

The Impact of Social Media on Brand Awareness (With Special Reference to Facebook Use in Fast Moving Consumer Goods in Sri Lanka)

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ABSTRACT

Today, traditional media is still a significant part of advertising strategies, but they cannot reach out to all members of the target audience on their own. In other hand, social media platforms, such as Facebook, Twitter and YouTube, also use as marketing strategy to enhance brand communication and promote and propagate product information among consumers in an efficient manner. As well as the trend of exerting social media platforms which FMCG industry carries out has a significant control over brand awareness and brand building. Therefore, this study has endeavored to fill the gap in marketing strategies, by examining the impact of social media marketing on brand awareness, with reference to Facebook use in fast moving consumer goods industry in Sri Lanka. The study sample was made of 200 people, both male and female, who reside in the Colombo district, use Facebook and have already liked at least one fast moving consumer goods brand. A standardized online survey was conducted via Google Docs by employing the convenience sampling technique to collect data. The researcher has analyzed data concerning User Generated Communication and Firm Generated Communication which are main two components of social media marketing as the independent variables and brand awareness as the dependent variable to look at the correlation between these factors. The results has found that User Generated Communication and Firm Generated Communication have a positive correlation and impact with brand awareness. Hence, the conclusion has given as social media efforts positively influence brand awareness in FMCG industry. Thereby, the study has suggested to build platforms to enhance consumer's engagement on creating user generate contents for their brands, create and increase more brand related and unrelated communication, combining traditional media with social media, achieving company target audience through Content/Adds/Apps to be more cost effective, have excellent brand management and good customer base.

Keywords-- Firm Generate Communication, Purchase intention, User Generate Communication, Facebook

Social media has become an integral part of the internet and our daily lives. It manifests itself in many different ways, with the term capturing a range of online platforms that are intended to facilitate global communication. Through using social media, everyone can create and share content among friends or globally to strangers, meaning it is now one of the greatest tools for spreading information around the world. Popular social media networking sites like Facebook, Instagram, Twitter, LinkedIn, and other content communities provide a platform for people to create and share content inside and outside of their professional context. This makes social media an invaluable tool for marketers, as it is a way for customers to share information, and for marketers to create awareness and empowerment for a brand to their customer base.

Social networking's power becomes apparent when looking at statistics, which demonstrate that it is now a global movement. Globally, the rate of those with a social media account is now 61%. Social networks have a faster rate of growth and usage than other online forms such as blogs and user groups (Hutton & Fosdick, 2011). Foster Research found that in 2008, 75% of Internet users were active on "Web-based social networking" sites, such as blogs, online shopping sites or networks intended for socializing. This is up from 56% the year before. This activity included participating on social networks, reading websites or blogs, or contributing reviews and ratings to online shopping sites (Kaplan and Haenlein, 2010).

Brand Reputation is everything for a marketer. This is because if there are no other factors such as quality or price separating two brands, users will choose to purchase one over the other because of its brand reputation. Therefore, companies must differentiate and position its brand name so that it is clear for its target market. Sometimes, visibility and recognition can be all that separate two brands. Users are now increasingly using social media to discuss brands and products, making reference to their functional performance as well as their social popularity (Kotler et al, 2010). Marketers should utilize this social power by encouraging

I. INTRODUCTION

consumers to engage with the brand in a positive manner. By using web-based social networking in a productive, well-considered way, firms have a way to create a strong online presence for themselves, and thereby be in a better position to offer believable perspectives on issues (Kotler and Keller, 2012).

II. RESEARCH PROBLEM

Sri Lankan organizations spend around 56 billion rupees a year on traditional media advertising (Athukorala, 2012). It is evident that Sri Lankan organizations invest significantly in both social and traditional media. However, it is still unclear what kind of impact social media has on brand awareness in Sri Lanka, because the existing literature does not provide empirical evidence that is unique to Sri Lanka.

To frame our understanding of Sri Lanka, other countries can be analyzed to understand the concepts. According to Balas (2014), social media has significantly increased brand awareness in Romania, while Jokinen (2015) found that social media can influence the overall impression of a brand's image. Factors such as using a site, the engagement of it, and the experience of users, related associations and a user's awareness of a brand all have a positive impact on the brand image (Nikolova 2012). Additionally, Maria (2010) mentions that even though there is a huge boom in the use of social networking sites such as Facebook, the research itself is lagging behind this rapid development, making it difficult to find recent studies on social media's relationship with the branding process. By taking all these facts into consideration, further research can assist in filling in this gap in the existing literature, and thereby identify the impact of social media marketing on brand awareness in fast moving consumer goods in Sri Lanka.

III. RESEARCH QUESTIONS

What is the impact of User Generated Communication on Facebook on brand awareness in fast moving consumer goods industry in Sri Lanka?

What is the impact of Firm Generated Communication on Facebook on brand awareness in fast moving consumer goods industry in Sri Lanka?

IV. RESEARCH OBJECTIVES

To observe and analyze the impact of User Generated Communication in Facebook on brand awareness in fast moving consumer goods industry in Sri Lanka

To observe and analyze the impact of Firm Generated Communication in Facebook on brand awareness in fast moving consumer goods industry in Sri Lanka

V. REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

Social Networking Sites and Social Media

According to Boyd & Ellison (2007), Social Networking Sites (SNS) are a key factor to create online content and share users who share common interests. These social networking sites are often made up of user profiles where registered members can share information on their profiles or with others. Users will create their content, such as adding photos or writing messages or will consume and share the content of others. Social media users can add their contacts to their social media networks by sending invitations. This invitation can be accepted or reject by other party. If the other party accepts the request, they become friends on the social network, and they can see each other activities which are shared on social network sites. (Kietzmann et al., 2011). Because of their potential to become viral and spread to a large audience, social networking sites are seen as a vital tool for marketers to communicate with consumers and promote products (Tsai & Men, 2012). Therefore, having a broad social media presence is required for any brand as social media is a place where consumers spend most of their time on social media networks (Darragh, 2015).

Social media can be defined in many ways. Some of the definitions are listed below:

1. Social Media is a tool which people use for social purposes (Safco, 2010).
2. A type of online word-of-mouth communication, when compared with its effect on consumer attitudes to real word-of-mouth communication (Rothschild, 2011).
3. A term for the range of information that is produced, initiated, spread and consumed by a user online, with the purpose of informing their social network about products, brands, services, people and issues (Blackshaw & Nazzaro, 2006).

Combining the above definitions, the researcher concludes social media as a website hosted on the internet which enables users to post content and share them with their friend's network.

The Dimensions of Facebook

Even though there are numerous social networks online, this researcher has decided to select Facebook as the primary social media to conduct this study.

Facebook is designed to create an open and connected global community, with users using the Facebook platform to stay connected with friends and family, stay informed on global events and express their personalities (Facebook, 2004). On Facebook, users can present themselves in an online profile. When they are become "friends," they can post comments, links and photos on each other's pages and message their friends. Facebook users can also join groups on the platform based on common interests and hobbies, or in educational groups based on different interests. Users also have the option of listing their hobbies, interests and favorite movie and music genres on their profiles to

share their personality with their friends (Ellison et al, 2007).

According to Weinberg (2009), a business Facebook page is a platform which works as a Facebook public profile that enables businesses to share their products or services with people that have Facebook accounts. These pages are similar to personal profiles, although it differs in the fact that businesses are focused on growing their fan base instead of the friend list. In the functions of a page, marketers can post and collect content, share content from their Twitter accounts or blogs, display user reviews and initiate conversations. Weinberg also noted that users could demonstrate their liking of many brands and companies by engaging with Facebook fan pages aimed at a particular brand or creating their own fan page. Facebook groups are another way for users to publicly state their interest or liking of a particular cause, product, business, or brand. Facebook also has advanced advertising mechanisms which are ideal for businesses, it enables to targets potential customers based on demographics such as age, gender, location, relationship status, and interests (Giesen, 2007).

User Generated Communication

Facebook content can be divided into two different categories, being either user-generated or firm-generated. User Generated Communication is where users create or share content, and Firm Generated Communication is when firms do with the intent of promoting their business on Facebook (Kurian, 2016). According to the Valcke & Lenaerts (2010), the term User Generated Communication (UGC) first came into usage around 2005. Since then, UGC has continued to be a crucial part of the social media landscape. The entire world is now capable of producing online content due to the increased accessibility of broadband technology and electronic gadgets, meaning more people can become active participants in the Web 2.0 and participate in UGC. However, Valcke & Lenaerts have noted that it's hard to define UGC because there is no officially accepted mainstream definition. However, UGC can be defined as all content posted online by users, which they have created themselves or by other which they are simply sharing. This can be anything from text to graphics, audio or video, or any combination of the above. UGC can also give users the freedom to engage in hate speech or defamation, invade privacy, infringe on intellectual property (Cocozzelli, 2006).

Having compiled the literature on UGC, Christodoulides, Jevons & Bonhomme (2012) have identified co-creation, empowerment, community, and self-concept as the factors that motivate users to generate their content and communication. Co-creation includes any situation where consumers collaborate with companies or other consumers to create online content (Humphreys & Grayson, 2008). Today there is a trend among consumers to express their brand related opinions with companies or with their friends. This can be used to understand consumer needs and wants and fulfill them. (Wright et al, 2006). UGC provides these people an

opportunity of expressing themselves by sharing their ideas, opinions, and interests with others. This because UGC also has a social dimension, which serves as a way for self-presentation and creating one's identity, allowing users to feel validated and recognized by their peers (Christodoulides et al, 2012).

UGC involvement can be identified as a type of product involvement because it is brand-related (Michaelidou & Dibb, 2008). Interviews conducted in previous studies have confirmed that brands use and encourage UGC as a way to build relationships with consumers. In the same vein, negative UGC can also have a harmful impact on a brand's reputation and equity. This is made worse by the fact that many users consider UGC more credible than professional content or FGC (Cheong & Morrison, 2008).

Firm Generated Communication

Firm Generated Communication is the other type of content created on Facebook. This can be defined as any content created by a firm or brand to promote themselves on Facebook to consumers (Kurian, 2016). Facebook has a great native advertising platform which is an excellent way to reach both customers and potential customers. Advertisements can be targeted at specific customer bases by location, interests, employment, and education. Marketers can decide and adjust their own budgets, as web advertisement can be bought by cost per mile or cost per click (Adams, 2012). According to Hof (2011), Facebook has a great reach capacity, as on average, people have a social network of 130 Facebook friends. This means that when they "Like" a brand, that public affirmation of support may appear on the news feeds of several of their friends, who may decide to spread it to their networks, thereby potentially spreading it to thousands in just a few moments. Hof also found that people are two times as likely to remember an advertisement if their friend is in it. The unit of branded content is also known as a social-media brand impression. There are a variety of channels that these impressions may happen, but there are five vehicles that are used in particular to deliver impressions:

Publishing on pages: These impressions are unpaid and appear on the walls of fan pages, and may also appear in the newsfeed of a fan or the fan's extended social network (Tag, 2015).

Friend's stories: These impressions, also unpaid, occur when a user directly engages with a brand, and their friends or friends of friends either see this on their newsfeed or their wall. An example of this may be someone liking Columbia Sportswear, with their friends seeing this (Smith, Fischer and Yongjian, 2012).

Sponsored stories: These impressions are paid, and are similar to friend's stories. But the key difference is that story is visible for a wider audience than average post reach (Lipsman et al., 2012)

Advertisements with social: These messages are branded, coming straight from advertisers. These messages are in a social context and appear to friends of fans (Lipsman, Mudd, Rich, & Bruich, 2012).

Apps: Facebook has numerous apps which can be used by marketers. These apps provide a vehicle that has great potential for going viral. Facebook also allows developers to create custom apps for their specific needs (Zarella & Zarella, 2011).

Brand awareness

Brand awareness is defined as the consumer's ability to identify a brand when presented to them in a different conditions. Brand awareness is increased by one's exposure to seeing it, hearing the name or thinking about it. Therefore, any efforts that marketers take such as designing a symbol, logo, character, packaging or advertising and promotions with slogans can increase the consumer's familiarity and awareness of a brand (Macdonald & Sharp, 2000).

Brand recognition is the consumer's ability to confirm that they have been previously exposed to a brand when given it as a prompt. Brand recall is when the consumer can name a brand from their memory when prompted by a product category or the purpose of that category, or purchase or usage situation (Parameswaran, Keller, & Jacob, 2012).

According to Brewer & Zhao (2010) brand awareness is key determinants to identify consumer behavior.

Consumers tend to purchase a product with higher brand awareness, rather than base their purchasing decision on quality or price.

Brand awareness motivates consumers to take purchase decision quicker.

Brand awareness also has a strong influence on whether or not the consumer chooses to purchase from the same brand again.

There are also other studies to support these claims regarding social media, such as Hutter et al. (2013) who found that Facebook fan pages have a positive effect on consumer brand awareness, and Tomi Jokinen (2016) found that social media impact on brand awareness is equivalent to traditional media.

Social Media and Fast Moving Consumer Goods industry in Sri Lanka

According to research compiled by Bartleet Religare Securities (2012), Sri Lanka Fast Moving Consumer Goods market has been grown rapidly in the past few years. Now there is high competition among manufacturers to provide quality products at normal price range. Sri Lanka's FMCG market amount to Rs. 141 billion during 2010. 74% of the market comprises of food and beverage companies, with personal care and home care having a market share of 15% and 11% respectively.

Social Media is also a huge part of the average Sri Lankan's life, with a majority of the population spending a significant amount of time on Facebook, as well as other social networks (Sri Lanka Social Media Survey, 2013).

According to McGiboney (2009), the estimated online advertising spending of marketers on the most popular social media and blogging sites increased 11%, from approximately \$49 million in August 2008 to about \$108 million the following August. The share of the total advertising budget dominated by social media advertising also grew, going from a 7% share of the total online advertisement budget in August 2008 to a 15% share the same time the following year.

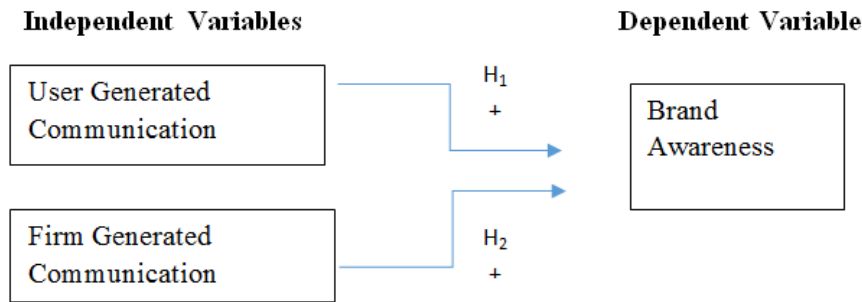
Additionally, a Nielsen Media Research study in June 2009 found that the spending of major FMCG brands on online display advertisements had fallen 11.4% in the first quarter of 2009, which indicates that brands are increasingly investing their money into social media. These brands are doing so because it is a way to directly build relationships with consumers (Smith, 2010).

However, what this means for the Sri Lankan market and the efficacy of Sri Lankan companies' social media use is still something to be investigated further.

VI. METHODS

In this study, the researcher has used deductive research strategy since the research is based on existing theories of User Generated Communication, Firm Generated Communication, and Brand Awareness. Under deductive strategy, the researcher has used a quantitative approach to collect and analyse data as research objectives are to measure the impact of two variables and to establish find the relationship between two variables. By using quantitative approach, it enables to find out empirical evidence on impact and relationship of User Generated Communication and Firm Generated Communication on Brand Awareness using statistical analyses. This study targets all consumers in Sri Lanka who use Facebook and have liked at least one FMCG brand prior to the study taking place. A sample size of the study is 200 respondents, who are conveniently able to provide the information and Colombo district selected as the extent of the study as Colombo District having the highest population who are using the internet and social media. The researcher is employing the convenience sampling technique.

Figure 1: Conceptual Framework



Hypotheses

Hypotheses stated in the above conceptual framework could be explained as follows;

H₁: User Generated Communication will positively affect brand awareness.

H₂: Firm Generated Communication will positively affect brand awareness.

Variable Definition

Variables included in the conceptual framework are defined below

Independent Variables

User Generated Communication: User Generated Communication (UGC) is defined as all online content generated or posted by users, whether they created it or not. This can be in the form of text, graphics, audio, video or any combination of the above (Valcke & Lenaerts, 2010).

Firm Generated Communication: Firm Generated Communication (FGC) can be defined as all content which is upload to the internet by firms to promote their brands. Firm Generated Communication means, contents that are published by firms to promote their brand on Facebook. (Kurian, 2016)

Dependent Variable

Brand Awareness: The potential buyer’s ability to identify or ability to remember brands from a certain product category can be defined as brand awareness. (Aaker, 1991)

Operationalization of Variables

The above-defined variables of the study could be divided into observable measures as presented in Table.

Table 1: Operationalization of Variables

Variable	Indicator	Measure	Source
User Generated Communication	Community	I sense community feeling when I post unique content about a brand.	(Christodoulides, Jevons, & Bonhomme, 2012)
		I involve with other members online, due to common interest in a brand.	
		I am encouraged to produce content about a brand because of my association in a social media network.	
	Concept of the Self	I express myself online through brands.	
Firm Generated Communication	Publishing on Page	I like to comment on social media posts generated by a brand.	(Zarella & Zarella, 2011)
		I use social media to share a brand’s posts (photos, videos, links and polls) with my friends	
		I am encouraged to produce content about a brand because of my membership in a social network.	

	Apps	I often start using an app if a brand posts about it.	
Brand Awareness	Recognition	I can recognize the brand.	(Yoo, Donthu, & Lee, 2000)
		I can tell the brand from among its competitors.	
	Recall	I can remember the name of the brand quickly whenever I see its background pictures.	
		I can think of key characteristics of the brand quickly whenever I see it	
		I can effortlessly imagine what the brand/s look like	

Data Collection

The most important data collected in this survey is primary data, which has been collected by conducting a questionnaire completed by 200 respondents. The questionnaire primarily asked questions about the respondents’ involvement in User Generated Communication and their involvement in Firm Generated Communication, as well as gathering demographical information on the respondents. The questionnaire was created and distributed via Google Docs (docs.google.com), which proved to be a convenient and flexible way to conduct the survey. The questionnaire was promoted on Facebook and was set up in such a way that users who tried to access the survey from outside of Colombo could not do so.

Data Analysis

The SPSS Statistical data analysis method will be utilized to analyze data which are gathered in this research. This will allow the researcher to draw disruptive statistics, correlation coefficient analysis and multiple regression estimates. Visual aids such as

graphs, tables, and charts are also used to represent the summarized data in a graphical way. The following multiple regression models are used in drawing statistical evidence to test hypothesized relationships of the study:

$$BA_i = \beta_0 + \beta_1 UGC_i + \beta_2 FGC_i + \epsilon_i$$

Where;

BA_i = Brand Awareness

β₀ = Constant

UGC = User Generated Communication

FGC = Firm Generated Communication

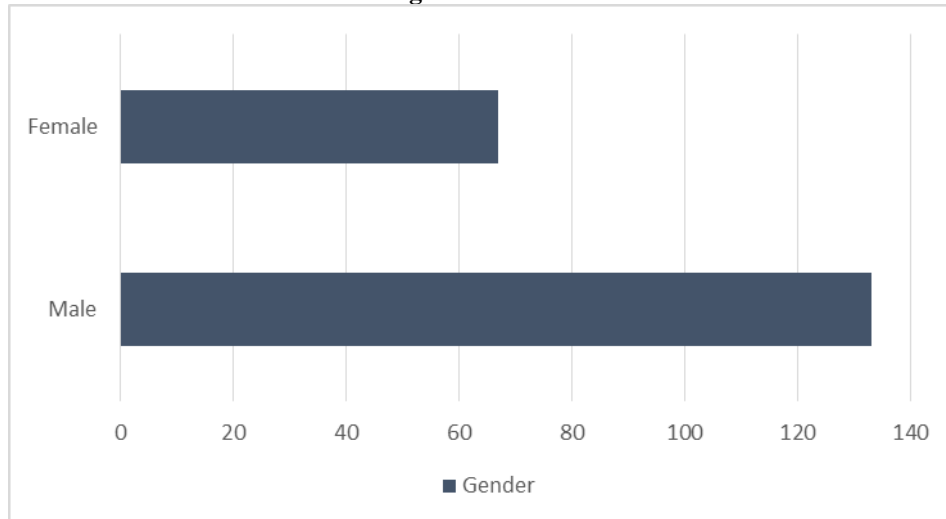
ε_i = Error Term

VII. PRESENTATION AND ANALYSIS OF DATA

Presentation of sample demographics

This section presents responses received for related questions raised by demographic data.

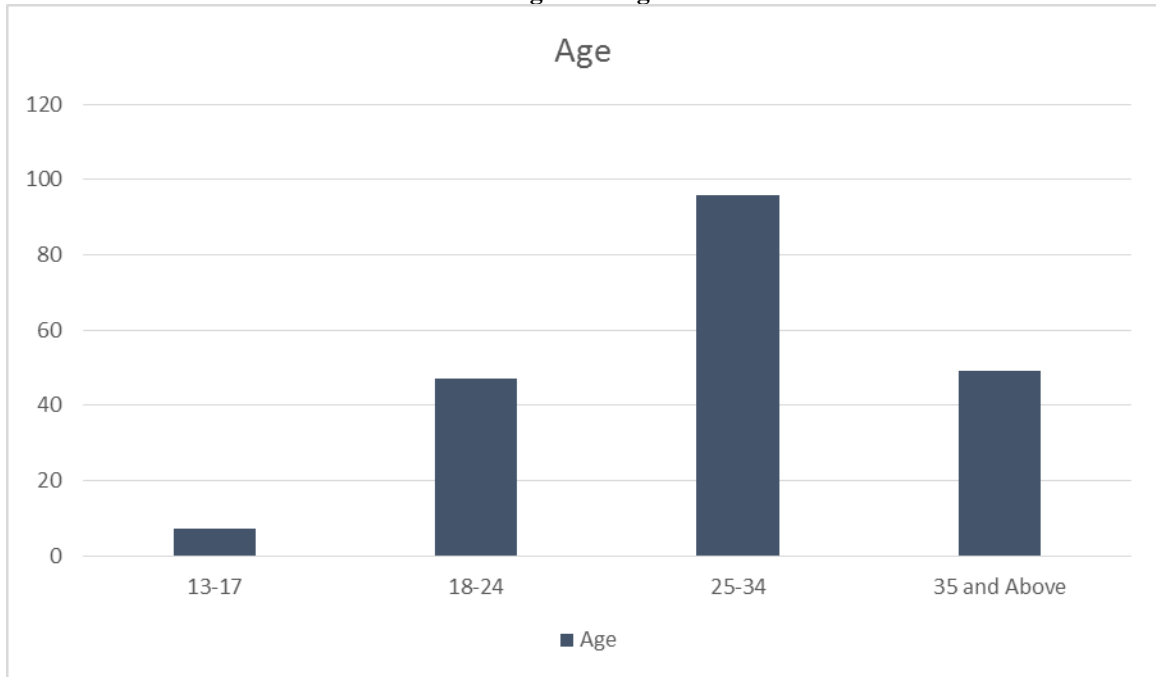
Figure 1: Gender



According to the analysis sample, males dominate in the gender composition. 66.5% of the sample respondents are males, while only 33.5% are

females. According to Facebook Sri Lanka’s statistics, males make up 70% of the social media platform’s users, while females represent only 30% of the user base.

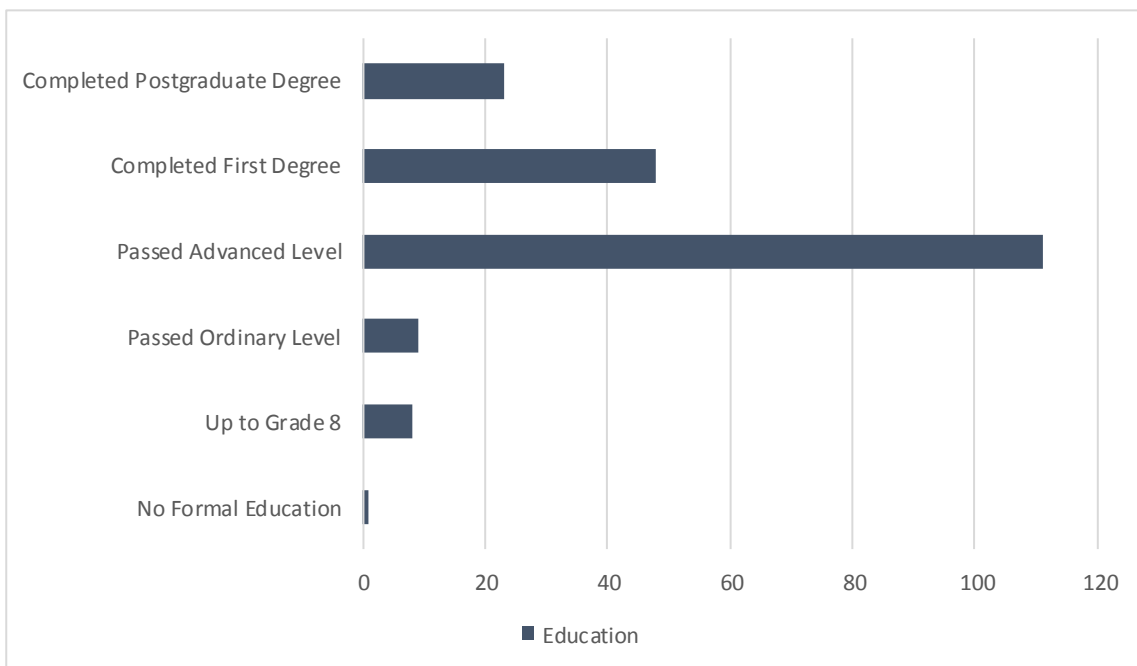
Figure 2: Age



The largest demographic in this study is the 25-34 age category, which comprises 48% of the respondents. Meanwhile, 24.5% of the respondents are above 35 and 23.5% respondents are in the 18-24 age

category. According to the Facebook statics Sri Lanka, 25-34 age categories represent 33% of the entire base of Sri Lankan Facebook users.

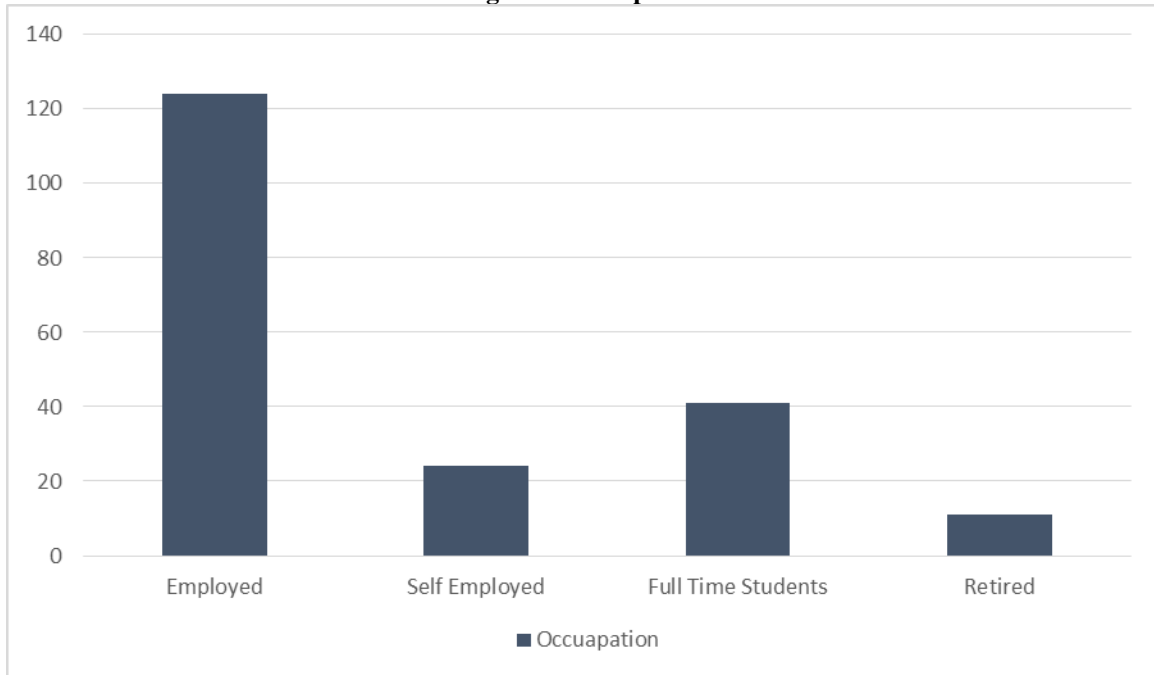
Figure 3: Education



Most of the respondents have completed advanced level followed by the first-degree category. Since the most respondents in sample age are 25-34, it seems that most of them are knowledgeable and aware of

technology. Respondents who do not have any formal education and passed only up to grade 8 shows low value, indicating a poor knowledge of new technology.

Figure 4: Occupation



The largest proportion of the sample, 62%, are employed. This could be because many Sri Lankans browse the internet while at work.

Reliability Test

Before progressing to the correlation and regression analysis, the researcher attempted to verify

the suitability of the collected data to be used in the analysis. Accordingly, the researcher used Cronbach's alpha reliability test to validate the internal reliability of the questionnaire. If the alpha value more than 0.7, the test can be considered as significant.

Table 02: Cronbach's Alpha Reliability Test

Variable	Number of Questions	Cronbach's Alpha
User Generated Communication	05	0.900
Firm Generated Communication	04	0.875
Brand Awareness	05	0.915

According to Table 01, Cronbach's alpha value is higher than 0.7 for all variables. Therefore the reliability of the questionnaire can be considered as acceptable.

Correlation Analysis

The purpose of the correlation analysis is to find out first phase statistical evidence to test the hypotheses of the study.

Table 03: Correlation Analysis between User Generated Communication and Brand Awareness

		User Generated Communication	Brand Awareness
User Generated Communication	Pearson Correlation	1	.753**
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.000
	N	200	200
Firm Generated Communication	Pearson Correlation	.753**	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	
	N	200	200

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

There is a strong correlation between User Generated Communication and brand awareness: 0.753 at a significant level of 0.01 as shown in table 18. The

Pearson Correlation is 0.753, which confirms that there is a strong correlation between User Generated Communication and brand awareness.

Table 04: Correlation Analysis between Firm Generated Communication and Brand Awareness

		Firm Generated Communication	Brand Awareness
Firm Generated Communication	Pearson Correlation	1	.754**
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.000
	N	200	200
Brand Awareness	Pearson Correlation	.754**	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	
	N	200	200

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

There is also a positive connection between Firm Generated Communication and brand awareness, as evidenced by the Pearson Correlation of 0.754 and the significant level of 0.01.

Regression Analysis

In order to test the combined effect of User Generated Communication and Firm Generated Communication on brand awareness, the researcher carried out a regression analysis and summarized the estimates in the table:

Table 05: Regression Analysis

Model	$BA_i = \beta_0 + \beta_1 UGC_i + \beta_2 FGC_i + \epsilon_i$	
	Coefficient	Significance (P value)
Constant	0.925	.000
User Generated Communication	.404	.000
Firm Generated Communication	.408	.000
Adjusted R2	.617	
F statistic	161.542	.000

The Coefficients in Table 20 revealed the intercept (β_0) equals 0.925. The impact of User Generated Communication (β_1) and Firm Generated Communication (β_2) are .404 and 0.408 respectively. These results indicate that when there is a 1 unit of change in a User Generated Communication, there will be a 0.404 unit increase in brand awareness, and when there is a 1 unit of change in a Firm Generated Communication, there will be a .408 increase in brand awareness. The p-value for User Generated Communication and Firm Generated Communication is 0.000, which suggests that the above influences are highly statistically significant. Accordingly, the established hypothesis in the correlation analysis can be confirmed.

According to the table 20, the coefficient of determination (R^2) is 0.617. It shows that 61.7% of the variation in the brand awareness could be explained by the User Generated Communication and Firm Generated Communication variables.

The p-value of the F –statistic table is 0.000 which is less than 0.05. Therefore the model developed and used in this study can be used as an efficient model for estimating the impact of brand awareness on User Generated Communication and Firm Generated Communication in Social Media. Further, it ensures the variables selected in the model have a linear relationship with brand awareness. Based on the outcomes of the hypotheses testing, the research questions could be answered as follows: User Generated Communication and Firm Generated Communication are key determinants of brand awareness in relating to FMCG in Sri Lanka.

VIII. CONCLUSION

Summary of the Study

Today, traditional media is still a significant part of advertising strategies, but they cannot reach out to all members of the target audience on their own. This study has therefore endeavoured to fill the gap in marketing strategies, by examining the impact of User Generated Communication and Firm Generated Communication on Facebook in regards to brand awareness in the FMCG industry in Sri Lanka. The study sample was made of 200 people, both male and female, who reside in the Colombo district, use Facebook and have already liked at least one fast moving consumer goods brand. A standardized online survey was conducted via Google Docs to collect the data. This data was then analysed by using regression analysis via SPSS statistical software. The results found that User Generated Communication and Firm Generated Communication have a positive correlation with brand awareness. Therefore, it can be concluded that social media efforts positively influence brand awareness. therefore, researcher recommends to create social media platforms which encourage user generated communication on it, create brand-related and unrelated communication, combine their existing traditional media with social media, and also reach out to the company's target audience through a mixture of content, advertisements, and apps.

Conclusion

This research project has concerned itself with the role social media marketing plays in creating brand

awareness of fast moving consumer goods. For this particular study, the researcher has analyzed data concerning User Generated Communication and Firm Generated Communication as the independent variables and brand awareness as the dependent variable to look at the correlation between these factors.

User Generated Communication is any brand-related content which is generated by Facebook users, regardless of whether they created the content themselves or not. This study has observed the drivers of UGC and goes to provide statistical evidence on how this impacts a brand.

Firm Generated Communication is content which are generated by companies for their brand pages on Facebook. Again, this study has demonstrated that utilizing Firm Generated Communication has a positive influence on brand awareness. Therefore, the study draws the conclusion that both User Generated Communication and Firm Generated Communication positively influence brand awareness in FMCG in Sri Lanka.

This is vital information for marketers, as they must be able to use social media marketing and Facebook advertising to Generated brand awareness by incorporation both User Generated Communication and Firm Generated Communication. To generate brand awareness, it is important that users engage with the brand page. Brands must therefore create sponsored Firm Generated Communication or use a mixture of engaging content, Facebook advertising and applications to foster brand awareness.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Based on the above conclusion, the research suggests the following recommendations:

Provide a platform that encourages User Generated Communication

This study demonstrates that there are users whose involvement with a brand is to express themselves online, aligning their personal characteristics with those of the brand. For example, if a user has liked Signal Sri Lanka, they are implicitly or explicitly expressing that they share the values of the brand. Therefore, companies need to encourage more User Generated Communication by providing a platform for this engagement to happen.

Create Conversations, either Brand Related or Unrelated

Facebook brand pages should concern themselves with generating as much conversation as possible within their industry or category. If a brand generates a variety of conversations, it will also increase the brand's equity. When a consumer seems valuable content, they will like, share and comment on the post, which will then notify their friends, thereby spreading the brand's message across social networks. Therefore, it will be highly beneficial for firms to create engaging content on Facebook and thereby fuel brand awareness and brand equity. Getting more likes on the brand page

by growing the fan base is key to success in Facebook marketing. When there are more users on a page, the more the content posted by the brand will be viral on Facebook.

Reach out to Target Audience with Advertisements and Applications

Facebook's inbuilt advertising feature can be leveraged very effectively by brands. Facebook advertisements allow brands to advertise their pages or events on Facebook, ensuring it gets seen by more people.

Facebook advertisements are a tool offered by Facebook to digital marketers to promote their product and services. By using Facebook advertisement platform, marketers can target their target audience based on their interest. Interest are measured from pages liked by each Facebook users. Marketers can either use their organic post reach to promote their products or they can reach more users by doing paid promotions on Facebook advertisements platform.

Merging Traditional Marketing with Social Media

Brands can merge social media marketing with traditional marketing to gain more benefits from social media. Marketers should encourage their consumers to create more User Generated Communication to express their feeling towards the brand. This can be encouraged via traditional media. For example, Closeup Sri Lanka launched a new toothpaste in different flavors through online media but also with the support of traditional media. They encourage consumers to visit their Facebook fan page and make comments on their launch video through traditional media.

Use User-Generated Content to Inform Future Brand Strategies

Companies should be aware of the consumer to consumer social media brand conversations. This is one good way to know what consumers are saying about your brand. These responses can be used to monitor negative and positive comments for the brand and it will be also helpful in making future brand strategies.

Encourage Conversions with a Call to Action

Brands should always use a call to action to achieve higher results in digital media campaigns. Joining a sweepstake, competing in a contest, signing up for a subscription or downloading an app are some of the popular call to actions used by digital marketers.

These calls to actions increase the brand equity, but companies must then shift consumers from brand equity to brand preference. With social media at their disposal, companies can listen to their consumers' needs and even lead the conversation in a way that is beneficial to them.

SUGGESTIONS FOR FURTHER RESEARCH

Future research in this area can focus on addressing the limitations above, such as increasing the sample size. Also collecting data from different district and generalizing it can be done. This researcher also

suggests identifying other influencing factors to brand awareness in social media. Rather than measuring the impact on brand awareness, future researchers can measure social media impact on consumers' purchasing intention.

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