research questions give a step-by-step direction to the researcher for solving the research problem in a defined manner.

RQ1: How customer participation in social media brand communities is conceptualized in existing literature?

RQ2: How to measure customer social participation in e-travel service companies brand communities?

RQ3: How to operationalized customer participation in social media brand communities?

RQ4: Does brand trust mediates the relationship between customer social participation and the outcome variables (brand commitment and word of mouth)?

All these four research questions are depicted in Figure 1.4.

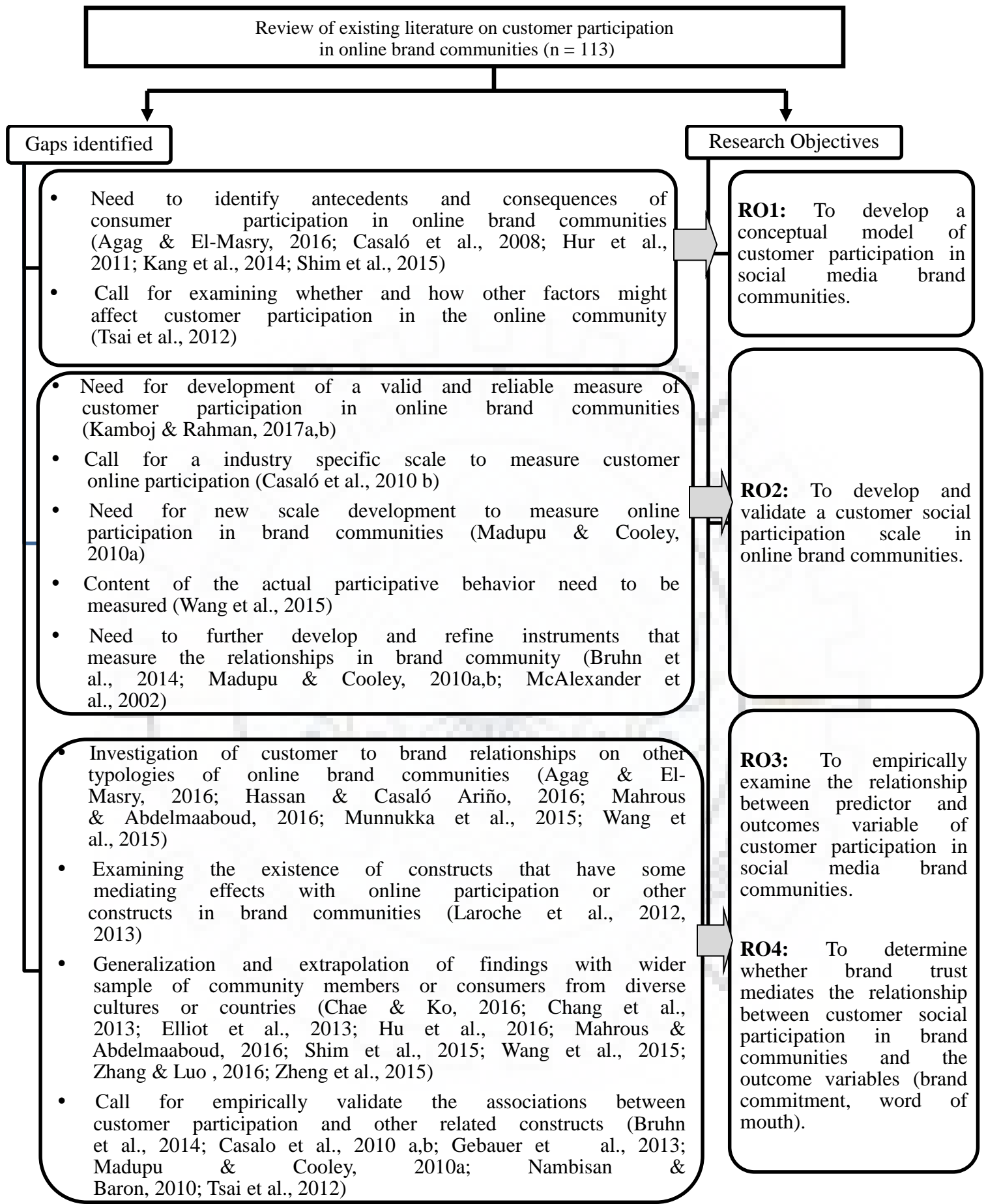


Figure 1.3: Conversion of research gaps into research objectives

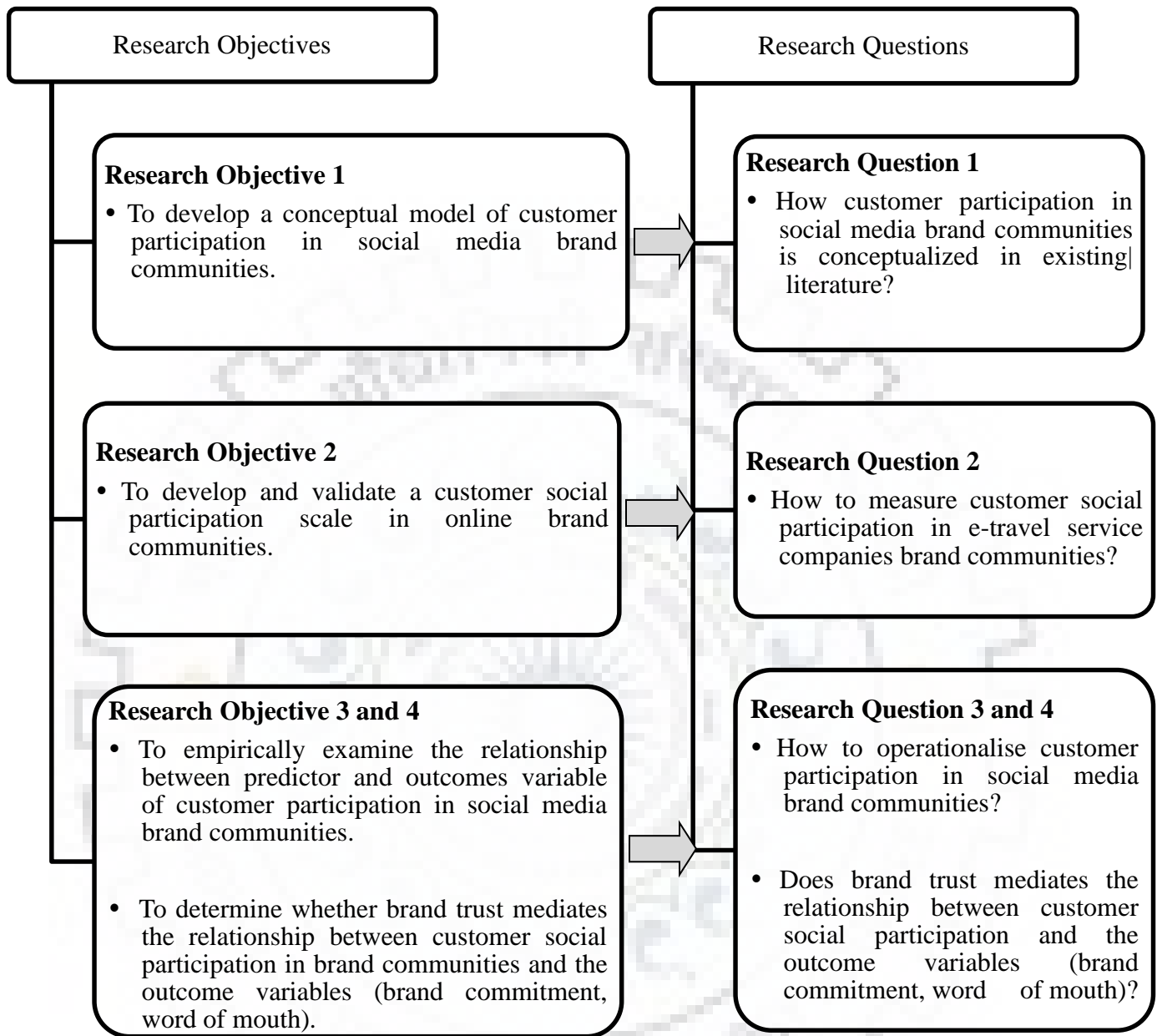


Figure 1.4: Schematic representation of research objectives and research questions

1.5 DEFINITIONS OF KEY TERMS

The key terms used in this research are defined below.

1.5.1 SNSs Participation Motivations

Motivations for participating on SNSs such as Facebook, Twitter include building interpersonal relationship, brand likeability, entertainment, information seeking and incentives (Alhabash et al., 2012; Muntinga et al., 2011; Yuan et al., 2016).

1.5.1.1 Building interpersonal relationship

According to Chae and Ko (2016, p. 3796), relationship-building refers to “individuals' use of SNSs to more easily connect with people and to better maintain their connections”.

1.5.1.2 Brand likeability

According to Nguyen et al. (2013, p. 372), brand likeability defined as, “a brand strategy based on attractiveness, credibility, and expertise in order to create attachment and love by delivering beneficial outcomes for consumers and brands alike”.

1.5.1.3 Entertainment

According to Chae and Ko (2016, p. 3796), entertainment refers to “use of SNSs to fill time, derive hedonistic pleasure, relax, and have fun”.

1.5.1.4 Incentive

According to Kang et al., (2014, p. 148), “Incentives are offered as a part of special treatment or individualized services”.

1.5.1.5 Information seeking

According to Chae and Ko (2016, p. 3796), information-seeking refers to “quests to acquire information that satisfies curiosity, fulfills general interests, and explains current news and cultural events”.

1.5.2 Customer Social Participation

According to Chae and Ko (2016, p. 3805), customer participation on social media known as customer social participation and defines it as, “an effort to achieve co-creation of values through required but the voluntary interactive participation of the customers in service production and delivery process in social media”.

1.5.3 Brand Trust

According to Delgado-Ballester (2001, p. 11), brand trust defined as, “feeling of security held by the consumer in his/her interaction with the brand, that it is based on the perceptions that the brand is reliable and responsible for the interests and welfare of the consumer”.

1.5.4 Brand Commitment

According to Beatty and Kahle (1988, p. 4) brand commitment defined as, “an emotional or psychological attachment of consumers to a specific brand within a product class”.

1.5.5 Word of Mouth

According to Anderson (1998, p. 6) word of mouth refers to, “informal communications between private parties concerning evaluations of goods and services rather than formal complaints to firms and/or personnel”.

1.5.6 Online Communities

According to Ridings et al. (2002, p. 273), online communities can be defined as, “groups of people with common interests and practices that communicate regularly and for some duration in an organized way over the Internet through a common location or mechanism”.

1.5.7 Virtual Communities

According to Rheingold (1993, p. 6), virtual communities defines as “social aggregations that emerge from the net when enough people carry on those public discussions long enough, with sufficient human feelings, to form webs of personal relationships in cyberspace. A virtual community is a group of people who may or may not meet one another face to face, and who exchange words and ideas through the mediation of computer bulletin boards and networks”.

1.5.8 Online Travel Communities

According to Wang et al. (2002, p. 407) defined online travel communities as “online communities where users attempt to fulfil their travel-related tasks, ranging from seeking travel information and tips, making travel transactions, fostering relationships with people from far away, finding travel companions, or simply playing games for entertainment purposes”.

1.5.9 Brand Communities

According to Muniz and O’Guinn (2001, p. 423) defined brand communities as “a specialized, non-geographically bound community, based on a structured set of social relations among admirers of a brand.”

1.5.10 Social Media

According to Kaplan and Haenlein (2010, p.61), social media is “a group of internet based applications that builds on the ideological and technological foundations of Web 2.0, and it allows the creation and exchange of user-generated content”.

1.5.11 Social Networking Sites (SNSs)

According to Lenhart and Madden (2007, p. 1), a social network site is defined as “an online place where a user can create a profile and build a personal network that connects him or her to other users”.

1.5.12 Social Media Brand Communities

According to Laroche et al. (2012, p. 1755), “social media brand communities are communities initiated on the platform of social media”.

In addition to the general definitions given above, some key definitions of the term ‘online community’ and ‘social media brand community’ as given in existing literature are provided below in Table 1.1.

Table 1.1: Some key definitions of online community and social media brand community in literature

Author/Year	“Online community definition in the 21st Century”
Jones and Rafaeli (2000, p. 216)	“A symbolically delineated computer-mediated space where people interact with each other by participating in and contributing to the community.”
Williams and Cottrell (2000, p. 81)	“Groups of people who engage in many-to-many interactions online.”
Preece (2000, p. 10)	“An online community consists of people interacting socially and sharing a purpose, of policies to guide these interactions, and of computer systems to facilitate the sense of togetherness.”
Preece (2001, p. 348)	“Any virtual social space where people come together to get and give information or support, to learn or to find company.”
Balasubramanian and Mahajan (2001, p. 108)	“Any entity that exhibits all of the following characteristics: an aggregation of people, rational utility-maximizers, interaction without physical collocation.”
Boetcher et al. (2002, p. 3)	“The gathering of people, in an online space, where they communicate, connect, and get to know each other better over time.”
Ridings et al. (2002,	“Groups of people with common interests and practices, who communicate

- p. 273) regularly and for some duration in an organized way over the Internet through a common location or mechanism.”
- Bagozzi and Dholakia (2002, p. 3) “Mediated social spaces in the digital environment that allow groups to form and be sustained primarily through an ongoing communication process.”
- Lee et al. (2003, p. 51) “A cyberspace supported by computer-based information technology centered upon communication and interaction of participants to generate member-driven content, resulting in a relationship being built.”
- Kang et al. (2007, p. 114) “A social group or organization, where people voluntarily become a member and participate in interaction activities with other members to exchange desired benefits they seek through a chosen community.”
- Kim et al. (2008, p. 410) “An aggregation of people who share a common interest and communicate through electronic mailing lists, chat rooms, Internet user groups or any other computer-mediated mechanism.”
- Porter and Donthu (2008, p. 115) “An aggregation of individuals or business partners who interact based on a shared interest, where the interaction is at least partially supported or mediated by technology and guided by certain protocols and norms.”
- Lee and Lee (2010, p. 713) “A group of people who regularly interact online and share common goals, ideas, and values, and thus extended the concept of community to the online realm.”
- Malinen (2015, p. 228) “Online communities are understood as web-based online services with features that enable members to communicate with each other.”

Social media brand community definition

- Luo et al. (2015, p. 493) “The combination of both brand community and social media brings out the brand community based on social media, whose distinctive platform for hundreds of thousands of consumers who share common interests about brands is the main differentiator compared with the traditional brand community.”
- Laroche et al. (2012, p. 1755) “Social media based brand communities are communities initiated on the the platform of social media.”
- “The combination of both brand community and social media leads to a concept that we call social media based brand community, which is a subset of the broader concept of “virtual communities” or online brand communities; but the main differentiator is their platforms. The core the platform of social media is Web 2.00 plus User Generated Content.”
- Laroche et al. (2013, p. 77) “The intersection of brand communities and social media leads to a concept that we call social media based brand community.”
- Sung et al. (2010, p. 433) “Virtual brand communities on social network sites, in particular, are now so popular that they attract many users with the common interest of engaging in community activities.”
- Kamboj and Rahman (2016, p. 4) “Social media brand communities involve two components: first, social media, and second, brand community.”
-

1.6 METHODOLOGY ADOPTED FOR THE PRESENT RESEARCH

The main objectives of the present research are to: (1) to develop a conceptual model of customer participation in social media brand communities, (2) to develop and validate a

customer social participation scale in online brand communities, (3) to empirically examine the relationship between predictor and outcomes variable of customer participation in social media brand communities (4) to determine whether brand trust mediates the relationship between customer social participation in brand communities and the outcome variables (brand commitment, word of mouth). In order to achieve these objectives, the researcher employed qualitative research method (i.e., focus group discussion) and quantitative research method. The detail regarding both qualitative and quantitative research methods are given in Chapter 4 and Chapter 5.

As a part of quantitative research method, a systematic scale development method recommended by Churchill (1979) and DeVellis (2012) was followed. The method has been followed in numerous other scale development studies (e.g., Baldus et al., 2015). Exploratory Factor Analysis (EFA) and Confirmatory Factor Analysis (CFA) were used to reduce items and validate the measurement scale (Mohanty and Sahney, 2015). Finally, to examine the influence of customer social participation on brand trust, brand commitment and word of mouth, an advanced modeling technique called structural equation modeling (SEM) was employed with the help of AMOS 20.0 software. SEM tests a theoretically hypothesized model using a two-step procedure where the first step tests whether the identified set of observed variables can define the underlying constructs (or latent variables) and the second step tests the relation among the hypothesized latent variables based on various model fitness parameters. Data for scale development and hypotheses testing were collected using questionnaire based survey approach.

1.7 OVERVIEW OF PRESENT RESEARCH

The present research commenced with an extensive review of customer participation in social media brand communities studies. Based on the gaps identified from the literature, the researcher framed research objectives and research questions. Qualitative research (i.e., phase I) was performed first to explore the concept of customer participation in social media brand communities by identifying its dimensions. Based on qualitative research (i.e., focus group discussions), this research identified three dimensions that constitute customer participation in travel brand communities on social media. Next, to measure customer participation in travel brand communities on social media, a measurement model was developed using quantitative research methods (i.e., phase II).

The present research adopted a scale development procedure to develop and validate the measurement instrument for customer participation in travel brand communities on social media dimensions that have been identified in phase I of this research. Details of the research methodology (i.e., research design; data collection methods; sampling design; scaling techniques; and questionnaire design) have been presented for each stage of scale development procedure. The scale development procedure includes item generation, item reduction, initial validation, and final validation of the scale items. Items were generated by conducting a review of online travel communities and customer participation in social media brand communities literature and referring to the qualitative study. Next, to perform item reduction, initial validation, and final validation studies, data were collected through questionnaire-based survey. Further, screening of data was done to get usable data. The usable data were analyzed using several statistical techniques such as EFA, CFA, and SEM.

Through such techniques, the researcher examined internal consistency, unidimensionality, reliability, convergent validity, and discriminant validity. As a result, a reliable and valid instrument was developed to measure customer participation in travel brand communities on social media. Further, the present research examined the nomological validity of the developed model by measuring the influence of customer participation in social media travel brand communities on brand trust, brand commitment, and word-of-mouth constructs.

Findings showed a significant and positive effect of customer participation in social media travel brand communities on brand trust, brand commitment, and word-of-mouth, thus establishing the nomological validity of the developed model. A flow diagram of research and research framework is presented in Figure 1.5, Figure 1.6 to provide an overview of the entire research work undertaken.

1.8 CHAPTER ORGANIZATION OF THESIS

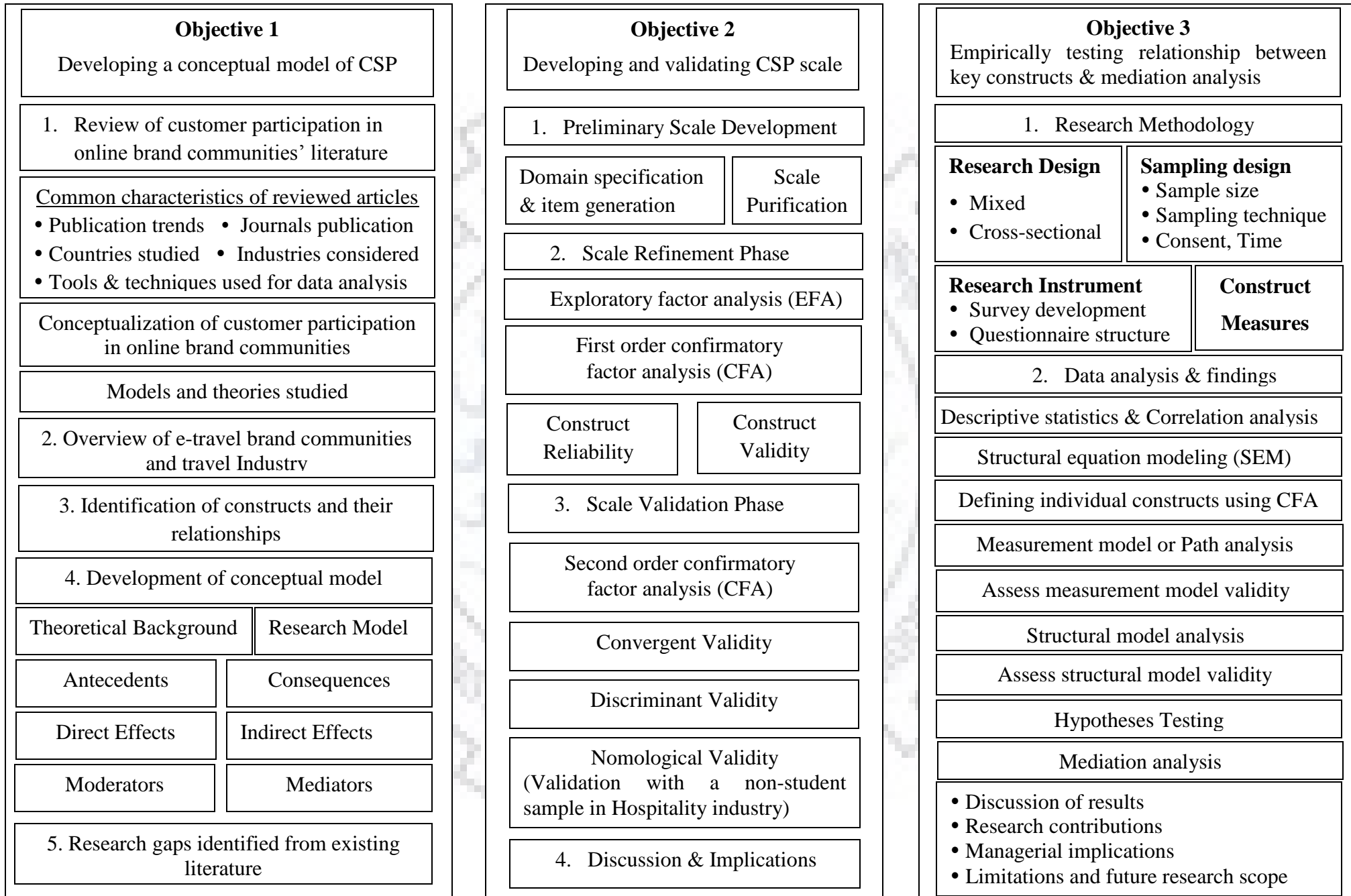
The research work undertaken in the present research has been covered in seven chapters as shown in Figure 1.7. A brief overview of every chapter is provided below:

Chapter One

This chapter presents an introduction to the present research with the motivations behind undertaking this research. It also presents the research gaps and scope of the present research.

Figure 1.5 Flow diagram of research

Research problem: Modeling and measuring customer participation in social media brand communities



Outcomes: Conceptualization of customer social participation (CSP) in brand communities of e-travel services; identification of various antecedents and consequences of CSP; Development and validation of CSP scale; empirically testing of CSP model and confirming the mediation effect of brand trust in CSP model.

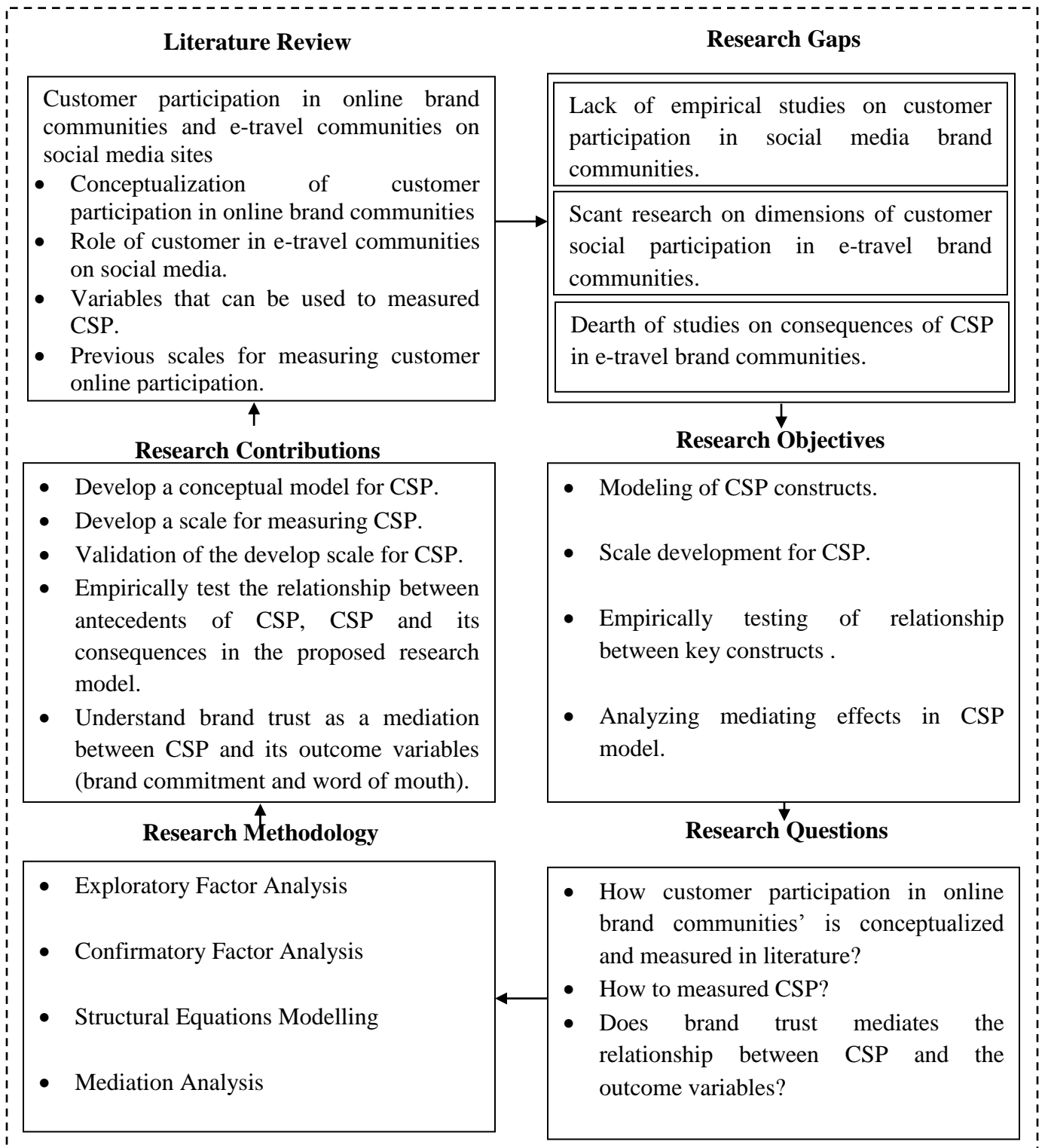


Figure 1.6: Overall research framework for the present study

In addition, this chapter also provides contributions of this research and a brief overview of the entire thesis and its organization.

Chapter Two

This chapter presents an in-depth review of extant literature on customer participation in online brand communities. It discusses common characteristics of reviewed articles, theories and model used in prior studies, antecedents, mediators, moderators and consequences of customer participation used in earlier studies, identify the major research gaps, and presented them as a future research agenda.

Chapter Three

This chapter describes a conceptual framework developed on the basis of literature review. Various hypotheses are proposed based on the existence of relationships among key constructs of this research in the literature.

Chapter Four

This chapter discusses the various methodologies adopted to achieve all objectives of the present research. In addition, it also includes the details of research design, data collection methods, scaling techniques, instrument design and sample design.

Chapter Five

This chapter explains the development and validation of customer social participation in online travel communities' scale. In this chapter, the scale development and validation process include three main steps: (1) item generation (2) scale refinement and (3) scale validation.

Chapter Six

Chapter six illustrating the empirical testing of CSP model based on the relationship between antecedent variables (SNSs participation motivations), customer social participation in brand communities and its outcome variables (brand trust, brand commitment and word of mouth). Additionally, in this chapter, mediation analysis is also performed to understand the direct and indirect effects of antecedents and consequences.

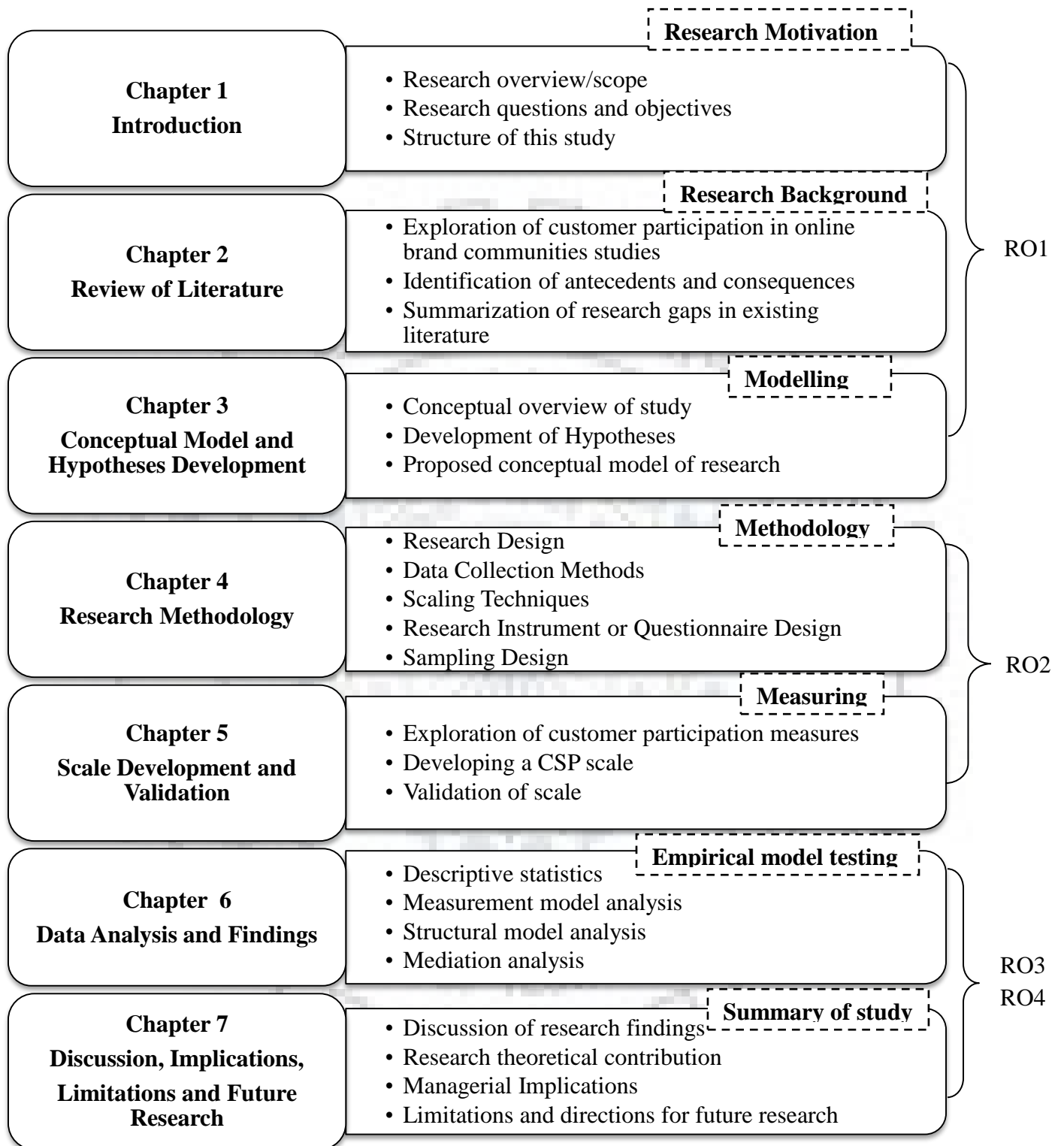


Figure 1.7: Schematic presentations of thesis chapters

Chapter Seven

This chapter provides the entire summary of present research findings, conclusion and discussions about main findings. In addition, in this chapter implications (theoretical and managerial) for both theory and practice have been described in detail along with research limitations and future research directions.

1.9 CONCLUSION

In today's scenario of intense competition when companies have recognized the relevance of involving customers in their operations, academics and practitioners suggest that engaging customers and ensuring more participation of customer in their brand communities may be an effective way to gain competitive advantage. Companies have started using social media brand communities for involving and connecting their current and potential customers in their companies' processes. In this research, the importance of customer participation in the context of online travel communities has been stressed. There is a need for such research that may assist academics and e-travel companies to understand the customer participation in travel communities on social media, and examining their influence on brand and consumer behavioral outcomes. Thus, the present research is an attempt to investigate the customer participation in social media brand communities concept in the context of travel communities, which would act as a foundation for further studies in this area. This chapter provides a complete overview of the work undertaken in this thesis; it includes the development of a model for measuring the influence of customer participation in social media brand communities on consumer behavior in travel brand communities.

CHAPTER 2 LITERATURE REVIEW

The purpose of this chapter is to present a systematic review of customer participation research specifically in online brand communities and summarize a number of basic issues as important research gaps that future research should address. By using the content analysis method, this research explores, analyses and presents a literature review by closely examining 113 articles published during 2001-2016, primarily from the leading marketing and management journals. Findings of this review show that regardless of the plenty of studies in this area a conceptual framework for customer participation is undetermined. This review presents a framework describing various antecedents, mediators, moderators, and consequences of online brand community participation. Apart from this, various theories and models used in the reviewed articles are being depicted. The literature classification presented in this research portrays the current trends and patterns of research in this area. It also includes a brief overview of the online brand communities and Indian hotel industry. Gaps identified from existing body of literature have also been presented. This chapter provides the basis for the present research and may guide the future researchers as well. Outline of this chapter is given below in Figure 2.1.

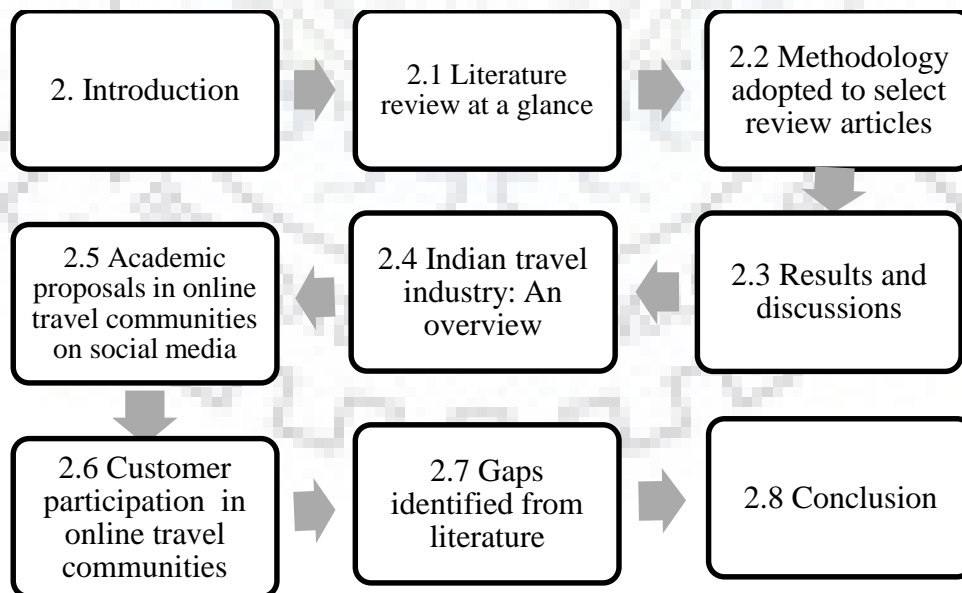


Figure 2.1: Structure of Chapter 2

2. INTRODUCTION

The growing interactivity and usage of Web pages during past decade has made possible speedy and simple communication among internet users, therefore, has led to the emerging concept of “online brand communities”. In the era of information technology, with the emergence of new technologies (Bahl et al., 2011), the internet, and social media these online brand communities are becoming popular worldwide. Online brand communities are understood as a “specialized, non-geographically bound community, based on a structured set of social relations among admirers of a brand” (Muniz & O’Guinn, 2001, p. 412). From a historical perspective, online brand communities were created on the companies’ web portals, Web 1.0 platform, or established by customers. Consequently, online brand communities often understood as a forum where customers consume content passively. However, with the emergence of social media, companies start to use social networking sites in order to support the formation of brand communities using Web 2.0 platform along with user-generated content. Thus, social media supports online brand communities and community members themselves via their active participation create content (Kamboj & Rahman, 2016). This creation of content forms the nature of the community and decides the influences of participants and users on each other (Bagozzi & Dholakia, 2002).

One of the most challenging and interesting aspects of online brands communities is their dependence on user-generated content because every individual now can perform as a creator of content on social networking sites. The key challenge for any online brand community provider is to encourage participation and to create a thriving community. Thus, it becomes an important question to know that what makes members participate in the context of online brand communities. Overall, social networking sites have significantly altered the role of the customer by breaking up the difference in producers and consumers of media (Lee et al., 2011a) and generating customers who participate by creating and flowing content the vital constituent of social media. Thus, for the sustainability of online brand communities, the participation of their members is necessary (Nambisan & Baron, 2009).

Marketing Science Institute mentioned “customer engagement” as an important research priority area in their list of research priorities 2016-2018, 2014-2016 and 2010-12 (MSI, 2010, 2014, 2016). Further, Vivek et al. (2012, p. 133) defined customer engagement as “the intensity of an individual’s participation in and connection with an organization’s offerings and/or

organizational activities, which either the customer or the organization initiate”. It implies affective, cognitive, behavioral and social factors that connect the customer with a brand and its community. The affective, cognitive parts of consumer engagement include feelings and experience of customers and social, behavioral parts incorporate current and potential customers’ participation (Vivek et al., 2012). Kang et al. (2014) also propose customer participation in online brand communities as an emerging research field, which requires scholarly attention. However, the concept of customer participation in online communities stands new to the academic world. Undoubtedly, studies on customer participation in online communities have mainly been published in the past few years.

Despite the popularity of this concept among practitioners and academicians, there is the lack of systematic literature review that could present the current scenario of customer participation in online communities’ research and the direction in which this area can be further taken forward. Consequently, this research aims to review customer participation in online communities’ research in the existing literature. This review contributes to the academic in several ways. It provides gainful insights about the present status of customer participation in online communities research by different classification schemes; describes the conceptualization of this concept, various theories, and models used in reviewed articles, antecedents and consequences of customer participation suggested by existing studies and summarizes a number of important issues which future studies need to investigate.

In the present research, the main objective of this review is twofold: first, to describe the current state of customer participation research; second to summarize a number of significant research gaps in the field of customer participation in online brand communities that future research should focus on. The present research tries to examine empirical results available on customers’ participation in the online brand community so far to present an outline of the research subject, methods along with future research implications.

2.1 LITERATURE REVIEW AT A GLANCE

A review of the literature has been performed to gain insights into the area of customer participation in online brand communities on social media. Also, researcher provided an overview of the travel industry in this section. The literature on customer participation in brand communities on social media has been presented under following headings: a literature review of

customer participation in brand communities on social media studies and results (see Figure 2.2). While providing an overview of the travel industry, the researcher discussed the classification of travel service providers in India, academic proposals in online travel communities on social media, customer participation in online travel communities. This literature review on customer participation in brand communities on social media research entailed a comprehensive study of 113 articles published in various peer-reviewed journals. On the basis of the literature review, gaps have been identified in this domain from the existing research. The literature review offers academics a clear understanding of the position at which customer participation in social media brand communities research stands, and suggests areas in which further research needs to be conducted.

2.2 METHODOLOGY

This research covers a systematic review of the literature on customer participation in online brand communities. The classification of literature is depicted in Figure 2.2. In management area, narrative literature reviews are criticized widely due to the subjectivity in the selection of articles. In a systematic review, there are always two main steps. First, deciding inclusion criteria and second, selection of databases and studies (Kamboj & Rahman, 2015). This systematic review is based on transparent and replicable steps.

2.2.1 The Inclusion Criteria

In this research, the researcher used four criteria to identify the probable articles on customer participation in online brand communities, which are as follows.

1. Be a paper published during 2001- 2016 in a refereed or peer-reviewed journal. As a result, other published sources such as working papers, reports and publication of government or other firms, textbooks, conference proceedings, doctoral and master dissertations were not included.
2. For customer participation, this research considered literature in the context of online brand communities only. Thus, studies conducted on customer participation other than online brand communities were not considered.
3. Both conceptual and empirical studies in different countries and industries were considered for this review. In addition, in this research, the researcher did not force any

restriction for data analysis tools employed by the authors of empirical papers – both econometric and descriptive statistics methods were considered.

4. Deals with studies in which any of brand related (e.g., brand loyalty, word of mouth), consumer-related (e.g., consumer loyalty, consumer trust) and community-related context (e.g., the consciousness of kind, moral responsibility) is taken as dependent variable.

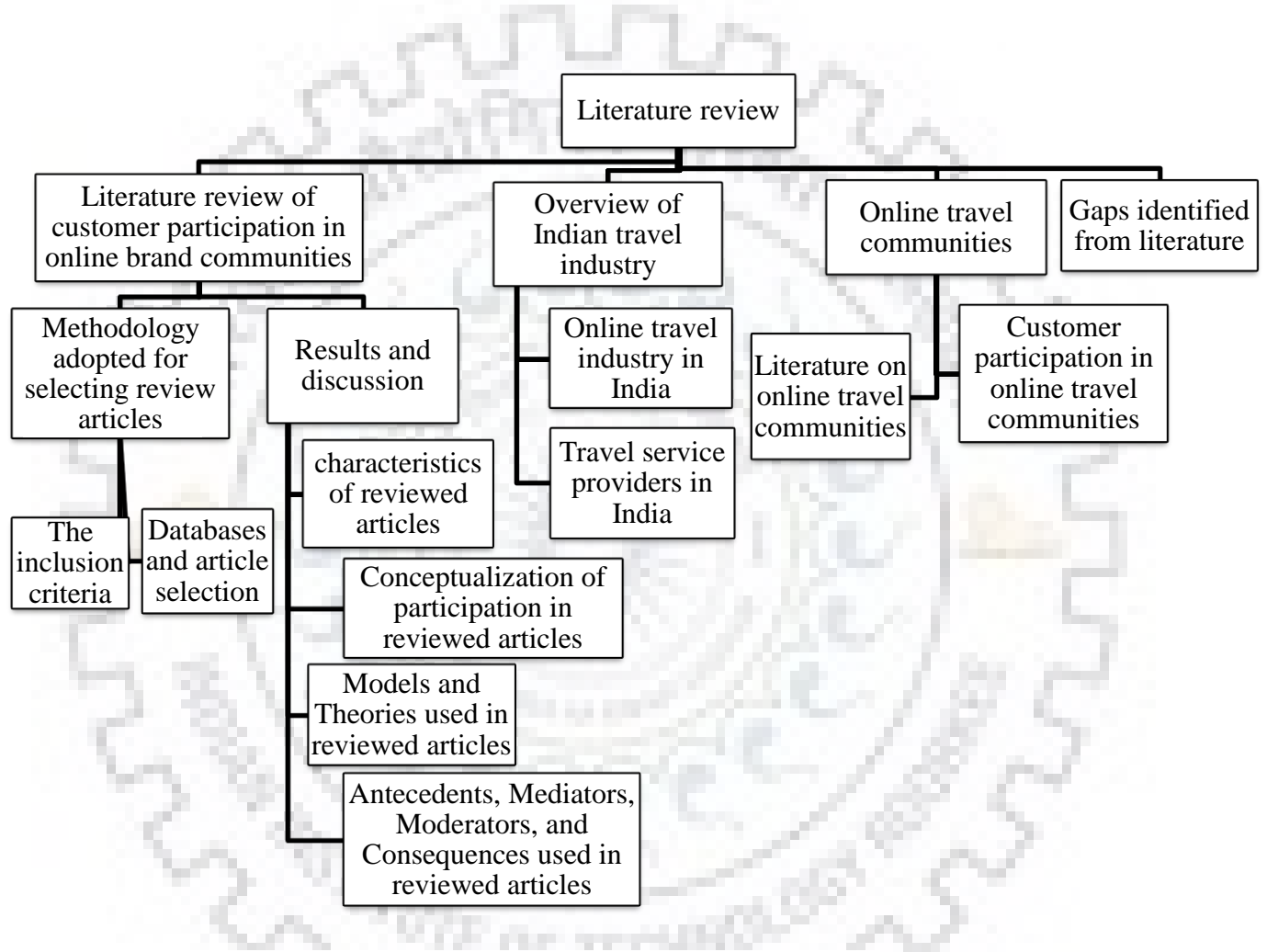


Figure 2.2: Classification of literature

2.2.2 Selection of Databases and Articles

For this review, three steps were used to select databases and articles. First, the researcher explored papers in four leading academic databases including EBSCO, Elsevier’s Science Direct, Emerald, and Scopus. The papers were searched in the “article title, abstract, and keywords” section of above-mentioned databases using keywords as “customer participation”; “consumer

participation”; “user participation”; “member participation”; “customer social participation”, “customer participation on social media”, and “brand community participation” in an online community, virtual community or online brand community.

These keywords were explored with the subject limits of “Business, management, and accounting”; “Social Sciences”; and “Psychology”. Second, researcher carry out a systematic search for the studies published during 2001- 2016 in five reputed journals in this field, namely, “Journal of Business Research”, “Journal of the Academy of Marketing Science” , “Computers in Human Behaviour”, “Internet Research” and “International Journal of Research in Marketing”. Finally, researcher considered citations of papers identified from previous two steps as further sources.

The selection of papers to be considered for review from above three steps was made on the basis of double screening which is shown in Figure 2.3. With this process, the researcher obtained 220 articles that were probably significant for the review. First, researcher assessed the papers on the basis of title and abstract. This resulted in the elimination of 81 articles. The researcher then performed a detailed study of remaining 139 articles to remove the papers, which do not satisfy our inclusion criteria. This led to the exclusion of 26 articles. Therefore, the resultant 113 papers that satisfied all four inclusion criteria, were considered for the review. An outline of article’s selection procedure is shown in Figure 2.3.

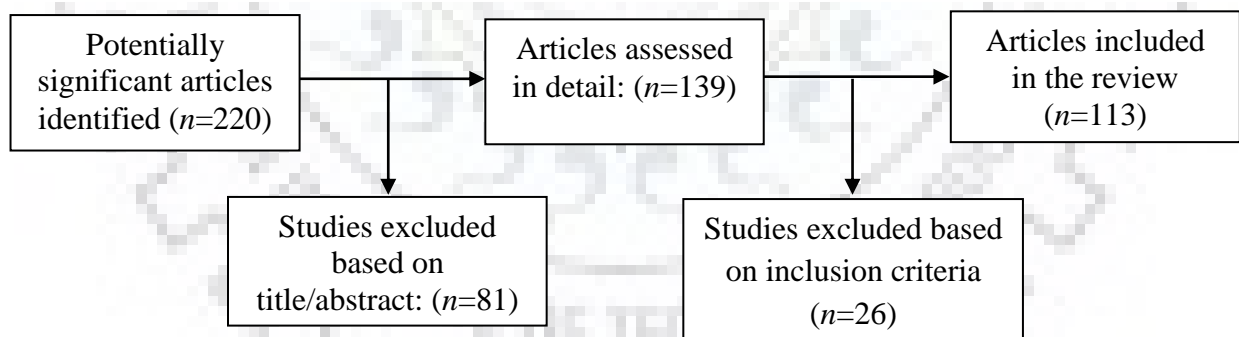


Figure 2.3: Flow diagram of article selection

2.3 RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

The results for 113 articles in form of discussions are discussed below. It includes some common characteristics, participation conceptualization, theories, antecedents, mediator, moderator and consequence used in reviewed articles.

2.3.1 Some Common Characteristics of Reviewed Articles

It includes distribution of articles by publication trend, journal-wise, country-wise, industry-wise and data analysis tools.

2.3.1.1 Distribution of articles by publication trend

The articles were categorized by year basis from 2001 to 2016 to identify the publication trend of academic research in online brand communities' participation within the purview of social media as depicted in Figure 2.4. The first study was published in 2001 and was considered as an initial point. It is also cleared from the analysis that research in this area has grown abruptly in the past six years (2011-2016). Out of 113 selected papers, more than 50 percent articles were published in this time. A significant number of articles have been published during 2012 (10 articles), 2013 (13 articles), 2014 (11 articles), 2015 (10 articles) and 2016 (14 articles).

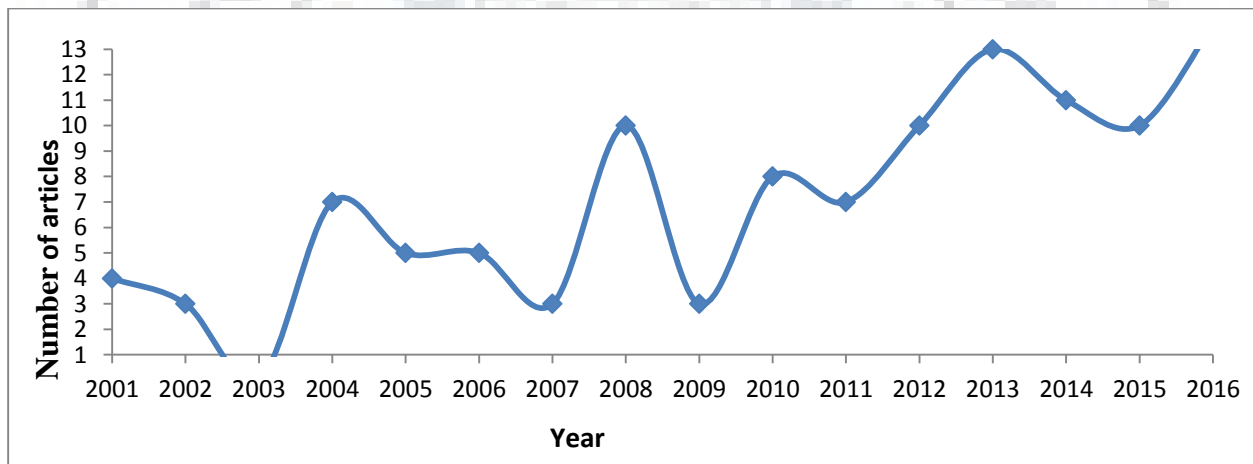


Figure 2.4: Distribution of articles by publication trend

2.3.1.2 Distribution of articles by countries

All the empirical studies were further classified based on countries investigated across selected time. This country-wise distribution of articles revealed that majority of studies in the area were conducted in the US (22), in China (13), in Taiwan (9), in Korea (8), and Germany (8). The analysis of selected articles in terms of investigated countries depicted that all articles were distributed over 22 different countries (Figure 2.5). Thus, this figure clearly shows the growing significance of the area all over the world. Various countries have used this emerging area for conducting research in their country. Some articles were general in nature and were not country

specific consequently the number of research papers in this category is less than the total 113 papers.

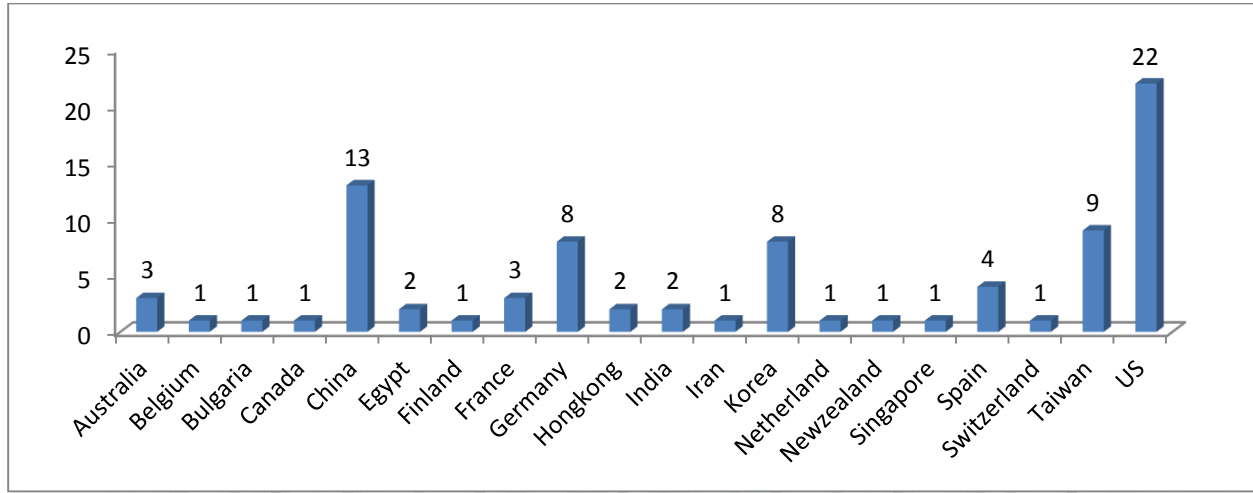


Figure 2.5: Distribution of articles by countries investigated

2.3.1.3 Distribution of articles by industries

The analysis of 113 articles in terms of industry depicted that all articles were distributed over 25 different industries (Figure 2.6). The majority of articles 19 articles have conducted research with the online brand community in multi-industry (e.g., Casalo et al., 2008; Habibi et al., 2014b).

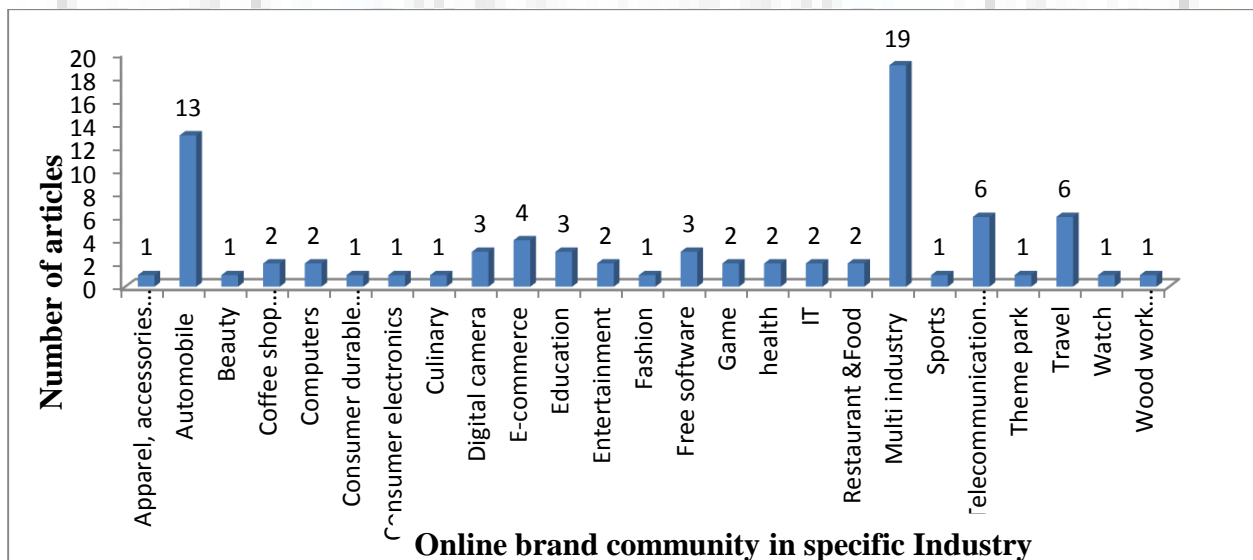


Figure 2.6: Distribution of articles by industries investigated

2.3.1.4 Distribution of articles by journals

The distribution of articles in selected journals in terms of time are shown in Table 2.1. Total 113 articles are being distributed in 53 top marketing peer reviewed journals. Out of 113, maximum articles (20) are published in Computers in Human Behavior and in Journal of Business Research (15 articles). Thus, distribution of all selected articles among these 53 different journals shows the multidisciplinary nature of this area.

Table 2.1: Distribution of articles by journals

Journal Name	2001-2004	2005-2008	2009-2012	2013-2016	Total
American Behavioral Scientist	1				1
Communications of Association Information Systems		1			1
Community College Review		1			1
Computers in Human Behavior	1	4	6	9	20
Corporate Communications: An International Journal		1			1
Current Issues in Tourism				1	1
Cyber Psychology, Behavior, and Social Networking			1		1
Decision Support Systems		1		1	2
Electronic Markets	1				1
Industrial Management and Data Systems		1			1
Industrial Marketing Management				1	1
Information and Management				2	2
Information and Software Technology			1		1
Information Systems Research			1		1
Information Technology and People				1	1
International Journal of Hospitality Management				1	1
International Journal of Human-Computer Studies	1	1			2
International Journal of Information Management			1	2	3
International Journal of Research in Marketing	1	1		1	3
Internet Research		1	1	4	6
Journal of the Academy of Marketing Science			1		1
Journal of Brand Management			2		2
Journal of Business Research		1	3	11	15
Journal of Computer-Mediated Communication		1			1
Journal of Consumer Research	1				1
Journal of Educational Technology and Society		1			1
Journal of Interactive Marketing	1	2			3
Journal of International Consumer Marketing			1		1
Journal of Internet Commerce			1		1
Journal of Marketing	1	1	1		3
Journal of Marketing Communications		1	1		2
Journal of Marketing For Higher Education		1			1
Journal of Marketing Management		1			1
Journal of Product and Brand Management	1				1

Journal of Product Innovation Management	1	1			2
Journal of Promotion Management			2		2
Journal of Relationship Marketing	1				1
Journal of Service Management		1	1		2
Journal of Service Research		1			1
Journal of Travel Research	1				1
Management Decision		1			1
Management Science		1			1
Mind, Culture, and Activity	1				1
MIT Sloan Management Review			1		1
Online Information Review		1	2		3
Organization Science			1		1
Organization Studies		2			2
Psychology & Marketing				1	1
Service Business				1	1
Technovation			1		1
The Journal of Strategic Information Systems	1				1
The Marketing Review				1	1
Tourism Management	2		2		4
Total	14	27	32	40	113

2.3.1.5 Distribution of articles by data analysis tools

The selected articles were further analyzed based on data analysis tools applied (Figure 2.7). The figure depicted that majority of empirical articles have used structural equation modeling (SEM) Partial Least Squares (PLS) and regression analysis as a data analysis tool.

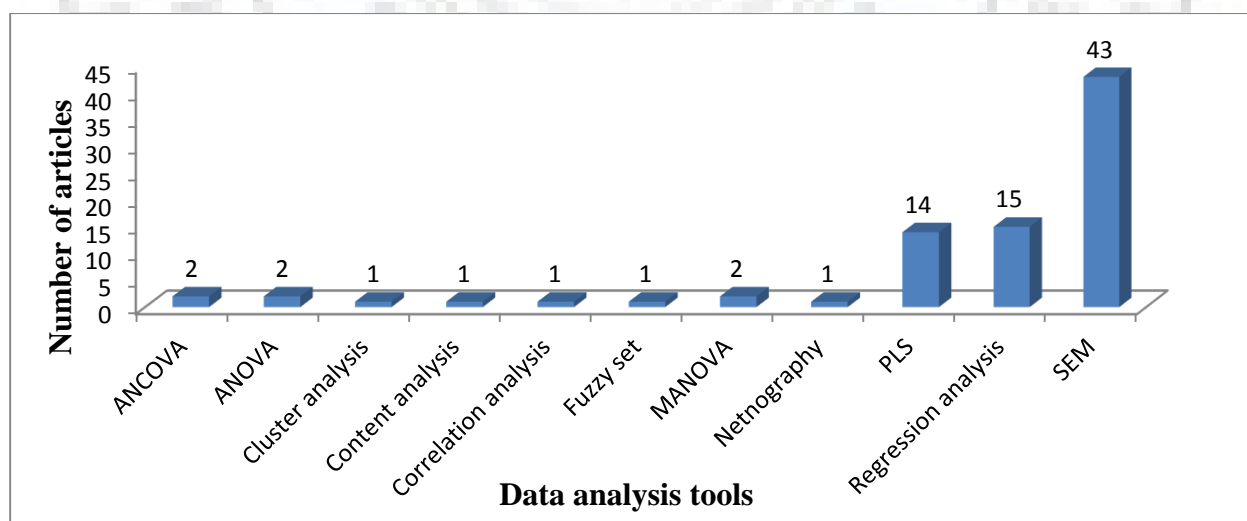


Figure 2.7: Distribution of articles by data analysis tools

More than 50 percent articles have used these three data analysis techniques. The number of research papers in this category is less than the total articles considered for the review, as some papers were general in nature and have not used any data analysis technique.

2.3.2 Conceptualization of Participation in Reviewed Articles

Prior marketing research has described participation in online communities with different perspectives. Initially, Kozinets (1999) described member participation as a tourist. In 1998, Okleshen and Grossbart suggested community interactions and observation frequencies as a different form of online community participation. Community interaction refers to how community users actively participate in its activities for instance conversation with other members and responding to the messages. Observation frequency refers to how members' make a visit to an online community instead of their participation. These two types of participation are vital for virtual communities and members' involvement determined via average duration, the total number of re-visitors, and regularity of chat (Chung & Buhalis, 2008). In line with prior discussion, passive members' contribution is limited to the success of the community.

Next, Wang and Fesenmaier (2004a) depicted three types of participants in online communities namely, Mingler, Devotee, and Insiders. In 2004, Preece et al explained two different types of participation in the online community: active and passive. Members who actively involved are extremely motivated to participate in virtual communities via their engagement in various activities, for instance, spreading information, posting messages, and assist the other members. Active participation of members leads to increase their understanding of brand (Muniz & O'Guinn, 2001), and therefore allows them to assist others in community via solving their problems regarding the usage of product and help them to take right decisions for purchase (Flavián & Guinalú, 2006), whereas passive members' surfing the online community and instead of contributing to the community activities they only get advantage of benefits offered by it. Passive members usually referred as "lurkers or free riders." The influence of user participation in social media brand communities. A community's popularity on social media is measured through the masses of free riders as they contribute to increase traffic on the website and raise clicks. These free riders not essentially contribute toward online communities' success (Ridings et al, 2006). Thus, converting lurkers into active participants could be an important goal

in making successful online communities (Kozinets, 1999). Therefore, the participation of active members' is an essential thing to create a thriving community virtually (Koh & Kim, 2004).

In the same line, Akkineu and Tuunainen (2005) explained two types of participation including lead user and active user. In the current discussion Gray (2004) provided the transformation concept of participation, which includes renovation from customer to the creator. The renovation from beginner to an experienced user or from passive to active poster has been also explained as touching from the periphery to core of the online community. After that, Shang et al. (2006), Tonteri et al. (2011) provided two more types in the discussion, reading, and posting.

Reading takes place to get help from the other participants and retrieving information in the virtual community. Posting including messages sending or share information and participants' own experiences in the online community. Later on, Nov et al. (2010) added two more types in the series i.e. sharing information with others and joining social structures. Shoham et al. (2013) specifically described participants' three types of consumption in a content community such as YouTube. These three types include interactive consumption by interactive users, passive consumption by passive users and active consumption by active users. Recently Kang et al. (2014), Kamboj and Rahman (2016) described the participation with a special focus on active members, they considered participation as "active member involvement" measured through the community interactions and level of observation frequencies. The detail regarding different categories of online community participants are given in Table 2.2

Table 2.2: "Categories of online brand community participants"

Authors and Years	Categories of participants	Description
Kozinets (1999)	Tourist	"Has weak social ties with other members"
Wang and Fesenmaier (2004a)	Mingler	"Has somewhat strong social bonds with their group and occasionally contributes to the community"
	Devotee	"Strongly tied to the other members, enthusiastic, and frequently participates in community activities"
	Insider	"Maintains very strong bonds with other members and very actively contributes to the community"
Koh and Kim (2004), Okleshen and Grossbart (1998)	Observation frequency	"Extent to which members visit an online community but do not participate in community activities"

	Community interactions	“Extent to which members actively participate in community activities, such as initiating conversations with others and replying to messages”
Burnett (2000), Preece et al. (2004), Ridings et al. (2006)	Lurker	“Free riders who take advantages of the community, but do not contribute to the community”
	Poster	“Participates in posting information and messages and has a higher willingness to provide information and exchange social support”
Akkinen and Tuunainen (2005)	Lead user	“Provides the necessary information to develop new products for their community”
	Active user	“Provides valuable information for new members”
Preece et al. (2004)	Passive members	“Who browse an online community and take advantage of the benefits offered, but do not contribute to community activities”
Gray (2004)	Transformation from consumer to creator	“The transformation from newcomer to experienced member or from lurker to the active poster has been also described as moving from periphery to the center of the community”
Shang et al. (2006), Tonteri et al. (2011)	Reading	“Reading discussion forums actively in order to get information and help from other participants of the virtual community”
	Posting	“Sending messages or answering questions to share information and own experiences in the virtual community”
Nov et al. (2010)	Sharing information with others in the community	“Contribution of content or information to a common pool created by the community and contribution of meta information (i.e. information about information), which is often done by adding tags to information goods such as photos or bookmarks”
	Joining social structures within the community	“The involvement of users in one-to-many relationships the creation of one-to-one ties with other members of the community by adding them as “friends” or “contacts” is another type of activity that reflects participation in communities such as Facebook”
Shoham et al. (2013)	Interactive user	“Employs content communities as an

	Passive user	interactive tool” “Takes place when users passively view the content similarly to television”
	Active user	“When users actively comment on the content but do not address their comments to other users”
Kang et al. (2014)	Active members	“Who actively participate, and their involvement gauged by the level of observation frequencies and community interactions”

2.3.3 Models and Theories Used in Reviewed Articles

In the reviewed articles various models and theories are used to study the social and psychological behavior of online community users and other stakeholders like customers. The details of these models and theories are described in Table 2.3. All of them are categorized under three groups; personal behavior, social behavior, and mass communication.

2.3.3.1 Theories related to the personal behavior

Those theories are included in the first group, which aims to describe the individual behavior at a personal level. As Table 2.3 reveals that in total, 23 theories are covered under this section. The majority of articles have used Technology Acceptance Model (TAM), to explain the perceived usefulness and perceived ease of use related to new one technology concerning an individuals’ attitude toward adoption. Thereafter trust theory was used in most of the articles including Füller et al. (2008), Porter and Donthu (2008), Ridings et al. (2002) and Wu et al. (2010).

Ajzen and Fishbein (1980) proposed a theory of reasoned action (TRA) to predict the behavior of an individual and believed it as a summation of the relative weights of their attitudes and subjective norms. This theory in reviewed articles explains the situation where individual intentionally participate in online community activities. The extended version of TRA is a theory of planned behavior (TPB), which explains that perceived behavior control is utilized to moderate the influence of subjective norms and attitudes on user behavior. In the reviewed papers context several authors used it to predict the behavior of users from intention to action.

2.3.3.2 Theories related to the social behavior

In this group, a total of 20 theories are included, which describe online users’ behavior towards the online community in social context. The detailed of all these theories are given in Table 2.3.

Some of the important theories of this section are discussed here. This section of social theory covers all social factors, for instance, social influence (e.g. social identity theory), social capital (e.g. social ties, social interaction theory). These social factors have extensively been used to explain individuals' intentions, attitudes, and actions in relation to participation adoption and online brand community usage for example in the research of Blanchard (2008) and Shiue et al. (2010) etc.

In the context of social media brand communities studies, social loafing theory is mainly used with social ties. This theory is used to explain that individual exerts minimum efforts when performing in the groups in compared to when they perform individually. Brand communities are considered as a platform for joint efforts, where user participation can be at minimum level. Shiue et al. (2010) used this theory to explain member group cohesion in the context of online communities.

2.3.3.3 Theories related to the mass communication

Mass communication exerts an important effect on user's behavior. In the reviewed studies, four types of theories were found to fit under this section, which is discussed below.

Table 2.3: Models and theories used in reviewed articles.

Theories and models	References
1. Theories related to personal behavior	
Activity theory	Barab et al. (2004)
Attribution theory	Porter and Donthu (2008)
Bond theory	Ren et al. (2007)
Commitment theory	Bateman et al. (2011), Füller et al. (2008), Jang et al. (2008)
Common identity	Ren et al. (2007)
Creativity theory	Füller et al. (2008),
Diffusion theory of innovations	Sun et al. (2006)
Ecological cognition model	Bishop (2007)
Existence, relatedness, growth theory	Hau and Kim (2011)
Expectation and disconfirmation paradigm	Chiu et al. (2011)
Goal-directed behavior model	Bagozzi and Dholakia (2002)
Innovation diffusion theory (IDT)	Agag and El-Masry (2016)
Loyalty theory	Hajli et al. (2017)
Relationship theory	Füller et al. (2008), Hajli et al. (2017), Zhang and Luo (2016)
Risk perception theory	Shiue et al. (2010)

Model of member incentives for active contribution	Wang and Fesenmaier (2004b)
Motivation model/theory	Chae and Ko (2016), Wang and Fesenmaier (2003)
Social cognitive theory	Chiu et al. (2006), Hsu et al. (2007) and Lin et al. (2009)
Technology acceptance model (TAM)	Agag and El-Masry (2016), Casaló et al. (2010), Casaló et al. (2011), Koh et al. (2007) and Teo et al. (2003)
Theory of planned behavior (TPB)	Casaló et al. (2010), Elliot et al. (2013)
Theory of reasoned action (TRA)	Hsu and Lu (2007)
Trust theory/Trust building model (TBM)	Füller et al. (2008), Porter and Donthu (2008), Ridings et al. (2002) and Wu et al. (2010)
Word of mouth theory	Kozinets et al. (2010)
3. Theories related to social behavior	
Cognitive map	Kang et al. (2007)
Cognitive overload theory	Li et al. (2016)
Community interactivity	Hu et al. (2016)
Consumer culture theory	Weijo et al. (2014)
Equity theory	Teichmann et al. (2015)
Involvement theory	Chaves (2006), Huang et al. (2010)
Justice theory	Chiu et al. (2011)
Self-categorization theory	Fiedler and Sarstedt (2014)
Self-construal theory	Hu et al. (2016)
Self-determination theory (SDT)	Hassan and Casaló Ariño (2016)
Social capital theory	Chiu et al. (2006), Hau and Kim (2011), Porter and Donthu (2008) and Wiertz and Ruyter (2007), Zhang and Luo (2016), Zhao et al. (2012)
Social exchange theory	Benoit et al. (2016), Blanchard (2008), Brown et al. (2007) and Lin et al. (2009)
Social identity theory	Blanchard (2008), Casaló et al. (2010) and Dholakia et al. (2004), Kim et al. (2008)
Social influence theory	Bagozzi and Dholakia (2002), Cheung et al. (2011) and Dholakia et al. (2004), Zhou (2011)
Social interaction theory	Chae and Ko (2016), Fischer and Reuber (2011), Shiue et al. (2010)
Social loafing	
Social network theory	Brown et al. (2007), Hsiao et al. (2010), Lee et al. (2011) and Toral et al. (2010)
Social presence theory	Cheung et al. (2011)
Social ties	Shiue et al. (2010)
Theory of organizational socialization	Liao et al. (2017)
4. Theories related to mass communication	
Media participation theory	Gebauer et al. (2013)
Media richness theory	Shiue et al. (2010)
Theory of uncertainty reduction	Adjei et al. (2010)

Media richness theory, “different communications media has different abilities to reproduce the information sent over them (Shiue et al., 2010, p. 772). Shiue et al. (2010) used this theory and suggests, social presence is the consequence of media richness. In general, Uses and Gratifications Theory (UGT) has been used for traditional media to know the behavior of the customer. In the context of the social media brand communities area, this theory is used to explain how to satisfy the needs of customers, as studied by Dholakia et al. (2004) and Porter & Donthu (2008).

2.3.4 Antecedents, Mediators, Moderators, and Consequences Used In Reviewed Articles

This section covers various identified antecedents, mediators, moderators and consequences under reviewed articles. A detailed framework of various variables that were studied in existing literature by a number of authors is depicted in Figure 2.8.

2.3.4.1 Antecedents

From the review of the literature, four categories of the antecedents of online brand communities’ participation have been found: social attributes, psychological attributes, hedonic attributes and functional attributes (Table 2.4).

Table 2.4: Constructs used as antecedents in online brand communities’ participation

Antecedents	References
1-Social attributes	
Co-member specific attribute	Benoit et al. (2016)
Communication	Casaló et al. (2008); Willi et al. (2013)
Compatibility	Agag and El-Masry (2016)
Interaction	Hu et al. (2016), Nambisan and Baron (2007)
Internalization	Bagozzi and Dholakia (2002), Dholakia et al. (2004), Zhou (2011)
Involvement	Kim et al. (2004), Shang et al. (2006)
Interpersonal connectivity	Chae and Ko (2016), Dholakia et al. (2004), Wu and Fang (2010)
Provider specific attribute	Benoit et al. (2016)
Relative advantages	Agag and El-Masry (2016)

Social Integration	Casaló et al. (2013), Kim et al. (2004), Madupu and Cooley (2010 b), Nambisan and Baron (2009)
Sociability and usability	Mahrous and Abdelmaaboud (2016)
Social needs/benefits	Kang et al. (2014), Wang and Fesenmaier (2004 a, b)
Social value	Jahn and Kunz (2012), Sicilia and Palazon (2008), Zhou et al. (2013)
Trust	Casaló et al. (2008), Mahrous and Abdelmaaboud (2016), Tsai et al. (2012), Wu et al. (2010)
2-Psychological attributes	
Affiliation	Tsai et al. (2012)
Anticipated emotions	Bagozzi and Dholakia (2002), Bagozzi and Dholakia (2006)
Attitudes	Agag and El-Masry (2016), Bagozzi and Dholakia (2002), Bagozzi and Dholakia (2006)
Compliance	Bagozzi and Dholakia (2002), Dholakia et al. (2004), Zhou (2011)
Desires	Bagozzi and Dholakia (2002), Bagozzi and Dholakia (2006), Dholakia et al. (2004)
Extrinsic motivation	Mahrous and Abdelmaaboud (2016)
Identification	Bagozzi and Dholakia (2002), Bagozzi and Dholakia (2006), Casaló et al. (2010), Dholakia et al. (2004), Kim et al. (2004), Tsai et al. (2012), Woisetschläger et al. (2008), Zhou (2011)
Influence and relatedness	Escobar et al. (2014), Kim et al. (2004), Woisetschläger et al. (2008)
Member specific attribute	Benoit et al. (2016)
Membership	Escobar et al. (2014), Kim et al. (2004)
Psychological needs/benefits	Kang et al. (2014), Wang and Fesenmaier (2004 a,b)
Satisfaction	Casaló et al. (2008, 2010), Tsai et al. (2012), Woisetschläger et al. (2008)
Self-construal	Hu et al. (2016)
Self-Discovery Motive	Dholakia et al. (2004), Jahn and Kunz (2012), Madupu and Cooley (2010 a), Nambisan and Baron (2010)
Shared emotional connection	Escobar et al. (2014), Kim et al. (2004)
Social enhancement motive	Dholakia et al. (2004), Madupu and Cooley (2010 a)
3-Hedonic attributes	
Entertainment motive	Chae and Ko (2016), Dholakia et al. (2004), Madupu and Cooley (2010 b), Sicilia and Palazon (2008)
Hedonic needs/benefits	Kang et al. (2014), Nambisan and Baron (2009), Wang and Fesenmaier (2004 a, b)
Hedonic value	Jahn and Kunz (2012)
4-Functional attributes	
Functional needs/benefits	Kang et al. (2014), Wang and Fesenmaier (2004 a, b)
Functional value	Jahn and Kunz (2012), Sicilia and Palazon (2008)
Information motive	Madupu and Cooley (2010 b)
Informational value	Chae and Ko (2016), Dholakia et al. (2004), Zhou et al. (2013)

Instrumental value	Dholakia et al. (2004)
purposive value	Dholakia et al. (2004)

The social attributes are further classified into social needs/benefits, communication, social value, trust, involvement, internalization, social integration and interpersonal interconnectivity etc. The majority of these studies have used social needs/benefits and social integration as antecedents to describe the various motives of customers' participation in brand communities (Table 2.4).

Identification is the most widely used antecedent in the category of psychological attributes (Table 2.4). Another antecedent in this category includes psychological needs/benefits, affiliation, desires, membership, satisfaction, attitudes, influence, and relatedness, shared an emotional connection, compliance, social enhancement motive, anticipated emotions, and self-discovery motive. In hedonic attributes, the majority of articles has used hedonic needs/benefits as an antecedent of customer participation (Table 2.4). After that, entertainment motive was found as widely used antecedent whereas, the hedonic value was found least used antecedent. Functional attributes further classified into six categories; functional needs/benefits, functional value, purposive value, information motive, informational value, and instrumental value. Functional needs/benefits are the most widely used antecedent in this category (Table 2.4).

2.3.4.2 Mediators

Mediators explain the relationship between antecedent and consequence. Ten types of mediators were used in reviewed article. Dholakia et al. (2004) used mutual agreement and accommodation among group members as a mediator to evaluate the relation between group norms and members participation in the virtual community. Zhou et al. (2013) considered two mediators informational value and perceived social value. Both of these mediators are used to access relationship between viewing post and community members' participation intention.

Relling et al. (2016) suggested that interaction between the occurrence of word of mouth and community type on its members' participation in a social networking based community is mediated by perceived goal instrumentality. Escobar et al. (2014) used needs fulfillment as a mediator between amplifier of membership and participation, and similarly used influence and shared an emotional connection as a mediator between shared values and members' participation. Additionally, Fuller et al. (2008) identified two mediators: skills and brand

community identification, which mediated between brand passion and participation. Study conducted by Kang et al. (2014), used brand trust as a mediator between active participation and brand commitment.

2.3.4.3 Moderators

Twelve different types of moderators have been used in reviewed articles: community type, the length of membership, trust, perceived attitude, interaction preference, brand knowledge and community size. In two studies community type is used as a mediator (Dholakia et al., 2004; Relling et al., 2016). Dholakia et al. (2004) identified community type as a moderator and it influenced both the reason of participation and the strength of their influence on social identity and group norms. Similarly, Relling et al. (2016) also evaluated the moderating impacts of community type on the affect of positive as well as negative word of mouth on members' perceived goal instrumentality of participation in social network-based communities. The details regarding constructs identified from the literature, which has used as a mediator and moderator in online brand communities context are depicted in Table 2.5.

Table 2.5: Constructs used as mediators, moderators in online brand communities participation

Mediators	References
Accommodation among group members	Dholakia et al. (2004)
Brand Trust	Kang et al. (2014)
Community identification	Fu'ller et al. (2008), Liao et al. (2017)
Influence and shared emotional connection	Escobar et al. (2014)
Informational value	Zhou et al. (2013)
Mutual agreement	Dholakia et al. (2004)
Needs fulfillment	Escobar et al. (2014)
Perceived goal instrumentality	Relling et al. (2016)
Perceived social value	Zhou et al. (2013)
Skills	Fu'ller et al. (2008)
Moderators	References
Brand knowledge	Algesheimer et al. (2005)
Community size	Algesheimer et al. (2005)
Community type	Dholakia et al. (2004), Relling et al. (2016)
Demographic	Mahrous and Abdelmaaboud

characteristics	(2016)
Interaction Preference	Woisetschläger et al. (2008)
Length of membership	Madupu and Cooley (2010 a)
Membership duration	Liao et al. (2017)
Members' enjoyment	Benoit et al. (2016)
Perceived attitude	Shang et al. (2006)
Religiosity	Agag and El-Masry (2016)
Self-construal	Hu et al. (2016)
Trust	Shang et al. (2006)

Madupu and Cooley (2010a) identified membership length as a moderator between participation in online brand community and the consequence of participation. Shang et al. (2006) identified trust as a moderator and found that it will moderate the impact of involvement on participation. Shang et al. (2006) also found that perceived attitude of messages in an online community would moderate the impact of member participation on brand loyalty. Algesheimer et al. (2005) found both community size and brand knowledge moderate the brand community effect on members. Woisetschläger et al. (2008) considered interaction preference as a moderator influencing the association between participation and related consequences. Agag and El-Masry (2016) investigated the moderating role of religiosity between customers' intention to participate, trust, attitude, and intention to purchase. Hu et al. (2016) found that self-construal as a moderator positively moderates the association between user participation and community interactivity. Demographic characteristics (e.g., gender, age) is found to moderate the association between participation, its antecedents and between participation and purchase decision in online communities (Mahrous & Abdelmaaboud, 2016).

2.3.4.4 Consequences

Consequences are the results of antecedents with the respective impact of moderators and/or mediators. Under the review, the outcomes of online brand communities' participation in extant literature can be classified into three broad categories mainly; brand context, consumer context and community context (Table 2.6). The brand context outcomes are further classified into thirteen categories, which are as follows: brand loyalty, brand commitment, branding co-creation, brand recommendation, word of mouth, brand purchase, brand trust, brand community commitment, repurchase intention, purchase intention, affective commitment, brand image and constructive complaint of the brand (Table 2.6).

Table 2.6: Constructs used as outcomes in online brand communities participation

Outcomes	References
1-Brand context	
Affective Commitment	Casaló et al. (2008)
Branding co-creation	Hajli et al. (2017)
Brand commitment	Ha (2004), Hajli et al. (2017), Jahn and Kunz (2012), Kang et al. (2014)
Brand Community commitment	Hur et al. (2011), Zheng et al. (2015)
Brand image	Woisetschläger et al. (2008)
Brand loyalty	Casaló et al. (2010), Hajli et al. (2017), Jahn and Kunz (2012), Laroche et al. (2012, 2013), Lin and Lee (2012), Madupu and Cooley (2010 a), Shang et al. (2006), Woisetschläger et al. (2008), Zheng et al. (2015)
Brand purchase	Jahn and Kunz (2012)
Brand recommendation intention	Madupu and Cooley (2010 a)
Brand trust	Hajli et al. (2017), Ha (2004), Kang et al. (2014), Laroche et al. (2012, 2013)
Constructive complaint of brand	Hur et al. (2011)
Purchase intention	Mahrous and Abdelmaaboud (2016)
Repurchase intention	Hur et al. (2011)
Word of mouth	Agag and El-Masry (2016), Chang et al. (2013), Hur et al. (2011), Jahn and Kunz (2012), Woisetschläger et al. (2008), Yeh and Choi (2011)
2-Consumer context	
Customer equity	Chae and Ko (2016)
Consumer loyalty	Casaló et al. (2007)
Customer satisfaction	Hajli et al. (2017)
Consumer trust	Casaló et al. (2007), Chae and Ko (2016)
Extent of contribution	Wang and Fesenmaier (2004 a,b)
Intention to purchase	Agag and El-Masry (2016)
Perceived customer value	Hu et al. (2016)
3-Community context	
Community identification	Liao et al. (2017)
Consciousness of kind	Madupu and Cooley (2010 a,b)
Moral responsibility	Madupu and Cooley (2010 a,b)
Obligation to Society	Laroche et al. (2012)
Shared Consciousness	Laroche et al. (2012)
Shared Rituals and Traditions	Madupu and Cooley (2010a), Laroche et al. (2012)

Brand loyalty (Kamboj & Rahman, 2016) and brand trust are the most widely seen outcome in the reviewed articles. Whereas, brand trust has been used in five studies (Ha, 2004; Hajli et al., 2017; Kang et al., 2014; Laroche et al., 2012; Laroche et al., 2013). Brand commitment (Ha, 2004; Hajli et al. 2016; Jahn & Kunz, 2012; Kang et al., 2014) has been used in four studies. Brand Community commitment has been used by two studies Zheng et al. (2015) and Hur et al. (2011). The remaining outcomes in this category are least used as brand context outcome of participation under reviewed studies.

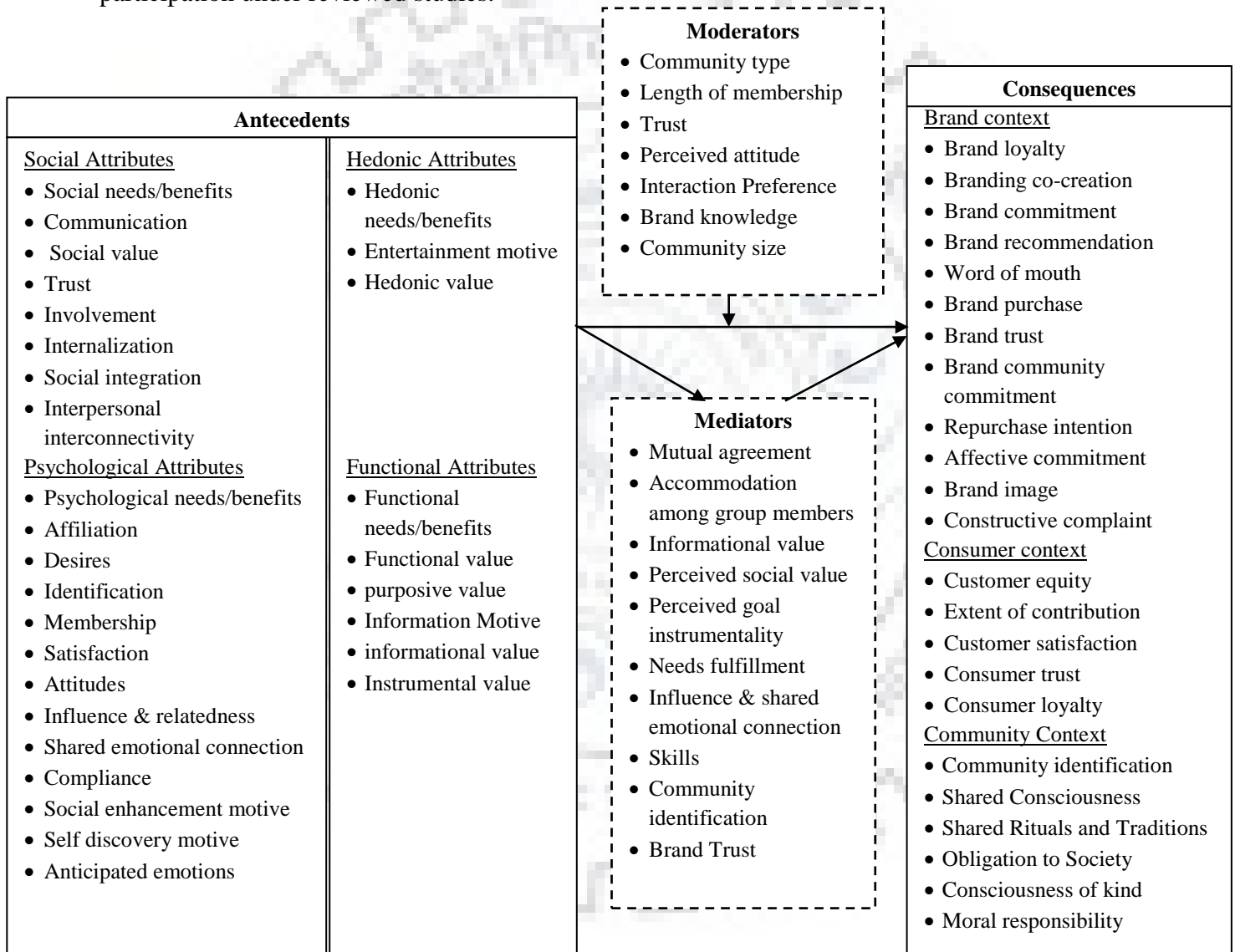


Figure 2.8: Causal chain framework for participation

The outcomes of customer’ participation also include a relationship with consumers (Adjei et al., 2012; Bruhn et al., 2014; Lee et al., 2011). The consumer context outcomes were further

classified into seven categories mainly: consumer loyalty, customer equity, customer satisfaction, the extent of contribution, intention to purchase, perceived customer value and consumer trust. In a study by Casaló et al. (2007), consumer loyalty and consumer trust have been an outcome of customer participation in virtual brand communities. The extent of contribution is also the outcome of members' participation in a study by Wang and Fesenmaier (2004 a,b).

The community context outcomes are further classified into six categories as follows: community identification, shared consciousness, shared rituals and traditions, the obligation to society, consciousness of kind and moral responsibility. In a study by Laroche et al. (2012) shared rituals, consciousness, traditions and societal obligation have been an outcome of social media brand communities. Shared rituals and traditions are also the outcomes of virtual brand community participation in a study by Madupu and Cooley (2010a). Madupu and Cooley (2010b) have studied moral responsibility and consciousness of kind as consequences of participation in the online brand community.

2.4 INDIAN TRAVEL INDUSTRY: AN OVERVIEW

The Indian hospitality and tourism industry has emerged as important key drivers of growth amongst the Indian services sector (IBEF, 2017). Indian travel industry is a major contributor in the Indian tourism and hospitality industry (IBEF, 2016). The Indian travel industry has emerged as key industries fostering the growth of the service sector and the Indian economy as well. Over past one decade, there is a significant rise observed in the inflow of leisure and business travel in India (IBEF, 2016). In addition to historical sites, India has also recognized as a destination for the medical (yoga, ayurveda, and naturopathy) and spiritual tourism in the last decade. Revenues from foreign and domestic tourism reached USD21.08 billion in 2015 (expected to reach USD28.34 billion by 2024) and USD93.96 billion in 2015 (expected to reach USD156.7 billion by 2024) respectively (IBEF, 2016). The number of Indian domestic travelers exceeds international arrivals; an increase of 156 percent observed in domestic tourism from the year 2000. Also, an increase has been seen in international tourism (i.e., Indian nationals visited outside country), as the Ministry of Tourism reported 10.8 million departures from the year 2008. Due to this growth in tourism, India has moved up by 13 positions in Tourism & Travel competitive index and acquired 52nd rank from 65th.

India is recognized as a large market for travel and tourism sector (IBEF, 2017). Travel and tourism sector in India is the third largest foreign exchange earner (IBEF, 2017). Total contribution by this sector is expected to increase from USD 136.3 billion in the year 2015 to USD 275.2 billion in the year 2025 in India's GDP (IBEF, 2017). The travel and tourism sector's total contribution to Indian GDP is anticipated to increase by 4.97 % per annum to USD 280.5 billion by the year 2025 i.e. 7.2 % of GDP (IBEF, 2017). The travel and tourism industry in India has huge potential for growth (IBEF, 2017).

Ministry of Tourism, Government of India, has broadly classified travel trade service providers in Indian travel industry into four categories based on their features and general facilities offered by them. Similarly, the Ministry of Tourism, Government of India, has an approving scheme for all four categories of travel service providers, so as to encourage service quality, and their standard in these categories in order to promote Indian Tourism. These four categories are travel agents, tour operators (inbound tour operator, domestic tour operator), tourist transport operators, and adventure tour operators.

Some of the key initiatives taken by the Indian government to help the growth of Indian travel and tourism sector are listed below:

- 100 percent foreign direct investment (FDI) has been allowed under automatic route to promote hospitality and tourism related industries.
- 'Medical Visa' has been introduced for tourists coming in from other countries for medical treatment.
- Issuing visa on arrival i.e. e-Visa facility for tourists from selected countries including Japan, Finland, and New Zealand, among others.
- Subsidy programs for hotels have been initiated.
- Promoting rural tourism of India
- Exempting fringe benefits tax on guest house facilities, employees' sports, and crèches.

2.4.1 E-Travel Industry in India

- In India, E-travel goes on to dominate the travel market of the country. According to Aranca research report on "Indian online travel industry" (2015, p. 1), "The industry is expected to grow by 17.8% during 2013–2016, outperforming the overall travel market by 6.0% points. Online penetration in travel and tourism bookings is estimated to increase from 41% in 2014

to 46% in 2017 in Indian travel market. While air and rail make up the vast majority of India’s online travel market, the country’s fragmented hotel landscape holds the greatest promise. Several tailwinds are anticipated to bolster this growth, such as an increasing number of budget hotels in Tier-1 and Tier-2 cities; the entry of new airlines, given the government’s “Open Skies Policy”; the government initiative to build 150 new airports by 2020; and India’s love for travel”.

- This report has also highlighted that in Indian travel and tourism industry, the e-travel sector has drastically grown-up during past few years. The high convenience level, growing penetration of e-commerce transactions, growing penetration of Internet as well as mobile, and growing population of India are the main factors behind the rapid increase in online travel bookings. As per India Brand Equity Foundation (IBEF) report on Indian tourism and hospitality industry analysis 2016-17 in India there are a number of e-travel service companies, including country club, Thomas cook, Cox & Kings, cleartrip, Expedia, Trivago, Tripadvisor, MakeMyTrip, club Mahindra, Yatra and goibibo (Figure 2.9).

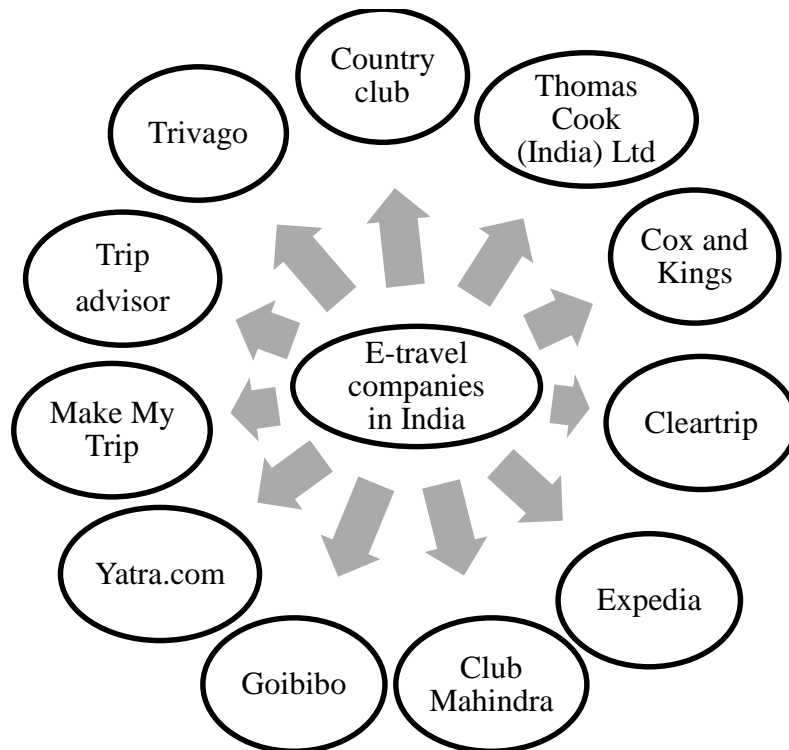


Figure 2.9: E-travel service companies in India

Source: India brand Equity foundation, IBEF (2016-17)

- In this report it was also mentioned that E-services offered by online travel companies such as MakeMyTrip in India including airline tickets or flight bookings, holiday packages (domestic and foreign packaged tours), bus tickets, hotel bookings, other services including corporate travel services, cab or car bookings, travel insurance, visa assistance and foreign exchange etc. (Figure 2.10).
- According to Phocuswright research report (2015) in India, online travel and tourism bookings penetration are anticipated to boost from 41per cent in the year 2014 to 46 percent in the year 2017 and total travel gross bookings will grow 37percent.
- As per Phocuswright research report (2016), by 2020, the travel market in India will be from '164,987 crores to '271,686 crores.

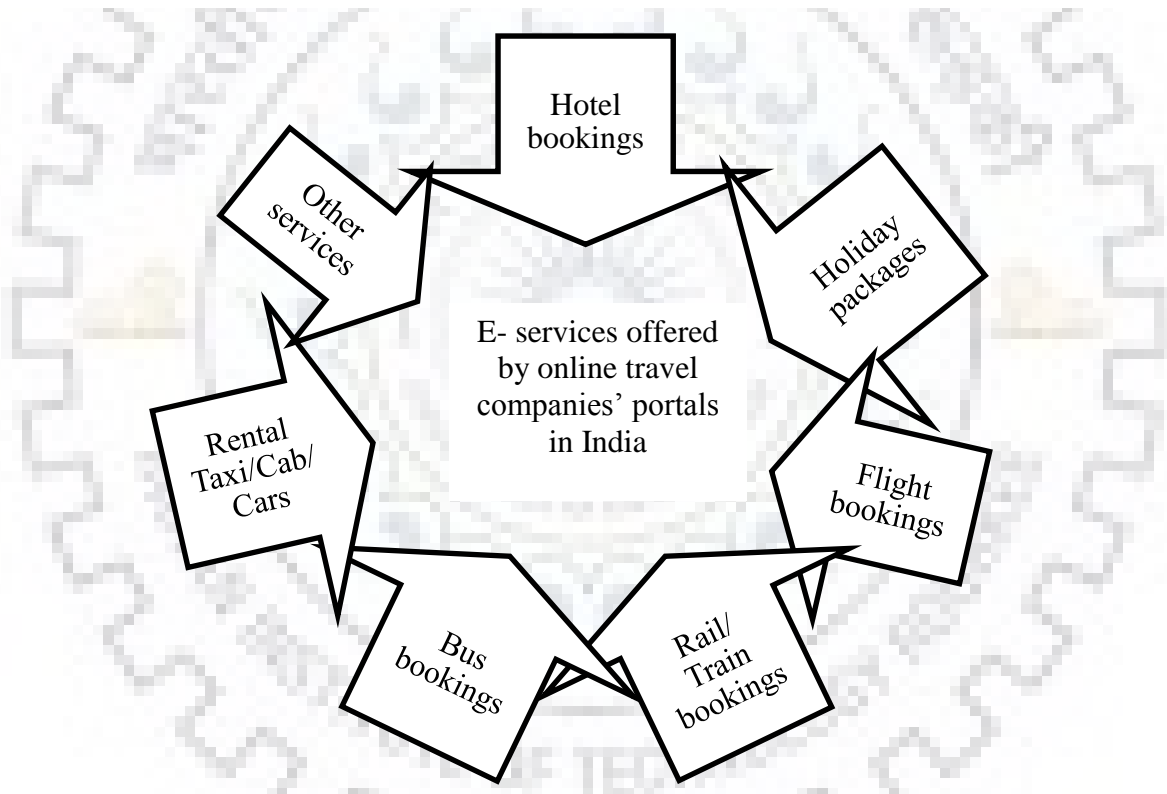


Figure 2.10: E-services offered by online travel companies' portals in India

Source: India brand Equity foundation, IBEF (2016-17)

2.5 RESEARCH ON CUSTOMER SOCIAL PARTICIPATION IN TRAVEL AND TOURISM INDUSTRY

The revolution of Internet substantially shifted the travel and tourism industry over past few decades. It is becoming the common interest of online communities. Online travel communities

depict a growing trend for the tourists (Bialski & Batorski, 2007). Online travel communities have gained considerable popularity in travelers' use of the internet (Liu & Norman, 2015). Travelers usually use these online travel communities to share and post travel-related suggestions, experiences, and comments; and their reviews information support other users in making their trip and travel plans and to choose the different tourism products (Xiang & Gretzel, 2010). The majority of online communities formed on preexisting societal relations (Boyd & Ellison, 2007). Online travel community users are unknown, and the community emphasizes on shared experiences regarding travel.

With the advancement of information technologies, companies getting new avenues to promote and distribute their offerings through innovative ways. This innovation plays an important role towards the advancement of internet-based businesses, for instance, the tourism industry and especially its travel sector (Buhalis & Law, 2008; Kim et al., 2011). Technological innovations in the field of tourism sector have considerably affected the channels of communication between potential travelers and service providers, however, scant research is available in this sector as compared to other sectors, particularly retail sector (Matzler et al., 2008).

The travel and tourism industry is information intensive, and the travelers depend greatly on the Internet as a single and primary source of travel related information to make a decision about their trips (Arsal et al., 2008). The emergence of Internet as a distinctive platform to both travelers and tourism service providers to share information about travel (Kim et al., 2004), and make it easier for other members to acquire this information, develop social connections, maintain relationships, and finally take decisions regarding travel (Jiang et al., 2008). Despite the importance of, scant studies investigate these communities behavior, and knowledge about members' needs or motivation in these communities remains fragmented (Illum et al., 2010; Wang et al., 2002). However, their popularity and power advocate that have the enough potential to contribute significantly to e-business strategy and customer relationship management.

The travel agencies increasingly use online channels, which allow travelers to have a variety of tourist services in customize, convenient, cheaper and easier ways, and enhance the offering's perceived value as well as the online purchase (Gupta, 2014; Wang & Wang, 2010). The information technologies and the internet together make possible the interactivity between these travel companies themselves and between the travel companies and their customers. In

addition, their interaction also enables customers to know the tourist experience in a better way. Thus, with this information, travel companies can enhance their service quality, so as to increase customer satisfaction and their willingness to re-purchase the travel product offerings, which therefore used to strengthened the customer relationships (Buhalis & Law, 2008) The online existence of travel companies raises this sector competition, which makes the understanding of the fact that what drives customer participation in these online travel companies' communities.

Ascertaining customer participation in online communities is an important concern that provides a guarantee of the success of community (Koh & Kim, 2004). As a result, new online communities emerge and contend to attract more and more new members so as to acquire larger advertising income. This trend comes into views frequently on travel companies websites, where online travel communities provide an avenue to the travelers to interact with others and to write their personal reviews (Wang & Fesenmaier, 2004b). Thus, integrating the new members in order to make them participate becomes a serious matter for the community managers to sustain their communities in long term.

In the travel industry, online travel communities have shifted nature of marketing communication between customers and companies. Within online travel communities, members can communicate with each other without distance and time constraints for trip and tours related motives, for instance, acquiring travel information, providing travel suggestions and having enjoyment through interesting stories of travelers experiences (Wang et al., 2002). Members of travel communities may join chat rooms and discussion forums for sharing information and can create their personal travel pages to reveal their own travel profiles, demonstrate their personal travelogues and providing travel tips and suggestions (Wang & Fesenmaier, 2004a). As a result of the emergence of online travel communities, a large number of travel companies have incorporated these communities' functionalities into their own websites (trip advisor, Yatra.com, Ease my trip, Make my trip). Thus, online travel communities have renovated the tourism industry (Kim et al., 2004). In terms of most popular types of user-generated content, online travel communities can be the main source that affects the travel decisions (Arsal et al., 2008; Chung & Buhalis, 2008).

2.6 ACADEMIC PROPOSALS FOR CUSTOMER PARTICIPATION IN E-TRAVEL COMMUNITIES ON SOCIAL MEDIA

Wang and Fesenmaier (2004a) proposes a conceptual model of member needs in online travel community and suggest that the knowledge regarding the member participation in these communities is essential for tourism marketing firms that are increasingly integrated online travel communities into their businesses. In this area, most of the previous research emphasizes on developed countries online communities members, and little is known regarding developing countries online communities members (Kim et al., 2005). Recently e-travel communities have received considerable attention. A number of researchers have emphasized on customer participation and people's motivation to participate in online communities, specifically in travel and tourism. (e.g., Agag & El-Masry, 2016; Casaló et al., 2011, 2013; Chung & Buhalis, 2008; Elliot et al., 2013; Kim et al., 2004; Kunz & Seshadri, 2015; Liu & Norman, 2015; Shim et al., 2015; Wang & Fesenmaier, 2004a,b; Wang & Fesenmaier, 2003; Wang et al., 2002).

Agag and El-Masry (2016) explored various factors that influence customer intention to participate in online travel communities and found compatibility, perceived usefulness, relative advantages, trust, attitude and perceived ease of use as a critical factor that affects customer intention to participate. Casaló et al. (2011) investigate a number of antecedents of customer intention to follow the suggestion acquired in online travel communities and found that attitude, trust, and perceived usefulness contribute significantly to determine customer intention to follow the suggestion or advice obtained in online travel communities. Casaló et al. (2013) examine several precursors and outcomes of online travel communities members' integration, found that reciprocity and perceived similarity have an effect on integration, which in result with satisfaction affect community participation. Chung and Buhalis (2008) identified socio-psychological, hedonic and informational benefits as fundamental benefits of online travel communities' members and they found functional benefits (experience sharing, information acquisition) as an important element, which affects their participation level and attitude.

Elliot et al. (2013) argued that quality of virtual travel communities significantly affects member satisfaction and trust. Kim et al. (2004) found that membership in the community significantly influences online virtual community members' loyalty, which in turn affect their travel products' purchase. They also found that low educated members have a tendency to participate actively in membership activities. Kunz and Seshadri (2015) found that perceived

similarity, online communication behavior and reputation of community members' are key determinants of travelers' engagement in offline relationships throughout their travels. Liu and Norman (2015) developed a conceptual framework based on social identity and attribute-empathy theory to understand the contribution of local residents' towards online travel communities. They found that helping behavior of local residents in online travel communities mainly influenced by the length of residency, personal distress, the evaluative identity of local resident and by their age.

Muntinga et al. (2011) emphasize on individual's motivations to engage in consumers' online brand-related activities (COBRAs) and found that distinct brand-related activities on social media platforms are driven by distinct motivations. They also discuss the three types of consumers' online brand-related activities; consuming, creating and contributing. "Consuming is the COBRA type with the lowest level of brand-related activeness and is driven by three motivational dimensions: information, entertainment, and remuneration (Muntinga et al., 2011, p. 35)". Whereas, "Creating is the COBRA type with the highest level of brand-related activeness and is driven by three motivational dimensions: personal identity, integration and social interaction, and entertainment (Muntinga et al., 2011, p. 36)". Contributing includes communicating with others regarding brands and provide a rating to brand-related videos and is driven by the same three motivations as creating; social interaction and integration, entertainment and personal identity. Shim et al. (2015) investigates the role of brand differentiation and brand community in luxury cruise market and found that in luxury cruise travelers' brand community the cruise product, other cruisers and relationship with the cruise brand together have an influence on brand distinctiveness, which in turn influence brand attraction, active engagement, and repurchase intentions. It is believed that significance given in display of a particular brand will activate impulse buying by the customers (Pandey & Wali, 2011).

Wang and Fesenmaier (2004a) found that hedonic and social needs have a positive influence on participation level and membership status affect members' participation level in online travel communities. Wang and Fesenmaier (2004b) found that in online travel communities participation is mainly driven by hedonic and social benefits, whereas active contribution level explained by expectancy, instrumental and efficacy related incentives. Wang and Fesenmaier (2003) investigate the motivation for members' active contribution in online

travel communities and found that motivations of efficacy, expectancy and instrumentality have a positive influence on members' level of active contribution. Additionally, they also found that personality of members', their involvement level and ease of communication have positive relationships with their active contribution level. Wang et al. (2002) identify the conceptual foundation for virtual tourist community concept based on virtual communities' core characteristics and basic needs of community members.

Whereas other than participation numerous other studies have also existed in online communities particularly in travel and tourism brand pages on social media (Gretzel & Dinhopl, 2013; Gretzel & Yoo, 2008; Illum et al., 2010; Sotiriadis & Van Zyl, 2013; Yoo & Gretzel, 2008, 2011; Yuan et al., 2016). Gretzel and Dinhopl (2013) examined the travel behavior of travelers who "unliked" travel destinations and travel companies on Facebook and found that travelers have dissimilar motivations for unlinking the Facebook pages of travel destinations or companies. They found that travelers usually unlike travel companies for the faults in their social networking sites presence (end post frequency, company promotions, their relevance), whereas travelers have a tendency to unlike a specific destination based on their offline experiences. Gretzel and Yoo (2008) examined how the travelers' reviews assist in trip planning and for the same they conducted an online survey of Trip Advisor (most famous travel review site) users. They found that reviews are mainly used to make accommodation decisions and are not used greatly while traveling.

Illum et al. (2010) investigate the features that make the highway maps usable by members of the tourism academic community and auto travelers. Sotiriadis and Van Zyl (2013) investigated the Twitter use by tourists and found three influential factors regarding tourism services information retrieved via Twitter namely: degree of posting-involvement, know-how, and expertise of Twitter followers/users and reliability of Twitter users/followers. Yoo and Gretzel (2008) found that online travel review writers are mainly motivated though helping a travel service provider, their needs for positive self-enhancement or enjoyment, and their concerns for other consumers. Yoo and Gretzel (2011) investigates how personality traits of travelers' significantly affect perceived barriers to the content creation, their specific creation behaviors, and motivations to engage in consumer-generated media (CGM) creation. Their findings with respect to barrier revealed that travelers are mainly escaped from content creation due to the lack of interest and time. Regarding motivations to create travel-related CGM, creators

were found to be motivated by hedonic and altruistic benefits. They also suggested that for travelers' the travel-related CGM is an important source of information as the majority of online travelers trusted on CGM content and used these content for their trip planning, whereas, as per their findings only a few travelers engages in content creation. Yuan et al. (2016) examined the influences of both e-service and personal factors in predicting customer intentional knowledge sharing in an online travel community and found that the stronger drivers of knowledge sharing in online travel communities are personal factors.

According to Internet and Mobile Association of India (IAMAI) report (2014-15, P.70), "Online travel industry include air and train ticket bookings, hotel accommodations and tour packages and contribute nearly 60% of the Digital payments". IAMAI annual report, 2014-15 has found that the majority of digital commerce pie i.e. 61% covered by online travel in India. Thus, it is important for travel marketers to identify and understand their online customers and to ensure their participation towards their social media based travel brand communities.

2.7 GAPS IDENTIFIED FOR FUTURE RESEARCH

This research underlines customer participation in online brand communities which is an important area of research for marketing researchers who are concerned about taking an integrative and extensive approach to understanding the customers. With the emergence of social media, customers interactions with one another and with brands in content generated activities are compelling companies to change their branding activities to reveal more participatory approach (Munnukka et al., 2015).

To succeed, an online community must have a solid member base which contributes actively to generate interesting content (Teichmann et al., 2015). The majority of online brand community members are passive readers and "one-shot" participants, thus the understanding of how to increase online brand communities participation and to improve their sustainability becomes a major challenge for companies (Algesheimer et al., 2005; Nambisan & Baron, 2009). Marketers consider customer participation as their leading branding strategy (Casaló et al., 2010). To the knowledge of researcher' there exists no systematic review that could depict the present state of customer participation research, and accelerate future research by emphasizing the crucial issues that researchers should investigate. This research described several limitations in previous literature on customer participation in online brand communities that further studies

should focus on. A summary of main research gaps identified from existing literature are depicted in Table 2.7.

2.7.1 Examine and compare the brand communities of various product types or different brands with differing characteristics to explore whether propensity for customer participation differs across different products and services

Consumer behavior regarding products and services can be different (Wu et al., 2015). Customer participation in online brand communities has been studied in context of limited products and services for instance travel (Wang & Fesenmaier a,b), hospitality (Kang et al., 2014), automobile (Park & Mcmillan, 2015), beauty products (Shen & Bissell, 2013) and healthcare (Kim & Sundar 2014), thereby, facilitating a large number of product and service contexts unexplored. Besides this, there are limited studies that have examined if the intensity of customer participation varies across product, service contexts. Therefore, customer participation needs to be investigated across various products and service categories such as search products, experience products, service products (Wu et al., 2015) and convenience products (Habibi et al., 2014b). More studies that are specific are required across different brands with diverse characteristics, for example, the difference between hedonic or functional brands or the difference between company brands and human brands (Jahn & Kunz, 2012).

2.7.2 Development of a valid and reliable measure of customer participation in online brand communities

Efforts have been made by researchers to establish a reliable measure of customer participation. New scales need to be developed to measure online participation in brand communities (Madupu and Cooley (2010a), as the existing scales differ in dimension and are restricted to a few contexts only, thus leaving a large number of areas untouched. Casalóa et al. (2010b) emphasized the need for industry specific online participation measurement scale. Consequently, there is a requirement to develop a more valid and reliable measure of customer participation in online brand communities (Bruhn et al., 2014; Madupu & Cooley, 2010a,b; McAlexander et al., 2002; Wang et al., 2015).

2.7.3 Investigation of customer to brand relationships on other typologies of online brand communities

Previous researchers has studied customer participation in a limited set of online brand communities; such as firm or company hosted/ marketer created (Casaló et al., 2010a, Lee et al., 2011), consumer hosted/created (Lee et al., 2011; Teichmann et al., 2015), B2B (Bruhn et al., 2014), professional context (Lin et al., 2009), and social networking sites (Zheng et al., 2015). Company-initiated communities are different from consumer-initiated communities in terms of information exchange and control, therefore leading to diverse participatory behavior (Wu et al., 2015). Thus, customer participation needs to be explored across different type of online brand communities' contexts (Munnukka et al. (2015) to check if any variations take places and if so, the factors that cause this variation need to be identified.

2.7.4 Undertaking longitudinal research to understand customer participation in online brand communities

Most of the research that have investigated customer participation empirically are mainly cross-sectional in nature (*e.g.* Bruhn et al., 2014; Munnukka et al., 2015; Zheng et al., 2015), depicting only a snapshot of a customer's participation with the main object. Therefore, it is suggested to undertake longitudinal research to present better insights about how customers participate in online brand communities over time. Longitudinal studies enable researchers to follow changes in the community (Laroche et al., 2013), to observe the dynamics of members' behavior (Jahn & Kunz, 2012) and compare results at different times (Laroche et al., 2012).

2.7.5 Investigating the existence of constructs that have some moderating and mediating effects associated with online participation or other constructs in brand communities

Laroche et al. (2012) suggest that future research may consider more factors and variables to have deeper insights about customer participation in brand communities. Therefore future research with possible mediating and moderating variables for instance brand type, culture (Laroche et al., 2012, 2013), facilities and characteristics of the community (Laroche et al., 2013), type and structure of communities, diversity in the functionality of social media platforms (Laroche et al., 2012) needs to be conducted.

Table 2.7: Major gaps identified in the literature

No.	Major gaps identified	Study
1	Examine and compare the brand communities of various product types or different brands with differing characteristics to explore whether propensity for customer participation differs across different products and services	Bishop (2007), Bruhn et al. (2014), Carlson et al. (2008), Chang et al. (2013), Elliot et al. (2013), Habibi et al. (2014a, b), Hassan and Casaló Ariño (2016), Hsiao et al. (2010), Huang et al. (2010), Jahn and Kunz (2012), Kang et al. (2014), Madupu and Cooley (2010b), Nambisan and Baron (2007, 2009, 2010), Park and Mcmillan (2015), Shang et al. (2006), Shen and Bissell (2013), Sun et al. (2006), Tsai et al. (2012), Wang and Fesenmaier (2004b), Wu et al. (2015), Yang and Li (2016), Yeh and Choi (2011), Zhang and Luo (2016)
2	Development of a valid and reliable measure of customer participation in brand communities	Bruhn et al. (2014), Casaló et al. (2010b), McAlexander et al. (2002), Madupu and Cooley (2010a, b), Wang et al. (2015)
3	Investigation of customer to brand relationships on other typologies of online brand communities	Agag and El-Masry (2016), Casaló et al. (2010a, b, 2011, 2013), Chiu et al. (2006, 2011), Ha (2004), Habibi et al. (2014b), Hassan and Casaló Ariño (2016), Hsiao et al. (2010), Hsu and Lu (2007), Hur et al. (2011), Lee et al. (2014), Li et al. (2016), Lin et al. (2009), Mahrous and Abdelmaaboud (2016), Munnukka et al. (2015), Nambisan and Baron (2007, 2009, 2010), Porter and Donthu (2008), Raïes et al. (2015), Ridings et al. (2006), Shang et al. (2006), Sicilia and Palazón (2008), Teo et al. (2003), Wang and Fesenmaier (2004b), Wang et al. (2015), Weijo et al. (2014), Wu and Fang (2010)
4	Undertaking longitudinal research to understand customer participation in online brand communities	Benoit et al. (2016), Bruhn et al. (2014), Casaló et al. (2010b), Cheung et al. (2011), Chiu et al. (2006, 2011), Hau and Kim (2011), Hsu et al. (2007), Jahn and Kunz (2012), Laroche et al. (2012, 2013), Mahrous and Abdelmaaboud (2016), Munnukka et al. (2015), Nambisan and Baron (2010), Porter and Donthu (2008), Ridings et al. (2002), Shen and Bissell (2013), Teichmann et al. (2015), Willi et al. (2013), Woisetschläger et al. (2008), Wu and Fang (2010), Yeh and Choi (2011), Zaglia (2013), Zhang and Luo (2016), Zheng et al. (2015), Zhou (2011), Zhou et al. (2012, 2013)
5	Investigating the existence of constructs that have some moderating and mediating effects associated with online participation or other constructs in brand communities	Bruhn et al. (2014), Laroche et al. (2012, 2013), Nambisan and Baron (2009), Zhou et al. (2013)

- | | | |
|---|--|---|
| 6 | Examining brand related or brand community-related determinants | Bruhn et al. (2014), Hur et al. (2011), Munnukka et al. (2015), Shim et al. (2015), Wang and Fesenmaier (2004b) |
| 7 | Generalization and extrapolation of findings with wider sample of community members or consumers from diverse cultures or countries and conducting a cross-cultural analysis | Agag and El-Masry (2016), Casaló et al. (2007, 2008, 2010a, b, 2011), Chae and Ko (2016), Chang et al. (2013), Cheung et al. (2011), Dholakia et al. (2009), Elliot et al. (2013), Ha (2004), Hau and Kim (2011), Hu et al. (2016), Huang et al. (2010), Hur et al. (2011), Kang et al. (2014), Kelley and Alden (2016), Kim et al. (2004), Liao et al. (2017), Lin et al. (2009), Madupu and Cooley (2010 a, b), Mahrous and Abdelmaaboud (2016), McAlexander et al. (2002), Park and Mcmillan (2015), Porter and Donthu (2008), Raies et al. (2015), Ridings et al. (2006), Shen and Bissell (2013), Shim et al. (2015), Shiue et al. (2010), Sing and Khine (2006), Wang et al. (2015), Wu et al. (2010, 2015), Zhang and Luo (2016), Zheng et al. (2015), Zhou (2011), Zhou et al. (2012) |
| 8 | Examining the effects of multiple memberships in online brand communities | Habibi et al. (2014 a,b), McAlexander et al. (2002), Woisetschläger et al. (2008) |
| 9 | Further exploration and empirical validation of causal relationships between customer participation and other related constructs in online brand communities | Agag and El-Masry (2016), Bruhn et al. (2014), Carlson et al. (2008), Casaló et al. (2007, 2008, 2010a, 2010b), Chae and Ko (2016), Gebauer et al. (2013), Kang et al. (2014), Madupu and Cooley (2010a), Nambisan and Baron (2010), Shim et al. (2015), Tsai et al. (2012) |
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Specifically, it would be interesting to examine few moderating effects, for example, interactivity or brand involvement, interaction experience (Bruhn et al., 2014), interaction propensity (Wiertz & de Ruyter, 2007), that may moderate participation intention of online community members.

2.7.6 Examining brand related or brand community-related determinants

A special attention needs to be given to exploring brand related determinants more deeply, for instance, brand knowledge or brand competence (Bruhn et al., 2014). Further research requires to investigate how customer' perception and brand community behavior influence brand loyalty via brand community commitment (Munnukka et al., 2015). Future research should focus on

detailed analysis of brand community-related determinants such as familiarity with the brand community, ability to contribute towards community and brand community identification (Bruhn et al., 2014).

In addition to other variables, for example, self-congruity need to considered and studied in the associations among precursors and their effects on brand commitment (Hur et al., 2011). Another area of study should identify the potential antecedents and outcomes related to the brand communities (Shim et al., 2015). The possible antecedents of brand communities to be considered for future studies including brand attitudes, enduring involvement, brand prestige, brand distinctiveness, brands' symbolic benefits, brand personality (Carlson et al., 2008).

Finally, brand equity, always deemed as vital criterion variable in the brand research, thus future investigations need to consider attitudes toward brand community-brand loyalty –brand equity (Hur et al., 2011). The relationship between brand and brand communities can be bidirectional (Zhou et al., 2012). Future research needs to consider brand relationship quality and its influence on brand community identification (Algesheimer et al., 2005; Zhou et al., 2012). Other important antecedents as an individual difference factors, for instance, materialism, brand communities' psychological sense and opinion seekers, ethnicity, age, and gender may contribute significantly in online brand communities (Kelley & Alden, 2016). Thus, in future studies, all these requires to be incorporated.

2.7.7 Generalization and extrapolation of findings with wider sample of community members or consumers from diverse cultures or countries and conducting a cross-cultural analysis

As the small sample limits the generalizability of the study (Zhou et al., 2012), and bring potential bias (Wu et al., 2015). Therefore, future work should investigate a large number with balanced samples to improve robustness and accuracy (Kang et al., 2014; Wu et al., 2015; Zhou et al., 2012). As the individuals' collectivistic cultural backgrounds are related to high tendencies of uniformity seeking as compared to individualistic cultural backgrounds, thus a future research need to examine the cultural influence on online brand communities (Chang et al., 2013).

Further studies required in other regions to compare findings in diverse locations to know the cultural bias (Zheng et al., 2015). Therefore, there is a requirement to understand how the culture influences customer trust and other key constructs in online brand communities, further studies

might investigate these cultural differences at both sides of national boundaries and ethnic backgrounds (Elliot et al., 2013).

2.7.8 Examining the effects of multiple memberships in online brand communities

McAlexander et al. (2002, p. 40) argued, “Scholars of the brand community often neglect the effect of multiple community memberships”. Owing to the nature of social media and the online brand community it is quite easy for customers to have multiple community memberships. Thus, social networking sites communities facilitate a platform where researchers can explore the influence of these multiple memberships. Theoretically, also these multiple memberships are possible on social media, where customers may experience multiple connections and identities with the brand, their friends, and company (Bagozzi & Dholakia, 2002). Further research needs to examine the effects of multiple memberships on consumption behavior or experience in online communities (Habibi et al., 2014, a,b).

2.7.9 Further exploration and empirical validation of causal relationships between customer participation and other related constructs in online brand communities

The investigation of community participation factors includes a number of constructs that may be significant in customers’ participation decisions (Tsai et al., 2012). Although, researchers have suggested several factors that may contribute to precursors and/or outcomes of customer participation (as shown in Table 2.4, Table 2.6). Thus, further research is directed to examine and empirically validate the associations between customer participation and other related constructs (Bruhn et al., 2014; Casaló et al., 2007, 2008, 2010 a, b; Gebauer et al., 2013; Madupu & Cooley, 2010a; Nambisan & Baron, 2010; Tsai et al., 2012) for the future progress of this area. Additionally, the broader research areas discussed above, future studies are encouraged to analyze other effects derived from customer participation in online brand communities such as the influence of fellow consumers’ recommendations on customer participation behavioral intentions (Casaló et al., 2010 a). Indeed, few researchers (e.g., Wiertz & De Ruyter, 2007) have argued that the participation inequalities may exist in most of the online communities, therefore a lot of members either observers or read others’ comments and posts (e.g., Casaló et al., 2010a). Another area of attention is to analyze the relationship between customer participation and other brand-related behaviors such as positive and negative word-of-mouth (Casaló et al., 2010b). In

addition to this, further research requires examining whether and how other factors might affect customer participation in the online community (Tsai et al., 2012). For instance, support from community leader may motivate users by creating and encouraging a social climate of customers' participation in the online brand community (McAlexander et al., 2002).

Another interesting area of research would be to examine other effects on consumer behavior linked with customers' participation in the online brand community, as the majority of research emphasized on online communities consequences conduct from the conceptual viewpoint (Casaló et al., 2008). Therefore, another area of further research would be a quantitative assessment of the influence of online communities in customer loyalty and consumer trust to the brand (Casaló et al., 2008).

Therefore, it would be better to investigate in detail antecedents of participation in the online community for instance privacy, identification or familiarity with the community and perceived control can affect customers' participation level in an online community (Casaló et al., 2008). Customers' brand love might drive online brand community participation (Zhou et al., 2012). Additional constructs for instance purchase intention, positive emotions, brand loyalty and brand equity could be considered as consequences of community participation in future research (Kang et al., 2014). Future studies should consider the word of mouth and actual purchase behavior into consideration and examine their effects in online brand communities (Zheng et al., 2015).

Further studies can be undertaken to examining how the association between group e-word of mouth and extremely negative event affect online brand communities response (Chang et al., 2013). Future studies should examine other characteristics of community members, for instance, the social status of members' in communities, to ensure whether or not such type of socialization tactics have an effect on the members' behavior (Liao et al., 2017).

Some other important antecedents (identification, subjective norms, and perceived behavioral control) of customer intention to participate providing opportunities for further research (Agag & El-Masry, 2016). The literature in online communities identify some factors that may affect customer behavioral intention toward online community (e.g., education, sex, income, and age). Future research needs to identify how each of these variables, separately and jointly, affects consumers' participation intention (Agag & El-Masry, 2016). Customer participation behaviors may be influenced by technical and personal cognition factors. Therefore,

understanding of user participation via consideration of these relevant factors can be an area for future research (Hu et al., 2016).

In addition, user participation needs to be compared across different social networking platforms (Khan, 2017). Different types of interactivity such as social bandwidth, synchronicity and surveillance need to be considered in future research (Hu et al., 2016). Future research needs to investigate the impact of users' broader psychological characteristics, personality characteristics (e.g. outgoing personality, shy personality etc), age, personal preferences, Internet literacy and ethnicity on their participation and consumption behaviors on social media sites communities' (Khan, 2017).

2.8 CONCLUSION

This chapter has shed light on extant literature in customer participation in online brand communities and role of customer participation in online travel communities. The literature on customer participation in online brand communities has been classified into categories, a namely journal focused, time-period of study, industry focus, country focus, data analysis techniques. After discussing the results obtained from literature review, researcher provided an overview of the online travel communities and Indian hotel industry, explained the idea of viewing hotel as a brand and the academic proposal for measuring customer participation in online travel communities. On the basis of reviewed literature, gaps existing in the body of literature have been presented. These gaps provided a base for forming the objectives of the present research. The identified gaps are summarized in tabular form and presented in detail in form of future research questions that need to be examined further.

CONCEPTUAL MODEL AND HYPOTHESES DEVELOPMENT

The main purpose of this research is to investigate the customer participation behaviors in brand communities on social media. In the beginning of this chapter, theoretical foundations are described in the form of Stimulus-Organism-Response, Uses and Gratification theory. The next section of this chapter is designed to propose a conceptual model of customer participation in brand communities on social media that is based on a systematic literature review presented in Chapter 2. The remaining section of this chapter describes the development of various hypotheses. Outline of this chapter is given below in Figure 3.1.

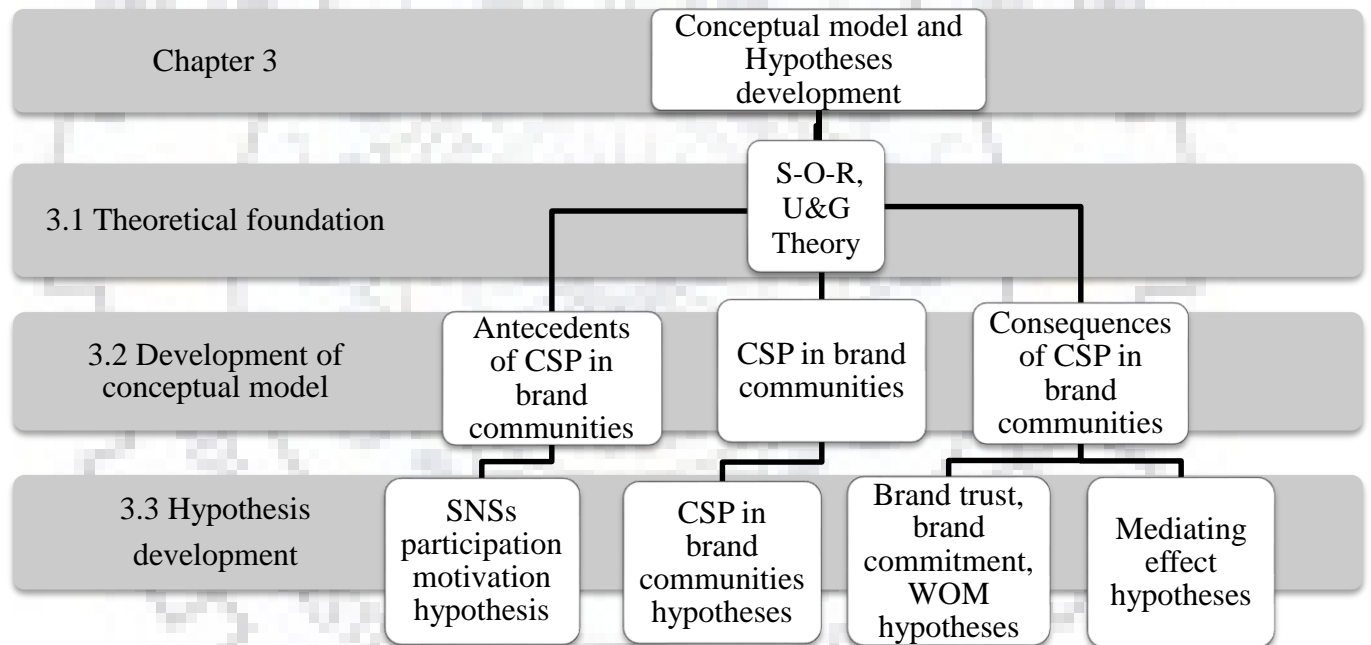


Figure 3.1: Structure of Chapter 3

3. INTRODUCTION

The conceptual model presented in Figure 3.3 is based on Stimulus-Organism-Response (S-O-R) as well as Use and Gratifications (U&G) theory, and it delineates antecedents (SNSs participation motivations) and consequences (trust, commitment and word of mouth towards brand) of customer social participation (CSP) in brand communities. The mediating role of brand

trust between CSP and its outcomes (brand commitment and word of mouth) is also depicted in the model.

3.1 THEORETICAL FOUNDATION

The various relationship among constructs included in the model taken from diverse streams of literature such as social media, consumer behaviour, services marketing, brand management and travel, tourism. The review of literature pertaining to these fields gives us valuable insights regarding customer participation in social media brand communities and brand trust, brand commitment, word of mouth behaviour of customers. A schematic presentation of research model development is elaborated in Figure 3.2. The research model is divided into two important parts- the first part depicts theoretical background for CSP, and second part reflects the CSP, its antecedents (SNSs participation motivations) and behavioral outcomes (brand trust, brand commitment and word of mouth).

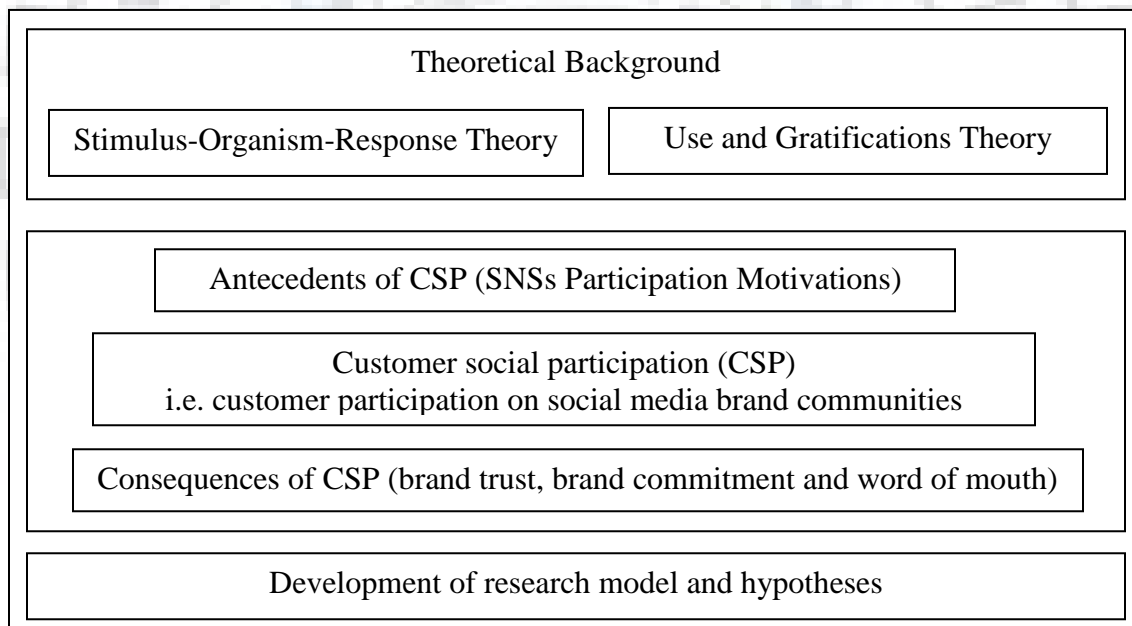


Figure 3.2: Schematic representation of research model development

3.1.1 The Stimulus-Organism-Response (S-O-R) Theory

The S-O-R theory has been used for a long time to understand the behaviour of consumers (Hoyer & MacInnis, 1997). Mehrabian and Russell (1974) initially proposed “S-O-R theory” which was later on modified by Jacoby (2002). This framework suggests that some environmental aspects provoke the individual’s emotional and cognitive condition, and resulting

in certain behavioral outcomes (Donovan & Rositer, 1982). Researchers (see Mollen & Wilson, 2010; Rose et al., 2012; Eroglu et al., 2003) extended this framework to website experience, consumer behavior areas and computer experience etc. This research applies “S-O-R framework” in the domain of consumer behavior.

The “S-O-R” includes three components; stimulus, organism, and response. The first “*stimulus*” component refers as “the influence that arouses the individual (Eroglu et al., 2001, p. 179)”. In social media brand communities, the stimulus is the motivations for participation in communities that affect the internal state of customers (Wang & Fesenmaier, 2003). The present research considers the motivations (building interpersonal relationships, entertainment, information seeking, brand likeability, and incentives) for participation on social media sites to be the stimuli for customers. Researcher propose that these all motivations have a significant influence on customer participation in brand communities, specifically in the case of social media.

The “*organism*” as a second component refers to the customers’ affective and cognitive condition and the entire processes that intervene between both stimuli and responses to the customers (Loureiro & Ribeiro, 2011). Affective position reveals the feelings and emotions expressed by customers following the stimuli. According to Eroglu et al. (2001, p. 181), cognitive position refers as “everything that goes in the consumers’ minds concerning the acquisition, processing, retention, and retrieval of information”. Thus, customers process stimuli in meaningful information, which further assist them for decision-makings (Loureiro & Ribeiro, 2011). In this research three dimensions of customer participation in SNSs brand communities (informational, attitudinal and actionable) are considered (Kamboj & Rahman, 2017), thereby, researcher propose that customers participation as an “organism” with social media brand communities will be influenced by the environmental cues (example, SNSs participation motivations) influence the affective and cognitive state of customers. Since, online communities in the environment of “computer-mediated communication (CMC)” such as social networking sites on social media (Boyd & Ellison, 2007) may provide the information to satisfy the customers’ cognitive and affective needs (Shang et al., 2006, p. 412).

The last component of “S-O-R framework” is ‘response’, which is referred as the consequences of customer participation in brand communities on social media, in form of customers behavior towards the brand (Donovan & Rositer, 1982). Various brand researchers

argued that an important outcome of consumer behavior in term of brand communities is to build trust, brand commitment towards the brand and to produce positive word of mouth i.e. WOM (Kang et al., 2014; Kozinets et al., 2010; Laroche et al., 2013). Similarly, online communities as a social structure (i.e. communities on social media) significantly influence trust, commitment and WOM (Habibi et al., 2014; Laroche et al., 2012, 2013). Brand communities on social media persuade customers to participate and allow them to build trust, commitment (Hajli et al., 2017). Based on above discussions, this research investigates brand trust, brand commitment and WOM as an outcome of customer participation in social media brand communities.

3.1.2 Use & Gratifications (U&G) Theory

U&G theory is most commonly utilized as one of the important media use theories by researchers and facilitates a wide application for understanding the usage of media (Dwyer et al., 2007). Exploring possible gratifications that Internet users seek from a media can provide the reasons for continuous use of that media (Limayem & Cheung, 2011). Owing to the strong base of U&G theory in the domain of media, its theoretical foundation offers tremendous groundwork and significance for the social media research (Malik et al., 2016). The growth and popularity of social media sites have aroused the interest of researchers from different areas to apply U&G theory for understanding satisfactions or gratifications of social media sites usage, its influence and probable outcomes (Pai & Arnott, 2013).

As social media platforms provide a broad range of actions, it becomes essential for scholars to examine how individuals participate using social media sites (Malik et al., 2016). Prior studies have also demonstrated that social media users are engaged, participative, devoted, highly motivated to spend more time in creating user-generated content to specific social networking sites i.e. SNSs (Krause et al., 2014). Thus, the three important purposes of U&G theory are: first, to describe how individual make use of the media to satisfy or gratify their needs; second to reveal the motives for the use of media; and lastly to identify the consequences (positive and negative) of media use (Katz et al., 1973).

Recently, various researchers have examined the U&G of particular activities on social media, including participation in groups (Karnik et al., 2013), music listening (Krause et al., 2014) and digital photo sharing (Malik et al., 2016). Considering the significance of customer participation on social media, exploring and relating its dimension with the

specific U&Gs is both relevant and usable. U&G has been broadly applied to the Internet (Luís Abrantes et al., 2013), SNSs (Malik et al., 2016; Doty & Dworkin, 2014) and mobile SNSs (Ha et al., 2015). U&G theory presents a user or customer level perspective of social media or SNSs (Malik et al., 2016). Given that interactivity, user-oriented nature and immediacy of social media sites, this user (customer) level approach appears appropriate for examining users' participation on social media using SNSs.

Dimmick and Albarran's (1994) classic research further extended the U&G theory to examine the key role of gratifications contribute in deciding media liking. Thus, they specified that media users make a distinction among the media based on the perceived gratifications they obtained (for example affective and cognitive) and new gratification opportunities (for instance, alternatives that media provide, and time flexibility) related to the attributes of different types of media. The actionable aspects of various media have been clearly defined by "human-computer interaction researchers" (Norman, 1999) as "affordances" (Gibson, 1977), i.e. the visual part of user interaction with media. These affordances facilitate the media users to experience media in new manners, and along with actively generate their content, and consequently given the increase in applications and interfaces (Sundar & Limperos, 2013).

Thus, media nowadays vary from a plethora of channels (e.g., Internet) to places on those channels (e.g., SNSs) affording customers the ability to interact and communicate with other customers or users (Sundar & Limperos, 2013). The convergence of digital technology and mass media has not only changed the contact patterns of various media users, but digital technology affordances have also altered the media experience by engaging us to participate in the media content personally (Sundar, 2008). As mentioned so far, this research focus on "customer participation on social media i.e. customer social participation" possesses technology affordances for instance customer-customer interaction (Chae & Ko, 2016), customer to media participation (Chae et al., 2015) and customer to brand connectivity and interactivity (Brodie et al., 2011; Kang et al., 2014).

Although several scholars used this U&G theory to underline the participation motivations in online brand communities, they cut down the discussion about how a customer actually manifests itself. The present research contributes to filling this gap in

literature considering new realities in which participation is manifested in a variety of forms (e.g., informational, attitudinal and actionable participation).

3.2 RESEARCH MODEL OVERVIEW

The research model shown in Figure 3.3 reveals the relationship between the antecedents and consequences of customer participation in social media brand communities. The model is based on S-O-R and U&G theory, which were discussed above in detail.

3.2.1 The Conceptual Model

The conceptual model highlights customer participation in brand communities of social networking sites (SNSs). The model is used to depict comprehensively the associations among the various constructs considered in this research. Consequently, the associations among the constructs are hypothesized based on a systematic literature review described in Chapter 2. The developed conceptual model is a form of varied literature related to social media and customer participation in online brand communities. The conceptual model consists of various antecedents and outcomes of customer participation in social media brand communities. The proposed conceptual model is described below in Figure 3.3

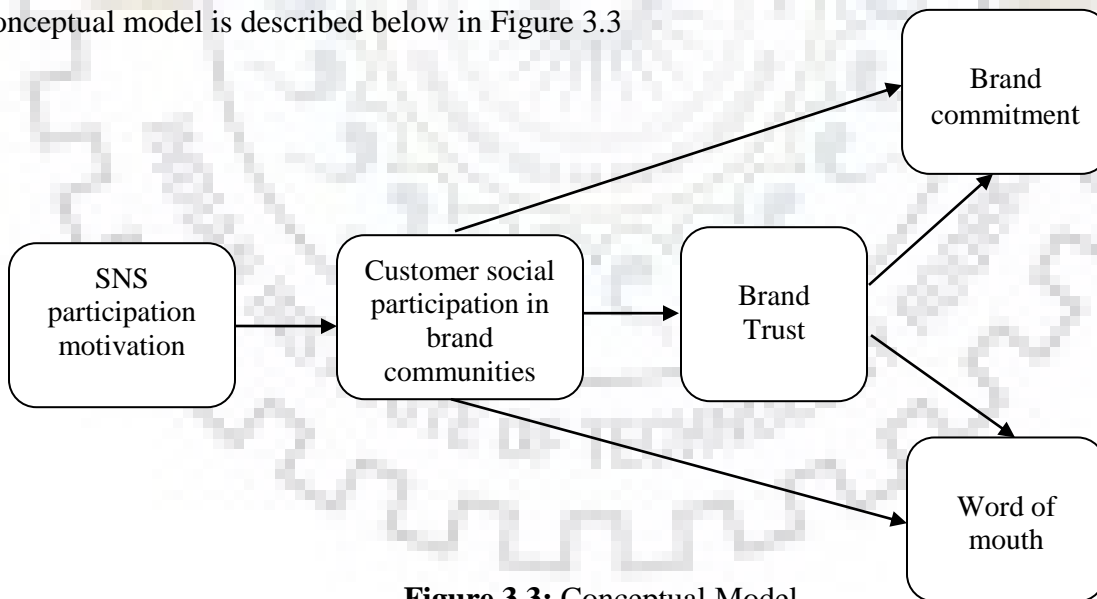


Figure 3.3: Conceptual Model

In this research, customer participation on social media is referred as customer social participation. The first variable SNSs (social networking sites) participation motivation is considered as an antecedent of customer social participation in brand communities. The

remaining part of the model depict various outcomes of customer social participation in brand communities. The outcomes are: i) brand trust; ii) brand commitment; and iii) word of mouth respectively. This research further explores 'brand trust' as a mediator between customer participation in brand communities on social media and brand commitment. Brand trust is also considered as a mediator between customer social participation in brand communities and word of mouth. All these components of proposed model are discussed below.

3.2.2 Concept of Customer Participation in Social Media Brand Communities

Recent technology developments have given rise to a new media society i.e. social media. Chae and Ko (2016, p. 3805) defined new media as "the media characterized by interactivity between the sender and the receiver, convergence, and its use of digital codes". The emergence of mobile devices has facilitated customers to access the SNSs of specific brands with immediate acquisition and share of information regarding the brand. Prior literature consider two concepts for customer participation: customer in-role behavior (customer participation behavior) and customer extra-role behavior (customer citizenship behavior) (Chae et al., 2015). This research considered customer in-role behavior i.e. customer participation behavior in context of online travel communities on social media.

The concept of customer participation is difficult to apply to social media context. But today the concept of Social Media is at top in their agenda for many companies. Most of the companies now try to identify ways with which they can make profitable use of social media in order to directly reach to their customers (Kaplan & Haenlein, 2010). As Hanna et al. (2011) discussed, the power of social media ecosystem is that "we are all connected". These new interactive means using social media platforms provide better environment to the social media users by means of "userfriendly interfaces" that facilitate more participation (Berthon et al., 2012). Based on broad research, this research refers to customer participation on social media as 'customer social participation'.

According to Chae and Ko (2016, p. 3805) 'customer social participation' refer as "an effort to achieve co-creation of values through required but voluntary interactive participation of the customers in service production and delivery process in social media and segments the interaction types into customer-brand, customer-customer, and customer-media according to the subject of interaction". Thus, customer participation in social media brand communities is known

as customer social participation in brand communities. In this research customer social participation in brand communities, especially in travel communities is the main construct. The entire research model is designed based on this construct, considering the antecedents and consequences of customer social participation in brand communities, which are explained in detail in the subsequent section.

3.2.3 Antecedent and Consequences of Customer Social Participation in Brand Communities

3.2.3.1 SNSs participation motivation

The first variable SNSs participation motivation is viewed as an important antecedent of customer social participation in brand communities. The SNSs participation motivation construct consists of variables such as- building interpersonal relationship, brand likeability, entertainment, information seeking and incentive. The variables are expected to have a direct impact on customer participation in brand communities of SNSs.

3.2.3.2 Brand trust

Brand trust is a key antecedent to consumer behavior intention (Hong & Cho, 2011; Wu & Chen, 2005) and considered as a mediating variable in the proposed conceptual model. The positioning of this variable highlights its significance as an important outcome of customer participation in brand communities of social networking sites. In this research, brand trust construct is proposed to mediate between customer social participation in brand communities; brand commitment and word of mouth (see Figure 3.3). In addition to its mediating effect, this variable is also anticipated to have a significant direct impact on both constructs - brand commitment and word of mouth.

3.2.3.3 Brand commitment

In this proposed model, brand commitment is presented as an important consequence of customer participation in brand communities on social media. Brand commitment is expected to be directly as well as indirectly (via brand trust variable) influenced by customer social participation in brand communities construct.

3.2.3.4 Word of mouth

Word of mouth is considered as another outcome of customer participation in brand communities on SNSs in the proposed conceptual model. Similar to brand commitment, word of mouth is also expected to be directly/indirectly (through brand trust variable) affected by the variable ‘customer social participation in brand communities’.

3.3 HYPOTHESES DEVELOPMENT

As discussed earlier, the literature review mentioned in Chapter 2 provide support for the development of various hypotheses in this section. The relationship among variables considered in this research is shown in Figure 3.4. In the next subsections, the proposed relationships are described and hypotheses are developed in order to be tested in this research.

3.3.1 SNSs Participation Motivation Hypothesis

The huge popularization of social networking sites is a major representation of Web 2.0. It differs from existing media in that deliberate participation of users is used to give information and improve product quality and service. Deliberate participation of customers’ needs is to be supported via a number of motivational factors to encourage and retain such behavior. The gist of the theory is that individual user, motivated by a particular set of motivations, voluntarily chooses a specific media that can satisfy their needs.

Motivation is important for participation behavior. Different motivations result in distinct participation behaviors for example; information, entertainment, and friendship can motivate users to use media. Motivations for social media users to use media are positively associated with their participation behaviors (Joinson, 2008). The more use of social media by users for information, social connection and entertainment lead to their stronger participation in communities built on social media platforms. Motivations to use social media sites, for instance, Facebook include various motives: information investigation, relationship building, social connection and entertainment seeking (Alhabash et al., 2012; Zhang & Pentina, 2012).

Information investigation is any activity carried out to acquire technological and human knowledge. In this research, it refers to obtaining information, which satisfies interest, fulfills curiosity and explains cultural events and current news (Ellison et al., 2007; Park et al., 2009). The activities, which provide amusements and funs to spent extra time are known as

entertainment. In this research, entertainment refers to use of social media sites to spent extra time, fun, relaxation and hedonistic pleasure activities (Leung & Wei, 1998). Users undertake relationship building to retain durable and satisfactory relationships. This research defines relationship building as users' use of social media sites to connect with others easily and to maintain their connections better (Sheldon, 2008). Individual's motivations to use social media sites affect their social media sites selections and communication and lead to influence their participation behavior (Chae & Ko, 2016). Stronger the SNSs participation motivation result in stronger customer social participation (Chae & Ko, 2016). Therefore, motives to use SNSs for participating in social media especially entertainment, relationship building, brand likeability, incentive and information seeking will be positively linked with customer participation on social media sites. Prior studies on uses and gratification theory considered various motivating factors of media use as cognitive motivation that try to find and obtain information, personal identity motivation (associated to strengthened individual's social position), entertainment motivation and social integrative need that is related to enhance social interaction with friends and family members via media (Subrahmanyam et al., 2008). Similarly, Lee et al. (2011b) explored various motives which drive Facebook, blogs, and Twitter use as six diverse areas of emotional motivation, entertainment motivation, social motivation, cognitive motivation, self-respect motivation and others.

The online environment of SNSs evokes motivations to participate, most important to the proactive customer participation. As a theoretical basis, motivation theory has been thoroughly applied to examine the behavior of individual who adopt latest technologies (Davis et al., 1992). Although the majority of prior studies are emphasized on offline service marketing. Darley et al. (2010) argued that in an online setting consumer decision-making process is more or less similar to the offline environment, although the process can be somewhat reduced because of the contextual attributes. This research classified SNSs participation motivation into building interpersonal relationship, brand likeability, entertainment, information seeking and incentive motivation. Thus, motivation to participate is considered as an antecedent variable to customers participation behavior, and it can be anticipated that the motivation to participate may have a significant influence on customer social participation in brand communities. This leads to the development of the following hypothesis.

H1: SNSs participation motivation is positively related to customer social participation in the brand community.

3.3.2 Customer Social Participation in Brand Community Hypotheses

Trust is a base of interpersonal exchange and is built gradually during repeated interactions (Gefen, 2000). The concept of trust has been of greater attention for the different academic disciplines researchers, for instance, psychology (Deutsch, 1962), political science (Barber, 1983), sociology (Gambetta, 1988), organization behavior (Kramer 1999) and much more (Connolly & Bannister, 2007). In the marketing literature, research regarding the antecedents of trust are conflicting and require further investigation (Sichtmann, 2007). The primary task of the marketer is to reduce the uncertainty of customers and persuade them to buy their products and services (Sichtmann, 2007). Thus, trust is viewed as a valuable instrument to decrease the uncertainty of customers (Morgan & Hunt, 1994). Trust in an online environment represents “the willingness of a party to be vulnerable to the actions of another party based on the expectation that the other will perform a particular action important to the trust or, irrespective of the ability to monitor or control that other party” (Mayer et al., 1995, p. 712). According to Morgan and Hunt (1994, p. 23) trust is referred as “when one party has confidence in an exchange partner’s reliability and integrity.” The important contribution of trust in stimulating positive responses from a medium to be used in further studies is underlined in existing researches (Casalo et al., 2010; Nadeem et al., 2015).

Ha and Perks (2005) defined brand trust as customers’ secure confidence that a particular brand will perform as supposed upon consumption. Brand trust is created by customer’s positive experiences with products and services of a company over time (Garbarino & Johnson, 1999). Customer regular positive contact with a company’s brand, enable them to become more confident that specific brand always meet or beat their expectation level (Deighton, 1992). Customer’s active participation in a community may facilitate the exchange of information along with customer-brand communication, and therefore contributes towards the formation of brand trust (Flavián & Guinalú, 2006). Additionally, brand trust considers as a key element to take a better decision when more perceived risks are associated with products purchased (Hess & Story, 2005). Customers are mainly in search of a trustworthy brand to keep away from the inherent risk of services and products (Delgado-Ballester & Luis Munuera-Alemán, 2001). Online communities afford the trusted, most personal and direct connection with the brand, customers

may learn from the other members consumption experience that is the main source of trust (Drury, 2008).

Morgan and Hunt (1994) argued that value sharing and continuous communication is required to create trust between brand and its customers. Park (2002) found that interactive participation from actively engaged customers in the online environment lead to increase in trust among them. As such, trust based relationship is created with participatory activities and active communication of customers and brand of a company. Spending more time with the online brand and participated in brand-hosted communities will encourage the strong brand relationship. Delgado-Ballester and Luis Munuera-Alemán (2005) argued that brand's prior interaction and previous experiences are base to develop brand trust. Therefore, it is affected by customer's assessment of direct contact, for instance brand usage (Keller, 1993). Similarly, Elliot and Yannopoulou (2007) suggested that what customers do with a brand is important to the formation of brand relationships. Existing studies revealed that brand experience (Ha & Perks, 2005) and frequency of interaction (Doney & Cannon, 1997) affect brand trust. Likewise, interactions between customer to customer in online communities are associated to the formation of brand relationships (Payne et al., 2009).

Various companies nowadays engage customers by providing them a chance to participate in their advertising such as Pepsi etc, as their interaction resulted into creation of emotional bonds and encouraged commitment and trust between brand and customer (Sashi, 2012). Recently a number of authors have supported that customers of online brand communities are having a tendency to depict relationship quality in terms of improved satisfaction, commitment and trust (Hollebeek et al., 2014; So et al., 2014). The researcher also argued in this research that if a company provide a chance to participate, resulted in interactions, which are if satisfying lead to increase trust as customers have more faith on information provided by other customers instead of the company itself (Dabholkar & Sheng, 2012). Therefore, this research proposes the following hypothesis:

H2: Customer social participation in the brand community is positively related to brand trust.

Brand commitment includes positive and strong emotional affection of users toward a specific brand (Beatty & Kahle, 1988). Instead of behavioral, this definition is more attitudinal (McAlexander et al., 2002). Consumers those who are committed have ongoing attitudes to a

specific brand to retain their relationship with brand only (Butler & Cantrell, 1994). Members who actively participate in online communities of SNSs usually depict higher interest in the brand, and regularly renew their brand knowledge (Bagozzi & Dholakia, 2002). Their regular contact toward brand increases positive feelings and strengthen consumer–brand relationship consequently results in customer commitment (Algesheimer et al, 2005). In an online community, a greater number of active participants can assist the company to set up strong customer–brand bond over time (Mangold & Faulds, 2009).

Online brand community with the majority of active participants can assist a company to establish enduring consumer brand relationship. The users of a specific brand on “Facebook Fan Page” are the followers of that particular brand. Participation by active members implies that brand page mainly occupies positive posts regarding products and services. This type of interactive communications results in psychological attachment to the brand. Therefore, brand commitment in this research specifies online community members readiness to keep their associations with brands via their participation in a community of social media sites. Based on the above discussion, this research proposes the following hypothesis

H3: Customer social participation in the brand community is positively related to brand commitment.

In marketing literature, more emphasize has been given to understand the antecedents and consequences of customer-to-customer interactions. The emphasis of academicians and marketers to understand such interactions results into the genesis of “Word of Mouth Marketing Association (WOMMA)” (Libai et al., 2010). Earlier, word of mouth was considered as oral talks between two customers regarding a brand. With the technology development (Shukla et al., 2015), this view has changed and customers start to interact in several ways, for instance, social media sites, recommendation sites and online communities, which were not reachable earlier (Hennig-Thurau et al., 2010).

Recently a large number of marketing practitioners and researchers have recognized the relevance of empirically assessing and investigating the extensive antecedents and consequences of customer interactions (word of mouth) to create value in customer-brand relations (Libai et al., 2010). Companies deem word of mouth as a promotional tool (Bone, 1995). Advantageous word of mouth may include “relating pleasant, vivid, or novel experiences; recommendations to

others; and even conspicuous display” (Anderson, 1998, p. 6). Word of mouth is of great importance in the context of online environment (De Valck et al., 2009) as suggestions spread quickly and reach to the large online users at cheapest cost (Brodie et al., 2013; Van Doorn et al., 2010). According to Hennig-Thurau et al. (2004, p. 39) word of mouth in online context refer as “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.”

Over social media platforms, customer’s word of mouth is mainly influenced by their online activities, for instance, blogging, tagging, complaining and reviewing (Kumar et al., 2010). All these activities facilitate a platform to the customers and may have an effect on others. Being a member of the brand community on social media, when a customer engaged and participate in the brand community always provide some feedback and share their actual experiences with other members in the community. If their experiences are good, they are strong to spread positive words and suggest others for the same brand. Marketers emphasize on considerable customer participation behaviors, which may extend beyond their transactions, for instance, writing blogs, suggestions, other word of mouth and reviews so to assist another customer who are participating in brand communities on social media sites (Van Doorn et al., 2010). Additionally, marketers also emphasize that how different types of customer participation (online or offline contexts) influence their purchase behaviors (Bolton, 2011). The significance of particular offline word-of-mouth activity in an online environment is supported by results of the study Chatterjee (2001).

In addition, Hollebeek and Chen (2014) also considered the spread of word-of-mouth by customers as an important outcome of customer participation. The present research believed that participation in online communities makes customers to promote brands (Vivek et al., 2014; Kumar, 2015). Similarly, Cheung et al. (2011) argued that customer’s ready to participate in the online community might depict a larger tendency to spread positive words regarding it. Moreover, customers may be influenced by other online members, guiding them to interact more and may spread positive word-of-mouth. Thus, based on above discussion, this research hypothesizes the following:

H4: Customer social participation in the brand community is positively related to word of mouth.

3.3.3 Brand Trust, Brand Commitment and Word of Mouth Hypotheses

When customers think that a specific brand's products and services are more trustworthy, they are supposed to have commitment or attachment towards that brand (Beatty & Kahle, 1988). The existing marketing research has been established an association between brand trust and commitment (Chaudhuri & Holbrook, 2001; Hess & Story, 2005). Customers try to know one's identity by their participations that resulted into formation of confidence or trust of the online community. The customers' emotional belief results into a commitment to the brand and online community (Kim et al., 2008).

In relationship marketing research, trust is generally deemed as a vital antecedent of commitment (Morgan & Hunt, 1994). From a theoretical viewpoint, a customer feeling strong affect for a specific brand should prefer to retain relationship (commitment). In the context of consumption, commitment for the brand should reveal a certain level of effect. According to Dick and Basu (1994), customer's emotional state with respect to the brand has an effect on their loyalty. Several research show that trust and affect may have an impact on loyalty (Bakshi & Mishra, 2014; Chaudhuri & Holbrook, 2001; Hur et al., 2011). In consumer marketing trust have an effect on both purchase loyalty and attitudinal loyalty (Chaudhuri & Holbrook, 2001). As commitment is considered as an attitudinal element of brand loyalty (Oliver, 1999), this research proposes the following hypothesis:

H5: Brand trust is positively related to brand commitment.

Word of mouth is a generally occurring phenomenon taking place in consumer behavior studies (Kozinets et al., 2010). It includes all types of interpersonal communication (positive as well as negative) regarding a brand, company, product between communicator and receiver, who is supposed as non-commercial (Goyette et al., 2010). Word of mouth considers as an important information source for a customer during their purchase process, as it facilitates product information and psychological as well as social effects of possible purchase decision (Brown et al., 2007). Since customers are familiar with the source of word of mouth, therefore the obtained information is expected to be more trustworthy, reliable and credible (Solomon, 2011).

Consequently, word of mouth as a believable information source is considered more effective and affects purchase decision process than other channels of marketing communication (Kozinets et al., 2010). The concept of loyalty is closely associated with word of mouth (Fuller et

al., 2012). When customers are loyal towards a brand or product, they are likely to talk about it and thus contribute to spread positive word of mouth. Sometimes they can become brand ambassadors also when they actively present brand to others and induce them to purchase it. The reach, transparency, and accessibility of internet have broadened customers viewpoints to collect information and engage in word of mouth (Hennig-Thurau et al., 2004).

Social networking sites provide an option to spread word of mouth. The immediate reach of social media to millions of users has improved dispersion of word of mouth considerably. One of the main purpose to use social networking sites is to communicate with other users that include both positive and negative word of mouth. Customers' level of involvement with social media sites, for instance, Facebook fan pages, i.e. the level of brand page awareness and brand trust can be a sign of positive word of mouth activities. These are the important prerequisites of word of mouth. It refers that stronger the brand presence in customers' mind, customers are more likely to say positive about the brand. Annoyance may be supposed to have a contrary influence on positive word of mouth.

In the consumer markets, the relationship marketing activity follows more commitment, customer positive word of mouth and increased sales (Bhattachary & Bolton, 2000; Palmatier et al., 2006). Regardless of its informal nature, word of mouth has a significant impact on consumer behavior (East et al., 2008). Word of mouth is generally interactive, informal speedy, suggestion passed between customers. It can be negative or positive. In this research, we consider the positive word of mouth, which refer as “informal, person-to-person communication between a perceived non-commercial communicator and a receiver regarding positive issues concerning a brand, a product, an organization, or a service” (Harrison-Walker, 2001, p.63). While word of mouth is formerly considered as a component of brand loyalty (Zeithaml et al., 1996), the present research consider Söderholm's (2006) suggestions and treat it as a separate construct. Previous research has revealed that brand trust resulted into customer loyalty (Horppu et al., 2008), and also support to the association between brand trust and word of mouth (Sichtmann, 2007). It is therefore hypothesized:

H6: Brand trust is positively related to word of mouth.

3.3.4 Mediating Effect Hypotheses

Relationship marketing reveals that the influences of the activities on resultant outcomes are generally mediated by trust, satisfaction, and commitment (Palmatier et al., 2006; Morgan & Hunt, 1994). Thus, the researcher here assumes that the effect of customer social participation in the brand community on brand commitment and word of mouth are mediated through a relational mediator. Hart and Johnsson (1999) found trust as a strong emotion to better predict customers word of mouth as compared to the satisfaction.

Likewise, Berry (1996, p.42) describes trust as “perhaps the single most powerful relationship marketing tool”. Palmatier et al.’s (2006) reveal that interaction frequency of customers has more influence on trust over other probable mediators. Moreover, it has also been observed that different relational mediators have different explanatory power across a different group of customers. Similarly, Garbarino and Johnson (1999) found that the primary mediators vary between customer groups: commitment and trust mediate the effects for consistent customers, high relational, whereas satisfaction is considered as the main mediating variable for low relational customers (irregular customers). It is consistent with Morgan and Hunt’s (1994) “*Commitment-Trust Theory of Relationship Marketing*” that there is a relational bond between customers, trust act as a mediator for the effects regarding relationship marketing activities.

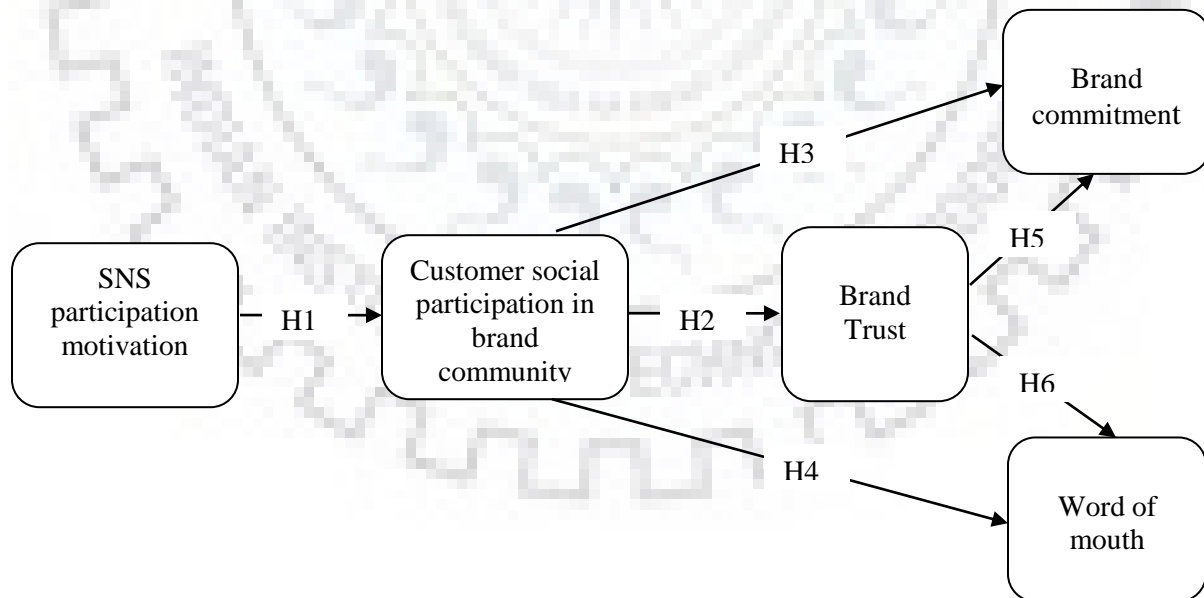


Figure 3.4: Hypothesized Conceptual model

Trust generally has been defined as when a party has some confidence over exchange party's integrity and reliability (Morgan & Hunt, 1994). As this research examine the customer-brand relationship, therefore mediator variable also reveals the trust of a customer for a particular brand. The researcher defines the concept of brand trust as confident beliefs of brand's intentions and reliability (adapted from Delgado-Ballester & Luis Munuera-Alemán, 2005; Ellonen et al., 2010). Corresponding to the definition of trust given above, the definition reveals two aspects of brand trust: intention, which depicts customers' positive intentions for their interests and welfare and brand reliability, which depicts customers' perception that brand may fulfill their needs (Delgado-Ballester et al., 2003). Based on above discussion, researcher proposed the following hypotheses.

H7: Brand trust mediates the relationship between customer social participation in brand community and brand commitment.

H8: Brand trust mediates the relationship between customer social participation in brand community and word of mouth.

3.4 CONCLUSION

This chapter describes the theoretical outline of this research along with brief presentation and support for all research hypotheses. Customer participation on social media is known as 'customer social participation'. Customer social participation refers as an attempt to realize value co-creation via customers' deliberate interactive participation in services on social media. The term customer social participation in brand communities is used to represents the customer participation in social media brand communities. The antecedents and consequences of customer participation in brand communities of SNSs are also examined. Additionally, the proposed model investigates the mediating role of brand trust between customer social participation in brand communities, brand commitment and word of mouth. Considering systematic literature reviewed in Chapter Two, the overall conceptual model is designed. The next chapter shows methodology associated with hypotheses testing and analysis of data.

This chapter outlines the methodology adopted to achieve the research objectives, and answer the research questions stated at the beginning of this chapter. It explains how the qualitative and quantitative research was conducted for achieving the objectives of the present research. First, this chapter presents the proposed research model, followed by research methodology and research design of the present research. The chapter explains the mixed method research design (i.e., both qualitative and quantitative research) adopted. Further, a brief description of the qualitative research method (i.e., phase I) has been presented.

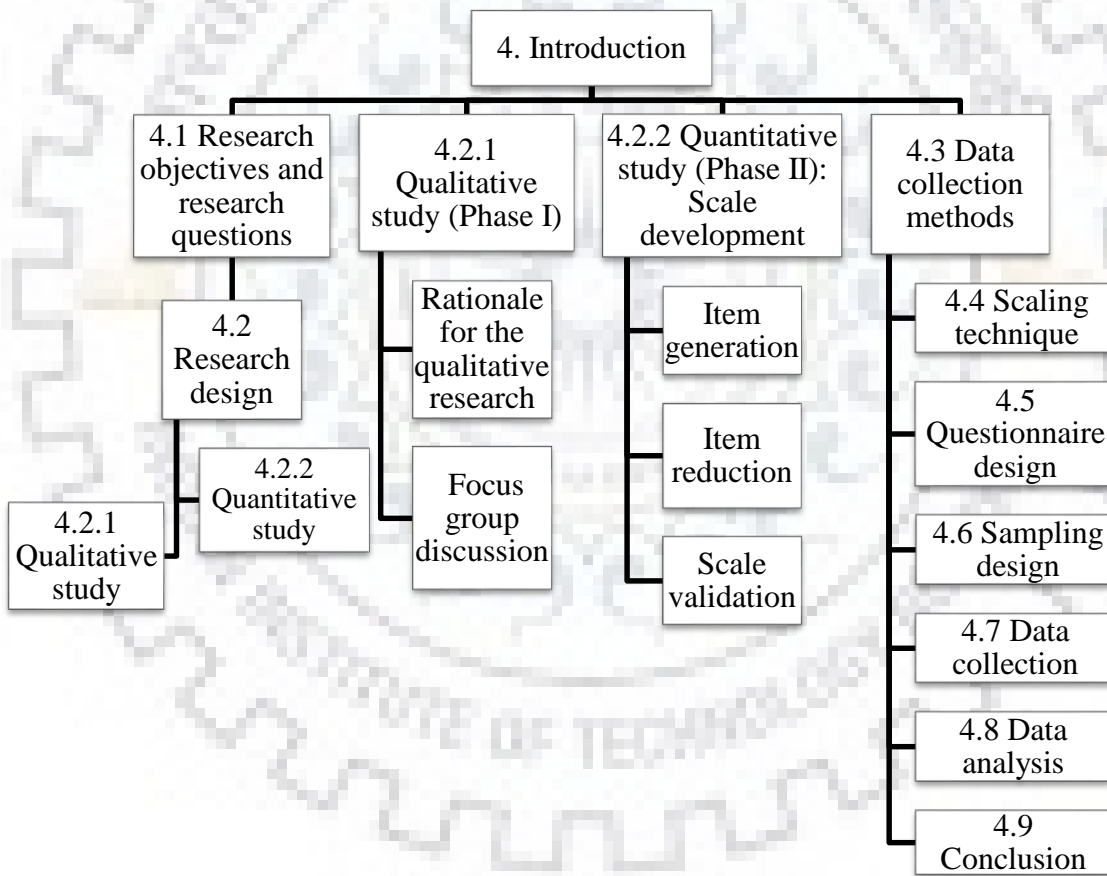


Figure 4.1: Structure of Chapter 4

Researcher discusses the rationale of using qualitative research and focus group discussion method in the qualitative research section. Next, the chapter explains the quantitative research

method (i.e., phase II) employed to develop and validate an instrument for measuring customer social participation in travel communities by providing scale items for the dimensions identified in phase I. The quantitative research section provides a brief description of the scale development process. This section also gives details of the research methodology, data collection methods, scaling techniques, questionnaire design, sampling design, target population, sampling frame, sampling technique, sample size, sampling units, data collection procedure, and data analysis procedure employed during the scale development process. Outline of this chapter was given in Figure 4.1.

4. INTRODUCTION

The objective of the present research is to develop a conceptual model and a scale for measuring customer social participation in brand communities, specifically e-travel companies' communities and empirically examine the relationship between the all construct of research model. The present research has undertaken exploratory and descriptive research design for understanding customer participation in social media travel communities. Data was collected using questionnaire with a cross sectional survey. Non comparative scaling techniques is used for data collection and data was collected on 7 point likert scale.

To explore how customer participates in social media travel communities, qualitative methods are applied initially followed by the development of scale through quantitative methods. The purpose behind using the qualitative research method (focus group discussion) is to gather maximum in-depth information to develop an understanding of customer social participation and its dimensions in online travel communities. The quantitative method involves data collection through questionnaire survey method, and was analyzed using EFA, CFA, SEM and bootstrap. The subsequent section describes the methodology including research objectives, research questions, research design, data collection methods, scaling techniques, questionnaire design, sampling design, data collection methods and data analysis procedures in detail.

4.1 RESEARCH OBJECTIVES AND RESEARCH QUESTIONS

The present research aimed at fulfilling the underlying research objectives and questions that were identified for addressing the problem statement in question. Following are the description of various research objectives (Figure 4.2).

Objective 1: To develop a conceptual model of customer participation in social media brand communities.

The research question for this objective is - how customer participation in online brand communities is conceptualized in existing literature? This objective was addressed through a modeling procedure to develop and propose a conceptual model. Based on the previous literature, the path demonstrating the relationships among the variables was hypothesized. In this relationship, the all hypothesized path were expected to be positive. In the proposed model, SNSs participation motivation is proposed to influence customer social participation, which in turn is influenced brand trust, brand commitment and word of mouth. A detailed discussion regarding conceptual model and hypotheses is mentioned in chapter 3.

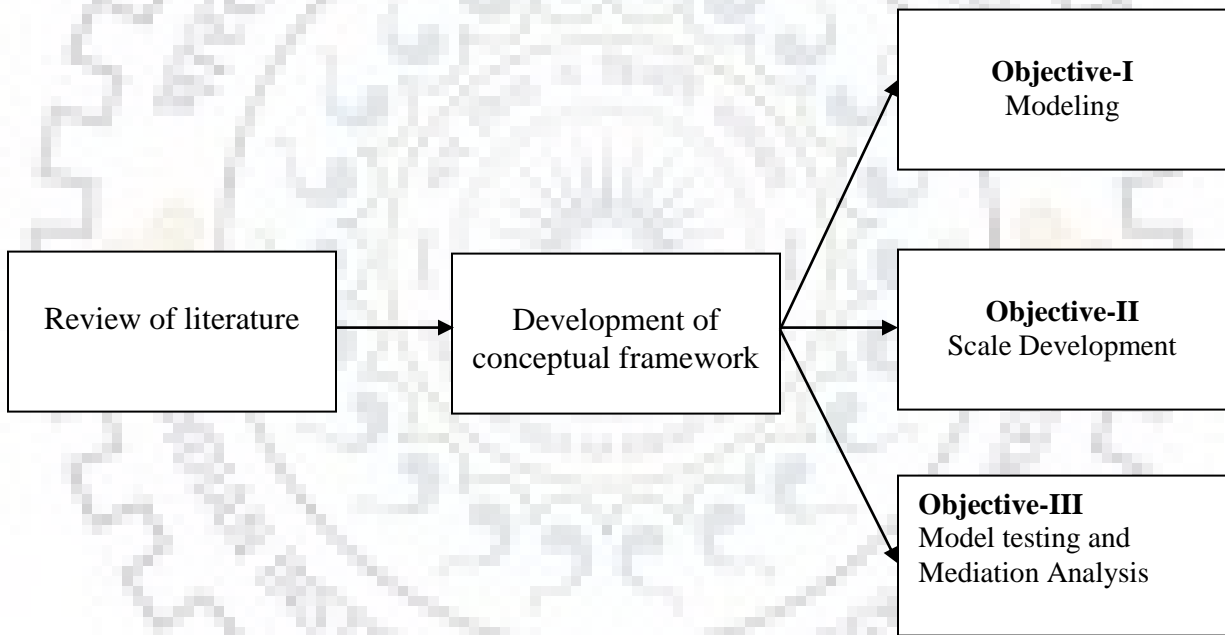


Figure 4.2: Design strategy of research

Objective 2: To develop and validate a customer social participation scale in online brand communities.

The research question for this objective is - how to measure customer social participation in e-travel service companies brand communities?

Customer participation in brand communities is usually measured as a uni-dimensional construct and few studies in the literature have measured this construct with a single item

(Algesheimer et al., 2005). A number of studies have measured this one-dimension construct with two items (Dholakia et al., 2004; Kang et al., 2014; Kim et al., 2008; Wang et al., 2015), whereas the others measured it with more than two items (e.g., Casaló et al., 2007; Casaló et al., 2010; Shang et al., 2006; Woisetschlager et al., 2008; Zheng et al., 2015). Few studies have considered multi-dimensional perspective for measuring customer participation in brand communities (Chae et al., 2015; Chae & Ko, 2016), which reveals more clearly the distinctive theoretical dimensions. In addition, Casaló et al. (2010) emphasized the need for developing industry specific scale to measure customer participation in brand communities. Thus, in this research, a scale was developed for measuring customer participation in travel communities on social media sites. Thus, researcher attempts to develop and validate customer social participation scale in online travel communities context. According to the suggestion given by Churchill (1979), the scale development process includes item generation, data collection, content validity, reliability and validity testing as shown in Figure 4.3.

Following Churchill's (1979) scale development process, a multi-item scale was developed for measuring the customer social participation in travel communities. The multi-dimensionality of the scale was determined based on the previous literature and discussion with industry experts, academic experts, and consumer group. Based on the above-mentioned activities, various dimension and their items relevant for travel community context were identified.

In the scale development process, the first step constituted generation of a pool of items through literature survey, experts' opinion, and group discussion with peers. The second step constituted data collection for the pilot testing. Thereafter, researcher determined content and face validity of the items, which was followed by the questionnaire development for the main survey. The data was collected by following personal survey method from the student sample and non student sample (hotel guests). Next step, constituted the measure purification process that included four main activities: (i) EFA (ii) CFA and (iii) the initial evaluation of scale reliability, convergent, discriminant and nomological validity of items (Churchill, 1979). EFA was done using the principal components extraction and Varimax rotation methods (Osborne & Costello, 2009). Based on the EFA results, items with factor loadings < 0.50 , cross-loadings > 0.40 and low communalities < 0.30 were items that were considered for deletion (Hair et al. 2010). CFA was applied in AMOS 22.0 to improve the congeneric properties of the scale by

following an iteration process based on CFA results (Arnold & Reynolds, 2003). Subsequently, the items were assessed for reliability and discriminant validity by using appropriate indices. A detailed discussion on the scale development procedures is mentioned in chapter 5.

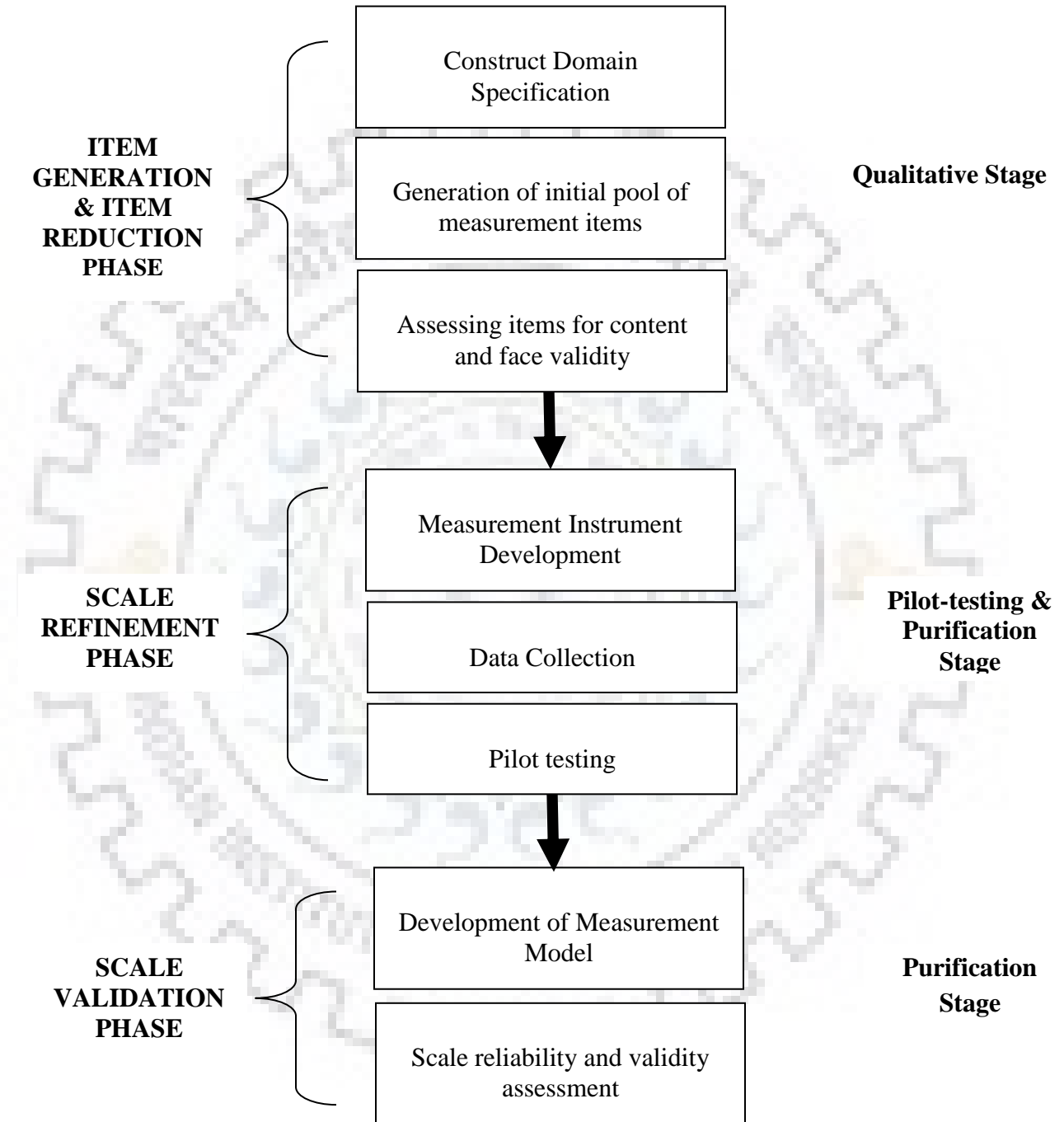


Figure 4.3: Scale development procedure

Objective 3: To empirically examine the relationship between predictor and outcome variables of customer participation in social media brand communities.

The research question for this objective is - how to operationalized customer participation in social media brand communities? The third objective of present research is mainly divided into two sub objectives, first to empirically examine the impact of SNSs participation motivations on customer participation in social media brand communities and second, to examine the impact of customer participation in social media brand communities on brand trust, brand commitment and word of mouth.

This objective was accomplished by the empirical testing of conceptual model and proposed hypotheses developed in Chapter 3. For this, the structural equation model (SEM) was performed using AMOS 22.0. The overall fitness model was evaluated based on the goodness of fit measures. The acceptable fit indices do not necessarily imply that the relations are strong; therefore, standardized path loadings must be significant. A detailed discussion about the findings of research model empirical testing and hypotheses is mentioned in chapter 6.

Objective 4: To determine whether brand trust mediates the relationship between customer social participation in brand communities and the outcome variables (brand commitment, word of mouth).

The research question for this objective is - what is the role of brand trust in the relationship between customer social participation, brand commitment and word of mouth?

This objective incorporates two main sub objectives. First, to empirically examines the mediating role of brand trust between customer social participation and brand commitment. Second, to empirically investigates the mediating role of brand trust between customer social participation and word of mouth.

The present research adopts the bootstrap procedure using SEM through AMOS for the mediation analysis, which also helps in overcome the certain key problem associated with Baron and Kenny (1986) approach and Sobel test for mediation (Preacher & Hayes, 2004). The detail of bootstrap procedure and findings regarding the mediation analysis is given in chapter 6.

4.2 RESEARCH DESIGN

Research design is of two types; exploratory and conclusive (descriptive research and causal research) research design (Malhotra & Dash, 2016). For the present research a mix research design is used, which includes exploratory as well as descriptive research design.

For the present research, exploratory research included a thorough study of literature related to social media and customer participation in online travel communities as well as conducted focus group discussions and interviewing various experts. This research design was used for achieving the objectives of this research, specifically for conceptual model and scale development. From the detail study of existing literature a conceptual model is developed (See Chapter 3), and for scale development along with extant literature consideration few qualitative research procedures (focus group and experts interviews) are considered (See Chapter 5). These qualitative research procedures assist researcher to identify the scale dimensions and items for measuring the customer social participation in online travel communities. The detailed discussion of scale development procedure is given in chapter 5.

Second, the descriptive research design was used in this research for determining the degree of association between variables and for carrying out the survey. In descriptive research design, researcher used multiple cross sectional survey design. There are a number of rationales for using cross sectional survey design over other methodological alternatives available. First, it is an efficient way to collect data from a diverse range and backgrounds of respondents (Babbie, 1989), and generate large samples for generalization of the research (Kerlinger, 1986). Second, a greater number of variables can be measured and investigated in an efficient manner through survey research (Churchill, 1991). Third, the usage of survey research design helps in investigation of the phenomenon in its natural form (Kerlinger, 1986). Finally, survey research has proved to be economical on the ground of quantity and quality of information it extends (Kerlinger, 1986). Considering all rationale associated with cross sectional survey design, it is found to be best suited for this research, as it allows data collection from different samples (students as well as non-student i.e. hotel guests) at one time and different stages of scale development as well as for final model validation.

Hence, this research has applied a combination of exploratory and descriptive research designs to achieve the objectives. By using these research designs, both qualitative research procedures (focus group, experts' interview) and quantitative research procedures (cross sectional survey with structured questionnaire) have been considered. The use of both qualitative and quantitative research procedures (i.e., mixed method research design) offers a more systematic and holistic perspective of the research problem (Silverman, 2006). Academics in social sciences have advocated the use of both qualitative and quantitative research procedures in

order to view a research problem from different angles (Bryman et al., 2008). Benefits of bringing qualitative and quantitative methods together in a single research are well recognized in literature also (Creswell, 2009; Pandya et al., 2012).

This research combines two methods (qualitative and quantitative) in order to gain deep insight and understating of customer participation in online travel communities on social media sites (Figure 4.4).

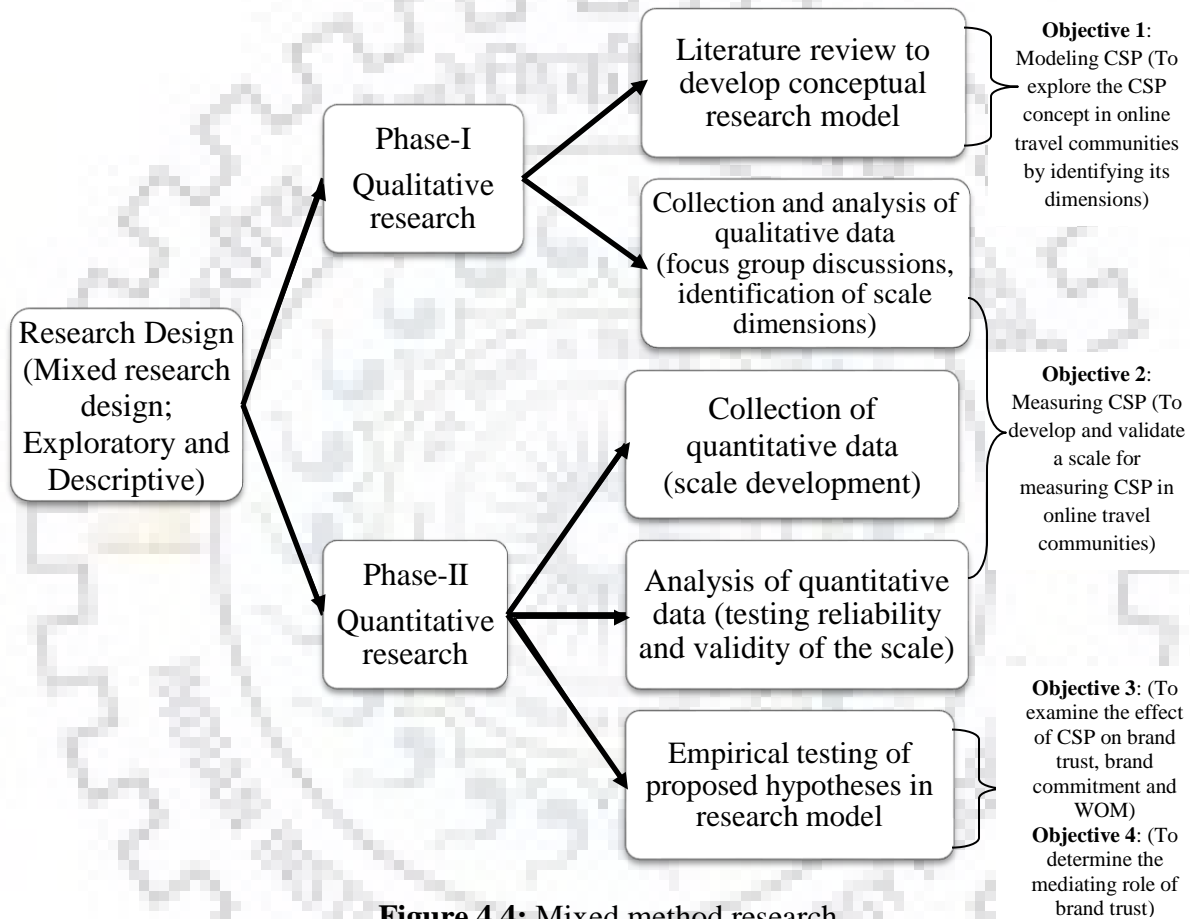


Figure 4.4: Mixed method research

The research includes an examination of dimensions of customer social participation in online travel communities and development of an instrument to measure them. The researchers have adopted a sequential strategy for mixing methods starting with qualitative methods and going on to use quantitative methods (Figure 4.4). A detailed discussion of both phases i.e. phase-I (qualitative research study) and phase-II (quantitative research study) are provided in Chapter 2, 3, 5 and 6.

4.2.1 Qualitative Study: Phase - I

During the qualitative phase of this research, efforts were made review the extant literature on customer participation in travel brand communities on social media so as to develop conceptual research model to accomplish the first objective of this research (See Chapter 2, Chapter 3). Next, researcher attempts to explore the customer participation on social media i.e. customer social participation concept in online travel communities context by the identifying its essential dimensions based on the existing literature in this area and collecting, analyzing qualitative data (focus group discussions). Customer social participation in online travel communities remains relatively unexplored in literature (Kamboj & Rahman, 2017), and its understanding among academics is limited (Chae & Ko, 2016). The present research conducted focus group discussions to get insights from participants and elicit information related to customer social participation in online travel communities. The detail regarding the collection and analysis of qualitative data, which mainly includes focus group discussions (FGDs) for this research is mentioned in Chapter 5 i.e. scale development.

There are a number of reasons to use focus group discussion as a part of qualitative study in this research. First, focus group discussions have emerged as one of the most frequently used qualitative research methods in marketing and consumer research (Saunders et al., 2012). Focus groups in marketing and consumer research have been used extensively to study consumer attitudes (Brsitol & Fern, 1993), online brand communities participation (Davis et al., 2014), online brand community engagement (Baldus et al., 2015), consumer xenocentrism (Mueller et al., 2016), etc. All these studies have employed focus groups to uncover important factors (or themes) by exploring how participants organize and describe their thoughts (Kitzinger, 1995). Second, it has been asserted that participants respond more effectively in a group setting as compared to individual interviews. The real-time discussion and interaction among participants provide the researcher with deep insights into the way a customer participate in online brand communities.

In focus groups, participants can clarify their views in ways not possible during individual interviews (Kitzinger, 1995). According to Hair et al. (2010), identification of salient attributes and measurement aids are among the key advantages of using focus groups. Third, focus groups are much helpful in the refinement of ideas related to a particular concept. Focus groups assist the researcher in becoming familiar with consumer vocabulary related to their

participation in online travel brand communities, and provide important insights into key themes (dimensions) of customer social participation. More importantly, academics who studied the customer participation concept in online brand communities specifically in the hospitality industry have also acknowledged the use of qualitative research to explore the meaning of customer participation in a better way (Arsal et al., 2010). In this research a coding team, using content analysis approach did analysis of qualitative data. The purpose of the content analysis is “to provide knowledge and understanding of the phenomenon under study” (Downe-Wamboldt, 1992, p. 314).

4.2.2 Quantitative Study - Phase II

The second phase of this research involved collection and analysis of quantitative data (scale development and validation) and empirical testing of proposed hypotheses in final research model. The developed scale help in validating the final research model including the hypotheses that state the influence of predictors of customer social participation on CSP, and its subsequent influence outcome variables (see Figure 3.3 in Chapter 3). This research followed the systematic scale development method (recommended by Churchill, 1979) which has been followed in numerous scale development studies in marketing literature (e.g., Baldus et al., 2015). The steps of scale development include item generation, item reduction, and validation are depicted in Figure 4.5. A brief overview of all stages of scale development is presented in the subsequent sections, and their complete details are mentioned in Chapter 5.

4.2.2.1 Item Generation

Researchers have utilized construct definitions to generate a list of items. In the present research, researcher reviewed extant literature on online travel communities and customer participation in social media as well as conducted focus group interviews to generate items for the studied concept, and referred to qualitative research.

4.2.2.2 Item Reduction

Reduction of generated items was done in two stages - experts’ opinion and EFA.

4.2.2.2.1 Experts' opinion

In this stage, researcher considered some experts (nine doctoral students in marketing domain mainly working in travel and tourism area, three marketing professors with an area of interest in travel and tourism management) were invited as judges. All the experts were familiar with the social media, branding and travel, tourism management literature. There are a number of reasons for considering doctoral students and professors in the area of marketing as an expert. First, now a day students and faculty members are tech-savvy (Nadeem et al., 2015). Secondly, they have a regular exposure to the Internet (Bolton et al., 2013) and social media sites (Kaur, 2016), contribute to make highest demographics of social networking sites (Burbary, 2011), and participate more in online brand communities on social media (Kaur, 2016). Finally, this method of data collection and analysis is consistent with the earlier scale development studies in the area of online brand communities especially in travel and tourism (Baldus et al., 2015; So et al., 2014). All these experts reduced the generated set of items sequentially. Detail is given in Chapter 5.

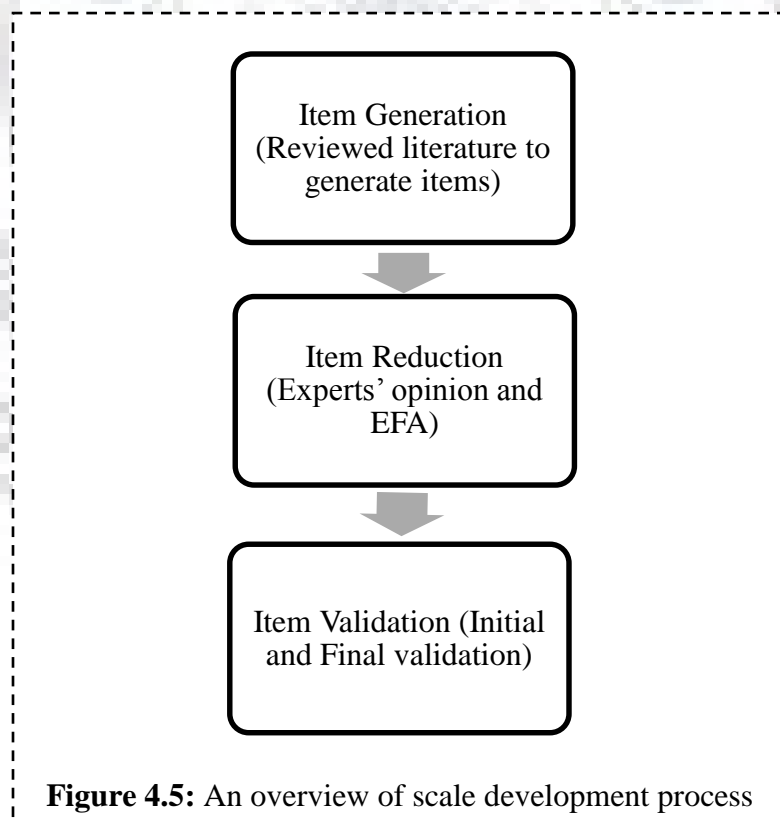


Figure 4.5: An overview of scale development process

4.2.2.2.2 EFA

After taking expert's opinion EFA was performed. During this stage, student sample was considered (Chapter 5). To ensure the eligibility of respondents, initially a screening question was asked from respondents that whether they have subscribed, liked or joined any e-travel service companies' community brand page using any social networking site, or have they ever posted or considered reviews and ratings of any e-travel service companies' via their official site or via mobile app while planning their travel. With the eligible respondents, EFA was then performed to reduce the items.

4.2.2.3 Scale Validation

Validation of the scale was done in two stages - initial validation and final validation. During the initial validation, CFA was performed to examine the dimensionality, reliability, and validity (convergent validity, discriminant validity). For final validation, a different sample (hotel guests) was taken to further validate scale items. The final validation stage examined the reliability, convergent and discriminant validity. During the final validation stage, the nomological validity of the scale was also examined by measuring the effect of customer social participation on brand trust, brand commitment, and WOM. This assessment of nomological validity fulfilled the second objective of this research i.e. to develop and validate a scale for measuring customer social participation in online travel communities. The detail regarding validation stage is mentioned in Chapter 5.

4.3 DATA COLLECTION METHODS

In the present research, for the scale development researcher collected data from students of a large university in India using structured questionnaire. For the scale validation and empirical testing of final model researcher collected data from hotel guest using structured questionnaire. In the present research, a structured questionnaire has been administered to the respondents through survey method. There are several reasons for using survey method with structured questionnaire. The main reason for the adoption of structured questionnaire was the even nature of results. This makes analysis and interpretation is comparatively easier. In addition to this, various number of earlier studies also adopted questionnaire method for data collection in this area (Chae & Ko, 2016; Kang et al., 2014; Laroche et al., 2013). Another reason of using the

questionnaire method is that this method is relatively cheap, accurate, covers a wide range, and quick in data collection (Zikmund, 1994; Cresswell, 2009). The full detail regarding the data collection from the respondents is mentioned in Chapter 5.

4.4 SCALING TECHNIQUES

In general, the scaling techniques are classified into two categories: comparative scales and non-comparative scales (Malhotra & Dash, 2009). For the present research, non-comparative scaling technique with seven points Likert scale has undertaken to collect the data. To achieve the objective of this research, data was collected with the help of a structured questionnaire in two stage i.e., item reduction and scale validation stage of scale development process. Initially, for pilot test and exploratory factor analysis, a 15 item questionnaire was applied. In next stage, for confirmatory factor analysis, data was collected with the help of 12 item questionnaire. During the final validation stage, the questionnaire included 9 items of the customer social participation scale. For the other constructs (SNSs participation motivations, brand trust, brand commitment and word of mouth) the scale is adapted from the existing literature (see Chapter 5, 6). In total, 3 items for each of the dependent variables (i.e., brand trust, brand commitment and word-of-mouth) and 17 items for SNSs participation motivation was borrowed. All items of developed scale and adapted scales were scored with the help of 7-point Likert scale (1 = strongly disagree to 7 = strongly agree).

There were various reasons behind the adoption of Likert scale. The first reason is the construction and administration of this scale is easy. In addition, this scale is suitable for the personal, mail and telephonic interview (Malhotra & Dash, 2009). As stated earlier, data for present research was collected through survey method. Therefore, Likert scale was best suited for the scaling technique used in this research. Another reason for the adoption of Likert scale is that highest number of research in this area have adopted the Likert scale for collecting of data in online brand communities on social media (Elliot et al., 2013, Casalo et al., 2013) (Table 4.2).

4.5 QUESTIONNAIRE DESIGN

The purpose of design the questionnaire in this research was to gather primary data for the testing of various hypotheses developed in Chapter 3. This section describes the overall structure of the research questionnaire, and depicts how the research instrument (i.e. questionnaire) was

developed. Various measures used to assess the distinct constructs included in the research will be described later in the chapter.

A multi-stage procedure was used to develop the research instrument that was finally sent to sample respondents. A systematic literature review was conducted to develop a conceptual model of customer participation in online brand communities on social media that provides directions and guides the data collection process. For the present research questionnaire consisted of several questions and were divided into four parts (1) demographic profile of respondent's and their experiences with online community's brand page on Facebook. (2) SNSs participation motivation, (3) customer social participation in brand communities, (4) brand trust, brand commitment, and word of mouth.

The questionnaire comprised structured questions to measure all variables of this research. Although the majority of variables involved in the research questionnaire were measured through adapted multi-item scales, at the point when no suitable measures could be found, scales were developed following standard scale development processes (Churchill, 1979; Peter, 1979) (see Chapter Five). In such situations, the systematic literature review helped to identify various existing items, while some other qualitative methods (e.g., focus group discussions) were used to support the scale development process. In the present research, structured questionnaire was administered to a group of respondents.

A multi-item questionnaire was designed through a scale development procedure. Questionnaire design was started with the generation of an initial pool of items through a review of existing literature, discussions and interview with experts. The reduction process provided 12 items for measuring customer participation in online travel communities across the three dimensions (six items measuring 'informational participation', three items in each for measuring 'attitudinal participation and 'actionable participation respectively.

Next, 12 items of the scale were validated in two stages – initial validation and final validation. Results of CFA during validation provided a total of 9 items. These 9 validated items of CSP scale and 9 items of the dependent variables (3 of brand trust, brand commitment and word-of-mouth each) resulted in a final questionnaire of 18 items for final validation which included nomological testing of the developed scale. In the final model, SNSs participation motivations added as an antecedent with 17 items. Final research questionnaire of 35 items was used in this research. SNSs participation motivations were measured using seventeen items

adapted from the study of Chae and Ko (2016) and Yuan et al. (2016). To measure brand trust, a three-item scale was adapted from the work of Chaudhuri and Holbrook (2001) and Laroche et al. (2012). The brand commitment was measured using three items taken from Jahn and Kunz (2012). Similarly, three items was borrowed from Zeithaml et al. (1996) to measure word-of-mouth.

In addition, a number of questions were asked from respondents about their personal experiences toward online community brand page on social networking sites: (1) How much time do you have a membership of particular brand page on SNSs? (2) How many brand's pages are you having a membership? (3) In a week how much time will you spend to participate for a particular brand's page on SNSs? etc. Most of the scale items (except demographics) consisted of 7-point Likert scale questions. The final research questionnaire based on different constructs and their corresponding items is shown in Appendix-I.

4.6 SAMPLING DESIGN

The present research followed five-step process to design the sample. These steps are: (1) identification of target population; (2) sampling frame determination; (3) selection of a suitable sampling technique; (4) determination of the adequate sample size; and (5) execution of the whole sample process (Malhotra & Dash, 2009). The details regarding five steps mentioned above are discussed below.

4.6.1 Target Population

Malhotra and Dash (2009) define three criteria for define target population as: elements, sampling units, extent and time. For the present research the target population is as follows:

Element - hotel guests

Sampling units - e-travel service companies' communities

Time - February-September 2016;

Extent - Delhi.

4.6.1.1 Elements: Hotel guests

In the present research, the elements of the target population are hotel guests, which are the members or customers of e-travel service companies' communities on social media sites in India.

To ensure the eligibility of respondents, initially a screening question was asked from respondents that whether they have subscribed, liked or joined any e-travel service companies' community brand page using any social networking site, or have they ever posted or considered reviews and ratings of e-travel service companies' via their official site or via mobile app while planning their travel. The questionnaire was given to those respondents only who were the members of one or more online travel communities on social media sites, and had a special interest in tour and travels. This was done with an objective to see their behavior despite the features of the online community in which they are members. Respondents were requested to provide their perception regarding favorite online travel community on social media site, based on their experience.

The type of hotel guests was decided on the basis of the hotel category that guests chose for their stay. In India, hotels are generally categorized on the basis of stars, namely five-star deluxe, five-star, four-star, three stars, two-star and one-star (Ministry of Tourism, Government of India, 2014). The criteria for the classification of hotels into star categories is mentioned in the 'Guidelines for Classification of Hotels' (Ministry of Tourism, Government of India, 2014). The present research considered the guests of star hotels category in Delhi. This research used the Ministry of Tourism, Government of India website as a source for gathering information about star category hotels in Delhi. There are several studies that have utilized Ministry of Tourism, Government of India website for getting information regarding hotels in India (Sarmah et al. 2017; Mohsin & Lockyer, 2010).

4.6.1.2 Sampling units: Why e-travel service communities?

In the present research, sampling unit is e-travel service companies' communities. The researcher has considered online travel communities in India because of the following reasons:

First, the Indian tourism and travel industry has emerged as important key drivers of growth amongst the Indian services sector (IBEF, 2017). Over past one decade, there is a significant rise observed in the inflow of leisure and business travel in India (IBEF, 2016). India is recognized as a large market for travel and tourism sector (IBEF, 2017). Travel and tourism sector in India is the third largest foreign exchange earner and has huge potential for growth (IBEF, 2017). In India, online travel goes on to dominate the travel market of the country (IBEF, 2016). Indian travel and tourism industry, the online travel sector has drastically grown-up

during past few years. The high convenience level, growing penetration of e-commerce transactions, growing penetration of Internet as well as mobile, and growing population of India are the main factors behind the rapid increase in online travel bookings (Aranca research report, 2015). In India, online travel and tourism bookings penetration are anticipated to boost from 41 per cent in the year 2014 to 46 percent in the year 2017 and total travel gross bookings will grow 37 percent, and by 2020, the travel market will be from '164,987 crores to '271,686 crores (Phocuswright research report, 2015).

Second, India has a tradition to treat the guests as God (“*ATITHI DEVO BHAVA*”). India, an emerging service economy has earned international recognition for its growing travel and tourism sector (India Tourism Statistics, 2015). India won the prestigious “Best Destination” and “Best Marketing Campaign” at the World Travel Awards, 2011. Branding and marketing of tourism in India under Incredible India campaign, and social awareness initiative like Athiti Devo Bhava (guests should be treated like God) for generating attitudinal shift towards tourists and travelers, and have provided a focused to the growth of travel and tourism industry in India. The government of India had launched e-Tourist Visa scheme i.e. “Tourist Visa on Arrival (TVoA)” in November 2014 for 43 countries, which is facilitated by “Electronic Travel Authorization (ETA)”. National Tourism Policy 2015 launched by the government, which encourage the Indian citizens to travel around their own country and position India as “Must see” destination for international travelers. This growth further signifies increased importance for customized and specially designed service offerings that can satisfy the travelers and hotel guests (IBEF, 2016). This particular trend signals more scope for customer interaction and participation through social networking sites in hotels and travel brand communities.

Third, there is a large population who uses the internet with a growing rate of internet penetration, and volume of online tourism and travel transactions in India (IBEF, 2016). Various online travel and tour operators have emerged in India who offers cheap prices with more options to the customers (IBEF, 2016). According to Octane Research e-Travel report, (2015, p. 8), “Hotel bookings are driven by online research. Hotel reviews by local are a driving factor in selecting a particular property. It is interesting to see that 30% of India’s Trip Advisor users are coming to the site using their mobile devices and search hotels”. Thus, it indicates that majority of Indian leisure travelers selected their hotels and travel plans through online communities such

as (Trip Advisor, Trivago, MakeMyTrip, Booking.com, goibibo, Yatra.com, Expedia, and Cleartrip) created on social networking sites like Facebook (IBEF, 2016).

The report also reveals some more facts that 97 percent users of MakeMyTrip want to book their hotel online, and out of it, 77 percent already use online travel agents (OTAs) for their online bookings. Similarly, 40 percent users' book hotel online on the day when they actually require hotel and 14 percent people make use of Mobile App for their booking. In India 95 percent, consumers look for online before making their travel purchase. The main three activities that consumers do online among top five are: Facebook includes 70 percent, travel search by 82 percent users and travel booking by 80 percent. Consumers instead of offline purchase prefer online purchase at the time of booking a train, hotel accommodation, an airline, and a bus. The report shows similar facts about women travelers that in India 43 percent women intent to book their hotel online, 76 percent women seek reviews of other users before making hotel booking online, and 56 percent make use of smart phone apps to get hotel information before they make their final booking.

Finally, Internet and Mobile Association of India (IAMAI) annual report, 2014-15 findings suggested that, "India currently has about 300 million internet users and is expected to overtake the US as the second-largest internet base in the world soon. The country's internet user base will cross 500 million by 2018" (p. 65). According to the report, in India, the number of social media users in the urban area reached 91 million at the end of 2013. Whereas, in India, the number of mobile Internet users is anticipated to reach 213 million at the end of June 2015 (IAMAI, 2015). The report further has found that the majority of digital commerce pie i.e. 61% covered by online travel in India. The rush of interest in big social data has facilitated increasing demand for social media (Akter et al., 2016; Wamba et al., 2016). Thus, it is important for travel marketers to identify and understand their online customers and to ensure their participation towards their social media based travel brand communities.

Thus considering all above mentioned highlights regarding the potential of travel industry and especially growing usage rate of online travel services in India e-travel service communities are taken as sampling unit for this research.

4.6.1.3 Time

This research involves primary data collection through hotel guests of e-travel service companies communities for empirical testing of final research model. Researcher to collect data for scale development, validation and final research model testing spent approximately eight months. Data for the qualitative phase during scale development were collected through focus group discussions. The researcher has contacted participants and conducted the qualitative study, i.e. focus group discussions in the month of February and March, 2016. Data for the quantitative phase during scale development were collected from two distinct samples for item reduction, initial validation and final validation of research model. Data collection for item reduction and initial validation was done from April to June, 2016. Data for the final validation stage and empirical model testing was collected from July to September, 2016.

4.6.1.4 Extent

For this research, data were collected from Delhi. The reasons behind selecting Delhi for the present research are given below:

Delhi is the capital of India where people visit from different countries. This brings diversity in the demographics of respondents. Delhi is officially known as National Capital Region i.e. NCR. According to the UN report (2014), Delhi has above 25 million populations, and is the second largest city in the world after Tokyo. In terms of population, Delhi is amongst the ten most populated cities in the world and the second largest metropolitan city in India after Mumbai (Aneja et al., 2001). Delhi has the advantage of cosmopolitan society where there are people from every corner of India. This makes the city multi-linguistic and multi-cultured. Delhi is one of the largest NCR regions of the world and has territorial jurisdiction of four states including Delhi, Haryana, Uttar Pradesh and Rajasthan. Its rural-urban region has 37.1 million people living in 108 towns (NCR Planning Board annual report, 2009-10). According to the annual report (2013–14) of NCR planning board, NCR is an interstate region, which covers an area of about 34,144 square km.

As per the Annual Report of Tourism Department, Government of Delhi (2014), Delhi has huge potential for tourism development. The main aims of tourism policy of Delhi is the protection of rich cultural heritage and develop the state as outstanding “cultural heritage tourism destination”. Various cultural fests have organized by the tourism department of this state such

as Qutub, Garden Tourism, Ananya festivals, Jahan-e-Khusrau and Mango that have been praised by both domestic and foreign tourists. Delhi tourism department has also organized various International fairs such as Travel and Tourism fair, IATO Convention, STATE and TAAI Convention. Delhi being a leisure and commercial destination in India has a large number of tourists and travelers.

Eight states/union territories, namely Maharashtra, Delhi, Andhra Pradesh, Goa, Rajasthan, Uttar Pradesh, Tamil Nadu, and West Bengal together account for more than 50 percent (a large percentage) of hotels. Collecting data from all the eight states/union territories was practically not possible, and also required a lot of time and money. In fact, amongst states/union territories, Delhi stands second (after Maharashtra) in terms of a number of star hotels in India. The presence of a large number of star category hotels in Delhi increased the chances of achieving a greater response rate. It also assisted researchers in intercepting and selecting appropriate candidates for filling the questionnaire.

4.6.2 Sampling Frame

In the present research, e-travel service companies' communities are considered as sampling frame because of following reasons. A recent report by India Brand Equity Foundation (IBEF, 2016) states that among 184 countries, India ranked at 11th number in terms of travel and tourism and this sector contribution to the GDP in 2015, and the direct contribution of this sector to GDP is anticipated to increase by 7.2 % per annum in 2015-25. The major travel and tourism companies in India includes Country club, Thomas cook, Cox and kings, Indian tourism development corporation limited, Club Mahindra, clear trip, Expedia.co.in, goibibo, Yatra.com, SOTC, MakeMyTrip, Incredible India, Trivago, Travelocity, travel ChaCha, ixigo, Travel Triangle and EaseMyTrip (IBEF, 2016). All these e-travel service companies have established their communities on social media sites.

This is important for travel and hospitality companies, given the inclination for persons to use social media while planning their holiday destination, sharing their experience about the trip, and reviewing the places they have stayed (Begwani & Pal, 2015). According to Begwani and Pal (2015, p. 1), "It's time for hospitality companies to harness the power of social media by assessing the suitability of various channels for their ability to increase customer engagement, enhance customer participation and improve retention rates."

Today, 52 % Facebook users get inspired by their friend's photos and then plan for their vacation destination, whereas 55 % of travelers changed their travel plans after searching their trip on social media sites (Begwani & Pal, 2015). RezNext (2015) conducted a survey among leading Indian hotels and contended that more than 40% of hoteliers engaged with their potential consumer segments on Facebook. Similarly above 45% of travelers were interested in connecting with hotels on social media platforms and tried to find interesting and creative interactive content.

As mentioned earlier also, for the empirical testing of final research model hotel guests were considered. For the hotel guests, the start category approved hotels in Delhi were approached in this research. The list of these start category approved hotels were derived from the site of Ministry of Tourism, Government of India (Table 4.1). The detail of the star category hotels is depicted in Table 4.1.

Table 4.1: Start category approved hotels in Delhi (India)

S. No	Star category hotel	Hotel name	Address(es)
1.	2 Star	Hotel Jageer Palace	C-6/1, Mansarover Garden, New Delhi, Delhi
<i>Total of 2 Star (Total No. of Hotels : 1)</i>			
1.	3 Star	Signature Grand	1A, Sub Distt.Centre,,Hari Nagar
2.	3 Star	Hotel The Manor	77, Friends Colony (W)
<i>Total of 3 Star (Total No. of Hotel: 2)</i>			
1.	4 Star	Hotel Radisson Blu Marina	G-59,Connaught Circus
2.	4 Star	Radisson Blu Hotel	Plot No. D, District,Centre, Outer Ring Road, Paschim Vihar
3.	4 Star	Hotel City Park	3/4, K/P Block, Pitampura
4.	4 Star	The Qutub, New Delhi	Shaheed Jeet Singh Marg,
<i>Total of 4 Star (Total No. of Hotel: 4)</i>			
1.	5 Star	Park Plaza, Delhi	Plot No. 32, CBD Ground,Shahdra
2.	5 Star	J W Marriott	Aero City, Aset 4,Near IGI
<i>Total of 5 Star (Total No. of Hotels :2)</i>			
1.	5 Star Deluxe	Hotel Welcome Sheraton	District Centre, Saket.
2.	5 Star Deluxe	Hotel Amanbagh	Lodhi Hotel Aman Newdelhi,Lodhi Road
3.	5 Star Deluxe	The Oberoi, New Delhi	Dr. Zakir Hussain Marg
4.	5 Star Deluxe	Hotel Imperial	Janpath
5.	5 Star Deluxe	The Taj Palace Hotel	Sardar Patel Marg,Diplomatic Enclave
6.	5 Star Deluxe	The Park	15, Parliament Street
7.	5 Star Deluxe	Radisson Blu Plaza Hotel	National Highway No. 8,Mahipalpur
8.	5 Star Deluxe	JW Marriott	Aero City, Asset 4,Near Indira Gandhi International Airport

9.	5 Star Deluxe	The Lodhi	A Unit of Lodhi Property Co. Ltd.,Lodhi Road
10.	5 Star Deluxe	The Ashok	50-B,Chanakyapuri
11.	5 Star Deluxe	ITC Maurya	Diplomatic Enclave
12.	5 Star Deluxe	Le Meridien New Delhi	8, Windsor Place Janpath, New Delhi
13.	5 Star Deluxe	Kempinski Ambience Hotel Delhi	Number 1, Central Business District, Shahdara

Total of 5 Star Deluxe (Total No. of Hotels :13)

Grand total of star category hotels in New Delhi, India (no.22)

Source: Ministry of Tourism, Government of India (2016-17)

4.6.3 Sampling Technique

In this research, sampling was done for the selection of the sample population and elements. There are many techniques for the sample designing, which can be applied as per the requirement of the research. These techniques can be classified into two categories, that is, probability and non-probability sampling techniques (Malhotra & Dash, 2009). In this research, non-probabilistic sampling technique was chosen. Particularly convenience sampling method was used, as in India, there is no list available for social media based travel community members. Therefore, convenience sampling method was considered to gather data as was done by San Martín and Herrero (2012). Additionally, majority studies on customer participation in brand communities on social media used convenience sampling method to collect data (e.g., Agag & El-Masry, 2016; Kamboj & Rahman, 2016; Zheng et al., 2015).

During the final validation stages, the questionnaire was administered to hotel guests as respondents via central location intercept across multiple locations (around hotels) in Delhi and at various times of the day. A qualified respondent first had to be a hotel guest during his/her trip to Delhi and either subscribed, liked or joined any e-travel service companies' community brand page using any social networking site six months prior the date of conducting survey. Second, respondent have either posted or considered reviews and ratings of any e-travel service companies' via their official site or via mobile app while planning their travel six months prior the date of conducting survey. Respondents were approached outside the hotels in Delhi during their checkout time. In india the checkout time of hotels is 12:00 P.M., thus at this time when a guest checked-out the hotel and come outside the hotel, researcher contacted them. Thus, during this time hotel guest were intercepted, screened and asked whether they would be willing to voluntarily participate in the survey. Special attention was paid while intercepting the respondents because hotel guests usually do not like to entertain any unknown person.

Before handing questionnaire to the respondents, they were informed about the purpose of the present research. The cover letter included the instructions specifying that the questionnaire is completed and returned directly to the person who had administered the survey. Questionnaires were handed to respondents willing to fill them out, and collected immediately after the completion. Thus, every possible effort was made to get a representative sample for the present research. The main challenge that researchers faced during the survey was building trust amongst respondents that the collected data will only be used for academic purposes, and that privacy would be maintained.

4.6.4 Sample Size

In the present research sample of 352 respondents as a hotel guest were considered as a usable sample for the empirical testing of final research model. The demographic detail of sample size is described in Table 5.4 in Chapter 5. The researcher contacted personally nearly 400 respondents. Of these 400 respondents approached, 361 responded to the questionnaire. After eliminating the nine incomplete responses, the survey resulted in 352 usable responses. The full details of the sample are described in Table 5.4. This sample size seems appropriate for the present research. There are several reasons to considered this sample size as suitable for present research these are as follows:

In this research multivariate data analysis techniques (EFA, CFA, SEM) were used. It is suggested that the number of respondents should be ten times the measurement items in case of multivariate technique (Nunnally, 1978). Many studies have justified this rule of thumb for selection of sample size for multivariate data analysis techniques especially for SEM (Kahai & Cooper, 2003; Chin, 1998). Hair et al., (2010) suggested that 10-15 observations were required for each variable. However, a 5:1 ratio of sample size to a number of variables also falls under acceptable limits (Bentler, 1989). In the words of Comrey and Lee (1992), a sample size of 100 is poor and 1000 is excellent, and 300 is an appropriate sample size. A sample size of 5 to 10 respondents per item having a total of 300 responses is adequate (Kass & Tinsley, 1979). Tabachnick and Fidell (2006) advocated that sample size should not be less than 300 if factor analysis was to be applied. A sample size of 100 to 200 participants has also been suggested for examining internal consistency (Spector, 1992). A sample size of at least 100 to 150 is required for applying SEM (Hair et al., 2010).

Table 4.2: Review of existing studies on customer participation in online travel communities

Authors/Years	Scale	Sample Size	Data collection method	Statistical Technique
Wang and Fesenmaier (2004 a)	5 point Likert	322	Questionnaire	SEM
Wang and Fesenmaier (2004 b)	5 point Likert	322	Questionnaire	SEM
Kim et al. (2004)	5 point Likert	351	Questionnaire	SEM
Wu et al. (2005)	5 point Likert	286	Questionnaire	SEM
Casaló et al. (2013)	7 point Likert	456	Questionnaire	SEM
Elliot et al. (2013)	7 point Likert	204	Questionnaire	SEM
Shim et al. (2015)	5 point Likert	300	Questionnaire	SEM
Agag and El-Masry (2016)	5 point Likert	495	Questionnaire	SEM
Yuan et al. (2016)	5 point Likert	364	Questionnaire	SEM

Thus, based on all above mentioned theoretical arguments, it can be said that a sample size of 352 respondents is acceptable and fulfills all conditions of the analysis technique. Additionally, the review of previous studies in the same area also in consistent with the sample size used in the present research (Table 4.2). The full detail regarding sample size used for scale development and validation is mentioned in Chapter 5.

4.7 DATA COLLECTION PROCEDURE

In the present research, both qualitative and quantitative data were collected from different sets of respondents. Qualitative data were collected during the scale development stage – item generation, specifically for identifying the dimensions of customer social participation in online travel communities through focus group discussions. A collection of quantitative data was done during the scale development stages; item reduction and item validation are depicted in Figure 4.5. Data collection procedure employed in the present research is consistent with various scale development studies conducted in the context of online social platforms (Cheung et al., 2011), customer engagement with tourism brands (So et al., 2014), customer brand engagement in social media (Hollebeek et al., 2014). Focus groups were formed of individuals who either traveled any destination or stayed at hotels in last six months and have booked their tour package or hotels via online travel service companies. The respondents were invited using snowball sampling technique which is commonly used for recruiting participants in focus group

discussions. To ensure that all participants possessed sufficient knowledge regarding online travel communities and services offered by these companies, it has been ensured that each participant has member of any online travel communities in last six months preceding the date of focus group discussions. The above-mentioned criterion was followed to ensure only valid and relevant participation. The researcher explained the purpose of focus group discussions with all potential candidates (who either contacted directly or obtain via referrals), and asked about their willingness to participate. The detail regarding who were in focus groups and where, how the focus group discussions were carried out etc is mentioned in Chapter 5.

For all stages of scale development (i.e., item reduction, initial validation, and final validation), data were collected using survey method with structured questionnaire. The questionnaires were given to hotel guests. To ensure that a respondent represented the target sample (i.e., hotel guest), participants were asked about the duration of their stay at the hotel and name of the hotel in which they stayed (or were staying). For the purpose of this research, a hotel guest is defined as “an individual who stayed overnight in a paid accommodation in a hotel located in Delhi, regardless of the distance travelled” (Walls, 2013, p. 183). To increase the response rate, the survey was conducted around star category hotels in Delhi. The data collected to check the nomological validity of the scale (final validation stage) was used for the empirical testing of final research model.

4.8 DATA ANALYSIS PROCEDURE

In this research, researcher collected both qualitative data (via focus groups) and quantitative data (via survey method). Analysis of qualitative data was performed through content analysis. To analyze quantitative data, this research has employed a two-step process - data cleaning and factor analysis. Data cleaning was performed to check for missing data and outliers, and test the assumptions of multivariate analysis through SPSS 21.0. Descriptive statistics were employed by calculating mean and standard deviations in order to get an overview of the sample. In the second step, following the scale development procedure, both EFA and CFA were conducted. EFA was conducted to identify correlation among the set of variables and reduce items on the basis of factor loadings, cross-loadings and communalities (Jain et al., 2013). CFA was performed on the reduced set of items in order to develop the measurement model. The confirmatory factor model was estimated using AMOS 20.0.

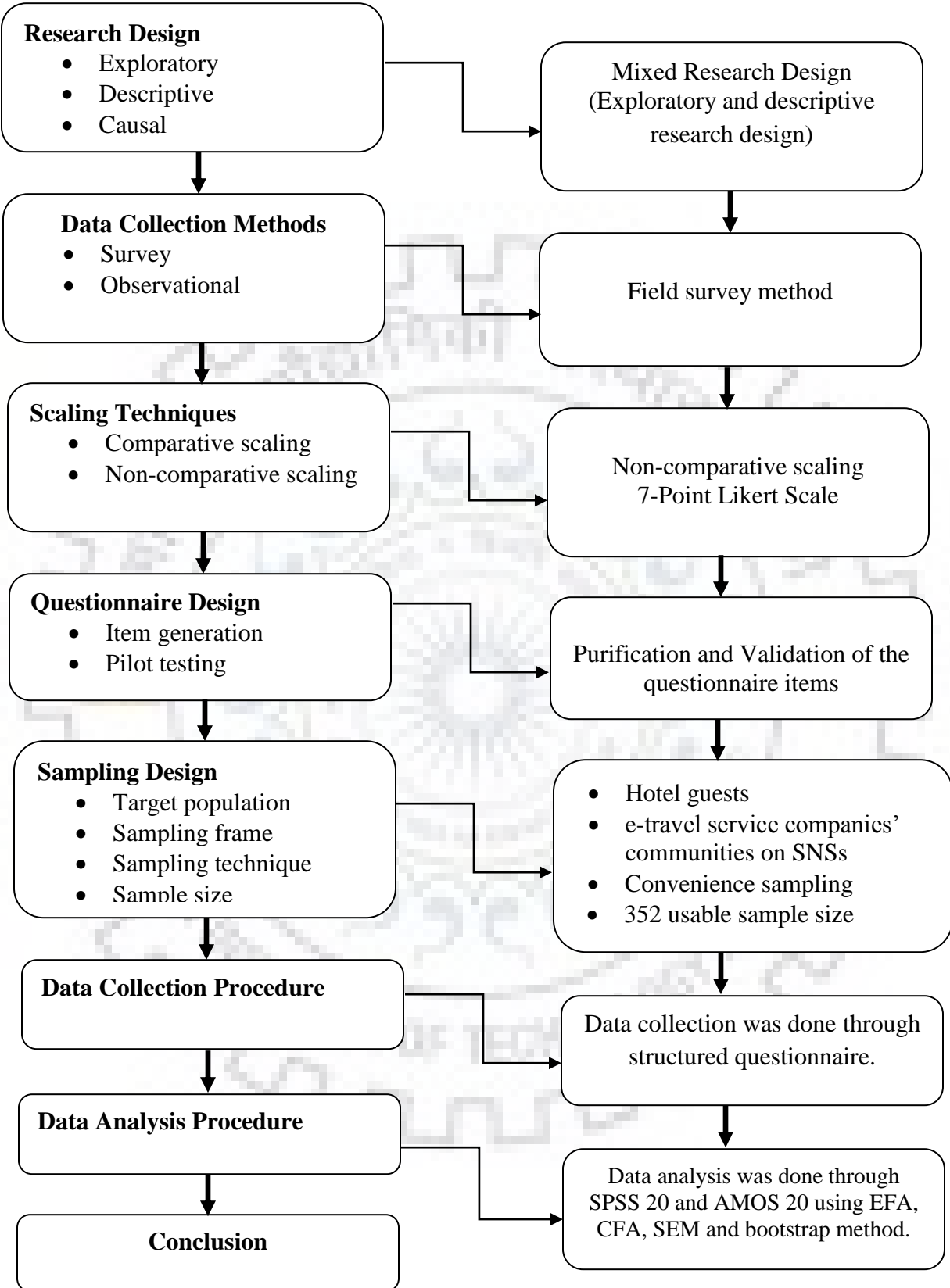


Figure 4.6: Flow chart of research methodology

Goodness of fit indices were examined to determine the best model fit. Reliability and validity (convergent and discriminant) of the scale were also checked. Convergent validity was examined for identifying the extent to which different assessment methods concurred in their measurement of the same trait (Byrne, 2010), and the purpose of testing for discriminant validity was to ascertain the extent to which independent assessment methods diverged in their measurement of different traits (Byrne, 2010). The multidimensionality of the scale was tested through second order CFA, which was necessary for high inter correlations among the five dimensions (Anderson and Gerbing, 1988). The purpose was to establish whether the first-order constructs were reflections of the higher order construct, i.e., customer social participation in online travel communities.

Finally, to test the proposed research model in chapter 3, this research employed SEM. SEM is a multivariate technique that merges the aspects of factor analysis and regression to assess the interrelationships among constructs (Hair et al., 2010). This research considered SEM for analyzing the proposed research model because it is the most efficient estimation technique for estimating a series of multiple regression equations simultaneously (Hair et al., 2010), which means that a dependent variable can be independent in another equation. SEM has the ability to examine multiple interrelated dependence relationships by measuring the effect of several independent variables (i.e., exogenous variables) on one or more dependent variables (i.e., endogenous variables).

The use of SEM has been suggested for testing theory and hypotheses (Tabachnick & Fidell, 2006). SEM improves the statistical estimation of relationships between constructs by incorporating latent variables which reduce measurement errors (Hair et al., 2010). Also, the majority of studies in customer participation in online brand communities and social media literature have employed SEM for analyzing data. Some of them are shown in Table 4.2. This research used covariance based SEM for determining path relationships as such covariance based SEM works more efficiently in the case of reflective kind of models (Chin & Newsted, 1995). In the reflective kind of models, the direction of the relationship is from construct to indicators (Bagozzi, 2011). This research has utilized AMOS 20.0 statistical software for performing SEM because AMOS is a user friendly and most widely-used program in literature for analyzing structural models (Hair et al., 2010). Similarly, to accomplish the last objective of present research bootstrap method was used via AMOS and mediation effect was determined. The reason

behind using bootstrap method was to overcome some key problem related with Baron and Kenny (1986) approach and Sobel test for mediation. As these approaches (Baron and Kenny, Sobel test approach) unable to clarify and present a statistical test for indirect effects exists from independent variable to mediating variable, and from mediating variable to dependent variable. Thus, in the present research bootstrap method was used as it takes into account all direct, indirect and total effect during mediation analysis. The detail mediation analysis via bootstrap method is mentioned in Chapter 6. The output tables of statistical techniques used in the present research are summarized in Appendix-III and Appendix-IV. A flow chart of research methodology adopted in this research was presented in figure 4.6.

4.9 CONCLUSION

Chapter Four has described the overall research design to be used in testing the hypotheses and conceptual model detailed in Chapter Three. On the basis of the research design, the steps of fulfilling the research gaps were sequentially planned. The present chapter explains the research methodology adopted to achieve the research objectives. In the initial section of this chapter, research objectives have been described. To this end, research methodology has been discussed in detail. It includes an explanation of research design of the present research, mixed method research, and details of qualitative and quantitative methods employed in the present research. Particularly, this chapter explained the research design adopted for scale development, data collection methods, scaling techniques, questionnaire design, sampling design for each stage of scale development process, data collection process and data analysis process.

CHAPTER 5
SCALE DEVELOPMENT

The objective of this Chapter is to develop and validate a scale to measure customer social participation in brand communities, specifically e-travel companies' communities. A qualitative research has been undertaken to generate a pool of items. Based on Churchill's (1979) scale development process numerous reliability and validity tests have been conducted to confirm scale structure.

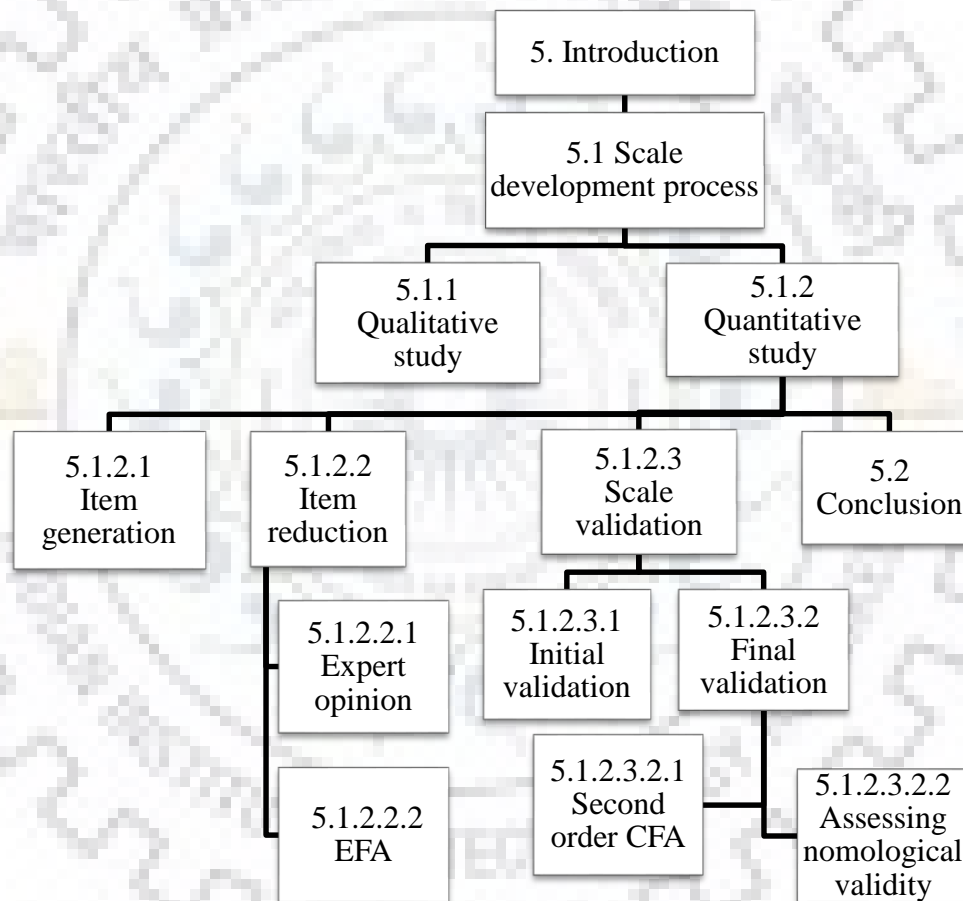


Figure 5.1: Structure of Chapter 5

Data were collected through surveys method from the student sample and hotel guests at different stages of scale development, who have either subscribed, liked or joined any e-travel service companies' community brand page using any social networking site or have ever posted or considered reviews and ratings of any e-travel service companies' via their official site or via

mobile app while planning their travel. The findings depict nine items, three-dimensional scale for measuring customer participation in travel brand communities created on social networking sites. Outline of this chapter was given in Figure 5.1.

5. INTRODUCTION

In the last decade, the concept of social media has emerged as a leading research domain, which underlines the varying aspects of customer relationships. Recently, social media is also highlighted as one of the dominant research priorities area of Marketing Science Institute (MSI) 2016–18 (MSI, 2016). The importance of social media can be observed via the growing number of active Facebook users in a month of December 2016 i.e. 1.86 billion (Facebook, 2017). If 1.86 billion is considered as a number, then Facebook as a popular social media platform has surpassed the highest populated country in the world (China-1.38 billion). This vast base of customers make social media a popular platform not only among its active users but also among the various companies, which make use of different social media platforms to promote and communicate their offerings (Hood & Day, 2014).

According to Rapp et al. (2013), around 88 percent of the companies including Media, IT & Telecommunication, FMCG & Retail, Travel & Leisure have already initiated to use various social networking sites and among them approximately 42 percent have fully incorporated different social networking sites into their marketing strategies. In addition, approximately 39 percent of customers use social media platforms to obtain information about different offerings of the companies, which makes social media sites to be considered as one of the best prospects by various companies to remain in touch with customers directly (Casey, 2017). Additionally, Fortune 500 companies are extensively adopting different social media platforms and online communities to make possible direct interactions with their customers (Culnan et al., 2010). According to some recent findings from Marketing research centre, about 63 percent of millennials either follow or like different brands on social media platform like Facebook and around 19 percent of the millennials follow them on Twitter also (Barnes & Correia, 2016).

Thus, owing to the wide adoption of social media, the past decade has also aroused the interest of academicians and practitioners' regarding online brand communities (Habibi et al., 2014; Luo et al., 2015; Zhang & Luo, 2016). The contribution of these online brand communities

in strengthening the relationship with customers' has been seen as a significant academic concern (Dessart et al., 2015; Manchanda et al., 2015).

Social media refer as, "a second generation of Web development and design, that aims to facilitate communication, secures information sharing, interoperability, and collaboration on the World Wide Web" (Paris et al., 2010, p. 531). According to Ulusu (2010, p. 2949) defined social media as, "Web-based services that allow people to create a public profile, share the connection with other users, and view and traverse their list of connections in common network." Social networking sites on social media have provided a platform that significantly contributes to building relationships with customers (Shen et al., 2010). According to Kang et al. (2014, p. 145), "social networking sites (SNSs) are defined as a second generation of web development and design features that facilitate communication, information sharing, and collaboration on the World Wide Web."

According to the literature on brand community and social media, online communities facilitate their members' sharing of required information from different sources (Schau et al., 2009). In addition, brand communities provide an opportunity for connecting with highly dedicated customers (Andersen, 2005), for communicating efficiently with others and acquiring useful information from them via close interaction (Von Hippel, 2005). The advantage of social media as an effective communication channel is considered as a powerful tool for influencing consumer behavior, and a means of connecting mutually dissimilar individuals is in motivating customer participation in social media brand communities. Social media brand communities play a crucial role in influencing sales, attracting new customers, and retaining existing customers (Adjei et al., 2010).

Recently, the conventional role of customers has been transformed into the socially networked marketplace (Labrecque et al., 2013). Customers have contributed as an active participant instead of passive participants in social media brand communities (Kang et al., 2014). In this era of social media, a number of companies have established their online brand communities to strengthen their bond with customers (Kamboj & Rahman, 2016). Despite the popularity of online brand communities, it is becoming a challenge for companies to create a successful online community for their brands due to the nature of customers' voluntary participation (Liao et al., 2017).

Although the benefits of customer participation in social media are increasingly evident (Kang et al., 2014), empirical investigation regarding this emerging concept is still limited, with earlier research on customer participation in social media being mainly restricted to conceptualized associations without empirical testing (e.g., Khan, 2017). A number of researchers have focused on establishing a reliable measure of customer participation in online brand communities (Bruhn et al., 2014; Wang et al., 2015). Indeed, Casaló et al. (2010) emphasized the need for industry specific online participation measurement scale. Recently an immense body of knowledge in topics related to social media has been increased in the latest hospitality and tourism literature (Law et al., 2017). Despite the increased use of online brand communities as new marketing strategy by various tourism companies and growing customer participation in online brand communities, knowledge about the conceptualization and measurement of customer participation in online brand communities is currently lacking (Wang et al., 2015) especially in tourism and travel brands on social media (Law et al., 2017). However, there is a lack of studies, which emphasizes on scale development regarding customer social participation in social media brand communities (Wang et al., 2015), specifically in travel and tourism (Oz et al., 2015). This research addresses this major gap by developing a customer social participation scale specifically designed to study the customer social participation in e-travel brand communities in India, an emerging country context.

5.1 SCALE DEVELOPMENT PROCEDURE

To develop a scale for measuring customer social participation, researcher have followed well-established scale development recommendations (Churchill, 1979; Gerbing & Anderson, 1988) and previous scale construction researches (e.g., Bearden et al., 1989; Böttger et al., 2017; Tian et al., 2001).

5.1.1 PHASE - I (Qualitative Study): Identification of Dimensions

The area of customer social participation specifically in travel brand communities is relatively emerging; thus, “grounded theory approach” has been used in the present research to explore the customer social participation in travel brand communities’ domain (Spiggle, 1994). Researcher conducted ‘focus group discussions’ to identify the dimensions of customer social participation

in online travel communities. The detail regarding focus group discussion is mentioned in detail below.

5.1.1.1 Focus group discussions

Students pursuing doctorates and masters from a large Indian university were contacted through telecalling and mailing, and asked to participate in discussions. To make sure that all respondents had participated adequately in online travel communities' activities using any SNSs, researcher established the following criteria:

- each participant should have subscribed, liked or joined any e-travel community brand page using any social networking site in the six months prior the date of focus group discussions;
- the participant should have participated through posting or considering reviews and ratings of any e-travel communities' via the e-travel company official website or via mobile app while planning their travel in the six months before the date of focus group discussions;
- the participant should have traveled (even if the first trip) to any destination of their choice and booked online either of the hotel, flight, train ticket, bus, holiday package, cabs etc. via e-travel company sites at least six months prior to the date of focus group discussions.

The aforementioned criteria were considered strictly to ensure only relevant and eligible participation. The above-mentioned large university considered for present research had around 950 students registered in the courses i.e. master's and doctorate; 118 students satisfied the aforesaid criteria for eligibility, and out of the eligible students only 42 were volunteered to take part in focus group discussions. A team of two senior doctoral fellows was formed to perform the focus group discussions. The team consists of a moderator (i.e. researcher) and another one skilled facilitator (with three years of experience in a marketing research company), and both of them have followed all significant guidelines suggested by Morgan (1996) for conducting focus group discussions.

The group of 42 participants was further assessed by the research team to identify students who have participated more in e-travel service company online portals using social media as compared to others in the group. The screening was made on the basis of a number of

online bookings for any of e-service and frequency of like, comment, and share e-travel brand pages using SNSs. As a result, 22 students were eliminated and remaining 20 students with a maximum number of online bookings and SNSs usage frequency was selected for focus group discussions. The finally selected 20 participants (12 males and 8 females) were divided randomly into two focus groups with ten participants in each. Fern (1982) has recommended eight as the best number for focus group participants. Most of the participants (14) were above 28 years of age and enrolled in doctorate courses, and 6 participants were below 28 years of age in the focus group. An approval form was distributed to members explaining the objective of research and procedure for conducting focus group discussion (such as informing group members regarding the use of an audio or voice recorder). The form also consists of a declaration of safeguard against privacy and space for deliberate participation consent (Morgan, 1996). Profiles of all the participants are given in Table 5.1.

Table 5.1: Profile of focus group participants

Group	Gender	Participation in travel communities on social media sites	Age		Education level		No. of participants	
			Range	Rate	Degree	Rate		
I Group	M-7	MMT	2	18-30	6	Bachelor	4	Ten
	F-3	Trivago	5	30-45	3	Masters	6	
		others	3	>45	1	or above		
II Group	M-5	Tripadvisor	4	18-30	4	Bachelor	2	Ten
	F-5	goibibo	2	30-45	4	Masters	8	
		others	4	>45	2	or above		

All participants were asked to sign this form after reading it carefully and understanding the objective of focus group discussion. A name card (i.e. a code) was allotted and put in the presence of group members prior to start the discussion, which assisted the moderator in making field notes. The focus group discussions were pre-scheduled and performed on weekends (Saturdays and Sundays) at 11.30 a.m. to 12.45 p.m. Following Krueger and Casey (2009), a questioning method was used for focus group discussions, which lasted for 1 hour 15 minutes at a silent place so as to conduct focus group discussions properly. The research team was

especially concern about the fatigue of group members so as to maintain the quality level of discussions. Gifts were offered to group members for their deliberate participation.

Focus group respondents' travel destinations included Goa, Kerala, Manali, Shimla, Mumbai, Bangalore, Rajasthan, Rishikesh, Haridwar, Mussoorie, Nainital, New Delhi, Ahmedabad, Pune, Agra, Jammu and Kashmir; their time spent on tour and travel ranged from at least 1 week (i.e. 7D/6N tour and travel package). This research tried to collect response from a variety of customers as a travelers or tourists with different demographics information (e.g., age, travel destinations, education, annual household income, occupation, time spent on tour and travel, travelling frequency per year, and travel and tour package booking method) about their participation in online travel communities on SNSs. In addition, few questions were asked to attain the individuals' information on their social participation in online travel communities. For instance: What travel and tourist destination did you visit during last two months? What method did you use for booking your travel and tour package? (e.g., company website, third party, travel agent, phone book, any known/relatives, smart phone apps and any other). How long did you stay for your travel and tourist destination? Did you post any review on online travel service companies' communities during or after your travel and tour? Did you consider reviews and ratings of any online travel service companies' communities while planning your travel and tour? What is your traveling frequency per year? All respondents were asked to provide their own contact detail for follow-up the content to look into whether the transcript exactly revealed what they had actually shared.

Transcripts were analyzed by the researcher and two additional research assistants help were taken to identify the appropriate themes (or dimensions) related to customer social participation in online travel communities. Coding team using content analysis approach analyzed responses. After that, using Hsieh and Shannon (2005), the analysts referred to appropriate theories and definitions for defining the preliminary codes of studied concept. Then, researcher used classification process recommended by Lincoln and Guba (1985) to create recurring themes list (the dimensions of customer social participation in travel communities). The findings of analysis revealed that all respondents had a concept of customer social participation in travel communities. Also, respondents expressed travel brand-related stimuli as a source of their participation with that travel brand community. Thus, following the results of this analysis, and discuss the outcomes of qualitative study (focus group discussions), the

researchers' team come up with a preliminary list of three dimensions of customer social participation in travel communities. The identified three dimensions and their operational definitions are mentioned in Table 5.2.

Table 5.2: Potential dimensions of customer social participation

Dimension	Conceptual Definition	Relevant Literature
Informational	The degree to which a consumer acquires information and fulfills general interests, that a consumer has in the brand.	Casaló et al. (2007); Casaló et al. (2010); Ellison et al. (2007); Kang et al. (2014); Park et al. (2009); Shim et al. (2015); Yuan et al. (2016); Zheng et al. (2015)
Actionable	A number of times a member participates in travel community activities and the extent to which members actively interact with other members in the community.	Algesheimer (2005); Casaló et al. (2007); Casaló et al. (2010), Kang et al. (2014); Tsai et al. (2012), Wang et al. (2002); Wang and Fesenmaier (2002); Wang and Fesenmaier (2003); Wang and Fesenmaier (2004 a, b); Wiertz and de Ruyter (2007)
Attitudinal	In general, the favorable or unfavorable assessment the consumer makes of a behavior (Wu and Chen, 2005). In terms of online travel communities “A psychological tendency to evaluate the performance of the community with some degree of favor or disfavor (Jiang et al., 2008, p.50).”	Agag and El-Masry (2016); Casaló et al. (2010); Casaló et al. (2011); Cheng et al. (2006); Elliot et al. (2013); Hsu et al. (2006)

5.1.2 PHASE - II (Quantitative Study): Scale Development Process

The qualitative phase i.e. scale development process was performed in three different stages; item generation, item reduction and scale validation. The details regarding all stages are mentioned below.

5.1.2.1 Items generation

Churchill (1979) suggested that a scale must be rigorous in describing what is incorporated in as well as excluded from the construct. After identifying three dimensions of customer social participation in travel communities, an initial pool of items using construct definitions was generated. In order to generate items, two researchers discussed and incorporated findings from

the extant literature on online travel communities (related to participation concepts, such as customer participation, consumer participation, guest participation etc.) and customer participation in SNSs. After that, researcher used thematic content analysis (based on the findings of focus group discussions) to explore, examine and explain the customer social participation themes in the context of online travel communities. The researchers separately read, arranged and reorganize transcripts, discussed with each other about the differences and appropriateness for a unit of analysis, and consequently agreed on the suitability of units for further analysis. Lastly, a total of 140 valid units were generated. Thus, in this research, the initial pool of items was generated after an extensive literature review and content analysis.

Thereafter, three marketing professors (with an area of interest in travel and tourism management) were invited as judge A, B and C. They were requested to qualitatively evaluate the item's face validity and construct validity. They then read out, sorted, and re-sorted the unit's themes, thus finally generating 26 themes. After that, four doctoral students, who are scholars of marketing and pursuing Ph.D. in travel and tourism area, performed the content analysis' last stage in terms of the reliability test. The standard for reliability is that coding agreement ratio to a total number of coding decisions goes beyond 80 percent (Kassarjian, 1977). The inter-judge reliability for final coding was 82 percent, above the standardized limit i.e. 80 percent. Next, these 26 themes were converted into measurable items as an initial pool of items for measuring the three dimensions of customer social participation in travel communities.

5.1.2.2 Item reduction

Item reduction was done in two stages i.e., experts opinion and exploratory factor analysis.

5.1.2.2.1 Experts' opinion

The item reduction process included a number of steps. First, three different scholars (pursuing Ph.D. in travel and tourism area) formed a panel in order to examine the items. Driven by the face-validity considerations, all 26 items were fully assessed by this panel. Then to avoid the problems of wrong content and ambiguous wording, they were asked to double-check each and every item. All of them were requested to evaluate every item carefully for conciseness and clarity. Additionally, all of them were also requested to provide details about the missing aspects in the construct, which are not captured rightly.

They were supposed to provide a rating to all item based on the criteria suggested by DeVellis (1991) i.e. ‘somewhat relevant’, ‘very relevant’ and ‘not relevant at all’. This lead to addition, modification, and deletion of some items, and resulted in 15 items. These 15 items were considered for the next stage of methodology.

All these items were further included in the questionnaire that was used for the survey. For the survey questionnaire, these items to evaluate the respondents’ agreement level were ranked on a 7-point Likert-type scale anchored with 1 (strongly disagree) to 7 (strongly agree). At last, analysis of all respondent’s profile including age, education, and so on was performed. The entire process of scale development is depicted in Table 5.3. This table described in detail both phases qualitative study to identify the scale dimensions and quantitative study to item generation, item reduction and scale validation (initial validation and final validation).

Table 5.3: Scale development process

Steps in the process	Details
Identification of dimensions	
PHASE I (Qualitative study): Identification of dimensions	
Focus group discussions	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Two focus groups with 20 members, ten in each group • Analysis of the focus group transcripts to identify customer social participation in travel communities dimensions • Result = Identified three dimensions
PHASE II (Quantitative study): Scale development process	
Item generation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Literature review (customer participation in social media and online travel communities literature) • Result = Generated a total of 140 items.
Item reduction Expert panels	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Expert’s judgment <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Panel I: Evaluated 26 items carefully - Result = 15 items retained
Exploratory factor analysis	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Conducted survey <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - 358 students responded to 15 reduced set of items - Result = 12 items retained (three items were dropped)
Scale validation Initial validation First order confirmatory factor analysis	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reduced 12 items set were analyzed using first order CFA

Overall and comparative fit

Dimensionality

Factor loadings

Reliability

Validity

Convergent validity

Discriminant validity

Final validation

Validation of the measurement properties

Second order confirmatory factor analysis

Structural equation modeling

Overall and comparative fit

Dimensionality

Factor loadings

Reliability

Validity

Convergent validity

Discriminant validity

Assessing nomological validity

- Result = 9 items retained (there more items were dropped due to low factor loadings)

Conducted survey for final validation

- With a non-student sample i.e. hotel guests ($n = 352$)
- 9 items were analyzed using second order CFA
- Result = Validation of customer social participation in travel communities scale including 9 items across the 3 dimensions
- Establishment of nomological validity (with 3 different theoretically linked constructs i.e. brand trust, brand commitment and word of mouth)

5.1.2.2.2 Exploratory Factor Analysis (EFA)

Next, researcher performed EFA to determine the suitability of 15 items received from the previous stage (i.e. item reduction through experts' opinion). Researcher performed this step to reduce down the number of items generated and to examine two questions: 1. How many customer social participation in e-travel brand communities dimensions are there? 2. What type of customer social participation in e-travel brand communities are captured by these dimensions? According to Malhotra et al. (2012, p. 850), "Once the item pool has been refined through initial content pretesting, the refined and reduced scale can be used for data collection following a sampling method well justified for the research context". Considering the same, for the scale refinement, data was collected from the students of Indian Institute of Technology, (IIT) Roorkee, Uttarakhand using online survey method. This method is a common research practice (e.g., Bagozzi & Dholakia, 2002, Yuan et al., 2016) in this domain. The researcher collected quantitative data by providing an invitation to participate in the online survey with a hyperlink to the web-based questionnaire (using Google Docs) in the IIT Roorkee students' online

community in India namely, “IIT Roorkee Alma Connect” (using, <https://iitraa.almaconnect.com>). This method of data collection is consistent with the previous research in the area of social media brand communities (Kamboj & Rahman, 2016).

To ensure the eligibility of respondents, initially a screening question was asked from respondents that whether they have subscribed, liked or joined any e-travel service companies’ community brand page using any social networking site, or have they ever posted or considered reviews and ratings of any e-travel service companies’ via their official site or via mobile app while planning their travel. The questionnaire was given those students only who were the members of one or more e- travel service companies’ communities on social media sites and had a special interest in tour and travel related services. This was done with an objective to see their behavior despite the features of online travel community in which they are members. Respondents were requested to provide their perception regarding favorite online travel community on social media site, on the basis of their experience. However, as In India, there is no list available for social media based travel community members. Therefore, convenience sampling method was considered to gather data. This method of sampling is consistent with the prior studies in the domain of travel communities on social media (Agag & El-Masry, 2016; Kang et al., 2014).

The survey comprises three parts: initial screening questions, the 15 items with two other questions, one probing community members’ overall experience and emotions attached to their favorite online travel community on Facebook and Twitter, and other related with their demographic profile. The process of data collection took six weeks and 358 valid responses were received. The detail of sample is depicted in Table 5.4.

Table 5.4: Sample description

Characteristics		Sample1 (n = 358)	Sample2 (n = 352)
Age (Years)	18-24	105 (29.32%)	87 (24.71%)
	25-30	189 (52.79%)	93 (26.42%)
	31-40	56 (15.64%)	88 (25%)
	40-50	06 (1.67%)	62 (17.61%)
	50 & above	02 (0.56%)	22 (6.25%)
Gender	Male	248 (69.27%)	260 (73.86%)
	Female	110 (30.73%)	92 (26.14%)
Education	High school & Intermediate	99 (27.65%)	72 (20.45%)
	Graduation	135 (37.70%)	176 (50%)
	Post graduation	124 (34.64%)	41 (11.65%)

Occupation	None	0	63(17.90 %)
	Student	358 (100%)	83 (23.58%)
	Self employed	0	128 (36.36%)
	Retired	0	51 (14.49%)
	Other	0	90 (25.57%)

After collecting the data, researcher performed exploratory factor analysis (EFA) for scale refinement. In EFA, principal component analysis was used to extract the factors using SPSS 21.0 with “varimax rotation method” and “Kaiser normalization”. The results of EFA confirmed the existence of the three distinct factors that are associated with proposed theoretical arguments of present research. The following criteria was used to extract the factors; (1) each factor must have an Eigenvalue more than 1, and (2) iterative process, in general, should reduce items having factor loadings less than 0.50, high cross-loadings over 0.40, and low communalities less than 0.30 (Hair et al., 2010). Thus, items with loadings less than 0.5 and cross-loadings on two or more factors were eliminated.

With EFA this research actually extracted three factors for customer social participation scale. These three factors accounted for 87.61% of the total variance. The entire procedure resulted in the elimination of three items and provided a clear twelve items factor structure matrix. The three items eliminated were “I do my best to participate in activities offered on the brand's Facebook page”, “I frequently interact with other community members”, and “I am very attached to the community”. These items were found to be important in another study context by researchers, but in the context of customer social participation in e-travel communities’ context specifically in India these items were not relevant for the respondents. Initially, they participate voluntarily but due to resource constraints such as lack of time, lack of motivations, due to the absence of incentives and rewards, they show less interest in participating in e-travel communities on social media sites.

The details of remaining twelve items are given in Table 5.5. These twelve items were loaded well on three factors, and items loading value were in ranged between 0.782 to 0.964. According to Hair et al. (2014, p. 116), “although factor loadings of ± 0.30 to ± 0.40 are minimally acceptable, values greater than ± 0.50 are generally considered necessary for practical significance”. Thus, the loading values were above 0.50 (see Table 5.5). The “Kaiser–Meyer–Olkin (KMO)” value was 0.853 and “Bartlett’s test of sphericity” have a significant chi-square value $\chi^2 = 6157.36, p < .05$, which specified that factor analysis was performed appropriately for

the data. Cronbach's alpha's values were ranged from 0.941 to 0.977 thus found within the acceptable limit as recommended by (Nunnally & Bernstein, 1994).

Table 5.5: Results of EFA
Rotated Component Matrix^a

Items	Component		
	1	2	3
INF1	.893		
INF2	.885		
INF3	.883		
INF4	.840		
INF5	.820		
INF6	.782		
ACT1		.964	
ACT2		.958	
ACT3		.955	
ATT1			.945
ATT2			.944
ATT3			.919

Extraction Method: Principal Component Analysis.
Rotation Method: Varimax with Kaiser Normalization.
a. Rotation converged in 4 iterations.

Note: KMO value = 0.853; variance explained = 87.61%. a. Items were scored on a 7-point Likert-type scale anchored by *strongly disagree* (1) and *strongly agree* (7). b. The valid sample size = 358.

The informational dimension included six items; the actionable dimension included three items, and the attitudinal dimension also included three items. Overall, the factor analysis results were in good structure and more interpretable. The loading of items on the first factor depicted how respondents provide time to search for information regarding travel community brand page on social media sites, thus this factor was named informational participation. The items loadings on the second factor showed how respondent participated actively via their visual actions, and therefore it was termed actionable participation. The third factor incorporated the attitude of respondents, and described how they interacted, and cooperated online with travel community members on social media sites, therefore this factor was named attitudinal participation. Results were depicted above in Table 5.5.

5.1.2.3 Scale validation

The next stage of scale development included validation of the scale. Researcher analyzing the psychometric properties of the developed scale during the validation phase. In this step, researcher performed confirmatory factor analysis (CFA) with first order and second order. CFA is basically a special case of structural equation modeling (SEM), which is also referred as covariance structure (Joreskog & Sorbom, 2004). In this research, both first order and second order CFA was performed using maximum likelihood method via AMOS 20.0.

Scale validation was performed in two stages, first initial validation, and second final validation. The initial validation was performed to validate the structure of factors via evaluating dimensionality, reliability and validity (convergent and discriminant) of scale items. The final validation was performed to revalidate the structure of factors and assess predictive or nomological validity of scale using non-student sample i.e. hotel guests. Consequently, during the final validation, the questionnaire included the questions related to both endogenous constructs (i.e. brand trust, brand commitment and word of mouth) and exogenous constructs (i.e. three developed dimensions of customer social participation in online travel communities). The full details regarding both initial and final validation are mentioned in subsequent sections.

5.1.2.3.1 Initial validation

After EFA researcher performed first order confirmatory factor analysis in order to develop measurement model as a part of initial validation in scale development process. The measurement model build at this stage is depicted in Figure 5.2. During this step, reliability and validity of scale is measured via CFA (Churchill, 1979). The validation process mainly relies on “iteration of confirmatory factor analysis, where the goal is to improve the congeneric measurement properties of the scale (Arnold and Reynolds, 2003, p. 83)”. Therefore, to achieve this goal, initial validation was performed to ascertain the 12 measurement items acquired from the previous stage i.e. item reduction. 358 responses gathered during EFA were further used for first order CFA during this stage.

CFA was performed using AMOS version 20 and significance of entire model with relationships between all items and scales were tested statistically. CFA was performed with three factors including 12 items identified by EFA. The researcher conducted CFA, in order to evaluate the quality of factor structure through statistical testing of the full model (the difference

between scales) and linkage between scales and its items. Researcher initially assessed the goodness of fit for a three-factor model with “rotated component matrix” as input and a “maximum likelihood solution”. Using CFA, measurement model was constructed and values of commonly used goodness of fit indices were assessed; “chi-square (χ^2/df)”, “normed fit index (NFI)”, “goodness-of-fit index (GFI)”, “adjusted goodness-of-fit Index (AGFI)”, “comparative fit index (CFI)”, PCLOSE, “root mean square error of approximation (RMSEA)”.

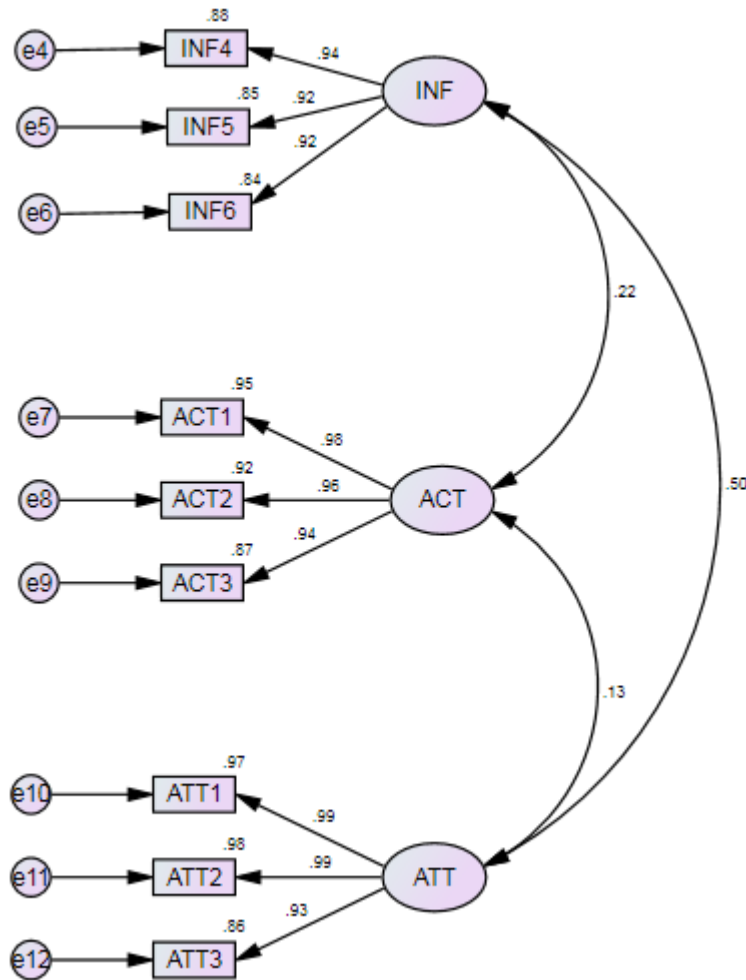


Figure 5.2: First order CFA

The findings of CFA with first order significantly support the three-factor model. The three items were eliminated in order to reach to the goodness of fit indices. The three eliminated items were “I have bidirectional communication with other community members”, “I see myself as a part of the community” and “I cooperate with other community members”. The remaining nine items

depict an overall goodness of model fit to the data ($\chi^2 = 33.98$, $df = 24$, $p < .001$, $GFI = .980$, $AGFI = .963$, $NFI = .992$, $CFI = 0.998$, $RMSEA = .034$, $PCLOSE = .840$). As all these values were within the standardized limits, thus showing a good fit between the observed data and the model. Findings are depicted in Table 5.6.

Table 5.6: First order CFA

Dimension	Items	Standardized loadings			CR
Informational participation	INF_PART 4	0.935			0.947
	INF_PART 5	0.921			
	INF_PART 6	0.919			
Actionable Participation	ACT_PART7	0.977			0.970
	ACT_PART8	0.957			
	ACT_PART9	0.935			
Attitudinal participation	ATT_PART10	0.985			0.978
	ATT_PART11	0.989			
	ATT_PART12	0.927			
Goodness-of-fit measures					
$\chi^2 = 33.985$, $df = 24$, ($P < 0.001$)	GFI	CFI	NFI	RMSEA	
	0.980	0.998	0.992	0.034	

The present research used the findings of CFA to assess reliability and validity (convergent and discriminant) of the scale. Construct reliability of the scale was assessed using Cronbach's alpha and composite reliability (CR). For CR estimate the rule of thumb states that the value at least 0.70 or more than indicates adequate reliability. The value of CR depicts the internal consistency among all items measuring the particular construct (Fornell & Larcker, 1981). As the values of Cronbach's alpha and CR were more than 0.70, representing that there was internal consistency (i.e. all measures consistently indicated something) and scale is a reliable one. The values were lies within suggested threshold criteria suggested by Nunnally (1978). Table 5.4 and 5.5 depict these values for each dimension.

The test of convergent validity was conducted to verify that each of the measured items represented their corresponding factor (Chau, 1997). Convergent validity refers to the extent to which constructs' measures that theoretically should be linked are actually linked. It is assessed through following criteria: at least or above 0.70 value of "composite reliability (CR)" (Nunnally, 1978), greater than 0.50 value of "average variance extracted (AVE)" (Fornell & Larcker, 1981), and in CFA greater than 0.70 value of all items loadings (Nunnally, 1978). All

these criteria for convergent validity are met in this research (Table 5.6, Table 5.7), thus there are no convergent validity concerns. Table 5.6 depict that all items loaded well on three factors with their loadings more than standardized cutoff range 0.70. Table 5.6 also shows that the value of CR for all three factors was within the standardized limits i.e. from 0.94 to 0.97, and similarly, the values of AVE was also within the standardized range i.e. from 0.85 to 0.93 (Table 5.7). For the convergent validity, AVE is a more reliable measure. As per Malhotra and Dash (2010, p. 702), "AVE is a more conservative measure than CR. On the basis of CR alone, the researcher may conclude that the convergent validity of the construct is adequate, even though more than 50% of the variance is due to an error."

Discriminant validity refers to the extent to which a constructed measure differs from the other constructs' measures in the similar measurement model (Hulland, 1999). The discriminant validity examined by three criteria: First, the value of AVE should be greater than "Average Shared Variance (ASV)", second, the value of AVE should be more than "Maximum Shared Variance (MSV)", and third, the value of square root of AVE should be more than inter-construct correlations. Table 5.7 depicts that for all three factors the value of AVE is more than MSV as well as ASV. Similarly, at the right side of this table, inter-construct correlations are described, which shows that at diagonal the square root of AVE (0.925, 0.956, 0.967) of all factors are greater than the values of inter-construct correlations. Therefore, in the research all conditions were met for discriminant validity, there are no concerns for it.

Table 5.7: Discriminate validity for first order CFA (initial validation)

	AVE	MSV	ASV	1	2	3
Informational participation (1)	0.856	0.247	0.147	0.925		
Actionable Participation (2)	0.915	0.048	0.032	0.219	0.956	
Attitudinal participation (3)	0.936	0.247	0.132	0.497	0.128	0.967

The scale development and initial validation process resulted in the three-factor structure of the customer social participation construct. In the refinement stage (item reduction and initial validation), EFA and first ordered CFA was conducted on the same sample, as EFA and CFA are two different techniques, but a number of studies on scale development were conducted these

two techniques using same data set in the same manner (*e.g.*, Walsh & Beatty, 2007; Khan & Rahman, 2017).

Whereas, the second order CFA was conducted on the second dataset. From the analyses performed across the refinement stage of scale, 9 items were held to measure the three dimensions of customer social participation in online travel communities. In order to further validate the newly develop scale, researcher next describe the second-order confirmatory factor analysis, which was performed on a second sample to evaluate the consistency of underlying structure with the prior analysis (Churchill, 1979) and nomological validity of the scale.

5.1.2.3.2 Final Validation

According to Malhotra et al. (2012), “Once the item pool has been refined through initial content pretesting, the refined and reduced scale can be used for data collection following a sampling method well justified for the research context” (p. 850). The main purposes of the final validation are (i) to validate the measurement model generated from the first data set (ii) to assess the generalizability of this factor structure, (iii) to examine this factor structure and fit it in a nomological network. In order to validate the scale, data were again collected. According to Internet and Mobile Association of India (IAMAI 2014-15) report, “online travel industry includes air and train ticket bookings, hotel accommodations and tour packages (p. 70)”. Based on this, the data for final validation stage were collected from 352 hotel guests. Demographic detail of these respondents was depicted in Table 5.4. Thus, respondents for the validation phase were Indian hotel guests above the age of 18 years. Hotel guests were selected as respondents for final validation stage, which is consistent with the previous studies in the travel and tourism literature (*e.g.*, Martínez et al., 2013; Khan & Rahman, 2017). With a structured questionnaire, the researcher contacted the respondents personally using survey method.

Respondents were asked to provide their responses during their checkout time and they were approached outside the hotels (see 4.6.3 section in methodology for detail). This was done to make sure that during the hotel checkout time the respondents had enough time to provide respond to the questions. The hotel guests’ of star category approved hotels in Delhi were approached. Delhi is a capital of India and has above 25 million populations (UN Report, 2014). As per the Department of Tourism, Delhi Government (2014), Delhi has huge potential for tourism and travel development. The main aims of tourism policy of Delhi are the protection of

rich cultural heritage and develop the state as outstanding “cultural heritage tourism destination”. Delhi being a leisure and commercial destination in India has a large number of tourists and travelers. At present, the total number of hotels in Delhi under star category (“2 Star Category, 3 Star Category, 4 Star Category, 5 Star and 5 Star Delux”) approved by the ministry of tourism, Government of India (2016-17) are 22 (see Table 4.1). The researcher contacted the hotel guests’ of these hotels personally. The same screening question was asked from the hotel guests’, which was asked from the earlier target population of students to ensure their eligibility. The researcher contacted personally nearly 400 respondents. Of these 400 respondents approached, 361 responded to the questionnaire. After eliminating the nine incomplete responses, the survey resulted in 352 usable responses. The full details of the sample were described in Table 5.4.

5.1.2.3.2.1 Second order CFA

Based on existing research and theories that developed scales in online brand communities on social media (Baldus et al., 2015) and travel and tourism contexts (So et al., 2016), the present research conceptualized customer social participation in online travel communities as a second-order construct consist of three first order constructs or dimensions. In order to test the factor structure, researcher further checked multidimensionality of the scale with CFA (second-order), which was found significant for high inter correlation among all three dimensions (Anderson and Gerbing, 1988). The aim behind conducting second order CFA was to determine whether the first-order factors (i.e., three dimensions) are the reflection of higher order construct i.e., customer social participation in online travel communities. It was found that all items loaded significantly on their corresponded propose factor only, and did not result into cross-load on any other factors see (Figure 5.3).

Thus, the previously identified three-factor structure with first order CFA was once again verified using CFA with the second order. AMOS version 20 was used to run this second order CFA. As mentioned earlier also, all nine items were significantly loaded on their corresponding factors. This second-order CFA model was found reasonably fit on the collected dataset. All goodness of fit indices (GFI = 0.978; NFI = 0.992; CFI = 0.997; RMSEA = 0.039) found within standardized limit and coefficient of determination was above 0.5. All the criteria met for convergent validity thus there are no concerns for convergent validity. Similarly, the values of

composite reliability were also above 0.7. The CFA with second order revealed a reasonable model fit, which is depicted in Figure 5.3.

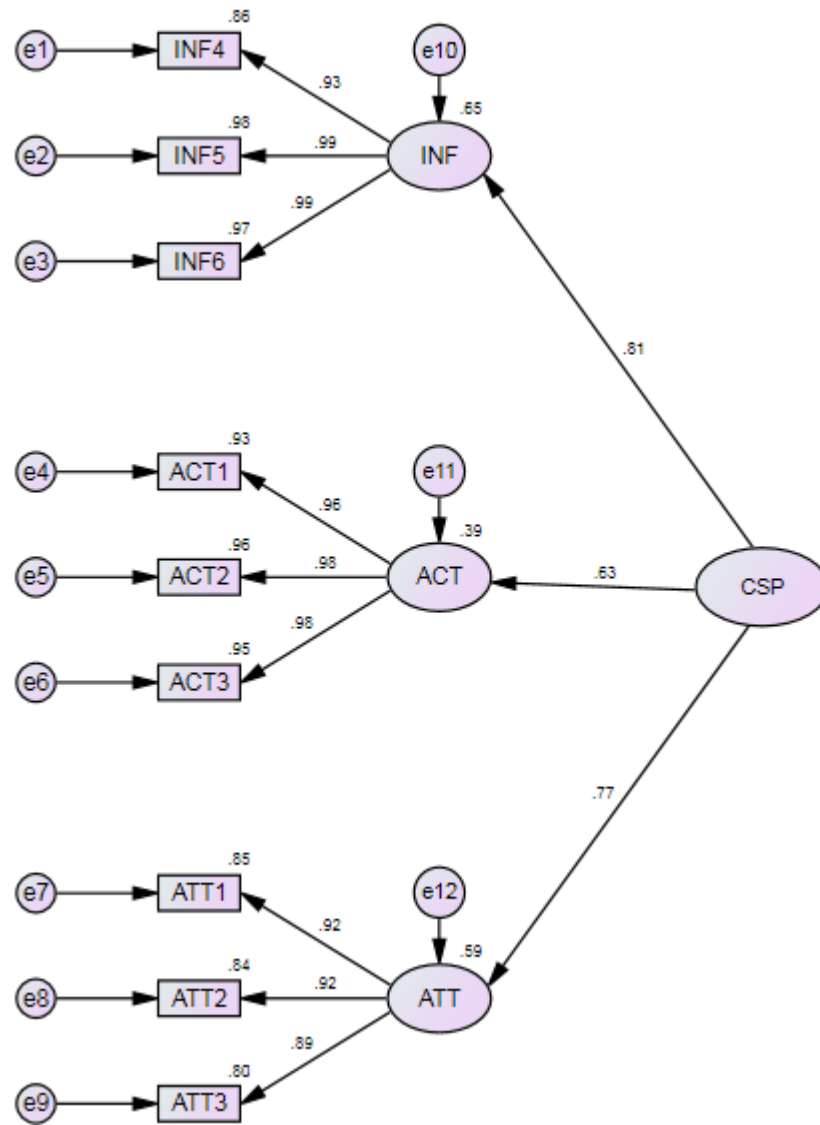


Figure 5.3: Second order CFA for scale validation

5.1.2.3.2.2 Assessment of Nomological Validity (structural model estimation)

For assessing the nomological validity of the scale, this research tested it with theoretically linked concepts in literature. Thus, the causal relation between customer online participation in social media based travel brand community and conceptual variables for instance brand trust, brand commitment (Kang et al., 2014) and brand loyalty (Zheng et al., 2015) has been considered as a frame of reference to test our developed scale.

Table 5.8: Customer participation outcomes variables

Coefficient of determination	Sources
Factor: Brand trust	AVE = 0.920; α /CR = 0.972
TRU1	0.940 (Chaudhuri & Holbrook, 2001; Laroche et al., 2012)
TRU2	0.980
TRU3	0.957
Factor: Brand commitment	AVE = 0.856; α /CR = 0.947
COM1	0.920 (Jahn & Kunz, 2012)
COM2	0.940
COM3	0.916
Factor: Word of mouth	AVE = 0.901; α /CR = 0.965
WOM1	0.930 (Zeithaml et al., 1996)
WOM2	0.958
WOM3	0.960

To examine nomological validity, correlations were assessed between the three factors of participation scale and three consequence variables. The informational factor was found to have a weak correlation with brand trust (0.13) and strong correlation with another two variables brand commitment (0.51) and brand loyalty (0.29). The strong connection between informational participation, brand commitment, and brand loyalty shows that this factor is having significant importance to the brand community members. The actionable factor was found to show a positive, strong correlation with all three consequence variables: brand trust (0.20), brand commitment (0.36) and brand loyalty (0.24).

Table 5.9: Means, standard deviation and correlation coefficient of the scale

	Mean	SD	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)
1 Informational	3.56	1.81	1					
2 Actionable	3.04	2.19	0.50	1				
3 Attitudinal	3.98	1.50	0.64	0.50	1			
4 Brand trust	4.01	1.51	0.13	0.20	0.14	1		
5 Brand commitment	3.82	1.59	0.51	0.36	0.63	0.23	1	
6 Word of mouth	3.91	1.63	0.29	0.24	0.37	0.30	0.47	1

This depicts that the factor is more valuable to the participation outcome variables. The actionable factor strong association with all three variables shows that this factor is of much importance to the brand community members. The attitudinal factor showed a strong correlation

with two of the consequence variables brand commitment (0.63) and brand loyalty (0.37) but a weak correlation with brand trust (0.14). This strong linkage between attitudinal factor, brand commitment, and loyalty show that this factor is also valuable to the travel brand community members. The values of these correlation estimates along with descriptive statistics were displayed in Table 5.9. The values of correlations are significant at $p < 0.5$, thus verifying the nomological validity of our proposed scale as per the criteria are given by (Shimp & Sharma, 1987).

The participation scale development and validation present a measure of social media based travel brand communities member's online participation on the brand page. Using a standardized scale development process, three dimensions of customer social participation in online travel communities was confirmed.

The mean score comparison of scale domains is performed to ensure the significant differences among them. Table 5.9 depicted the existence of significant differences in the perceive relevance associated to participation domains by community members. Brand community members provide more relevance to the attitudinal and informational dimension. As displayed in Table 5.9 the high rated dimension is attitudinal participation (mean = 3.98) and least rated is actionable participation (mean = 3.04). The all nine items individual mean score is displayed in Table 5.10.

Table 5.10: Mean test of customer social participation' items ratings

Items	Mean
INF_PART 4	3.49
INF_PART 5	3.54
INF_PART 6	3.57
ACT_PART7	3.10
ACT_PART8	3.07
ACT_PART9	2.93
ATT_PART10	4.09
ATT_PART11	3.96
ATT_PART12	3.94

Among all items of participation the high rated items are “I feel good when I interact with other online community members” (mean = 4.09); “I try to be cooperative with other members in online community” (mean = 3.96); “I enjoy making new friends in online community” (mean =

3.94); “ I read comments/reviews of other community members about brand”(mean = 3.57); “I post messages and provide responses online on the brand community page frequently” (mean = 3.54), and least rated item is “I provide feedback online related to participation in the community's activities” (mean = 2.93).

5.2 CONCLUSION

The present research examines customer’ participation in online travel community built on any social media based platform such as Facebook, Twitter, and YouTube etc. The unique contribution of this chapter is to providing consumer perception of travel brand community to all three dimension of customer social participation construct. This research provides a multidimensional measure of customer social participation specifically for online travel communities. The proposed scale is developed through a systematic process of scale development given by Churchill (1979). The entire procedure comprised the study of two different samples of distinct stages. In addition, several tests and retests were performed to determine the scale validity. Lastly, nine items under three distinct dimensions: informational, actionable and attitudinal were arrived at. Thus, this research adds to the existing literature by presenting a multidimensional psychometrically sound scale of customer social participation from a holistic perspective relevant to the travel and tourism industry.

The present research is the first devoted attempt to develop a multi-dimensional measure of customers’ social participation in online travel brand community. Moreover, it is the first considerable research into online brand community participation since important development in online communities, for instance, the launch of social media sites (Facebook, Twitter, and YouTube etc), and the devotion of other internet based applications and online technologies revolutionized online communities, specifically in travel and tourism sector. Developing the customer social participation scale is a valuable effort towards the advancement of conceptual argument to measure online participation behaviors (Casaló et al., 2010). In addition, at final stage i.e. scale validation, the validity of developed scale is further verified by testing the causal relation between customer social participation and conceptually linked variables through structural equation modeling.

After developing the scale for measuring the customer social participation in the previous chapter, the present chapter aims at fulfilling the objective three - examining the relationship between predictor and outcome variables of customer participation in social media brand communities, and objective four - examine the mediating role of brand trust between customer social participation and its outcome variables (brand commitment and word of mouth). This chapter entails the procedure and results of modeling and mediation analysis. In the subsequent section, the results of descriptive statistics, exploratory factor analysis, confirmatory factor analysis and structural equation modeling are presented for modeling and the basis of boot strap analysis has been discussed for mediation analysis. Outline of this chapter is given in Figure 6.1.

6	• Introduction
6.1	• Descriptive statistics
6.2	• Non response biasness
6.3	• Measurement model analysis
6.4	• Results of confirmatory factor analysis
6.5	• Common method variance
6.6	• Hypotheses testing using structure equation modeling (SEM)
6.7	• Conclusion

Figure 6.1: Structure of Chapter 6

6. INTRODUCTION

In the present chapter, the collected data from star category hotel guest (n = 352) in Delhi was analyzed for testing the conceptual model and proposed hypotheses. Data was analyzed using SPSS version 21 and AMOS version 20 and presented in terms of (i) Descriptive statistics (ii) Non-response biasness (iii) Measurement model analysis with CFA (iv) Assessment of reliability and validity of constructs (v) Examining common method variance (vi) Hypotheses testing with structural equation modeling. The proposed research model is shown in Figure 6.2.

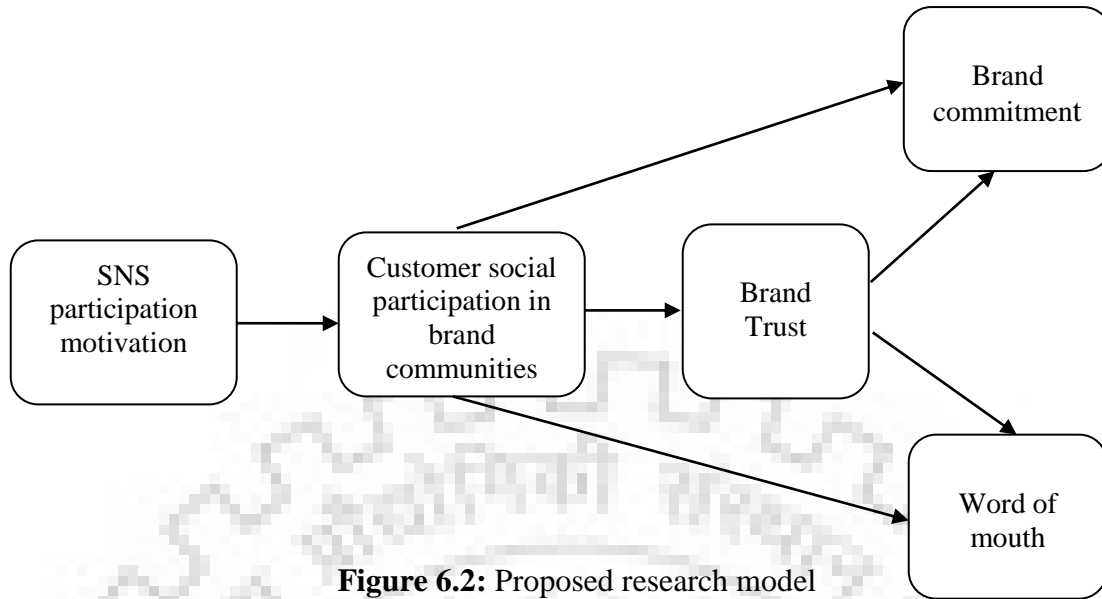


Figure 6.2: Proposed research model

6.1 Descriptive statistics

As mentioned in Chapter Five, 400 guest of star category hotels who had recently visited to these hotels during their trip and travel were contacted personally by researcher. The 400 respondents gave 352 usable responses, which were finalized for final analysis. The demographic profile of respondents is summarized in Table 6.1.

Table 6.1: Demographic characteristics of participants

Demographic variable	Frequency	Percentage
Age (years)		
18-24	87	24.72
25-30	93	26.42
31-40	88	25
40-50	62	17.61
50 & above	22	6.25
Gender		
Male	260	73.86
Female	92	26.14
Education		
High school & Intermediate	72	20.45
Graduation	176	50
Post graduation	41	11.65
Other	63	17.90
Marital status		
Married	160	45.45
Unmarried	192	54.55

Income (monthly)		
Less than 10,000	04	1.14
10,000-30,000	34	9.66
30,000-50,000	193	54.83
Above 50,000	121	34.37

6.1.1 Age of Respondents

The respondents' age varied from 18 to 50 and above years, with 87 were in age group of 18-24 years (24.72%) and 93 were in age group of 25-30 years (26.42%). The 88 respondents were in age group of 31-40 years (25%), whereas 62 respondents were in age group of 40-50 years (17.61%) and rest 22 respondents were in age group of 50 and above years (6.25%). Results show that majority of respondents i.e. 268 were in age group of 18-40 years (76.14%). Figure 6.3 presents age of the respondents in terms of percentage responses received.

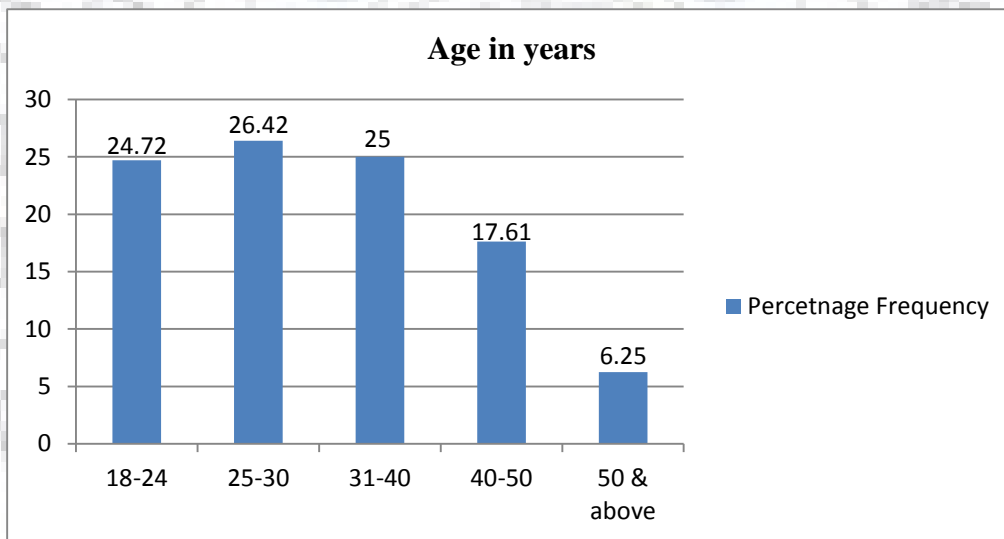


Figure 6.3: Percentage frequency of the respondents on the basis of their age

6.1.2 Gender Bias

With regard to participant's gender, there are 260 male (73.86%) and 92 female (26.14%) respondents to the survey instrument used in this research (Figure 6.4). It suggests that a maximum number of guest visit in star category hotels at Delhi in India are males. Results show very low female participation in this research. It reveals that in the guest level the ratio of male visitors and travellers is higher than the female counter parts.

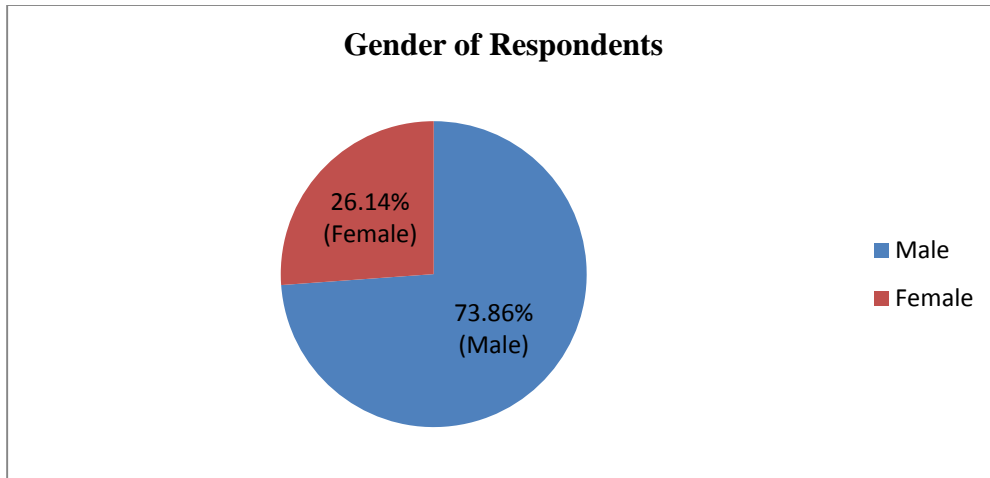


Figure 6.4: Gender of respondents

6.1.3 Education level of Respondents

With respect to the information collected on the education level of respondents were in the four different categories. Results show that 20.45% respondents were qualified either with high school or intermediate (Figure 6.5). Respondents in the category of graduation were in majority i.e. 50%. Whereas, only 11.65% were qualified with post graduation degree and rest 17.9% were other than graduation or post graduation degree.

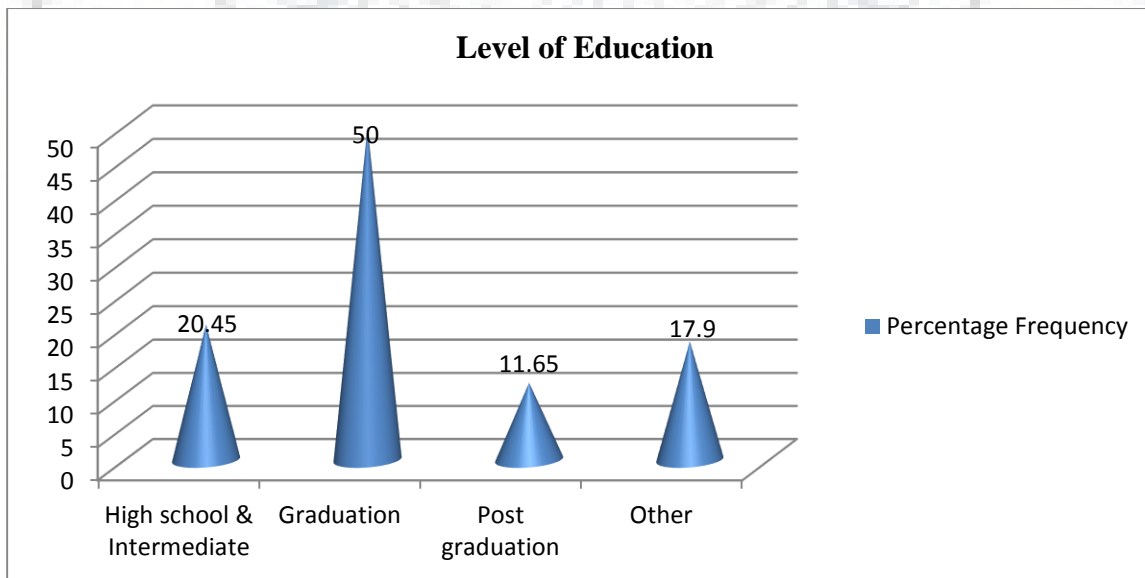


Figure 6.5: Education level of respondents

6.1.4 Marital Status of Respondents

Out of 352 respondents, 54.55 percent (more than half) of the respondents were found to unmarried (Figure 6.6). Whereas, the rest of respondents 45.45% were found under the category of married.

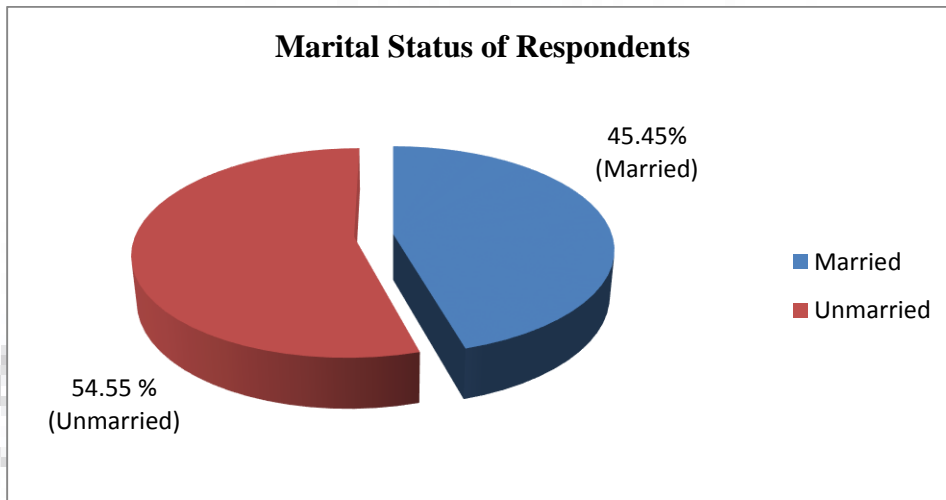


Figure 6.6: Marital status of respondents

6.1.5 Monthly Income of Respondents

This research was conducted on the basis of hotel guests' perception of their participation in e-travel companies' communities on social media. It is assumed that respondents possess the more income will spend more on their travel and trips.

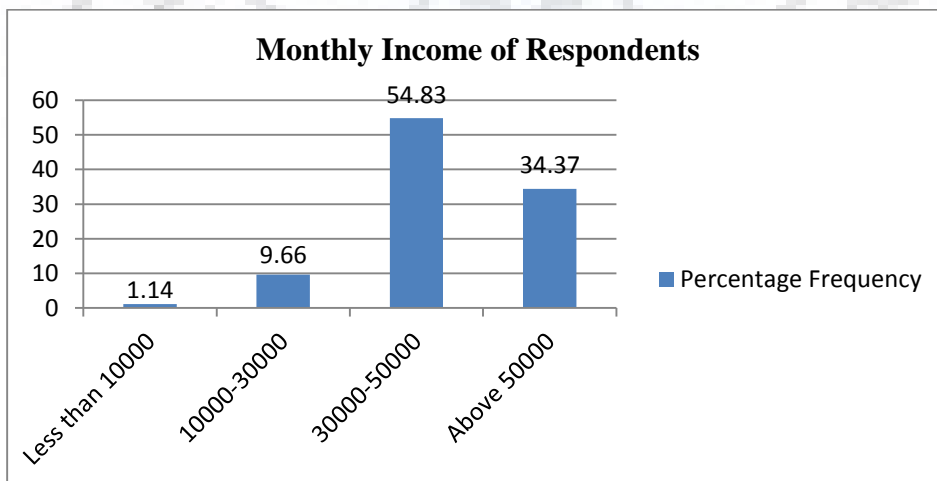


Figure 6.7: Monthly income of respondents

The analysis of monthly income hold by the respondents participated in the survey shows that more than fifty percent respondents (54.83%) have income between 30000-50000 rupees (Figure 6.7). This predicts that the responses received do provide the desired information up to some extent. Only 1.14 percent of respondents hold income less than 10000 rupees. Whereas, 9.66 percent of respondents have monthly income between 10000-30000 rupees and rest 34.37 percent have their monthly income above 50000 rupees.

6.2 NON-RESPONSE BIASNESS

To assess the non-response bias in the data collection through survey method, statistical difference tests between earliest and latest responses is applied (Armstrong and Overton, 1977). In this method, first fifty and last fifty respondents were checked and compared. This is validated by using F-tests with 95 percent confidence level ($p \geq 0.05$) between these two groups with respect to the customer social participation in e-travel companies' communities. The ANOVA (using the F-distribution) was applied to compare means of all 35 observed variables. Analysis revealed that there was no significant difference between the early and late responses (Table 6.2).

Table 6.2: Result of non response bias test

Variable	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.	
REL_1	Between Groups	41.239	6	6.873	1.444	.206
	Within Groups	442.601	93	4.759		
	Total	483.840	99			
REL_2	Between Groups	32.572	6	5.429	1.040	.404
	Within Groups	485.268	93	5.218		
	Total	517.840	99			
REL_3	Between Groups	12.697	6	2.116	.489	.815
	Within Groups	402.293	93	4.326		
	Total	414.990	99			
BL_1	Between Groups	19.842	6	3.307	1.354	.242
	Within Groups	227.158	93	2.443		
	Total	247.000	99			
BL_2	Between Groups	12.654	6	2.109	.680	.666
	Within Groups	288.506	93	3.102		
	Total	301.160	99			
BL_3	Between Groups	13.644	6	2.274	.992	.435
	Within Groups	213.106	93	2.291		
	Total	226.750	99			
ENT_1	Between Groups	12.649	6	2.108	.662	.681
	Within Groups	136.971	93	3.185		

	Total	149.620	99			
ENT_2	Between Groups	11.006	6	2.201	.737	.600
	Within Groups	131.494	93	2.989		
	Total	142.500	99			
ENT_3	Between Groups	36.381	6	6.063	1.955	.180
	Within Groups	288.369	93	3.101		
	Total	324.750	99			
ENT_4	Between Groups	17.280	6	2.880	.906	.494
	Within Groups	295.470	93	3.177		
	Total	312.750	99			
INFO_1	Between Groups	13.218	6	2.203	.679	.667
	Within Groups	301.532	93	3.242		
	Total	314.750	99			
INFO_2	Between Groups	33.703	6	5.617	1.797	.108
	Within Groups	290.737	93	3.126		
	Total	324.440	99			
INFO_3	Between Groups	29.040	6	4.840	1.583	.161
	Within Groups	284.270	93	3.057		
	Total	313.310	99			
INFO_4	Between Groups	19.486	6	3.248	.989	.437
	Within Groups	305.264	93	3.282		
	Total	324.750	99			
INC_1	Between Groups	24.676	5	4.935	1.308	.267
	Within Groups	354.764	94	3.774		
	Total	379.440	99			
INC_2	Between Groups	49.400	6	8.233	2.325	.139
	Within Groups	329.350	93	3.541		
	Total	378.750	99			
INC_3	Between Groups	14.220	6	2.370	.718	.636
	Within Groups	307.170	93	3.303		
	Total	321.390	99			
INF_4	Between Groups	31.709	6	5.285	1.711	.127
	Within Groups	287.251	93	3.089		
	Total	318.960	99			
INF_5	Between Groups	18.641	6	3.107	1.102	.367
	Within Groups	262.269	93	2.820		
	Total	280.910	99			
INF_6	Between Groups	14.311	6	2.385	.832	.548
	Within Groups	266.599	93	2.867		
	Total	280.910	99			
ACT_1	Between Groups	42.491	6	7.082	1.330	.252
	Within Groups	495.349	93	5.326		
	Total	537.840	99			
ACT_2	Between Groups	36.141	6	6.024	1.190	.319
	Within Groups	470.859	93	5.063		
	Total	507.000	99			

ACT_3	Between Groups	19.367	6	3.228	.625	.710
	Within Groups	480.023	93	5.162		
	Total	499.390	99			
ATT_1	Between Groups	5.401	6	.900	.344	.912
	Within Groups	243.109	93	2.614		
	Total	248.510	99			
ATT_2	Between Groups	17.068	6	2.845	1.126	.354
	Within Groups	235.042	93	2.527		
	Total	252.110	99			
ATT_3	Between Groups	20.621	6	3.437	1.102	.367
	Within Groups	290.129	93	3.120		
	Total	310.750	99			
BT_1	Between Groups	6.824	6	1.137	.503	.805
	Within Groups	210.216	93	2.260		
	Total	217.040	99			
BT_2	Between Groups	12.682	6	2.114	.884	.510
	Within Groups	222.478	93	2.392		
	Total	235.160	99			
BT_3	Between Groups	23.369	6	3.895	1.336	.249
	Within Groups	271.141	93	2.915		
	Total	294.510	99			
BC_1	Between Groups	48.625	6	8.104	2.012	.172
	Within Groups	374.685	93	4.029		
	Total	423.310	99			
BC_2	Between Groups	20.423	6	3.404	.960	.457
	Within Groups	329.687	93	3.545		
	Total	350.110	99			
BC_3	Between Groups	29.775	6	4.962	1.217	.305
	Within Groups	379.135	93	4.077		
	Total	408.910	99			
WOM_1	Between Groups	32.413	6	5.402	1.606	.154
	Within Groups	312.747	93	3.363		
	Total	345.160	99			
WOM_2	Between Groups	27.053	6	4.509	1.477	.195
	Within Groups	283.987	93	3.054		
	Total	311.040	99			
WOM_3	Between Groups	37.407	6	6.234	1.859	.196
	Within Groups	311.903	93	3.354		
	Total	349.310	99			

Thus, it is concluded that there was no evidence of non response bias in the data and it may not be a problem in the present research. Table 6.1 show the results of one-way ANOVA test with F-distribution using SPSS version 21.0 between early and late respondents. Thus, the findings preclude the possibility of non-response biases with respect to response time. The 352 responses

were critically analyzed and findings from the survey are discussed in the later section of this chapter.

6.3 MEASUREMENT MODEL ANALYSIS OVERVIEW

The proposed conceptual model developed in Chapter Three was made-up of different measurement models. Before final analysis, refinement and purification of these models is essential. Therefore, confirmatory factor analysis (CFA), reliability and validity analysis were applied in order to purify the measurement models. This procedure is proposed to retain a cleaned set of items that effectively measure every construct. These purified measurement scales are further utilized to test various hypotheses developed in Chapter Three.

6.3.1 Confirmatory Factor Analysis (CFA)

CFA is a multivariate statistical method used to specify the relationships between observed measures and their proposed fundamental constructs (Anderson & Gerbing, 1988). Confirmatory models additionally allow the researcher to check the convergent and discriminant validity of constructs in the models (Campbell & Fiske, 1959).

Several criteria exist to evaluate the overall fit between the proposed measurement model and the primary data. Of these criteria, the chi-square test is possibly the most common indicator of fit adequacy. On the other hand, the chi-square test is exceptionally sensitive to sample size and generally indicates an unacceptable fit for large samples, even when the fit is really acceptable (Anderson & Gerbing, 1988; Bagozzi & Yi, 1988; Bentler & Bonett, 1980). Although the chi square test will be incorporated in the measurement model, yet other fit indices that are relatively less sensitive to large sample size biases will also be incorporated to overcome the limitations of the chi-square test.

According to Bentler (1990) and Bentler and Bonett (1980), both Bentler's Comparative Fit Index (CFI) and Bentler and Bonett's Non-normed Fit Index (NNFI) (also known as Tucker-Lewis coefficient – TLI) are less likely to create biased estimates with large sample sizes, thus are relatively less sensitive to large sample sizes than the chi-square test. Hence, both these fit indices (CFI and NNFI) will be incorporated in addition to the chi-square test to evaluate the overall model fit in this quantitative phase of the research.

Although no specific rules direct acceptable fit with these tests, general rule of thumb has usually been followed by marketing researchers. It is generally accepted that an acceptable fit for the fit indices used in this research (CFI and NNFI) will be accomplished when scores are greater than .90 (Hair et al., 1998). The acceptable fit is also evidenced with the same score ($>.90$), even if chi-square test is not found significant enough due to sample size limitations. Furthermore, a chi-square to degree of freedom ratio of 2:3 will also demonstrate an acceptable fit. Here again, the chi-square to degree of freedom ratio is extremely sensitive to large sample size biases.

In addition to the overall fit of the measurement model evaluated by the aforementioned criteria, examinations of various kinds of validity (convergent and discriminant validity) and reliability have also been done with the help of confirmatory model. As a general rule of thumb, convergent validity is supported when an expected pattern of significant factor loadings are observed where all the items with significant loadings will reach the fundamental construct (Anderson & Gerbing, 1988). Next, discriminant validity between two constructs is supported when the correlation is less than 1.0 by an amount greater than twice the standardized error (Bagozzi & Warshaw, 1990). The reliability for each construct is evaluated using Cronbach's alpha coefficient and is supported with scores of .70 or higher (Nunnally, 1978).

In order to evaluate the overall model fit, convergent and discriminant validity, the reliability of all measures with a confirmatory factor model was assessed. No single item measures will be included in the CFA. Since the CFA is intended to refine the measures for the aforementioned set of variables, insignificant items will be dropped based on an analysis of the standardized residual matrix, standardized factor loading and item-to-total correlations.

6.4 RESULTS OF CONFIRMATORY FACTOR ANALYSIS

This section discusses the results of CFA using AMOS 20.0. The distinct measurement models for all measures were evaluated through CFA. Factor loadings, standard error and cronbach's alpha (α) values for each of the measures are presented in Tables 6.3.

In this research, CFA was performed with five distinct measures (SNSs participation motivation, customer social participation, brand trust, brand commitment and word of mouth), which further comprised of 35 items (See Chapter Four for detail). All the scale-items, are shown in Table 6.3, load significantly on their expected fundamental constructs. The smallest standardized loading is .618 that is extremely significant at .001 level. The observed pattern of

all these factor loadings provides sufficient evidence of convergent validity (Anderson & Gerbing, 1988). Discriminant validity is supported based on an examination of all potential correlations which were found to be significantly less than 1.0 by an amount greater than twice the standard error in all cases (Bagozzi & Warshaw, 1990). The validity and reliability is further explained in the coming sections in detail.

Table 6.3: Confirmatory factor analysis

Variable	Scale items/ Variables	Standardized item loading	Standard Error	Cronbach's Alpha (α)
SNSs participation motivation	Interpersonal_relation 1	0.927	*	0.942
	Interpersonal_relation 2	0.977	.032	
	Interpersonal_relation 3	0.618	.046	
	Brand_likeability1	0.976	.017	
	Brand_likeability2	0.916	.025	
	Brand_likeability3	0.982	*	
	Entertainment1	0.930	.024	
	Entertainment2	0.981	.016	
	Entertainment3	0.977	*	
	Entertainment 4	0.912	.025	
	Information_seeking 1	0.863	.029	
	Information_seeking 2	0.968	.017	
	Information_seeking 3	0.967	.018	
	Information_seeking 4	0.981	*	
	Incentive 1	0.763	.045	
	Incentive 2	0.970	*	
Incentive 3	0.761	.044		
Customer social participation (CSP) in brand communities	Informational_particiaption1	0.928	.023	0.926
	Informational_particiaption2	0.989	*	
	Informational_particiaption3	0.985	.013	
	Actionable_participation 1	0.963	.020	
	Actionable_participation 2	0.978	.017	
	Actionable_participation 3	0.977	*	
	Attitudinal_particiaption 1	0.925	.035	
	Attitudinal_particiaption 2	0.916	*	
	Attitudinal_particiaption 3	0.893	.040	
Brand trust	Brand_trust 1	0.939	.025	0.938
	Brand_trust 2	0.981	*	
	Brand_trust 3	0.831	.036	
Brand commitment	Brand_commitment 1	0.885	.032	0.946
	Brand_commitment 2	0.977	*	
	Brand_commitment 3	0.913	.029	
Word of	Word of mouth 1	0.943	.025	0.959

mouth	Word of mouth 2	0.914	.027
	Word of mouth 3	0.969	*

Notes: * denotes a constrained relationship to 1.00 in order for identification.

Additionally, the chi-square test and the chi-square to degree of freedom ratio both indicate an excellent fit to the model; however, these tests are extremely sensitive to sample size. While the chi-square test indicates an excellent model fit, other indices support the adequacy of fit. Chi-square statistic (χ^2) was found significant ($\chi^2 = 1201, p = 0.00$). The chi-square to degree of freedom ratio of 2.218 is just below the recommended ratio of 2:3, which is a standard used to assess the fit of a measurement model. Other goodness of fit indices (CFI and NNFI or TLI) that are not much sensitive to sample size limitations also confirm an excellent measurement model fit. Both CFI and TLI are more than the acceptable level ($>.90$) with scores of .960 and .956 respectively confirm the overall model fit (Table 6.4). The final confirmatory factor analysis model is shown in Figure 6.8. The overall goodness of fit for measurement model fit the data well. The normed chi-square ($\chi^2/df = 2.218$) was less than the suggested standardized limit (i.e. ≤ 3.0) and was, therefore, satisfactory (Bollen, 1989).

Table 6.4: Goodness-of-fit indices for measurement model

Goodness-of-fit index	Model-fit result
Chi-square (χ^2) statistic	1201 ($p = 0.00 < 0.05$)
Degree of freedom (df)	542
χ^2/df	2.218
GFI	0.901
CFI	0.960
NFI	0.929
RFI	0.923
IFI	0.960
TLI	0.956
RMSEA	0.059

As per the Hu and Bentler (1999), the value of RMSEA showed that the measurement model had an adequate required fit (RMSEA = 0.059). CFI was 0.960, and GFI was 0.901 both of these were found within the acceptable range (Kline, 2005). Similarly, the findings of confirmatory factor reveals a good model fit with NFI = 0.929, RFI = 0.923, IFI = 0.960, TLI = 0.956. These results for the goodness of fit indices for measurement model were shown in Table 6.4.

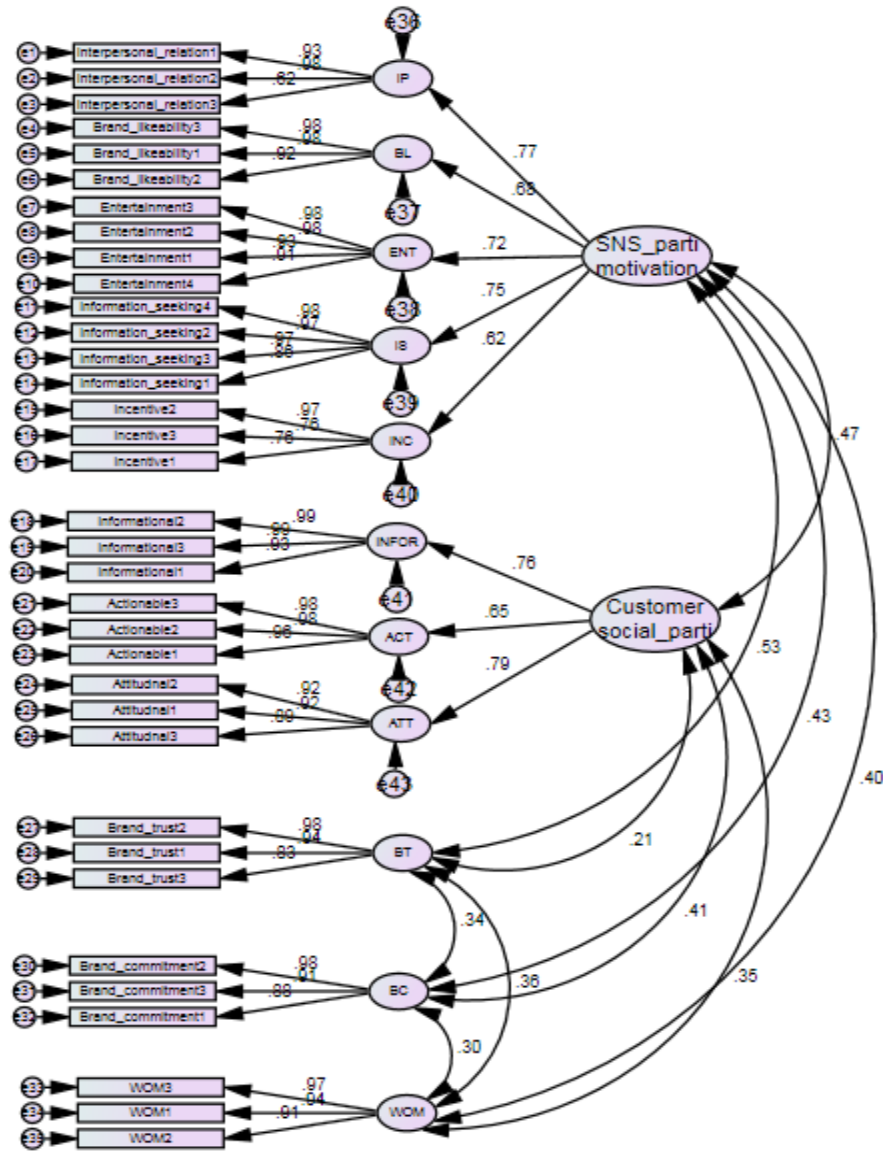


Figure 6.8: Confirmatory factor analysis for proposed model

The all 35 items loaded significantly on five factors, and were confirmed an overall goodness of model fit to the data (See figure 6.8). As all these values were within the standardized limits, thus showing a good fit between the observed data and the model fit. After that mean values, standard deviation and inter-construct correlations are reported in Table 6.5. The values of correlations are found significant at the .01 level. The diagonal line of the correlation matrix represents the square root of AVE values. In Table 6.5, off-diagonal elements are the correlations among constructs.

Table 6.5: Descriptive statistics and correlation matrix

Variable	M	SD	1	2	3	4	5
1. SNSs participation motivation	2.53	0.78	0.710				
2. CSP in brand communities	3.49	1.13	0.472	0.737			
3. Brand trust	4.07	1.50	0.527	0.207	0.919		
4. Brand commitment	3.72	1.62	0.432	0.407	0.336	0.926	
5. Word of mouth	3.97	1.76	0.404	0.352	0.357	0.304	0.942

Notes: Correlations are significant at the .01 level, M = mean values, SD = standard deviation

6.4.1 Assessment of Reliability Analysis of Constructs

As mentioned earlier also, findings of CFA can also be used to assess the reliability of all constructs. The reliability of constructs was examined using two different criteria (i) Cronbach's alpha (α), and (ii) composite reliability (CR) values. The value of Cronbach's alpha (α) depicts the internal consistency among all items measuring the particular construct (Fornell & Larcker, 1981). As the rule of thumb for Cronbach's alpha and CR state that the values at least 0.70 or more than indicates adequate reliability. Therefore, the suggested cutoff range 0.70 was used to decide internal consistency (α) and CR values (Fornell & Larcker, 1981).

In this research, the researcher found that the values of Cronbach's alpha and CR were more than 0.70, representing an internal consistency in the data (i.e. all measures consistently indicated something). Cronbach's alpha (α) value for each construct was depicted in Table 6.3. In this research, each construct along with their corresponding items depicted a high level of internal consistency, as the value of Cronbach's alpha for each of them was found to be more than the minimum acceptable value i.e. 0.70 (Nunnally, 1978). Similarly, the value of composite reliability (CR) for each construct is shown in Table 6.6.

Table 6.6: Reliability and Validity Analysis

Variable	CR	AVE	MSV	ASV
SNSs participation motivation	0.835	0.504	0.278	0.213
Customer social participation	0.780	0.543	0.223	0.139
Brand trust	0.942	0.845	0.278	0.140
Brand commitment	0.947	0.857	0.187	0.139
Word of mouth	0.960	0.888	0.163	0.127

Composite reliability value was observed to be above the standardized cutoff value i.e. 0.70 (Fornell & Larcker, 1981), and ranged from 0.780 to 0.960 (See Table 6.6). As all the values for

α and CR were found more than the acceptable thresholds limits (Fornell & Larcker, 1981; Hair et al., 2009). Thus, on the basis of overall information about reliability tests, the all measures of proposed hypothesized model were deemed reliable (see Table 6.3 and Table 6.6). Thus, findings recommend adequate reliability of the constructs.

6.4.2 Assessment of Validity Analysis of Constructs

The results of CFA can also used to examine the various kinds of validity (convergent and discriminant validity) of all measures. Convergent validity is assessed through the following three criteria: first, at least or above 0.70 value of “composite reliability (CR)” (Nunnally, 1978), Second, greater than 0.50 value of “average variance extracted (AVE)” (Fornell & Larcker, 1981). Lastly, in CFA greater than 0.70 values of all items’ standardized loadings (Nunnally, 1978), allows a satisfactory loading for good convergent validity in the model (Anderson and Gerbing, 1988). The value of average variance extracted (AVE) was found to be above 0.50 for all five factors, and thus met the cutoff range suggested by Bagozzi and Yi (1988), and Fornell and Larcker (1981). All above-mentioned criteria for convergent validity were met in this research (See Table 6.3 and Table 6.6), thus there are no concern regarding convergent validity.

The discriminant validity was examined using four criteria; (i) comparison of AVE for each construct with “Average Shared Variance (ASV)”, (ii) comparison of AVE for each construct with “Maximum Shared Variance (MSV)”, (iii) assessment of inter-construct correlations, and (iv) comparison of average variance extracted (AVE) with squared correlation. Discriminant validity is considered to be satisfying when the value of AVE should be greater than ASV as well as MSV (Fornell & Larcker, 1981). Next, the value of square root of AVE should be more than inter-construct correlations (Fornell & Larcker, 1981) or inter-construct correlation is less than 0.85 (Kline, 2005). Finally, Fornell and Larcker (1981) suggested a more robust method for measuring discriminant validity i.e. considering the squared correlation between the two constructs and it should be less than the AVE for every construct.

Table 6.6 depicts that for all constructs the value of AVE is more than MSV as well as ASV. Similarly, in Table 6.5 inter-construct correlations were described. At diagonal Table 6.5 shows the square root of AVE values (0.710, 0.737, 0.919, 0.926, 0.942) of all constructs, which are greater than the values of inter-construct correlations. The value of inter-construct correlation is found to be less than 0.85 (Kline, 2005) or lower than 1.0 (Bagozzi & Heatherton, 1994).

Similarly, the values of squared correlation (0.309, 0.084, 0.260, 0.230) was found less than the values of AVE (0.504, 0.543, 0.845, 0.857, 0.888). Therefore, in this research all conditions were fulfilled for discriminant validity, and thus there are no concerns for it.

6.5 Examining Common Method Bias

The nature of the research question in the present research required to collect data on multiple construct from a single respondent at the same time, yet one important issue with using self-reported data are common methods or single source bias (Spector, 1987).

Common method bias is a normal concern of researcher has come out with mixed result concerning the seriousness of the problem. Podsakoff et. al. (2003), suggested that management researches should address two issues when considering self report methodologies.

First is how appropriate is self-report for measuring particular constructs in the context of the study. Therefore, customers of e-travel service companies can only provide the information related to their participation in these companies' communities on social media (Agag & El-Masry, 2016). This research is also based on the hotel guests' perception of their participation in e-travel companies' communities on social media. Therefore, this self reported methodology was an appropriate way to assess all constructs in the model.

Second question deals with the practical and ethical concern of the data collected from the respondents. In this research, anonymity and confidentiality of the data were assured to the respondents. This motivated respondents for honest and open answer regarding their perception on the construct of interest. Therefore, it is assumed that this research did not suffer from the overestimation of the responses.

This research used the well-known Harman's single-factor test proposed by Harman (1960) and Podsakoff and Organ (1986) which suggests that if there is a common method variance (CMV) in the data, it is unlikely to influence the results or conclusions. To do so, all the 35 final items were included into an un-rotated principal-component exploratory factor analysis (extracting only one factor). Results of this analysis revealed the presence of single factor that did not account for a majority of the total variance. According to rule of thumb, this total variance explained by a single factor should not be more than 50 percent (Hair et al., 1998). The results of this test are shown in Table 6.7. The findings of EFA reveal that the unrotated solution with single factor did not explain the majority of total variance, it explains only 35.69 percent of

the variance, which was less than fifty percent whereas other factors were supposed to explain the rest of 65 percent of the variance. Thus, the results preclude the possibility of CMV, and suggest that CMV is not of great concern and will not affect the results and their interpretation.

Table 6.7: Harmon's single factor test

Component	Total Variance Explained					
	Total	Initial Eigen values		Extraction Sums of Squared Loadings		
		% of Variance	Cumulative %	Total	% of Variance	Cumulative %
1	12.494	35.698	35.698	12.494	35.698	35.698
2	4.474	12.783	48.481			
3	2.630	7.515	55.996			
4	2.103	6.009	62.005			
5	1.982	5.662	67.667			
6	1.892	5.405	73.072			
7	1.625	4.642	77.714			
8	1.459	4.168	81.881			
9	1.137	3.249	85.130			
10	1.110	3.173	88.303			
11	.907	2.593	90.895			
12	.589	1.683	92.579			
13	.316	.902	93.480			
14	.285	.816	94.296			
15	.225	.644	94.940			
16	.197	.562	95.502			
17	.175	.500	96.002			
18	.157	.447	96.449			
19	.148	.422	96.871			
20	.132	.377	97.248			
21	.122	.348	97.596			
22	.112	.320	97.915			
23	.106	.302	98.218			
24	.090	.257	98.474			
25	.083	.236	98.711			
26	.073	.208	98.919			
27	.065	.185	99.103			
28	.053	.151	99.255			
29	.051	.146	99.401			
30	.046	.132	99.533			
31	.040	.113	99.646			
32	.037	.105	99.751			
33	.033	.094	99.845			
34	.033	.093	99.938			
35	.022	.062	100.000			

Extraction Method: Principal Component Analysis

Podsakoff et al., (2003) characterized the Harman single-factor test as a diagnostic technique that “actually does nothing to statistically control for (or partial out) method effects” (p. 889). Further, they argued that the emergence of multiple factors did not indicate the absence of CMV and recommend against the use of this test. Therefore, the researcher also applied common latent factor (CLF) method in order to confirm the common method variance among all observed variables in the proposed model. For this, a CLF was added to the structural model, and then connected to all 35 observed variables. On comparing the standardized regression weights from this model to the standardized regression weights of a model without the CLF, it was found that there were no large differences (> 0.2) (see Figure 6.9 and Table 6.8). Therefore, no need was felt to retain CLF in the structural model, as there was no possibility of CMV. The structural model connected with CLF and all 35 observed variables is shown in Figure 6.9.

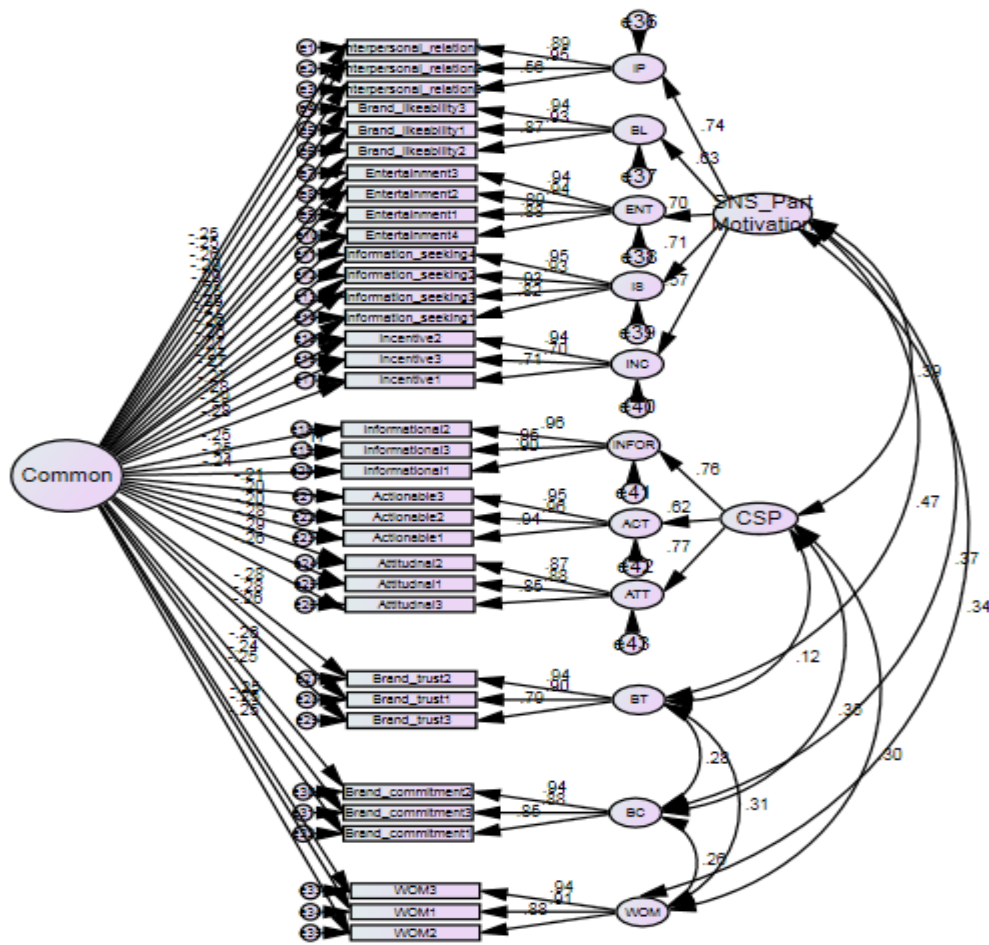


Figure 6.9: Final model for common method variance with CLF

Table 6.8: Results of common method bias

Standardized Regression Weights: (With CLF)				Standardized Regression Weights:(Without CLF)				
			Estimate			Estimate	Delta	
Relation_build	<---	SNS_Part_motive	0.743	Relation_build	<---	SNS_Part_motive	0.77	0.027
Entertainment	<---	SNS_Part_motive	0.7	Entertainment	<---	SNS_Part_motive	0.719	0.019
Info_seeking	<---	SNS_Part_motive	0.714	Info_seeking	<---	SNS_Part_motive	0.745	0.031
Incentive	<---	SNS_Part_motive	0.573	Incentive	<---	SNS_Part_motive	0.625	0.052
Brand_like	<---	SNS_Part_motive	0.627	Brand_like	<---	SNS_Part_motive	0.669	0.042
Informational	<---	CSP	0.756	Informational	<---	CSP	0.762	0.006
Actionable	<---	CSP	0.625	Actionable	<---	CSP	0.65	0.025
Attitudinal	<---	CSP	0.767	Attitudinal	<---	CSP	0.791	0.024
Entertainment3	<---	Entertainment	0.942	Entertainment3	<---	Entertainment	0.977	0.035
Entertainment2	<---	Entertainment	0.943	Entertainment2	<---	Entertainment	0.981	0.038
Entertainment1	<---	Entertainment	0.893	Entertainment1	<---	Entertainment	0.93	0.037
Entertainment4	<---	Entertainment	0.875	Entertainment4	<---	Entertainment	0.913	0.038
Info_seeking 4	<---	Info_seeking	0.945	Info_seeking 4	<---	Info_seeking	0.982	0.037
Info_seeking 2	<---	Info_seeking	0.928	Info_seeking 2	<---	Info_seeking	0.968	0.04
Info_seeking 3	<---	Info_seeking	0.929	Info_seeking 3	<---	Info_seeking	0.967	0.038
Info_seeking 1	<---	Info_seeking	0.82	Info_seeking 1	<---	Info_seeking	0.864	0.044
Actionable3	<---	Actionable	0.955	Actionable3	<---	Actionable	0.977	0.022
Actionable2	<---	Actionable	0.957	Actionable2	<---	Actionable	0.978	0.021
Actionable1	<---	Actionable	0.942	Actionable1	<---	Actionable	0.963	0.021
Informational2	<---	Informational	0.958	Informational2	<---	Informational	0.989	0.031
Informational3	<---	Informational	0.954	Informational3	<---	Informational	0.985	0.031
Informational1	<---	Informational	0.898	Informational1	<---	Informational	0.928	0.03
WOM3	<---	Word of mouth	0.937	WOM3	<---	Word of mouth	0.968	0.031
WOM1	<---	Word of mouth	0.91	WOM1	<---	Word of mouth	0.943	0.033
WOM2	<---	Word of mouth	0.879	WOM2	<---	Word of mouth	0.914	0.035
Brand_comit2		Brand_comit	0.942	Brand_comit2		Brand_comit	0.977	0.035
Brand_comit3		Brand_comit	0.88	Brand_comit3		Brand_comit	0.913	0.033
Brand_comit1		Brand_comit	0.85	Brand_comit1		Brand_comit	0.885	0.035
Brand_trust2	<---	Brand_trust	0.942	Brand_trust2	<---	Brand_trust	0.981	0.039
Brand_trust1	<---	Brand_trust	0.896	Brand_trust1	<---	Brand_trust	0.939	0.043
Brand_trust3	<---	Brand_trust	0.786	Brand_trust3	<---	Brand_trust	0.83	0.044
Brand_like3	<---	Brand_like	0.938	Brand_like3	<---	Brand_like	0.982	0.044
Brand_like1	<---	Brand_like	0.931	Brand_like1	<---	Brand_like	0.977	0.046
Brand_like2	<---	Brand_like	0.865	Brand_like2	<---	Brand_like	0.911	0.046
Attitudnal2	<---	Attitudinal	0.87	Attitudnal2	<---	Attitudinal	0.914	0.044
Attitudnal1	<---	Attitudinal	0.88	Attitudnal1	<---	Attitudinal	0.926	0.046
Attitudnal3	<---	Attitudinal	0.855	Attitudnal3	<---	Attitudinal	0.892	0.037
Incentive2	<---	Incentive	0.94	Incentive2	<---	Incentive	0.97	0.03
Incentive3	<---	Incentive	0.698	Incentive3	<---	Incentive	0.761	0.063
Incentive1	<---	Incentive	0.705	Incentive1	<---	Incentive	0.762	0.057
Relation_build1	<---	Relation_build	0.889	Relation_build1	<---	Relation_build	0.927	0.038
Relation_build2	<---	Relation_build	0.947	Relation_build2	<---	Relation_build	0.977	0.03
Relation_build3	<---	Relation_build	0.563	Relation_build3	<---	Relation_build	0.618	0.055

Results of common method bias using standardized regression weights with and without CLF were depicted in Table 6.8. The difference between two standardized regression weights (with and without CLF) was found in line with the cutoff range i.e. less than 0.2, which was shown in Table 6.8 in terms of delta. The findings revealed that common method bias was small and did not influence the analysis.

6.6 Structural Model

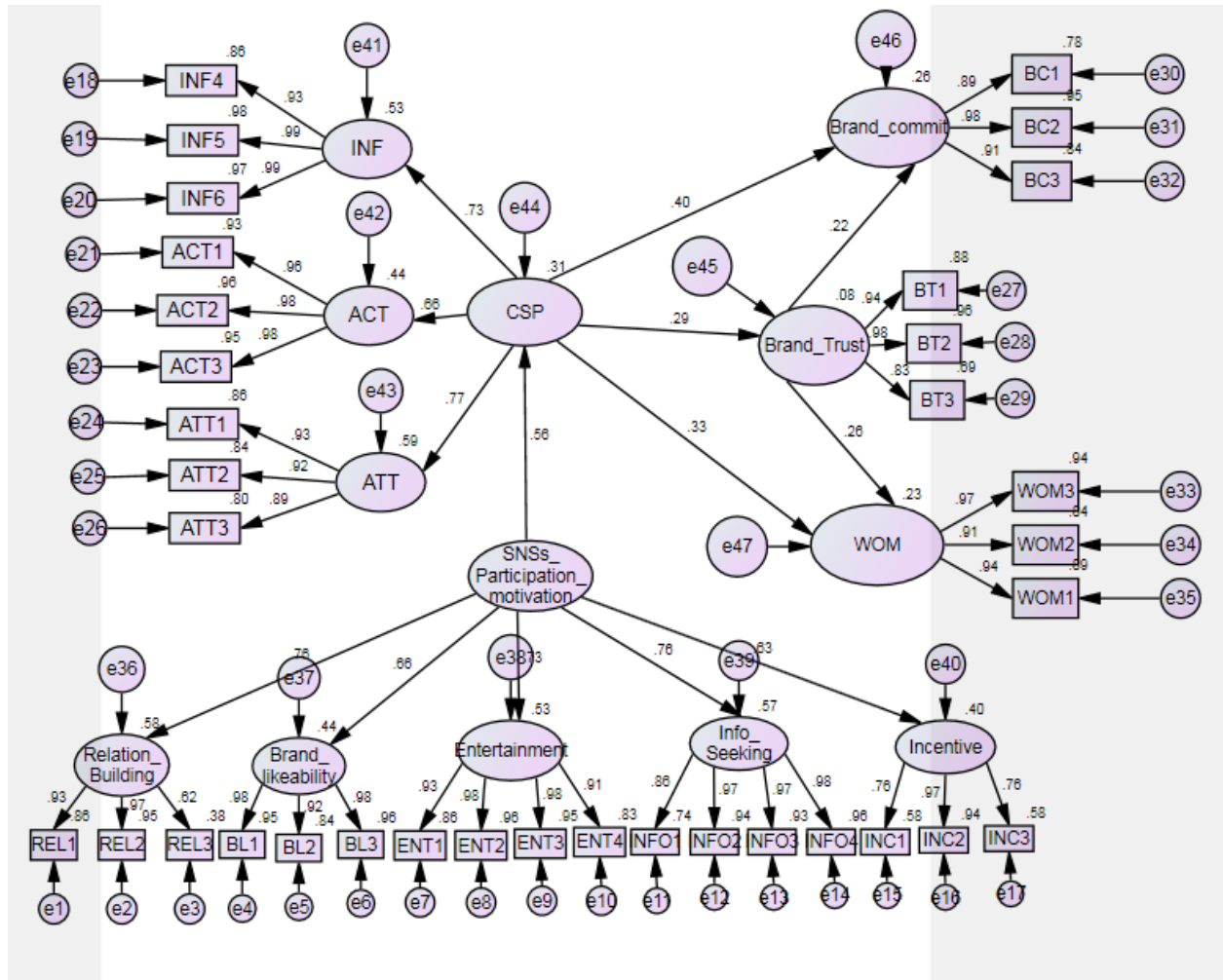
Measurement model deals with relationship between latent variable and its items. Structural model provides estimation on the relationship between latent variables. The structural equation model (SEM) was estimated in AMOS 20.0. SEM is an appropriate data analysis technique for examining the multiple relationships of a constructs simultaneously. Constructs are unobservable (latent variable) represented by multiple observable variable. The SEM is an extension and generalization of multiple regression and factor analysis (Hair et al., 2010). One of the benefits of using SEM approach is to incorporate the multiple relationships in a single model. SEM provides the greater flexibility in how the equations are specified (Kline, 2005). The assessment of the structural model results into the assessment of the proposed hypotheses that is represented by a causal path. The results are presented in the Table 6.9 and Table 6.10.

6.6.1 Hypotheses testing

The measures refined and purified through CFA were used the collected primary responses as inputs for structural equation modeling (SEM). Researcher used SEM to test the hypotheses proposed in Chapter Three. Figure 6.10 depicts the estimated standardized coefficients for all constructs used in the proposed research model.

The information regarding the significance of the hypothesized relationships is presented with the t values in Table 6.9. H1 proposed a direct and positive relationship between SNSs participation motivation and customer social participation in the brand community ($\beta=0.56$). Thus, H1 is supported. H2 posits the impact of customer social participation in the brand community on brand trust; results reveal a direct and positive association between customer social participation in brand community and brand trust ($\beta=0.29$). As this hypothesis was found to be significant, consequently the hypothesis H2 was supported. H3 states that customer social participation in the brand community is positively related to brand commitment; findings depicts

a significant and positive relationship between customer social participation in brand community and brand commitment ($\beta=0.40$). As a result, H3 is also supported.



Note: All coefficient values are standardized and appear near the associated path, and are significance at $p < 0.05$

Figure 6.10: Final Structural Model

H4 intended a positive and direct relationship between customer social participation in brand community and word of mouth; results demonstrates a significant and positive relationship between customer social participation in brand community and word of mouth ($\beta=0.33$). Accordingly, H4 is also supported in this research.

H5 proposes the impact of brand trust on brand commitment; findings reveal the positive, significant and direct connection between brand trust and brand commitment ($\beta=0.22$). Therefore, the hypothesis H5 was supported. Similarly, H6 posits that there is a positive impact

of brand trust on word of mouth. The results of this research confirm a significant and positive association between brand trust and word of mouth ($\beta=0.26$). Thus, the hypothesis H6 was supported.

Table 6.9: Testing of hypotheses

S. No.	Hypotheses Path	Path coefficient	t-value	Result
H1	SNSs participation motivation → CSP in brand communities	0.556***	6.736	Supported
H2	CSP in brand communities → Brand trust	0.290***	4.636	Supported
H3	CSP in brand communities → Brand commitment	0.401***	6.264	Supported
H4	CSP in brand communities → Word of mouth	0.335***	5.397	Supported
H5	Brand trust → Brand commitment	0.220***	4.180	Supported
H6	Brand trust → Word of mouth	0.260***	4.926	Supported

Notes: *** p value Significant at 0.001 level

Model Fit for SEM	
Chi-square (χ^2) statistic	1285.3
Degree of freedom (<i>df</i>)	546
χ^2/df	2.354
GFI	0.920
CFI	0.955
NFI	0.925
RFI	0.918
IFI	0.955
TLI	0.951
RMSEA	0.062

Using mediation analysis, this research has confirmed whether brand trust act as a mediator between CSP in brand communities and two outcome variables (brand commitment and word of mouth). This research conducts the bootstrap method using SEM in AMOS for assessing mediation analysis (Table 6.10). The reason behind using bootstrap method was to overcome some key problem related with Baron and Kenny (1986) approach and Sobel test for mediation. As this approach unable to clarify and present a statistical test for indirect effects exists from independent variable to mediating variable, and from mediating variable to dependent variable. In addition, a number of researchers are also using Sobel test to investigate the mediation analysis. The researcher used a bootstrap method instead of this Sobel test, as this test in case of small samples based on the undefined assumption of normality and result in the possibility of Type I error (Preacher & Hayes, 2004). Additionally, Mackinnon et al. (2004) inquire to test

indirect effect of an exogenous variable on endogenous variable via mediating variable, he declared that at the time of assessing the significance of indirect effect, standard error problem gets surfaced. Consequently, Shrouf and Bolger (2002) suggested this bootstrap method to resolve the problem of standard error. Moreover, the bootstrap method also allows an empirical investigation to determine statistical estimates' significance (Efron & Tibshirani, 1993; Song et al., 2013), where results will reveal mean indirect effects' significance at 95% confidence interval. Thus, if the confidence interval does not include zero, the indirect effect will be deemed significant at 95% level.

Ho (2014) suggested determining the mediating effect as a significant aspect in path modeling. Thus, researchers in place of using the Ordinary Least Squares method in SPSS prefer the use of SEM in AMOS using "Maximum Likelihood Estimation", to explore the level and direction of indirect and direct effect that a variable has on other, as propose in the hypotheses. In a bootstrap method, firstly, using replacement procedure a random sampling is used to generate 1000 samples from the original data set (Shrouf & Bolger, 2002). Then SEM model was tested with bootstrapped method to create 1000 estimates of every path coefficient. Next, the indirect effect of a predictor variable is evaluated via the output from 1000 estimates of every path coefficient.

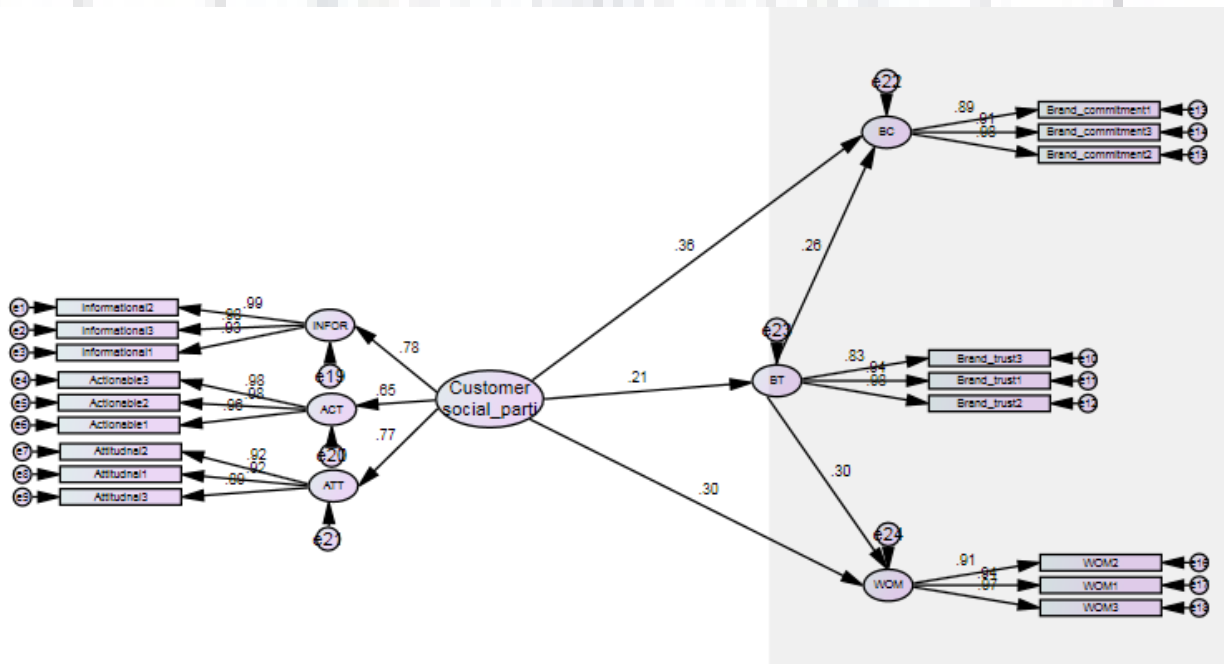


Figure 6.11: Structural model with mediation analysis

In the bootstrap method, three effects (direct effect, indirect effect, and total effect) examine the mediating variable's effect. The direct effect is the level to which a change in the independent variable is directly affected dependent variable. The indirect effect is the extent to which change in independent variable resulted into the change in dependent variable by a mediating variable. Similarly, the total effect is the level to which change in independent variable affects the dependent variable.

Table 6.10 displays the findings regarding mediation analysis. The findings display the significance of brand trust as a mediating variable between predictor (customer social participation) and outcome variables (brand commitment and word of mouth). The results of SEM with brand trust as a mediator were presented in Figure 6.11. The overall findings of mediation analysis using bootstrap (Figure 6.11) point out that brand trust act as a mediator between the predictor variable (CSP in brand communities) and outcome variables (brand commitment and word of mouth).

Table 6.10: Mediation analysis

S. No.	Hypotheses path	Direct Effect	Indirect Effect	Total Effect	Result
H7	CSP in brand communities → Brand trust → Brand commitment	.359***	.054***	.413***	Partial Mediation
H8	CSP in brand communities → Brand trust → Word of mouth	.302***	.061***	.363***	Partial Mediation
Notes: *** = p<0.001					
Model Fit for mediation model					
Chi-square (χ^2)					258.38
Degree of freedom (<i>df</i>)					127
CMIN/DF					2.035
GFI					0.928
AGFI					0.904
CFI					0.984
NFI					0.969
RFI					0.962
IFI					0.984
TLI					0.981
RMSEA					0.054

The direct effect of both hypothesized path (CSP in brand communities-brand commitment and CSP in brand communities-word of mouth) has significant value at 0.001 level of significance.

Similarly, the indirect effect of each hypothesized path also found to be significant. As reveal by Table 6.10 brand trust in this research contribute as a partial mediator between CSP in brand communities and outcome variables (brand commitment and word of mouth). The partial mediation of brand trust indicates that despite customer social participation in brand communities, brand trust depends upon their level of participation. It means if the customer is not involved or participated at a high level, then the possibility of brand trust would be less. Thus, both direct and indirect effect has significant value, which depicts that CSP in brand communities has a direct effect on brand commitment and word of mouth and also have an indirect effect through brand trust. Thus, the significance of direct and indirect effect leads to the confirmation of brand trust as a partial mediator.

6.6.2 Goodness of Fit

After the assessment of hypotheses, next stage is to evaluate the goodness-of-fit indices which reflect the predictive power of the inner and outer model relationship (Sanchez-Hernandez and Miranda, 2011). The goodness-of-fit statistics of SEM were described in Table 6.9 and Table 6.10, which shows an acceptable level of fit between the data and structural model. Following the Hair et al. (2009) suggestions various indices for model fit were used, including chi-square statistic (χ^2), the root mean square error of approximation (RMSEA), the normed chi-square (χ^2/df), comparative fit index (CFI), goodness of Fit Index (GFI), normed Fit Index (NFI). For chi-square statistic (χ^2), insignificant difference specifies that there is no difference between observed and expected covariance matrices. Bollen (1989) recommended that for the normed chi-square (χ^2/df), a standardized limit less than 3.0 are considered as reasonable fit. In this research, for the final structural model (Table 6.9) it was found within acceptable limits i.e. $\chi^2/df = 2.354$. Similarly for the structural model with mediation analysis (Table 6.10) it was found suitable i.e. $\chi^2/df = 2.035$.

As proposed by Hu and Bentler (1999) that RMSEA value of 0.06 also shows a close fit. Similarly, the value of RMSEA between 0.06-0.08 signifies an acceptable fit, and between 0.08-0.10 indicates mediocre fit. In consistent with the suggested limit, the value of RMSEA specified that structural model has an acceptable fit with RMSEA = 0.062, 90 percent CI = 0.061-0.086 (Hu & Bentler, 1999) confirming that the structural model fits well. In addition, for the structural model with mediation analysis it was found within standardized limits i.e. 0.054 (Table 6.10).

For the CFI, the value more than 0.90 shows an acceptable fit and value more than 0.95 indicate a close fit to the model (Bentler, 1990; Hu & Bentler, 1999). For the TLI, the value more than 0.90 represents a suitable fit (Bentler and Bonett, 1980). For the other goodness-of-fit indices GFI, NFI, RFI and IFI rule of thumb is that the values more than 0.90 depicts an adequate fit (Hair et al., 1998). In this research, the model fit indices for structural model falls within acceptable limits with the values CFI = 0.955, TLI = 0.951, GFI = 0.920, NFI = 0.925, RFI = 0.918, IFI = 0.955 (see Table 6.9). Similarly, for the structural model with mediation analysis the other goodness of model fit indices was found in the cutoff range with the values CFI = 0.984, TLI = 0.981, GFI = 0.928, NFI = 0.969, RFI = 0.962, IFI = 0.984 (see Table 6.10).

The overall findings of this research show that the all proposed hypothesized relationship in the research model were significant. As confirmed in Table 6.9 and Table 6.10, SNSs participation motivation has a positive influence on CSP in brand communities, and CSP in return has a positive influence on all outcome variables (brand trust, brand commitment and word of mouth). Therefore, all proposed hypotheses were found to be significant, true and hence found to be fully or partially accepted. List of all proposed hypotheses in the present research are presented in Table 6.11.

Table 6.11: List of hypotheses

Proposed hypotheses	
H1	SNSs participation motivation is positively related to customer social participation in the brand community.
H2	Customer social participation in the brand community is positively related to brand trust.
H3	Customer social participation in the brand community is positively related to brand commitment.
H4	Customer social participation in the brand community is positively related to word of mouth.
H5	Brand trust is positively related to brand commitment.
H6	Brand trust is positively related to word of mouth.
H7	Brand trust mediates the relationship between customer social participation in brand community and brand commitment.
H8	Brand trust mediates the relationship between customer social participation in brand community and word of mouth.

6.7 CONCLUSION

This chapter describes the data analysis procedure and provides a summary of findings from the quantitative methodology adopted in this research. Demographic statistics of the sample respondents were initially provided followed by a summary of the refinement and purification procedures of all measures used to collect primary responses. The foremost intent was to provide findings from the empirical examination of various hypotheses developed in Chapter Three. In the next and last chapter, various findings and implications for both academics and managers are reported along with research limitations and directions for future research.



DISCUSSION, IMPLICATIONS AND FUTURE RESEARCH

This chapter provides an overview of the research work conducted in the present study by discussing major research outcomes and key results. The implications of the results from different methodologies are also provided. These implications of this research will to ensure its use by both practitioners and academicians. Next to this, the limitations of the present research are also provided. Finally directions for future research are also suggested. Outline of this chapter is given below in Figure 7.1.

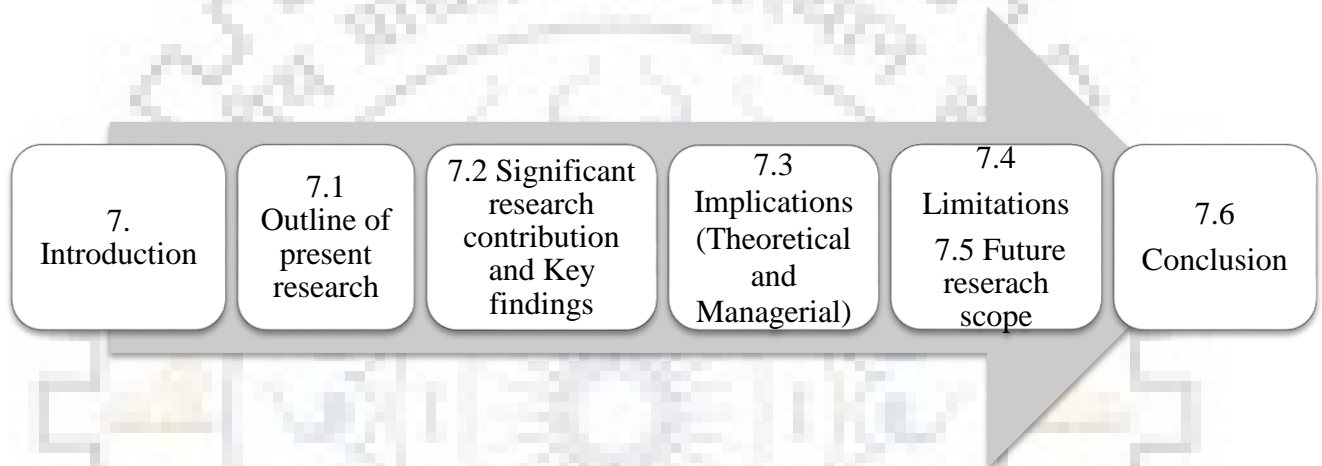


Figure 7.1: Structure of Chapter 7

7. INTRODUCTION

The global trend about social media has gained grip in India also. The emergence of social media in India has continuously increased, as the active internet users in number have raised to 375 million. According to Yral report (2016, p. 5), “Currently, in India, 28.4 per cent of the population is using internet and 10.3 per cent are active on social media by the end of 2016”. These numbers have drawn the interest of various businesses and several brands have started invested billions since the emergence of social media in India. Brands are functioning vigorously to grasp the interest of their potential customers and enter into their day-to-day life via social media. With the huge reach and strong power to influence social media users as potential customers are the emerging facades of social media marketing and a guidebook for brands to get in touch with their customers.

At present, with the numbers shown previously, customer participation on social media for various brands has not been promising. Thus, brands have to serve million social media users so as to get their participation towards their products and brands, but this is still in the stage of infancy in developing countries. Social media users have been rapidly increasing their internet usage on daily basis via their engagement on different social media communities. Still, there is limited number of academic study which examining customer participation in social media brand communities, specifically in developing countries. However, with the emergence of social media across the globe and in India, customer participation strategy via social media brand communities created on its different platforms could provide brands the much-needed enhancement.

It is necessary to measure the customer participation in social media brand communities in developing countries like India. Although, it is discussed in detail in the literature there are few steps taken by both researchers and practitioners to measure customer participation in social media brand communities and its impact on brand related outcomes in context of different communities. To the best of author's knowledge, no other researcher has developed a scale to measure the customer participation in social media brand communities of e-travel companies' communities or apply any of the modeling techniques used for the identification of the factors of customer social participation in e-travel companies' communities.

Apart from this, there is a dearth of studies that have investigated the impact of customer social participation on brand trust, brand commitment and word of mouth for e-travel companies communities in context of India. The changing market scenario demands more research in the field of customer participation in social media brand communities measurement and development of scales to measure the customer participation in social media brand communities, specifically in e-travel companies' communities. This study works as a path for both researchers and practitioners working in this field of study. This study will help in decision making by measuring the impact of customer social participation on brand related outcomes (brand trust, brand commitment and word of mouth).

The present research contributes significantly to the empirical literature of customer participation in social media brand communities in three ways. In the Indian scenario, no organized database is available on social media users that evaluate customer participation from the perspective of social media brand communities. Although, a few recent initiatives have been

undertaken by statista, and smart insights etc but they do not address the all issues that fall under the periphery of digital media marketing. The developed and validated scale in the present study, for the measurement of customer social participation from e-travel service companies communities' perspectives can be used in the future studies.

Second, the majority of studies have used an aggregate measurement of customer participation in online brand communities' data provided by secondary sources. In the present study, the integrated approach of assessment is used by collecting primary data on the various factors or dimensions of customer participation in social media brand communities. In the present research, the three dimensions are used (informational participation, attitudinal participation and actionable participation) for the assessment of customer social participation in e-travel companies' brand communities. In earlier studies, in those the primary data was collected to serve the measurement objective were focused on a single dimension of the customer participation in online brand communities.

Third, very few earlier studies have assessed the association of SNSs participation motivations on customer participation (Chae et al., 2015; Chae and Ko, 2016) or customer social participation on word of mouth (Dimitriadis & Papista, 2010; Woisetschläger et al., 2008), but not in the integrated context of customer social participation in e-travel companies communities. The use of SNSs participation motivations as an antecedent and word of mouth as a consequence of customer social participation supports the connection of customer social participation and brand trust, brand commitment. This study results in a positive relationship between SNSs participation motivations on customer social participation, which in turn found to be significantly affect word of mouth.

7.1 OUTLINE OF PRESENT RESEARCH

This research is an attempt to fill the gaps identified in the available literature on the customer participation in social media brand communities. The present research measured the association between SNSs participation motivations, customer social participation and its consequent impact on three important brand related outcomes (brand trust, brand commitment and word of mouth) in the context of e-travel companies' communities. To assess this relationship, different models have been designed to investigate and measure the identified antecedents of customer social participation in e-travel communities from the literature and their impact on customer social

participation, which consequently affect brand related outcomes (brand trust, brand commitment and word of mouth) of customer social participation. For investigation purposes, a qualitative model has been developed and presented in Chapter Three. This model is developed on the basis of various antecedents and consequences identified from the literature of customer social participation in context of e-travel companies communities. Next to this, the measurement aspect of customer participation in social media brand communities was addressed by the development of a quantitative model shown in Chapter Six. The final empirical model has been used to develop and validate the scale for the measurement of customer participation in e-travel companies' communities on social media.

The present research comprises of the following:

- A broad and thorough literature review has been conducted on the association of customer participation in social media brand communities, its antecedents (SNSs participation motivations) and consequences (brand trust, brand commitment and word of mouth). The literature review consists of the evolution, definitions of social media as well as customer participation, a classification of available literature, various antecedents, mediators, moderators and consequences of customer participation in social media brand communities. Based on this review various gaps and a research agenda was identified which provided a sound base to conduct the present research.
- A literature review of the methodologies used in this field of research was also conducted. These methodologies were partial least square (PLS), Regression analysis, Structure equation modeling (SEM), Exploratory and Confirmatory Factor analysis and Correlation analysis. These methodologies were further discussed.
- Based on Stimulus-Organism-Response (S-O-R) and Use and Gratification (U&G) theory, researcher makes an attempt to develop a conceptual model in Chapter Three. The developed model displays both predictors and outcomes of customer social participation in e-travel brand communities. Further, a number of hypotheses were developed based on relationships among various constructs. This model was also used to assess the impact of SNSs participation motivations on customer social participation, and its resultant impact of brand related outcomes (brand trust, brand commitment and word of mouth).

- A scale development process suggested by various researchers was used to develop a measurement scale for customer social participation. A discussion with decision makers and interviews with the experts was carried out to get more and more insights related to customer social participation in e-travel brand companies' communities. The measurement scale was developed with the help of identified factors and their underlying items for the measurement of customer participation in e-travel companies communities on social media from the literature.
- The items for the scale development were extracted from the available literature on each factor of customer social participation. After the item generation, face validity and content validity of these items were evaluated. In this process a large number of items were deleted. With the help of the remaining items, a questionnaire was developed. This questionnaire has been distributed to the respondents personally by researcher. A pilot testing survey was conducted for the initial refinements of the items. Further, an item analysis and exploratory factor analysis have been performed to check the internal consistency and reliability to ensure the standardization of the scale.
- After EFA, a confirmatory factor analysis (CFA) has been performed for the validation and purification of the scale. The data has been collected from 358 respondents. After the assessment of uni-dimensionality and reliability of the refined items, the validity of the scale was examined. At this stage the convergent and discriminant validity of the scale were evaluated.
- In order to confirm the final scale items, nomological validity was checked and the relationship between customer social participation in e-travel brand communities and its outcome variables (brand trust, brand commitment and word of mouth) was tested. For nomological validity, data were collected from 352 respondents who were the guest of start category hotels in Delhi. Finally, a three factor nine item scale has been built up to measure the customer social participation in e-travel companies communities.
- Further, the proposed conceptual model was tested using structure equation modeling.

7.2 SIGNIFICANT RESEARCH CONTRIBUTION AND KEY FINDINGS

The main purpose of this research was to provide a measurement model for customer social participation and a possible association between CSP and its antecedents as well as

consequences. In the present research, both qualitative and quantitative models were developed with the help of practitioners and decision makers of the travel and tourism sector. These models will also help researcher working in this field of study. These models are an attempt to fulfill the gaps in the available literature and to achieve the objective of the present research.

The main input and key findings of the present research are given below:

- In this research a review and taxonomical classification of the available literature was presented. Different antecedents and consequences of customer participation in social media brand communities were derived from a further perusal of the present research. These antecedents are *social attributes, psychological attributes, hedonic attributes and functional attributes*. The consequences of customer participation in social media brand communities are *brand context, consumer context and community context*.
- After the identification of the different antecedents and consequences of customer social participation in the context of the e-travel brand companies communities a qualitative model has been developed. Based on S-O-R and U&G theories, researcher has developed the research model. In this model, 17 identified factors as antecedents of customer social participation (SNSs participation motivations) have been categorized under the five dimensions i.e. *building interpersonal relationship, brand likeability, entertainment, information seeking and incentive*.
- In addition, three brand related outcomes of customer social participation (*brand trust, brand commitment and word of mouth*) have been incorporated in this research model based on major research gaps presented in the extant literature. In this model, the relative importance of the antecedents and consequences of customer social participation have been assessed in the context of the e-travel brand companies' communities. Managers in the sector of travel and tourism need to be attentive to all the antecedents and consequences of CSP to improve the overall participation of their potential customers in brand communities on social media.
- After the identification of various antecedents and consequences of customer social participation and the development of model with the help of the S-O-R and U&G theories, the next objective of the research was achieved by designing a quantitative model. This model covers two aspects. One is the measurement of customer social participation in the e-travel brand companies' communities and the second one is to evaluate the association

between antecedents and customer social participation along with its consequences. A scale was developed by following a well-defined scale development procedure. The scale development process consists of three stages; item generation and selection, scale refinement and validation.

- In the first stage, items related to the factors were extracted from the available literature. For this purpose different techniques were used such as content analysis, production of the primary pool of items and evaluation of content and face validity through expert judgment. Next to this, a pilot survey was conducted for the item analysis, EFA and reliability of the items. This initial refinement process was followed by the purification stage. In this stage reliability, CFA, uni-dimensionality, convergent and discriminant validity assessment were conducted. This scale has been developed for the measurement of customer social participation of the e-travel companies' communities. The internal consistency and reliability has been checked by different tests.
- It was hypothesized that SNSs participation motivations exerts a positive impact on the customer participation in social media brand communities (H1). Based on the empirical evidence and results, this hypothesis is supported. The positive impact of SNSs participation motivations on customer social participation reveals that customers seek all types of motivations i.e. social, psychological, hedonic, functional and monetary. Thus, building interpersonal social relationships with other members, likeability for the brand, entertainment motive, information seeking related to the travel, tour and their packages, and incentives attached to the e-travel communities on social media platforms motivates them. These social and psychological motivations may improve customers' perceptions for attractiveness of a specific community and motivate them to give valuable feedback regarding the activities of these online communities (Bendapudi & Berry, 1997). Members of these e-travel communities on social media platforms were found to be spend extra time mostly when the communities' social media pages incorporated distinctive features equipped toward customers' interests that force them to visit the sites for some enjoyment and entertainment (Dholakia et al., 2004; Kang et al., 2014). Concerning functional and monetary motivations, this research indicated that these are also equally influential factors like others in encouraging customer participation in e-travel companies' communities on social media. It could be understand that social media platforms some times are used as a mean for

consumers seeking product and service information (functional motivations) and promotions of service offerings (monetary motivations) specifically in context of travel and tour services on social media sites. As revealed in existing studies, consumers mostly rely on friends and family members referrals, personal experience and sharing of real life stories etc when seeking functional motivations (Hwang and Cho, 2005), which is only possible on social media platforms. In addition, companies' main sources for travel and tour related service promotions are customers' word of mouth, reviews and star ratings to the services based on their personal experiences (Luk and Yip, 2008; Yin and Dubinsky,2004).

- The second hypothesis asked if a positive relationship exists between customer participation on social media brand communities and brand trust (H2).The results of the present research support this hypothesis. The findings confirmed the positive impact of customer social participation on strengthening the customer–brand relationships. In particular, customers' more interactions on e-travel communities page using social media platforms exhibit the travel and tour companies effort to communicate directly with their customers and based on their online feedbacks to correct service failures (Kang et al., 2014; McCarthy et al., 2010). Thus, the interactions of customers exert a strong impact on building their trust toward travel and tour service brands on social media platforms. The findings regarding this hypothesis were consistent with the previous research, which found that participation in online brand community activities encourages customer trust towards the brand (Bagozzi & Dholakia, 2006; Casalo et al., 2007; Ha & Perks, 2005).
- The third hypothesis of the research posited positive relationship between customer participation on social media brand communities and brand commitment (H3). The acceptance of H3 revealed that e-travel brand companies' communities could increase brand commitment by encouraging more participation of their customers towards their community activities. Customers who participated more in an e-travel community usually show higher interest in the travel, tour related services, and always renew their knowledge via asking from travel and tour companies itself or communicating with other members of the community (Bagozzi and Dholakia, 2002). These continuous contacts with the e-travel service companies brand have improved customers' positive attitudes, make stronger their bond with brand, and consequently resulted into brand commitment (Algesheimer et al., 2005; Casalo et al., 2008, 2010a; Jang et al., 2008; Raju et al., 2009). For instance, members of

e-travel companies' communities page on social media are the customers of the travel and tour companies. Their more participation in these companies communities page on social media means that their pages mainly involves more positive comments regarding their services and companies' attempts to solve their customer complaints. Such interactive engagement and communications can encourage psychological attachment towards travel and tour brands.

- The fourth hypothesis of the research put forward a positive relationship between customer participation in social media brand communities and word of mouth (H4). The findings of this research support this hypothesis. Customer participation in social media brand communities supports the development of their behavioral intentions to buy travel services online and to recommend the products and services of e-travel companies' communities to other members. Thus, travel and tour companies may improve their market share via encouraging more positive recommendations between their customers (Casalo et al., 2011; Chung & Darke, 2006). Additionally, Agag and El-Masry (2016), Casalo et al. (2010) and Muniz and Schau (2005) also found that the customer participate in online travel brand communities have a positive and significant influence on their positive word of mouth towards travel brand.
- The fifth hypothesis of the research proposed a positive relationship between brand trust and brand commitment (H5). The findings of current research favor this hypothesis. This finding can be interpreted that customer participation in e-travel brand communities on social media increases members' reliability of information and create more trust in travel service brands, which consequently make stronger customer-brand bonds and thus resulted into brand commitment. The positive relationship found in this research were consistent with the findings of existing studies by Casalo et al.(2007), Ha (2004), Hajli et al. (2017), Hur et al. (2011), Kang et al. (2014).
- The sixth hypothesis of the research intended to exert a positive relationship between brand trust and word of mouth (H6). The results of present research support this hypothesis. Brand trust is another important construct of this research found to impact customers' word of mouth communication towards travel service brand communities on social media. In particular, the high level of trust social media users have in their contacts regarding the travel brand, more likely they will engage in opinion passing behaviour i.e. opinion seeking and opinion giving in e-travel communities on social media. This finding support those of

Ellonen et al. (2010), Jarvenpaa et al. (1998), Kim et al. (2014) and Ridings et al. (2002), who also found a positive relationship between brand trust and community members' intention to exchange the information in terms of word of mouth. From the perspectives of social media brand communities, trust plays an important role for customers to assess the source and value of the information, and accordingly has a significant impact on word of mouth towards brand. Consequently, when social media users trust other members or their social connections in their "friends list", their likelihood to rely on these connections is increased due to the connections' perceived trustworthiness and reliability, which in this manner enhances their word of mouth behaviour in social media brand communities.

- The final two mediating hypotheses of the research posited that brand trust mediates the relationship between customer social participation in brand community and its two outcomes i.e. brand commitment and word of mouth (H7 and H8). These hypotheses are not fully supported by empirical results. The findings of this research confirmed brand trust as a partial mediator between customer social participation and brand commitment, and thus partially accepted H7. This partial mediation means a significant association between dependent and mediator variable, along with a direct association between dependent and independent variable (Preacher & Hayes, 2008). Accordingly, it was found that mediator variable i.e. brand trust accounted for some, but not all, of the association between customer social participation and brand commitment in context of e-travel communities on social media.
- Following the recommendations by Shrout and Bolger (2002), direct, indirect and total effect showed that brand trust partially mediated the association between customer social participation and word of mouth in context of e-travel community. These findings are in line with Agag & El-Masry (2016) results in travel and tourism context. Thus, the association between customer social participation and word of mouth in e-travel community must be assessed with caution. This findings regarding the mediating hypotheses are consistent with Baron and Kenny's (1986) explanation that particular mediation effect may not completely account for the associations between dependent and independent variables.
- Another exclusivity of the present research is that it has strived to fill major gaps existing in the field of customer participation in social media brand communities measurement. The present research has applied modeling techniques as well as developed a reliable and valid

measurement scale for customer social participation in e-travel communities. This scale has not been developed in any study in the available literature. In addition, this research is also an extension of the highly debatable issue i.e. the customer participation on social media in context of developing economies.

The overall model, which is derived from the findings, is depicted in Figure 7.2. The tested results are also shown with standardized path coefficients with their significance level in terms of p value.

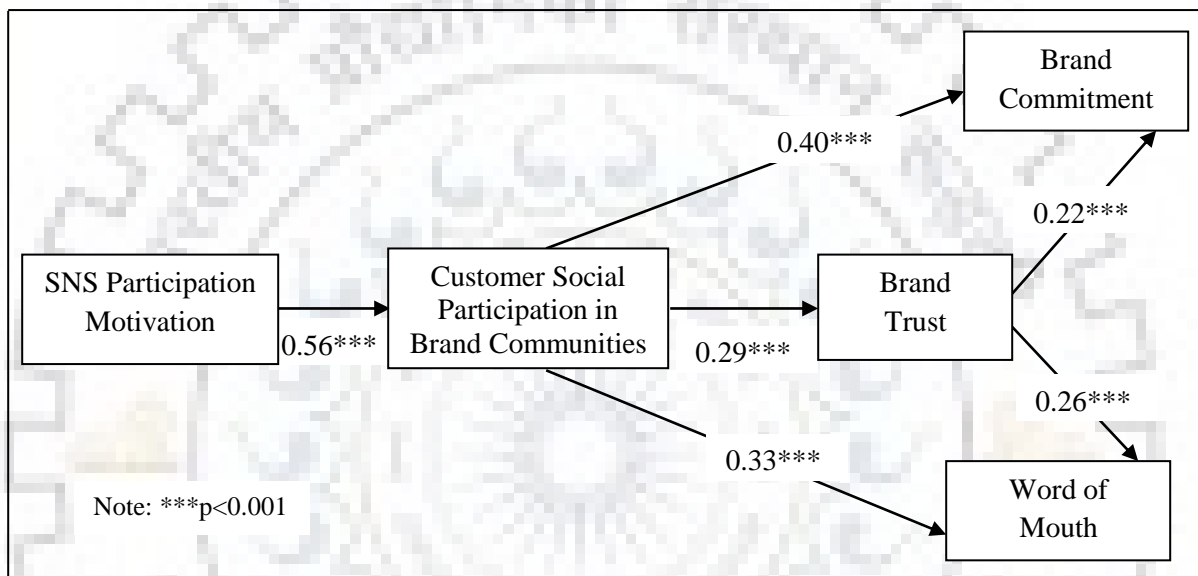


Figure 7.2: Results of proposed research model tested with SEM

7.3 IMPLICATIONS OF THE PRESENT RESEARCH

The outcomes of the present research add to the existing body of literature on customer participation in social media brand communities. The results of the research provide a path for the both academicians and practitioners for the enhancement of customer participation in social media brand communities in context of travel and tourism sector. The main probable implications of the present research are:

7.3.1 Implication for Academicians

The main implications for the academicians are:

- A bibliographic record provided in the literature review of the present research may work as a guideline for future research in this field of study.

- The modeling techniques and their advantages and disadvantages may work as a source of learning in the selection of an appropriate technique by the researcher.
- The scale development process may be helpful for academicians to develop a scale in different areas of interest.
- The developed questionnaire for the present study may be used to carry out an empirical study related to customer participation in social media brand communities related issues in different industries.
- The assessment of issues related to customer participation in social media brand communities may be used as teaching support for the development of case studies.
- The different antecedents and consequences identified related to customer participation in social media brand communities may be helpful for a further study in this field.

7.3.2 Implications for Practitioners

The important managerial implications of the present research are summarized below:

- The outcome of the present research presents the practical implications of the identified customer participation in social media brand communities measurement factors. Their application in the Indian travel and tourism sector provides a guideline for the managers and decision makers of these companies to increase customers' participation within their brand communities created on social media platforms.
- This research is for the entire travel and tourism sector. So the scale developed in the present research can be used with some modifications for specific industries in further studies.
- The various antecedents and consequences identified with the help of the literature review may be helpful for the managers and decision makers in the improvement of customer participation in social media brand communities via providing more motivations to the customers to ensuring their more contribution towards their travel and tourism brands.
- The findings of this research support that SNSs participation motivation shows a positive impact on customer social participation, which in turn positively influences brand trust, brand commitment and word of mouth in e-travel companies communities built on social media platforms.
- The outcome of the research provides a sound rationalization for the use of the different techniques applied for the assessment of customer participation in social media brand

communities. The overall findings are the outcome of both the quality of the process and the techniques adopted in the present research.

- Managers or decision makers of travel and tourism companies may adopt a technique like EFA, CFA and SEM for assessing the association between various identified antecedents and consequences of customer participation within their travel brand communities on social media as per their specific set of requirements.
- The model developed here shows a positive impact of SNSs participation motivations on customer social participation, and its consequent impact on brand related outcomes (brand trust, brand commitment and word of mouth). These findings may work as a motivating factor to contribute towards the improvement of customer participation in social media brand communities as a key to enhance the profitability of the organization.

7.4 LIMITATIONS OF THE PRESENT RESEARCH

Every research has its own limitation due to various factors. This limitation may be time, sample, availability of data, techniques applied etc. The same is the case with the present research. These limitations may provide various useful inputs that can be addressed in future studies. The limitations of the present research are as follows:

In the scale development, the scale for customer social participation was developed by using expert's opinion. This may lead to some biasedness in the comparative analysis of various factors identified from the literature and may result in a significant difference in the selection of the factors. There is an enough scope for further use of other techniques for scale development.

In the present research, the entire travel and tourism sector has been considered for the assessment of customer participation in social media brand communities. The scale developed in the research is a generalized scale for the entire travel and tourism sector. There may be variation in the importance of various factors from industry to industry. The result of present research can be further verified by conducting a sector specific research.

The study is conducted only in the Indian scenario. This research is based on the data collected from a single country, whereas social media users are dispersed worldwide. Thus, the result may be different in the case of another country due to the cultural biasness. Therefore, it is necessary to validate the results before generalizing the research to other countries.

The research is focused on certain star category hotels by applying various parameters in the sample selection. This may be further extended for the another hotel types such as heritage hotel and bed and breakfast hotel to get better and more generalized results for this sector.

The sample size was limited to star category hotels, which potentially limits its application for another travel and tourism service companies. This may be further extended for the travel and tour companies to get better and more generalized results for the travel and tourism sector.

In the present research, data for both dependent and independent variable was collected through the same self reported questionnaire, so the data may have suffered from measurement bias. Further, this research presents evidences of a positive link between SNSs participation motivations, customer social participation and its brand related consequences (brand trust, brand commitment and word of mouth). However, it does not help in understanding the process through which customer participation in social media brand communities affects the brand trust, brand commitment and word of mouth. In the future, a detailed case study research may be helpful in understanding this issue.

This research has measured the impact of customer social participation on its three outcomes only (brand trust, brand commitment and word-of-mouth) to avoid the complexity issue while developing research model. Other consequences such as brand equity, brand loyalty, brand affect etc. could be included in the model to obtain a better and broader understanding of present research.

The effect of moderating factors, which have an impact on the customer participation in social media brand communities has not been considered in the present research. However, it is possible that personal characteristics such as age, gender, income, and education, and situational characteristics such as expertise, critical incident recovery, and loyalty card membership behave as moderator in the relationships examined in this research. More specifically, examining the proposed model across different age groups could be beneficial for the brand managers, because customer participation varies across different age groups.

This research presents a cross-sectional study. However, customer participation in social media brand communities being dynamic concept requires constant nurturing from companies for ensuring continuous participation of customers within these brand communities. The use of longitudinal research might be useful in explaining the relative importance of three dimensions

of customer participation in social media brand communities. Owing to the availability of social media platforms, it is becoming easier to conduct such types of studies than before. Therefore, longitudinal research could facilitate researchers to generate more insight regarding the dynamic interactions among online community elements.

7.5 SCOPE FOR FUTURE RESEARCH

The research carried out in the present study is widespread and may be of high use to academicians, practitioners, managers, decision makers and scholars. Every research has its own limitation in terms of the different issues as mentioned in an earlier section. These limitations raise the need to extend this work in further studies. The research presents many opportunities that could be explored in future studies. The possible and important scope for future research is presented as below:

- The barriers and drivers can be identified for improving customer participation in social media brand communities.
- The interrelationship issues among the three dimensions of customer social participation i.e. Informational, attitudinal and actionable need to be addressed in future studies.
- The another techniques such as Analytic Hierarchy Process (AHP), fuzzy AHP method can be applied to develop research model to access the priorities of the dimensions and factors of customer participation in social media brand communities based on factor ranking as per their relative importance.
- Various literature reviews and classification schemes like, bibliometric analysis, and meta analysis can also be applied to get more in depth understanding.
- The scale can be employed on a longitudinal or on an adhoc temporal basis for particular company to assess improvements.
- The developed scale can be used to conduct a comparative study between two different sectors.
- This scale can be further modified as per the specification of a particular sector for the assessment of customer participation in social media brand communities. Thus, this research can be extended to the other sectors by developing a different scale for the measurement of customer social participation in the specific sector.

- Future research should examine the influence of other mediators and moderators on the proposed model in this research. A possible number of potential mediators and moderators for instance culture, communities type, brand type, differences in social networking platforms features and facilities or functionality, structure and culture could be examined to have more insights about how these relationships vary in different situation. In addition to these, some moderators, for example, brand involvement, interaction experience and customers' interactivity, interaction propensity that may moderate the participation intention of brand communities members' on social media will be useful to explore.
- Future research should focus on another consequences (brand loyalty, brand equity etc) or detailed analysis of brand community related determinants. Brand community related determinants might include familiarity with the brand community, ability to contribute towards community and brand community identification.
- In association with various other related studies, an entirely new stream of social media research may also be proposed. For example, a couple of such possibilities could be investigated as: how does different age group person with more females having different marital status and incomes affect (i) customer participation in social media brand communities; and (ii) brand trust, brand commitment or word of mouth?
- Another area of study should identify the potential antecedents related to the brand communities. The possible antecedents of brand communities to be considered for future studies including brand attitudes, enduring involvement, brand prestige, brand distinctiveness, brands' symbolic benefits, brand personality.
- Further research needs to examine the effects of multiple memberships on consumption behavior or experience in social media brand communities.
- This research is conducted in India. Thus, a research in other developed and emerging countries can present valuable insights that would make possible and strong comparisons with the western countries findings.

7.6 CONCLUSION

This chapter provides a consolidate picture of the entire research. It also provides the research contribution, implications for the practitioners and academician, key findings, limitations of the present research followed by avenues for the future research. It is expected that this research for

the development of a scale for the assessment of customer participation in social media brand communities and its impact on three important brand related outcomes i.e. brand trust, brand commitment and word of mouth in Indian travel and tourism sector, will work as a tool for attracting the interest of various researchers in this field of study, especially in developing countries. This study touched on various issue of customer participation in social media brand communities that may be useful in developing a strategy and will be helpful in policy formulation to improve efforts towards the goal of more participation of customers within their brand communities on social media platforms.



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LIST OF PUBLICATIONS

IN JOURNALS

1. Kamboj, S., & Sarmah, B (2018). Construction and Validation of the Customer Social Participation in Brand Communities Scale. *Internet Research*, <https://doi.org/10.1108/IntR-01-2017-0011>{Emerald}(Scopus, SSCI, Impact factor 2.931).
2. Kamboj, S., Sarmah, B., Gupta, S., & Dwivedi, Y. (2018). Examining branding co-creation in brand communities on social media: Applying the paradigm of Stimulus-Organism-Response. *International Journal of Information Management*, 39(1), 169-185{Elsevier}(Scopus, SSCI, Impact factor 3.872).
3. Jain, N. K., Kamboj, S., Kumar, V., & Rahman, Z. (2018). Examining consumer-brand relationships on social media platforms. *Marketing Intelligence & Planning*, 36(1), 63-78{Emerald}(Scopus, SSCI, Impact factor pending).
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7. Kamboj, S., Yadav, M., & Rahman, Z (2017). Impact of social media and customer centric technology on performance outcomes: The mediating role of social CRM capabilities. *International Journal of Electronic Marketing and Retailing*, (Forthcoming){Inderscience}.
8. Kamboj, S., & Rahman, Z (2017). Market orientation, marketing capabilities and sustainable innovation: The mediating role of sustainable consumption and competitive advantage. *Management Research Review*, 40(6), 698-724 {Emerald}.
9. Kamboj, S., Yadav, M., & Rahman, Z (2017). BHARAT to INDIA: A case of connecting IFFCO brand with generation Y. *International Journal of Business Excellence*, 13(4),

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10. Sarmah, B., Rahman, Z., & Kamboj, S (2017). Customer co-creation and adoption intention towards newly developed services: An empirical study. *International Journal of Culture, Tourism, and Hospitality Research*, 11(3), 372-391 {Emerald}.
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 13. Kamboj, S., Yadav, M., & Rahman, Z (2016). Impact of social CRM capabilities on firm performance : Examining the mediating role of co-created customer experience. *International Journal of Information Systems in the Service Sector*, 8(4), 1-15 {IGI Global}.
 14. Yadav, M., Kamboj, S., & Rahman, Z (2016). Customer co-creation through social media: The case of crash the PEPSI IPL-2015. *Journal of Direct, Data, and Digital Marketing Practice*, 17(4), 1-16 {Palgrave MacMillan}.
 15. Kamboj, S., & Rahman, Z (2015). A resource -based view on marketing capability, operations capability and financial performance: An empirical examination of mediating role. *Procedia Social and Behavioral Sciences*, 189(1), 406-415 {Elsevier}.
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1. Kamboj, S., Yadav, M., Rahman, Z., & Goyal, P. (2015). A capability based view on social media technologies and firm performance: An empirical examination of mediating role. *Proceedings of the International Conference on evidence based management* (pp. 289-297), BITS Pilani India: Excellent Publishing House, ISBN: 978-93- 84935-18- 4.
2. Kamboj, S., & Rahman, Z. (2014). Marketing capability, innovation capability and sustainable competitive advantage: A conceptual framework. *Proceedings of the*

International conference on Research and sustainable business (pp. 711-717), IIT Roorkee India: Excel India Publishers, ISBN: 978-93- 83842-19- 3.

3. Kamboj, S., Rahman, Z., & Goyal, P. (2014). Marketing capabilities, operation capabilities and performance: A study on mediating roles. *Proceedings of the XVIII Annual International Conference of the Society of Operations Management* (pp. 726-733), IIT Roorkee, India: Excellent Publishing House, ISBN:978-9384935-02-3.

Research Papers: Presented in International Conferences

1. Kamboj, S. (2017). Understanding Selfie-Posting Behavior on Social Media: An Empirical Study. *International conference on Global Business Strategies for Sustainability (GLOBUSS-2017)*, 1st-2nd November, Amity University, Noida.
2. Kamboj, S., & Rahman, Z (2016). Influence of tourists' perceived risks on revisit intentions. *International conference on advancement of development administration 2016- social sciences & Interdisciplinary studies (The 5th ICADA 2016 – SSIS)*, 26th-28th May, National institute of development administration (NIDA), Bangkok, Thailand.
3. Kamboj, S (2016). Underpinnings of customer participation in social media based brand communities. *International conference on global trends in business and sustainability research*. 2nd- 4th December, IIT Roorkee, Greater Noida Campus.
4. Kamboj, S., & Rahman, Z (2016). Building brand loyalty through member's participation in online brand communities on social media. *International conference on doctoral thesis*, 21st-22nd April, IBS, Hyderabad.
5. Kamboj, S (2016). Measuring the effects of social media and customer centric technologies on firm performance. *National conference on media and public policy in India*, 21st-22nd January, IIM, Kashipur.
6. Kamboj, S., & Rahman, Z. (2015). Traditional and Social media in the global marketing arena: the power of socio-traditional media mix. *International conference on SIIBICON-2015*, 20th -21st February, SIIB Pune.
7. Kamboj, S., & Rahman, Z. (2015). Social media capability: A new perspective for corporate sustainability promotion. *International conference SIIBICON-2015*, 20th-21st February, Symbiosis Institute of International business, Pune.

8. Kaushik, A., Kamboj, S., & Rahman, Z (2014). Impact of Torrential Rainfall in Kedarnath, Uttarakhand. *International conference on excellence in research & education (CERE-2014)*, 8th-11th May, IIM Indore.

WORKSHOPS/ SEMINARS ATTENDED:

1. Workshop on checking of plagiarism in scientific writing using turnitin software held at Mahatma Gandhi Central Library organized by IIT, Roorkee on 8th August, 2015.
2. Presented a paper titled “Higher Education in Human values: Need and Challenges” at UGC sponsored national seminar on *Challenges before Higher Education in India* organized by Guru Nanak Dev University College (GNDUC), Jalandhar on 27th 28th March, 2015.
3. Workshop on I EXCEL I LEAD in Sankalp 2015 organized by Indian Institute of Technology, Roorkee on 6th-8th February, 2015.



APPENDIX-I

APPENDIX-I

Questionnaire



Department of Management Studies,
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Phone: Tel: 01332-285014, 285617, Fax: 01332- 285565

QUESTIONNAIRE FOR SURVEY

Shampy Kamboj
kamboj.shampy@gmail.com
Department of Management Studies, IIT Roorkee

Dear Respondents,

The purpose of this questionnaire is to identify some valid and reliable questions for modelling and measuring of customer participation in social media brand communities. This questionnaire contains some scale items, which you can voluntarily respond, or you may quit at any time you desire. Information collected through this questionnaire will be kept anonymous and will only be used for academic purposes. Although the results of this research will be published, it will be devoid of any identifying information. The respondent identity will be confidential until disclosure is required by the law.

The research has been explained to me and all my questions have been satisfied. I may suggest additional questions, if I feel it is required in my case. In case of further questions regarding the respondents' rights or anything regarding researcher's affiliation, can contact Dr. Zillur Rahman, Department of Management Studies, IIT Roorkee, yusuffdm@iitr.ernet.in or zrahman786@gmail.com

Introduction

The purpose of this research is to investigate the customer participation in online travel communities on social media sites. Before asking to share your opinion about your participation in any of travel communities using any social networking sites (SNSs), it is need to clarify what the present research mean by customer participation on social media and online travel communities.

About customer participation on social media

Customer participation on social media known as “customer social participation” and it refer as an attempt to attain value co-creation via essential but deliberate participation of interactive customers in service creation and delivery process in social media.

About online travel communities

The online communities where customers effort to fulfil their travel-related tasks, including travel information or tips seeking, travel transactions making, developing connections with persons from distant location, finding travel companions, and looking for entertainment purposes.

About questionnaire

The present questionnaire is mainly divided into four sections. Section I comprises a brief profile of the respondents through a number of demographic variables. Section II obtains information about motivations for participation in travel communities using SNSs. Section III obtains the information about the consumer social participation in online travel communities. Section III obtains the information about the brand trust, brand commitment and word-of-mouth behaviour regarding travel community brand.

1. Please read each item carefully before answering them.
2. Indicate your decision by placing a tick (—√) in the box to the right of the items.
3. Make sure to complete **ALL** items.

Section I:

1. **Name** (Optional) _____
2. **Age**[Please tick]: 18 – 24 25 – 30 31–40 40-50 50 & above
3. **Gender** [Please tick]: Male Female
4. **Qualifications** [Please tick]:
Below Under Graduate Under Graduate Post Graduate Other
5. **Occupation** [Please tick]: Student Self-employed Retired Other
6. **Income(monthly)** [Please tick]:
<10,000 10,000-30,000 30,000-50,000 Above 50,000
7. Have you subscribed, liked or joined any e-travel service companies' community brand page using any social networking site [Please tick]:
i. Yes ii) No
8. Which e-travel service companies' community brand page using SNSs you have subscribed, liked or joined [Please tick]:
i) MakeMyTrip ii) Yatra.com iii) Clear trip iv) Expedia.co.in v) goibibo
vi) Yatra.com vii) Trip advisor viii) EaseMyTrip ix) Any other.....

9. Which social networking site you used frequently [Please tick]:
 i) Facebook ii) Twitter iii) LinkedIn iv) YouTube v) Other
10. Did you post any review on online travel service companies' communities during or after your travel and tour using SNSs?
 i) Never ii) Hardly once or twice iii) Sometimes iv) Often v) Always
11. Did you consider reviews and ratings of any online travel service companies' communities while planning your travel and tour?
 i) Never ii) Hardly once or twice iii) Sometimes iv) Often v) Always

Section II:

For each of the statements listed below, please tick the appropriate circle, where 1= Strongly disagree; 2= Somewhat disagree; 3= Disagree; 4= Neither agree nor disagree; 5= Somewhat agree; 6= Agree; 7= Strongly agree.

I visit travel brand community using SNSs.....

1	to communicate with others.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
2	to get in touch with friends I have n't contacted for a while.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
3	to talk to friends in private settings.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
4	because I like, love this brand.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
5	because I am interested in this brand.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
6	because this brand means a lot to me.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
7	to fill my free time.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
8	because it is entertaining.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
9	because it is relaxing.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
10	because it is cool to use it.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
11	to get useful information about products or services.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
12	to get useful information I didn't know before.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
13	to learn about things related to my interests.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
14	to learn what is going on in society.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
15	to get a reward for my continued participation.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
16	because the community offers incentives (e.g., cyber money, coupons, promotional deals or free samples).	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
17	because the community gives me loyalty incentives for my	1	2	3	4	5	6	7

continued participation.

Section III

- | | | | | | | | | |
|----|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 18 | I frequently provide useful information online to the other members | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 |
| 19 | I post messages and provide responses online on the brand community page frequently | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 |
| 20 | I read comments/reviews of other community members about brand online | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 |
| 21 | I actively participate online in the brand community's activities. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 |
| 22 | I spend a lot of time online in participating with brand community's activities. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 |
| 23 | I provide feedback online related to participation in the community's activities. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 |
| 24 | I think participating in this online community would be good for me. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 |
| 25 | I have a positive opinion about my participation in this online community. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 |
| 26 | I think participating in this online community would be beneficial for me. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 |

Section IV

- | | | | | | | | | |
|----|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 27 | My brand gives me everything that I expect out of the product | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 |
| 28 | I rely on my brand | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 |
| 29 | My brand never disappoints me | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 |
| 30 | I feel I am part of a community around this brand | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 |
| 31 | I am an active supporter of this brand. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 |
| 32 | I interact with this brand. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 |
| 33 | I say positive things about brand to other people. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 |
| 34 | I often recommend brand to others. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 |
| 35 | I encourage friends and relative to do business with brand | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 |

Thanks for your kind cooperation



APPENDIX-II

Customer participation in social media brand communities studies

S. No	Title	Authors/Year	Journal	Research Approach	Statistic Method	Sample size	Results/Findings	Gaps identified
1.	“How do brand communities generate brand relationships? Intermediate mechanism”	Zhou et al. (2012)	Journal of Business Research	Questionnaire survey	PLS	437	“Consumer brand attachment mediate between brand community commitment and brand commitment and partial mediate between brand identification and brand commitment.”	“Future research could Undertake longitudinal research to understand brand community relationships and explore bidirectional impact of brand communities on brand relationships.”
2.	“New members' integration: Key factor of success in online travel communities”	Casaló et al. (2013)	Journal of Business Research	Questionnaire survey	SEM	456	“Both integration and satisfaction with the community influence community participation. Finally, perceived reciprocity positively affects both satisfaction and intention to participate in the community.”	“Future research may be need to generalize and extrapolate the findings with wider sample of community members or consumers from diverse cultures or countries.”
3.	“A social influence model of consumer participation in network- and small-group-based virtual communities”	Dholakia et al. (2004)	International Journal of Research in Marketing	Questionnaire survey	SEM	545	“Virtual community type moderates consumers' reasons for participating, as well as the strengths of their impact on group norms and social identity.”	“Future studies may be require to investigate customer to brand relationships on other typologies of online brand communities.”
4.	“Antecedents and purchase consequence of customer participation in small group brand communities”	Bagozzi and Dholakia (2006)	International Journal of Research in Marketing	Questionnaire survey	SEM	I study sample 154, II study sample 255	“Brand-related behaviors found to be significant consequences of group behavior for both small group brand communities and other communities.”	“Future studies could examine and compare the brand communities of various product types or different brands with differing characteristics to explore whether propensity for customer participation differs across different products and services.”

5.	“Antecedents and consequences of the quality of e-customer-to-customer interactions in B2B brand communities”	Bruhn et al. (2014)	Industrial Marketing Management	Questionnaire survey	SEM	330	“Brand community trust is essential for the quality of C2C interactions in B2B brand communities.”	“Future research could Undertake longitudinal research to understand brand community relationships in other type of communities. it would be interesting to analyze some moderating effects, such as interaction experience, interactivity or brand involvement.”
6.	“Customer participation in virtual brand communities: The self-construal perspective”	Wang et al. (2015)	Information & Management	Questionnaire survey	PLS	167	“There is a significant relationship between intention and actual participation in online brand communities.”	“Future studies could test the research model using data collected from other populations. Future studies could test the model in other online brand communities and explore the differences between self-managed and firm-sponsored OBCs.”
7.	“Social versus psychological brand community: The role of psychological sense of brand community”	Carlson et al. (2008)	Journal of Business Research	Questionnaire survey	SEM	314	“Psychological sense of brand community serves an important role in consumer-brand relationships in both social brand communities and psychological brand communities.”	“Future research might examine additional possible antecedents of online brand communities (e.g., enduring involvement, symbolic benefits of the brand, brand attitudes, brand personality, brand prestige, and brand distinctiveness).”
8.	“Brand community participation in Taiwan: Examining the roles of individual, group-, and relationship-	Tsai et al. (2012)	Journal of Business Research	Questionnaire survey	PLS	544	“Three levels of antecedents (i.e., individual-, relationship-, and group-level factors) significantly influence brand community participation.”	“Future studies should investigate whether and how other factors might influence the participation. More empirical research should pursue insights into the

	levelantecedents”							similarities and differences of brand community membership for various product categories.”
9.	“Transforming visitors into members in online brand communities: Evidence from China”	Zhou et al. (2013)	Journal of Business Research	Questionnaire survey	PLS	220	“Viewing of posts leads to informational value and perceived social value, which in turn increases visitors' intentions to participate in the community.”	“Future studies should consider moderators, such as interaction propensity, that may moderate the intention to participate.”
10	“Influence of community design on user behaviors in online communities”	Fiedler and Sarstedt (2014)	Journal of Business Research	Questionnaire survey	PLS-SEM	147	“Common identity attachment is the primary driver of user behavior in online communities.”	“Further research should examine how other concepts such as utilitarian motives of community members or organizational identity of a community guide behavior in a social network.”
11	“Each can help or hurt: Negative and positive word of mouth in social network brand communities”	Relling et al. (2015)	International Journal of Research in Marketing	Questionnaire survey	Regression analysis, ANOVA	I-328 II-165 III-136	“WOM evokes more positive consumer reactions in social-goal communities in terms of more active participation behavior.”	“Future research might test impact of willingness to join on the intention to participate and the consequences of positive interactions without any brand reference.”
12	“Relationship quality, community promotion and brand loyalty in virtual communities: Evidence from free software communities”	Casaló et al. (2010)	International Journal of Information Management	Questionnaire survey	SEM	215	“Identification and satisfaction with a virtual community may increase the level of consumer participation in that community.”	“It would be interesting to analyze possible differences in the antecedents and consequences of consumers' participation in virtual communities from different cultures. It would be useful to include in the future real usage data in order to validate the participation measure.”
13	“Relationships among	Kuo and	International	Questionnaire	PLS	283	“Hedonic, social, and learning	“Future study need to examine

.	community interaction characteristics, perceived benefits, community commitment, and oppositional brand loyalty in online brand communities”	Feng (2013)	Journal of Information Management	Survey			benefits positively affect community commitments, which in turn affect brand loyalty.”	the relationships between consequences of oppositional brand loyalty and oppositional brand loyalty in online brand communities.”
14	“Identify with community or company? An investigation on the consumer behavior in Facebook brand community”	Ho (2015)	Telematics and Informatics	Questionnaire survey	PLS	206	“Interactions with a company’s Facebook community have positive effects on C–C identifications.”	“In future studies consumer–community identification, could be considered and examined as antecedents of citizenship behaviors. Future studies could test this model in more individualistic cultures and in different types of social community with a specific company or brand settings.”
15	“The roles of brand community and community engagement in building brand trust on social media”	Habibi et al. (2014)	Computers in Human Behavior	Questionnaire survey	SEM	569	“Consumers’ brand relationships (consumer–product, brand and community) positively influences brand trust.”	“Examining the effects of multiple memberships in online brand communities”
16	“Can online buddies and bandwagon cues enhance user participation in online health communities?”	Kim and Sundar (2014)	Computers in Human Behavior	Questionnaire survey	MANC OVA	100	“The online buddy invitation may not work positively in online communities. Bandwagon cues will attenuate negative reactions to online buddy’s exclusivity.”	“Qualitative data obtained through in-depth interviews with actual users would help clarify the underlying findings.”
17	“Are Facebook brand community members	Munnukk a	Computers in Human	Questionnaire survey	PLS	I study sample	“Community commitment is associated with community	“Future research might compare how members differ from non-

	truly loyal to the brand?"	et al. (2015)	Behaviour			1936, II study sample 1369	promotion behavior and loyalty. User activity in Facebook has little or no effect on brand loyalty."	members in their brand community commitment and brand loyalty. It is need to examine how individuals' brand community behavior affect their brand loyalty through brand community commitment."
18	"Influence of consumer attitude toward online brand community on revisit intention and brand trust"	Jung et al. (2014)	Journal of Retailing and Consumer Services	Questionnaire survey	Regression analysis	242	"Social and informational benefits have positive impacts on attitude, which, in turn, significantly influence revisit intention and brand trust."	"Future research may need to include online brand communities of several different brands in different product types. future research should consider other moderating variables that may be related to consumer perceptions of and behavioral intention toward online brand communities."
19	"Luxury-cruise travelers' brand community perception and its consequences"	Shim et al. (2015)	Current Issues in Tourism	Questionnaire survey	SEM	300	"Emotional brand attraction had positive effects on active engagement and repurchase intentions."	"Future research should continue to modify model to identify potential antecedents and consequences associated with luxury-cruise brand communities in cross-cultural setting with wider sample."
20	"It takes a marketplace community to raise brand commitment: the role of online communities"	Kim et al. (2008)	Journal of Marketing Management	Questionnaire survey	SEM	1500	"Online community participants possess stronger brand commitment than consumers who are not members of the community."	"Future research examine and answer such questions as 1) How does an online community evolve? 2) Does it matter when participants become part of the online community? Or 3) Does the behaviour of online participants vary over time?."

21	“Towards understanding members’ interactivity, trust, and flow in online travel community”	Wu and Chang (2005)	Industrial Management & Data Systems	Questionnaire survey	SEM	286	“In online travel communities both interactivity and trust do affect each other, interactivity is the key factor for the members to have flow experience, it in turn can enhance the transaction intentions of members.”	“In future in-depth interviews of internet users might be undertaken in the future for more precise profiling of travel population behavior and for refinement of survey instrument.”
22	“How to transform consumers into fans of your brand”	Jahn and Kunz (2012)	Journal of Service Management	Questionnaire survey	SEM	523	“Online service usage behavior has significant influence on the fan page on the customer-brand relationship, and different values such as functional and hedonic content as drivers of fan-page participation.”	“Future research could focus on the difference between manufacture and dominantly service industries; between more hedonic or functional brands, or between company brands and human brands. Further study is needed for assessing the effects of negative word-of-mouth on social media platforms.”
23	“The impact of electronic word-of-mouth: The adoption of online opinions in online customer communities”	Cheung et al. (2008)	Internet Research	Questionnaire survey	PLS	154	“Information usefulness had a strong and significant impact on consumer decision to adopt information within online communities.”	“Other antecedents of information usefulness like the web site design and layout may also be added to further enhance the variance of information adoption.”
24	“Understanding online community user participation: A social influence perspective”	Zhou (2011)	Internet Research	Questionnaire survey	SEM	450	“Both social identity and group norm have significant effects on user participation.”	“Future research could examine the effects of other possible factors affecting user participation, such as trust and usability.”
25	“Promoting	Casalo’	Journal of	Questionnaire	SEM	215	“Participation in a virtual	“To analyse other effects on

.	consumer's participation in virtual brand communities: A new paradigm in branding strategy”	et al. (2008)	Marketing Communications	Survey			community has a positive influence on consumer commitment; trust had a positive effect on members' participation.”	consumer behaviour associated to the consumers’ participation in virtual communities, such as quantitative assessment of the impact of virtual communities in consumer trust and loyalty to the brand around which the community is developed.”
26	“How to make brand communities work: Antecedents and consequences of consumer participation”	Woisetschläger et al. (2008)	Journal of Relationship Marketing	Questionnaire survey	SEM	1,025	“Identification with community, satisfaction and degree of influence has positive influence on consumer participation”	“Future research should focus on the question of how business offers could be communicated to the community without leading to adverse reactions from users.”
27	“The influence of on-line brand community Characteristics on community commitment and brand loyalty”	Jang et al. (2008)	International Journal of Electronic Commerce	Questionnaire survey	Regression analysis	250	“Community commitment positively influenced by their community interaction and the activities rewards.”	“A future study could better explain the community’s operating mechanism by taking variables like customer participation in building and managing a brand community.”
28	“To be or not to be in social media: How brand loyalty is affected by social media?”	Laroche et al. (2013)	International Journal of Information Management	Questionnaire survey	SEM	441	“Brand communities established on social media have positive effects on customer brand relationships, which in turn have positive effects on brand trust, and trust has positive effects on brand loyalty.”	“In future research other possible moderating and mediating variables, such as brand type, culture, characteristics and facilities of the community on social media, could be included to produce deeper insights about how these relationships vary in different situation.”
29	“Enhancing consumer–brand relationships on	Kang et al. (2014)	International Journal of Hospitality	Questionnaire survey	SEM	331	“Social–psychological and hedonic benefits have a significant impact on	“Additional constructs, such as brand loyalty, purchase intention, and brand equity,

	restaurant Facebook fan pages: Maximizing consumer benefits and increasing active participation”		Management				members’ active participation, which in turn influences brand trust and brand commitment.”	could be added to validate the effectiveness of utilizing social media as a tool to build consumer–brand relationships.”
30	“Customer social participation in the social networking services and its impact upon the customer equity of global fashion brands”	Chae and Ko (2016)	Journal of Business Research	Questionnaire survey	SEM	582	“SNS participation motivation and customer social participation associated positively and have significant influence on customer equity.”	“Customer participation on SNS needs to be further applied with different antecedents and consequences. future research work toward developing and strengthening the theoretical framework of customer social participation is suggested.”



APPENDIX-III
Results of CSP Scale

KMO and Bartlett's Test

Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin Measure of Sampling Adequacy.		.853
Bartlett's Test of Sphericity	Approx. Chi-Square	6157.368
	Df	66
	Sig.	.000

Reliability Statistics for informational participation

Cronbach's Alpha	N of Items
.941	6

Reliability Statistics for actionable participation

Cronbach's Alpha	N of Items
.969	3

Reliability Statistics for attitudinal participation

Cronbach's Alpha	N of Items
.977	3

Model Fit Summary (Initial validation- Scale first order CFA) (Chapter 5)

CMIN

Model	NPAR	CMIN	DF	P	CMIN/DF
Default model	30	33.985	24	.085	1.416
Saturated model	54	.000	0		
Independence model	18	4329.448	36	.000	120.262

RMR, GFI

Model	RMR	GFI	AGFI	PGFI
Default model	.053	.980	.963	.523
Saturated model	.000	1.000		
Independence model	1.452	.317	.147	.254

Baseline Comparisons

Model	NFI Delta1	RFI rho1	IFI Delta2	TLI rho2	CFI
Default model	.992	.988	.998	.997	.998
Saturated model	1.000		1.000		1.000
Independence model	.000	.000	.000	.000	.000

RMSEA

Model	RMSEA	LO 90	HI 90	PCLOSE
Default model	.034	.000	.059	.840
Independence model	.578	.564	.593	.000

ECVI

Model	ECVI	LO 90	HI 90	MECVI
Default model	.263	.235	.318	.268
Saturated model	.303	.303	.303	.311
Independence model	12.228	11.633	12.844	12.231

Standardized Regression Weights: (Group number 1 - Default model)

			Estimate
INF4	<---	INF	.935
INF5	<---	INF	.921
INF6	<---	INF	.919
ACT1	<---	ACT	.977
ACT2	<---	ACT	.957
ACT3	<---	ACT	.935
ATT1	<---	ATT	.985
ATT2	<---	ATT	.989
ATT3	<---	ATT	.927

Correlations: (Group number 1 - Default model)

			Estimate
ATT	<-->	INF	.497
ATT	<-->	ACT	.128
INF	<-->	ACT	.219

Validity Master

	CR	AVE	MSV	ASV	INF	ATT	ACT
INF	0.947	0.856	0.247	0.147	0.925		
ATT	0.978	0.936	0.247	0.132	0.497	0.967	
ACT	0.970	0.915	0.048	0.032	0.219	0.128	0.956

Model Fit Summary (Final validation- Scale second order CFA) (Chapter 5)

CMIN

Model	NPAR	CMIN	DF	P	CMIN/DF
Default model	21	36.607	24	.048	1.525
Saturated model	45	.000	0		
Independence model	9	4611.455	36	.000	128.096

RMR, GFI

Model	RMR	GFI	AGFI	PGFI
Default model	.072	.978	.959	.522
Saturated model	.000	1.000		
Independence model	2.133	.245	.056	.196

Baseline Comparisons

Model	NFI Delta1	RFI rho1	IFI Delta2	TLI rho2	CFI
Default model	.992	.988	.997	.996	.997
Saturated model	1.000		1.000		1.000
Independence model	.000	.000	.000	.000	.000

RMSEA

Model	RMSEA	LO 90	HI 90	PCLOSE
Default model	.039	.004	.063	.759
Independence model	.602	.587	.616	.000

ECVI

Model	ECVI	LO 90	HI 90	MECVI
Default model	.224	.188	.282	.227
Saturated model	.256	.256	.256	.264
Independence model	13.189	12.564	13.835	13.191

Standardized Regression Weights: (Group number 1 - Default model)

			Estimate
INF	<---	CSP	.808
ATT	<---	CSP	.765
ACT	<---	CSP	.625
INF4	<---	INF	.928
INF5	<---	INF	.989
INF6	<---	INF	.985
ACT1	<---	ACT	.963
ACT2	<---	ACT	.978

			Estimate
ACT3	<---	ACT	.977
ATT1	<---	ATT	.924
ATT2	<---	ATT	.916
ATT3	<---	ATT	.894

Model Fit Summary (Final validation- Nomological validity) (Chapter 5)

CMIN

Model	NPAR	CMIN	DF	P	CMIN/DF
Default model	42	285.154	129	.000	2.210
Saturated model	171	.000	0		
Independence model	18	8815.634	153	.000	57.619

RMR, GFI

Model	RMR	GFI	AGFI	PGFI
Default model	.203	.917	.890	.692
Saturated model	.000	1.000		
Independence model	1.480	.224	.133	.201

Baseline Comparisons

Model	NFI Delta1	RFI rho1	IFI Delta2	TLI rho2	CFI
Default model	.968	.962	.982	.979	.982
Saturated model	1.000		1.000		1.000
Independence model	.000	.000	.000	.000	.000

RMSEA

Model	RMSEA	LO 90	HI 90	PCLOSE
Default model	.059	.050	.068	.059
Independence model	.402	.395	.409	.000

ECVI

Model	ECVI	LO 90	HI 90	MECVI
Default model	1.052	.923	1.202	1.065
Saturated model	.974	.974	.974	1.030
Independence model	25.218	24.351	26.103	25.224

Standardized Regression Weights: (Group number 1 - Default model)

			Estimate
BT3	<---	BT	.957
BT2	<---	BT	.980
BT1	<---	BT	.940
BC3	<---	BC	.916
BC2	<---	BC	.940
BC1	<---	BC	.920
WOM3	<---	WOM	.960
WOM2	<---	WOM	.958
WOM1	<---	WOM	.930

Correlations: (Group number 1 - Default model)

			Estimate
BT	<-->	BC	.223
BT	<-->	WOM	.296
BC	<-->	WOM	.453

Validity Master

	CR	AVE	MSV	ASV	BC	BT	WOM
BC	0.947	0.856	0.205	0.127	0.925		
BT	0.972	0.920	0.088	0.069	0.223	0.959	
WOM	0.965	0.901	0.205	0.146	0.453	0.296	0.949



Model Fit Summary (Final measurement model) Chapter 6

CMIN

Model	NPAR	CMIN	DF	P	CMIN/DF
Default model	88	1201.923	542	.000	2.218
Saturated model	630	.000	0		
Independence model	35	17031.735	595	.000	28.625

RMR, GFI

Model	RMR	GFI	AGFI	PGFI
Default model	.166	.960	.839	.722
Saturated model	.000	1.000		
Independence model	1.171	.172	.123	.162

Baseline Comparisons

Model	NFI Delta1	RFI rho1	IFI Delta2	TLI rho2	CFI
Default model	.929	.923	.960	.956	.960
Saturated model	1.000		1.000		1.000
Independence model	.000	.000	.000	.000	.000

RMSEA

Model	RMSEA	LO 90	HI 90	PCLOSE
Default model	.059	.054	.063	.001
Independence model	.281	.277	.284	.000

ECVI

Model	ECVI	LO 90	HI 90	MECVI
Default model	3.926	3.651	4.223	3.983
Saturated model	3.590	3.590	3.590	4.000
Independence model	48.723	47.520	49.944	48.746

Validity test for final measurement model (Chapter 6)

Correlations: (Group number 1 - Default model)

			Estimate
BT	<-->	CSP	.207
SNS	<-->	CSP	.472
BC	<-->	CSP	.407
BT	<-->	SNS	.527
BC	<-->	SNS	.432

			Estimate
WOM	<-->	CSP	.352
WOM	<-->	SNS	.404
WOM	<-->	BC	.304
WOM	<-->	BT	.357
BC	<-->	BT	.336

Validity Master

	CR	AVE	MSV	ASV	SNS	CSP	BT	BC	WOM
SNS	0.835	0.504	0.278	0.213	0.710				
CSP	0.780	0.543	0.223	0.139	0.472	0.737			
BT	0.942	0.845	0.278	0.140	0.527	0.207	0.919		
BC	0.947	0.857	0.187	0.139	0.432	0.407	0.336	0.926	
WOM	0.960	0.888	0.163	0.127	0.404	0.352	0.357	0.304	0.942

Reliability test for final measurement model (Chapter 6)

Reliability Statistics

CSP

Cronbach's Alpha	N of Items
.926	9

Reliability Statistics SNS

participation motivations

Cronbach's Alpha	N of Items
.942	17

Reliability Statistics

brand trust

Cronbach's Alpha	N of Items
.938	3

**Reliability Statistics
brand commitment**

Cronbach's Alpha	N of Items
.946	3

**Reliability Statistics
WOM**

Cronbach's Alpha	N of Items
.959	3

Descriptive Statistics

	N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std. Deviation
SNSs_motivation	352	.67	4.33	2.5308	.78004
CSP	352	.94	6.37	3.4914	1.13891
Brand_Trust	352	.95	6.65	4.0719	1.50750
Brand_commitment	352	.95	6.67	3.7204	1.62759
WOM	352	1.01	7.07	3.9677	1.76965
Valid N (listwise)	352				

Model Fit Summary (Final structural model) (Chapter 6)

CMIN

Model	NPAR	CMIN	DF	P	CMIN/DF
Default model	84	1285.383	546	.000	2.354
Saturated model	630	.000	0		
Independence model	35	17031.735	595	.000	28.625

RMR, GFI

Model	RMR	GFI	AGFI	PGFI
Default model	.287	.920	.829	.718
Saturated model	.000	1.000		
Independence model	1.171	.172	.123	.162

Baseline Comparisons

Model	NFI Delta1	RFI rho1	IFI Delta2	TLI rho2	CFI
Default model	.925	.918	.955	.951	.955
Saturated model	1.000		1.000		1.000
Independence model	.000	.000	.000	.000	.000

RMSEA

Model	RMSEA	LO 90	HI 90	PCLOSE
Default model	.062	.058	.067	.000
Independence model	.281	.277	.284	.000

ECVI

Model	ECVI	LO 90	HI 90	MECVI
Default model	4.141	3.853	4.450	4.195
Saturated model	3.590	3.590	3.590	4.000
Independence model	48.723	47.520	49.944	48.746

Model Fit Summary (Mediation model) (Chapter 6)

CMIN

Model	NPAR	CMIN	DF	P	CMIN/DF
Default model	44	258.388	127	.000	2.035
Saturated model	171	.000	0		
Independence model	18	8285.397	153	.000	54.153

RMR, GFI

Model	RMR	GFI	AGFI	PGFI
Default model	.140	.928	.904	.690
Saturated model	.000	1.000		
Independence model	1.432	.249	.161	.223

Baseline Comparisons

Model	NFI Delta1	RFI rho1	IFI Delta2	TLI rho2	CFI
Default model	.969	.962	.984	.981	.984
Saturated model	1.000		1.000		1.000
Independence model	.000	.000	.000	.000	.000

RMSEA

Model	RMSEA	LO 90	HI 90	PCLOSE
Default model	.054	.045	.064	.221
Independence model	.389	.382	.396	.000

ECVI

Model	ECVI	LO 90	HI 90	MECVI
Default model	.987	.867	1.129	1.001
Saturated model	.974	.974	.974	1.030
Independence model	23.708	22.868	24.566	23.714

