Chapter 6
Theoretical and Managerial Implications

Virtual world of community website has emerged out as one of the interactive and opportunistic platform both for maintaining and enhancing the professional, social and self related activities. Based upon the opportunity of high profit-margin and attractive market-pie, several virtual community websites have emerged providing wide range of choice for the online visitors. This has resulted in a competitive marketplace which demands consumer/member-centric strategy to make sure the retrieval of online members with the community website. Retrieval here not only suggests repeat online presence of the users but also their constant active participation with community activities. Such increased and motivated participatory behaviour increases the attractiveness of the networking websites. As discussed earlier within the literature review and framework, the value based strategy provides an opportunity of mutual benefit for both user and website manager.

The relationship direction and influence type within the research model contributes both in the area of academics and organizational management. It provides an opportunity to analyze the model across several categories of youths that forms the major population of social networking community websites. The categorical variation among the targeted sample population is on the basis of their demographic profile. Such profiling based analysis suggests variation among the customers but also provides a typical behaviour that exists among the cluster/group indicating their point of differentiation. However, few proposed relationship among the variables suggests the point of communality among the categories too. Focusing upon these points of differentiation and communality, website managers can strategise their competitive or sustainable execution planning accordingly.
Proposed research model also directs to compete in the virtual environment by creating unique value proposition which cannot be easily replicated. Emphasizing more upon creating value at every step of member participation and creating an overwhelming experience will make sure the long time retrieval of the members. Also engaging the members with the community website by providing several preferences for social activity, professional activity, entertainment and fun-zone; members might become less prone to other available community website preference. Long engagement of users with the community website also suggests initial stage of user loyalty towards community website, which when maintained can influence wider population segment through positive word-of-mouth and peer influence. This leads to higher profit margin for the website owners and contribute in website success.

Use of trust and technological skill as a moderator suggests that along with experiential strategic focus, website managers also need to focus on building trust and enhancing user’s technical efficacy. Presence of these factors further increases user’s tendency to get retained with the community website. Such value based model integrated with the effect of trust, technological skill, experience and stickiness explains the wider framework of building long-term relationship in the virtual platform. Such user-website relationship ensures user stability with their active participation attitude towards the community website, thereby influencing overall performance of the social networking based community website.

Along with the extended managerial implications, the study also contributes in the field of academics. Earlier studies with respect to community websites of virtual platform mainly focuses upon the dimensions of usability and sociability to create model influencing user’s participatory behaviour. There also exists a separate study that extends the role of online trust for creating secure and satisfactory environment for the users. Along with these factors, experiential marketing, the concept discussed at length in services marketing, was examined by several researchers to measure its effect of user’s retention and engagement with the
website. However, the factors discussed above were studied in silo or in combination with other factors focusing its influence upon user’s participation.

With increasing competition and paradigm shift in strategic decision making process, online marketing theory has shifted towards creating mutual benefit rather focusing upon user loyalty and retention. Therefore, the proposed model contributes in the existing theory of online marketing by providing a framework of online value creation. The model suggest that value here is not only created for the users with respect to networking and recognition, but also the online website managers can be equally benefited with active user participation through long-term retention and engagement with the community website.

Conceptualization of user retention and engagement is referred as user stickiness. Earlier studies have defined user sticky behaviour within the virtual platform with respect to time spent by the online users on the community website. Extending this conceptualization of user stickiness, this study explains the concept with respect to time, duration and user’s repeat behaviour. Based upon previous studies and discussed literature review in chapter 2, both retention and engagement are identified as the dimensions explaining user’s sticky behaviour. Further the concept is integrated as a mediator affecting influence of user’s participation for overall value creation. Therefore, extended conceptualization and integrating the concept in online value chain further adds the existing online theory of marketing.

Also, user trust is discussed as an important independent or dependent variable influencing several dimensions of online users and their shared relationship with the website. However, this study considers user trust as a moderator rather an independent or dependent variable, thereby explaining its role of influencing relationship with newer dimension. The factor was mainly tested in the presence of user satisfaction, loyalty, purchase intention, participation, positive word of mouth and several such factors. Extending the understanding of user trust
role, the proposed model provides a framework where trust moderates the relationship between user experience and user stickiness. Here user trust’s effect is examined for user retention and their engagement with the community website with certain level of defined user experience. This explains that experience always affect user’s sticky behaviour with the community website, but its extent of effect depends upon the level of user’s trust with the community website.

Lastly, user’s self efficacy has also emerged as an important variable of marketing theory with the emergence of online platform. Educating user base is identified as an important dimension influencing user’s preference for the online community website thereby influencing their success and positioning. Identifying this factor as an important element that motivate user’s to participate, the study integrate this factor in the proposed value model as moderator explaining the relationship effect of user participation on user experience. This further contributes the existing online theory to understand the complex phenomena of initial participatory action and its effect on user’s experience building with the community website.