
The Influence of Brand Communication Tools on Consumer Based Brand Equity (with Special Reference to Young Consumers in Sri Lanka)

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A B S T R A C T

Understanding and building a relationship between customers and brands has become an essential function of today's business world because of the increasing competition in the modern business environment. As a result of the increasing tendency of today's society toward technology, social media has become the most often used business communication platform. Marketers are accustomed to utilize both user-generated and firm-created social media brand communication tools. Marketers are presently spending 14.9% of their marketing budget on social media and next year marketers expect to spend 17.8% of their total marketing budgets on social media, increasing to 24.5% of budgets in five years. Because of the continuous increase in the cost of social media marketing, there is a need to find the most efficient and profitable communication tool before investments. Hence, this study aims to measure the influence of both brand communication tools on consumer-based brand equity and identify which social media brand communication tool is most appropriate to influence each dimension of consumer-based brand equity. Hypotheses were conducted concerning this study and then tested on university undergraduates. Under the deductive approach, the descriptive research design engaged in hypothesis testing. 375 online questionnaires were distributed among undergraduates and 373 responses were received to the researcher. This research used Cronbach's alpha test to examine the reliability of variables. Factor analysis is used to measure the validity of the sample to test the goodness of the data. According to the results of this study, both firm created and user-generated content significantly influence consumer-based brand equity. However, user-generated content has a greater influence on consumer-based brand equity than firm-created content. On the other hand, this study provides vital information to marketing and brand managers to identify which brand communication tool is efficacious to improve each dimension of consumer-based brand equity as required and strategies to implement that identified brand communication tool.

Keywords: Brand trust, Brand loyalty, Consumer-based brand equity, Firm created content, User-generated content

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1. Introduction

Social media that is created as a result of rapid development in Information Technology has resulted in a revolution in corporate communication and it has become incredibly popular in recent years. Social media is continually evolving to connect with consumers and brands worldwide. As a result, social media has evolved from a one-dimensional, two-way, peer-to-peer communication system (Berthon et al., 2008) As well as, the global market among the population in Sri Lanka 84.84% of people use Facebook, 7.59% of people use YouTube and 1.07% of people use Instagram (Statcounter, 2022). In an environment where market competition is increasing, marketers highly consider how the consumers respond to their brand. Simply, they were interested in consumer-based brand equity and they looked for strategies to further develop consumer-based brand equity in their brands. Customer-based brand equity (CBBE) assesses the consumers' reaction to a brand name (Keller, 1993). Brand awareness, brand association, brand perceived quality, brand trust, and brand loyalty can be used to assess consumer-based brand equity. "The consumers' capability to recognize the brand as reflected by their ability to notice the brand under various conditions and to relate brand logo, brand name, symbol, etc. to specific association in memory" is the meaning of Brand awareness (Keller & Hoeffler, 2003). The consumer's perceptions, feelings, thoughts, experiences, beliefs, attitudes, and everything else associated with a brand are included in Brand association (Kotler & Keller, 2006). As opposed to objective quality, Perceived quality is the customers' assessment of the product's overall differentiation (Zeithaml et al., 1988). Brand loyalty is consumers' sense of loyalty to buy their chosen product or service in the future, regardless of external pressures (Atilgan et al., 2005). The readiness of a buyer to rely on a brand's capacity to fulfill the conveyed functions and features, as assessed by the brand's ability to deliver on its promises, is described as brand trust (Kimpakorn & Tocquer, 2010). People are sometimes aware of certain brands but are unwilling to purchase them and some consumers are accustomed to purchase things without any regard for the brand name. As a result, businesses needed to figure out how consumers react to their brand names and how to enhance the link between a brand and a customer.

As people's use of social media increased, marketers focused to use social media for promotional purposes and they used two types of brand communication tools called firm-created content and user-generated content to improve consumer-based brand equity. The firm-created social media brand communication can be described as marketing communications undertaken by the firm on its official social media sites that aid in the development of the one-on-one relationship with its clients (Baker et al., 2016). Most marketers use official Facebook pages, Instagram pages, and YouTube channels for marketing purposes on behalf of their company. According to user-generated content, a company uses any content such as texts, videos, and images created by people for brand communication. As the impact of these brand communication tools on each dimension of consumer-based brand equity varied, there was a need to identify the most effective brand communication tool for each dimension of consumer-based brand equity to be developed. According to some studies, 63.64% of total social media users expect to get information about products from social media and 25.25% of total social media users expect to watch advertisements through social media (Sri Lanka Social Media Audience Survey-2018, 2018). In the global context, Companies are currently spending an average monthly cost of \$200 to \$1500 and an average monthly marketing campaign management cost of \$1000 to \$2500 on social media advertising through Facebook, Instagram, and YouTube ("WebFX," 2022). Additionally, marketers are presently spending 14.9% of their marketing budget on social media and next year marketers expect to spend 17.8% of their total marketing budgets on social media, increasing to 24.5% of budgets

in five years (“The CMO Survey,” 2021). Furthermore, in the Sri Lankan context, the average cost of social media marketing packages on Facebook and Instagram is in the range of Rs.8000-Rs.35000 per month and the average YouTube viral video production cost is Rs. 50,000 upwards (“360digital”, 2022). Because their investment in social media marketing is considerable, businesses should have a thorough understanding of which social media brand communication tool has the most Influence on customers.

Assessing the influence of social media brand communication tools on the consumer-based brand equity of university undergraduates in Sri Lanka is the objective of this study. The reason behind taking undergraduates as the population for this study is that previous research has revealed that in the Sri Lankan context university undergraduates are the ones who use social media most (Sri Lanka CERT/CC 2017). Therefore, this study aims to find the answers to key questions of how firm-created content influences each dimension of consumer-based brand equity and how user-generated content influences each dimension of consumer-based brand equity in Sri Lanka. Finally, after comparing the influence of both brand communication tools on consumer-based brand equity, identified which social media brand communication tool is most suitable to influence each brand awareness, brand association, brand trust, brand loyalty, and brand perceived quality. The findings of this study recommend brand managers and marketing specialists which social media brand communication tool is most suitable for social media brand communication.

2. Literature review

2.1. Social media

Social media are computer-mediated interactive tools that allow people to create and share information, ideas, career interests, and other kinds of expression through virtual communities and networks (“WIKIPEDIA,” n.d.) In January 2021, Sri Lanka had 7.90 million social media users (“DATAREPORTAL,” 2021). Among those platforms, Facebook and Instagram are the most widely used social media platforms today. In January 2022, Sri Lanka had 8 590 800 Facebook members, accounting for 40.2% of the country’s total population. In January 2022, there were 1 676 300 Instagram users in Sri Lanka, accounting for 7.8% of the country’s total population (“NapoleonCat,” 2022). Furthermore, consumers are not the only ones that utilize social media. However, it also gives businesses a relatively rapid and low-cost method to communicate with customers (Fischer & Reuber, 2011).

2.2. Firm-created social media brand communication

Any piece of brand-related communication delivered via social media that allows internet users to access, exchange, interact with each other, add to and co-created is referred to as brand communication in social media (Alabash et al., 2017). The firm-created content of social media brand communication is described as marketing communication that a firm initiates on its official social media sites and that serves to develop one-on-one contact with its consumers by utilizing the interactive elements of this medium (Baker et al., 2016). The firm-created content may provide some advantages, including an additional communication channel and a relationship with loyal customers, a cost-cutting tool that can be utilized in customer retention and service, and a tool to boost sales, customer satisfaction and brand image. According to Heba Sadek and Sarah Elwy, firm-created content had a positive influence on brand association/awareness, perceived quality, and brand trust. (Sadek & Elwy 2018).

2.3. User-generated social media brand communication

Any sort of information, such as photos, videos, text and audio, that has been produced by users related to a certain brand on social media platforms can be classified as user-generated social media brand communication. It may be created, edited, shared and consumed individually and cooperatively and “can be considered as the total of all ways in which individuals use social media” (M. Kaplan & Haenlein., 2012). Customers participate in the content production process for several reasons, including self-promotion, intrinsic delight and the aim of altering public attitudes, according to previous studies of user-generated content. Consumers are influenced by the social media environment when they access information to make buying decisions. It was also discovered that before making a purchase decision, individuals browse articles on social media (Hazari, 2018). The research conducted by Vinna Hermaren & Adrian Achyar identified that only brand association/awareness and brand perceived quality are affected by the evaluation of user-generated social media brand communication. (Hermaren & Achyar 2018).

2.4. Consumer based brand equity (CBBE)

Consumer-based brand equity measures a consumer’s reaction to the brand name (Keller, 1993). CBBE is measured along with several parameters, including brand awareness, brand association, brand perceived quality, brand loyalty and brand trust. The influence of each brand communication tool on consumer-based brand equity varies. (Schivinski & Dabrowski 2015) “The customers’ capability to recognize the brand as mirrored by their ability to spot the brand in the varied situation and to relate the brand name, logo, symbol and so on to particular associations in memory” is how brand awareness is defined (Keller & Hoeffler, 2003). According to the prior studies, by enhancing brand equity through brand communication, companies have a possibility of being included in the customer’s consideration set. According to Bruno Schivinski & Dariusz Dabrowski, both firm-created and user-generated social media brand communication tools have a positive influence on brand awareness (Schivinski & Dabrowski 2015). A brand association is something deeply ingrained in a customer’s mind regarding a certain brand. All ideas, feelings, pictures, experiences, beliefs, attitudes and perceptions associated with a brand are included in brand association (Kotler & Keller, 2006). Several studies have shown that when clients have a pleasant experience with a company, the brand gets stronger (Schivinski & Dabrowski., 2015). The experience of excellence that a customer gets from a brand through its appearance, sound, aroma, and touch is known as brand perceived quality. Similarly, perceived quality may be defined as a customer’s assessment of a product’s superiority or excellence that differs from objective quality. Vinna Hermaren & Adrian Achyar showed that firm-created social media brand communication has a more positive influence on brand perceived quality than user-generated social media brand communication. (Hermaren & Achyar 2018) Consumers’ strong commitment to repurchase their chosen product or service in the future, regardless of external pressure, is referred to as brand loyalty (Atilgan et al., 2005). Brand loyalty occurs when people consistently choose the same brand from among rival brands. According to the research conducted by Heba Sadek & Sarah Elwy, firm-created content had a positive and substantial influence on brand loyalty and user-generated content in social media brand communication does not affect brand loyalty. (Sadek & Elwy 2018) Customers’ trust in a brand is measured by how much they believe the brand. It indicates whether your brand follows through on its promises and adheres to its core principles (wix.com, 2020). In addition, Brand trust is described as a buyer’s willingness to put their faith in a brand’s capacity to deliver on the functions and features that have been started, as assessed by the brand’s ability to keep its promises (Kimpakorn & Tocquer 2010). Few studies have examined the impact of social media brand communications on brand trust.

Based on Khalid (2016) firm-created social media brand communication shows a positive influence on brand trust (Khalid, 2016).

3. Methodology

There are some hypotheses conducted concerning this study and then testing them over university undergraduates. This study represents the deductive approach. Under the deductive approach, descriptive research design engages in hypotheses testing. The goal of utilizing a descriptive study approach is to show the nature of cause-and-effect interactions between social media brand communication tools and consumer-based brand equity characteristics. The hypotheses are followed by a model that reflects the links between social media brand communication tools and consumer-based brand equity to fulfill the study objectives. Researchers used the survey method to collect data by asking questions from university undergraduates. The researcher used a cross-sectional approach and this approach explains that the data is collected only once.

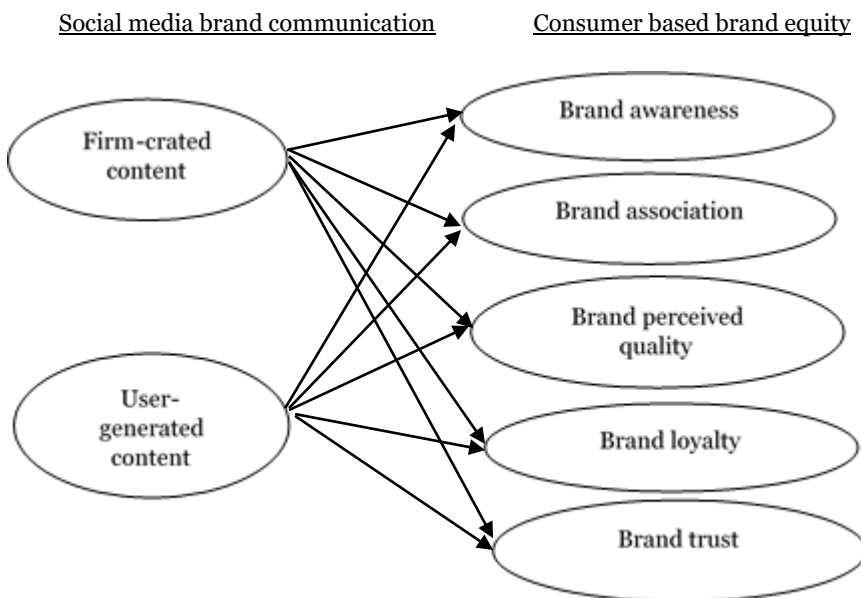


Figure 1: Conceptual Framework

The following hypothesis are created based on the conceptual framework.

H1a: Firm-created social media brand communication has a significant Influence on Brand awareness.

H2a: User-generated social media brand communication has a significant Influence on Brand awareness.

H1b: Firm-created social media brand communication has a significant Influence on Brand association.

H2b: User-generated social media brand communication has a significant Influence on Brand association.

H1c: Firm-created social media brand communication has a significant Influence on Brand perceived quality.

H2c: User-generated social media brand communication has a significant Influence on Brand perceived quality.

H1d: Firm-created social media brand communication has a significant Influence on Brand loyalty.

H2d: User-generated social media brand communication has a significant Influence on Brand loyalty.

H1e: Firm-created social media brand communication has a significant Influence on Brand trust.

H2e: User-generated social media brand communication has a significant Influence on Brand trust.

This research mainly focused on Sri Lankan social media users. Previous research studies have revealed that in the Sri Lankan context, university undergraduates are the ones who use social media most (Sri Lanka CERT/CC 2017). Therefore, this study analyzed the CBBE of the undergraduates at the University of Sri Jayewardenepura. 14750 undergraduates of the University of Sri Jayewardenepura were chosen as the population for this study (Wikipedia). According to Sekaran's (2012) sample size guidance, the sample size was determined as 375 undergraduates from seven faculties of the University of Sri Jayewardenepura. The simple random sampling technique was used in this research as a probability sampling technique. The reason behind selecting the mentioned sample technique is the availability of a sampling framework, from which is a complete list of all cases in the population from which the sample could be picked (Saunders et al., 2012).

The required data for this research was gathered through primary data. The data collected from the field first-hand is known as primary data (Sekaran & Bougie, 2010). In terms of cost-effectiveness and timeliness, the survey technique is the best option to collect data from a large population. A systematic questionnaire with a total of 28 items was created and scored on a five-point Likert scale with ends of strongly disagree and strongly agree. This research used quantitative data analysis. The purpose of the quantitative data analysis in this research is to test hypotheses and examine the relationship between consumer-based brand equity and firm-created and user-generated social media brand communication tools. Finally made a comparison between user-generated social media communication and firm-created social media brand communication to find the most efficient brand communication tool. This research used Cronbach's alpha test to test the reliability and Factor analysis to test the validity of the sample to test the goodness of the data. The statistical package for social science (SPSS) software was also utilized.

4. Data analysis

The sample size was selected as 375 Undergraduates of the University of Sri Jayewardenepura for the survey. Therefore, the researcher distributed 375 online questionnaires (Google forms) for undergraduates and received only 373 responses.

In the first section of the survey, collected the background information of undergraduates. The characteristics of the respondents were described in terms of gender, faculty, academic year, the most used social media network, and daily usage of social media networks. While considering the gender of the respondents, this study sample consisted of 199 (53.4%) male undergraduates and 174 (46.6%) female undergraduates. Among those undergraduates, 171 undergraduates (46.7%) are studying at the faculty of management studies and commerce, 122 undergraduates (33.3%) are studying at the faculty of humanities and social

science, 36 undergraduates (9.8%) are studying at the faculty of applied science, 16 undergraduates (4.4%) are studying at the faculty of medical science, 11 undergraduates (3%) are studying at the department of technology, 9 undergraduates (2.5%) are studying at the faculty of engineering and only one undergraduate (0.3%) is studying at the faculty of allied health sciences.

When considering the academic year of the responders, 17 undergraduates (4.6%) are in their first year of university, 34 undergraduates (9.2%) are in their second year of university, 133 undergraduates (36.1%) are in their third year of university and 184 undergraduates (50%) are in their fourth year of university. According to the information collected from undergraduates, 124 undergraduates (33.2%) mostly used YouTube, 161 undergraduates (43.2%) mostly used Facebook, 84 undergraduates (22.5%) mostly used Instagram and 4 undergraduates (1.1%) mostly used other social media networks. As well as, 59 undergraduates (15.8%) spend less than one hour on social media, 83 undergraduates (22.3%) spend between one to three hours on social media, 171 undergraduates (45.8%) spend between three to five hours on social media and 60 undergraduates (16.1%) spend more than five hours on social media.

4.1. Factor Analysis

The objective of factor analysis is data reduction and purification of the variables of this study. Therefore, the Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin (KMO) value is used to measure sample adequacy. According to Vinayan et al. (2012), the KMO value should be higher than 0.5 to consider that factor analysis is successful. As shown in Table 1 below, all the variables measurement items exceeded the accepted threshold 0.5 KMO value. Therefore, this sample size is more than enough to measure the hypothesis. As well as, the measurement items' total variance explained was greater than 50%, indicating that the total variation in the respective factors' items was appropriate. Therefore, the appropriateness of factor analysis could be emphasized by these results. Further, according to the component matrix, each variable has a single component column of its measurement items. Therefore, all the outcomes have ensured the suitability of the factor analysis in the research study.

Table 1: Factor Analysis

Variable	KMO value	Bartlett's Test of Sphericity Chi-Square	Total Variance Explained	Factor Loading
Firm Created content	.784	564.824	66.877	Component Matrix^a
				<u>Component</u>
				1
				Firm created content .808
				Firm created content .797
				Firm created content .836
				Firm created content .829
User Generated content	.823	785.509	73.818	Component Matrix^a
				<u>Component</u>
				1

				User generated content	.847
				User generated content	.866
				User generated content	.861
				User generated content	.862
Brand Awareness	.813	623.430	69.130	Component Matrix^a	
				<u>Component</u>	
				1	
				Brand Awareness	.841
				Brand Awareness	.855
				Brand Awareness	.828
				Brand Awareness	.801
Brand Perceived Quality	.780	581.322	66.924	Component Matrix^a	
				<u>Component</u>	
				1	
				Brand Percieved Quality	.787
				Brand Percieved Quality	.851
				Brand Percieved Quality	.841
				Brand Percieved Quality	.792
Brand Loyalty	.790	527.261	65.611	Component Matrix^a	
				<u>Component</u>	
				1	
				Brand Loyalty	.811
				Brand Loyalty	.805
				Brand Loyalty	.842
				Brand Loyalty	.781
Brand Trust	.795	559.556	66.890	Component Matrix^a	
				<u>Component</u>	
				1	
				Brand Trust	.798
				Brand Trust	.836
				Brand Trust	.827
				Brand Trust	.809

Brand Association	.803	563.794	67.067	Component Matrix^a	
				Component	
				1	
				Brand Association	.837
				Brand Association	.806
				Brand Association	.844
				Brand Association	.788

Source: Survey Data

4.2. Reliability Analysis

The researcher performed a reliability analysis to determine Cronbach's alpha values and investigated the internal consistency values to examine the reliability of variables. When Cronbach's alpha value exceeds 0.6, the variables are regarded to be reliable. The results shown in the table below indicate that the Cronbach's Alpha value of all variables exceeds the minimum requirement of 0.6. Therefore, it is clear that the variables were reliable.

Table 2: Reliability Analysis

Variable	Cronbach's Alpha value	No of items
Firm created content	.835	4
User generated content	.882	4
Brand Awareness	.850	4
Brand Perceived Quality	.835	4
Brand Loyalty	.825	4
Brand Trust	.835	4
Brand Association	.835	4

Source 1: Survey data

4.2. Multiple Regression Analysis

The dependent variables of this study are brand awareness, brand perceived quality, brand loyalty, brand trust, and brand association and the independent variables are user-generated social media brand communication and firm-created social media brand communication. The multiple regression analysis was used to determine whether the independent variables of this study significantly influence dependent variables. The following tables are the results of the regression analysis.

Table 3: Model Summary Table

	R	R square	Adjusted R square	Std. error of the estimate	Durbin-Watson
Brand Awareness	.550	.303	.299	.63803	1.783
Brand Perceived Quality	.584	.341	.338	.62890	2.039

Brand Loyalty	.577	.333	.329	.64253	1.931
Brand trust	.586	.343	.339	.62811	2.027
Brand Association	.590	.348	.345	.63233	1.761

Source 3: Survey data

The R² value is the variation percentage in the dependent variable that can be predicted using the independent variables. The standard of it should be at least 30% of the variation in the dependent variable which can be explained by the independent variable. According to the model summary table, the independent and dependent variables in this study have fulfilled the minimum requirement of R square.

Table 4: Coefficient table

Model		Unstandardize d Coefficients		Standardize d Coefficients	t	Sig.	Collinearity Statistics	
		B	Std. Error				Beta	Toleranc e
BA	(Constant)	1.391	.206		6.750	.000		
	MEANFC	.326	.051	.299	6.437	.000	.871	1.149
	MEANUG	.338	.043	.367	7.882	.000	.871	1.149
BP Q	(Constant)	1.151	.203		5.665	.000		
	MEANFC	.306	.050	.277	6.135	.000	.871	1.149
	MEANUG	.397	.042	.424	9.374	.000	.871	1.149
BL	(Constant)	1.138	.208		5.480	.000		
	MEANFC	.327	.051	.292	6.423	.000	.871	1.149
	MEANUG	.383	.043	.403	8.858	.000	.871	1.149
BT	(Constant)	1.171	.203		5.772	.000		
	MEANFC	.275	.050	.249	5.511	.000	.871	1.149
	MEANUG	.419	.042	.448	9.921	.000	.871	1.149
BAs	(Constant)	1.184	.204		5.793	.000		
	MEANFC	.282	.050	.253	5.617	.000	.871	1.149
	MEANUG	.426	.043	.450	10.013	.000	.871	1.149

Source 4: Survey data

According to the Coefficients table, the p-values of Firm created and User-generated social media brand communication tools were lower than 0.05. Hence, these factors are significant determinants of Consumer Based Brand Equity. The B value in the table above indicates how much percentage of influence is given by the independent variable to the dependent variable. There are five dependent variables in this study and User-generated content has shown the highest B value for each dependent variable than Firm created content.

The overall results of the multiple regression analysis and the hypotheses of this study are interpreted in the table below.

Table 5: Overall Results

Hypotheses	Result
H1a: Firm-created social media brand communication has a significant Influence on Brand awareness.	Supported
H2a: User-generated social media brand communication has a significant Influence on Brand awareness.	Supported
H1b: Firm-created social media brand communication has a significant Influence on Brand association.	Supported
H2b: User-generated social media brand communication has a significant Influence on Brand association.	Supported
H1c: Firm-created social media brand communication has a significant Influence on Brand perceived quality.	Supported
H2c: User-generated social media brand communication has a significant Influence on Brand perceived quality.	Supported
H1d: Firm-created social media brand communication has a significant Influence on Brand loyalty.	Supported
H2d: User-generated social media brand communication has a significant Influence on Brand loyalty.	Supported
H1e: Firm-created social media brand communication has a significant Influence on Brand trust.	Supported
H2e: User-generated social media brand communication has a significant Influence on Brand trust.	Supported

5. Results and discussion

The purpose of this research is to determine how the evaluation of firm-created content and user-generated content affect consumer-based brand equity and, which social media brand communication tools highly influence each dimension of consumer-based brand equity. Based on the findings of the research and discussion, it is clear that there is a positive influence of both User-generated and Firm created social media brand communication tools on consumer-based brand equity but User-generated content highly influences all five dimensions of

Consumer-based brand equity more than Firm-created content. Based on the findings of this study, the most appropriate communication tool for introducing the brand to consumers is the user-generated brand communication tool since the user-generated content has a greater influence on consumers' brand awareness than firm-created content. Also, this study has shown that user-generated content affects brand association the most. That means the user-generated content is the most appropriate brand communication tool to create positive attitudes about the brand's qualities and to specify the brand to its inherent qualities. Furthermore, user-generated social media brand communication can be used to improve the impression of excellence that customer experiences about a product, brand, or business, derived through sight, sound, touch, and scent because the user-generated content has a greater influence on the brand's perceived quality than firm created content. In addition, the results of this study indicate that user-generated content also has a greater influence on brand loyalty and brand trust. Accordingly, user-generated content is the most efficient tool to induce customers to continuously purchase a brand's product. As a result, the most important aspect to emphasize is that the findings are very pertinent to the Sri Lankan context.

Heba Sadek & Sarah Elwy showed that firm-created content has a favorable and significant Influence only on brand association/awareness, perceived quality, and brand trust. However, user-generated content has no significant Influence on brand perceived quality, brand loyalty, and brand trust. Additionally, it has been discovered that user-generated social media brand communication has a detrimental influence on brand awareness and brand associations (Sadek & Elwy 2018). However, one of the key differences between this study and the research conducted by Sadek & Elwy is this study indicates that Firm created content also positively Influences brand loyalty. Furthermore, this study indicates that user-generated content has a favorable Influence on Brand perceived quality, brand loyalty, and brand trust. Sadak & Elwy conducted their research based on Egypt and this study have conducted based on Sri Lanka. Therefore, due to political and cultural differences between the two nations, different results may be reached. Giving a finding similar to this research, Vinna Hermaren & Adrian Achyar (2018) showed that both user-generated and firm-created content favorably and significantly influence brand awareness, brand association, and brand perceived quality. As in this research, Hermaren & Achyar have had similar results in brand awareness, brand association, brand perceived quality, and brand loyalty. However, Hermaren & Achyar have observed that User-generated social media brand communication has no significant influence on brand loyalty. According to the findings of this research, researchers have observed that there is a positive influence of User-generated social media brand communication on brand loyalty. Herman & Achyar have conducted this research focusing on the Cosmetic industry and it may be the reason for the difference in the findings of these researches. According to Bakshy, Karrer, & Adamic, the Adoption rate for a given product is highly influenced by social media communication among friends. Social media communication among friends can identify as User-generated social media brand communication. Observations of this research indicated that if there is a well-developed user-generated social media brand communication system, customers will always choose the same product among different products. Therefore, the findings of this research are the same as those Bakshy, Karrer, & Adamic. However, Bakshy, Karrer, & Adamic have further explained that user-generated social media brand communication highly Influences brand loyalty only if that user-generated brand communication system includes friends.

6. Conclusion

This study contributes to the body of knowledge by analyzing two forms of social media brand communications (firm-created and user-generated social media brand communications) on five CBBE dimensions in Sri Lanka. This research aims to measure the Influence of brand communication tools on Consumer-based brand equity and identify which social media brand communication tool is most suitable to influence consumer-based brand equity. Two main hypotheses were tested using primary data collected from undergraduates of the University of Sri Jayewardenepura. According to the result of the tested hypotheses, both user-generated and firm-created social media brand communication tools have a favorable influence on consumer-based brand equity. Additionally, the results of this study showed that user-generated social media brand communication tool has more impact on consumer-based brand equity than the impact of firm-created social media brand communication tools. This study delivers information to marketing managers by guiding them to invest further in brand communication tools that have a significant influence on brand equity. Today, consumers are highly sensitive to the attitudes of others toward the brands. Therefore, marketers can design some campaigns on social media to encourage consumers' persuasive and informative communication among themselves. As an example, creating space in social media for consumers to share their own experiences of the brands and what they think about the brand will be useful to generate positive ideas among their potential customers. Those positive ideas improve customers' loyalty to the brand. For this purpose, marketers can create a social media marketing platform for consumers to share the experience of consuming specified products (ex: Yelp.com). As well as in the usage of Facebook, many organizations have fan pages for their brands (Coca-Cola, Dove) and they encourage Facebook users to share the content about their products by rewarding consumers who are most actively sharing content on their fan page. The increase in picture and video sharing leads to improve brand awareness among other social media users. As well as, marketers can have a great impact on customers by using social media influencers to share the contents of their brands. Furthermore, this study will be more important to Sri Lanka as a developing country because the majority of research on this topic have been undertaken in developed countries.

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