The study was aimed at online social networking websites users to study value creation process through consumer engagement. The data was collected from both secondary as well as primary sources. Appropriate statistical tools like percentage, mean, multiple regression analysis, preference mapping factor analysis and structured equation modelling were employed. Based on results and discussions, the key findings and conclusions from this study has been recapitulated and presented in the following sections. Based on findings a few suggestions have also been recommended.

9.1 Major Findings

Consumer engagement in virtual world can be observed through the most basic measurement of engagement i.e. user involvement, which in case of online social networks is highlighted with regular visits by large number of social networkers. Consumer make repeat visits to online sites because of value derived from different activities they are performing on these sites. This motivation to use online social network sites has been found to be influenced by five factors as listed in the following section. When consumers or users of online social network websites create content or get engaged in any type of content creation activities, a potential value is created for such consumers. eWOM is influenced by different social relationship in online social network websites. Users in online social networks use brands as reference points in their online conversations (i.e. eWOM) creating brand advocacy and brand loyalty, which are signs for consumer engagement with brands over social networks and value creation for the brands. Objective wise detailed findings are as under:

9.1.1 Usage pattern of social networking sites among the social networkers across cross-sections of the population

Findings related to usage pattern of social networking sites among social networkers suggested that there are different types of usage habits, user preferences, topics and activities of user interest that are associated with online social networking websites. Major findings among these are:

i. As the frequency of use of online social networking tends to increase so do the amount of time spend on social networking site in a single day increases.
ii. Facebook is the most frequently used social networking sites with the people of Punjab and Twitter is the least used one. Google+ which is a relatively new service among the four social networking sites under study is quickly finding its place with the people of Punjab as it is the second most preferred platform for online social networking activities by the users.

iii. If the people have less number of contacts in their social networking sites, they tend to know a larger number of people out of their virtual contacts/friends in the real world or vice versa.

iv. As more people of Punjab are using social networking sites for linking with personal contacts, it justifies the less use of LinkedIn which is a social networking site for professional networking.

v. There are contacts in social network profiles of users with whom they never interact individually but definitely would be seeing the updates shared by them.

vi. Laptop computer and mobile phones are mostly used for social networking by people of Punjab highlighting the importance of convenience and portability in devices used for social networking. These two devices, especially a mobile phone offer users with convenience to access their social networking sites on the go. This intention of keeping oneself social network ready highlights feeling of engagement among the SNS users.

vii. There are different types of activities performed by social networkers on online social networking sites. But these activities are performed in varying intensities and analysis of the responses gave following results:

   a) Reading news feeds or comments is mostly performed activity by people on the social networking sites and playing games in least performed activity by the people of Punjab on social networking sites.

   b) Most people do not like to play games in social networking sites. A large segment of approximately 45 percent of respondents in the survey have never been involved with online social network gaming.

   c) 51 percent of respondents in study are those who had never or rarely participate in brand communities.

   d) A good number of nearly 88% of people/social networkers visit brand pages to search information or to learn about the brands. This is good sign for the companies to use social networking sites as an information sharing tool with their existing and potential customers.
e) Making new friends online is not a frequently performed activity by social networkers of Punjab.

viii. Home décor related things are least discussed by social networkers. This indicates home décor companies/brands need to excite users to start talking about such topics. This can happen by paid advertisements on social networking sites by the home décor brands. In India for home décor mostly elderly females are responsible in families and such category of people are not using social networking sites.

ix. Mostly discussed topics over social networking sites are school/college stuff and personal issues.

9.1.2 Factors motivating usage of social networking sites

Different factors have been identified which motivate people of Punjab to use online social networking sites. The factors are:

i. Need for information exchange: This factor comprises of intentions related to usage of social networking sites in order to learn about useful and unknown things and to get or share new ideas and achievements.

ii. Need for entertainment fit: This factor comprises of items related to use of social networking sites by users because social networking is free, they can use it anytime and anywhere and social network activity help them in passing their time.

iii. Need for expression: Third factor is related to use of online social networks for expressing ones emotions. Social networkers use these sites to express their anger to others who will sympathize with them and to talk about their problems and seek advice from others.

iv. Need for networking: People go for online social networking to search likeminded people and to dialogue with people of similar interests.

v. Need for social acceptance: User of online social networks are motivated to use such sites in order to create their social acceptance. Individuals use social networking sites because people important to them think that they should use online social networks, because people influencing their behaviour think that they should use online social network, because of the feeling of social warmth on social networking sites and to create ones social identity.
9.1.3 Brand personification and social networking sites

Perceived personality notions about brands in the mind of customers leads to formation of personality of a brand in the mind of customers, indicating a relationship between brand users and brand. It has been found that:

i. Online social networking site Google+ and Twitter are perceived as brands carrying rugged personality. But Twitter is valued more on this personality trait as compared to Google +. This perception of Google+ being a rugged (tough) person is a good sign for the company because Google+ is being positioned as a service underlying many other services of Google Inc. On the other hand, Twitter being a rugged (tough) person definitely meets the idea of successful people joining twitter to connect with their fans.

ii. Facebook is perceived to have both sophisticated and exciting personality but brand personality element of sophistication is having high degree of association as compared to other one. Brand personality element of sophistication (traits like upper class and glamorous) which is strongly associated with Facebook is a good brand personality position as more and more people are becoming status oriented. This brand positioning would help it in retaining existing and in gaining new customers and also fueling future growth.

iii. LinkedIn is perceived to have elements of competence and sincerity. Brand personality characteristic of sincerity is perceived more strongly as compared to element of competence. Considering the focus of being a professional networking service provider company, the personality of brand in the mind of people is adequately positioned to be of a sincere and competent person.

9.1.4 Value creation for brands through social networking sites

The value creation in terms of relationship between brand advocacy, brand loyalty, and measured variable of momentum effect have put forward the following major findings:

i. Structural model of brand value creation depicts that value is created for brands through social networking sites and momentum effect leads to brand advocacy and brand loyalty.

ii. Structural model potrays that loyalty for brands is caused in online social network websites due to momentum effect and due to creation of loyalty, brand engagement
is also created as per Haven (2007). It can be put forward that brand loyalty signifies consumer engagement and engagement is created due to momentum effect.

iii. Users were found to share information or opinion received from a friend/contact related to a brand with others on online social networks. Value is also co-created when different consumers or users over online social network websites illustrate a pass-along behavior to share content created by other users in the network. When this content created or co-created is related to any of the brands, consumer brand engagement is materialized.

iv. Customers co-create brand related communication by discussing positive attributes of a brand, recommend brand/brands and share concerns for one or multiple attributes for any brand. This leads to brand advocacy, which is a sign for consumer engagement with brands over social networks.

v. Social networkers tends to give suggestions for even those brands that they have not used personally and this tendency don’t effect brand advocacy.

vi. People show low levels of interest in keeping themselves updated with information about brands by following them over social networking sites or in regularly visiting company/brand profile pages.

9.1.5 Association between social relationships and eWOM

Social relationships signify interaction between two or more individuals. Association between social relationship variables and electronic word of mouth on social networking sites suggested that:

i. Electronic word of mouth on social networking sites is influenced by the social tie strength, social capital, homophily and interpersonal influence among the social network users. Trust among the social network users does not make significant influence on likelihood of electronic word of mouth happening in social networking sites.

ii. Opinion giving behavior on social networking sites is influenced by the social capital, homophily and interpersonal influence among the social network users. Trust and social tie strength among the social network users does not make significant influence on likelihood of opinion giving behavior in social networking sites.

iii. Opinion seeking behavior on social networking sites is influenced by the social capital, social tie strength and interpersonal influence among the social network
users. Trust and homophily among the social network users does not make significant influence on likelihood of happening of opinion seeking in social networking sites.

iv. Trust as a social relationship has been observed to play no part in happening of opinion giving, seeking and information pass along behavior on social networking sites.

v. Professional ties mark a relative high influence as compared to person ties to indulge in social networking activities.

vi. Informational Interpersonal Influence leads to increased likelihood of eWOM (electronic world of mouth) in social networking sites as compared to value expressive and utilitarian influence. This indicates that desire to make an informed decision on social networking sites increase eWOM likelihood.

vii. Bridging social capital is strongly associated with electronic word of mouth in social networking sites as compared to bonding social capital. It means that people of Punjab are more likely to seek advice from others and to indulge in more of information pass along behavior.

viii. The association between social relationships and electronic word of mouth in social networking sites varies across gender. Homophily affects the eWOM likelihood only in case of females.

ix. The association between social relationships and electronic word of mouth in social networking sites varies across age. Social networkers of age less than 25 years indulge in eWOM due to interpersonal influence, social capital and homophily. eWOM activity of users with more than 25 years of age is only influenced by social tie strength.

x. The association between social relationships and electronic word of mouth in social networking sites varies across income groups.
   a) For people having income more than INR60000, interpersonal influence and social capital play a significant role in influencing the likelihood to perform eWOM in social networking sites.
   b) People with income category of more than INR 20000 but less than INR60000 are influenced by interpersonal influence, social capital and social tie strength to indulge into eWOM on social networking sites.
   c) People with income category of less than INR 20000 are not at all influenced by trust to indulge into eWOM.
xi. In case of respondents who are under graduates or less qualified, it has been found that interpersonal influence, trust, homophily and social tie strength play a part in driving eWOM in social networking site.

xii. Married people are influenced by interpersonal influence, social capital and tie strength whereas unmarried ones are influenced by interpersonal influence, social capital, tie strength and homophily to perform the likelihood of word of mouth activity on online social networks.

xiii. Interpersonal influence, social capital, tie strength, homophily are important social relationship factors for students to start with word of mouth activity on online social networks.

9.1.6 User engagement across social network advertisement types

Analysis to understand the engagement in the form of likelihood of population under study towards different types of social network advertisements suggested that:

i. Social networkers have shown positive attitude towards reading of posts done by brands on their social network pages.

ii. Social networkers are less likely to participate in online polling by brands and are nor preferring to see brands in form of in-game placements.

iii. There is a significant difference across males and females when it comes to liking towards brand pages or brand profiles on social networking sites. Females like to go through brand pages more as compared to males.

iv. In case of liking towards banner advertisements in social networking sites, females tend to like banner advertisements more on social networking sites as compared to male respondents.

v. In case of liking towards brand videos, males are found to be more receptive to watch brand videos on social networking sites than females.

vi. People across two age categories of 19-25 and 26-30 years have similar preference towards banner advertisements on social networking sites. This makes youngsters more receptive to banner advertisements on social networking sites.

vii. There is a significant difference between married and unmarried people towards likability across all social network advertising types under study. Unmarried respondents have shown a better likelihood to read posts done by brands, to see banner advertisements, to go through brand profiles, to see brand videos, to
participate in online polling by brands and towards In-game placements as compared to married respondents.

viii. Across all the six advertisement types, students tends to showcase more likability towards all social network advertisements than respondents from the service class.

ix. Social networkers who are educated up to the level of under graduation are found more receptive to in-game placements and visits to brand pages or profiles as compared respondents with who are post graduates.

9.2 Suggestions

The following suggestions based on the findings and observations of the researcher are offered:

i. Most important factor which motivate people to use networking sites is related to need for information exchange. People are highly motivated to use social networking sites to learn about new and useful things or to get new ideas and also to share information. Brands can use this motivator by promoting interesting facts about their brands and alternate uses of their products. Brands can share new product ideas over social networks to check their feasibility by asking comments from users.

ii. As sharing of information among the connections over social network is a variable motivating people to use the network, so interesting content should be shared by brands (informational in nature) in any form may be videos or text, which motivate users to share the content within their connections leading to promotion for brands via electronic word of mouth.

iii. A very careful selection of the social networking sites for brand promotion is required by marketers, as every brand carries a personality image in the mind of the consumers so do every social networking site. A proper match in the personality of brand and personality of social networking site can help in receiving more return on investment for marketers.

iv. Personality perception of Google+ being a rugged (tough) person is a good sign for the company as Google+ supports many of Google’s other properties but at the same time it should also be positioned as having competent (reliable) personality. Brand image of Twitter being a rugged (tough) person definitely meets the idea of successful people joining twitter to connect with their fans but in order to increase its fan base,
Twitter needs to have ingredient of excitement in its personality as in India the larger base of social networking is young people.

v. Facebook is having exciting personality element to it but this representation is not very strong. Facebook needs to work on strengthening of this exciting element of personality with its brand for long term relationship with existing users.

vi. LinkedIn as a person is perceived to be sincere and competent. As LinkedIn is promoted to be a network for managing professional identity and to build and engage with professional network, the current positioning is found to be appropriate.

vii. Low cost promotions on social networking sites offers a great motivation to marketers to use this medium, but every bit of communication by marketers related to products/brand needs to be diligently screened. Screening of information is very important for marketers because any misunderstood information on social networking sites can lead to negative word of mouth for the brands.

viii. People on social networks tend to give suggestions to others even for those brands which they have not used personally. Brands can target non users segment to create advocacy and loyalty using momentum effect. This could again be done by sharing useful and interesting information about brands. In order to increase consumer engagement, distribution of sales promotion coupons through social networking sites can be a good option.

ix. Brand engagement in the form of large number of people following the brand on social networking sites, leads to an impression of quality brand. Social relationship of Trust do not influence the likelihood for happening of electronic word of mouth in social networking sites. This means that people are ready to accept information from any type of contacts. A brand which is new to the market (especially) or any established one can use social networking sites to do promotions and if a brand is able to get a large number of consumer associates with it in form of followers, then it is easy for such brands to skim the market by carefully tailoring its market communication.

x. On social networking sites, for females, homophily is important to indulge into social networking sites. This characteristic can be used by lifestyle brands or female specific publication brands to connect with their audience over social networking sites.

xi. Professional ties that a person is having in social networks is deemed to be important. Brands dealing in enterprise related software’s can definitely use social networks to do brand promotions. LinkedIn should offer video conferencing options on lines of
Google+ handout. This would help the brand in developing more advocacy or loyalty for its brand.

xii. In the market of Punjab, marketers should use more of banner advertisements for promoting products related to males and for brands catering to both genders, the brand pages of such brands should use more feminine color tone.

9.3 Conclusion

After analysis of all the six objectives under study, it can be concluded that value is created for brands over online social network websites through consumer engagement. Following are the different perspectives as per which user/consumer engagement happens with brands in online social networks.

i. Perspective One: Engagement for brands over social networks happen if users engage in collaborative activities of sharing thoughts, ideas and concerns related to brands (Evans, 2010). Respondents in the study were found to perform activities of opinion leadership i.e. giving, opinion seeking and information pass along related to brands over social networking sites. All these activities lead to collaborative thought and idea sharing, thus conforming engagement. As per the finding related to momentum effect which is using brand as a reference points in conversation and brand advocacy, it was found that momentum effect leads to brand advocacy. Customers co-create brand related communication by discussing positive attributes of a brand, recommend brand/brands to others and share concerns for one or multiple attributes for any brand. This leads to brand advocacy, which is a sign for consumer engagement with brands over social networks. So consumer-brand engagement happens due to advocacy encouraged by collaborative activities.

ii. Perspective Two: as per Haven (2007) brand loyalty is signified through consumer engagement. Structural model prepared under objective four, depicts a relationship between brand value creation through momentum effect which leads to brand loyalty. So if loyalty for brands is caused in online social network websites due to momentum effect, so brand engagement is also created.

iii. Perspective Three: User engagement in virtual world can also be observed through involvement, interaction, intimacy and influence as per (Haven, 2007).
iv. The most basic measurement of engagement is involvement which in case of online social networks is highlighted with large number of regular social site visits by population under study.

v. Second measure of consumer engagement is interaction. Interaction is highlighted with user generated content for brands, which could be as simple as a like on Facebook. Out of the total population under study, approximately 86 percent of the respondents were those, who discuss about brands over social networks. This large number of people who discuss topics related to brands over online social networks, signifies a good level of user interaction with brands.

vi. Third measure of consumer engagement with brands is intimacy. Intimacy with a brand goes beyond the measures of involvement and interaction. Intimacy talks in terms of consumer sentiments towards a brand. It can observed through consumer opinion expression activities over social networking sites. Through eWOM activities of opinion expressing about brands over online social network websites, people were found to express their opinions related to brands. This means that consumer intimacy is happening for brands over online social network websites. So consumers are being engaged with brands online.

vii. Fourth and the highest level of consumer engagement is influence. Influence happens over social network sites with content forwarding. Users on online social networks were found passing on information or their opinion related to products/brands to their contacts. Moreover, users were sharing information or opinion received from a friend/contact related to a brand. So pass along behavior was shown by respondents over online social networks related to brand information. Based on this information, one can confidently state that value is created for brands over social network sites through consumer engagement.

9.4 Limitations of the study

Like most other studies, this study also does not offer limitation less explanation of the issues under study. Present research study has been carried out under restraints of time and other resources. Through broad review of literature an effort to assimilate all obtainable literature was made, yet understanding may have been reserved by the visualization of researcher.
The other limitation of the study is with respect to the generalizability of the results. The data collected for purpose of research is from Punjab only, so the results cannot be generalized completely to the whole of the Indian population.

**9.5 Scope for future research**

The results of present study also has created contemporary future research directions. Future research can focus on different micro-cultures within India or a comparative study of Indian culture with some other country or culture can be initiated to study motivations for online network usage. Moreover, Other than just online social network sites, such kind of study can also be conducted for different components of social media like video blogging sites, news aggregation sites and wikis etc.

Certain gaps in personality perceptions of social networking sites have been identified, a similar research in a near future would be required to understand whether such gaps have been fulfilled or not. Brand personality related findings for the social networking sites cannot remain constant over the longer period of time. As the social networking sites will change their positing based on relevant points of differentiation and points of parity, the perception of the users about the personality of such sites could also change. So future research will be required to judge these changes in personality perception among users.

Sentiment tracking is the upcoming area in online social network research. This field could be explored with some company specific research for tracking and analyzing the customer sentiments related to usage pattern of online social networks.

User’s motivation to indulge in social networking activities could change in years to come with the changes in services offered via social networking sites and advancements in information technologies. User motivation behind use of such services can be performed in future.

Momentum effect in social networking sites leads to brand advocacy and brand loyalty is true for the population of Punjab, but this concept could be cross checked across other cultures, states, ethnicities or countries.

Trust being a social relationship do not make any effect on likelihood of eWOM for people of Punjab in online social networks. A more detailed study just for this parameter could be pursued to retrieve in depth reasons behind the same.