

***The Effects of Brand Communication on Consumer-Based Brand Equity:
A Study on Firm-Created Website and User-Generated Fan Page***

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Abstract

Brand social communities are increasingly attracting the attention of consumers intrigued by active two-way communication and up-to-date information. The purpose of this study is to compare the communication effectiveness of firm-created content (FGC) and user-generated content (UGC) on four consumer-based brand equity (CBBE) dimensions and purchase intention. The paper applied quantitative approach, standardized online survey and Likert scale are used to collect the effects of brand communication on brand awareness, brand association, brand perceived quality and brand loyalty, and analyzed by using SPSS statistical analysis. The results showed that firm-created content influence the four CBBE dimensions and user-generated content influence perceived quality and brand loyalty. It means that firm-created content can strongly connect the basic brand recognition, attributes and all over brand equities, but user-generated content has a positive impact on the consumers' brand perception, superiority and purchase considerations. Four CBBE dimensions are fully influence the purchase decision of firm-created website. Brand association has no impact on decision-making of user-generated fan page. The paper revealed the effort of social media brand communication on four CBBE dimensions, which indicate marketing specialists and brand managers to know how assess social media functions and features via two different types of brand communication contents to build the brand equities.

Keywords: Social media brand communication, Consumer-based brand equity (CBBE), Official website, Fan page

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Introduction

Social Media has rapidly developed into the main media of personal social networks, with the function of interaction and collaboration, which is increasingly favored by social communities and companies. Unlike the normal website, these social media brand communications are created by individuals, groups or companies, is characterized by diverse, immediate, two-way communication, sharing, collaboration, and business merits become the sales tool for firm messages, or share use experiences and brand activities (Kaplan & Haenlein 2012; Schivinski & Dabrowski 2015).

In the early days of the internet, many companies created official websites on the internet to provide visitors with one-way information about company development, corporate philosophy, brands, supporting, shopping link, locations of store etc. Firm websites are created by advanced technology providing myriad interactive opportunities for firm and visitors. With the technological evolution and brand strategies, the features of website are to navigation the firm pages, to build visitor trust, to enhance visitors' impressions of brand, to call actions, to get accessible contact details, to submit the work forms and to monitor data analytics.

In the digital period of web 2.0, firm generated content (FGU) and user generated content (UGC) interact and share information with online users and create a cohesive force in a large and diverse virtual world. Users attach on these social media to build a kind of eWOM. Although the credibility of eWOM posted on discussion forum has not been confirmed, consumers' perceptions and use experiences are easy to accept on the site credibility and source credibility of social communication platforms. Brand managers can monitor the attitude towards products and provide event information to communicate with target consumers. These social media gather users to generate concerned content, to attach on the platforms, and to communicate others purposefully. As a result, a variety of social communities and commercial applications have been developed to create new social communication models (Chen et al., 2012).

Compared with traditional one-way media, multi-dimensional and two-way communication of social media has made significant changes as a commercial tool for connecting with consumers and strengthening brand equity (Khalid, 2016). Official website and fan page social platforms are often used and discussed (Schivinski & Dabrowski, 2015). According to Sadek, Elwy, & Eldallal (2017), the company's established firm-created social media and user-generated social media have different communication effects on brand equity. Although previous researches have shown that social media communication has positive value for firm or products, it's unclear whether the effectiveness is predictive or casual after user-generated social media add into the brand communication. And limited researches examine the different effectiveness of firm-created content and user-generated content on the CBBE. Therefore, we choose firm-created website and user-generated fan page to illuminate the function, value and effectiveness between social media brand communication and CBBE dimensions.

Research Purpose

More and more firms incorporate social media spending into their marketing budgets,

understanding the impact of social media brand communication and how it impacts CBBE dimensions will help brands make long-term value and planning. Firms should know how to manage the social communication process since brand equity can be affected by positive as well as negative information.

Based on the research of Sadek, Elwy, & Eldallal (2017), there are different communication goals, content and effects between firm-created website and user-generated fan page. We want to understand the impact of both social media brand communications on the four dimensions of Consumers-based Brand Equity (CBBE), as well as the impact of purchase intention. We investigate that official website and fan page of social media communication affect CBBE by relating different dimensions.

Literature Review

Brand Equity

Brand equity is a key determinant long-term firm value and has emerged as one of the key marketing concepts for academics and practitioners (Rego et al., 2009; Baalbaki & Guzmán, 2016). The concept of brand equity is proposed by Aaker (1991). Brand equity is the content of the brand's name and symbol to provide the value for products or services. Marketers believed that brand equity can make products differentiate from competitive brands. Brand equity is important for the firm and is the sustainable advantage that the firm can have (Aaker, 1991; Keller, 1993). All concepts behind the brand equity are to build a strong brand, to shape products, consumers will have specific, positive thoughts, feelings, beliefs, opinions, and perceptions about brands (Keller, 2018). The main advantage of the high brand equity is to communicate with the consumer market efficiency and enhance consumer confidence compared to competing brands more competitive. Customers will have more loyal, trust, satisfaction and opinion on products with high brand equity. When consumers have more product engagements, there will be cumulative positive effects on brand equity.

Customer-Based Brand Equity (CBBE)

CBBE is defined as the differential effect of brand knowledge on consumer response to the brand's marketing (Keller, 2013). Keller's Brand Equity Model is also known as the Customer-Based Brand Equity (CBBE) Model. The dimensions of CBBE are based on the distinction between reputation, trust and competitive brands. For consumers, when the brand has a favorable, strong or memory connection, it can reduce the risk of purchase and enhance user confidence. The quality of products that continue to trust can build consumer loyalty. Therefore, different CBBE dimensions are interactively related (Torres et al., 2015).

Traditional marketing uses the CBBE model to measure the effectiveness of brand communication for years. Until the digital age, the consumer-brand engagement progressively shifts to digital domains, understanding the effectiveness of social media marketing and consumer communication has become vital for brand management. The original perspectives of studying brand equity are customer perspective, organizational perspective or financial perspective (Farjam & Hongyi, 2015).

Now, online brand equity is interactively influenced by FCC and UGC influencing the

online consumers' perspective. More emphasis on the effectiveness of social media on consumer-related metrics and acknowledge of social media on firm performance (Bharadwaj, 2015; Hewett et al. 2016). Social media emerges as an important driver of CBBE for general brands and high involvement products (Colicev, Malshe, & Pauwels, 2018). Moreover, the effect of social media on consumers' brand engagement and purchase intention influences the building of brand equity (Kumar et al., 2016). The CBBE dimensions of this study are based on the classification of Schivinski and Dabrowski (2015) comprise brand awareness/associations, brand perceived quality and brand loyalty. The effect of CBBE dimensions is discussed as following.

Social media brand communication

Consumers like contributing, creating and joining communities to satisfy needs of social connection and interaction with others (Laroche et al., 2012). Creating social media brand profiles has become a standard online marketing tool for many big brands (Khalid, 2016). Social media communication refers to user-generated content, autonomous brand communication, and can be any form of social media content, such as movies, pictures or text etc. The function of social media can interact, participate, collaborate and share business activities, bringing a new type of communication model for group communities (Khalid, 2016). User evaluation and comments to other users can focus on the target audience and be strongly convincing to the user (Goh, Heng & Lin 2013; Gensler et al., 2013; Schivinski & Dabrowski, 2015). In addition to the content generated by the user spontaneously, some users who have doubts about the brand quality may easier to be convinced by other users' experiences. The spread of social media also accelerates the spread of negative reviews if faced with negative corporate assessments or when brands are being questioned. Therefore, how to use the social media brand content to monitor and master the dissemination and development of brand information, and respond to consumer opinions and feedback duly, in order to effectively use social media to maintain a successful branding.

CBBE dimensions on Social Media Communication

The content of social media brand communication can be generated by firms and users. Companies choose more channels or social media platforms to positively provide the brand value and encourage users to spread out the content on networks. Therefore, building, monitoring and managing the brand content and activities on social media platforms are extremely important for any company to develop the CBBE effectively. When online customers engage into the company activities, they may have a positive word-of-mouth to influence on brand awareness and brand relationship, to fortify brand reputation and trust (Shen and Bissell, 2013; Trainor et al., 2014). Shen and Bissell (2013) proved that companies can improve brand awareness and brand image through enhancing customer engagement on social media, resulting in brand loyalty reinforcement.

Social media connecting multi-directive users make more precious and effective channels to trigger brand awareness, attention, and word-of-mouth (Kietzmann et al. 2011; Coulter and Roggeveen, 2012) and to increase brand trust, brand loyalty (Laroche et al., 2012). According to Sadek, Elwy, & Eldallal (2017) findings, firm-created and user-generated social media brand communication are partially impact on CBBE. Firm-created contents on social media have a positive impact on brand awareness, brand perceived quality, brand association and brand trust. And

user-generated contents on social media have a negative impact on brand awareness and brand association. It provides that two different types of social media brand communication have vital information and differently influences on CBBE dimensions. However, Adetunji et al. (2018) examined the relationships between user-generated type (eWOM) and firm created types (social media advertising, social media promotion and social media interactive marketing) for automotive brands, but the findings indicated that social media interactive marketing has an insignificant role in the CBBE. Despite many researches pointed out the importance of social media communication in building brand equity, the effect of different social media content on several dimensions of CBBE is not confirmed. And little researches have focused on the effects of different types of social communications anchored by different platforms for brand equity. The research of Pham and Gammoh (2015) examined four dimensions of social media marketing strategy: variety, diversity, intensity, and connectivity, which focus on the different impact of platform types. Pham and Gammoh (2015) provided a new strategy for CBBE model on social media brand communication. Social media marketing is considered as a company's process of creating and promoting online marketing-related activities for commercial metric on social media platforms.

Firm-created Websites and User-generated Fan Page

Marketers focused on the FCC and UGC of social media communication emphasizing on the effectiveness and value for marketing metrics on CBBE. Therefore, two social media platforms, firm-created website and user-generated fan page, are considered to be independent variables and compared the impact on four CBBE dimensions in this study. The firm-created website is a Firm-to-Consumer (F2C) model. Firm-created website known as the official site is the internet page for companies or brands to present corporate spirit, ideas and product information. The brand-related content on firm website notifies customers about new products, promotions, and brand-related corporate news to make memorable, easily recognizable, superior in quality and reliability. Firm-created website can control what the user contact messages, content and advertising, but lack of interaction between users. The user-generated fan page is a user-centric, Consumer-to-Consumer (C2C) model. User-generated fan page empowers users feel free to log in, leave comments, share content, improve experiences or participate activities, and encourages them to be truly social across the site. The fan page should become a good helper for customers, and the best aid for pouring popular traffic into the official website. However, many fan pages are generated by unknown customers, source credibility will be questioned, and it may not represent the core value of company or brand. The content in user-generated fan page maybe chaos and can't fully control the messages and user responses, but constantly updating feeds displaying their friends' activities and foster brand engagements.

For the long-term brand development, more firms simultaneously operate and manage fan page and official website. Firm set the fan page serving as a channel for exposure brand, provides a discussion space and a marketing channel platform, manages customer relationships. How can companies choose between official website or fan page, or both, to develop their respective brand equity? What is the value and function of different social media platforms? Is it the best way for brands to interact with consumers by disclosing brand messages on fan page or guiding consumers from firm website to fan page? Can companies effectively conduct purchase intention by firm

website and fan page? Therefore, social media brand communication to reach, understand and influence consumers and further to build brand equity is an important issue in the era of digital marketing.

Methodology

Research Design

We assumed that both firm-created website and user-generated fan page differently affect CBBE and there is potential causal impact on four CBBE dimensions in this study. Based on the research structure of Schivinski & Dabrowski (2015), this study provides the comparison results on the brand communication impact four CBBE dimensions in the high-involvement product APPLE via the most popular firm-created website and user-generated Facebook fan page. The reason for choosing APPLE as a test product is that it is a well-known and mature brand for daily use in Taiwan. More and more users visit its official website and fan page.

Research Hypotheses

Based on the research objective to find out what kind of social media content and platforms are more effective on the CBBE dimensions and affect the purchase intention. The hypotheses are developed as following:

- H1: Firm-created content and User-generated content have significant positive impact on four CBBE dimensions
- H2: Four CBBE dimensions have significant positive impact on decision-making of website and fan page.
- H3: Firm-created website and user-generated fan page can be predictors of CBBE dimensions.

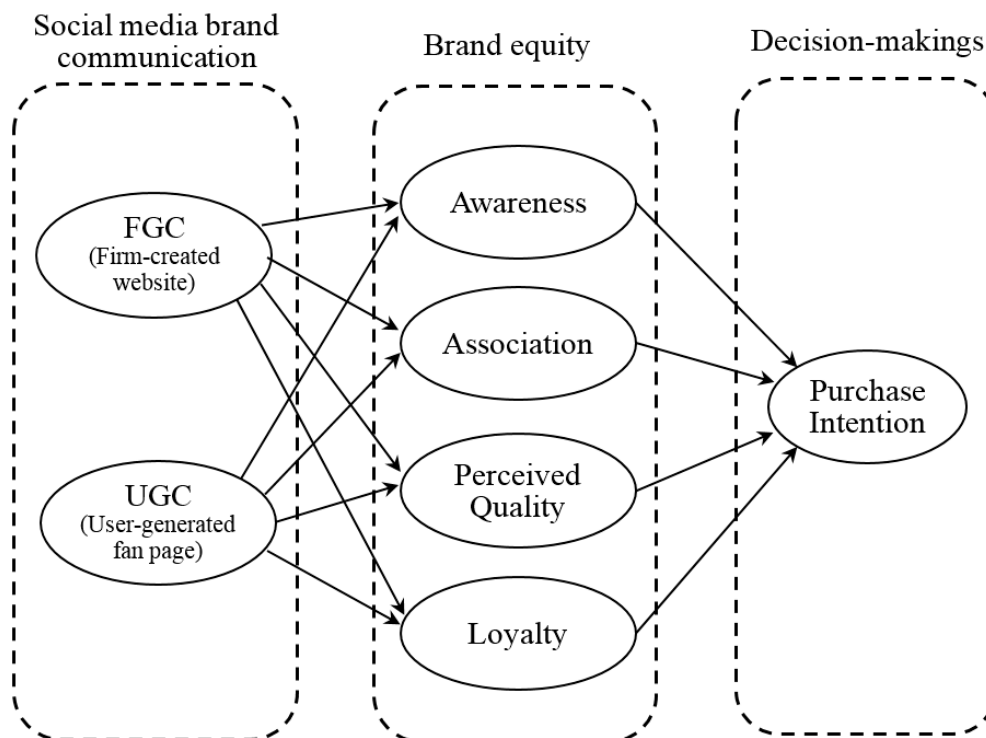


Fig. 1: Proposed Model

Measurement

The questionnaire used in this study adopted a 7-point Likert scale. The results were analyzed using SPSS for the validation of the research hypotheses. The significance and correlation of the research were validated by t-test, Pearson correlation analysis, and ANOVA. Part I is the basic information and participants' use behaviors of social media. Part II concerns the CBBE dimensions on brand APPLE. Part III is the effectiveness and purchase intention of FCC and UGC on brand APPLE. The reliability and validity of the items were tested. Based on the results, the items were modified for the formal survey.

Subject

The subjects of this study were 113 participants who are average aged 33.58 years old. Among the subjects, 48.6% are male and 51.4% are female. Over 61% of participants have college/university education level. The details are shown in Table 1. Use behavior of social media shown in Table 2. Regarding their exposure to social media, 29.2% and 22.1% have used social media for 7-8 years and above 11 years. As for the usage frequency, most subjects use social media many times a day (56.6%), followed by all the time (30%). In terms of usage time, 40.7% use social media for 1-3 hours a day. The number of friends is dispersed.

Table 1: Participants' characteristics

	n (N=113)	%
Gender		
Male	55	48.6
Female	58	51.4
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Age	M=33.58	
Education		
Junior high school	2	1.7
Senior high school	19	16.8
College / university	70	61.9
Graduate school or above	22	19.4
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Income(NTD)		
No income	25	22.1
Under 20000	12	10.6
20,000-39,999	26	23
40,000-59,999	24	21.2
60,000-79,999	12	10.6
80,000-99,999	7	6.1
Above 100000	7	6.1

Table 2: Use behavior of social media

	N=113	%		N=113	%
Exposure period (year)			Number of friends		
Under one year	1	0.8	under 100	16	14.1
1-2	2	1.7	101-250	28	24.7
3-4	16	14.1	251-400	21	18.5
5-6	16	14.1	401-550	14	12.3
7-8	33	29.2	551-700	16	14.1
9-11	20	17.6	701-850	8	7
Above 11	25	22.1	851-1000	3	2.6
			over 1000	7	6.1
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Usage time (a day)			Usage frequency,		
Uner 60 mins	27	23.8	followed by all the time	34	30
Within 1-3 hrs	46	40.7	many times a day	64	56.6

Within 3-5 hrs	27	23.8	once a day	10	8.8
Within 5-7 hrs	10	8.8	1-2 days	1	0.8
Above 7	3	2.6	3-4 days	2	1.7
			occasional use	2	1.7

Reliability and Validity

The reliability is shown in Table 3. The Cronbach's α coefficients were all greater than 0.9. All factor loading of variables are over 0.7. The reliability and validity of the questionnaire was therefore acceptable. The independent sample T test of a few variables did not reach significance, indicating that there was no significant difference in these items.

Table 3: The reliability and validity of questionnaires

Items	M	Std	Factor Loading	α if item deleted	T	Sig.
Firm-Created Content (Alpha=.951)						
Like_1	4.96	1.79	.740	.945	5.74	.000***
Lik2_2	4.75	1.94	.728	.947	4.11	.000***
Like_3	3.54	1.77	.846	.953	-2.77	.007**
Trust_1	5.40	1.64	.928	.945	9.07	.000***
Trust_2	5.48	1.62	.926	.945	9.73	.000***
Trust_3	5.36	1.64	.944	.943	8.85	.000***
Satisfaction_1	5.37	1.65	.925	.943	8.82	.000***
Satisfaction_2	5.34	1.72	.930	.943	8.26	.000***
Satisfaction_3	5.33	1.73	.940	.943	8.16	.000***
eWOM_1	4.64	1.88	.746	.948	3.60	.000***
eWOM_2	4.20	1.77	.895	.950	1.22	.225
eWOM_3	3.73	1.80	.888	.954	-1.57	.119
Eigenvalue=1.991						
Cumulative %=83.63%						
User-Generated Content (Alpha=.965)						
Like_1	4.73	1.91	.828	.962	4.09	.000***
Lik2_2	4.44	2.01	.768	.962	1.82	.071
Like_3	3.58	1.88	.874	.966	-2.40	.018*
Trust_1	4.77	1.77	.907	.962	4.62	.000***
Trust_2	4.90	1.76	.914	.961	5.40	.000***
Trust_3	4.69	1.82	.903	.959	4.03	.000***
Satisfaction_1	4.70	1.88	.913	.959	3.95	.000***
Satisfaction_2	4.66	1.82	.920	.960	3.88	.000***
Satisfaction_3	4.53	1.94	.865	.960	2.91	.000***
eWOM_1	4.07	1.94	.740	.962	0.39	.699
eWOM_2	3.73	1.78	.925	.964	-1.59	.115
eWOM_3	3.58	1.77	.927	.965	-2.55	.012*
Eigenvalue=1.705						
Cumulative %=87.04%						
Brand awareness (Alpha=.924)						
BA_1	6.56	1.09	.770	.927	24.87	.000***
BA_2	6.00	1.50	.865	.910	14.17	.000***
BA_3	6.28	1.29	.842	.916	18.79	.000***
BA_4	5.04	1.75	.866	.906	6.30	.000***
BA_5	5.18	1.81	.882	.903	6.90	.000***
BA_6	5.55	1.66	.912	.897	9.90	.000***
Eigenvalue=4.411						
Cumulative %=73.51%						
Brand association (Alpha=.933)						
BAS_1	5.93	1.42	.885	.917	14.46	.000***
BAS_2	6.52	1.13	.849	.926	23.63	.000***
BAS_3	5.80	1.62	.857	.923	11.81	.000***
BAS_4	6.06	1.47	.863	.921	14.89	.000***
BAS_5	5.89	1.44	.899	.915	13.97	.000***
BAS_6	5.65	1.49	.863	.921	11.72	.000***
Eigenvalue=4.537						
Cumulative %=75.62%						

Perceived quality (Alpha=.966)						
PQ_1	5.86	1.46	.869	.963	13.50	.000***
PQ_2	5.34	1.69	.873	.963	8.39	.000***
PQ_3	5.21	1.70	.879	.963	7.59	.000***
PQ_4	5.07	1.63	.901	.961	6.99	.000***
PQ_5	5.37	1.54	.900	.962	9.46	.000***
PQ_6	5.07	1.62	.867	.963	7.01	.000***
PQ_7	5.47	1.40	.925	.961	11.19	.000***
PQ_8	5.52	1.46	.895	.962	11.05	.000***
PQ_9	5.64	1.38	.905	.962	12.65	.000***
Eigenvalue=7.140						
Cumulative %=79.33%						
Brand loyalty (Alpha=.974)						
BL_1	4.88	2.01	.924	.970	4.62	.000***
BL_2	4.88	1.98	.939	.969	4.62	.000***
BL_3	4.62	2.11	.933	.969	3.12	.000***
BL_4	4.85	2.07	.953	.968	4.36	.000***
BL_5	4.73	1.92	.895	.971	4.01	.000***
BL_6	3.74	2.01	.799	.976	-1.36	.178
BL_7	4.98	2.13	.926	.969	4.91	.000***
BL_8	4.41	2.14	.880	.972	2.02	.046*
BL_9	4.72	2.09	.946	.968	3.65	.000***
Eigenvalue=7.451						
Cumulative %=82.79%						
Decision-making of Website (Alpha=.931)						
W_1	5.58	1.40	.947	.890	11.98	.000***
W_2	5.50	1.56	.945	.889	10.26	.000***
W_3	5.51	1.60	.925	.921	10.03	.000***
Eigenvalue=2.646						
Cumulative %=88.20%						
Decision-making of Fan Page(Alpha=.955)						
FP_1	4.86	1.87	.944	.954	4.89	.000***
FP_2	4.63	1.86	.962	.927	3.59	.000***
FP_3	4.72	1.81	.967	.919	4.20	.000***
Eigenvalue=2.751						
Cumulative %=91.70%						

Note: * $P < .05$; ** $P < .01$; *** $P < .001$

The ANOVA is shown in Table 4. The results showed that firm-created content influence the four CBBE dimensions and user-generated content influence perceived quality ($F=1.949, p=.008 > .001$) and brand loyalty ($F=2.863, p=.000 > .001$).

According to the correlation coefficient of constructs (see Table 5), only brand association ($r=.126, p=.183 > .05$) has insignificant correlations with decision-making of fan page. Four CBBE dimensions have high correlation between brand awareness, perceived quality and association. Only brand loyalty has medium correlation with brand awareness ($r=.671$) and brand association ($r=.631$). Decision-making of website and fan page have medium and low correlation with four CBBE dimensions except brand association. Both website and fan page ($r=.512$) have medium correlation on decision-making.

Table 4: The effect of FCC and UGC on four CBBE dimensions

Firm-Created Content (FGC)		<i>SS</i>	<i>df</i>	<i>MS</i>	<i>F</i>	<i>sig</i>
Brand awareness	Between	158.225	65	2.434	3.319	.000***
	Within	34.471	47	0.733		
	Total	192.697	112			
Brand association	Between	138.314	65	2.128	2.834	.000***
	Within	35.289	47	0.751		
	Total	173.604	112			
Perceived quality	Between	155.471	65	2.392	2.018	.006**

	Within	55.714	47	1.185		
	Total	211.185	112			
Brand loyalty	Between	294.479	65	4.53	2.235	.002**
	Within	95.267	47	2.027		
	Total	389.747	112			
User-Generated Content (UGC)		<i>SS</i>	<i>df</i>	<i>MS</i>	<i>F</i>	<i>sig</i>
Brand awareness	Between	127.187	63	2.019	1.510	.068
	Within	65.509	49	1.337		
	Total	192.697	112			
Brand association	Between	111.788	63	1.774	1.407	.108
	Within	61.816	49	1.262		
	Total	173.604	112			
Perceived quality	Between	150.938	63	2.396	1.949	.008**
	Within	60.247	49	1.23		
	Total	211.185	112			
Brand loyalty	Between	306.481	63	4.865	2.863	.000***
	Within	83.266	49	1.699		
	Total	389.747	112			

Table 5: The results of Pearson correlation coefficient on CBBE dimensions and Decision-making

Variables		1	2	3	4	5
1	Brand awareness	1				
2	Brand association	.837***	1			
3	Perceived quality	.725***	.788***	1		
4	Brand loyalty	.671***	.631***	.806***	1	
5	Decision-making of website	.479***	.343***	.309***	.364***	1
6	Decision-making of fan page	.249**	.126	.275**	.306***	.512***

Note: * $P < .05$; ** $P < .01$; *** $P < .001$

Discussion and Conclusions

The results showed that firm-created content influence the four CBBE dimensions and user-generated content influence perceived quality and brand loyalty. It means that firm-created content can strongly connect the basic brand recognition, attributes and all over brand equities, but user-generated content has a positive impact on the consumers' brand perception, superiority and purchase considerations. Four CBBE dimensions are fully influence the purchase decision of firm-created website. Brand association has no impact on decision-making of user-generated fan page.

Brand manager considerate social media brand communication to interact with online consumers in ways that traditional media could not deliver. The effectiveness of social media brand communication is not fully understood. This research provides conceptual ideas into how different types of social media contents and platforms foster CBBE metrics on high-involvement product. The examination of the impact of both social media brand contents, FCC and UGC, demonstrate that FCC influences four CBBE dimensions and UGC influences only perceived quality and brand loyalty. It indicates that consumers are willing to believe in the value created by the company.

However, the contents generated by users can deeply impact the brand perception of the overall quality and shopping decision. Four CBBE dimensions have positively impacts on purchase intention of websites and fan page, except brand association and fan page. In the high-involvement products, four CBBE dimensions have a vital influence on consumers who reference the firm-created website to make buying decisions. Lacking the brand related qualities of attributes on user-generated fan page, only brand awareness, perceived quality and brand loyalty affect consumers to make buying decision. It is important to notice, that firm-created social media content are best affect the consumers' CBBE dimensions and CBBE dimensions also best influences consumers' shopping decisions on firm-created website.

In summary, different from the research of Schivinski and Dabrowski (2015), FCC plays a vital role in the perception of brand metrics of high involvement products in this study. Brand manager should concern the attribute of product category and emphasize the creation of social media content generated by company. UGC should place on the advantages to enhance the overall quality, aid the intended purpose and promote the buying behavior. Social media platforms provide alternative ways for consumers to interact, share and create content of products and services. Social media brand communication plays more and more important role into the social media strategy to enhance the performance of the brands. Jointing the advantages of firm-created and user-generated social media brand communication will create the comprehensive brand equity for marketing metrics.

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