Brand Awareness: The Influence of Social Media During the Covid-19 Pandemic

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Abstract

In today's society, social media is unavoidable, especially as we enter the 'new normal'. As the pandemic alters our use of social media, it becomes an even more valuable medium of communication for brands and consumers alike. The present global pandemic, with its imposed lockdowns, has caused millions of us to turn to the internet to socialize. Social media has become an everyday aspect of our lives, and not simply when we are trying to maintain social distance. Now, social media itself has become the new normal. Marketers have taken notice of this emerging social phenomenon. There is a change in consumer behavior as well as a change in marketing tools. As a result, the purpose of this research is to gain a better knowledge of the influence and usefulness of social media as a digital marketing tool on brand awareness during Covid-19 pandemic. Thus, a study was conducted on 100 respondents using an online questionnaire instrument (Google Form) in Kota Kinabalu, Sabah. The findings demonstrate that social media marketing was effective at brand awareness during COVID-19. Marketers must rethink how they analyze and target the current consumer. It is vital to take advantage of the opportunity to explore and research the new normal following the COVID-19 pandemic, as doing so will improve the future of marketing, technology, and communication. The research on brand efficacy in marketing during COVID-19 offers fresh insight that is essential to developing a sales plan following COVID-19 since doing so will advance marketing, technology, and communication in the future.

Keywords: *Brand Awareness, Consumer Behavior, Covid-19, Social Media*

INTRODUCTION

The COVID-19 pandemic has compelled business players and micro, small, and medium-sized enterprises (MSMEs) to respond to the wave of disruption. People are ditching conventional buying in favour of market purchasing online (Ausat & Suherlan, 2021). Social media plays a key role in pandemic survival in the contemporary world. With all the time and opportunities available, several businesses and government agencies have utilised the MCO and post-MCO periods to initiate online brand awareness campaigns. Businesses that survived the statewide lockdowns did so by modifying their tactics and relying only on social media for client connections.

On March 18, 2020, Malaysia imposed its first nationwide Movement Control Order (MCO), mandating temporary closures for non-essential companies, interstate and international travel, major social gatherings, etc. Malaysia has undergone numerous phases of MCO since 2020, including the Conditional Movement Control Order (CMCO) and Recovery Movement Control Order (RMCO). MCO adoption has resulted in complicated effects that generate their own merits and downsides (Jafar et al., 2021).

Social media has become an increasingly important tool for all types of businesses. During the pandemic, one of the most successful social media campaigns was the Stay-at-Home campaign, a global internet awareness movement that promoted staying at home to prevent the spread of the coronavirus. Successive corporations, government organizations, and even celebrities promoted their online brand awareness, generating a domino effect. The study aims to investigate the relationship between social media use and its influence on COVID-19's brand awareness and to establish whether social media is a superior alternative to conventional marketing strategies. Its diverse platforms consist of social networking sites, microblogging platforms, and content communities (Kaplan & Haenlein, 2010). It also demonstrates the significance of understanding social media and its impact on brand awareness to maximise its application.

The study aims to investigate the relationship between social media use and its influence on COVID-19's brand awareness and to establish whether social media is a superior alternative to conventional marketing strategies.

RESEARCH OBJECTIVES

Malaysian Communications and Multimedia Commission. Ahmad and Guerrero:. Social media is an essential instrument for us to conduct our contactless "new norm" lifestyle. According to the research of Susanto et al., (2021), firms can attract more customers during a pandemic by improving brand awareness and customer loyalty using social media. The process begins by increasing customer awareness of the company's offerings; it will then have an impact on customer satisfaction and client loyalty. The Internet User Survey 2020 was conducted by the Malaysian Communications and Multimedia Commission during the epidemic, resulting in an astonishing conclusion of 88.7% internet users in 2020, compared to 87.4% in 2018.

When small businesses employ social media marketing to enhance brand awareness, they are able to increase revenue, improve business performance, and attract more customers. Ahmad & others, (2020) found that social media has enabled small firms to reap the benefits of good brand recognition among social media users. Fuciu (2019) also noted the importance of social media in brand awareness and loyalty.

This study was done under the following objectives: a). To find out whether social media is an effective digital marketing tool for companies in creating brand awareness during Covid-19 pandemic; b). To study and understand the importance of social media contents, planning and scheduling in reaching and effectively sending the right message to the target audience demographic after the Covid-19 pandemic.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Most scholars have recently investigated the influence of social media on consumer behaviour. According to Ritwik Maity and Sukheet Kaur Sandhu, social media is perceived as a more reputable source of news (2021). In terms of technology, communication, and even commerce, social media has become a game-changer. Social media has grown into a platform where users may search for breaking news, information, reviews, shopping catalogues, and more. It is no more a place for users to see images and read status updates from family and friends. It is the quickest form of advertising, as buyers may obtain all of your information instantaneously from a single social media post. And it is typically less expensive than standard

printing media. Since the sector is continually expanding, additional research and development are still being undertaken.

According to (Akram & Kumar, 2017), social media is an online platform where individuals can network with others who share similar interests, such as profession, activities, or backgrounds. Kim and Ko (2012) define social media as an online application platform that allows user contact, collaboration, and the sharing of material. We perceive social media as a digital networking platform that enables users to communicate with one another and to create and share multimedia inside online communities. Social media includes a variety of online platforms and tools, such as social networking, blogs, multimedia sites, websites, podcasts (Tajudeen, 2014), wikis, message boards, and even podcasts (Evans, 2008).

Social media networks such as Facebook, Instagram, Twitter, LinkedIn, WhatsApp, and Tik Tok are no longer unfamiliar to us. The further we grow, the more dependent we get on social media in our daily lives. From using Facebook as an alternative method of communication with friends and family to purchasing meals or clothing from other Instagram users. Social media is no longer only a social platform; it has transformed marketing techniques such as advertising and promotions (Hanna, Rohm, & Crittenden, 2011).

According to Mazzini Muda and Noor Rita Mohamed Khan, social media has dramatically altered the communication landscape and the connection between goods suppliers and purchasers (2020). Young consumers rely more on product recommendations and information from other customers who share their experiences on social media than on product advertising from businesses, according to their findings. These social media tools can be set up everywhere an internet connection is available. Social media has impacted every area of the internet and even altered its position in people's lives; therefore, marketers, advertisers, and content creators should consider them an essential component of their communication (Muda & Khan, 2020). The Internet has enabled agencies to reach a bigger target market and create more compelling value offerings than ever before.

Social media marketing

Social media marketing has made it easier for businesses to generate brand awareness, as it is less expensive and takes less time to develop than traditional marketing tactics. Facebook is among the first successful social media that have dominated the world, a social phenomenon acknowledged by social scientists and known as the 'Facebook Effect' (Tritama & Tarigan, 2016). Twitter, Instagram, YouTube, TikTok, LinkedIn, and additional social media networks with a variety of functionalities followed shortly thereafter. Social media can assist businesses in raising their sales and profit margins, depending on the platform (Ansari et al., 2019).

Ahmad and Guerrero (2016) noted, "Posting a company's product or service on the internet and having a social media account is not sufficient to make the brand known and stand out. When making internet commercials or using social media as a marketing tool, firms must leverage these platforms by continuously developing content to keep up with and surpass their competitors. As businesses become aware of users' increased participation in social media, their marketing departments are tasked with investigating the new marketing tool (Katona, Zubcsek, & Sarvary, 2011). Social Media Marketing (SMM), Influencer Marketing, Affiliate Marketing, Email Marketing, Content Marketing, Search Engine Optimization, Paid Advertising, and Pay-Per-Click are the various channels of digital marketing (Erdoğmuş and Çiçek, 2012).

As a means of preventing the virus from spreading, the present Covid-19 epidemic has compelled us to become more reliant on technological technology, where social isolation has become our new daily routine. Contactless services, deliveries, payments, and check-in systems have become the new standard. As a result of the shift in our social behaviour, more efforts are being made to become completely digital. This includes the preference for online marketing and advertising over traditional channels including print media, television, and radio. According to Zaimovic and Sutrovic (2018), radio, newspapers, magazines, billboards, and other traditional media are deemed traditional since they are utilised for mass media advertising, which targets the entire market and enables a unified marketing communication strategy. For example, advertising does not allow interaction between the company and the customer. In addition, traditional media do not permit businesses to provide personalised marketing messages.

The invention of social media has altered the structure of our social behaviour and the way we communicate in the current world. As we proceed along the path of advanced technology, our reliance on social media grows. This is evident as government officials increasingly use social media as their primary means of communication with the public, such as to disseminate information about Covid-19. Marketers have focused on the rising use of social media and the shift in social behaviour in society. They have also observed that each social media platform might impact the marketing success of a corporation (Nadaraja & Yazdanifard, 2013). Today, numerous social media sites are available, including Facebook, Instagram, Tik Tok, YouTube, LinkedIn, and others.

Marketers are beginning to comprehend social media's role in marketing plans and campaigns to reach customers (Nadaraja & Yazdanifard, 2013). As the social media industry continues to produce and develop better analytic features, it has enabled marketers to obtain better and more effective insights (Hafele, 2010). As a result, many businesses are conducting additional research on how social media marketing can assist in promoting their business to consumers (Watson et al., 2002). On the plus side, social media marketing is cost-effective and has more customer reach (Nadaraja & Yazdanifard, 2013).

Social media marketing, often known as SMM, is a type of online marketing that employs social networking websites as a promotional tool (Bansal, Masood & Dadhich, 2013). According to Bansal, Masood, and Dadhich (2013), social media marketing is the process of acquiring website traffic using social networking platforms. This is accomplished by catching the attention of customers with content and motivating them to share it with their social network. The writers went on to clarify that because this sort of marketing relies on word-of-mouth, it generates earned media rather than paid media.

Social media marketing has aided marketers in advertising, promotion, brand building, information search, and customer connection development. It takes time to build a successful online brand and marketing strategy; consequently, it is essential for marketers to consistently look for methods to improve their social media marketing plan (Parveen, Jaafar & Ainin, 2015).

According to Parveen, Jaafar, and Ainin (2015), sustaining your online brand and presence requires a solid strategy and discipline. Good engagement is also essential in social media marketing; therefore, marketers must comprehend two concepts: "Provide great value" and "Content is everything" It is essential that your content can educate and inspire your audience, since this will help you stand out from your competitors. A smart social media marketing approach will attract viewers and convert them into paying customers or devoted fans (Parveen, Jaafar & Ainin, 2015).

According to Albors et al. (2008), by utilising social media, consumers can engage with the brand, be outspoken about it, conduct additional research, and purchase their products and services. The support and participation of online consumers will benefit the social media brand of a business. According to Vinerean (2018), "...electronic word of mouth has a greater impact on social media marketing than traditional contacts between people since it can reach more individuals in online settings and influence their future decisions or perceptions of various brands."

For a successful, competitive, and distinguishable social media brand, marketers must select a combination of marketing communication activities to promote their product and attract the greatest number of prospective customers (Ali Taha et al., 2021). Ali Taha et al. (2021) explained that customers can purchase and examine products or services at any time, thus there must be conveniently accessible, fast, and accurate information to respond to their questions. While there isn't many research examining the aspects that influence follower relationships and social media effectiveness, there are several.

The influence of social media on brand recognition

Branding is an essential aspect of marketing since it creates product or service recognition, identity, and reputation. Branding may make a product or service stand out from its competitors through marketing activities such as product innovation and marketing communication. Sammut-Bonnici (2015) elaborated, "When strong brand equity is generated through brand distinctiveness, price elasticity of demand decreases, allowing the company to raise prices and boost profitability." Therefore, it is essential for a company to build brand recognition.

Brand recognition provides information about a product or service (Homburg, Klarmann and Schmitt, 2010). While Urbanskien et al. (2006) believe that brand awareness denotes if a product or service immediately comes to mind and thought for the consumer. Like the concept shared by Percy and Rossiter (1992), brand awareness enables consumers to recognise a brand within a product category and influences their purchasing decision. According to Tritama and Tarigan's (2016) study, brand awareness is a continuum that begins with a nagging feeling that a particular brand has been encountered before and concludes with a consumer's belief that the product is the only one in its category. When utilising social media, a brand becomes reliant on consumer desire and intent (Zailskaite-Jakste & Kuvykaite, 2013).

Dwivedi et al., (2021) stated, "People spend an increasing amount of time online searching for information, on products and services, communicating with other consumers about their experiences, and engaging with companies," which makes social media a significant influence on a product or service's brand awareness because it is more convenient to circulate among consumers, thereby attracting more potential buyers in a short period of time. Social media also enables businesses to engage directly with customers, increase brand awareness, influence consumer behaviour, obtain customer feedback, enhance products or services, and boost sales. According to the research of Bija and Balaş (2014), brand awareness increases when using the appropriate social media platform and creating compelling content.

According to Rohana Mijan, Shuhaida Md Noor, and Mastura Jaafar (2020), a company's economic growth is dependent upon a competitive brand. According to them, branding is the strategic process by which a business establishes a competitive brand. Social media marketing enables organisations to effectively engage with consumers and achieve viral

marketing or word-of-mouth communication. Therefore, social media is one of the most powerful marketing platforms for increasing brand awareness, enhancing brand image, and contributing to the financial performance of brands (Aydin et al., 2021).

The impact of social media on consumer conduct

Consumer behaviour is a psychological attribute that impacts whether a person purchases goods, services, or anything else, according to Barmola & Srivastava, (2010). Consumer behaviour is defined by Walters (1974) as "the process by which individuals determine if, what, when, where, and from whom to purchase products and services." While Schiffman and Kanuk (1997) described it as the process of searching for, purchasing, employing, evaluating, and discarding goods, services, and concepts. Social media marketing can influence consumer behaviour, according to the study. According to the study conducted by Jothi and Gaffoor (2017), consumers would make more purchases if they could access more information from the media. According to Mayfield (2011), social media will influence advertising, brand quality, and customer purchase decisions.

According to Appel et al. (2020), analysing the future of social media in the context of consumer behaviour and marketing is critical since social media has become a key marketing and communications channel for businesses, organisations, and institutions. According to Lee (2013), social media is superior to conventional marketing tactics at establishing and maintaining a feedback loop since the dialogues are more dynamic and two-way. In a similar vein, Bansal and Gupta (2020) argued, "Social media provides real-time information and facilitates two-way communications between retailers and consumers, enabling retailers to serve their consumers more efficiently and effectively through improved customer relationship management, extended product lines, cost effectiveness, and customised offers." Today's consumers rely heavily on the Internet to research a product or service, highlighting the importance of a strong social media presence. Positive customer evaluations will encourage customers to make purchases and increase the company's income (Bansal & Gupta, 2020).

In the digital era, it is also essential for businesses to provide relevant, high-quality content and prioritise customer connections (Gulzar & Maqbool, 2018). Strong online presence and visual appeal make a positive first impression for consumers, attracting them and instilling a sense of trust. Singh (2020) noted that having a consistent and distinct voice on the selected social media platform, as well as consistently updating your feed, can increase the possibility of conversions by enhancing the brand's image and credibility with present and potential customers. For consumers to interact with a brand that will take care of them, social media must provide them with accessibility and openness. According to Singh (2020), customers rely heavily on social media networks for customer service and assistance; hence, firms should establish themselves in digital media to give this service. Customer pleasure will generate customer loyalty and continuous revenue for the business.

Today, online processes have significantly altered the behaviour of individuals (Dellarocas, 2002). Consumers now have easy access to product and service information and reviews. A buyer will research product information prior to purchasing, such as pricing, style, and reviews (Kumar, 2004). Therefore, it is essential for a business to maintain a continuous online presence and provide high-quality content that adds value for consumers. This will increase consumers' reliance on the company's social media as their major source of product and service information. Likewise, continuing consumer-business engagement will accelerate

the spread of brand awareness. It will also have a significant impact on the customer's purchasing choice, including problem recognition, the search for relevant information, the evaluation of alternatives, the ultimate purchase decision, and post-purchase satisfaction (Nolcheska, 2017).

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

A research design, according to Creswell and Plano Clark (2007), is the technique for collecting, analysing, interpreting, and reporting data in a study. Its objective is to establish the technique for required data, data collection and analysis, and how this will deliver the answer to the research question (Grey, 2014). According to Durrheim (2004), research design is a strategic framework that links research questions to the execution or implementation of the research plan. There are three types of research purposes, including exploratory, descriptive, and explanatory (Robson, 2002) - each design serves a distinct end goal. The exploratory and descriptive research design was adopted for this study due to the paucity of current research and contemporary viewpoints on the impact of social media on brand awareness during the Covid-19 pandemic. Exploratory studies are employed to study a new area of interest or when the subject under investigation is relatively new (Johansson, 2010). The objective of descriptive research is to paint an accurate picture of the observed people, settings, events, and locations (Johansson, 2010).

The purpose of this research is to gain a deeper knowledge of the influence and efficacy of social media as a digital marketing tool on brand recognition during the Covid-19 pandemic. As the research is dependent on the collection of data and information from customers, the quantitative approach is the most appropriate research methodology for testing the association between the variables in the study and achieving the predetermined objectives.

To study the link between many variables, surveys are used as the quantitative way for discovering the answer. According to Adedoyin (2020), a survey is "a data gathering instrument for quantitative research, and there are two all-inclusive survey kinds, namely questionnaire and interview." Producing questionnaires as one of the research tools for this study provides greater flexibility and the capacity to simultaneously contact a big number of respondents. Questionnaires are a well-known method for collecting demographic data and user comments (Rogers et al., 2011). There are three sorts of interviews, according to Mathers, Fox, and Hunn (2002): organised, semi-structured, and unstructured. For this study, the questionnaire will be administered via a structured or standardised interview, which permits identical questions to be posed to respondents in identical ways (Mathers et al., 2002).

The surveys are designed in advance, and the questions are refined through a pilot test. In addition, they typically include closed questions, in which the responses are predetermined, and respondents are limited to a single alternative. This study will adopt convenience sampling, a typical practise in quantitative research that focuses more on generalizability, for its sampling. The online questionnaire was administered in August 2021 using a quantitative survey methodology to examine the impact and efficacy of social media as a digital marketing strategy on brand recognition during the Covid-19 pandemic. It also includes a compilation of data regarding Kota Kinabalu's social media users from various demographics.

Through a link that links respondents to the databases, the online questionnaire was distributed (Google Form). Three components comprise the questionnaire: 1) Section A: Demographic is to collect data of participants based in Kota Kinabalu. This section of the questionnaire addresses the race, age and gender of participants as well as understanding

their level of knowledge in social media tools; 2) Section B: The Relevance of Social Media Marketing During Covid-19 Pandemic is to understand social media's influence, impact and effectiveness on brand awareness among consumers during the pandemic. The questions were short and clear, and participants were given simple rating scales of choice - "yes or no" answers; 3) Section C: The Impact of Social Media Marketing on Brand Awareness During Covid-19 Pandemic is to understand the current consumer behavior in regards to social media marketing during Covid-19 pandemic and whether it is more relevant than traditional marketing strategies. As a close-ended questionnaire, this section was designed according to a 5-point Likert scale (1 - strongly disagree; 5 - strongly agree).

RESULT

One hundred individuals in Kota Kinabalu were given the online survey. The demographic profile of respondents is segmented based on four variables: gender, age, occupation and level of social media or social media platform knowledge. Based on Table 1, the study's findings indicate that 38 percent of the 100 participants were male and 62 percent were female. Demographic respondents profile (n=100)

Table 1: Profile of Respondents

Respondents Profile	Frequency	Percent (%)
Gender		
Male	38	38
Female	62	62
Age		
18-25	8	8
26-30	19	19
31-35	37	37
36-40	14	14
41 and above	22	22
Occupational		
Student	7	7
Private Employee	54	54
Government Employee	21	21
Housewife	9	9
Unemployed	1	1
None of the above	8	8

Knowledge level

This question seeks to establish respondents' prior knowledge of social media or social media platforms, as this may have influenced their selections in sections B, C, and D. Respondents were provided with four response options: novice, fundamental, average, and expert. Most respondents (69%) believe their knowledge of social media or social media platforms to be Average, while 25% consider it to be Basic and 6% consider it to be Expert, according to Table 2. Given the significance of social media during the Covid-19 outbreak, it is not surprising that no respondent claimed to have a beginner's level of comprehension.

Table 2: Level of Knowledge on Social Media Or Social Media Platforms

Knowledge Level	Frequency	Percent (%)

Basic	25	25
Average	69	69
Expert	6	6

Face Value vs Research

This question serves a similar function as the preceding one. The purpose of this section is to determine respondents' social media purchase habits, as this may have influenced their selections in sections B, C, and D. Respondents were provided with two answer options: Face Value or Research. According to Table 3, most respondents (89%) claimed they would conduct study prior to purchasing a product, whereas only 11% said they would purchase at face value.

Table 3: Respondents' Purchasing Behavior

Purchasing Behavior	Frequency	Percent (%)
Face Value	11	11
Research	89	89

The impact of social media during the Covid-19 pandemic in generating brand awareness

The table below relates to the research question regarding the usefulness of social media during the pandemic to increase brand awareness. Respondents were given a Likert scale of: 1 (Strongly Disagree), 2 (Disagree), 3 (Neutral), 4 (Agree) and 5 (Strongly Agree).

Table 4: The Impact of Social Media on Brand Awareness

	N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std. Deviation
I believe it is important for a company or brand to use social media as a marketing tool.	100	3.00	5.00	4.7400	.46319
I believe social media is an effective marketing tool for a product or brand during Covid-19.	100	3.00	5.00	4.7600	.49482
I based my trust on a brand or product based on the consistent postings in a social media account.	100	2.00	5.00	42800	80503
My trust in a brand/product is influenced by the popularity of their social media account/page.	100	2.00	5.00	4.0200	.77824
My trust in a brand/product is influenced by endorsements or promotions made by celebrities/influencers.	100	1.00	5.00	3.6400	.97980

	N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std. Deviation
Valid N (listwise)	**100**				

Most respondents (M=4.74, SD=0.46) strongly agreed that social media is an important marketing tool (Table 4). In addition, they all agreed (M=4.76, SD=0.49) that it is a good tool for a product or company during the Covid-19 pandemic. Most respondents were also adamant that consistent postings aid in establishing consumer confidence in a brand or product. Most respondents (M=3.64, SD=0.97) are neutral when it comes to products supported by celebrities or influencers, while nearly half of respondents (M=4.28, SD=.80) believe that their trust is based on the popularity of a social media account.

The significance of social media strategy to attract and engage audiences during the Covid-19 pandemic.

The table below provides the answer to the research question of whether a well-planned social media strategy is necessary to attract audiences during the Covid-19 pandemic. Social media techniques include preparing and arranging your content and engaging with your followers effectively. Respondents had the option of selecting "yes" (1) or "no" (2) as an answer.

Table 5: The Relevance of Social Media Marketing During Covid-19 Pandemic

	N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std. Deviation
Has social media marketing influenced your purchasing decision on a product during the pandemic?	100	1.00	2.00	1.0900	.28762
Have you purchased product(s) from a social media account/page during the pandemic?	100	1.00	2.00	1.1200	.32660
Have you purchased product(s) from a social media advertisement during the pandemic?	100	1.00	2.00	1.2000	.40202
Have you ever repurchased any product that you've bought online during the pandemic?	100	1.00	2.00	1.1700	.37753
Do you follow/like a particular brand or multiple brands on social media?	100	1.00	2.00	1.1700	.37753
Has any social media marketed product made	100	1.00	2.00	1.3500	.47937

	N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std. Deviation
you a brand loyal customer?					
Do you rely on a company or brand's social media to find information?	100	1.00	2.00	1.1800	.38612
Have you started a small business through social media during the pandemic?	100	1.00	2.00	1.5500	.50000
Have you advertised through social media during the pandemic?	100	1.00	2.00	1.4500	.50000
Valid N (listwise)	**100**				

According to Table 5, a sizeable proportion of respondents (M=1.09, SD=0.28) indicated that social media marketing influenced their purchasing decisions during the Covid-19 pandemic. During the pandemic, most respondents reported purchasing product(s) from social media pages (M=1.12, SD=.32) and social media advertisements (M=1.20, SD=.40), repurchasing a product purchased online (M=1.17, SD=.37), and socially following or liking a brand on social media (M=1.17, SD=.37). Nearly half of respondents (M=1.18, SD=0.47) become brand-loyal purchasers of a social media marketing product.

They also utilised social media to research a company or brand (M=1.18, SD=0.38). According to the data, half of the respondents have not launched a social media business during the pandemic (M=1.55, SD=0.5). However, at least half of them have expertise with social media advertising (M=1.45, SD=0.5).

DISCUSSION

Due to the random distribution of online questionnaires to 100 respondents in this study, we only acquired their viewpoints on social media comprehension and brand awareness development. We would have liked to conduct interviews with respondents who are specialists and more experienced in the field of digital marketing to establish whether they hold similar or contrasting opinions on the topic. Also, the research was conducted and collected just in Kota Kinabalu, but it would be great to get statistics on the entire state of Sabah or Malaysia to determine if the responses to the questionnaires varied. In addition, while our research focuses on a broad general issue of social media, we wish we could specialise the topic to boost comprehension in a particular area of social media (for example to role of content marketing in revitalising the tourism industry in Sabah).

The impact of social media on brand recognition during the Covid-19 pandemic. Based on the results of the data analysis, it was determined that respondents felt social media to be a valuable digital marketing tool used by companies to generate brand awareness, with most respondents agreeing with the importance of social media during the epidemic. Notably, most respondents concurred that social media marketing is more effective during a pandemic. The significance of social media strategy to attract and engage audiences during the Covid-19 pandemic. Maintaining a successful social media presence requires engagement between

brands and followers. It has the capability of turning followers into consumers. Creating valuable material via social media will assist in converting current followers into devoted clients. Nevertheless, the results indicate that some respondents (19% neutral, 1% disagree) do not believe that consistency in social media is essential for attracting them as followers. The results of the data analysis support the null hypothesis that firms' use of social media as a digital marketing approach to raise brand recognition during the Covid-19 outbreak is unsuccessful.

This could suggest that certain users place a greater emphasis on the value of a brand or product for them than on social media's overall look.
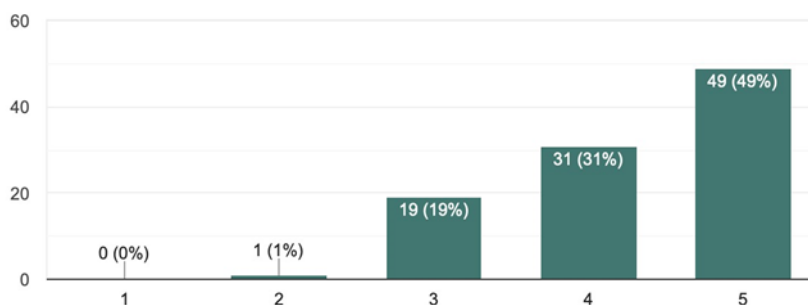

Figure 1: Respondents Results in Social Media Consistency

CONCLUSION

Throughout the pandemic, effective internet ads have showed the capacity to draw customers substantially more quickly and to increase brand loyalty. It also emphasised the importance of understanding social media and its effect on brand recognition to maximise its use and execute efficient marketing plans, particularly for businesses and government bodies. Understanding the full potential of social media can also help us mitigate the effects of a future global economic catastrophe. It is intended that the findings of this study can serve as a starting point for more research on the impact of social media on brand awareness during the Covid-19 outbreak.

The purpose of this study was to provide a clearer and more in-depth understanding of social media's potential by highlighting its usefulness and effectiveness as a marketing tool during Covid-19. Both the brand and the consumer are essential components of a successful marketing strategy. And by discovering what aligns with one another, especially in a circumstance involving a country's economic health, analysing social media and its functionality will be of tremendous assistance in preparing for the next global crisis. This study provides marketers with a deeper understanding of how social media may contribute to brand awareness and digital communication.

Covid-19 has compelled us to adopt a more technologically advanced lifestyle, compelling us to research new ways to prevent the virus in general. As a result of this shift in customer behaviour, marketers must rethink their methods for analysing and targeting the modern consumer. Therefore, children born during this period will have a unique life

experience compared to those born before the pandemic. Therefore, it is essential to analyse and study the current situation, as it will benefit the future of marketing, technology, and communication.

This study is so intriguing and important since it is still relevantly new; it arouses a great lot of curiosity while exposing a great deal about our technological and communicative advancements. This study's timing is particularly relevant because it occurs at the beginning of the new normal, allowing for further studies, such as the possibilities post-Covid-19.

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