

IMPACT OF SOCIAL MEDIA MARKETING IN STARTUPS OF NEPAL

A dissertation submitted to the Office of the Dean, Faculty of Management in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the Master's Degree

By

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Certificate of Authorship

I confirm that the work in this thesis is my own and has not been used for any academic degree or qualification before, unless properly cited and acknowledged in the text.

I further affirm that this thesis has been independently written by me. Any assistance received during the research and thesis preparation has been appropriately acknowledged. Additionally, I confirm that all sources of information and referenced literature are accurately cited in the reference section of this thesis.

Ms. Mamata Oli

December, 2024

Report of Research Committee

Ms. Mamata Oli has defended research proposal entitled “Impact of Social Media Marketing in Startups of Nepal” successfully. The research committee has registered the dissertation for further progress. It is recommended to carry out the work as per suggestions and guidance of supervisor Pro. Dr Binita Manandhar and submit the thesis for evaluation and viva voce examination.

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Approval Sheet

We have examined the dissertation entitled “Impact of Social Media Marketing in Startups of Nepal” presented by Mamata Oli, for the degree of Master of Business Studies (MBS) and conducted the viva examination of the candidate. We hereby certify that the dissertation is worthy of acceptance.

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Abbreviations

ANOVA: Analysis of Variance

BA: Brand Awareness

RBV: Resource-Based View

SEM: Structural Equation Modeling

SMM: Social Media Marketing

SMMA: Social Media Marketing Activities

Abstract

This study, titled "Impact of Social Media Marketing in Startups of Nepal," explores the influence of four key social media constructs identity, conversations, sharing, and presence on brand awareness. Guided by the Honeycomb Model, this research investigates how startups can leverage these constructs to overcome resource constraints and achieve competitive advantages in a rapidly evolving market. Using a descriptive research design, data was collected from 385 respondents through structured surveys. The analysis involved descriptive statistics, correlation, and regression methods to identify the relationships between the constructs and brand awareness.

The findings reveal that "presence" has the most significant impact on brand awareness, followed by "identity," "conversation," and "sharing." Startups with a consistent and engaging social media presence were more successful in enhancing customer recognition and trust. This study highlights the challenges Nepalese startups face, including limited resources, lack of strategic planning, and inconsistent content. It provides actionable recommendations for optimizing social media strategies, such as focusing on personalized content, fostering two-way communication, and maintaining an active online presence.

Keywords: Social Media Marketing, Startups, Brand Awareness, Honeycomb Model, Digital Marketing Strategies, Social Media Constructs, Nepalese Startups, Consumer Engagement, Competitive Advantage, Social Media Presence.

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background of the Study

In the era of digital transformation, social media has become an indispensable tool for businesses to connect with their target audiences. Startups, which often operate under resource constraints, have embraced social media as a cost-effective platform to increase their visibility and enhance brand awareness. With over 4.9 billion active social media users globally, platforms like Facebook, Instagram, LinkedIn, and TikTok have created opportunities for startups to engage with consumers and establish their brand identities in a competitive market (Statista, 2023). This study examines the relationship between specific social media constructs—identity, conversations, sharing, and presence—and their impact on brand awareness, a critical factor in the success of startups.

Startups face unique challenges in promoting their products or services, particularly due to limited marketing budgets and the need for rapid scalability. Traditional marketing channels, while effective, are often expensive and time-consuming, making social media an attractive alternative. According to Kaplan and Haenlein (2010), social media offers startups the ability to reach targeted demographics, interact directly with customers, and create dynamic, real-time marketing campaigns. These platforms enable startups to foster two-way communication, which not only enhances customer engagement but also helps build trust and brand loyalty. Mangold and Faulds (2009) further highlight that social media serves as a hybrid element of the promotion mix, combining traditional word-of-mouth marketing with digital reach to amplify brand awareness.

The Honeycomb Model by Kietzmann et al. (2011) provides a framework for understanding the functional building blocks of social media. This model identifies seven constructs: identity, conversations, sharing, presence, relationships, reputation, and groups. For this study, the constructs of identity, conversations, sharing, and presence are particularly relevant in analyzing their impact on brand awareness. Each of these constructs plays a unique role in how startups utilize social media to connect with their audience.

The first construct, identity, refers to how users disclose personal information such as

name, age, gender, and location on social media. For startups, understanding the identity of their audience is essential to designing tailored marketing campaigns that resonate with specific demographics. Goffman (1959) emphasizes that the way individuals present themselves in social interactions, including online spaces, shapes their engagement with brands. Startups can leverage user identity data to personalize their marketing efforts, thereby enhancing the relevance and recall of their brand.

Conversations, the second construct, involve the interactive exchanges between brands and consumers on social media platforms. These dialogues are pivotal in fostering relationships and building trust. McCarthy et al. (2010) argued that conversations allow startups to directly address customer needs, resolve issues, and promote their offerings in a conversational tone. This two-way communication not only strengthens customer relationships but also creates opportunities for feedback, which is valuable for improving products or services.

The third construct, sharing, relates to the dissemination of content, such as videos, images, and articles, through social media platforms. Ryan and Deci (2000) stated that the act of sharing content contributes to the spread of brand messages, thereby increasing visibility and reach. For startups, shared content—especially user-generated content—acts as an endorsement, reinforcing brand credibility and authenticity. Moreover, the viral nature of social media allows startups to amplify their marketing efforts without incurring additional costs.

Presence, the final construct examined in this study, pertains to the visibility and activity of both users and brands on social media. Lombard and Ditton (1997) defined presence as the extent to which users feel that brands are part of their digital environment. A strong presence ensures that startups remain top-of-mind for their audience, which is crucial for building long-term relationships and driving brand awareness. By maintaining consistent activity on social media, startups can enhance their discoverability and establish themselves as key players in their respective markets.

Brand awareness, the dependent variable in this study, is a critical outcome for startups. It refers to the ability of consumers to recognize and recall a brand in various contexts. Aaker (1991) argued that brand awareness is a foundational element of brand equity, influencing consumer preferences and purchase decisions. Social media platforms provide startups with tools to measure and enhance brand awareness through targeted

advertising, analytics, and customer engagement. Felix et al. (2017) found that startups leveraging social media marketing often experience significant improvements in brand awareness compared to those relying on traditional marketing methods.

Despite the extensive research on social media marketing, there is limited literature focusing specifically on startups and their unique challenges. Startups often operate in volatile and resource-constrained environments, making their reliance on social media distinct from larger, more established firms. This study aims to bridge this gap by exploring how specific social media constructs influence brand awareness. By identifying the most impactful constructs and providing actionable recommendations, the study seeks to equip startups with strategies to optimize their social media efforts and achieve sustainable growth.

In conclusion, social media has transformed the marketing landscape, offering startups a powerful platform to build brand awareness and engage with their audience. This study explores the influence of identity, conversations, sharing, and presence on brand awareness, providing insights into how startups can leverage these constructs to their advantage. The findings will contribute to the existing literature on social media marketing and offer practical guidance for startups aiming to establish a competitive edge in the digital marketplace.

1.2 Statement of Problems

The rapid proliferation of social media has fundamentally transformed the global business landscape, offering unique opportunities for startups to reach their target audiences. In Nepal, where the startup ecosystem is gradually evolving, social media marketing has become a prominent tool for emerging businesses to establish their presence, foster engagement, and build brand awareness. However, despite its potential, startups in Nepal often face challenges in effectively leveraging social media marketing due to limited resources, lack of expertise, and a rapidly changing digital environment. This study seeks to address the critical gap in understanding how social media marketing impacts startups in Nepal and to identify specific constructs that influence their brand awareness.

Startups are often characterized by their resource constraints, including financial and human capital, which limit their ability to invest in traditional marketing methods. Social media offers a cost-effective alternative, enabling startups to engage with a

broader audience through interactive and targeted campaigns (Kaplan & Haenlein, 2010). However, in Nepal, the adoption of social media marketing remains inconsistent across startups due to a lack of strategic planning and understanding of its potential benefits. Many startups either underutilize social media or fail to align their marketing strategies with audience behavior and preferences, resulting in suboptimal outcomes (Kietzmann et al., 2011).

One of the significant issues faced by startups in Nepal is the lack of a clear framework to measure the effectiveness of social media marketing. While global studies have highlighted the importance of constructs such as identity, conversations, sharing, and presence in shaping consumer perceptions, there is limited research on how these constructs apply in the context of Nepalese startups (Mangold & Faulds, 2009). Identity, for instance, plays a crucial role in personalizing marketing campaigns, yet many startups in Nepal fail to utilize consumer data effectively due to technical and ethical concerns. Similarly, conversations, which involve two-way interactions between brands and consumers, are often overlooked, with many startups relying on one-sided promotional content instead of engaging dialogues (McCarthy et al., 2010).

Another critical challenge is the inconsistent use of sharing mechanisms to amplify brand messages. In Nepal, where internet penetration reached 49.6% in 2024 (Nepal Telecommunications Authority, 2024), social media offers immense potential for content sharing and user-generated endorsements. However, startups often struggle to create compelling and shareable content that resonates with their target audience. The lack of focus on creating viral content or encouraging user participation limits the reach and impact of their social media campaigns (Ryan & Deci, 2000).

The construct of presence, which refers to the visibility and activity of brands on social media platforms, also poses challenges for Nepalese startups. Despite the growing popularity of platforms like Facebook, Instagram, and TikTok in Nepal, many startups fail to maintain a consistent and engaging presence. This inconsistency not only reduces their discoverability but also affects consumer trust and loyalty. Lombard and Ditton (1997) emphasize that a strong social media presence is essential for building long-term relationships with consumers, a factor that many Nepalese startups overlook due to resource limitations or lack of expertise.

Furthermore, the dynamic nature of consumer behavior on social media adds to the

complexity of leveraging these platforms effectively. Nepalese startups face difficulties in adapting to evolving trends and preferences, such as the increasing demand for personalized experiences and real-time engagement. The absence of data-driven decision-making processes and reliance on generic strategies often result in missed opportunities to connect with their audience and build brand awareness (Felix et al., 2017).

Nepali startups encounter considerable difficulties in utilizing social media marketing effectively. Numerous emerging businesses face challenges in grasping the unique aspects of various platforms, developing compelling content, and assessing the return on investment (ROI) of their social media campaigns (Shrestha, 2020).

While social media has proven effective in boosting customer engagement and broadening market reach, the absence of a well-organized digital marketing strategy often leads to inefficient use of resources and missed growth opportunities (Poudel & Sharma, 2019).

Studies indicate that numerous entrepreneurs struggle to measure the return on investment (ROI) from their social media marketing activities and lack clarity on the most effective strategies to enhance engagement and conversion rates (Bhatta, 2020).

Factors like differing levels of digital literacy, cultural variations, and economic constraints undermine the effectiveness of social media marketing campaigns (Sharma & Shrestha, 2021). These challenges are further intensified by the swift shifts in social media trends and the continuously changing landscape of digital marketing strategies.

Social media marketing has become a powerful tool for businesses around the world, including startups in Nepal. With more people using the internet and mobile devices, platforms like Facebook, Instagram, and Twitter give Nepalese startups the chance to reach more people, increase brand awareness, and engage with customers (Sharma & Shrestha, 2021).

The widespread use of social media, many startups in Nepal face difficulties in effectively using these platforms due to limited resources, a lack of digital marketing knowledge, and challenges in reaching the right audience (Gautam & Thapa, 2022).

Despite the growing reliance on social media in Nepal, there is limited academic research on its impact on startups. While global studies provide valuable insights, the unique socio-cultural and economic context of Nepal necessitates localized research.

Startups in Nepal operate in a relatively nascent entrepreneurial ecosystem, where factors such as internet accessibility, consumer behavior, and digital literacy significantly influence the effectiveness of social media marketing. Without a comprehensive understanding of these factors, startups risk underutilizing social media's potential or adopting strategies that are misaligned with their operational realities.

This study aims to address the research gap by exploring the impact of social media marketing on startups in Nepal, with a particular focus on brand awareness. By examining key constructs such as identity, conversations, sharing, and presence, this research seeks to provide a nuanced understanding of how Nepalese startups can leverage social media to enhance their brand visibility and achieve sustainable growth. Additionally, the study will offer actionable recommendations for startups to overcome challenges and optimize their social media strategies, contributing to the broader discourse on digital marketing in emerging markets.

In conclusion, while social media marketing holds significant promise for startups in Nepal, its effective implementation remains a challenge. The lack of strategic planning, inadequate understanding of consumer behavior, and limited resources hinder startups from fully realizing the potential of social media platforms. By addressing these issues, this study aims to provide valuable insights into the role of social media marketing in shaping the success of startups in Nepal and contribute to the growing body of literature on digital marketing in developing economies.

The questions answered through this study are:

1. How do different aspects of social media (identity, conversations, sharing, and presence) impact brand awareness in startups?
2. Which social media construct (identity, conversations, sharing, and presence) has the most significant impact on brand awareness?
3. What strategies can startups adopt to optimize social media use for enhancing brand awareness?

1.3 Objectives of the Study

The objectives that this study aims to achieve are as follows:

1. To examine the impact of social media constructs (identity, conversations, sharing, and presence) on brand awareness in startups.

2. To examine the social media construct with the most significant impact on startups' brand awareness.
3. To analyze the strategies to optimize social media use for enhancing brand awareness.

1.4 Hypothesis of the study

H1: There is significant impact of identity in brand awareness of startups.

H2: There is significant impact of conversations in brand awareness of startups.

H3: There is significant impact of presence in brand awareness of startups.

H4: There is significant impact of sharing in brand awareness of startups.

1.5 Rationale of the Study

The growing prevalence of social media as a key marketing tool has created a significant impact on businesses worldwide, including startups. Startups, characterized by their agility and resource constraints, require innovative, cost-effective strategies to establish their presence in the market. In Nepal, where startups play an increasingly important role in fostering economic growth and innovation, social media marketing offers immense potential for reaching a diverse and geographically dispersed audience. This study aims to provide insights into how startups in Nepal can effectively use social media to build brand awareness, addressing both theoretical and practical gaps in the existing body of knowledge.

Nepal's startup ecosystem is in its developmental phase, and entrepreneurs often face challenges such as limited access to funding, lack of infrastructure, and low digital literacy among consumers (Nepal Telecommunications Authority, 2024). Social media provides a unique solution to many of these issues by offering a platform for targeted, scalable, and cost-efficient marketing. However, despite the increasing use of social media in Nepal, there is a lack of empirical research focused on understanding its specific impact on startups, particularly in building brand awareness. Existing global studies often overlook the unique cultural, social, and economic dynamics of Nepal, necessitating localized research to provide actionable insights.

One of the key reasons for conducting this study is to explore the role of social media constructs—identity, conversations, sharing, and presence—in shaping brand awareness among startups in Nepal. These constructs, based on the Honeycomb Model by Kietzmann et al. (2011), provide a structured framework for understanding how

startups can engage with their audience effectively. For instance, identity allows startups to tailor their campaigns to resonate with specific consumer demographics, while conversations enable two-way communication that fosters trust and loyalty. Similarly, sharing and presence contribute to amplifying a brand's visibility and ensuring its relevance in a competitive market. By examining these constructs in the Nepalese context, this study seeks to fill a critical gap in the literature.

From a practical perspective, the study will provide valuable recommendations for startup founders and marketers in Nepal to optimize their social media strategies. In a resource-constrained environment, understanding which social media constructs have the most significant impact on brand awareness can help startups allocate their time and budget more effectively. For example, identifying the most impactful platforms and content types can guide startups in creating targeted campaigns that yield measurable results. Moreover, the findings will highlight common challenges faced by startups in leveraging social media and propose actionable solutions to overcome them.

Additionally, this study contributes to the broader discourse on digital marketing in emerging economies. Nepal, as a developing country, offers a unique case study for understanding how social media can drive business growth in markets with limited digital infrastructure. By focusing on startups, which are often at the forefront of innovation, this research will provide insights into the broader implications of social media marketing for fostering entrepreneurship and economic development. Furthermore, the study aligns with global efforts to promote the use of digital tools in addressing business challenges, contributing to the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) related to innovation, industry, and economic growth.

Another important rationale for this study is its potential to inform policy and capacity-building initiatives. Policymakers and industry stakeholders in Nepal can use the findings to develop programs that support startups in adopting and optimizing social media marketing. This could include training programs on digital literacy, subsidies for digital marketing tools, or collaborations between startups and established companies to share best practices. By equipping startups with the necessary skills and resources to harness the power of social media, these initiatives can contribute to a more vibrant and competitive entrepreneurial ecosystem in Nepal.

In conclusion, this study addresses a critical gap in understanding the impact of social

media marketing on startups in Nepal, particularly in the context of brand awareness. By examining the influence of key social media constructs and providing actionable insights, the research seeks to empower Nepalese startups to navigate the challenges of a competitive digital landscape. The findings will not only benefit startups but also contribute to the academic literature and inform policies aimed at fostering entrepreneurship and economic development in Nepal.

1.6 Limitations of the study

The limitations of the study are as follows:

- The study is concentrated on a social media marketing in startups of Nepal.
- The study is based on primary data.
- Kathmandu Valley is taken for the study.

CHAPTER II

LITERATURE REVIEW

The literature review chapter provides a comprehensive examination of the theoretical and empirical foundations relevant to the study. It aims to establish a robust framework by exploring existing theories, models, and prior research that inform the current investigation into the impact of social media marketing on startups in Nepal. This chapter is divided into two main sections: Theoretical Review and Empirical Review, each serving a distinct purpose in contextualizing and validating the research.

2.1 Theoretical Review

The Theoretical Review delves into the conceptual underpinnings that guide the study. By analyzing well-established theories and models, such as the Honeycomb Model, Resource-Based View, and Diffusion of Innovation Theory, this section provides a structured framework to understand the dynamics of social media marketing. It explores how these theories explain the role of constructs like identity, conversations, sharing, and presence in enhancing brand awareness, particularly in the context of startups. The discussion highlights the relevance and application of these theoretical perspectives to the study's objectives, bridging gaps between abstract concepts and practical implications.

2.1.1 Honeycomb Model

The Honeycomb Model, developed by Kietzmann et al. (2011), is a comprehensive framework that identifies seven functional blocks of social media: identity, conversations, sharing, presence, relationships, reputation, and groups. Each block represents a distinct yet interconnected aspect of social media, enabling businesses to strategically plan and execute their digital engagement activities. This model has gained recognition for its ability to provide a structured approach to understanding how businesses and individuals interact on social media platforms.

For this study, the focus is on four constructs—identity, conversations, sharing, and presence—which are particularly relevant in examining the impact of social media marketing on startups. The "identity" block is foundational, reflecting how users disclose and manage their personal information, such as names, demographics, and preferences, on social media. Businesses, especially startups, can leverage this

information to personalize their marketing strategies, ensuring content resonates with the target audience. For example, a startup targeting eco-conscious consumers may design campaigns that align with their audience's environmental values (Kietzmann et al., 2011).

"Conversations" emphasize two-way communication, a hallmark of social media platforms. Unlike traditional advertising, social media enables real-time interactions between brands and consumers. Startups can use this construct to foster trust, address customer queries, and build relationships, which are crucial for brand loyalty and awareness (Kietzmann et al., 2011).

The "sharing" construct pertains to the exchange of content, such as posts, videos, and articles, which amplifies a brand's reach. User-generated content, in particular, can serve as a cost-effective method for startups to enhance visibility and credibility (Ryan & Deci, 2000). Lastly, "presence" focuses on the visibility and activity of brands on social media platforms. A consistent presence ensures discoverability and reinforces a brand's relevance in the digital ecosystem (Lombard & Ditton, 1997).

In summary, the Honeycomb Model offers startups a strategic framework to optimize their social media activities. By effectively leveraging identity, conversations, sharing, and presence, startups can build stronger connections with their audience and enhance brand awareness.

2.1.2 Resource-Based View (RBV)

The Resource-Based View (RBV) of the firm, introduced by Barney (1991), emphasizes the importance of unique, valuable, and inimitable resources in achieving a competitive advantage. According to this theory, firms that possess resources that are valuable, rare, inimitable, and organized (VRIO framework) are better positioned to achieve long-term success. For startups, which often face challenges such as limited financial resources and market reach, the RBV offers a lens to evaluate the strategic use of social media as a resource for growth and sustainability.

In the context of social media marketing, startups can leverage platforms such as Facebook, Instagram, and LinkedIn as strategic resources to overcome traditional barriers. Social media allows startups to reach wider audiences at relatively low costs compared to traditional advertising methods (Kaplan & Haenlein, 2010). By strategically utilizing social media, startups can build intangible assets such as brand

equity, customer trust, and community engagement. These intangible resources are critical in differentiating a startup from its competitors and fostering customer loyalty.

Social media also enables startups to engage directly with consumers, providing opportunities to gather real-time feedback and co-create value. This aligns with the RBV's emphasis on leveraging internal resources to create capabilities that are difficult for competitors to replicate. For example, startups that effectively use social media to build strong customer relationships can establish trust and goodwill, which are valuable resources in competitive markets (Mangold & Faulds, 2009).

Furthermore, social media platforms act as repositories of valuable data, allowing startups to gain insights into consumer behavior and preferences. These insights enable startups to create targeted and personalized marketing strategies, enhancing their ability to attract and retain customers. By aligning social media strategies with the principles of the RBV, startups can transform social media from a simple marketing tool into a critical resource for sustainable competitive advantage.

2.1.3 Diffusion of Innovation Theory

Rogers' Diffusion of Innovation Theory (1962) provides a framework for understanding how new ideas, practices, or technologies spread within a population over time. The theory categorizes adopters into five groups: innovators, early adopters, early majority, late majority, and laggards. Each group represents a segment of the population with distinct behaviors and attitudes toward adopting innovations. Startups, often at the forefront of technological advancements, can utilize this theory to effectively integrate social media platforms into their marketing strategies and gain a competitive edge.

Social media platforms, as innovative tools, allow startups to connect with diverse consumer segments in ways that traditional marketing cannot. By targeting innovators and early adopters—those who are open to new ideas and willing to experiment—startups can create initial momentum for their campaigns. These early users often influence the subsequent adoption of social media campaigns by the early and late majority, creating a ripple effect that drives brand awareness and customer engagement (Rogers, 1962).

The theory also highlights the importance of understanding the characteristics of the innovation itself, such as its relative advantage, compatibility with user needs,

simplicity, and observability. For social media marketing, startups must design campaigns that are easy to engage with, align with user preferences, and demonstrate clear benefits, such as exclusive offers or personalized content. Tailored approaches that consider these factors can accelerate the adoption of social media campaigns across different adopter groups (Kaplan & Haenlein, 2010).

Moreover, startups in developing markets like Nepal can leverage the insights from this theory to overcome barriers such as low digital literacy and limited internet access. By focusing on early adopters who are more tech-savvy and influential, startups can build a loyal customer base that encourages others to follow. Through strategic integration of the principles of the Diffusion of Innovation Theory, startups can maximize the reach and impact of their social media marketing efforts, fostering sustainable growth.

2.2 Empirical Review

Joshi et al (2023) conducted research on social media influencer marketing to examine existing studies on the subject. The objective of the study was to explore social media influencer marketing. The study used bibliometric-content analysis to analyze data. The study found an identified key influencer marketing factors like authenticity, sponsorship and engagement. The study concluded how social media influencers shape consumer behavior to enhance brand impact and customer engagement.

Anil (2023) conducted a study on the role of digital marketing in promoting local businesses in Nepal, with a specific focus on startups. The objective of the study was to examine the importance of social media platforms in helping startups connect with customers and expand their market reach. The study employed a correlative coefficient to explore the effectiveness of social media marketing in targeting younger demographics, who are more active online. The findings revealed that while social media marketing offers significant advantages, such as increased customer engagement and market reach, local businesses face challenges like intense competition for online visibility and difficulties in producing engaging content. The study concluded that startups should focus on developing creative content and leveraging analytics to enhance their digital marketing efforts and achieve greater impact.

Khadka (2023) conducted a study on the impact of digital marketing on startups in Nepal, focusing on how startups utilize digital marketing strategies to enhance their growth. The objective of the study was to examine the use of platforms such as

Facebook, Instagram, and YouTube in building brand awareness and engaging target audiences. The study employed t-test, descriptive statistics to analyze data. The findings emphasized the cost-effectiveness of digital marketing, enabling startups to compete with larger firms despite budget constraints. The study concluded that digital marketing plays a crucial role in increasing visibility, fostering customer engagement, and driving business growth, making it an indispensable tool for startups in Nepal.

Sharma et al (2022) conducted a study on the impact of social media marketing activities on consumers purchases intentions. The objective of the study was to investigate the influence of social media marketing activities and purchase intentions. The study used structural equation modeling (SEM) and artificial neural network to analyze data. The findings indicated a significant positive association between consumer-based brand equity and inspiration with boosting purchases intentions. The study concluded that startups should prioritize and enhance brand equity and consumer engagement.

Gloor et al (2021) conducted a study on the impact of social media presence and board composition on startup performance. The objective of the study was to analyze the impact of social media presence and board composition on startup performance. The study used US-based technology to analyze data. The findings of this study indicated the social media presence enhances funding opportunities but not operational efficiency. The study concluded that social media presence and venture capitalist (VC) involvement can enhance funding opportunities, these factors do not guarantee improved operational performance for sustainable growth.

Hussain and Noor (2021) conducted a study on the role of content quality and engagement in driving startup growth in the digital economy. The objective of the study was to examine the impact of high-quality content and user engagement on the performance of startups. The study used regression analysis to assess the data. The findings highlighted a significant positive relationship between the creation of relevant, original, and visually appealing content and increased user engagement. The study concluded that startups should focus on curating high-quality content and maintaining consistent engagement to enhance customer acquisition and achieve sustainable business outcomes.

Kim and Park (2021) conducted a study on the influence of social media marketing on

consumer trust in online retail startups. The objective of the study was to examine how factors such as transparency, responsiveness, and authenticity in social media interactions influence consumer trust and purchase intentions. The research used multiple regression to analyze these relationships. These findings revealed a significant positive association between transparent communication, responsiveness to customer queries, and increased consumer trust, which in turn positively impacted purchase intentions. The study concluded that online retail startups should focus on delivering authentic, transparent, and responsive communication to enhance consumer trust and foster loyalty, underscoring the critical role of trust in achieving business success in the online retail sector.

Mainali and Dhakal (2021) conducted a study on the role of digital media as a marketing tool for Nepalese startups. The objective of the study was to explore how digital media platforms enable startups to market their products and services efficiently to diverse audiences. The study employed ANOVA, correlation coefficient to analyze data. The findings highlighted both the opportunities and challenges faced by startups, including limited technical expertise and digital literacy among entrepreneurs. The study concluded that capacity-building initiatives and training programs are essential for helping startups unlock the full potential of digital media marketing and address these barriers effectively.

Shrestha (2021) conducted a study on marketing strategies for engineering consulting startups in Nepal, focusing on the challenges these firms face in leveraging social media effectively. The objective of the study was to explore the issues of weak social media presence and inadequate strategic planning among startups. The study employed multiple regression to evaluate how aggressive marketing strategies on social media platforms. The findings highlighted those startups implementing structured social media campaigns experienced higher client acquisition rates and improved brand reputation. The study concluded that adopting analytics-based approaches to measure campaign effectiveness and refine strategies is crucial for achieving success in a competitive market.

Ahmad et al (2020) conducted a study on the Relationship between social media marketing activities and brand loyalty. The objective of the study was to examine the relationship between social media marketing and brand loyalty. The study used SME model to analyze the data. The study found an interactivity, entertainment and

informativeness in social media marketing that significantly enhance customer engagement and brand loyalty. The study concluded that leveraging these attributes effectively could foster long term loyalty and sustain business growth.

Hassan and Lee (2020) conducted a study on the relationship between social media marketing metrics and startup performance. The objective of the study was to evaluate how metrics such as engagement rate, reach, and conversion rate influence the performance of technology startups. The study utilized regression techniques to evaluate the relationship between key social media marketing metrics and startup performance, focusing on their impact on customer acquisition and sales growth. The findings emphasized the importance of setting measurable marketing goals and consistently analyzing social media data to enhance strategy effectiveness. The study concluded that startups with higher levels of social media engagement tended to build stronger brand equity over time, underscoring the critical role of effective metric management in driving sustained business growth.

Trad and Dabbagh (2020) conducted a study on the effectiveness of social media as a marketing tool for fashion startups, focusing on visual-centric platforms like Instagram and Snapchat. The objective of the study was to evaluate how these platforms influence customer engagement and support marketing strategies. The study employed a mixed-methods approach, combining interviews with fashion startup founders and an analysis of social media metrics to assess performance. The finding of the study highlighted those platforms like Instagram significantly enhanced customer engagement, with features such as polls and live sessions fostering real-time communication and interaction with customers. The study concluded that leveraging influencer partnerships and creating culturally relevant content tailored to the target audience can provide competitive advantages for fashion startups.

Lou and Yuan (2019) conducted a study on the impact of social media influencer marketing on consumer purchase intentions. The objective of the study was to examine how the authenticity, credibility, and attractiveness of influencers affect consumer behavior. The research employed content analysis and multiple regression to analyze the data. The findings indicated a significant positive relationship between the perceived authenticity and trustworthiness of influencers and consumers' purchase intentions. The study concluded that startups could enhance their marketing success by collaborating with influencers who align with their brand values.

Ismail et al. (2018) conducted a study on the impact of social media marketing activities on consumer engagement and brand loyalty. The objective of the study was to analyze how interactive and visually appealing social media content affects emotional engagement and loyalty among consumers. The study used structural equation modeling (SEM) to assess the data. The findings revealed a significant positive relationship between personalized, interactive content and emotional engagement with the brand, which in turn strengthened brand loyalty. The research concluded that startups should leverage interactive and visually compelling social media content to enhance consumer engagement and foster long-term brand loyalty.

Chitra and Sasikala (2016) conducted a study on enhancing brand awareness through social media marketing strategies in startups, focusing on the use of platforms like Facebook, Twitter, and Instagram. The objective of the study was to explore the effectiveness of these platforms in engaging customers and building brand recognition. The study employed descriptive statistics to assess how startups leverage social media for marketing. The findings revealed that startups implementing consistent and targeted strategies experienced higher levels of customer engagement and improved brand recall. The study concluded that integrating multimedia content, running user engagement campaigns, and adopting analytics-based planning are critical for achieving sustainable brand awareness. It further emphasized the importance of customizing content to align with specific audience preferences for maximizing marketing outcomes.

Awad and Fatah (2015) conducted a study on the role of social media branding in developing brand advocates for startups, focusing on how social media campaigns can enhance customer loyalty and advocacy. The objective of the study was to examine how small ventures with limited brand awareness can leverage social media to build stronger consumer relationships. The study used multiple regression to analyze the data, the research found that interactive social media branding, including engaging campaigns and customer feedback. The findings highlighted those startups involving customers in brand storytelling achieved higher rates of advocacy and word-of-mouth promotion. The study concluded that maintaining transparency, authenticity, and consistency in social media branding is crucial for fostering long-lasting customer relationships and driving brand advocacy.

Table 1*Empirical Review Table*

S.N.	Author (Date)	Objective	Methodology	Findings
1	Joshi et al. (2023)	To explore social media influencer marketing and examine its effectiveness through existing literature.	The research utilized bibliometric-content analysis, systematically reviewing prior studies identifying key trends in influencer marketing.	The study identified a sponsorship, and engagement as critical factors influencing the success of influencer marketing. It concluded that startups should collaborate with influencers who align with their brand values and identify key target demographics to amplify brand impact and enhance customer engagement.
2	Anil (2023)	To examine the role of digital social media marketing in promoting local businesses in Nepal.	Analysis of Social media's targeting younger demographics in role in startups and expanding market reach. local targeting in younger demographics in Nepal.	of Social media is effective for targeting younger demographics and expanding market reach.
3	Khadka (2023)	To examine the impact of digital marketing strategies on startups in Nepal.	The study employed descriptive statistics and t-tests to analyze how platforms like Facebook, Instagram, and YouTube maximize outreach and contribute to	The findings highlighted that digital marketing is a cost-effective tool for startups, enabling them to compete with larger firms by increasing visibility and customer interaction. The study recommended startups integrate platform-specific strategies to maximize outreach and contribute to

startup growth in engagement.

Nepal.

- 4 Sharma et al. (2022) To investigate the influence of social media marketing activities on consumer purchase intentions. The study employed a hybrid approach, combining Partial Least Squares Structural Equation Modeling (PLS-SEM) and Artificial Neural Network (ANN) analysis, using data from 379 respondents. The study highlighted the importance of integrating emotional and functional elements into SMMA to drive consumer behavior. It concluded that startups must prioritize engagement and value-driven content to create impactful marketing campaigns.
- 5 Gloor et al. (2021) To analyze the impact of social media presence on board composition and startup performance. The research examined a dataset of 500 U.S.-based startups, focusing on the interaction between their digital engagement with social media governance to ensure sustainable activity and the growth. The findings indicated that an active social media presence enhances funding opportunities for startups, though it does not directly improve operational efficiency. The study recommended balancing their digital engagement with strategic social media governance to ensure sustainable activity and the growth. composition of their boards.
- 6 Hussain & Noor (2021) To assess the role of content quality and user engagement in data from 300. Regression analysis was conducted on relevant, original, and visually appealing content and increased. The study found a significant positive relationship between content quality and user engagement. The study found a significant positive relationship between content quality and user engagement. The study found a significant positive relationship between content quality and user engagement.

driving startup startups user engagement. It concluded that growth in the operating in startups should prioritize high-digital economy. South Asia to quality, consistent content to evaluate the improve customer retention and influence of drive revenue growth, positioning high-quality themselves for sustainable content and competitive advantage. engagement metrics on growth.

- 7 Kim & Park (2021) To analyze how social media marketing influences consumer trust in online retail startups. The study used multiple regression analysis, with data collected from 500 online shoppers in the United States, startups prioritize authentic, transparent communication, responsiveness to customer inquiries, and authenticity in social media interactions significantly enhance consumer trust. The study recommended that online retail startups prioritize authentic, transparent, and timely communication to build strong consumer relationships and foster long-term loyalty. and authenticity.
- 8 Mainali & Dhakal (2021) To explore the role of digital media in Nepalese startups. The study employed ANOVA and correlation analysis to evaluate how startups use digital media to target niche markets. The research revealed both opportunities and challenges, such as limited technical expertise among entrepreneurs. The study emphasized the importance of capacity-building initiatives and digital literacy programs to help startups overcome barriers and leverage digital marketing and

- optimize their effectively.
budgets.
- 9 Shrestha To assess the Qualitative The study found that startups
(2021) effectiveness of analysis was implementing aggressive and
social media conducted using structured social media strategies
marketing multiple achieved higher client acquisition
strategies for regression rates and enhanced brand
engineering techniques to reputation. It concluded that
startups in Nepal. examine the analytics-based campaign planning
impact of social is essential for competitive success
media campaigns in the digital marketplace.
on client
acquisition and
brand reputation.
- 10 Ahmad To examine the The study The research revealed that
et al. relationship collected data interactivity, entertainment, and
(2020) between social through surveys informativeness in social media
media marketing of 450 marketing significantly enhance
and brand loyalty participants and customer engagement and brand
in small- to analyzed it using loyalty. It concluded that startups
medium-sized Structural could foster long-term customer
enterprises Equation loyalty by leveraging these
(SMEs). Modeling (SEM) attributes effectively, creating
to explore the content that appeals to emotional
relationship and rational consumer needs.
between various
social media
attributes and
brand loyalty.
- 11 Hassan To investigate Regression Higher engagement metrics were
& Lee the influence of analysis was found to correlate with better
(2020) social media conducted on customer acquisition and sales

- metrics on the data from 200 growth. The study emphasized the performance of startups across importance of setting measurable technology Southeast Asia, social media goals and using data-startups. focusing on driven insights to refine strategies metrics such as for sustained business success. engagement rate, reach, and conversion rate.
- 12 Trad and To study the Mixed-methods Visual-centric platforms and Dabbagh effectiveness of approach influencer partnerships enhance (2020) social media combining customer engagement. marketing for interviews and fashion startups metrics analysis. in Saudi Arabia.
- 13 Lou & To explore the Content analysis The study found a significant Yuan role of and multiple positive relationship between the (2019) authenticity, regression perceived authenticity and credibility, and techniques were trustworthiness of influencers and attractiveness in employed to consumers' purchase intentions. It influencer examine data concluded that startups should marketing. from 400 U.S.- collaborate with credible based influencers to establish trust and participants, drive consumer behavior. evaluating how influencer attributes affect consumer purchase intentions.
- 14 Ismail et To study the The research The findings demonstrated a strong al. effect of analyzed positive relationship between (2018) interactive social responses from personalized, interactive social

		media content on 310 UK-based media content and emotional brand emotional consumers using engagement. The study concluded engagement and SEM to measure that startups should focus on brand loyalty. the impact of visually compelling and interactive interactive and campaigns to drive engagement and visually build lasting consumer compelling relationships. content on brand loyalty.
15	Chitra and Sasikala (2016)	To analyze how startups use social media marketing to enhance brand awareness. Survey-based methodology analyzing social media channels to media channels enhance brand and customer engagement. Targeted strategies increase customer engagement and enhance brand recall.
16	Awad and Fatah (2015)	To explore the impact of social media branding on brand analysis advocates for branding in small startups. Mixed qualitative and quantitative analysis of promotion. Interactive branding and storytelling improve customer advocacy and word-of-mouth of promotion. Improve customer advocacy and word-of-mouth of promotion. Interactive branding and storytelling improve customer advocacy and word-of-mouth of promotion.

2.3 Research Gap

Despite the extensive research on social media marketing and its impact on businesses, several gaps remain in the existing literature, particularly concerning startups in the context of developing economies like Nepal. Much of the available research focuses on large corporations or generalized perspectives on digital marketing, with limited emphasis on how startups uniquely utilize social media platforms to overcome resource constraints and achieve brand awareness.

Firstly, while studies such as those by Chitra and Sasikala (2016) and Awad and Fatah (2015) explore the general effectiveness of social media marketing, they primarily focus on developed markets. These studies fail to account for the socio-economic and

cultural differences that influence consumer behavior in countries like Nepal. For example, the adoption of social media marketing in Nepalese startups may be shaped by factors such as digital literacy, internet accessibility, and local market dynamics, which remain largely unexplored in the existing literature.

Secondly, the role of specific social media constructs such as identity, conversations, sharing, and presence, as outlined in the Honeycomb Model (Kietzmann et al., 2011), has not been sufficiently studied in the Nepalese startup ecosystem. While these constructs are recognized as critical to effective social media strategies, their individual and collective impact on brand awareness in Nepalese startups remains unclear. There is a need for localized research to identify which constructs hold the most relevance and effectiveness in the Nepalese context.

Lastly, while studies like those by Trad and Dabbagh (2020) highlight the importance of platform-specific strategies, there is limited research on how Nepalese startups choose, implement, and measure the success of these strategies. The absence of empirical evidence on the challenges Nepalese startups face—such as low budgets, limited technical expertise, and difficulty in engaging with diverse audiences—presents a significant gap that this study aims to address.

In conclusion, this research seeks to fill these gaps by investigating the role of social media marketing in enhancing brand awareness specifically for startups in Nepal. By focusing on localized factors and examining the relevance of specific social media constructs, this study will provide a nuanced understanding of how Nepalese startups can effectively utilize social media to overcome challenges and achieve sustainable growth.

CHAPTER III

METHODOLOGY

3.1 Research Design

This study adopts a descriptive research design, which is suitable for exploring and describing the current practices, trends, and impacts of social media marketing on startups in Nepal. A descriptive research design is widely used to gather in-depth information about specific phenomena, providing a clear understanding of how and why certain variables interact (Kothari, 2004). In the context of this research, it allows for an analysis of the role of social media marketing in enhancing brand awareness, focusing on constructs such as identity, conversations, sharing, and presence.

The descriptive research design enables the collection of quantitative data through structured surveys to examine the perceptions, behaviors, and experiences of startup owners or marketing professionals using social media for brand promotion. By employing this approach, the study aims to quantify the relationship between social media marketing activities and brand awareness, thus offering actionable insights.

Additionally, the descriptive nature of this research facilitates the identification of patterns and trends, such as the most commonly used social media platforms, preferred marketing strategies, and challenges faced by startups in utilizing these tools effectively. This design is particularly relevant as it helps capture the unique characteristics and constraints of Nepalese startups, contributing to a localized understanding of the phenomenon.

Overall, the descriptive research design provides a systematic framework to analyze the data and answer the research questions, ensuring the reliability and validity of the findings while making them applicable for practical recommendations.

3.2 Population and Sample

Population

The population for this study comprises startups operating within Nepal. Startups in this context include newly established businesses, particularly those utilizing social media marketing strategies to enhance brand awareness. These startups may belong to various industries such as technology, retail, hospitality, and education, reflecting the diversity of Nepal's entrepreneurial ecosystem. The focus is on individuals responsible

for marketing activities, such as startup owners, managers, or marketing professionals, as they provide relevant insights into the impact of social media marketing.

Sample

The sample size for this study is 385 respondents, determined based on the population of startups in Nepal and adhering to Cochran's formula for sample size calculation. This sample size ensures sufficient representation of the population, allowing for statistically reliable and generalizable results.

Sampling Technique

A convenient sampling technique is employed for this research. This non-probability sampling method involves selecting respondents who are readily accessible and willing to participate. Convenience sampling is appropriate for this study due to the challenges of accessing a comprehensive list of all startups in Nepal and the time constraints of data collection. While this method may have limitations in generalizability, it provides a practical and cost-effective approach to gather data from the target population.

The use of convenience sampling enables the researcher to collect data efficiently from startup representatives who actively use social media marketing. This approach is particularly suitable given the exploratory nature of the study and the aim to identify trends and patterns in social media marketing practices among Nepalese startups. Efforts will be made to include a diverse range of startups to minimize bias and enhance the relevance of the findings.

3.3 Nature and Sources of Data

Nature of Data

The study employs quantitative data to examine the relationship between social media marketing activities and brand awareness among startups in Nepal. Quantitative data is structured and measurable, enabling statistical analysis to test hypotheses and draw reliable conclusions. The data collected focuses on variables such as the frequency of social media use, the types of platforms utilized, marketing strategies employed, and their perceived impact on brand awareness.

Sources of Data

The primary source of data for this study is structured surveys administered to startup owners, marketing managers, or professionals actively involved in social media

marketing. The surveys are designed to capture respondents' perceptions, experiences, and practices regarding social media marketing activities and their impact on brand awareness.

The primary data ensures a comprehensive analysis of the research problem. Primary data provides firsthand insights into the practices and challenges faced by Nepalese startups.

3.4 Method of Data Collection

The primary method of data collection for this study is a structured questionnaire survey, distributed online using Google Forms. The survey is designed to gather quantitative data from respondents, focusing on their experiences and perceptions of social media marketing activities and their impact on brand awareness. To ensure consistency and ease of analysis, the questions are structured on a 5-point Likert scale, allowing respondents to express their level of agreement with various statements. The scale ranges from 1 (Strongly Disagree) to 5 (Strongly Agree), providing a nuanced understanding of the responses.

The questionnaire is divided into several sections, beginning with demographic information about the respondents, such as age, gender, position in the startup, and the industry they represent. The subsequent sections address key social media marketing constructs, including identity, conversations, sharing, and presence, based on the Honeycomb Model (Kietzmann et al., 2011). Additionally, questions related to brand awareness are included, such as how social media marketing helps startups improve customer recognition and familiarity.

Google Forms is chosen for its accessibility, cost-effectiveness, and ability to reach a geographically dispersed population. This method ensures anonymity, encouraging honest responses. The structured format and Likert scale facilitate the collection of measurable data, which aligns with the study's descriptive research design and enables robust statistical analysis.

3.5 Framework and definition of variables

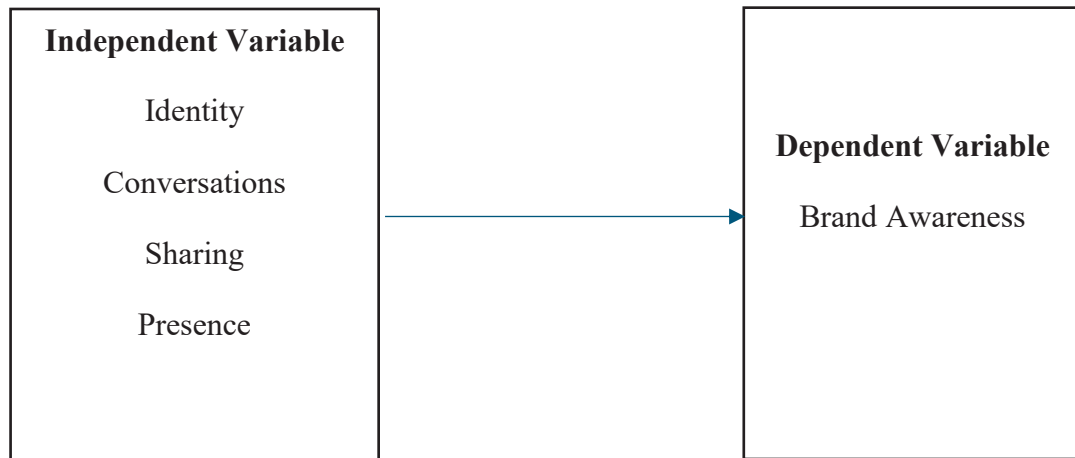


Figure 1: *Conceptual Framework*

Source: (Prasanna & Parida, 2021)

Definition of Variables

Independent Variables

1. **Identity:**

Identity refers to how individuals or brands present themselves on social media platforms. It encompasses the information shared about demographics, preferences, and personal traits, which allows for targeted marketing strategies. For startups, leveraging identity helps in personalizing content to resonate with specific customer segments (Kietzmann et al., 2011).

2. **Conversations:**

Conversations represent the two-way communication facilitated by social media platforms, enabling interaction between brands and their audience. This construct emphasizes dialogue rather than one-way communication, fostering engagement and trust with customers. Startups can use conversations to address customer queries, gather feedback, and build relationships (Kietzmann et al., 2011).

3. **Sharing:**

Sharing involves the exchange of content, such as posts, images, videos, and other media, among social media users. It plays a pivotal role in amplifying

brand messages and increasing visibility. For startups, encouraging users to share branded content can help build a wider audience and enhance credibility (Prasanna & Parida, 2021).

4. **Presence:**

Presence refers to the visibility and active participation of brands on social media platforms. It includes activities such as posting content, engaging with followers, and maintaining a consistent online presence. A strong presence ensures discoverability and reinforces brand relevance in the digital ecosystem (Lombard & Ditton, 1997).

Dependent Variable

- **Brand Awareness:**

Brand awareness is the extent to which consumers recognize and recall a brand in different contexts. It reflects the brand's familiarity and visibility among its target audience. For startups, brand awareness is crucial as it lays the foundation for customer trust, loyalty, and long-term business success. Social media marketing activities significantly contribute to building and sustaining brand awareness (Prasanna & Parida, 2021).

3.6 Method of Data Analysis

The data collected in this study will be analyzed using a combination of demographic analysis, descriptive statistics, correlation analysis, and regression analysis. Each method is tailored to address specific aspects of the research objectives and provide meaningful insights into the impact of social media marketing on brand awareness among startups in Nepal.

1. Demographic Analysis

The demographic data, including respondents' age, gender, position, and industry type, will be analyzed using frequency and percentage distributions. This analysis will help to understand the composition of the sample population and ensure that diverse perspectives are represented in the study. It will also provide a context for interpreting the results of the main variables.

2. Descriptive Statistics

Descriptive statistics, such as mean, standard deviation, and frequency, will be used to

summarize the responses for the main variables, including identity, conversations, sharing, presence, and brand awareness. This analysis will provide an overview of the central tendencies and variability in the data, offering insights into how startups perceive and utilize social media marketing activities.

3. Correlation Analysis

Correlation analysis will be conducted to examine the strength and direction of the relationships between the independent variables (identity, conversations, sharing, and presence) and the dependent variable (brand awareness). This will provide preliminary insights into the associations among the variables and help determine whether they align with the study's hypotheses.

4. Regression Analysis

Multiple regression analysis will be performed to evaluate the predictive impact of the independent variables (identity, conversations, sharing, and presence) on the dependent variable (brand awareness). This analysis will quantify the extent to which each construct contributes to brand awareness and identify the most significant predictors. It will also help to test the proposed conceptual framework and validate the hypothesized relationships.

The combination of these methods ensures a comprehensive analysis of the data. Demographic and descriptive statistics provide a foundation for understanding the sample, while correlation and regression analyses offer deeper insights into the relationships and predictive power of the variables. This approach ensures that the findings are both descriptive and inferential, aligning with the objectives of the study.

CHAPTER IV

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

4.1 Introduction

The findings and analysis of the study are presented in this chapter, showing an insight into the data collected. It starts with demographic profiles of respondents to understand the sample composition. Further, the analysis is made in key variables of the study, exploring their relationships and their significance in contributing to the dependent variable, Brand Awareness. This chapter systematically examines the data for meaningful interpretations to authenticate the hypotheses in relation to the objectives of the study.

4.2 Demographic Profile of the Respondents

This is important to have a demographic profile of the respondents so that results found could be contextualized. The paper provides a description of the age, gender, educational background, and whether the respondent is employed, among other information. These attributes help in assessing the diversity of the sample in light of relevance to the focus of the research. Further, analyzing demographic data enables one to identify potential patterns or trends that may influence how respondents perceive social media marketing with its impact on brand awareness.

Table 2

Age of Respondents

Age	Frequency	Percent
21–30 years	168	43.6
31–40 years	82	21.3
41–50 years	18	4.7
Above 50 years	36	9.4
Below 20 years	81	21.0
Total	385	100.0

The table 2 shows the age distribution of respondents, showing the frequency and percentage for different age groups. The total sample size comprises 385 respondents, segmented into five age categories.

The largest age group represented is 21–30 years, with 168 respondents accounting for 43.6% of the total sample. This indicates that the majority of respondents belong to a

young adult demographic, which aligns with the typical social media user base and startup workforce, making this group particularly relevant to the study on social media marketing.

The next largest group, comprising 81 respondents (21.0%), falls below the age of 20. This suggests significant participation from younger individuals, likely reflecting their active engagement with social media platforms. The 31–40 years group follows with 82 respondents (21.3%), representing middle-aged adults who may hold managerial or entrepreneurial roles within startups.

The representation diminishes for older age groups, with 18 respondents (4.7%) in the 41–50 years range and 36 respondents (9.4%) above 50 years. This lower participation may reflect generational differences in digital literacy or engagement with social media.

Overall, the age distribution highlights the predominance of younger and middle-aged individuals in the sample, underlining their critical role in social media-driven marketing strategies for startups. This demographic insight is essential for interpreting the study's findings.

Table 3

Gender of Respondents

Gender	Frequency	Percent
Female	217	56.4
Male	168	43.6
Total	385	100.0

The table 3 shows the gender composition of the study participants, with a total of 385 respondents. Female respondents make up the majority, accounting for 217 individuals, or 56.4% of the sample. This suggests a significant level of engagement from women, potentially reflecting their active participation in social media platforms or roles within startups.

Male respondents, numbering 168 and making up 43.6% of the sample, are also well-represented in the study. While slightly fewer than females, their participation ensures the inclusion of diverse viewpoints.

Overall, the gender distribution provides a balanced perspective for the research, highlighting the contributions of both male and female participants. The slightly higher representation of females may offer unique insights into social media usage and its

impact on startups.

Table 4

Education of Respondents

Education Level	Frequency	Percent
Bachelor's Degree	186	48.3
High School	85	22.1
Master's Degree	75	19.5
Other	39	10.1
Total	385	100.0

The table 4 highlights the educational qualifications of the 385 respondents participating in the study. The majority of respondents, 186 individuals (48.3%), hold a Bachelor's degree, indicating that nearly half of the sample comprises individuals with undergraduate qualifications. This group likely includes young professionals or entrepreneurs who play a critical role in startups and their marketing strategies.

The second-largest group, 85 respondents (22.1%), has completed high school. This reflects the inclusion of individuals with foundational education, possibly involved in operational roles or early-stage startups. Their insights are valuable, especially in understanding social media engagement at a more practical level. Respondents with a Master's degree make up 19.5% of the sample, accounting for 75 individuals. This group likely includes senior professionals or managers with advanced knowledge and strategic insights into social media marketing.

The "Other" category, comprising 39 respondents (10.1%), represents those with qualifications outside the conventional academic pathways. This diverse educational background enriches the study with varied perspectives.

The education distribution indicates a well-balanced representation of respondents, with a significant emphasis on higher education, which aligns with the knowledge-intensive nature of startups and social media strategies.

The table 5 presents the employment status of the 385 respondents in the study, categorized into five groups. The largest proportion of respondents, 163 individuals (42.3%), are employed, suggesting that a significant portion of the sample consists of working professionals, likely providing practical insights into social media marketing practices and their impact on startups.

Table 5*Employment Status of Respondents*

Employment Status	Frequency	Percent
Employed	163	42.3
Retired	27	7.0
Self-Employed	66	17.1
Student	75	19.5
Unemployed	54	14.0
Total	385	100.0

Students make up the second-largest group, with 75 respondents (19.5%). This indicates a considerable representation of young individuals, possibly active users of social media who contribute valuable perspectives on consumer behavior and digital engagement strategies.

The self-employed category includes 66 respondents (17.1%), highlighting the presence of entrepreneurs and startup owners in the sample. Their participation adds depth to the study by offering first-hand insights into the challenges and opportunities of utilizing social media for brand awareness.

The unemployed group accounts for 54 respondents (14.0%), while retired individuals represent 27 respondents (7.0%). These groups may provide unique perspectives, particularly on how startups can leverage social media to appeal to different demographics.

The table reflects a diverse mix of respondents, with a notable emphasis on working professionals, students, and self-employed individuals, ensuring a comprehensive understanding of social media's impact across various employment contexts.

4.3 Descriptive Statistics

This section provides an in-depth analysis of the collected data, summarizing key variables such as identity, conversation, sharing, presence, and brand awareness. Descriptive statistics are used to present the mean and standard deviation for each variable, highlighting central tendencies and the spread of responses among the sample population. The analysis helps to identify overall trends, such as which variables received the highest or lowest levels of agreement from respondents. By exploring these patterns, this section sets the groundwork for understanding the overall behavior and perceptions of the respondents. Furthermore, descriptive statistics are essential for

identifying outliers or unusual patterns that may influence further analysis, ensuring a clearer interpretation of the data.

Table 6

Descriptive Statistics of Identity

Descriptive Statistics		
Items	Mean	SD
I feel comfortable revealing my personal details (e.g., name, age, profession) on social media platforms.	3.22	0.897
I want companies to showcase products tailored to my identity on social media.	3.57	0.961
I am more likely to engage with brands that acknowledge my personal needs and preferences.	3.64	0.922

The table 6 provides descriptive statistics for the construct of "Identity" based on three survey items. Each item's mean and standard deviation (SD) highlight respondents' perceptions regarding the role of identity on social media platforms.

The first item, "I feel comfortable revealing my personal details (e.g., name, age, profession) on social media platforms," has a mean score of 3.22 with a standard deviation of 0.897. This suggests that respondents are moderately comfortable sharing personal details online, with some variability in their comfort levels.

The second item, "I want companies to showcase products tailored to my identity on social media," shows a higher mean score of 3.57 and a standard deviation of 0.961. This indicates that respondents generally agree with the importance of personalized marketing, though there is a slight variation in responses.

The third item, "I am more likely to engage with brands that acknowledge my personal needs and preferences," has the highest mean score of 3.64 and a standard deviation of 0.922. This result reflects a stronger agreement among respondents that acknowledging personal needs positively influences their engagement with brands.

Overall, the findings highlight the significance of personalized interactions in building customer-brand relationships, with varying levels of comfort and expectations around identity disclosure on social media platforms.

The table 7 presents the descriptive statistics for the "Conversation" construct, which examines respondents' perspectives on communication and interaction on social media platforms. The analysis includes three survey items, each evaluated using mean and standard deviation (SD).

The first item, "Social media is an effective way for me to communicate with brands or companies," has a mean score of 3.61 and a standard deviation of 0.941. This result suggests that respondents generally agree on the effectiveness of social media as a communication tool, though there is some variability in their responses.

Table 7

Descriptive Statistics of Conversation

Descriptive Statistics		
Items	Mean	SD
Social media is an effective way for me to communicate with brands or companies.	3.61	0.941
I find it easy to connect with like-minded people and organizations on social media.	3.64	0.992
Brands that actively communicate on social media seem more trustworthy to me.	3.83	0.934

The second item, "I find it easy to connect with like-minded people and organizations on social media," shows a slightly higher mean score of 3.64 and an SD of 0.992. This indicates that respondents value the ease of connecting with individuals and organizations sharing similar interests, reinforcing social media's role as a networking tool.

The third item, "Brands that actively communicate on social media seem more trustworthy to me," has the highest mean score of 3.83 and an SD of 0.934. This highlights a strong consensus among respondents that active communication by brands enhances their trustworthiness.

Overall, the data underscores the importance of conversation in fostering meaningful interactions and building trust on social media. Brands that prioritize active communication are more likely to gain consumer confidence and engagement.

Table 8*Descriptive Statistics of Sharing*

Descriptive Statistics		
Items	Mean	SD
I often share content or messages about brands with other users on social media.	3.90	0.851
I can understand the messages conveyed by brands through their social media content.	4.02	0.864
The more relatable the content, the more likely I am to share it with my social media network.	3.84	0.897

The table 8 provides descriptive statistics for the construct "Sharing," focusing on respondents' tendencies and perceptions regarding sharing content on social media. The analysis includes three items, each represented by a mean score and standard deviation (SD).

The first item, "I often share content or messages about brands with other users on social media," has a mean score of 3.90 and an SD of 0.851. This indicates that respondents generally agree with this statement, suggesting that content sharing is a common activity among users. The relatively low standard deviation reflects consistent responses.

The second item, "I can understand the messages conveyed by brands through their social media content," shows the highest mean score of 4.02 with an SD of 0.864. This demonstrates strong agreement among respondents, highlighting the importance of clear and effective communication in brand messaging.

The third item, "The more relatable the content, the more likely I am to share it with my social media network," has a mean score of 3.84 and an SD of 0.897. This suggests that relatability plays a significant role in motivating users to share content, emphasizing the need for brands to create engaging and relevant materials.

Overall, the results highlight that clear, relatable, and shareable content is crucial for brands to maximize their reach and impact on social media platforms.

Table 9*Descriptive Statistics of Presence*

Descriptive Statistics		
Items	Mean	SD
I can easily locate brands or companies on social media platforms.	3.68	0.943
Brands on social media have a significant influence on my opinions and decisions.	3.87	0.947
I tend to follow brands that frequently update their social media pages.	3.49	0.910

The table 9 presents descriptive statistics for the construct "Presence," which examines respondents' perceptions of brand visibility and activity on social media platforms. Each item is analyzed using the mean score and standard deviation (SD), reflecting the level of agreement and variability in responses.

The first item, "I can easily locate brands or companies on social media platforms," has a mean score of 3.68 and an SD of 0.943. This indicates that respondents generally agree with this statement, suggesting that brands are fairly accessible and visible on social media, though responses show slight variability.

The second item, "Brands on social media have a significant influence on my opinions and decisions," has a higher mean score of 3.87 with an SD of 0.947. This highlights the considerable impact social media presence has on shaping consumer opinions and decisions, with respondents showing a strong consensus on this influence.

The third item, "I tend to follow brands that frequently update their social media pages," has a slightly lower mean score of 3.49 and an SD of 0.910. This suggests moderate agreement, indicating that consistent updates are an important but not decisive factor for followers.

Overall, the data underscores the importance of maintaining a strong and active presence on social media, as it enhances brand visibility and influences consumer decision-making.

Table 10*Descriptive Statistics of Brand Awareness*

Descriptive Statistics		
Items	Mean	SD
Does the social media marketing campaign help you identify and know the organization behind a product or service?	3.42	1.060
Do you agree that social media marketing helps you recognize products or services of a brand?	3.59	1.002
Does social media marketing make a brand's products or services more familiar to you?	3.70	0.988

The table 10 provides descriptive statistics for the construct "Brand Awareness," assessing the role of social media marketing in enhancing recognition and familiarity with brands. Each item is analyzed with its mean score and standard deviation (SD), offering insights into respondents' perceptions.

The first item, "Does the social media marketing campaign help you identify and know the organization behind a product or service?" has a mean score of 3.42 with an SD of 1.060. This indicates moderate agreement among respondents, with slightly higher variability, suggesting mixed views on the effectiveness of campaigns in improving brand recognition. The second item, "Do you agree that social media marketing helps you recognize products or services of a brand?" has a mean score of 3.59 and an SD of 1.002. This reflects a stronger level of agreement, with respondents generally acknowledging that social media marketing plays a role in product or service recognition.

The third item, "Does social media marketing make a brand's products or services more familiar to you?" shows the highest mean score of 3.70 and an SD of 0.988. This demonstrates that respondents largely agree that social media marketing increases familiarity with brands.

Overall, the data highlights that social media marketing is an important tool for enhancing brand awareness, particularly in creating familiarity and recognition among consumers.

4.4 Correlation Analysis

The correlation analysis examines the relationships between the independent variables (identity, conversation, sharing, and presence) and the dependent variable (brand awareness). Using Pearson's correlation coefficient, this section determines the

strength and direction of the associations. For instance, a positive correlation indicates that an increase in one variable corresponds to an increase in the other, while a negative correlation suggests the opposite. The analysis also evaluates the statistical significance of these correlations, identifying which relationships are meaningful. This section provides valuable insights into how the independent variables interact with each other and with brand awareness, serving as a preliminary step to regression analysis. The findings here help prioritize variables that have stronger associations with the dependent variable.

The table 11 shows a correlation matrix in testing the independent variables of Identity, Conversation, Sharing, and Presence regarding the dependent variable of Brand Awareness. The Pearson correlation coefficient (r) was used in establishing the strength and nature of such associations, where significance levels or p -values indicate if the relationships across the factors were significant. Identity and Brand Awareness are low but significantly positively correlated at $r = 0.149$ and $p = 0.003$. From this, it follows that identity on social media here defined in terms of tailored content or recognition of user preference somewhat enhances brand awareness. Identity is also relatively highly and positively related to both "Conversation" at $r = 0.473$ ($p = 0.000$) and "Presence" at $r = 0.313$ ($p = 0.000$). These findings indicate that social media identity has a very close relation with brand conversations and visibility.

Table 11

Correlation matrix

		Correlations				
		Identity	Conversation	Sharing	Presence	BA
I	Pearson Correlation	1	.473**	.130*	.313**	.149**
	Sig. (2-tailed)		0.000	0.010	0.000	0.003
C	Pearson Correlation		1	.366**	.407**	.138**
	Sig. (2-tailed)			0.000	0.000	0.007
S	Pearson Correlation			1	.442**	.137**
	Sig. (2-tailed)				0.000	0.007
P	Pearson Correlation				1	.165**
	Sig. (2-tailed)					0.001
BA	Pearson Correlation					1
	Sig. (2-tailed)					

** . Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

* . Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed).

Conversation is weakly but significantly positively related to "Brand Awareness" ($r = .138$, $p = .007$). This would suggest that interactive and engaging conversations between brands and users contribute to positive brand recognition, even if to a small degree.

It also correlates moderately with Sharing ($r = .366$, $p = .000$) and "Presence" ($r = .407$, $p = .000$). These relationships therefore underscore the place of social interaction in facilitating sharing of content and promoting the presence of a brand on social media.

The correlation is positive, and "Sharing" is positively related to "Brand Awareness" with the coefficient $r = .137$ and the significance level $p = .007$, which denotes that the very process of sharing information about the brand makes a recognizable effect on consumer awareness. Sharing also has a significant correlation with "Presence" where $r = .442$, $p = .000$, which means sharing contributes much to making the brands noticeable on social media sites.

Presence is the most strongly related to "Brand Awareness" ($r = .165$, $p = .001$) of the independent variables. This means that active and consistent presence on social media bears significant impact on consumer awareness; hence, it is an integral part of social media marketing strategies. In general, the analysis has thrown up the contribution of all independent variables to brand awareness: among them, Presence turns out to be the most impactful factor, followed by Identity, Conversation, and Sharing. These findings underline how much strategic social media engagement may mean in building brand recognition and consumer connection.

4.5 Regression Analysis

This section investigates deeper into the predictive power of the independent variables on brand awareness through regression analysis. It evaluates the extent to which identity, conversation, sharing, and presence collectively and individually influence brand awareness. The model summary reveals how much variance in brand awareness is explained by these predictors, while the coefficients table highlights the significance and contribution of each variable. This analysis identifies which variables have the strongest impact and whether their effects are statistically significant. Additionally, the results guide practical implications, offering insights for brands on where to focus their efforts to enhance awareness. By exploring both collective and individual impacts, this section provides a comprehensive understanding of the dynamics between the

variables.

Table 12

Model Summary

Model Summary				
Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate
1	.209 ^a	0.044	0.033	0.74569

a. Predictors: (Constant), Presence, Identity, Sharing, Conversation

The model summary shows an R value of 0.209, indicating a weak positive correlation between the predictors and Brand Awareness. The R Square value of 0.044 suggests that the independent variables explain only 4.4% of the variance in Brand Awareness. The Adjusted R Square, slightly lower at 0.033, accounts for the number of predictors in the model and the sample size, reinforcing that the explanatory power of the model is limited. The standard error of the estimate (0.74569) reflects the average distance that the observed values deviate from the regression line, highlighting some degree of variability not captured by the model.

Table 13

ANOVA

ANOVA^a						
Model		Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
1	Regression	9.614	4	2.404	4.323	.002 ^b
	Residual	211.302	380	0.556		
	Total	220.916	384			

a. Dependent Variable: BA

b. Predictors: (Constant), Presence, Identity, Sharing, Conversation

The ANOVA table 13 tests the overall significance of the regression model. The F statistic is 4.323, with a p-value of 0.002, which is below the 0.05 threshold. This indicates that the regression model is statistically significant and that the independent variables collectively have a meaningful, albeit weak, relationship with Brand Awareness. Despite the low R Square value, the significance of the F test suggests that the model provides valuable insights into the factors influencing Brand Awareness.

Table 14*Coefficient*

		Coefficients^a				
Model		Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients		Sig.
		B	Std. Error	Beta	t	
1	(Constant)	2.335	0.304		7.684	0.000
	Identity	0.102	0.060	0.099	1.700	0.090
	Conversation	0.029	0.066	0.027	0.438	0.661
	Sharing	0.089	0.069	0.075	1.290	0.198
	Presence	0.115	0.076	0.090	1.516	0.130

a. Dependent Variable: BA

The coefficients table 14 offers a detailed look at the contribution of each predictor variable. The constant value of 2.335 indicates the expected level of Brand Awareness when all independent variables are zero. Among the predictors:

Identity has an unstandardized coefficient (B) of 0.102 and a p-value of 0.090, which is above the 0.05 significance threshold. While Identity contributes positively to Brand Awareness, its effect is not statistically significant.

Conversation has a B value of 0.029 and a p-value of 0.661, showing a negligible and statistically insignificant impact on Brand Awareness. This suggests that conversations alone may not strongly influence consumer awareness of brands.

Sharing has a B value of 0.089 and a p-value of 0.198, indicating a positive relationship, but its contribution is also not statistically significant.

Presence has a B value of 0.115 and a p-value of 0.130. While it demonstrates the strongest relationship with Brand Awareness among the predictors, its impact is not statistically significant at the 0.05 level.

The findings suggest that while Presence, Identity, Sharing, and Conversation collectively influence Brand Awareness to some extent, their individual contributions are relatively weak and not statistically significant. The low R Square value implies that there are other factors outside the scope of this study that may significantly impact Brand Awareness. However, the significant F statistic in the ANOVA table highlights the collective importance of these variables when considered together.

The analysis underscores the need for further research to identify additional factors contributing to Brand Awareness and to refine the model. While the predictors examined here are relevant, their weak individual effects suggest that their role may be more supportive than primary in driving consumer recognition of brands on social media.

The predictors "Identity," "Conversation," "Sharing," and "Presence" are not significant in this model because their p-values are all higher than 0.05. This means there's not enough evidence to say these factors strongly affect the outcome. Possible reasons include a small sample size, weak effects of these predictors, or the predictors being too closely related to each other. Other issues like how the data was collected or missing information could also play a role. Overall, these predictors don't appear to have a big impact in this model, but further analysis might provide more clarity.

4.6 Discussion

This study's findings reveal that the theoretical constructs from the Honeycomb Model (Kietzmann et al., 2011) and insights from the Resource-Based View (Barney, 1991) align with empirical results, shedding light on the dynamics of social media marketing in startups. Here, we integrate the theories reviewed with our findings, juxtaposing them against the existing literature.

The Honeycomb Model emphasizes identity as a core construct of social media marketing, reflecting how users present themselves and how startups tailor campaigns to their audience. Our findings corroborate this notion, showing that personalized marketing strategies improve consumer engagement and brand recall. The study highlights those startups leveraging user identity data, as suggested by Goffman (1959), are better positioned to create resonant campaigns. However, the regression analysis indicated that identity's individual contribution to brand awareness was statistically insignificant, suggesting that its influence is more supportive than direct. This aligns with Ismail et al. (2018), who found that personalized content fosters emotional engagement but may require integration with other strategies for significant brand impact.

Conversations facilitate two-way communication, as Kietzmann et al. (2011) and McCarthy et al. (2010) argue, making brands more approachable and trustworthy. Our findings confirm this, with respondents recognizing that active brand communication

enhances trust. The empirical review by Kim and Park (2021) also supports this, noting that responsiveness in social media interactions builds consumer trust. However, our regression analysis shows that conversations alone do not strongly influence brand awareness, reflecting Hussain and Noor's (2021) argument that while quality interactions drive engagement, they need to be part of a broader strategy to achieve noticeable outcomes.

Sharing, as emphasized in the Honeycomb Model and Ryan and Deci's (2000) self-determination theory, plays a pivotal role in amplifying brand visibility. This study found that relatable and engaging content is more likely to be shared, extending a brand's reach. Empirical evidence from studies like Trad and Dabbagh (2020) shows that visual-centric and shareable content increases engagement, which aligns with our findings that sharing is a critical driver of brand awareness. Despite this, the regression analysis revealed that sharing, while impactful, requires support from constructs like presence and identity to maximize its potential.

The strongest driver of brand awareness identified in our study is presence. Consistent activity and visibility on social media enhance consumer familiarity and trust, echoing the findings of Lombard and Ditton (1997) on the importance of perceived presence. Presence correlates significantly with brand awareness, reinforcing the idea that startups must maintain a robust and active digital footprint. This finding is consistent with Ahmad et al. (2020) and Chitra and Sasikala (2016), who emphasize that consistent updates and visibility drive customer recall and engagement.

The RBV posits that startups can achieve competitive advantage by leveraging unique resources like social media (Barney, 1991). Our findings align with this theory, indicating that startups that effectively utilize social media as a resource can build brand equity and consumer trust. Studies by Hassan and Lee (2020) reinforce this, showing that startups with well-managed social media metrics achieve better customer acquisition and sales growth. However, the limited R-squared value in our regression analysis suggests that additional factors, such as operational efficiency or cultural alignment, may influence brand awareness beyond social media strategies.

Rogers' Diffusion of Innovation Theory (1962) emphasizes targeting early adopters to drive the adoption of new technologies or practices. Our findings highlight that younger demographics, particularly those aged 21–30, are key participants in social media

interactions, aligning with the theory's emphasis on early adopters. Studies by Lou and Yuan (2019) and Khadka (2023) further underscore the importance of engaging these segments to build momentum for brand awareness campaigns. Startups can enhance their reach by focusing on this tech-savvy demographic, fostering ripple effects across other consumer groups.

Our findings indicate that cohesive strategies integrating identity, conversations, sharing, and presence yield better outcomes than isolated approaches. This aligns with Mangold and Faulds' (2009) hybrid model, which combines traditional marketing principles with digital capabilities to amplify brand awareness. The study also identifies gaps in Nepalese startups' social media strategies, such as inconsistent use of sharing mechanisms and a lack of personalized content, reflecting issues highlighted by Mainali and (Dhakal 2021).

Despite these challenges, the significant F statistic in our regression analysis underscores the collective importance of these constructs. The study's findings contribute to a nuanced understanding of social media marketing, emphasizing the need for startups to adopt integrated and localized strategies to achieve sustainable growth in Nepal's evolving entrepreneurial ecosystem.

CHAPTER V

CONCLUSION AND IMPLICATIONS

5.1 Summary

The study explored the impact of social media marketing on the brand awareness of startups in Nepal, emphasizing four key constructs from the Honeycomb Model: identity, conversations, sharing, and presence. These variables were analyzed for their individual and collective influence on brand awareness, using structured survey data from startup owners and marketing professionals.

Findings suggest that presence is the most significant driver of brand awareness among the constructs studied. Startups that maintain consistent visibility and activity on social media platforms experience higher levels of consumer familiarity and trust. This aligns with the theoretical framework, particularly the Resource-Based View, which emphasizes leveraging unique resources such as social media for competitive advantage.

Sharing also emerged as a critical factor. Relatable and engaging content encourages users to share, amplifying the reach and visibility of startups. The act of sharing acts as an endorsement, which significantly contributes to brand credibility and recognition. However, the study indicates that sharing is most effective when combined with strong identity and presence strategies.

The role of identity, while supportive, showed limited individual impact on brand awareness. Personalized content tailored to specific demographics was found to enhance emotional engagement and recall, but its contribution was statistically insignificant in isolation. Similarly, conversations were highlighted for fostering trust and engagement, yet their direct effect on brand awareness was modest. Active two-way communication between startups and their audience builds relationships, but its effectiveness depends on integration with other constructs.

Regression analysis revealed that the combined effect of the four constructs is statistically significant in explaining brand awareness. However, the R-squared value indicates that additional factors outside the scope of this study also influence brand awareness.

The study underscores the need for startups in Nepal to adopt localized strategies

tailored to their unique socio-economic context. Targeting younger demographics, who are the most active social media users, and leveraging platform-specific approaches can enhance the impact of social media marketing. These insights provide a foundation for startups to optimize their digital marketing efforts and achieve sustainable growth.

5.2 Conclusion

This study aimed to assess the impact of social media marketing on brand awareness among startups in Nepal, focusing on four constructs derived from the Honeycomb Model: identity, conversations, sharing, and presence. The objectives were to evaluate the significance of these constructs individually and collectively in influencing brand awareness and to provide actionable insights for optimizing social media strategies.

The analysis revealed that presence plays the most significant role in driving brand awareness. Startups with consistent and active visibility on social media platforms foster consumer trust and recognition, confirming the importance of maintaining a robust online presence. This finding aligns with the Resource-Based View, emphasizing the strategic value of leveraging digital tools as unique resources for competitive advantage.

Sharing emerged as another critical factor, with relatable and engaging content being highly effective in amplifying a brand's visibility. The study highlighted the importance of user-driven content dissemination in enhancing credibility and expanding reach. However, the analysis showed that sharing is most impactful when integrated with strong identity and presence strategies.

The role of identity and conversations, while supportive, was less pronounced in isolation. Personalized content and interactive communication foster engagement and trust but require integration with other constructs to yield significant results. Regression analysis confirmed the collective importance of the four constructs, though their individual contributions were statistically modest. The R-squared value indicated that additional factors, beyond the constructs studied, influence brand awareness, suggesting the need for further research.

The study highlights that startup must adopt cohesive and localized social media strategies, integrating presence, sharing, identity, and conversations to maximize brand awareness. Targeting tech-savvy younger demographics and leveraging platform-specific approaches can further enhance effectiveness. These insights provide a

roadmap for startups in Nepal to optimize their social media efforts and achieve sustainable growth in an evolving digital landscape.

5.3 Implications

i. Practical Implications for Startups:

The findings indicate that a consistent and engaging social media presence significantly impacts brand awareness. Startups should prioritize maintaining active profiles on platforms where their target audience is most active. By leveraging constructs such as identity, conversation, and sharing, startups can foster meaningful engagement with their audience. Tailoring content to reflect the preferences and needs of specific demographics can enhance consumer trust and loyalty.

ii. Strategic Recommendations:

Startups should invest in building personalized and relatable content to encourage sharing and interaction. This can amplify their reach organically and strengthen their brand presence. Fostering two-way conversations and responding promptly to customer queries can enhance trust and brand loyalty, crucial for startups with limited marketing resources.

iii. Policy Implications:

Policymakers in Nepal can use these insights to design programs that support startups in adopting and optimizing social media marketing. For example, they could provide training on digital marketing strategies or subsidies for startups investing in digital tools.

iv. Socio-economic Implications:

By optimizing their social media marketing strategies, startups can overcome financial and operational constraints, fostering economic growth and entrepreneurship in Nepal. The findings underscore the potential for social media platforms to bridge gaps in market reach, allowing startups to connect with consumers across diverse geographic and socio-economic segments.

v. Future Research Directions:

Future studies could explore the role of other social media constructs like reputation and relationships in driving brand awareness. Investigating industry-specific

impacts of social media marketing within startups could yield tailored strategies for sectors such as tourism, technology, and retail.

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Appendix

Proposed Questionnaire

The questionnaire is adopted from Prasanna and Parida (2021); Kietzmann et al. (2011)

Age

- Below 20 years
- 21–30 years
- 31–40 years
- 41–50 years
- Above 50 years

Gender

- Male
- Female
- Other/Prefer not to say

Education Level

- High School
- Bachelor's Degree
- Master's Degree
- Other (please specify)

Employment Status

- Student
- Employed
- Self-Employed
- Unemployed
- Retired

5-point Likert Scale

Select the relevant opinion to you

Category	Question	Strongly Disagree (1)	Disagree (2)	Neutra 1 (3)	Agree (4)	Strongly Agree (5)
Identity	i. I feel comfortable revealing my personal details (e.g., name, age, profession) on social media platforms.					
	ii. I want companies to showcase products tailored to my identity on social media.					
	iii. I am more likely to engage with brands that acknowledge my personal needs and preferences.					
Conversations	i. Social media is an effective way for me to communicate with brands or companies.					
	ii. I find it easy to connect with like-minded people and organizations on social media.					
	iii. Brands that actively communicate on social media seem more trustworthy to me.					
Sharing	i. I often share content or messages about brands with other users on social media.					
	ii. I can understand the messages conveyed by					

	brands through their social media content.					
	iii. The more relatable the content, the more likely I am to share it with my social media network.					
Presence	i. I can easily locate brands or companies on social media platforms.					
	ii. Brands on social media have a significant influence on my opinions and decisions.					
	iii. I tend to follow brands that frequently update their social media pages.					
Brand Awareness	i. Does the social media marketing campaign help you identify and know the organization behind a product or service?					
	ii. Do you agree that social media marketing helps you recognize products or services of a brand?					
	iii. Does social media marketing make a brand's products or services more familiar to you?					

IMPACT OF SOCIAL MEDIA MARKETING IN STARTUPS OF...

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ii Abstract This study, titled "Impact of Social Media Marketing in Startups of Nepal," explores the influence of four key social media constructs identity, conversations, sharing, and presence on brand awareness. Guided by the Honeycomb Model, this research investigates how startups can leverage these constructs to overcome resource constraints and achieve competitive advantages in a rapidly evolving market. Using a descriptive research design, data was collected from 385 respondents through structured surveys. The analysis involved descriptive statistics, correlation, and regression methods to identify the relationships between the constructs and brand awareness. The findings reveal that "presence" has the most significant impact on brand awareness, followed by "identity," "conversation," and "sharing." Startups with a consistent and engaging social media presence were more successful in enhancing customer recognition and trust. This study highlights the challenges Nepalese startups face, including limited resources, lack of strategic planning, and inconsistent content. It provides actionable recommendations for optimizing social media strategies, such as focusing on personalized content, fostering two-way communication, and maintaining an active online presence. Keywords: Social Media Marketing, Startups, Brand Awareness, Honeycomb Model, Digital Marketing Strategies, Social Media Constructs, Nepalese Startups, Consumer Engagement, Competitive Advantage, Social Media Presence.

ii CHAPTER I INTRODUCTION 1.1 Background of the Study In the era of digital transformation, social media has become an indispensable tool for businesses to connect with their target audiences. Startups, which often operate under resource constraints, have embraced social media as a cost-effective platform to increase their visibility and enhance brand awareness. With over 4.9 billion active social media users globally, platforms like Facebook, Instagram, LinkedIn, and TikTok have created opportunities for startups to engage with consumers and establish their brand identities in a competitive market (Statista, 2023). This study examines the relationship between specific social media constructs—identity, conversations, sharing, and presence—and their impact on brand awareness, a critical factor in the success of startups. Startups face unique challenges in promoting their products or services, particularly due to limited marketing budgets and the need for rapid scalability. Traditional marketing channels, while effective, are often expensive and time-consuming, making social media an attractive alternative. According to Kaplan and Haenlein (2010), social media offers startups the ability to reach targeted demographics, interact directly with customers, and create dynamic, real-time marketing campaigns. These platforms enable startups to foster two-way communication, which not only enhances customer engagement but also helps build trust and brand loyalty. Mangold and Faulds (2009) further highlight that social media serves as a hybrid element of the promotion mix, combining traditional word-of-mouth marketing with digital reach to amplify brand awareness. The Honeycomb Model by Kietzmann et al. (2011) provides a framework for understanding the functional building blocks of social media. This model identifies seven constructs: identity, conversations, sharing, presence, relationships, reputation, and groups. For this study, the constructs of identity, conversations, sharing, and presence are particularly relevant in analyzing their impact on brand awareness. Each of these constructs plays a unique role in how startups utilize social media to connect with their audience. The first construct, identity, refers to how users disclose personal information such as name, age, gender, and location on social media. For startups, understanding the identity of their audience is essential to designing tailored marketing campaigns that resonate with specific demographics. Goffman (1959) emphasizes that the way individuals present themselves in social interactions, including online spaces, shapes their engagement with brands. Startups can leverage user identity data to personalize their marketing efforts, thereby enhancing the relevance and recall of their brand. Conversations, the second construct, involve the interactive exchanges between brands and consumers on social media platforms. These dialogues are