

**EFFECT OF SOCIAL MEDIA COMMUNICATION ON  
CUSTOMER BASED BRAND EQUITY: A CASE OF NCELL**

**A THESIS**

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## DECLARATION

I certify that the work in this thesis has not previously been submitted for a degree nor has it been submitted as part of requirements for a degree except as fully acknowledged within the text. I also certify that the thesis has been written by me. Any help that I have received in my research work and the preparation of the thesis itself has been acknowledged. In addition, I certify that all information sources and literature used are indicated in the reference section of the thesis.

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## **ABBREVIATIONS**

BA	Brand Awareness
BBS	Bulletin Board System
BI	Brand Image/ Association
BL	Brand Loyalty
BQ	Brand Perceived Quality
CBBE	Customer Based Brand Equity
FCC/FC	Firm Created Communication
GDP	Gross domestic Product
GSM	Global System for Mobile
ICT	Information and Communications Technology
IMC	Integrated Marketing Communication
ITU	International Telecommunications Union
MIS	Management Information system
MoCIT	Ministry of Communication and Information Technology
NTA	Nepal Telecom Authority
NTC	Nepal Telecommunications Corporation
SMC	Social Media Communication
SPSS	Statistical Package for Social Science
UGC	User Generated Communication
UN	United Nation

# CHAPTER I

## INTRODUCTION

### **1.1 Background of the Study**

The advanced development of Information and Communications Technology (ICT) has transformed the relationship between the consumer and the product or service. Consumer could easily and quickly access timely information, search for their desired product or service and make a purchase decision without temporal and geographic restrictions. At the same time, brand marketers could use the same technology as a promotional tool with a variety of information and knowledge about the brand such as brand image, product feature, price and services. This reciprocity of marketing communications between consumer and the brand in today's world is marked by the computer technology, internet and the social media.

The explosive developments in communications technology and changes in marketer and customer communication strategies have had a dramatic impact on marketing communications. The new digital media have given birth to a new marketing communication model (Kotler, Silva, Armstrong & Haque, 2011). As a result, firms are adopting an emerging component of the integrated marketing communication that is, social media for their brand related communication. Web based technologies and social media tools have transformed the way firm communicate with their customers to build brand. Similarly, internet users are turning away from traditional media and are increasingly using social media to search for information (Mangold & Faulds, 2009).

With the emergence of internet based social media in recent years, the marketing communication environment has changed significantly. It allows one consumer connect and communicate with thousands of other consumer simultaneously about brands and product through social platform. The information flow nowadays is not only direct-controlled by marketers but also consumers.

Social media have a far greater capacity for reaching the general public than traditional media, such as television, radio, and magazines (Keller, 2008). It has become integral part of today's marketing communications because of its reach, timeliness, impact and cost-effectiveness. With the use of social media, Babac (2011)

states, organizations are now able to communicate directly with their consumers and engage in one-to-one conversations. They use social media to share, co-create, and discuss user-generated content (Kietzmann, Hermkens, McCarthy, & Silvestre, 2011). Similarly, social media empowers customers to express their perceptions about products or services in the public domain (Nasermoadeli, Severi, & Ling, 2014)

Moreover, social media channels are a cost-effective and an alternative way for companies to access and gather consumer-to-consumer communication (Godes & Mayzlin 2004).

In addition, rapid feedback and insight from consumers provide a mechanism for firms to assess customer opinion to improve products, customer service and brand perception. Monitoring the market, competitor and customers has become easier because of social media. Moreover, Firms are getting web traffic, increasing sales and creating revenue.

Nepal is currently at a time of historic transformation after the promulgation of new constitution with three levels of government i.e. federal, provincial and local. 'Economic Development and the Prosperity' has become one of the major goals of the constitution. There is a newfound optimism for greater political stability, inclusion, good governance and sustainable growth. The new federal structure presents unprecedented opportunities for Nepal to reset its development storyline. People are taking charge of driving the economy, the advanced development of information technology, identifying anything relating to their consumption habits and so on. This is a big advantage for companies to target their products and services with best information with best medium to reach customers. And, no brand in today's world can avoid the internet and social media.

### **1.1.1 Use social media in marketing communication**

Focus of the today's marketers is to place their brands in the mind of the customer. This is only possible through the process of branding. Keller (2008) defines, branding as all about creating differences and endowing products and services with the power of brand equity. Brand equity is the intangible assets of a firm which generates value to customers and provides the firm a space to adopt premium price. Similarly, differences in outcomes of a product or services can be created through the effectiveness

marketing communication. Marketing communications are the means by which firms attempt to inform, persuade and remind customers directly and indirectly about the brands they sell. Various communication options are available to the marketers. Marketers should mix and match communication options to build brand equity (Keller, 2008). Mix matching the available marketing communication option is known as the integrated marketing communication (IMC).

The goal of IMC is to integrate and coordinate multiple communication channels to deliver clear, consistent and compelling message about firm and its product. These channels or communication options as above stated include advertising, promotions, public relations, personal selling and direct marketing. IMC provides the option of sharing common meaning about a single brand through different communication channels. The visibility of the brand in different marketing communications, can positively influencing customers' opinions about the firm and its brands. This process of influencing opinions about the firm and its single brand is referred as brand communications. According to Yoo & Donthu (2001) brand communication is positively correlated with brand equity as long as the message drives customer reaction to the product in question, compared to a non-branded good in its product category.

The internet is hybrid media, in part it is a communication medium, allowing companies to create awareness, provide information and influence attitudes well as pursue other communication objectives (Belch and Belch, 2010). Social media are the set of online platforms such as blogs, discussion boards, forums or social networks, they provide opportunities for Internet users to create and share content. Moreover, social media is an effective marketing tool for firms. Kaplan, & Haenlein, 2010 state it is a phenomenon that has drawn a lot of attention to both companies and individuals interacting with the networking landscape.

Social media is also accepted as the new sources of online information where the information itself is —created, initiated, circulated and used by consumers for the purposes of educating each other about products, brands, services, personalities, and issues (Blackshaw & Nazzaro, 2004). In social media, user can express their opinion to millions of people in only seconds. One of the great advantages in today's online marketing and online social network arena is that companies can blend valuable

services with advertising and content: maximizing shareholder value and building stronger brand equity (Aaker 2011).

Knowing these features of social media Philip Kotler has said that, the Internet, social media and new communication technologies are major game changers in marketing. No company can afford to deceive customers without being quickly exposed on the Internet (Kotler, 2007).

According to the International Telecommunications Union (ITU), the specialized UN agency for information and communications technology, estimates that at the end of 2018, 51.2 percent of the global population, or 3.9 billion people, are using the Internet. There are strong linkages between digital adoption and GDP growth. According to a World Bank report, every 10% increase in internet penetration in a country, results in an incremental economic growth of 1.3% (World Bank, 2016). According to ITU, in developed countries, slow and steady growth increased the percentage of population using the Internet, from 51.3 per cent in 2005 to 80.9 per cent in 2018. In developing countries, growth has been much more sustained increasing from 7.7 per cent in 2005 to 45.3 per cent at the end of 2018. Of all ITU regions, 47 per cent of growth was reported in the Asia-Pacific region (ITU, 2018).

According to Global Digital Report 2019 by Hootsuite, a social media management platform the number of social media users worldwide in 2019 is 3.484 billion, up 9% year-on-year. With Facebook having the most daily active users compared to other social networks. Top brands on Instagram are seeing a per-follower engagement rate of 4.21% which is 58 times higher than on Facebook and 120 times higher than on Twitter (Hootsuite, 2019). Instagram has become a powerful platform for marketers and its potential cannot be overlooked any longer. 63% of customers actually expect companies to offer customer service via their social media channels, and 90% of social media users have already used social media as a way to communicate with a brand or business (Hootsuite, 2019). 78% of people who complain to a brand via Twitter expect a response within an hour (Lithium, 2016). Customers are turning to social media outlets to unleash their frustration or questions. Make sure you are actively engaged on your social networks.

There are now more than 50 million small businesses using Facebook Pages to connect with their customers, among them three million businesses actively advertise

on Facebook. That's three million companies from all over the world (Facebook, 2016). This seems marketers are attracted to communicate their offerings and programs with the customers through social media. They make not only presence in social media but also immediate interact with their fans and followers to maintain the relationship with them.

### **1.1.2 History of Social Media**

Facebook may have made social networking a worldwide cultural phenomenon, but it wasn't the first Internet Company to connect people online. And it won't be the last (Ortutay, 2012). In the early 2000s, the social media or SNS began to appear for the first time; however, the vision for a technical tool which connects people from different geographical locations who have common interests was the one that drove the evolution of the Internet back in the late 1960s (Keith, Lauren & Kristen, 2011).

In 1971 the first email was delivered. Electronic mail predates the inception of the Internet, and was in fact a crucial tool in creating it. In 1978 bulletin board system (BBS) was invented. It made possible to inform, make announcements and share information through postings. It was the beginning of virtual community. Geocities, launched in 1994, offered a way for people to build websites and tell the world about themselves with postings and photos (Ortutay, 2012). In April 2009, Yahoo! bought GeoCities (CNN, 1999).

Classmates.com is a social networking service created in 1995. The website created to connect former schoolmates with one another. In 2007, it had about 50 million users. Classmates.com still exists today, but is overshadowed by Facebook (Ortutay, 2012). Hotmail, one of the first web-based email services (Sharma, 2009), was launched in July 1996 as "HoTMaiL" (Hoy, 2017). It was acquired by Microsoft in 1997 and shortly after, it was rebranded as "MSN Hotmail".

The first recognizable social network site SixDegrees.com launched in 1997 that allowed users to create profiles, list their friends and surf the friends lists (Boyd & Ellison, 2007). While SixDegrees attracted millions of users, it failed to become a sustainable business and, in 2000, the service closed. Google Search, a web search engine, receiving several hundred million queries each day through its various services launched in 1998.

LiveJournal, pioneer of social networking communities, started in 1999 (LiveJournal, 2010). Blogger, on the other hand, began its life as a commercial blogging service in 1999. Created by Pyra Labs, the platform was later purchased by Google in 2003 and made freely available to the world (Gunn, 2019). This move pushed not just Blogger, but also the entire concept of blogging, into the main stream. Wikipedia, a free, collaboratively edited and multilingual Internet encyclopedia was launched on January 15, 2001 by Jimmy Wales and Larry Sanger (Miliard, 2008). Wikipedia originally developed from another encyclopedia project called Nupedia. Other collaborative online encyclopedias were attempted before Wikipedia, but none were as successful (Garner, 2011). Available in 303 languages, Wikipedia has 83,120,881 registered users and 1,145 administrators.

In 2002, social networking hit really its stride with the launch of Friendster. Friendster used a degree of separation concept similar to that of the now-defunct SixDegrees.com, refined it into a routine dubbed the “Circle of Friends,” and promoted the idea that a rich online community can exist only between people who truly have common bonds (Shah, 2016).

Originally launched in August 2003, Myspace incorporated many of the same features as Facebook and was especially popular with bands and musicians, who could share their music with others for free (Beare, 2018). The News Corporation acquired Intermix Media Inc., owner of MySpace.com, paying \$580 million in cash in 2005 (Siklos, 2005). From 2005 until early 2008, Myspace was the most visited social networking site in the world, attracting 75.9 million unique visitors a month at its 2008 peak (Mitchell, 2019).

LinkedIn was founded in 2002 and launched formally in 2003. LinkedIn has over 575+ million users, with more than 260 million monthly active users (Osman, 2019). LinkedIn is the most powerful marketing tool of the 21st century and there are three main reasons why — media, partnerships and clients (Chansamooth, 2017). WordPress, started in 2003, is a free and open source blogging tool and the most popular Content Management System (CMS). It is a largest self-hosted blogging tool in the world.

With 2.41 billion monthly active users as of the second quarter of 2019, Facebook is the biggest social network worldwide. In the third quarter of 2012, the number of

active Facebook users surpassed one billion, making it the first social network ever to do so (Clement, 2019). Founded in 2004, more than half of the user use mobile device for Facebook (Sengupta, 2012). Flickr, an image hosting website was launched in 2004. This service is widely used by bloggers to host images that they embed in blogs and social media (Terdiman, 2004).

YouTube made its debut on the Web in February 2005, making an unprecedented ascent into the mainstream consciousness (Ostrow, 2010). Twitter, social networking as well as microblogging service, was launched in 2006. As a real-time information network that connects to the latest stories, ideas, opinions and news. Twitter has 500 million active user and generate 340 million tweets a day (Twitter, 2012). Instagram is an online mobile social network photo-sharing, video-sharing, and social networking service launched in 2010. It allows users to take photos and videos, and share them either publicly or privately on its website or mobile app, as well as through a variety of other social networking platforms, including Facebook, Twitter, Tumblr, and Flickr. Apart from these, there are thousands of internet based social media networks which are connecting goods and services with consumers. Ostrow, (2011) estimates that between 1995 to 2011 June, the number of registered domains has gone from 15000 to 350000000.

### **1.1.3 Social Media Communication and Nepali Context**

Like other global organizations and brands, Nepali organizations are also in the way to make presence on the social media. Although the presence of the Nepali companies on social media is very low, some of the big brands are using social media effectively. However, its impact to grow their business and build brand equity has not been systematically studied till the date.

A recent Management Information system (MIS) report from Nepal Telecom Authority (NTA) states that the internet penetration rate as of May, 2019 is nearly 63% in Nepal (NTA, 2019). According to Ministry of Communication and Information Technology (2018), Nepal is expected to lead Internet penetration by 2025 in comparison to major economies such as China and India, given its growth trend over the next few years. The growing popularity of social media is a crucial driver for Internet adoption in Nepal, coming second only to Bhutan in South Asia in social media penetration.



According to alexa.com, a web analytic tool, Facebook is the top site browsing from the Nepal on date 5 June 2019. Furthermore, analyzing the top 10 sites in Nepal, social media sites are in the top rank. Among 10 top sites Facebook is in first, Google.com is in second and YouTube is in third rank. Similarly, Twitter and Wikipedia are in fifth and tenth rank respectively.

As of May 2017, there were more than 56,286 registered websites in Nepal, including 40,000 commercial websites. 15 Many business & organizations in Nepal started leveraging digital marketing to enhance their online presence on the Internet and promote their business globally (MoCIT, 2018). As of January 2018, Nepal has nearly 9.3 million Facebook users. Entertainment and video sharing are other popular use cases with more than 6.4 million registered users on YouTube (HootSuit, 2018).

According to socialbakers.com, Ekantipur, Ncell, BBC Nepali, US Embassy Nepal and Rekha Thapa, are the top five Facebook pages having largest audience on the date 5 July 2019. According to alexa.com, web analytic tools, Facebook is the top site browsing from the Nepal on date fifth June 2019.

The rapid growth of social media users and increasing of internet penetration in Nepal has catalyzed the stereotypical concept of traditional marketing and created the emergence of digital marketing in the country. Website development, social media marketing, content management, web design and e-mail marketing have vastly expanded in Nepal and have become one of the fastest forms of information dissemination (MoCIT, 2018).

In this way social media is being a major tool for brand communication among the global as well as Nepali brands and firms. There are many studies on impact of social media on brand equity done internationally, but not any work has been done on Nepalese firms and brands. Therefore this study conducted mainly to explore the effect of brand based social media communication in customer based brand equity. For the study purpose “the socind largest GSM mobile service provider of Nepal (NTA, 2018)” i.e., Ncell is selected to collect the data on brand based social media communication.

#### **1.1.4 Industry Profile**

“In Nepal, operating any form of telecommunication service dates back to 94 years in B.S. 1970 (NTA, 2005).” But formally telecom service was provided mainly after the establishment of Mohan Akashwani in B.S. 2005. Later as per the plan formulated in First National Five year plan (2012-2017); Telecommunication Department was established in B.S.2016. To modernize the telecommunications services and to expand the services, during third five-year plan (2023-2028), Telecommunication Department was converted into Telecommunications Development Board in B.S.2026.

After the enactment of Communications Corporation Act 2028, it was formally established as fully owned Government Corporation called Nepal Telecommunications Corporation (NTC) in B.S. 2032 for the purpose of providing telecommunications services to Nepalese People. After serving the nation for 29 years with great pride and a sense of accomplishment, Nepal Telecommunication Corporation was transformed into Nepal Doorsanchar Company Limited from Baisakh 1, 2061. Nepal Doorsanchar Company Limited is a company registered under the companies Act 2053. However the company is known to the general public by the brand name Nepal Telecom as registered trademark.

The National Communication Policy 1992 envisaged the concept of encouraging the private sector participation for providing telecommunication services to the public (NTA, 2005). The policy’s objective was “to meet policy’s objective to create a favorable environment in order to make the telecommunication services reliable and accessible to all people at a reasonable price.”

Government took initiation to encourage private sector in telecommunications three year after the introduction of communication policy. “His Majesty's Government of Nepal's (cabinet’s) decision dated December 25, 1995 had initiated the involvement of the private sector in the development of the telecommunication services (NTA, 2005).” “Nepal Telecommunications Authority was established on March 4, 1998 as an autonomous regulatory body in telecommunication (NTA, 2005).” It works within the framework of the Telecommunication Act 1997 and Telecommunication Regulation 1998.

After the necessity of an appropriate and up to date policy to use the possibilities and opportunities of telecommunications, “His Majesty's Government of Nepal has passed the Telecom Policy, 2004 replacing the older Telecom Policy, 1999 by the decision of the cabinet on March 8, 2004 (NTA, 2005)”

In the same year, Ncell (then Mero Mobile) was launched in Nepal. Spice Nepal Private Ltd. was established in 2004 as the first private GSM mobile operator in Nepal and launched its services under Mero Mobile brand in 2005. (Ncell, 2015). It was entered into the Nepali market offering its services under the brand name ‘Mero Mobile’. In March 2010, Mero Mobile rebranded to Ncell, followed by the change of the legal entity name from Spice Nepal to Ncell. Ncell (then Mero Mobile) broke the monopoly held by the state-owned Nepal Doorsanchar Company Limited. In October 2008, TeliaSonera acquired majority of its share in the company.

It broke the monopoly held by the state-owned telecommunications company, Nepal Telecom by building a new arena in cellular telephony services. The company is now owned in 80% by Swedish/Finnish TeliaSonera Holdings. Ncell Private Limited was previously known as Spice Nepal Private Ltd., established in the year 2004 with the license issued by Nepal Telecommunications Authority to operate GSM mobile services both Post- Paid and Pre-Paid in the country and commercially launched its services on September 17, 2005 in the capital valley and vicinity.

All the 77 districts of Nepal's seven provinces are covered by Ncell. Moreover, Ncell is gradually expanding its network coverage in various urban, semi- urban and rural areas of the country. According to Ncell (2012), it has adopted the approach that mobile communication is not a luxury but a necessity. It was the first in the market to launch a single rate tariff for all everywhere in Nepal. And it was also the first to introduce the Nepalese to a bundled offer (handset + tariff), and the latest Smartphone solutions.

According to Nepal Telecommunications Authority’s May 2019 MIS Report, there exist three GSM mobile service providers in Nepal. They are Ncell and Nepal Door Sanchar Company Limited. NTA MIS report states that Ncell is the second largest telecom operator in Nepal with 41% market share. While it’s major competitor Nepal Door Sanchar Company Limited has 54 % of market share. However, Ncell has been able to differentiate it from NTC by positioning itself as superior network quality.

Now NTC users also subscribe Ncell services for backup purpose. Likewise, people also differentiate Ncell from other as a brand having unique services which are still not been provided by other companies.

#### **1.1.4.1 Ncell Online Profile**

In the evolving business models, every company is required to have an online presence and online communication channels, for people to connect with the service. Nepali people and companies are also leveraging the benefits of IT and social media. Being telecom companies, Ncell must be forerunner into adopting new technology and encouraging new services. Ncell seems to be doing great within it.

In 2016, Nepal's second largest mobile service providers Ncell, had offered free unlimited browsing of the Twitter in, a micro blogging site and Wikikipedia, a largest digital library under the campaign 'Twitter Zero' and 'Wikipedia Zero'. Lunching this package, corporate communication director of Ncell has said, "Twitter Zero is our initiative to provide great value to our customers. It will empower our customers to express their thoughts and comment on others' opinion, thereby bolstering their rights of freedom of expression". In this way Ncell continuously involve social media and promoting among their user also.

Now, this month of July, Ncell has declared to celebrate the existence of social media and at the same time look into its role in today's youth, how life has transformed after the rise of social media and at the same time talk about some interesting and important issues around it. This means a constant presence -- physically and virtually.

Ncell have online presence in Facebook, Twitter, Youtube, and Instagram and also gaining popularity among social media users. Ncells's social media profile is presented in table 1.1. These activities show the vibes of Nepalese Online Community which if leveraged correctly would benefit companies.

Table 1.1 Ncell's Online Profile

	Link	Subscribers
Total Subscribers		16,489,945
Website	<a href="https://www.ncell.axiata.com/">https://www.ncell.axiata.com/</a>	
Facebook	<a href="https://www.facebook.com/ncell">https://www.facebook.com/ncell</a>	3,756,975
Twitter	<a href="https://twitter.com/ncell">https://twitter.com/ncell</a>	316,392
Instagram	<a href="https://www.instagram.com/ncell/">https://www.instagram.com/ncell/</a>	72,234
Youtube	<a href="https://www.youtube.com/ncell">https://www.youtube.com/ncell</a>	14,741
LinkedIn	<a href="http://www.linkedin.com/company/ncell">http://www.linkedin.com/company/ncell</a>	

## 1.2 Research Questions

Social media communication refers to the connections, relationships, interactions and effects formed between users and marketers within the social media platforms. Thus, this process simply involves the way connections are formed, information are disseminated and user (fans and followers) volunteer their efforts and time. Moreover, from marketing perspective, it is the interactions between the marketers and those interacting within the constructs via social media.

Social media is being a major tool for brand communication among the global as well as Nepali brands and firms. There are many studies on impact of social media on brand equity done internationally, but not any work has been done on Nepalese firms and brands.

The analysis of the effect of marketing communication program in social media platform on brand equity has been neglected.

The study has the following research questions :

- Do firm created brand based social media communication has any impact on Customer Based Brand Equity?
- Do user generated brand based social media communication has any impact on brand Customer Based Brand Equity?

### **1.3 Objectives of the Study**

The highly competitive market and the constantly changing marketing communication environment today lead to telecom brand invest more money to develop a good marketing communication program so that to build up a long relationship with their customers. Therefore, this study aims to determine the extent of which social media communication could influence brand awareness and brand image, which would in turn influence customer-based brand equity.

This study has two objectives:

- To measure the impact of Firm Created Social Media Communication on Customer Based Brand Equity (CBBE).
- To measure the impact of User Generated Social Media Communication on Customer Based Brand Equity (CBBE).

Aaker's brand equity model is been taken as the basis of the study to meet these objectives. The model states the four dimensions of costumer-based brand equity: brand awareness, perceived quality, brand association and brand loyalty. Thus, the study measured the effects of social media to create brand awareness, to improve perceived quality, to create brand association and to retain brand loyalty.

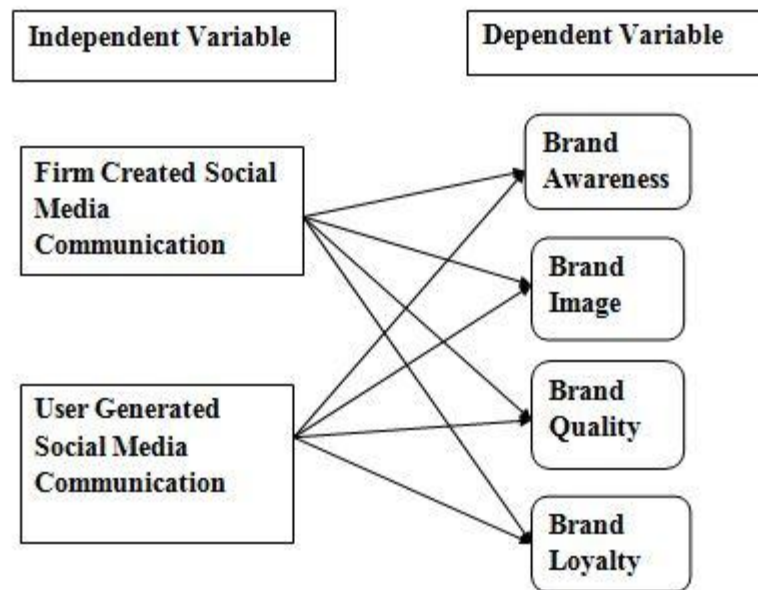
### **1.4 Conceptual Framework**

The conceptual framework in figure 1.2 is developed to analyze both brands and consumer communication activities which could affect the four dimensions of customer-based brand equity.

The proposed model consists of two steps. The first step relates to the source of marketing communication which is independent variable and generated solely by brands social media communication, and social media users. Literature indicates that the social media not only provides marketers with different gateways to communicate the feature of brands and interact with consumers but also increases the ability of

consumers to reach their favorable brands. Consumers could find the information from three sources including integrated marketing mix, firm-created messages and user-generated messages in social media platform.

**Figure 1.1 Conceptual Framework of the Study**



The second step encompasses the four dimensions dependent to communication source, the brand awareness, brand association, perceived value and brand loyalty, which are the important elements in the mindset of consumers contributing to customer-based brand equity. All in all, the above elements contributed by literatures are vital for hypothesis development in this study.

### **1.5 Hypotheses Development**

Brand communication strengthens brand equity of customers by enhancing the probability that a brand might be integrated with the consumer’s consideration mindset, which led to decrease the decision making time and changed that choice into their habit (Yoo et al., 2000). It could assume that the traditional and social media communication activities affect the brand equity.

The brand marketers usually promote their brands images healthy and positively via social media communication so that the consumers could perceive their brand

positively. Therefore, it is assumed that the positive attitude of firm-created messages social media brand communication positively affect customer-based brand equity. Similarly, apart from firm-created messages, the user-generated messages are extra products in social media, which are not controlled by brand marketers but social media users.

*H<sub>1</sub>: There is a significant impact of firm-created and User Generated social media communication on brand awareness.*

*H<sub>2</sub>: There is a significant impact of firm-created and User Generated social media communication on brand image.*

*H<sub>3</sub>: There is a significant impact of firm-created and User Generated social media communication on brand perceived quality.*

*H<sub>4</sub>: There is a significant impact of firm-created and User Generated social media communication on brand loyalty.*

## **1.6 Limitations of the Study**

While conducting any kind of research, there are a certain number of limitations that will ultimately affect the final outcome and the effectiveness of the study. In the process of this research, one of the important limitations to have affected the study is the time constraint. This study is simply a partial fulfillment of MBS degree and has to be finished within a short span of time. Therefore, it is natural to have several limitations, which can weaken the objectives of this study. Some of the limitations are as follows:

- i) The researcher feels that in order to make a more in-depth and conclusive study the time frame should be enhanced. With a longer timeframe, the researcher believes that more variables could be added to the framework to make it more precise than it already is.
- ii) The circumstances under which the study has been carried out can be called a limitation as well. As the social media landscape is continuous changing and evolving, the data collected today may not be relevant in the future.



- iii) Data collected from the individual understanding of the respondent. Respondents may provide wrong information. And there might be chance of response errors because of factors such as unawareness of the respondents, hesitation of respondents, misinterpretations, etc.
- iv) Only one telecom brand of Nepal is included in this study. Conclusions derived may not be necessarily applicable to other products and services.
- v) Sample size is very small in comparison to the population of the study.
- vi) This study is totally based on the views and responses received from consumers of Ncell, who has liked and followed Ncell's social media pages on Facebook and Twitter, YouTube, and Instagram only. The findings of the study may not be applicable for other products and services in other construct.

## **1.7 Organization of the Study**

The outline of the study is as follows:

### **Chapter 1: Introduction to the study**

This chapter presents the introduction to the study, the background to the study, research problem statement, limitations of this study and the research objectives. This chapter presents an overview of the social media communication scenario in global as well as Nepal. This chapter also gives the insight of telecom industry of Nepal.

### **Chapter 2: Literature review**

This chapter presents an overview of literature on branding and brand management. It provides the context within which brand equity measurement should be assessed. The empirical research findings the effect of firm created and user generated social media communication on customer based brand equity are presented.

### **Chapter 3: Research methodology**

This chapter presents the research methodology, the development of the sample frame, and the statistical techniques used in the analysis and presentation of the data.

### **Chapter 4: Analysis and Presentation of data**

The analysis of the research results and research findings are presented in this chapter. It consists of useful and meaningful information generated by statistic software. The 23rd version of Statistical Package for Social Science (SPSS) is used for data analysis, in which descriptive statistic, linear regression and correlation are adopted in this study as an analysis method.

### **Chapter 5: Conclusion**

The interpretation of the research findings and the conclusion re presented in this chapter also contains recommendations on how brands can improve customer- based brand equity through social media communication in the defined target market.

## CHAPTER II

### LITERATURE REVIEW

#### 2.1 Background

The review of literatures on Social Media Communication (SMC) and its Effect on Customer Based Brand Equity (CBBE) reveals that several contributions have been made by scholars from different country contexts, sectors, product lines and perspectives using variety of research methodologies. The concept of brand equity was initially brought into the business literature during the 1980s and gained significant attention from academic scholars during the 1990s. With the invention of the Internet and Internet based technologies, the later scholars have been focused their studies on how Web 2.0 and the social media affect the relationship between the brand and the customers.

Selecting and interpreting the significant contribution of existing literature from home and abroad, this chapter tries to shed light on the effect of firm created communication and user generated communication on customer based brand equity dimensions. The first section describes the meaning of brand, customer-based brand equity and its related dimensions. The second section describes how the changes of communication process affect the power of marketers in controlling the brand information to customers. Finally, the third section lists previous research done in these areas.

#### 2.2 Overview of Brand and Brand Equity

Rivkin & Sutherland (2004) quoted Walter Landor as saying "Products are created in the factory, but brands are created in the mind" (p. ix). This popular saying does not only indicates the distinction between the concept of product and the brand, but also how brand is associated with cognitive and behavioral function. A product, according to Keller (2003), can be anything that is offered to the markets'attention, use or consumption (such as a social cause, a bank or a car) in an attempt to satisfy a need or a want. On the other hand, a brand adds other dimensions that differentiate the product in some way from other products designed to satisfy the same need (Keller, 2003).

Kotler (1988) defines brand as a distinguishing name, term, sign, symbol or design (such as logo, trademark or package design) - or a combination of the all - which intends to identify the goods or services of one seller or a group of sellers, and to differentiate those goods and services from those of the competitors. Similarly, Business Dictionary (2019) defines brand as a unique design, sign, symbol, words, or a combination of these, employed in creating an image that identifies a product and differentiates it from its competitors. Over the time, this image becomes associated with a level of credibility, quality, and satisfaction in the consumer's mind. From the above definitions one can conclude that a brand is – a name, a term, a symbol, or any other unique element of a product that identifies one firm’s products and sets them apart from the competition. In marketing, it is the symbolic embodiment of all the information connected with a product or service. Thus brands help harried consumers in crowded and complex marketplace, by standing for certain benefits and value.

The number of companies that began to recognize —brand as their most marketable asset and as an invaluable source of competitive advantage has been increasing over the last few decades (Aaker, 1991). The term, “brand equity” became one of the most important marketing concepts since 1980s. According to Aaker (1991), it is a set of brand assets and liabilities linked to a brand, its name and symbol, that add to or subtract from the value provided by a product or service to a firm and/or to that firm’s customers. Aaker (1991) further presents five categories of brand assets (liabilities) linked to a brand’s name or symbol that add to (subtract from) the value provided by a product or service.” Brand equity has been studied for two reasons. The first reason is to evaluate a brand, especially to estimate the value of a brand for financial purposes or business arrangements such as mergers and acquisitions. The second reason is to enhance marketing output by understanding consumers’ the knowledge about the brand and to develop appropriate brand strategies.

Aaker (1996) introduced a new model for measuring brand equity: “the Brand Equity Ten”. This model included customer-based brand equity constructs, such as awareness, associations, perceived quality, perceived value, loyalty, and satisfaction, as well as market behavior measures, such as market share, market price and distribution coverage. Solomon and Stuart (2002), for instance, explained brand equity as the value that a brand has for a particular organization or company. As they put it, for a firm, brand equity provides a competitive advantage because it gives the

brand the power to capture and hold onto a larger share of the market and to sell at prices with higher profit margins.

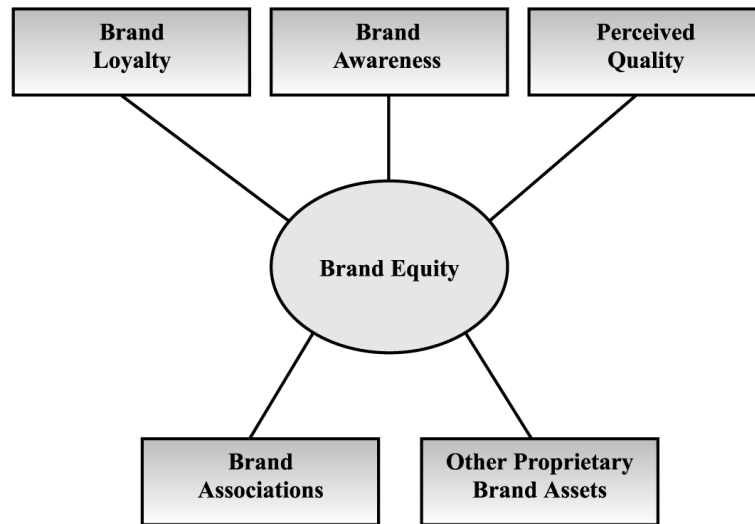
Another model of brand identity prism by Kapferer (2004) raises the issue of why brand strategy and brand management are so important. He discusses how connections with brands are in every part of our society and penetrate all spheres of life, including, economic, social, and cultural, sports and even religion. According to Kapferer (2004), in order to form a brand to stay strong it must be true to its identity and to avail the brands inner most substance. The six facets of brand identity are stated by Kapferer as brand physique, personality, culture, relationship, reflection and image.

Brand equity is one of the most important assets that an organization can have. Through brand equity, firms enjoy customer loyalty, ability to pursue brand extension strategies and competitive advantage (Aaker, 1991). Similarly, Keller (1993) proposes that enhancing brand equity results in the ability to command larger margins from consumers, improved marketing communication effectiveness, licensing opportunities, and increased consumers' responsiveness to brand extensions. Moreover, brand equity exist when the consumers have a high level of awareness and familiarity with a brand and hold some strong, favourable and unique brand associations their memory (Keller, 2003). Simon and Sullivan (1993) reviewed Keller's study approaches of brand equity from a marketing perspective as opposed to a financial one that measures brand equity in market based monetary terms. When brand equity is approached from a marketing or consumer perspective, Keller (1993) notes it is referred as consumer-based brand equity. Therefore, this study will refer to brand equity as consumer-based brand equity for the rest of the research.

### **2.3 Consumer-Based Brand Equity**

Different conceptualizations of brand equity have been measured by various researchers. Aaker (1991) view brand equity as a multidimensional concept which is made up of different brand elements. He explained those elements as brand awareness, brand association, perceived qualities, brand loyalty and propriety assets. The first element brand awareness has to do with the ability of a potential buyer to identify a brand among a product category. Similarly, second element brand association is anything that is connected in a consumer's memory of a brand. The

third, perceived quality, deals with the consumer's perception of the brand's total quality or superiority. Fourth, brand loyalty has to do with the level of devotion a consumer has to a brand. Finally, the other proprietary brand asset has to do with patents and trademarks. Aaker (1991) concluded that creating brand equity, that is, building a strong brand, is a successful strategy for differentiating a product from competing brands.

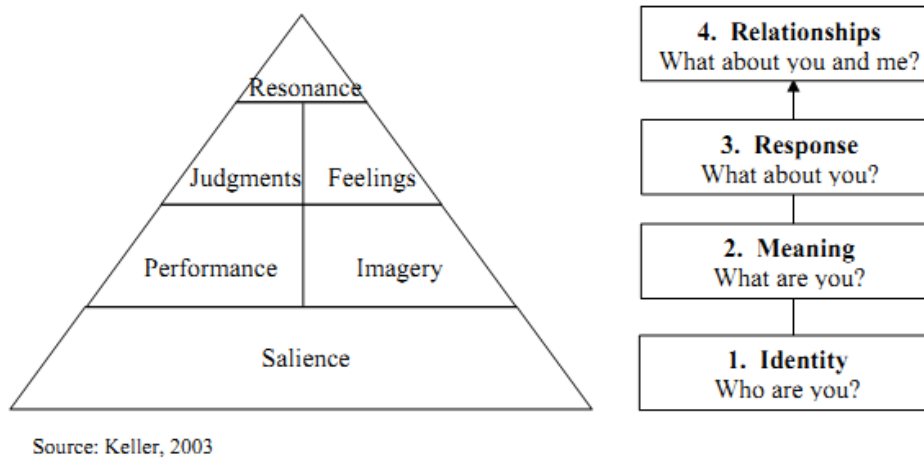


Source: Aaker (1991)

**Figure 2.1 Consumer Based Brand Equity (CBBE) Model By Aaker**

A similar conceptualization was proposed by Keller (1993). He proposed two dimensions of Consumer Based Brand Equity (CBBE) : brand knowledge and brand awareness. Furthermore, Keller (1993) defined it as the differential effect of brand knowledge on consumer response to the marketing of the brand. In other words, the differentiation effect is determined by comparing consumers' reactions to the marketing of a brand with their reactions to same marketing of an unnamed version of the product. He highlighted two brand equity constructs: brand knowledge and brand response. Brand knowledge has been defined in terms of brand awareness and image, while brand response to marketing has been conceptualized in terms of consumer perceptions, preferences, and behavior arising from marketing mix activities.

### Keller's Customer-Based Brand Equity Pyramid



**Figure 2.2 Consumer Based Brand Equity (CBBE) Model By Keller**

As Keller (1993) puts it, by building brands and creating brand images, companies support positioning and differentiation of their products in addition to establishing an extra value that transcends the value of the physical product itself. Therefore, in order to create a successful brand, it is important for the marketers to carefully choose from the number of brand elements that help identify their product and create unique brand associations.

The following sub-sections will explain Aaker's (1991) four dimensions of CBBE : brand loyalty, brand awareness, perceived quality and brand associations.

## 2.4 Dimensions of CBBE

### 2.4.1 Brand Awareness

According to Keller (2003) brand awareness dimension is about —the consumers' ability to recall and recognize the brand as reflected by their ability to identify the brand under different conditions and to link the brand name, logo, symbol, and so forth to certain associations in memory. Keller (1993) argued that “brand recognition may be more important to the extent that product decisions are made in the store”. In other words, brand awareness is about the strength of a brand in the mind of its target audience along a continuum (Aaker, 1996).

Aaker (1991) defines brand awareness as —the ability of a potential buyer to recognize or recall that a brand is a member of a certain product category. (Whereby) A link between product class and the brand is involved. Thus, brand awareness can be broken into brand recognition and recall (Keller, 1993). Aaker (1996) emphasizes that while for new or niche brands, recognition can be important; for well-known brands, brand recall and top-of-mind are more significant. Thus, Brand awareness can be referred as the degree of consumers' familiarity with a brand.

Many researchers have seen brand awareness as an element that plays a vital role in consumer's choice of brand. The study by Lin and Chang (2003), established that brand awareness had the most powerful influence on consumers purchase decision. Similarly, Lin and Chang (2003) examined the importance of brand awareness in consumer's decision making process. The study found out that brand awareness was a primary factor in determining consumer's decision making.

#### **2.4.2 Brand Association/Image**

Keller (1993) argues brand image as a perception or association consumers form as a result of their memory concerning a product. Brand image, can also be referred as, the emotional perception or reason that consumers place to a particular brand (Low and Lamb Jr., 2000). Similarly, Blackwell et al. (2001) referred brand image as the combined effect of brand association or consumers perception of the “brands tangible and intangible association”.

Marketing researchers such as Keller (1993) has proposed that brand image is an important element of brand equity. Krishnan (1996) found out that brands with high brand equity are prone to more positive brand associations than those with low brand equity. Likewise, Lassar et al. (1995) has found out that brand with high brand image rating always have higher brand equity and premium price. Similarly, Kwon & Hee(1990) reported that positive brand image is most likely associated with preferred brands.

For Aaker (1991), brand association is "anything linked to the memory of a brand". However, brand associations are not limited to all brand-related thoughts, feelings, perceptions, images, experiences, beliefs and attitudes (Kotler & Keller 2006). As one of the most important dimensions of CBBE, in Aaker's (1991) opine, they correspond



to the basis for purchase decisions and for brand loyalty. He underlines that associations help consumers generate or verify information about a particular brand, position the brand, provide a purchase reason, and create positive feelings. Moreover, when brand associations are unique, they help differentiate the brand from its competitors and provide organizations with sustainable competitive advantage (Keller, 2003).

In one hand, consumers continually form and update their subjective perception of a brand by obtaining new information from their environment. On the other, hand these subjective perceptions may lead to rational or emotional considerations - therefore formation of certain beliefs about a brand. Thus, according to Aaker (1992) brand associations are formed when these sets of subjective perceptions and beliefs about a brand, are organized in some meaningful way. Researchers have proposed that brand equity is to an extent driven by the brand association composition of the image. Keller (1993) states that favorable, unique and strong associations are assumed to provide a positive brand image which will create a bias in the mind of consumers thereby increasing the brand equity.

Pitta and Lea (1995) also stated that a unique, favorable and strong brand image allows the brand to be easily differentiated and positioned in the consumers mind, thereby adding to the possibility of increased brand equity. Thus, brand image does not exist in the features, technology or the actual product itself, it is sometimes brought out by advertisement, promotion or users. Brand image enables a consumer to recognize a product, lower purchase risks, evaluate the quality and obtain certain experience and satisfaction out of product differentiation.

### **2.4.3 Perceived Quality**

Perceived quality dimension of the CBBE model represents —consumer's perception of the overall quality or superiority of a brand - with respect to its intended purpose- relative to its alternatives available in the market (Aaker, 1991). In other words, perceived quality of a brand is based on consumers' subjective evaluations of a brand. According to Zeithaml (1988) perceived quality can be studied in two parts; intrinsic attributes and extrinsic attributes. The intrinsic attributes are about the physical aspects of a branded product (i.e. color, flavor, appearance) and increasing the perceived value of intrinsic values are almost directly related to creating strong,

favorable and unique brand associations. Whereas extrinsic attributes are about more intangible aspects of a brand such as the name, stamp of quality, store, packaging and production information. Therefore improving perceived quality for these attributes bound to require more effort to increase perceived quality than resorting to desirable brand associations (Zeithaml, 1988).

Low and Lamb (2000) highlight that perceived quality is essential factor behind the argument that strong brands add value to consumers' purchases. And also Low and Lamb Jr. (2000) referred to perceived quality as the perception of the superiority of a brand when compared to alternative brand.

Szymanski and Henard (2001) argued perceived quality as one of the antecedents of satisfactions. Like brand association, perceived quality provide consumers with value and give them reason to differentiate a brand from another. Justified by Researchers such as Carmen (1990), Parasuraman et al. (1988), perceived quality can said to have a positive effect on customers purchase intention. Although there are inconsistencies on the available empirical evidence for example, Boulding et al. (1993) considered service quality as one of the factors leading to purchase intention. However, Cronin and Taylor (1992) stated that direct effect was not significant whereas there was an indirect effect which rose from satisfaction. Taylor and Baker (1994) speculated that perceived quality linked with satisfaction has an effect on consumers purchase intention. As it relates to the willingness to pay a price premium, brand choice and brand purchase intention, Aaker (1996) and Keller (1998) stated that perceived quality is a core dimension of customers based brand equity.

#### **2.4.4 Brand Loyalty**

According to Aaker (1991), brand loyalty is “the attachment that a customer has to a brand”. Yoo and Donthu (2001) also referred to brand loyalty as the tendency to be loyal to a brand and this can be shown by the intention of the consumer to buy the brand as a foremost choice. Similarly, Oliver (1999) defined brand loyalty as “deeply held commitment to re-buy or re-patronize a preferred product/service consistently in the future, thereby causing repetition of same-brand or same brand set purchasing, despite situational influence and marketing efforts having the potential to cause switching behaviors”.

Brand loyalty has been studied in marketing literature from both attitudinal and behavioral perspectives. Odin et al. (2001) stated that brand loyalty can either be behavioral or attitudinal. Behavioral loyalty comprises of repeated purchases of the brand. Dekimpe et al. (1997) presented that one advantage of this is that it measures observable behaviors rather than self reported disposition or intention. It is easier and cheaper to measure. Chaudhuri and Holbrooks (2001) stated that attitudinal loyalty can be referred to as the extent of dispositional promises with respect to some particular advantages connected with the brand while behavioral loyalty has to do with the intention to repeat a purchase. Aaker (1991) classified loyalty as non-customer, price switcher, passive loyal, fence sitters and committed. Kotler (2002) also classified loyalty to include switchers, soft-core, hard-core loyal and shifting loyal.

On the other hand, researchers who adopted attitudinal perspective, define brand loyalty is as 'the tendency to be loyal to a focal brand, which is demonstrated by the intention to buy the brand as a primary choice' (Yoo & Donthu, 2001; Oliver, 1999). Aaker (1991) defines brand loyalty as the attachment that a customer has to a brand. Brand loyalty is closely linked to brand awareness, where consumers' interest in a product or service is actually about the brand (Keller 1998).

Lassar et al. (1995) noted "greater confidence that consumers place in a brand than they do in its competitors the more loyal they would be towards that brand and the more willing they would be to pay a premium price." Thus, consumer's perceptions about the quality of a brand are presumed to be high when they have strong association with the brand and vice versa.

## **2.5 CBBE in the service context**

There are several CBBE models in the marketing literature that have been developed to explain how consumers evaluate and behave toward brands (Aaker, 1991, 1996; Aaker & Keller, 1990; Berry, 2000; Kapferer, 2008; Keller, 1993). Among others, Aaker's brand equity model (1991) is the most referenced and operationalised. It is noticed that most researches (Yoo et al. (2000); Washburn and Plank, (2002); Kim and Kim (2005); Chen and Chen (2010); Çifci et al. (2016) have been surveyed these four dimensions of customer based-brand equity (brand awareness, brand associations, perceived quality and brand loyalty) have suggested

that they all have influence on consumer. This model is operationalised in both products and services contexts. Different scholar did empirical tests and validated the Aaker (1991) model in the context of different product and services brand. Such as, Yoo & Donthun (2001), conducted empirical tests in the context of three product categories (athletic shoes, film for cameras, and color television sets). Yoo and Donthun (2001) has employed four of Aaker's component of brand equity i.e. brand awareness, brand loyalty, perceived quality and brand association excluding proprietary assets dimension. Brand equity, specifically consumer-based brand equity, can be measured according to four elements: brand loyalty, brand awareness, perceived quality, and brand association Washburn and Plank (2002) conducted empirical tests in the context of different brands and combination of brand in a co-branding context. According to Washburn and Plank (2002), the element of other proprietary brand assets is not appropriate to measure consumer-based brand equity. Here, consumer-based means that "cognitive and behavioral brand equity at the individual consumer level through a consumer survey" (Yoo & Donthun, 2001).

Similarly, Kim and Kim (2005) conducted empirical tests in the context of Luxury hotel chain restaurant, Chen and Chen (2010) in Airline Taiwa, Çifci et al. (2016) in retail brands, Pike and Bianchi (2016) in Tourism and Hospitality Sectors and Rao Umer Nasir et al in the context of telecom brand. These studies argued that the model is applicable to both product and service brands setting.

In Nepali context, Shrestha (2012) conducted a survey research in the context of diary milk brands and suggested that brand awareness, brand association, perceived quality and brand loyalty are influential dimensions of brand equity in Nepali context. Similarly, Khanal and Lamichhane (2018) studied Customer-Based Brand Equity of Star Hotels in Nepal. They concluded that brand image, brand loyalty and perceived quality have a positive impact on brand equity, hence, significantly contributing to the customer based brand equity.

**Table 2.1 List t of Literature related to customer-based brand equity**

Definition and Key Ideas of Brand Equity theories		
Authors	Definition	Components
Aaker (1991)	Brand Equity is added value to firm and consumer	Brand loyalty, Brand name awareness, Brand associations, Perceived quality, Other proprietary brand assets
Keller (1993)	Consumer-based brand equity differential effect of brand knowledge on consumer response to the marketing of the brand.	Brand awareness, Brand association
Kapferer (2004)	Brand has a duty to be faithful to its identity	Physical features, Brand personality, Culture
Yoo, Donthu & Lee (2001)	Adopted Aaker (1991) model	Brand awareness, Brand associations, Perceived quality, Brand loyalty
Washburn (2002)	Adopted Aaker (1991) model	Brand awareness, Brand associations, Perceived quality, Brand loyalty

## **2.6 Communication: Traditional VS New**

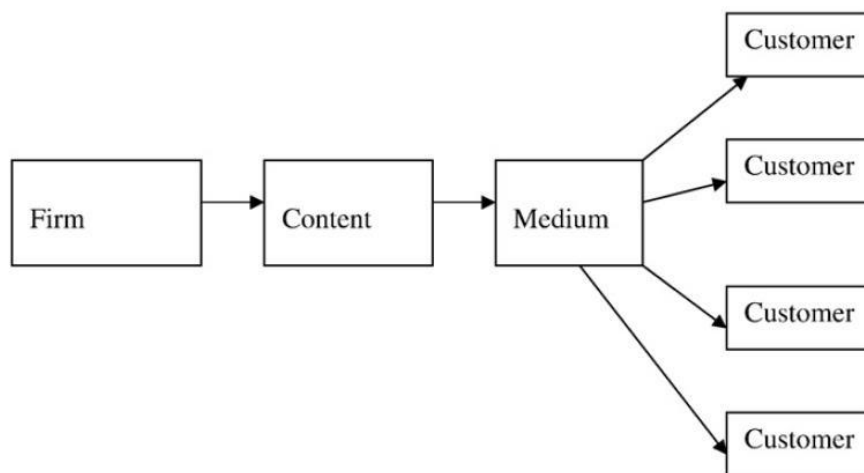
### **2.6.1 Traditional communication Channel**

In the traditional communication model, the marketer had power in the marketplace to control the communication flow from sender, the brand, to many receivers, the consumers (Winer, 2009; Schultz & Barnes, 1999). The marketers communicated with a group of consumers or potential customer via marketing mix, in which no interaction existed between them (Keller, 2009). Schultz and Barnes (1999) mentioned that the information technology in this traditional model allowed marketer direct the product and service information available in the media and channel. The marketer could decide the degree of product or service content exposed in the marketing program (Schultz & Barnes, 1999).

Based on the series of provided information from marketers in the traditional communication model, individual customers would interact between each other by face to face communication and share feedback about the product and service

(Hoffman & Novak, 1996). Due to the geographic constraints, Mayzlin (2006) suggested that the feedback with little dissemination from customers in the market generally had little effect on brand image. Therefore, Glynn Mangold and Faulds (2009) indicated that marketer had high control of the communication process in the marketplace, in which the positive brand image, product and service were usually presented to consumers.

Figure 2.3: Traditional mass communications model proposed by Winer (2009)



To communicate with consumers effectively, marketer employed various mass media with marketing communication program to represent the voice of brand (Kellen, 2010). Before mid-1990s, traditional communication channels including television, radio, print advertisement, magazine, newspaper, email, physical store and trade fair were widely used in marketing communication mix, which are advertising, personal selling, public relations, direct marketing and sales promotion, to produce consumer-oriented messages and achieve company goals (Kolter & Kellen, 2007; Boone & Kurtz, 2007). Kellen (2010) mentioned that the traditional communication channel featured one to many communications could provide marketers with high control of the message. The content of messages formulated by marketers could clearly transmit to consumers without further altered.

### 2.6.2 New Communication Flow

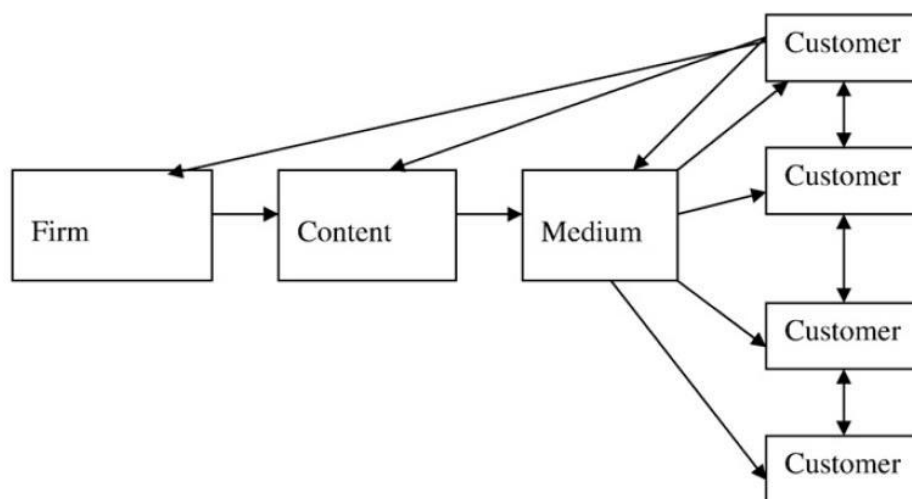
In the digital era, the nature of communication focused on interactivity and digital and the power to control communication process in the marketplace has been partly shift from marketers to consumers (Winer, 2009). Scholar claimed that the consumers now

become important role in the internet retail environment because of the advanced information technologies.

According to modified mass communication model provided by Winer (2009), Figure 2.1 showed that consumers could communicate with the company, the media and other users by burgeoning social media such as social networking. Bashir, Ayub & Jalees (2017) concluded that through social media communications marketing managers tend to stay connected with their loyal consumers. Moreover, this helps them (marketers) to learn more about consumers' perception and attitude towards their brand and services.

Schultz and Barnes (1999) explained this advanced information technologies empowered consumers to increase interactivity between each other, access the brand profile easily and compare difference of product and service from a wide range of brands without time and location limit. This information accessed by consumers recently was not only provided by marketers via traditional marketing mix but also based on experience from other consumers (Mangold & Faulds, 2009). Therefore, the rise of social media changed the communication flow led to marketers losing their control of the “groundswell” (Li & Bernhoff, 2008) about the brand that might impact consumer behavior, which increased the difficulty to marketers to coordinate the messages from various media.

Figure 2.4: Modified mass communications model proposed by Winer (2009)



### **2.6.2.1 Social Media**

Social media is a group of Internet-based applications that build on the ideological and technological foundations of Web 2.0, and that allow the creation and exchange of user-generated content (Kaplan and Haenlein, 2010). Social media is a modern communication tools with possibility of international reach.

Social media consist of electronic communications that allow individuals to shift fluidly and flexibly between the roles of audience and author. Social media communications are created in a group/ social way as opposed to being created by journalists, editors or media conglomerates. Social media is created using software which does not require extensive technological knowledge and is designed to facilitate rapid communication to a large audience (Thornley, 2008).

Mangold and Faulds (2009) describe —social media as the set of online word of mouth forums which includes blogs, discussion boards, forums or social networks to name a few. Adetunji, Rashid & Ishak (2018) reveled that social media advertising, social media promotions and social media word-of-mouth have positive relationships with the CBBE of automotive brands in Malasia. Using all mobile and web-based technologies, social media creates highly interactive platforms by bringing together individuals and creating communities. People and organizations use social media to share, co-create, and discuss user-generated content (Kietzmann et al., 2011). Moreover, social media is accepted as the new sources of online information where the information itself is created, initiated, circulated and used by consumers for the purposes of educating each other about products, brands, services, personalities, and issues‘ (Blackshaw & Nazzaro, 2004).

Currently internet has a diverse ecosystem of social media sites. These sites vary in terms of their scope and functionality. Some social media sites are for the general masses (i.e. myspace, facebook) while others (i.e. LinkedIn, Xing) are focused on professional networks. Media sharing sites (i.e. YouTube, Picassa and Flickr) or blogging platforms (i.e. blogspot, wordpress) are also members of this ecosystem called social media (Kietzmann et al., 2011). Similarly, micro-blogging and location specific micro-blogging have joined the social media family (i.e. Twitter, Foursquare) by offering real-time updates on people and organizations within a limited space of 140 characters per message. Most recently, social media video app, TikTok is getting



popular for creating and sharing short lip-sync, comedy, and talent videos which is being already used by popular brands.

### **2.6.2.2 Basic forms of Social media**

Social media include services such as virtual social networks (Facebook), personal journal (i.e. blog) services (Blogger, Wordpress), instant micro-blogging systems (Twitter), virtual worlds (Second Life), social photo, video and audio sharing websites (YouTube, MySpace), and message or conversation boards. Antony Mayfield (2008), Head of Content & Media at iCrossing finds that at this time, there are basically six kinds of social media. Note, though, that innovation and change are rife.

**Social Networks:** These sites allow people to build personal web pages and then connect with Friends to share content and communication. The biggest social networks are MySpace, Facebook and Bebo.

**Blogs:** Perhaps the best-known form of social media, blogs are online journals, with entries appearing with the most recent first.

**Wikis:** These websites allow people to add content to or edit the information on them, acting as a communal document or database. The best-known wiki is Wikipedia, the online encyclopedia which has over 2 million English language articles.

**Forums:** Areas for online discussion, often around specific topics and interests. Forums came about before the term “social media” and are a powerful and popular element of online communities.

**Content Communities:** Communities, which organize and share particular kinds of content. The most popular content communities tend to form around photos (flicker), bookmarked links (del.icio.us) and videos (YouTube and TikTok).

**Micro blogging:** Social networking combined with bite-sized blogging, where small amounts of content (‘updates’) are distributed online and through the mobile phone network. Twitter is the clear leader in this field.

## **2.7 Social Media as a Brand communication Tool**

According to Schultz and Barnes (1999), communication was everything or every way, which could be the form, value and quality of the tangible or intangible goods, to

transmit the message from the product and service to customers and help the company reach their customers. It acted as an essential role for building a brand in customer mind and establishing the relationship with customers (Azize, Cemal & Hakan, 2012). Duncan and Moriarty (1998) suggested the objective of brand communication was to increase the brand loyalty by increasing the customer attachment to the brand. Through brand communication, consumers could discover the brand that high exposure of brand to consumers possibly gains more brand awareness, strong brand association and higher brand recall, as a result, customers were willing spend more on the same brand (Schultz & Barnes, 1999).

Scholars claimed that the brand was a group of factors, function, form and context in the customer mindset, therefore, brand communication should be the integration of all elements about the brand instead of only marketing mix (Schultz & Barnes, 1999). According to Kotler and Keller (2006), integrated marketing communication strategy was a tool used by marketers to deliver brand communication to general public. These strategies could inform, persuade, remind consumers what the brand state for, what function the product has, and who sold and made the product. Consumers gotten incentives in using and experiencing these all elements related to brand could save their feeling and comment as a memory in their deep mind. Then, the integrated marketing communication on behalf of the brand talking to consumers could successfully build up relationship with consumers.

In the view of Zehir, Şahin, Kitapçıand Özşahin(2011), customers were loyal to a brand and had a strong relationship with brand that was important for long-run success and brand sustainability because customers generally possessed a positive attitude to a brand and repeat purchased. Therefore, integrated marketing communication is prerequisite tool for brand communicating to their customer so that to build customer-based equity.

In terms of integrated marketing communication, it has been discussed that this strategy include all aspect of elements related to brand in order to achieve effective communication. Scholars, Schultz and Barnes (1999), had suggested six communication types for marketers to reach their consumers, which were advertising, sales promotion, events, public relations, direct marketing and corporate sponsorships. Apart from these six ways, Kolter and Keller (2007) as well as Keller (2009) had

further expended the communication method and added two more types of communication among the traditional way, which were interactive marketing and word of mouth marketing, due to the evolution of communication flow and media.

The emergence of social media reformed communication method between marketers and consumers (Hennig-Thurau et al., 2004; Nambisan & Baron, 2007), which provided a new way for them engaging with each other. The tools and strategies for communicating with consumers have changed significantly since the emergence Internet and - in the last decade - with the world-wide penetration of social media. Social media also proved to be effective marketing tools for organizations. With the use of social media, organizations are now able to communicate directly with their consumers and engage in one-to-one conversations. If we go back, Parent (2011) noted, Facebook had less than one million (700,000) active business pages in 2010. However, today, it has increased by 757 percent in these eight year. According to BrandWatch (2019), there are over 60 million active business pages today. While it is up to the firms to employ social media in their marketing efforts, communication about brands continues to take place on social media, with or without permission of the firms in question (Kietzmann et al., 2011).

These platforms offered two way conversations among users to share knowledge and opinion, and access timely information (Laroche, Habibi, Richard & Narayanan, 2012). The content discussed by users contained different fields about the brands and products that made the marketers not solely the main source of brand communication (Berthon, Pitt & Campbell, 2008). Keller (2009) and Mangold and Faulds (2009) mentioned consumers increased frequency in using social media because it had higher ability to reach information than traditional media. Consumers generally believed that the sources of information retrieved from social media were more reliable and authentic than traditional media marketing communication (Karakaya & Barnes, 2010; Kietzmann, Hermkens, McCarthy & Silvestre, 2011).

However, Fournier and Avery (2011) argued that brands are “uninvited” users, in which most users resisted the advertising in their social media platform such as Facebook and YouTube because these channels were used to connect with friends instead of brand communication. Thus, scholar suggested the brand communication approach in social media channels should be heterogeneous than conventional method

of communication in order to build brand equity (Erdoğan & Cicek, 2012). The new approach should be regarded as relationship marketing, which was about “making connection” and “communication” with consumers rather than “control” and “try to sell” the brand images (Erdoğan & Cicek, 2012).

### **2.7.1 Firm Created Communication and CBBE**

The Firm-created Communication (FCC) can be explained as types of social media communications such as Facebook posts, Tweets, YouTube videos that are posted by brand owners on their brand pages, accounts or channels of social media (Bruhn, Schoenmueller & Schäfer, 2012). Under this phenomenon, marketers grasped the opportunity to engage with its customers to review the customers comment (Fournier & Avery, 2011). They spent marketing communication mix to promote their brands, products and services in social media platform, such as social networking sites, blogs, forums, content communities and so on (Kaplan & Haenlein, 2010). Khang, Ki and Ye (2012) indicated that the advertisement posted by marketers would be shared and spread rapidly among users in social media, and the conversation between them could provide more cost effective way to enhance brand awareness and purchase intention than the traditional “paid” advertisement. So, Mckee (2010) claimed the channels could nourish brand attachment of customers via conversation, networking and brand community.

Marketers represent brands to engage in social media, who aim to create the “buzz” and interact with social media users. These firm-created messages are controlled by management of the brand. Scholars pointed out that these firm-created messages could be viewed as persuasive advertisement (Russo & Chaxel, 2010), in which the context aimed to promote the positivity and advantages of products in turn of establishing favorable images to customers or potential consumers and increase their intention to purchase (Chen & Wang, 2009). Therefore, marketers generally believed that firm-created messages in social media platform became a catalyst to build up the good reputation for their brands and boost up the sales.

However, Escalas (2007) argued that firm-created messages might not be as effective as the expectation of marketers because consumers generally thought the messages were mostly skewed to positive and overstated. Hence, the efficiency and impact of firm-created messages on customer’s purchase intention was still unclear.

Similarly, after analyzing the impact of social media communication in Egyptian FMCG industry, Sadek and Elwy (2018) recommended to further invest in firm created social media and pay less attention to the user generated content in order to build brand equity.

### **2.7.2 User-Generated Communication and CBBE**

According to Laroche et al. (2012), user-generated messages were the products from social media platform that included various form of media messages delivered and published by users, such as text, audio and video form. Due to the well-developed social media platform, the communication between consumers and unknown consumers were accelerated in recent years. Customers engaging in these platforms liked to share their personal experience and opinion in some products or service of brands to others consumers in the brands' page, which could assist other consumers seeking the suitable brands or products to satisfy their needs (Algesheimer, Dholakia, & Herrmann, 2005).

These user-generated messages were the overall assessment of products, services, or brands that the comments were based on the usage conditions from customers' view (Bickart & Schindler, 2001), which could be positive or negative depending on the satisfaction level of consumers towards the products and services. Because of the similar tastes, preference and needs of the users towards the particular brand or product, customers tended to believe the information and evaluation about the brand and product generated by others (Brown & Reingen, 1987) and the purchasing behavior could be affected by these messages, no matter positive or negative (Pavlou & Dimoka, 2006). Therefore, it is assumed that these consumer to consumer communications would bring important influence to brand equity.

According to Zailskaitė-Jakštė and Kuvykaitė (2012), the company (firm or brand) created content in social media without engagement of consumers is not influential enough. Therefore interaction with consumer should be taken under consideration. They further suggested that it is necessary to evaluate communication between consumer and company and consumer-to-consumer, when identifying the impact of communication on brand equity.

### **2.7.2.1 Word of Mouth and Electronic Word of Mouth**

Westbrook (1987) defines Word of Mouth as “all informal communications directed at other consumers about the ownership, usage, or characteristics of particular goods and services or their sellers.”. Described as WOM communication (WOM), the process allows consumers to share information and opinions that direct buyers towards and away from specific products, brands, and services (Hawkins, Best & Coney, 2004). Litvin, Goldsmith & Pan (2008) define WOM as the communication between consumers about a product, service, or a company in which the sources are considered independent of commercial influence.

Based on the definition of WOM by Westbrook (1987), electronic word-of-mouth (E-WOM) can be defined as all informal communications directed at consumers through Internet-based technology related to the usage or characteristics of particular goods and services, or their sellers. This includes communication between producers and consumers as well as those between consumers themselves (Goldsmith, 2006). Duana, Gu & Whinston (2008) define online word of mouth (E-WOM) as an Internet platform to share the positive or negative reports between the existing users and future customers. In contrast to traditional WOM, E-WOM is defined as ‘any positive or negative statements made by potential, actual, or former customers about a product or company, which is made available to a multitude of people and institutions via the Internet’ (Henning-Thurau et al, 2004). As such, far different from physical WOM, E-WOM can create virtual relationships and communities, with influence far beyond the readers and producers of WOM; it actually creates a new type of reality by influencing readers during their online information searches (Litvin et al, 2008).

Table 2.2 shows some relevant studies conducted in the field along with their constructs and findings as concluded by the researchers.

**Table 2.2: List of Studies Related Social Media Communication and Brand Equity**

Author & Year	Constructs	Constructs Key findings
Bruhn,M., Schoenmueller, V., & Schafer, D. (2012)	User generated content & Firm created content), Consumer mindset (Brand awareness, Functional brand image, Hedonic brand image & Brand attitude) and Consumer Behavior (Purchase intention).	Social media Communications strongly influence brand image. Firm created content has an important impact on functional brand image while user generated Content has a major influence on hedonic brand image.
Vries, N. J. D., & Carlson, J. (2014)	Gratifications (Functional value, Hedonic value Social value & Co- Creation value) , Brand strength, Usage intensity, Customer engagement with Brand Facebook page, Customer engagement behaviors with Brand Facebook page and Brand loyalty	Customer engagement is formed by co-creation and social value together with usage intensity and brand strength. Customer engagement influences Customer engagement behaviors directed at the Brand Facebook page and brand loyalty
Schivinski, B., & Dabrowski, D. (2015)	User generated social media communication, Firm created social media communication, Brand equity, Brand attitude and Purchase intention.	User generated communication has positive impact on brand Equity and brand attitude. Firm created content has positive impact on brand attitude.
Christodoulides, G., Jevons, C. & Bonhomme, J. (2012)	User generated content (Co-Creation, Empowerment, Community & Self- Concept) and Consumer based brand equity	Co-Creation, Community and Self-Concept have a positive impact on consumers' involvement with UGC and that UGC involvement has a positive impact on brand perceptions through CBBE.
Murtiasih, S., Sucherly. , & Siringoringo, H. (2013)	Brand equity, Brand awareness, Brand association, Perceived quality, Brand loyalty and Word of mouth (WOM)	WOM positively influences brand awareness, brand association, brand loyalty and perceived quality. Brand awareness, brand association, brand loyalty and perceived quality positively influence brand equity.

Severi, E., Ling, K.C., Nasermodeli, A. (2014)	Electronic word of mouth (E-WOM), Brand awareness, Brand association, Perceived quality, Brand loyalty, Brand image.	A significant impact on brand awareness, brand association, brand loyalty, brand image and perceived quality.
Vinna Hermaren Adrian Achyar (2018)	firm created content and user-generated content evaluation in social media, brand awareness, perceived quality and brand loyalty	Firm created content has a positive and significant impact on brand awareness, perceived quality and brand loyalty. Meanwhile, user-generated content has significant effect only on brand awareness and perceived quality
Dr. Rachna & Iesha Khajuria (2017)	user-generated content brand awareness, brand perceived quality, brand associations, brand loyalty	A significant impact of user-generated content on brand equity constructs
Muhammad Adnan Bashir, Nadia Ayub & Tariq Jalees (2017)	firm generated social media communication and the user generated social media communication brand awareness, brand perceived quality, brand associations, brand loyalty	Findings of this research revealed that both the firm generated and the user generated social media communications have a positive influence on the brand equity elements.
Ligita Zailskaitė-Jakštė, Rita Kuvykaitė (2016)	Consumer to consumer communication (non-sponsored content) Communication between consumer and brand (sponsored content) brand awareness, , brand associations, brand loyalty	The consumer-generated content created in interaction with company and without interaction with company in social media is making impact on brand equity.

## 2.8 Critical Analysis of Literature

Social media is an emerging trend among marketers as well as academicians due to its potential to influence the marketing elements. It is being used for branding purpose extensively. Such emerging topic has attracted the researchers and academicians from all corners of the world to debate over this. Though this field of research is in introductory stage, researchers are opting to conduct studies in the particular field. On the other hand, electronic word of mouth is the result of the internet based



communications taking place on social media platforms. It is of equal importance and very much responsible for branding like creating brand equity.

Recently, researchers have started examining how social media activities affect consumer mindset metrics and consumer behavior (Liu and Lopez 2016; Lovett Staelin 2016), Yet, limited research exists on the link between social media and CBBE.

During the previous studies, the results obtained by researchers in the context of Social Media Communication and its relationships with Customer based Brand Equity has varied. research carried out in the western and more developed world have found strong relationships existing between Social Media Communication and its relationships with Customer based Brand Equity. While some studies result show strong relationships existing between Firm Created Social Media Communication and Customer based Brand Equity dimensions and low or moderately significant relationship between User Generated Social Media Communication and Customer based Brand Equity dimensions, where as some studies result show strong relationships existing between User Generated Social Media Communication and Customer based Brand Equity dimensions and low or moderately significant relationship between Firm Created Social Media Communication and Customer based Brand Equity dimensions. This could be down to the fact that all consumers are not aware and conscious of Social Media Communication. The internet access and presence in social media platform can also be the major reason of this.

While all previous research has clearly stated that Social Media Communication activities have an impact on Customer based Brand Equity dimensions, the researcher would like to test the extent to which the results obtained in different settings can be applied to this research.

## **CHAPTER III**

### **METHODOLOGY**

#### **3.1 Background**

Research methodology is the combination of two worlds, research and methodology. Research means to search again to find out something new and more about a phenomenon. It is systemic and organized effect to inquire about a specific problem that needs an answer, this process of gathering recording analyzing and interpreting data with the purpose of finding solution to the problem is called research. Methodology is a systemic rules and procedure upon which is based. Research methodology is a format or a set of methods that has to follow as guiding principles in a scientific study.

Thus ultimate goal of research methodology is to design the framework of research guide the research develop tools and techniques (data collection and analysis) to achieve the stated objectives of the study (Sharma 2003\36).

This chapter is designed to explain the research methods used to meet the stated objectives of the study. The methodologies undertaken in relation to the research paradigm are sampling process, data collection and analysis techniques to study the social media communication effect on consumer based brand equity are explained in this chapter. This chapter also explains the collection procedure of data and methodology used by researcher for analyzing the available data. It includes preparation of the questionnaire to be answered by the respondent. A description of method and procedure employed for collecting and analyzing the data has been explained. This chapter further looks into methodology establishing relationships that exist between the independent and dependent variables.

#### **3.2 Research Design**

This study is descriptive as well as explanatory research in nature. This study tries to determine relationship between social media communication and brand equity construct. Furthermore, it observe the variation in the dependent variables i.e. brand awareness, brand image, brand perceived quality and brand loyalty by the independent variables firm created and user generated social media communication.

The findings of this research were based upon the primary survey. The data had been collected by formulating a set of questionnaire and the questionnaire was distributed to the respondents. The findings had been totally based in the data and facts provided by sampled respondent. Apart from questionnaire, the expert opinion was obtained depending upon the necessity of the research.

### **3.3 Data collection procedure**

Data may be obtained either from the primary source or from secondary source. Primary data is first hand or original in character. Generally, they are generated by field surveys. Primary data are collected directly from the respondent through the methods of observation interviewing and questionnaire survey. Data which are not originally collected rather obtained from published or unpublished sources are called secondary data. Sometime secondary data should use due to time and resource limitation so normally individual research work is based on both primary and secondary data but it depends on the research problem.

At the initial phase, for the purpose for developing conceptual framework the data collection procedure was secondary. Basically, the secondary source of data was internet, books, journals, newspaper and articles. Whereas, in the later stage, the primary source of data collection was used for the purpose of collecting data so as to analyze data for making findings. Thus, the major tool used in data collection was questionnaire.

### **3.4 Population**

The term population refers to the number of consumers who lie in the specific area. According to the MIS (Management Information Report) of Nepal Telecom Authority (NTA) 15 March, 2019 Ncell has total 16,489,945 Subscriber. Thus total population is the total number of Nell's consumer.

### **3.5 Sample**

Selection of sample is very important part to carry out during the research. It is difficult to collect information from the entire consumer so that sample has been taken

by using convincing sampling method. For the accuracy in result, only those respondents have been selected who are well aware about Ncell.

The 134 consumers who have been using Ncell and also like and follow the Ncell social media page in Twitter, Facebook Instagram and YouTube, have been chosen as the sample for the this study. Sample are randomly chosen and both male and female with aged 20 or below, 21 –30, 31 –40, and 41 or above would be considered in this study. Apart from gender and ages, educational level would also be asked. The study mainly focuses on social media user of Ncell so the city of resident would not be restricted.

### **3.6 Questionnaire Survey**

The questionnaire had multiple response question, ranking question and six point Likert scale questions. “Likert scale is named after its developer, Rennis Likert, is widely used rating scale that requires the respondent to indicate a degree of agreement or disagreement with each of a series of statement about the stimulus objects.” It is widely used rating scale that requires the respondent to indicate a degree of agreement or disagreement with each series of statement. Each scale item response categorizes ranging from “strongly agree” to “strongly disagree.” Where 1 stand for strongly disagree, 2 stand for Disagree, 3 stand for Neutral, 4 stand for Agree and 5 stand for Strongly agree

The questionnaire is divided into three parts with 26 questions in total: part one is introduction with screening questions, part two, part three and four are core area to conduct the data for hypothesis testing.

In part one, respondents are asked by three screening questions to ensure they have experience in using social media platforms so that to obtain the comprehensive and reliable answers for later study. They are asked the questions of (1) “Have you registered personal account in social media platform? (E.g. Facebook, Twitter, Youtube,)”, and (2) “Have you “liked” or followed the page of Ncell in social media platform?”. If respondents answer with “No” in one of the questions in this part, they are excluded in this study.

The second part of the questionnaire deals with demographic information which includes gender, age and education level. In part three, sets of questions aim to

explore the attitude of respondents towards the firm-created messages and user-generated messages respectively, in social media. In part four the variable elements of customer-based brand equity including brand awareness, brand association, perceived quality and brand loyalty are concerned.

We drew on established scales used in the literature and adapted them to our research context. Specifically, eight items for measuring firm-generated content and consumer-generated content were gathered from Schivinski and Dabrowski, 2013) study. Fifteen items measuring brand equity were drawn from previous brand equity literature (Aaker, 1991; Yoo and Donthu 2001)

Questionnaire is created on Google Forms ([docs.google.com](https://docs.google.com)) which is a useful survey making website providing a convenient way to conduct the questionnaire. The questionnaire is distributed through social media platform like Facebook, Twitter and E-mail with attached the link of questionnaire. The respondents were given one week of time frame to fill up the questionnaire. All questionnaires are distributed and collected in the first week of July 2019.

The study was designed to understand the perception of individuals towards Ncell social media communication. The respondents of the research were those people who use Ncell's product and services. So the level of understanding of the respondents was considered while designing the sample. The researcher distributed 200 questionnaires to respondents and response from 182 respondents were collected. Out of the 182, primary 10 responses were considered for validation of the data. The result of the data came positive there for, the researcher moved forward with the questionnaire without any further changes to the questionnaire.

Among 182 respondents 134 sets of questionnaire would be considered as useful and meaningful for this study, while 48 sets of questionnaire would be useless because the respondents are failed in part one of questionnaire that they have registered the account in at least one social media platform but have not liked and followed the pages of Ncell.

### **3.7 Tools for data analysis**

The study is based on various statistical tests such as correlation, regression, mean, standard deviation and etc. The software called Statistical Package for social science

(SPSS) 23<sup>rd</sup> version and Microsoft Excel was used to analyze and interpret the quantitative data. This software is commonly used by researchers an easily available in business setting.

### 3.7.1 Reliability test

Reliability refers to the correlation of an item, scale or instrument with a hypothetical one which measures what it is supposed to. it is adopted to measure the internal consistency of the inter-related questions for each dimension. This gives the reliability of each question reflecting their corresponding hypothesis. All data related to each variable would be examined under the reliability test to see whether the data are consistent and reliable. The results of reliability test would be reflected in with Cronbach's alpha value. The Cronbach's alpha value ( $\alpha$ ) is ranged from 1 to 0, in which  $\alpha=1$  represents 100 % consistent and correlated and  $\alpha=0$  represents no correlation. The questions for each variable would be considered consistent and reliable if the Cronbach's alpha value is above then 0.7.

The main purpose of the reliability analysis is to determine whether data are trustworthy or not. It is performed to calculate the internal consistency and reliability between more than one item which are related to specific variable or dimension. Cronbach's Alpha acts as an indicator to evaluate the level of reliability for each variable. The test would be accepted if the value of Cronbach's Alpha is 0.7 or above. The higher value of the Cronbach's Alpha is, the higher degree of internal reliability for each dimension has.

Table 3.1 shows the Cronbach's alpha coefficients of variables such as brand awareness, brand association, perceived quality and brand loyalty towards firm-created messages, user-generated messages. Here, Cronbach's Alpha of all the variables is considered as good. Therefore, the instruments used in this research are considered to be reliable.

*Table3.1*  
*Reliability Statistics*

Cronbach's Alpha	N of Items
0.914	20

From Table 3.1 Cronbach's alpha for the data is 0.914 which reveals the internal consistency of the studied construct and the data is reliable and valid. The Cronbach's alpha of 0.914 also shows that 91.4 percent of the data taken for the study is reliable while the remaining 8.6 percent of data consists of error. It can be inferred that the questionnaire adopted was reliable for the study as the overall Cronbach's Alpha was 0.914 (Number of items = 20).

According to the table shown above, all variables are accepted because their respected Cronbach's Alpha values could achieve the minimum accepted level of 0.7. It could be concluded that the internal consistency of each individual item is related and reliable to each other for their specific dimension.

### **3.7.2 Descriptive statistic**

The overall picture of demography data of respondents and screening questions would be generated and analyzed by descriptive statistic. Specially mean and standard deviation is used. The results of demography data encompass about gender, ages, educational level and likes and dislike of Ncell social media pages would be revealed with pie chart clearly. The frequency of respondents with personal account in social media platform, follow and engagement with Ncell's page would also be showed in this way.

### **3.7.3 Correlation**

Correlation means relation between two variables or more than two variables. Relation between of among the variables may be positive and negative, linear and non linear and simple multiple and partial.

Two variables are said to have Correlation, when they are so related that change in the value of variable is accompanied by the change in the value of other. For example increase in advertisement expenditure is accompanied by increase in sales. Correlation analysis only helps in determining the extent to which the two variables are correlated but does not tell about cause and effect relationship.

To test the strength of relationship between dependent and independent variable, bivariate correlation would be employed. The result would be shown in the

correlations matrix that the strength of the relationship between two variables is represented by Pearson's correlation coefficient (r) ranged from -1 to 1. If the Pearson's r is closer to 1 (positive relationship) or -1 (negative relationship) with the significance level below 0.05 ( $\alpha=0.05$ ), which expresses stronger strength of relationship between two variables.

There are so many tools used to get the result to the research work. Normally average percentage, ratio correlation, regression analysis and chi-square test are used for the analysis of data from the field.

### 3.7.4 Model Specification

As the main objective of this research is to determine whether the Firm Created and User Generated Social Media Communication have significant impact on customer based brand equity construct or not. Taking Firm Created Social Media Communication and User Generated Social Media Communication as independent variable and Brand Awareness Brand image, Brand Loyalty, Brand Perceived Quality as dependent variable; following models are constructed with equation as:

$$BA = \beta_0 + \beta_1 FCC + \beta_2 UGC + \epsilon \dots\dots\dots(I)$$

$$BI = \beta_0 + \beta_1 FCC + \beta_2 UGC + \epsilon \dots\dots\dots(II)$$

$$BL = \beta_0 + \beta_1 FCC + \beta_2 UGC + \epsilon \dots\dots\dots(III)$$

$$PQ = \beta_0 + \beta_1 FCC + \beta_2 UGC + \epsilon \dots\dots\dots(IV)$$

Where,

BA = Brand Awareness

BI = Brand Image

BL = Brand Loyalty

PQ = Brand Perceived Quality

FCC = Firm Created Social Media Communication

UGC = User Generated Social Media Communication

$\beta_0$  = Y-intercept (constant term)



$\beta_1$  = Slope Coefficients for Independent Variable FCC

$\beta_2$ =Slope Coefficients for Independent Variable UGC

$\epsilon$ = the model's error term (also known as the residuals)

### **3.7.5 Regression Analysis**

Multiple regression analysis had been used to find out to test the strength of relationship between dependent and independent variable. Multiple regression analysis is a statistical technique that uses the observed data to predict the linear relationship between dependent variables and independent variables. In this study, the relationship between the dimension of customer-based brand equity and consumer attitude for social media communication are calculated by this statistical technique.

The relationship between the dimension of customer-based brand equity and consumer attitude for social media communication are specified in to the four models. Multiple regressions analysis is adopted to find the fitness of these four specified models

### **3.8 Analysis Plan**

After gathering all the questionnaires from the respondents, SPSS and Excel were used for the analysis of the data. Total responses collected from the respondent were coded and tabulated into SPSS worksheet. Depending upon the nature of the question such as Likert scale, the coding was followed as per the rule.

The data obtained from the research was analyzed by using SPSS software. For presentation of data, several graphical tools such as tables, charts, diagrams and graphs have been used. Mean and standard deviation have been presented for the descriptive study of variables. Correlation analyses were carried out followed by stepwise regression analysis. Test of significance have been conducted to make the results more effective. All the observed relationship and findings have been interpreted to drive the meaningful conclusions regarding the relationship between firm created social media communication, user generated social media communication, Perceived Service Quality, Brand Image, brand association and brand loyalty.

## CHAPTER IV

### ANALYSIS AND PRESENTATION

#### 4.1 Background

This chapter is based on the analysis, discussion, and interpretation of data collected during the study. The analysis is mainly based on primary data which were collected through the questionnaire filled by the respondents. The data has been analyzed with references to the objectives of the study as mentioned in the chapter I. The data are presented with tables and diagrams to make it convenient possible to interpret.

The chapter presents the results performed by SPSS. First of all, descriptive statistic shows the overall mean and standard deviation of demographic data. Secondly, correlation test is employed to evaluate the relationship and strength between independent and dependent variables.

For the purpose of this study Firm Created Social Media Communication and User Generated Social Media Communication are the independent variable and Brand Awareness Brand image, Brand Loyalty, Brand Perceived Quality as dependent variable The relationship between the dimension of customer-based brand equity and consumer attitude for social media communication are specified in to the four models. Finally, multiple regressions analysis is adopted to find the fitness of these specified models.

#### 4.2 Demographic statistic

This section deals with the demographic analysis and interpretation of primary data collected through questionnaires. The analysis of demographic profile is done by the interpretation of the responses collected. Respondents profile was categorized according to their gender, age, education level. The respondents of the research were those people who use Ncell.

200 respondents were selected for this study and the questionnaire was distributed to them through personal visit, online and through email. Out of the 200 questionnaires, only 182 valid responses were collected. Hence, the response rate was 91% percent.

To ensure all respondents who are suitable for this survey, the screening questions are applied at the beginning of the questionnaire. The respondent's must have at least one social media account among Facebook, Twitter, YouTube and Instagram. The result revealed all respondents, 182 in total, have registered at least one personal account in social media platform like Facebook, Twitter, YouTube and Instagram.

The target respondents who have using Ncell and have followed at least one the social media page established by Ncell, gives comprehensive responds for this study. Among 182, only 134 (69.79%) of the respondents expressed that they have “liked” or followed the pages of Ncell in social media, while 48 (30.21%) of all respondents who have not followed the pages. After screening process, 48 out of 182 samples would be removed in this study. Therefore, 134 samples could contribute the useful data for further analysis.

**(a) Gender Profile**

In order to generate the overall assessment, the viewpoint of both male and female in firm-created messages and user-generated messages in social media platform are considered in this study. The frequency and percentage of the gender of the respondents is depicted in Table 4.1 and Figure 4.1.

*Table 4.1*

<i>Distribution of Respondents Based on Gender</i>		
	Frequency	Percent
Male	77	57.5
Female	57	42.5
<b>Total</b>	<b>134</b>	<b>100</b>

Figure 4.1 Pie-chart of Distribution of Respondents Based on Gender

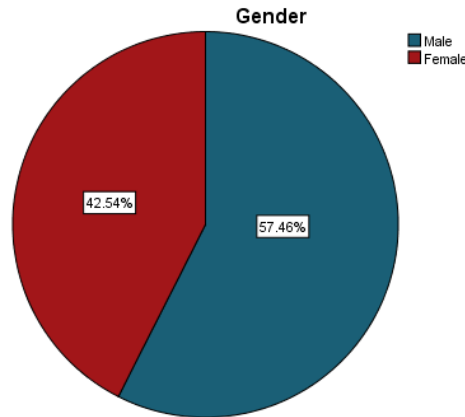


Table 4.1 and Figure 4.1 show the gender distribution of respondents. They show that the participation of male respondents was more than that of female respondents in the sample size of 134. The percentage of male and female respondents was account for 57.5% and account for 42.5% respectively.

**(b) Ages**

The age of the respondents is categorized into four different groups as below 20 years, 20-30 years, 30- 40 years, 40 or above. The tabulations of age group were generated to explore the distribution of the age group of the respondents. This was to determine the percentage distribution of the age groups of person who responded as shown in Table 4.2 and Figure 4.2

*Table 4.2*

		Frequency	Percent
Ages	20 or below	2	1.5
	21-30	58	43.3
	31-40	66	49.3
	41 or above	8	6
Total		134	100

Figure 4.2 Pie-chart of Distribution of Respondents Based on Ages

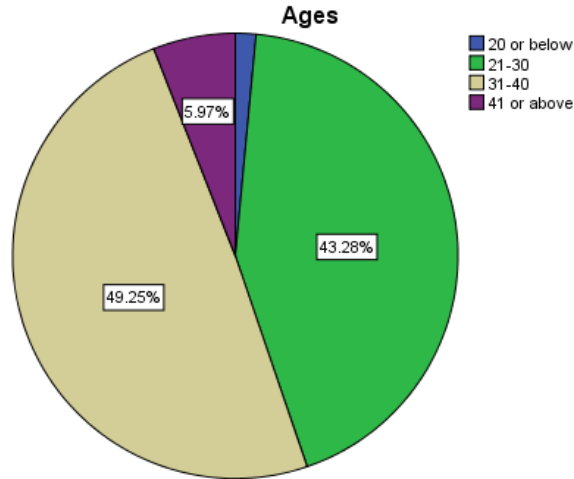


Table 4.2 and Figure 4.2 show the ages distribution of respondents. Around half of the respondents age 31-40 (49.3%). Then respondents age 21-30 cover almost another half proportion (43.3%). There are 6 % respondents aged 41 or above and very least percentage of respondent (1.5%) age 20 or below.

**(c) Education Level**

The occupation of the respondents are categorized into four groups as below secondary, 10+2, bachelor and masters or above the frequency distribution of respondents as per their education level is shown in Table 4.3 and Figure 4.3.

*Table 4.3*

		Frequency	Percent
Education Level	10+2	24	17.9
	Bachelor	73	54.5
	Masters or above	37	27.6
Total		134	100

Figure 4.3 Pie-chart of Distribution of Respondents Based on Education Level

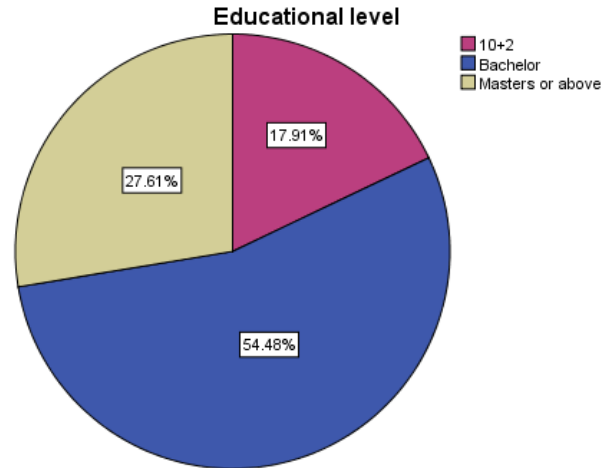


Table 4.3 and Figure 4.3 show the education level of the respondents. The majority of the respondents had the education level bachelor, which is 54.48% of the total sample. Similarly, 26.61% respondents had education level of masters or above. Last but not the least, 17.91% respondents was 10+2 pass. There was not any respondents having secondary or below education.

**(d) Distribution of Respondents Based on Number of Social Media Platforms They Use**

Since, our case brand “Ncell” has made presence on four different social media platforms such as Facebook, Twitter, YouTube and Instagram, so the distribution of respondents is based on those social media is presented in Table 4.4 and figure 4.4.

*Table 4.4  
Cross Table of Respondents use Social Media*

Number of Social Media	Frequency	Percent
1	9	6.7
2	48	35.8
3	47	35.5
4	30	22.4
Total	134	100

Figure 4.4 Distributions of Respondents Based on Number of Social Media Platforms They Use

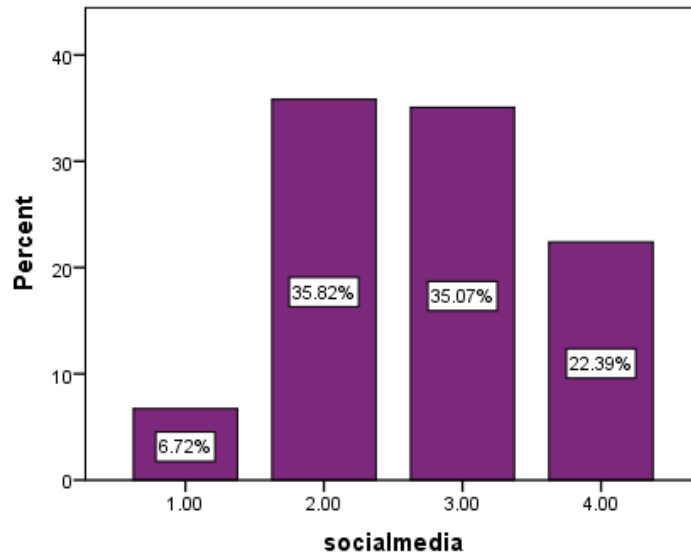


Figure 4.4 show the number of respondent's uses different social media platform. Where one stand for only one social media among Facebook, Twitter, Instagram and YouTube, two stand for teo of them, three stand for three of them and 4 stand for all of them. From the figure 4.4 we can conclude that majority of the respondents (93.28%) use more than one social media platform. Only 6.72 % of respondents used only one social media platform.

### 4.3 Descriptive Analysis

This section deals with the descriptive analysis of the data collected through the questionnaires during the research process. Descriptive statistics is the way of quantitatively describing the main features of a collection of data. Descriptive statistics help us to simplify large amounts of data associated with these variables in a sensible way. Descriptive analysis incorporates calculation of statistical measures such as mean and standard deviation.

For this purpose, Number of respondents (N) in each question item was 134. Descriptive statistic of dependent as well as independent variables is shown in Table 4.5; this shows the agreement level of the respondents.

Firm Created Social Media Communication and User Generated Social Media Communication are the independent variable of this research. The aggregate mean of FCC and UGC are respectively 3.8265 and 3.65 with standard deviation of 1.16 and 1.25 respectively. This shows that the respondents had positive attitude towards both

Firm Created Social Media Communication and User Generated Social Media Communication.

*Table 4.5*

<i>Descriptive Statistics</i>		
<i>Variables</i>	<i>Mean</i>	<i>Std. Deviation</i>
Firm Created Social Media Communication (FCC)	3.83	1.16
User Generated Social Media Communication (UGC)	3.65	1.25
Brand Awareness (BA)	3.8	1.22
Brand Image (BI)	3.73	1.25
Brand Loyalty (BL)	3.62	1.31
Perceiver Quality (PQ)	3.79	1.26
N (134)		

Similarly Brand Awareness, Brand Image/Association, Brand Loyalty and Brand Quality are the dependent variable of the research. The results regarding this entire variable among the respondents were above neutral.

Brand Awareness has aggregate mean of 3.80 and standard deviation of 1.22. The response towards brand awareness was positive. This means respondents were aware about the brand. Brand Image/Association has aggregate mean of 3.73 and standard deviation of 1.25. The response towards brand association and image was positive. This means respondents had favorable brand association about the brand. Brand Loyalty has aggregate mean of 3.62 and standard deviation of 1.31. The response towards brand loyalty was positive. This means respondents thought they are moderately loyal towards the brand. Brand Quality has aggregate mean of 3.79 and standard deviation of 1.26. The response towards brand quality was positive. This means respondents had moderately strong perceived quality about the brand.

The results regarding the overall brand equity among the respondents were above neutral with aggregate mean of 3.64 and standard deviation of 1.24. This means respondents had positive attitude towards overall brand equity.



#### **4.4 Inferential Analysis**

The purpose of this section is to present the method for analyzing the empirical results, test the hypothesis set, built in previous chapter. Inferential statistics are procedures used that allow researchers to infer or generalize observations made with samples to the larger population from which they were selected. It enables use of one or more samples of observations to infer values of a population. Inferential analysis test hypotheses to determine if observed differences between groups or variables are real or occur simply by chance. It produces new information by making predictions and generalizations based on samples.

##### **4.4.1 Correlations Analysis**

Correlations Analysis is used to evaluate how the variables are related and the strength of their relationship. The linear relationship and the strength of relationship between two variables, namely communication source and customer-based brand equity would be assessed by Pearson's correlation test. Correlation matrix was computed to assess the extent or degree of relationship in between the research variables.

Pearson's correlations analysis was carried out for variables having simple multi option answers. Pearson's correlation coefficient( $r$ ) is the measurement of the linear relationship between two variables would be shown in the correlations table. The value of correlation coefficient is ranged between -1 (negative) to 1 (positive). A positive correlation reveals that the direction of the relationship is positive with one increasing in reaction to the other's increase. Meanwhile, a negative correlation reveals an inverse of the above; an increase in one when the other decreases. The strength of relationship between two variables is high if the  $r$  is closer to -1 or 1.

Table 4.6 shows the correlation coefficient of independent and dependent variables. Pearson Correlation coefficient between the independent variable Firm Created Social Media Communication and dependent variable Brand Awareness, Brand Loyalty, Brand Image and Brand Quality are respectively, 0.897, 0.848, 0.880 and 0.882. This implies that the independent Firm Created Social Media Communication and all the dependent variable Brand Awareness, Brand Loyalty, Brand Image and Brand Quality are positively correlated. Table also depicts that there are significant correlations

between Firm Created Social Media Communication and Brand Awareness, Brand Loyalty, Brand Image and Brand Quality as  $p < 0.01$ .

*Table 4.6*  
*Summary from correlation test for all variables*

		BA	BI	BL	PQ
FC	Pearson Correlation	.897**	.880**	.848**	.882**
	Sig (2-tailed)	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00
UGC	Pearson Correlation	.875**	.890**	.883**	.878**
	Sig (2-tailed)	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00

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

Similarly, Pearson Correlation coefficient between the independent variable User Generated Social Media Communication and dependent variable Brand Awareness, Brand Image, Brand Loyalty, and Brand Quality are respectively, 0.875, 0.890, 0.883, and 0.878. This implies that the User Generated Social Media Communication and all the dependent variable Brand Awareness, Brand Loyalty, Brand Image and Brand Quality are positively correlated. Table also depicts that there are significant correlations between User Generated Social Media Communication and variable Brand Awareness, Brand Loyalty, Brand Image and Brand Quality as  $p < 0.01$ .

#### **4.4.2 Multiple regression analysis**

A correlation analysis can only tell whether or not a strong relationship exists between two variables. But even if a correlation coefficient indicates that a strong relationship exists between two variables, the exact shape of the relationship between the two variables cannot be determined. In this case, regression analysis provides more information about the slope of the relationship. It is used to describe the nature of a relationship and to make predictions. So, for deeper understanding of the relationship between social media communication and brand equity dimensions, the regression analysis is conducted. This section determines which independent variable explains variability in the outcome, how much variability in dependent variable is explained by

independent variables, and which variables are significant (over other variables) in explaining the variability of the dependent variables.

Multiple regression analysis is a statistical technique that uses the observed data to predict the linear relationship between dependent variables and independent variables. In this study, the relationship between the dimension of customer-based brand equity and consumer attitude for social media communication are calculated by this statistical technique.

#### 4.4.2.1 Regression Analysis for Model I: Brand Awareness

Taking Firm Created Social Media Communication and User Generated Social Media Communication as independent variable and Brand Awareness as dependent variable, model was constructed with equation as:  $BA = \beta_0 + \beta_1 FCC + \beta_2 UGC + \epsilon$

From table 4.7, the value of R- square also known as coefficient of determination which can help in explaining variance is 0.848 which means 84.8% variation in Brand Awareness (BA) is explained by Social Media Communication. However, it is still leaves 15.2% (100% - 84.8%) unexplained in this research. In other words, there are other additional variables that are important in explaining Brand Awareness that have not been considered in this research.

Table 4.7

*Regression Analysis for Brand Awareness*

Model		Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients		
		B	Std. Error	Beta	T	Sig.
1	(Constant)	0.144	0.143		1.003	0.318
	FC	0.582	0.069	0.555	8.449**	0.00
	UGC	0.391	0.064	0.400	6.098**	0.00
R Square	0.848	Adjusted R Square	0.845	Std. Error of the Estimate	0.48044	
F = 364.8478**						
$BA = 0.144 + 0.583 FCC + 0.391 UGC + \epsilon$						

Dependent Variable: BA

Predictors: (Constant), UGC, FC

\*\* Significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed)

Similarly, adjusted R-square is 0.845 which means 84.5% variation in Brand Awareness (BA) is explained by Social Media Communication after adjusting degree of freedom (df). Model summary also indicates the standard error of the estimate of 0.48044 which shows the variability of the observed value of Brand Awareness from regression line is 0.48044 units.

Based on ANOVA, the p-value is 0.000 which is lesser than alpha value 0.05. Therefore, the model is a good descriptor of the relation between the dependent and independent variables. As a result, the independent variables Firm Created Social Media Communication and User Generated Social Media Communication are significant in explaining the Brand Awareness.

Based on the coefficients, the regression equation for the Brand Awareness taking Firm Created Social Media Communication and User Generated Social Media Communication as independent variable, the model constructed with equation as can be written as :

$$BA = 0.144 + 0.582 FCC + 0.391 UGC + \epsilon$$

Regression coefficient of FCC and UGC are 0.582 and 0.391 respectively are the significant independent variables ( $p > 0.05$ ). This illustrates that 1-unit increase in FCC and UGC will bring 0.582 and 0.391 respectively increase in brand image. Hence the hypothesis  $H_1$ , firm created and user generated social media communication have significant impact on brand awareness is supported.

Table 4.7 depicts beta for all the attributes or independent variables taken in the study to determine its influence on Brand Awareness. Since, the beta of Firm Created Social Media Communication is highest i.e. 0.555, it has the most dominant influence in increasing Brand Awareness.

#### **4.4.2.2 Regression Analysis for Model II: Brand Image**

Taking Firm Created Social Media Communication and User Generated Social Media Communication as independent variable and Brand Image as dependent variable, model is constructed with equation as:  $BI = \beta_0 + \beta_1 FCC + \beta_2 UGC + \epsilon$

Table 4.8

*Regression Analysis for Brand Image*

		Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients		
Model		B	Std. Error	Beta	T	Sig.
2	(Constant)	0.056	0.147		0.381	.704
	FC	0.475	0.071	0.444	6.712**	0.00
	UGC	0.507	0.066	0.510	7.710**	0.00
R Square	0.845	Adjusted R Square	0.843	Std. Error of the Estimate	0.49338	
F = 358.016**						
BI= 0.056 + 0.475 FCC + 0.507 UGC + ε						

Dependent Variable: BI

Predictors: (Constant), UGC, FC

\*\* Significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed)

From the table 4.8, the value of R- square also known as coefficient of determination which can help in explaining variance, is 0.845 which means 84.5% variation in Brand Image (BI) is explained by Social Media Communication. However, it is still leaves 15.5% (100% - 84.5%) unexplained in this research. In other words, there are other additional variables that are important in explaining Brand Image that have not been considered in this research.

Similarly, adjusted R-square is 0.843 which means 84.3% variation in Brand Image (BI) is explained by Social Media Communication after adjusting degree of freedom (df). Model summary also indicates the standard error of the estimate of 0.49338 which shows the variability of the observed value of Brand Image from regression line is 0.49338 units.

Based on ANOVA, the p-value is 0.000 which is lesser than alpha value 0.05.

Therefore, the model is a good descriptor of the relation between the dependent and independent variables. As a result, the independent variables Firm Created Social Media Communication and User Generated Social Media Communication are significant in explaining the variance Brand Image.

Based on the coefficients, the regression equation for the Brand Image taking Firm Created Social Media Communication and User Generated Social Media Communication as independent variable, the model constructed with equation as can be written as:

$$BI = 0.056 + 0.475 FCC + 0.507 UGC + \epsilon$$

Regression coefficient of FCC and UGC are 0.475 and 0.507 respectively are the significant independent variables ( $p > 0.05$ ). This illustrates that 1-unit increase in FCC and UGC will bring 0.475 and 0.507 respectively increase in Brand Image. Hence the hypothesis H<sub>2</sub>: firm created and user generated social media communication have significant impact on brand image is supported.

Table 4.8 depicts beta for all the attributes or independent variables taken in the study to determine its influence on Brand Image. Since, the beta of User Generated Social Media Communication is highest i.e. 0.510, it has the most dominant influence in increasing Brand Image.

#### **4.4.2.3 Regression Analysis for Model III: Brand Loyalty**

Taking Firm Created Social Media Communication and User Generated Social Media Communication as independent variable and Brand Loyalty as dependent variable, model is constructed with equation as:

$$BL = \beta_0 + \beta_1 FCC + \beta_2 UGC + \epsilon$$

From Table 4.9, R-square, coefficient of determination value is 0.812 which means 81.2% variation in Brand Loyalty (BL) is explained by Social Media Communication. However, it still leaves 18.8% (100% - 81.2%) unexplained in this research. In other words, there are other additional variables that are important in explaining Brand Loyalty that have not been considered in this research.

Similarly, adjusted R-square is 0.809 which means 80.9% variation in Brand Loyalty (BL) is explained by Social Media Communication after adjusting degree of freedom (df). Model summary also indicates the standard error of the estimate of 0.57211 which shows the variability of the observed value of Brand Loyalty from regression line is 0.57211 units.

Table 4.9

*Regression Analysis for Brand Loyalty*

Model	Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients		
	B	Std. Error	Beta	T	Sig.
3 (Constant)	-0.112	0.171		-0.654	.515
FC	0.389	0.082	0.346	4.741**	0.00
UGC	0.614	0.076	0.587	8.048**	0.00
R Square	0.812	Adjusted R Square	0.809	Std. Error of the Estimate	0.57211
F = 282.845**					
BL= -0.112 + 0.389 FCC + 0.614 UGC+ ε					

Dependent Variable: BL

Predictors: (Constant), UGC, FC

\*\* Significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed)

Based on ANOVA, the p-value is 0.000 which is lesser than alpha value 0.05.

Therefore, the model is a good descriptor of the relation between the dependent and independent variables. As a result, the independent variables Firm Created Social Media Communication and User Generated Social Media Communication are significant in explaining the variance Brand Loyalty.

Based on the coefficients, the regression equation for the Brand Loyalty taking Firm Created Social Media Communication and User Generated Social Media Communication as independent variable, the model constructed with equation can be written as :

$$BL = -0.112 + 0.389 FCC + 0.614UGC + \epsilon$$

Regression coefficient of FCC and UGC are 0.389 and 0.614 respectively are the significant independent variables ( $p > 0.05$ ). This illustrates that 1-unit increase in FCC and UGC will bring 0.389 and 0.614 respectively increase in Brand Loyalty. Hence the hypothesis H<sub>3</sub>, firm created and user generated social media communication have significant impact on brand loyalty is supported.

Table 4.9 depicts beta for all the attributes or independent variables taken in the study to determine its influence on Brand Loyalty. Since, the beta of User Generated Social

Media Communication is highest i.e. 0.587, it has the most dominant influence in increasing Brand Loyalty.

#### 4.4.2.4 Regression Analysis for Model IV: Brand Perceived Quality

Taking Firm Created Social Media Communication and User Generated Social Media Communication as independent variable and Brand Perceived Quality as dependent variable, model is constructed with equation as:

$$BQ = \beta_0 + \beta_1 FCC + \beta_2 UGC + \epsilon$$

From the Table 4.10 the value of R-square value is 0.848 which means 83.4% variation in Brand Perceived Quality (BQ) is explained by Social Media Communication. However, it is still leaves 16.6% (100% - 83.4%) unexplained in this research. In other words, there are other additional variables that are important in explaining Brand Perceived Quality that have not been considered in this research.

Similarly, adjusted R-square is 0.832 which means 83.2% variation in Brand Perceived Quality (BQ) is explained by Social Media Communication after adjusting degree of freedom (df). Model summary also indicates the standard error of the estimate of 0.51696 which shows the variability of the observed value of Brand Perceived Quality from regression line is 0.51696 units.

Table 4.10

Regression Analysis for Perceived Quality

Model	Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients		Sig.
	B	Std. Error	Beta	T	
4 (Constant)	0.071	0.154		0.461	.645
FC	0.529	0.074	0.489	7.133**	0.00
UGC	0.463	.069	.460	6.717**	0.00
R Square	0.834	Adjusted R Square	0.832	Std. Error of the Estimate	0.51696
F = 330.059**					
BQ = 0.071 + 0.529 FCC + 0.463 UGC + $\epsilon$					

Dependent Variable: BQ

Predictors: (Constant), UGC, FC

\*\* Significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed)



Based on ANOVA, the p-value is 0.000 which is lesser than alpha value 0.05.

Therefore, the model is a good descriptor of the relation between the dependent and independent variables. As a result, the independent variables Firm Created Social Media Communication and User Generated Social Media Communication are significant in explaining the variance Brand Perceived Quality.

Based on the coefficients, the regression equation for the Brand Perceived Quality taking Firm Created Social Media Communication and User Generated Social Media Communication as independent variable, the model constructed with equation can be written as:

$$BQ = 0.071 + 0.529 FCC + 0.463 UGC + \epsilon$$

Regression coefficient of FCC and UGC are 0.529 and 0.463 respectively are the significant independent variables ( $p > 0.05$ ). This illustrates that 1-unit increase in FCC and UGC will bring 0.529 and 0.463 respectively increase in Perceived Quality. Hence the hypothesis H<sub>4</sub>; firm created and user generated social media communication have significant impact on brand perceived quality is supported.

Table 4.11 depicts beta for all the attributes or independent variables taken in the study to determine its influence on Brand Perceived Quality. Since, the beta of Firm Created Social Media Communication is highest i.e. 0.489, it has the most dominant influence in increasing Brand Perceived Quality.

#### **4.5 Major Findings**

To sum up, the results of correlation test and regression analysis reveal that there are relationship with different strength between the social media communication and customer-based brand equity. Therefore, it is fairly concluded that the all hypothesis in proposed model are supported. We can conclude that, firm created and user generated both social media communication have impact on customer based brand equity dimensions. The major findings are as follows:

- i. Male respondents were more than that of female respondents in the sample i.e. 57.5% and 42.5% respectively.

- ii. Around half of the respondents age 31-40 (49.3%). Then respondents age 21-30 cover almost another half proportion (43.3%).
- iii. The majority of the respondents had the education level bachelor, which is 54.48% of the total sample. Similarly, 26.61% respondents had education level of masters or above.
- iv. Majority of the respondents (93.28%) use more than one social media platform. Only 6.72 % of respondents used only one social media platform.
- v. The attitude of the respondents towards firm created social media communication is more positive (mean 3.82) than user generated social media communication (mean 3.65).
- vi. Among the four dimensions of CBBE the brand awareness is strongest with highest aggregate mean (3.79) and lowest standard deviation (1.22) and brand quality is weaker with lowest aggregate mean (3.61) and highest standard deviation of 1.30.
- vii. The dependent variable Brand Awareness has strongest positive relation with Firm Created Social Media Communication with  $r=0.897$ .
- viii. The variable Brand Image has strongest positive relation with User Generated Social Media Communication with  $r=0.890$ .
- ix. Social Media Communication could be explained 84.8% variation in Brand Awareness (BA), 84.5% in Brand Image (BI) , 81.2% in Brand Loyalty (BL) and 83.4% in Brand Perceived Quality (BQ) .
- x. The research result finds that the firm-created messages has a highest strength of impact on brand awareness ( $\beta=0.555$ ) than user-generated messages ( $\beta=0.400$ ).
- xi. The research discovers that, user-generated messages has a highest strength of impact on image ( $\beta=0.510$ ) than firm-created messages ( $\beta=0.444$ ).
- xii. User-generated messages have higher significant impact on perceived quality ( $\beta=0.589$ ) compared to firm-created messages ( $\beta=0.346$ ).
- xiii. Firm-created messages and user-generated messages has similar strength of impact on brand loyalty as standardized regression coefficient  $\beta$  is 0.489 and 0.460 respectively.

## **CHAPTER V**

### **CONCLUSION**

#### **5.1 Discussion**

The main purpose of this study is to analyze the effect of social media communication on customer based brand equity. In order to analyze this, the relationship of social media communication and customer based equity dimensions was studied.

Based on the literature reviewed, various relevant independent variables and dependent variable were identified. The independent variables include firm created social media communication and user generated social media communication. It was found that these variables have significant impact on customer based brand equity dimensions such as brand awareness, brand association/image, brand perceived quality and brand loyalty.

The sample for the research was taken from consumer of Ncell. The conceptual framework of the study was developed on the basis of dependent and independent variables identified through literature review. The overall plan of a research study was presented in third chapter. Convenience sampling was used as data collection procedure. The data was collected with the help of questionnaire. The study was conducted based on the sample size 134. The questionnaire was made available to the respondents through mail. This was done as per ease of respondents as well as the researcher. The questionnaire was adopted from the previous research done by different scholars. This was done to maintain the validity of research and questionnaire. Similarly, reliability scores are expressed numerically as a coefficient. This was tested with the help of Cronbach alpha which resulted that the research to be reliable.

The overall research method is conducted through the collection of primary data. With reference to the demographic profile, the study focused on four components: gender, age, education level and social media usages. Out of 134 respondents the participation of male respondents was more than that of female respondents in the sample i.e. 57.5% and 42.5% respectively. Around half of the respondents age 31-40 (49.3%). Then respondents age 21-30 cover almost another half proportion (43.3%). The majority of the respondents had the education level bachelor, which is 54.48% of

the total sample. Similarly, 26.61% respondents had education level of masters or above. Majority of the respondents (93.28%) use more than one social media platform. Only 6.72 % of respondents used only one social media platform.

The attitude of the respondents towards firm created social media communication is more positive (mean 3.82) than user generated social media communication (mean 3.65). Among the four dimensions of CBBE the brand awareness is strongest with highest aggregate mean (3.79) and lowest standard deviation (1.22) and brand quality is weaker with lowest aggregate mean (3.61) and highest standard deviation of 1.30.

To sum up, the results of correlation test and regression analysis reveal that there are relationship with different strength between the social media communication and customer-based brand equity. Therefore, it is fairly concluded that all the hypothesis in proposed model are supported. The dependent variable Brand Awareness has strongest positive relation with Firm Created Social Media Communication with  $r=0.897$ . The variable Brand Image has strongest positive relation with User Generated Social Media Communication with  $r=0.890$ .

Social Media Communication could be explained 84.8% variation in Brand Awareness (BA), 84.5% in Brand Image (BI) , 81.2% in Brand Loyalty (BL) and 83.4% in Brand Perceived Quality (BQ) .

The research result finds that both firm-created communication and user-generated communication have significant impact on brand awareness, in which the firm-created communication has a highest strength of impact on brand awareness (beta=0.555) than user-generated communication (beta=0.400). This means customers could easily recognize and be aware of their favorable brands through firm created messages in social media. Since Ncell has presence of is in different social media platform, customers could easily access the information about Ncell brand through social media.

The research discovers that firm-created communication and user-generated communication in social media have a significant impact on brand association/image. In which, user-generated communication has a highest strength of impact on image (beta=0.510) than firm-created communication (beta=0.444). Consumers would integrate everything related to the brand such as concept, ideas, feature and event that

these experiences would be structured and saved in their memory. The marketers usually updated the recent information or video of brand's activities, product and promotion on the pages in social media that could further impress consumers. Consumers share the experience and opinions about the product or service of brands in social media that might help consumers easily link with the brand under specific situation.

This study also concluded that firm-created communication and user-generated communication in social media affect the customer perceived quality of brands. User-generated communication have higher significant impact on perceived quality (beta=0.589) compared to firm-created communication (beta=0.346), which agrees with the finding of Bonhomme et al. (2010). Perceived quality is built through the long term personal experience, special needs and consumption situation. The subjective judgment on the brand would be developed after directly experiencing the feature of the brand. Customers like to share their experience with and receive opinion from other consumers. Therefore, it could be fairly said that perceived quality could be better developed through user generated social media communication channel.

From the result of study, firm-created communication and user-generated communication in social media have a significant positive impact on brand loyalty. Firm-created and user-generated communication has similar strength of impact on brand loyalty as standardized regression coefficient beta is 0.489 and 0.460 respectively. Brand loyalty is one of important factors to help a brand consistently generate profit in the future due to the recall and re-buy of loyal customers. Customers are to be loyal to one brand with directly using and experiencing the product and service of the brand. The consumers would discover or aware of products or service of a brand which is frequently exposed in the comment from other users. Therefore, the effect of these two communication source is significant.

The findings of this research are somewhat similar to previous studies that examined the implications of social media communications in maintaining and developing brand equity (Bruno & Dabrowski, 2014; Schivinski, 2011), Yoo et al. (2000), Kim and Ko (2012), Bonhomme et al. (2010) and Bashir, Ayub & Jalees (2017). Additionally, this research also conforms to the findings of previous researchers, on the strong positive impacts of user-generated contents in creating and shaping brand equity dimensions

than firm created social media communication ( Bonhomme et al., 2010; Bruhn et al., 2012; Christodoulides et al., 2012). Meanwhile, in contradictory with Hermaren & Achyar (2018) and Sadek and Elwy (2018) user-generated content has strong relationship with all the dimensions of customer-based brand equity. Kim and Ko (2012) found out that brand equity has relationship with social media marketing activities.

The result of this study is somewhat similar with the result of Bonhomme et al. (2010), concluded that user-generated messages have strong significant impact on customer based brand equity dimensions, than firm-created social media communication. Because consumers typically judge the information provided by other individuals to be trustworthy and credible (Schivinski. B & Dąbrowski. D, 2013). Thus, firm-created social media content only serves to build awareness of and positive associations with a brand but does not affect much on consumer perceptions of brand value.

## **5.2 Conclusion**

From this study, firm-created messages and user-generated messages in social media platform both have strong positive impact on all dimensions of customer-based brand equity. Different degree of effect on customer-based brand equity could be created by different source of communication.

Firm-created social media communication has a highest strength of impact on brand awareness and brand loyalty dimensions than user generated social media communication. Thus, firm-created social media content serves to build awareness of and positive associations with a brand. The consumers would discover or aware of products or service of a brand which is frequently exposed in the social media platform. While user-generated social media communication has a highest strength of impact on image and perceived quality dimensions than firm created social media communication. Thus, user-created social media communication serves to create unique and favorable brand association/ image and shape the consumer perceptions of brand value. Therefore, the effect of these two communication source is significant in creating customer based brand equity.

To sum up, marketers can influence consumers' perception about the brand by developing a platform for consumers to express their opinions about the brand, creating effective firm-created social media communication to stimulate user-generated content, and actively monitoring social media communications. It is essential to incorporate social media into branding strategy and marketing practices. Both firms and their marketing teams should focus on social media communications driven by both brands and users, because these positively relate to brand equity.

Also, marketers should evaluate which communication media could influence customer-based brand equity more effectively so that to facilitate their brand equity. Hootsuite (2019) mentioned that brands want to increase the spending on social media in order to interact with consumers and increase the customers' brand equity. This study also shows that customer-based brand equity could be speeded up via social media.

### **5.3 Implication of study**

Social media is now popularly used by consumers to interact and connect with friends and family. Telecom brands could grasp the opportunity to engage and interact with customers in order to increase the brand equity. The findings of this study revealed that, social media marketing communications in terms of user-generated contents and firm-created contents have strong positive impact on developing CBBE of Ncell brands.

In general, the findings presented in this research provide insights for brand managers on the importance of different types of marketing communications and the implications of social media as the platforms for disseminating brand-related communications for managing and enhancing the acceptance of their brands. The theoretical implications of this research is that, the findings presented in this study highlight the significance of social media communications in marketing and brand management. Most important, the study shows how brand-related communications and interactions between brand and consumers can enhance consumers' acceptance, shape consumers' perception and mindset towards a brand. This argument is in line with the observation of Keller (2009) who has mentioned that, brand-related communications on social media platforms can have the greatest effect on the

perception of a brand, especially when brand managers can ignite involvement and maintain positive engagements with their consumers on social media platforms.

Furthermore, the implications of these findings is that, the marketing communications generated on different platforms of social media, including *Facebook*, *YouTube*, *Instagram* and *Twitter* have significant impacts on CBBE. The contents and reviews that are posted on brand pages of social media by consumers as conceptualized by user generated social media communication is found to be impactful on the mindset of brand equity of Ncell. User-generated messages have the high impact on customer-based brand equity because consumers like to seek the information and experience from others. Although these messages could not be controlled and managed by marketers, marketers could create a topic for them to discuss. High exposure of brands in the content of user-generated messages could slightly increase the brand equity in customer mind.

The practical implication of this study is that, this highlights the significance of social media communications. With regards to the interactive features and the ubiquitous nature of social media platforms, the possibility of a daily and frequent encounter, engagement and feedback between consumers and brands are increased. These subsequently, increase the level of brand awareness in terms of recall and recognition, improve positive image of the brand and ultimately shape the attitude of the consumers towards the brand (Adetunji, Sabrina, & Sobhi, 2017). Therefore, this study recommends that, brand managers of telecom brands should continue their employment of social media platforms as an important effort for building and maintaining their brand equity.

### **5.3.1 Recommendation for future research**

Although this study makes a significant contribution to the social media communication literature, this research is not without limitations. Therefore, the restrictions of this study can provide guidelines for future research. Some limitations are faced in this study. Because of time and resource limited, the data collection is finished in a short period that could not represent a whole population in Nepal.

I suggest that all leading social media sites be analyzed to gain a broader understanding of the firm-created and user-generated social media communication. Moreover, a wider range of industries should be examined in future studies. This



practice would provide an indication of how costumers perceive brands from different industries in social media channels.

The respondents in this study mainly aged between 21 to 30 that the sampling method is not random enough. Also, the simple size is only 143 which is not big enough to represent whole population of Nepal. Therefore, to improve the capability of the research to obtain more comprehensive result, further study should focus on reaching higher amount of sample size and different aged group to collect more representative findings.

Finally, when replicating this research, researchers should consider social, economic, and cultural differences. It is also recommended that such research be conducted in different sector and different brands existing in Nepal to produce stronger validation and generalization of the findings.

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## APPENDICES

### Questionnaire

I am doing Masters of Business Management in the Central Department of Management Tribhuvan University. Recently, I am doing thesis about “how social media communication affect the customer based brand equity in telecom industry especially regarding Ncell.” I appreciate your time spent on this questionnaire. All information would be treated confidentially. Thank you.

**Part one: Introduction and demographic data (Please tick one answer in following questions.)**

**1. Gender**

Male    Female

**2. Ages**

20 or below    21-30                      31-40                      41 or above

**3. Educational level**

Primary or below    Secondary    Diploma or Certification.

**4. Do you use Ncell**

Yes                                      NO

**5. Have you registered personal account in social media platform like,Facebook and Twitter?**

Yes    No

(If no, the questionnaire ends, thanks for your participation.)

**6. Have you “liked” or followed pages of Ncell in social media platforms.**

Yes    No

(If no, the questionnaire ends, thanks for your participant.)

### **Part two:**

#### **2.1 Firm-created social media communication of Ncell in social media**

**Ncell transmit firm-created messages in social media (E.g. advertising and information of brands and products)**

**(Please select your degree of agreement with the following sentences in a scale from 1 to 5. (1 = strongly disagree, 2= Disagree, 3 = neutral, 4= Agree and 5 = strongly agree)**

7. [FC1] I am satisfied with the company's social media communications for Ncell.

Strongly disagree      Disagree      Neutral      Agree      Strongly agree

8. [FC2] The level of the company's social media communications for Ncell meets my expectations

Strongly disagree      Disagree      Neutral      Agree      Strongly agree

9. [FC3] The company's social media communications for Ncell are very attractive

Strongly disagree      Disagree      Neutral      Agree      Strongly agree

10. [FC4] This company's social media communications for Ncell perform well, when compared with the social media communications of other companies

Strongly disagree      Disagree      Neutral      Agree      Strongly agree

### **2.3 User-generated social media communication**

**Many users engage in social media platforms where they generated Ncell related messages. (E.g. comments, recommendation and opinion towards Ncell)**

11. [UG1] I am satisfied with the content generated on social media sites by other users about Ncell.

Strongly disagree      Disagree      Neutral      Agree      Strongly agree

12. [UG2] The level of the content generated on social media sites by other users about Ncell meets my expectations.

Strongly disagree      Disagree      Neutral      Agree      Strongly agree

13. [UG3] The content generated by other users about Ncell is very attractive

Strongly disagree    Disagree    Neutral    Agree    Strongly agree

14. [UG4] The content generated on social media sites by other users about Ncell performs well, when compared with other brands

**Part 3 Customer Based Brand Equity Dimensions**

15. I am always aware of Ncell.

Strongly disagree    Disagree    Neutral    Agree    Strongly agree

16. Characteristics of Ncell come to my mind quickly.

Strongly disagree    Disagree    Neutral    Agree    Strongly agree

17. I can quickly recall the symbol or logo of Ncell.

Strongly disagree    Disagree    Neutral    Agree    Strongly agree

18. Ncell has a strong personality.

Strongly disagree    Disagree    Neutral    Agree    Strongly agree

19. Ncell has a strong image.

Strongly disagree    Disagree    Neutral    Agree    Strongly agree

20. Ncell has a unique image in my mind compared to other competing brands

Strongly disagree    Disagree    Neutral    Agree    Strongly agree

21. I will suggest Ncell to other consumers.

Strongly disagree    Disagree    Neutral    Agree    Strongly agree

22. I would love to recommend Ncell to my friends.

Strongly disagree    Disagree    Neutral    Agree    Strongly agree

23. Ncell would be my first choice

Strongly disagree    Disagree    Neutral    Agree    Strongly agree

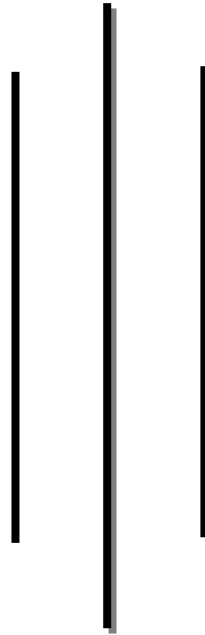
24. Ncell provides prompt services at the promised time.

	Strongly disagree agree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly
25. Ncell handles customer complained effectively.	Strongly disagree agree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly
26. Compared to other brands, Ncell is of high quality.	Strongly disagree agree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly

# **The Effects of Social Media Communication on Customer-Based Brand Equity**

**An Study on Ncell**

**(Thesis Proposal)**



**Submitted by**

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**Date: 4 March , 2015**

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## **1 Introduction**

Focus of the today's marketers is to place their brands in the mind of the customer. This is only possible through the process of branding. Keller (2008) defines branding as all about creating differences and endowing products and services with the power of brand equity. Brand equity is the intangible assets of a firm which generates value to customers and provides the firm a space to adopt premium price. Similarly, differences in outcomes of a product or services can be created through the effective marketing communication. Marketing communication are the means by which firms attempt to inform, persuade and remind customers directly and indirectly about the brands they sell. Various communication options are available to the marketers. Keller (2008) suggested marketers to mix and match communication options to build brand equity. Mix matching the available marketing communication option is known as the integrated marketing communication (IMC).

The goal of IMC is to integrate and coordinate multiple communication channels to deliver clear, consistent and compelling message about firm and its product. These channels or communication options as above stated include advertising, promotions, public relations, personal selling and direct marketing. IMC provides the option of sharing common meaning about a single brand through different communication channels. The visibility of the brand in different marketing communications, can positively influence customers' opinions about the firm and its brands. This process of influencing opinions about the firm and its single brand is referred as brand communications. Yoo and Donthu (2001) explained, brand communication as it is positively correlated with brand equity as long as the message drives customer reaction to the product in question, compared to a non-branded good in its product category.

The explosive developments in communications technology and changes in marketer and customer communication strategies have had a dramatic impact on marketing communications (Kotler and et al., 2010). As a result, firms are adopting an emerging component of the IMC that is, social media for their brand related communication.

The internet is hybrid media, in part it is a communication medium, allowing companies to create awareness, provide information and influence attitudes well as pursue other communication objectives (Belch, and Belch, 2010). Social media are the

set of online platforms such as blogs, discussion boards, forums or social networks, they provide opportunities for Internet users to create and share content. Web based technologies and social media tools have transformed the way firm communicate with their customers to build brand. Similarly, internet users are turning away from traditional media and are increasingly using social media to search for information (Mangold & Faulds, 2009 ). Next, organizations have begun to understand the importance of and have taken control of the Internet (Berthon et al. ,2012) Moreover, social media is an effective marketing tool for firms. “Social media marketing is a phenomenon that has drawn a lot of attention to both companies and individuals interacting with the networking landscape (Kaplan, & Haenlein, 2010)

Social media is also accepted as the new sources of online information where the information itself is —created, initiated, circulated and used by consumers for the purposes of educating each other about products, brands, services, personalities, and issues (Blackshaw & Nazzaro, 2004). In social media user can express their opinion to millions of people in only seconds. “One of the great advantages in today’s online marketing and online social network arena is that companies can blend valuable services with advertising and content: maximizing shareholder value and building stronger brand equity (Aaker 2011).”

According to the International Telecommunications Union (ITU), the specialized UN agency for information and communications technology, in 2014, count of the global online population is 2.7 billion people. This is the 37.9% of the earth’s estimated population of 7.1 billion people. Internet connectivity is concentrated in developed countries, where 78% of the population is online. In developing country, only 32.3% of the population is online. In South Asia 13.7% estimated population are connected to the internet. Moreover, the rate at which the world is connecting to the internet is 6.6%.

Similarly, a survey conducted by SocialMediaExaminer a world’s largest online social media magazine in 2014 over 2800 global marketers on how marketers are using social media to grow their business, a significant 92% of marketers indicate that social media is important for their business. Facebook and LinkedIn are the two most important social networks used by marketers by 54% of marketers 17% respectively (Social Media Marketing Industry Report, 2014)



This seems marketers are attracted to communicate their offerings and programs with the customers through social media. They make not only presence in social media but also immediate interact with their fans and followers to maintain the relationship with them.

Moving in the Nepali context, very less literature is available about the internet and social media usages pattern in Nepal. According to Nepal Telecommunications Authority's 92nd MIS Report published on 15 December 2014, internet penetration rate of Nepal is 38.09 % of the total population. This seems to be similar condition to the global scenario.

Like other global organizations and brands, Nepali organizations are also in the way to make presence on the social media. Although the presence of the Nepali companies on social media is very low, some of the big brands are using social media effectively. However, its impact to grow their business and build brand equity has not been systematically studied till the date.

According to socialbakers.com, Ncell, Sparrow SMS, Asian Paints Nepal, AceTravelas.com, and Yati airlines are the top five Facebook pages having largest audience on the date 2 march 2015. Other companies like Nepal telecom, Dabur Nepal, UFO Nepal, are following them.

According to alexa.com, a web analytic tools, facebook is the top site browsing from the Nepal on date third march 2015. Furthermore, analyzing the top 10 sites in Nepal, social media sites are in the top rank. Among 10 top sites Facebook.com is in first, google.com is in second and YouTube is in third rank. Similarly, Twitter and Wikipedia are in fifth and tenth rank respectively.

One of the Nepal's largest mobile service providers Ncell, has recently offered free unlimited browsing of the Twitter, a micro blogging site and Wikikipedia, a largest digital library under the campaign 'Twitter Zero' and 'Wikipedia Zero'. It had already started to collect quarries via Twitter regarding its services and answering them.

Lunching this package, corporate communication director of Ncell has said, "Twitter Zero is our initiative to provide great value to our customers. It will empower our customers to express their thoughts and comment on others' opinion, thereby bolstering their rights of freedom of expression".

In this way social media is being a major tool for brand communication among the global as well as Nepali brands and firms. There are many studies on impact of social media on brand equity done internationally, but not any work has been done on Nepalese firms and brands.

Therefore this study will be conducted mainly to explore the effect of brand based social media communication in customer based brand equity. For the study purpose “the largest GSM mobile service provider of Nepal (NTA MIS Report, 2014)” i.e., Ncell is selected to collect the data on brand based social media communication.

## **2 Research Problem**

Social media is being a major tool for brand communication among the global as well as Nepali brands and firms. It is being popular among the firms and customers both. The present study will be focused on consumers based perception about the brand based social media communication of a telecom brand in Nepal.

The research problem of the study can be identified as follows;

Do firm created and user generated brand based social media communication of a Nepali brand helps it's firm to build brand equity.

What is the mostly affected dimension of the customer based brand by the brand based social media communication in Nepali telecom brand.

## **3 Objectives of the Study**

This study has two objectives:

To examine the effects of social media communication on customer-based brand equity.

To measure the customer-based brand equity dimension that is strongly affected by social media communication.

Aaker's brand equity model will be taken as the basis of the study to meet these objectives. The model states the four dimensions of customer-based brand equity: brand awareness, perceived quality, brand image and brand loyalty. Thus, the study

will measure the effects of social media communication to create brand awareness, to improve perceived quality, to create brand image and to retain brand loyalty.

#### **4 Literature Review**

The purpose of this chapter is to critically review literature related to the theoretical concept of the topic of brand equity, customer based brand equity and social media communication. The literature review is to develop a theoretical framework for the study.

##### **4.1 Brand and Brand Equity**

A brand is – A name, a term, a symbol, or any other unique element of a product that identifies one firm's products and sets them apart from the competition (Solomon & Stuart, 2002).

According to Keller, 2008, Branding is all about creating differences. He proposed the following basic principles of branding and brand equity:

1. Differences in outcomes arise from the “added value” endowed to a product as a result of past marketing activity for the brand.
2. This value can be created for a brand in many different ways.
3. Brand equity provides a common denominator for interpreting marketing strategies and assessing the value of a brand.

Aaker, 1991 defined ‘brand ‘as, a distinguishing name and symbol (such as a logo, trademark, or package design) intended to identify the goods or services of either one seller or a group of sellers, and to differentiate those goods or services from those of competitors . He also defined the term, “brand equity” as, a set of brand assets and liabilities linked to a brand, its name and symbol, that add to or subtract from the value provided by a product or service to a firm and/or to that firm's customers (Aaker, 1991). He further elaborate, brand equity as “a set of five categories of brand assets (liabilities) linked to a brand's name or symbol that add to (subtract from) the value provided by a product or service.” He identified five brand equity constructs: brand awareness; brand perceived quality; brand associations; brand loyalty; and other

proprietary brands assets, such as patents, trademarks, and channel relationships. This is also known as the Aaker's brand equity model.

## **4.2 Customer-Based Brand Equity**

According to Keller (1993), consumer based brand equity consist of two dimensions, brand knowledge and brand awareness. Keller (1993) defined "Customer-based brand equity" (CBBE) as "the differential effect of brand knowledge on consumer response to the marketing of the brand". According to Keller (1993), the differentiation effect is determined by comparing consumers' reactions to the marketing of a brand with their reactions to same marketing of an unnamed version of the product. He highlighted two brand equity constructs: brand knowledge and brand response. Brand knowledge has been defined in terms of brand awareness and image, while brand response to marketing has been defined in terms of consumer perceptions, preferences, and behavior arising from marketing mix activities.

According to Yoo and Donthu (2001) brand equity, specifically consumer-based brand equity, can be measured through the four elements: brand loyalty, brand awareness, perceived quality, and brand association. Brand equity has been studied for two reasons.

Here, consumer-based means that "cognitive and behavioral brand equity at the individual consumer level through a consumer survey" (Yoo & Donthun, 2001). Yoo and Donthun (2001) has employed four of Aaker's component of brand equity i.e. brand awareness, brand loyalty, perceived quality and brand association excluding proprietary assets dimension as it is not important in the measurement of customer based brand equity.

### **4.2.1 Dimensions of Consumer-Based Brand Equity**

#### **4.2.1.1 Brand Awareness**

Brand awareness is the ability of consumers to distinguish a brand among other brand in a product category. Aaker (1991) stated that brand awareness is a vital element of brand equity. Keller (1993) conceptualized brand awareness as comprising of brand recall and brand recognition. He went further to say that brand recall is the ability of

consumers to remember a brand from their mind when the product class is made know.

Aaker (1991) suggested that there are three levels of brand awareness: brand recognition, brand recall and top of mind. Many researchers have seen brand awareness as main element of brand equity. Hoyer and Brown (1990 as cited in Lin and Chang 2003) study examined the importance of brand awareness in consumer's decision making process and they found out that brand awareness was a primary factor.

#### **4.2.1.2 Brand Association/Image**

Blackwell et al. (2001) referred to brand image as the combined effect of brand association or consumers perception of the “brands tangible and intangible association”. Keller (1993) has proposed that brand image is an important element of brand equity and argues brand image as a perception or association consumers form as a result of their memory concerning a product.

Thus, brand image does not exist in the features, technology or the actual product itself, it is sometimes brought out by advertisement, promotion or users. Brand image enables a consumer to recognize a product, lower purchase risks, evaluate the quality and obtain certain experience and satisfaction out of product differentiation.

#### **4.2.1.3 Brand Loyalty**

According to Aaker (1991), brand loyalty is “the attachment that a customer has to a brand”. Further he classified loyalty as non-customer, price switcher, passive loyal, fence sitters and committed. Yoo and Donthun (2001) also referred to brand loyalty as the tendency to be loyal to a brand and this can be shown by the intention of the consumer to buy the brand as a foremost choice.

Odin et al. (2001) stated that brand loyalty can either be behavioral or attitudinal. Behavioral loyalty comprises of repeated purchases of the brand and attitudinal perspective stresses on consumers intention to be loyal to the brand.

Aaker's brand equity model (1991) is the mother of many researchers' findings and results (shrestha 2012). Most researches (Lasser et al., 1995; Yoo et al., 2000; Yoo & Donthun, 2001; and Lin & Chang, 2003) have been surveyed these four dimensions of

customer based-brand equity (brand awareness, perceived quality, brand loyalty and brand associations).

#### **4.2.1.4 Perceived Quality**

Aaker (1996) and Keller (1993,1998) stated that perceived quality is a core dimension of customers based brand equity as it relates to the willingness to pay a price premium, brand choice and brand purchase intention.

Zeithamal (2000) defined perceived quality as consumer's judgment about the whole product superiority or excellence. Like brand association, perceived quality provide consumers with value and give them reason to differentiate a brand from another.

### **4.3 Social Media**

Based on Kaplan and Haenlein (2010, p. 565), social media is an internet based program that helps consumers to share opinions, information, experiences, and perspectives in which the internet based programs can be explored through the social networking sites, blogs and content areas.

Mangold and Faulds (2009 (as cited in Babac, 2011) describe —social media as the set of online word of mouth forums which includes blogs, discussion boards, forums or social networks to name a few.

Social media sites vary in terms of their scope and functionality(Babac, 2011) . Some social media sites are for the general masses (i.e. myspace, facebook) while others (i.e. LinkedIn, Xing) are focused on professional networks. Media sharing sites (i.e. YouTube, Picassa and Flickr) or blogging platforms (i.e. blogspot, wordpress) are also members of this ecosystem called social media (Kietzmann et al., 2011 as cited in Babac, 2011).

Most recently, micro-blogging and location specific micro-blogging have joined the social media family (i.e. Twitter, Foursquare) by offering real-time updates on people and organizations within a limited space of 140 characters per message(Babac, 2011).

Social media provide opportunities for Internet users to create and share content. Through the social media, consumers can express their views to millions of people in only seconds. Depending upon the internet and social media the new form of

marketing i.e social media marketing, has developed these days. Social media marketing is the marketing strategies that businesses are employing in order to be a part of a network of people online.

#### **4.4 Brand Based Social Media Communication**

Social media channels offer both firms and customers new ways of engaging with each other. Companies hope to engage with loyal consumers and influence individuals' perceptions about their products, spread information, and learn from and about their audience (Roderick J. Brodie et al. 2013). The content created by Internet users involves different topics, including brands and products, making companies no longer the primary source of brand communication (Schivinski& Dabrowski, 2013).

There are two different forms of social media communications (a) firm-created and (b) user-generated social media communication (Schivinski& Dabrowski, 2013).

User-generated content (UGC) can be understood as the sum of all ways in which people make use of social media. The term user-generated content is usually applied to describe the various forms of media content that are publicly available and created by Internet users (Kaplan and Haenlein, 2010). Customers participate in the process of content creation for a variety of reasons such as self-promotion, intrinsic enjoyment, and hope of changing public perceptions (Schivinski& Dabrowski, 2013).

Firm-created social media communication is under the management of companies, while user-generated social media communication is independent of the firm's control (Schivinski& Dabrowski, 2013). Firm-created Word Of Mouth may be perceived as a fusion between traditional advertising and consumer word of mouth, characterized as being firm initiated but consumer implemented (Godes & Mayzlin 2009).

In this way, social media provide the opportunity for both firms and customer to connect with each other, to co-create the content, to share owns view, and discuss about any brands or services. This whole process can be referred as brand based social media communication. Firms and customer may have their own different reason and motives to participate in this process. Hence, this study is focused on the effect of brand related social media communication on customer based brand equity.

#### 4.5 Review of previous related works

In this study, some previous studies will be reviewed in this section. Since very less work is done about the internet and social media usages pattern in Nepal. But globally we can find some significant work on this topic.

One is Working Paper on The Impact of Brand Communication On Brand Equity Dimensions And Brand Purchase Intention Through Facebook by Bruno Schivinski and Dariusz Dąbrowski.

Another is another study is The Effect of Social Media Marketing on Luxury Brand Customer Equity among Young Adults which was published on International Journal of Economics and Management

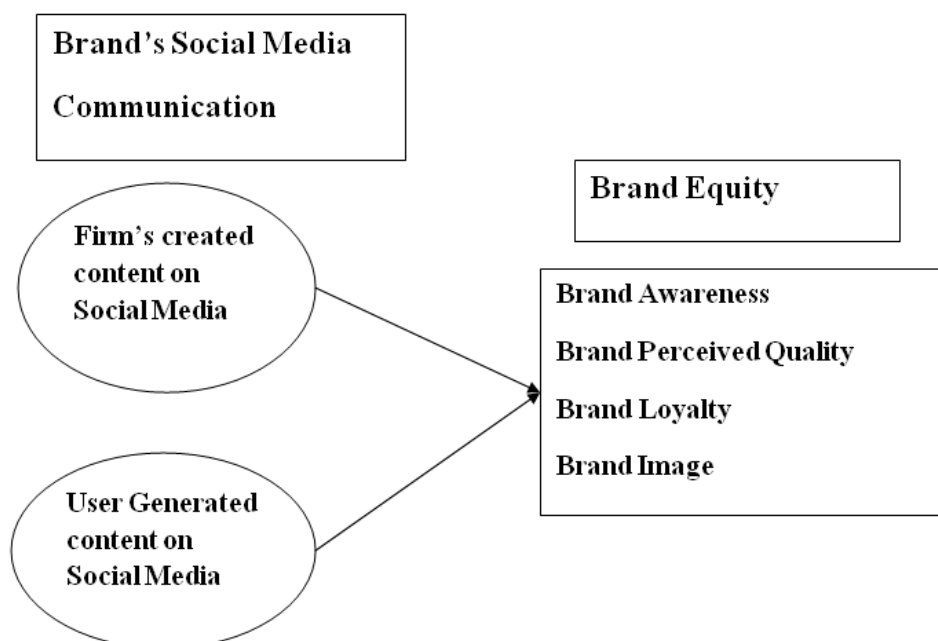
Similarly, other related studies and journal article related to social media communication and brand equity will be analyzed.

#### 4.6 Conceptual Framework

On the basis of above literature, following conceptual framework has been developed for the study.

Independent Variables

Dependent Variables



Hence, for the study purpose following hypothesis are formulated.



H1. Firm created social media communication positively influences (H1a) brand awareness/association, (H1b) brand loyalty and (H1c) perceived quality.

H2. User generator social media communication positively influences (H2a) brand awareness/association, (H2b) brand loyalty and (H2c) perceived quality.

## **6 Methodology**

The study on the effects of brand based social media communication on Customer Based Brand Equity will basically be descriptive and analytical in nature, based on primary data. The questionnaire survey will be designed to obtain responses of the user (fans and followers) on the social media communication of the selected brand. The questionnaire will be based on those social media platforms which the case brand uses.

The respondents will be asked to participate voluntarily in the questionnaire survey.

Descriptive statistical tools such as mean, standard deviation, correlation, regression will be used for analysis. Moreover, regression analysis will be used to establish the relationship between independent variables (social media communication) with the dependent variable (brand awareness, brand image/association, perceived quality, brand loyalty and brand equity).

## **7 Limitation of the Study**

The study on effects of social media communication on CBBE has following limitations:

- i. As the social media landscape is continuous changing and evolving, the data collected today may not be relevant in the future.
- ii. Only one telecom brand of Nepal will be included in this study. Conclusions derived may not be necessarily applicable to other products and services.
- iii. This study will be totally based on the views and responses received from consumers of Ncell, who has liked and followed Ncell's social media pages on Facebook and Twitter, YouTube, and Instagram only. The findings of the study may not be applicable for other products and services in other construct.

## **8 Organization of the Study**

The outline of the study is as follows:

### Chapter 1: Introduction to the study

This chapter presents the introduction to the study, the background to the study and the research objectives.

This chapter presents an overview of the marketing environment of the major cell phone network service providers in Nepal.

### Chapter 2: Literature review

This chapter presents an overview of literature on branding and brand management. It provides the context within which brand equity measurement should be assessed.

In this chapter current approaches to brand valuation and the measurement of brand equity will be discussed. The empirical research findings that were obtained by applying different brand equity measurement methodologies are also presented.

### Chapter 3: Research methodology

This chapter presents the research methodology, the development of the sample frame, and the statistical techniques used in the analysis of the data.

### Chapter 4: Analysis of the results

The analysis of the research results and research findings are presented in this chapter.

### Chapter 5: Conclusion and recommendations

The interpretation of the research findings and the conclusion will be presented in this chapter also contains recommendations on how brands can improve customer- based brand equity through social media marketing in the defined target market.

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