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## Examining the importance of digital marketing strategies in brand creation for SMEs in Malaysia

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### ABSTRACT

This research aimed to investigate the relationship between brand creation and various types of marketing strategies in SMEs across Malaysia, with a focus on the role of digital platforms in shaping consumer engagement and perceptions. The research was conducted using a correlational quantitative approach in Malaysia. Through the probability sampling method, 51 SME employees were selected. Research data were collected through surveys and analyzed using SPSS software. The findings showed that utilizing various digital marketing strategies was essential for SME brand creation. Social media, content creation, community engagement, influencer collaboration, SEO, and email marketing proved significant in increasing brand visibility and loyalty among Malaysian consumers. The study highlighted that content marketing enabled SMEs to convey their values and unique selling propositions. Additionally, implementing an SEO strategy significantly increased an SME's visibility in search engine results, boosted website traffic, and built customer credibility. Influencer marketing was also effective for Malaysian SMEs in facilitating audience reach and increasing brand awareness through personalized consumer relationships. Moreover, email marketing played an important role in brand creation by enhancing customer relationships and engagement. This study provided empirical insights into how Malaysian SMEs leveraged digital marketing channels to strengthen their brands, emphasizing the need to adapt strategies to changing consumer preferences and technological advances in the digital landscape.

**Keywords:** Brand creation, consumer engagement, digital marketing, Malaysian SMEs, online marketing platforms

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## INTRODUCTION

Small and medium enterprises (SMEs) in Malaysia are crucial to the country's economy, particularly its GDP. According to the Department of Statistics Malaysia (2022), SMEs contributed 38.4% to the national GDP in 2022, amounting to RM580.4 billion. It was further reported that SMEs experienced a GDP growth of 11.6%, surpassing the national GDP growth rate of 8.7%. These figures underlined the pivotal role of SMEs in driving national economic expansion. One strategy to foster ongoing SME success is to focus on developing SME brands through various digital platforms.

In the present era, digital marketing is essential in business advancement, supported significantly by the rapid increase in internet usage and digital reliance among consumers. Statista reports that as of April 2024, the number of global internet users has reached 5.44 billion, constituting 67.1% of the total global population. Data Reportal (2024) also notes a rise in social media users to 259 million since 2023, marking a 5.4% increase. As businesses increasingly pivot online to ensure continuity, and with more consumers turning to e-commerce and digital platforms to meet their needs and desires, the COVID-19 pandemic has further accelerated digital adoption (Santos et al., 2022). In this case, the pandemic phenomenon has encouraged MSMEs to adopt and implement various online strategies to maintain business existence (Gao et al., 2023).

Digital marketing is a useful and widespread tool for small and medium-sized Malaysian businesses (SMEs) with fewer resources and a smaller customer base than their larger counterparts. With digital marketing, they may expand their reach beyond their local area, perhaps tapping into new markets for very little out of pocket. It also lets them communicate with their customers in new ways, learn more about their tastes and habits, and adjust their products and outreach accordingly. Therefore, today's SMEs must not only realize the importance of digital marketing but also actively implement it to survive. Content marketing, social media engagement, search engine optimization (SEO), and influencer partnerships are all used to capture audience attention and develop brand equity on online platforms (Coman et al., 2020).

Despite digital marketing's obvious success and growing potential in the field of brand creation for SMEs, there are observable challenges such as intense competition, continuously developing technology, fluctuating trends, and knowledge gaps, especially in the Malaysian setting. The complexity and constant change of the digital marketing landscape are a major source of difficulty. When trying to carve out a niche for their brands, small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) sometimes struggle to efficiently navigate the complex digital platforms available today, especially in developing markets like Malaysia (Jones, 2019). According to the available research, Malaysian small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) lack a thorough comprehension of the nuances and practical implementations of various digital marketing tactics. Ghazali et al. (2020) note that while SMEs are beginning to recognize the value of digital marketing, many still lack the expertise necessary to strategically deploy and optimise digital solutions. This knowledge gap coupled with a lack of action may prevent small and medium-sized enterprises from realizing the full potential of digital marketing for brand building (Dumitriu et al., 2019).

While the digital marketing literature has largely focused on major corporations, Tan and Lee (2021) note that less attention has been paid to small and medium-sized businesses, notably in Malaysia. Because of their smaller size, limited resources, and narrower areas of operations, small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) have unique problems and opportunities in digital marketing. This means that there is a pressing need for specialised study and guidance, as the techniques and insights applicable to larger organisations may not be directly transferable or even feasible for SMEs. Many small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) struggle to adopt and reap the benefits of digital marketing campaigns due to fundamental issues such as the technical gap and resource restrictions (Ismail et al., 2018). Small and medium-sized businesses (SMEs) frequently have limited resources and knowledge, making it difficult for them to invest in and make good use of digital marketing tools for brand construction. Discovering techniques that are not only productive but also feasible and sustainable for SMEs over the long term is, therefore, crucial.

Malaysia's cultural and socioeconomic diversity should also be taken into account. Cultural and social circumstances can have a big impact on how well digital marketing is received and how well it performs (Ali et al., 2019). Therefore, it is vital to establish resonance and engagement with the target audience to comprehend and use these factors in digital marketing strategies for brand construction. However, there isn't a lot of study that dives deeply into how SMEs in Malaysia might benefit from the convergence of digital marketing, brand development, and local settings. By delving into the theoretical foundations of digital marketing's impact on brand creation for SMEs as well as the practical, contextual, and strategic aspects, this study aims to fill in the identified gaps, particularly in the Malaysian context. The purpose of this research is to help small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) in Malaysia establish and expand their digital brands by uncovering insights and developing strategies that are both theoretically solid and practically practicable.

Thus, to develop a successful plan in both the short and long term for small and medium enterprises (SMEs) in Malaysia, it is first important to understand the dynamics and impact of digital marketing on brand construction. For micro, small, and medium enterprises (MSMEs) in Malaysia, the rise of digital marketing has

brought about major changes in the branding process. The ability to build and maintain a strong online presence is critical for small and medium-sized businesses (SMEs) in today's increasingly digital economy. Through an examination of how various digital marketing tactics affect consumer perception, recognition, and loyalty, this study aims to make sense of the complex web of relationships between brand building and digital marketing. This study sets out to help small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) in Malaysia successfully and efficiently navigate the digital branding journey in the aftermath of the digital era and the difficulties and opportunities it brings.

This study seeks to understand the effect of digital marketing strategies on the process of "brand creation" for small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) in Malaysia. Brands are more than just names, logos, or symbols; they are the very essence of a company, guaranteeing its uniqueness in a crowded marketplace. They communicate a company's goals and values to its target audience. If you want to influence consumer loyalty and purchase decisions, you need to create and manage a brand that people will associate with quality, trust, and value. Effective brand creation is crucial for all businesses, but especially for SMEs which frequently lack the robust financial powers of larger corporations in order to carve out a niche and compete effectively in the marketplace. This study examines the function and effectiveness of digital marketing in constructing recognizable and trustworthy brands within the context of Malaysia's dynamic and varied economic landscape. This research will examine the many components of digital marketing and the real-world effects they have on SMB brand building.

## LITERATURE REVIEW

### Brand Creation

The process of developing a brand is crucial in the commercial sector. It's a powerful resource for small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) in Malaysia, helping them stand out from the crowd (Kotler et al., 2015). Consumers' trust, loyalty, and even readiness to pay more for a product or service can all benefit from a well-established brand (Keller, 1993). In addition, it encourages brand recognition, attract larger customer base, increase trust and confidence among customers, also enhance loyalty among customers (Aaker, 1996; Kapferer, 2012). Moreover, Keller (1993) describes as the process of establishing the characteristics that set one product apart from another on the market. Brand creation involves shaping the identity, perception, and reputation of a brand (Iglesias et al., 2020; Kapferer, 2012). Furthermore, Pealoza and Venkatesh (2006) suggest that creating brand meanings through consumer interactions is an integral part of the branding process.

### Digital Marketing

The promotion of goods and services to a certain demographic through electronic channels is called "digital marketing," as defined by Chaffey and Ellis-Chadwick (2019). Electronic channels include the web, mobile devices, and social media. Search engine optimization (SEO), content marketing, email marketing, social media marketing, and online advertising are just a few of the many strategies that fall under the umbrella of "digital marketing," as Smith and Chaffey (2020) elaborate. Digital marketing makes it easier for customers to participate in conversations about brands and provide feedback, all of which contribute to increased brand recognition, customer loyalty, and consumer confidence (Kaplan and Haenlein, 2010). Moreover, the implementation of digital marketing also acts as a solution that helps SMEs overcome marketing and advertising challenges, thereby enabling them to compete with large companies and achieve their goals. Digital marketing provides various opportunities for SMEs to produce quality customer service, customer satisfaction, and better business growth (Bruce et al., 2023).

### Social Media Marketing

In order to reach a specific demographic, businesses can utilize social media marketing to promote their goods and services on sites like Facebook, Instagram, Twitter, and LinkedIn (Smith & Zook, 2011). Social media, as part of digital marketing, is believed to have an important function in marketing organizational products and services in the digital market. Social media has been utilized in increasing customer loyalty, customer communication, social selling, and market expansion (Peter & Dalla Vecchia, 2021). Viral marketing is made easier by social media, since happy customers can spread the word about their positive experience (Kaplan & Haenlein, 2010). Thus, the implementation of social media marketing strategy is crucial, as it could influences consumer behavior through the interaction and relations between consumer and business or brand (Ziółkowska, 2021).

### Content Marketing

Producing and disseminating high-quality material on a regular basis is a key component of a successful content marketing strategy (Kaplan & Haenlein, 2010). Blog posts, articles, films, infographics, and other media are all valid forms of content in this context. The basic objective of content marketing is to gain the audience's

confidence and credibility and strongly related with value creation of a brand (Ho et al., 2020; Pulizzi & Barrett, 2008). Digital content marketing has been identified as a marketing tool that is carried out through the process of creating, distributing, and sharing relevant, interesting, and timely content to engage customers at the right point in their purchase decision process (Sawaftah et al., 2021). Content marketing increases brand recognition and loyalty by establishing a trustworthy relationship with consumers through the dissemination of relevant, high-quality content (Kaplan & Haenlein, 2010).

### Online Advertising

Advertising campaigns that take place online are collectively referred to as "online advertising," "internet advertising," or "digital advertising" (Smith & Chaffey, 2020). It encompasses a wide variety of media, from display ads to PPC ads to social media and video ads. According to Kaplan and Haenlein (2010), the primary goal of online advertising is to take advantage of the widespread accessibility of the Internet by efficiently disseminating promotional messages through digital media. For businesses, its pinpoint targeting capabilities mean they can better reach customers who share their values, hobbies, and other characteristics (Lee & Johnson, 2010; Smith & Chaffey, 2020). In addition, online advertising provides instant exposure and can direct visitors to websites or landing pages, which can increase the awareness of a brand and, hopefully, result in sales (Kaplan & Haenlein, 2010; Chen & Huang, 2017).

## METHODS

The research design chosen for the current study is a quantitative correlational approach, in order to be able to obtain answers to the research objectives and research methodology effectively. According to Morajan (2020), a correlational quantitative design method, involving survey-based research, will be used to investigate the impact of content marketing on brand development in the context of small and medium enterprises (SMEs) in Malaysia. The correlational design was chosen to test the relationship between variables, in this case exploring how content marketing strategies correlate with brand creation results among SMEs. This approach allows the exploration of potential causal or predictive relationships without manipulating variables, thereby providing valuable insight into the phenomena that occur. For this study, a total of 51 valid responses from employees from various SMEs in Malaysia participated, selected through probability sampling methods to ensure a representative sample. Data collection is carried out at SME offices, employee workplaces, and other locations that are accessible and relevant to the stakeholders involved in each company. The data was collected during December 2023 – January 2024. The main data collection method used was a structured questionnaire survey, designed to collect detailed information about perceptions, strategies, and results related to content marketing and brand creation within these SMEs. The data collected through the survey was then analyzed using the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS) program. This analytical tool allows researchers to examine and quantify observed relationships, assess the significance of findings, and draw conclusions regarding the impact and benefits of content marketing practices on SME businesses in Malaysia.

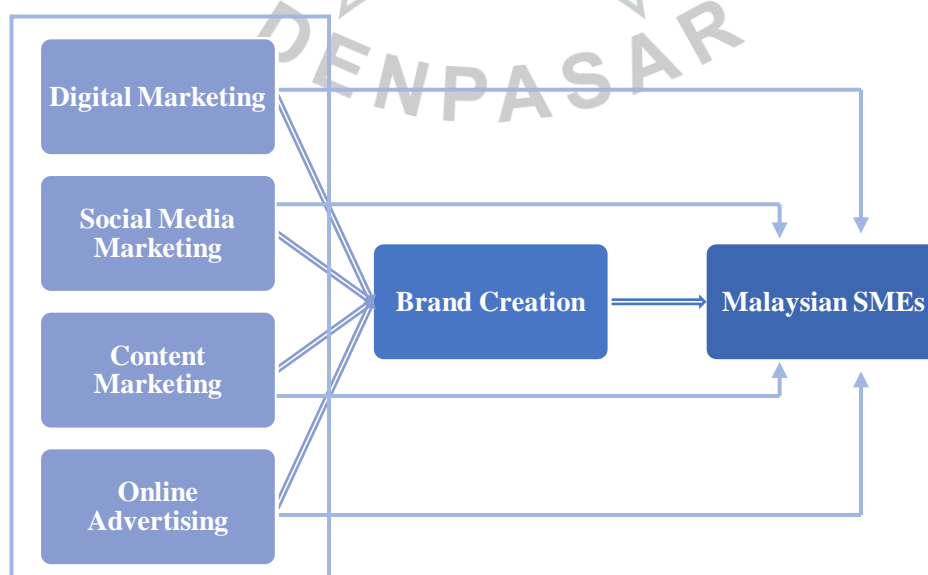


FIGURE 1. Conceptual Framework

## RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

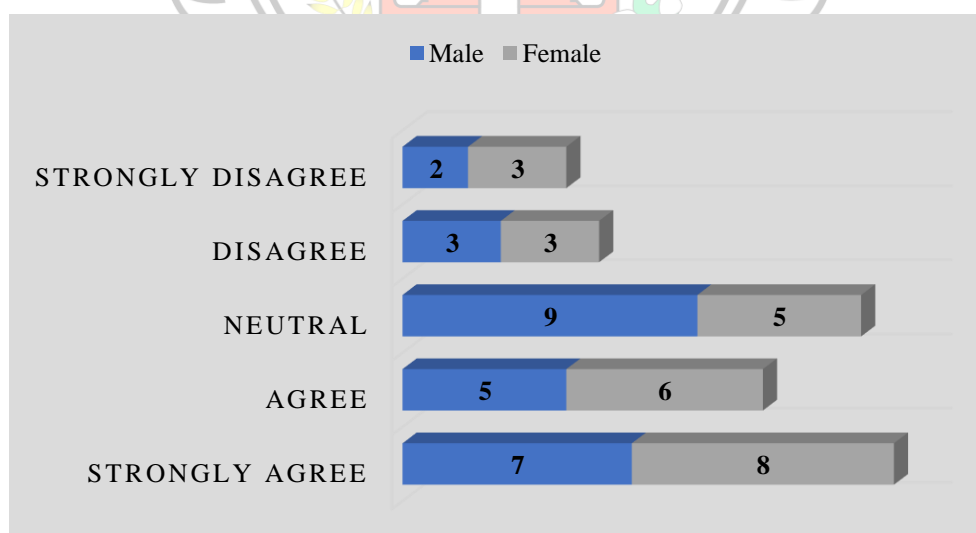
This study is aimed at investigating the role of marketing strategies including digital marketing, social media marketing, content marketing, and online advertising in influencing brand creation in SMEs in Malaysia. This study involved 51 MSME business actors, where based on Table 1 it can be seen that the majority of respondents were MSME actors aged 20-30 years (33.3%), female (51%), and acted as social media marketers (33.3%), marketing specialist (33.3%), and influencer marketer (33.3%).

**TABLE 1. Characteristics of Respondents**

Variable	Classification	Total	Percentage
Age	20 – 30 years	17	33.3%
	31 – 40 years	14	27.5%
	41 – 50 years	10	19.6%
	51 – 60 years	10	19.6%
Gender	Male	26	49.0%
	Female	25	51.0%
Occupation	Social Media Marketer	17	33.3%
	Marketing Specialist	17	33.3%
	Influencer Marketer	17	33.3%
<b>Total</b>		<b>51</b>	<b>100%</b>

Source: Primary data processed, 2024

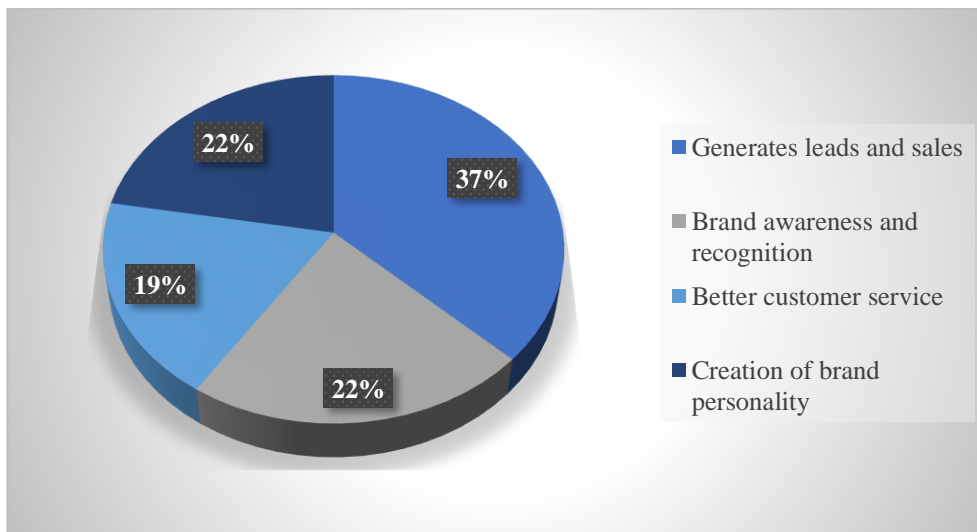
Figure 2 illustrates the impact of social media marketing on brand image. In this case, 25 women were found to offer their individual thoughts regarding the impact of social media marketing on brand image development. It is known that as many as 6 women stated that social media marketing was important for developing brand image, while 3 women disagree with this fact. As a result, 5 women remained neutral because they did not really believe or deny the facts. On the other hand, 7 men strongly agreed with the fact while 2 men strongly disagreed that social media marketing cannot have a strong impact in developing a brand image for SMEs, especially across Malaysia. On the other hand, 5 men agreed with this fact and were direct members of various SMEs in Malaysia and had sufficient experience regarding the matters asked of them. In this context, 9 male candidates also behaved neutrally, in contrast to the female candidates, because they seemed somewhat confused by changes in current market demand.



**FIGURE 2. Impact of Social Media Marketing on Brand Image**

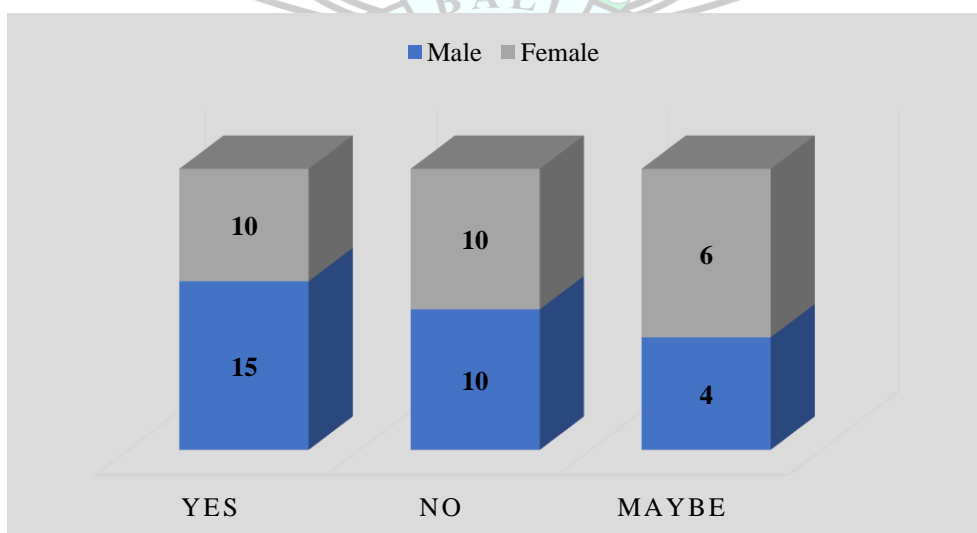
Figure 3 illustrates the importance of content marketing in SME businesses across Malaysia. It can be shown that digital content marketing has a huge impact on developing brand awareness as well as garnering a competitive advantage in business. The survey results revealed that the majority of participants gave positive results regarding this matter. In this context, nearly 26 male participants have been given individual insights into the subject matter offered to them. On the other hand, 25 female participants also agreed with the fact that content marketing has greater opportunities to provide to the business world, especially for SMEs. In both cases, men and women claim that content marketing can effectively generate and increase the percentage of sales for

SMEs. On the other hand, only a few of them claim that content marketing can increase brand recognition and awareness by up to 5x. Therefore, SMEs throughout Malaysia can accommodate these factors for the betterment of their business. Apart from that, the participants also claimed that Content marketing for SMEs can actually make customer service better because they can meet customer demands and approaches towards brands. Apart from that, brand personality development can also be managed through anticipated content marketing for the business.



**FIGURE 3. Importance of Content Marketing in SMEs**

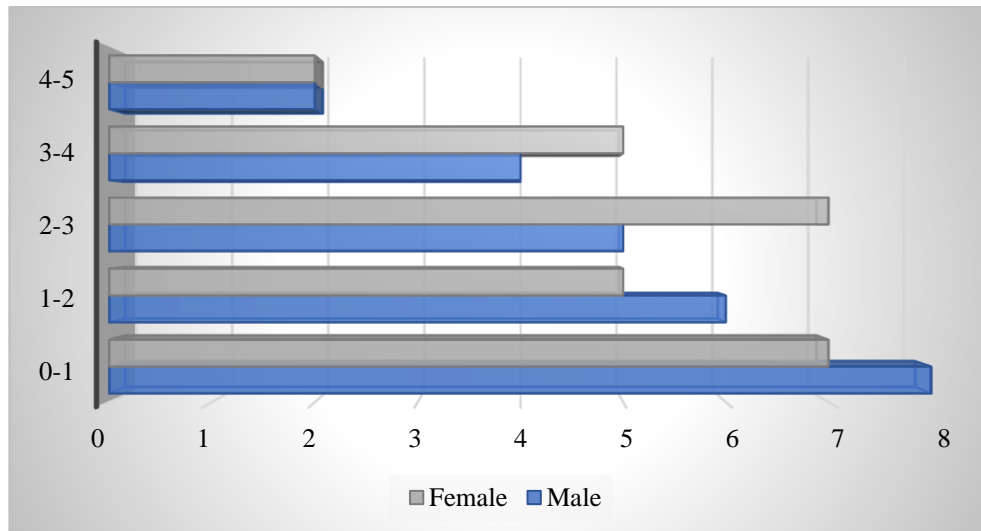
The affirmative stance supported by using 10 female contributors underlines the importance of SEO in establishing brand trust for SMEs in Malaysia. Figure 4 also shows that these respondents are likely aware of the important function of virtual marketing strategies, along with search engine optimization, in increasing online visibility and using logo awareness. They may also argue that strong search engine marketing practices enable SMEs to improve their search engine rankings, thereby increasing their online presence and attracting affluent customers. Additionally, it was noted that 6 female participants had shown their interest in the “Maybe” section which shows whether or not SEO affects SME organizations in Malaysian businesses. Therefore, it can be said that digital presence has helped SME organizations build their brand reputation and improve their business performance in the business market area.



**FIGURE 4. SEO Influences Brand Creation**

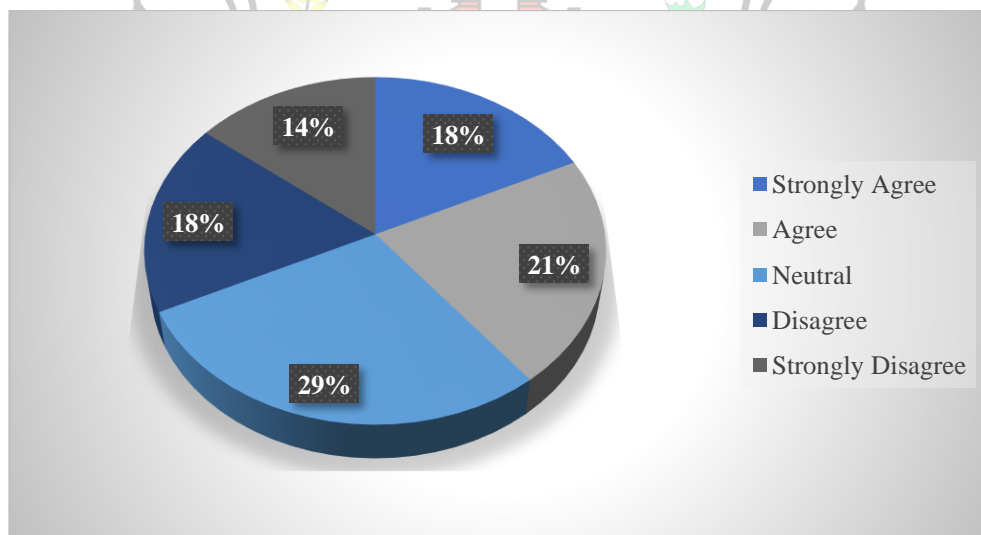
Figure 5 depicts the importance of digital marketing in the context of the success of the SME. In addition, it has been conceived that a 0-1 scale of 7 women participants believes that digital marketing has been helping to shape SME organisations in the business market territory. On the other hand, 1-2 scale 5-woman participants believed that digital marketing has been giving the platforms the SAME organisation in order to shape the business performances of the SMEs in the Malaysia business market territory. Furthermore, it has been noted

that on the 4- 5 scale only 2 women have been perceived as the digital marketing could be helping the SME organisation to deliver effective services to the consumer in the business market territory.



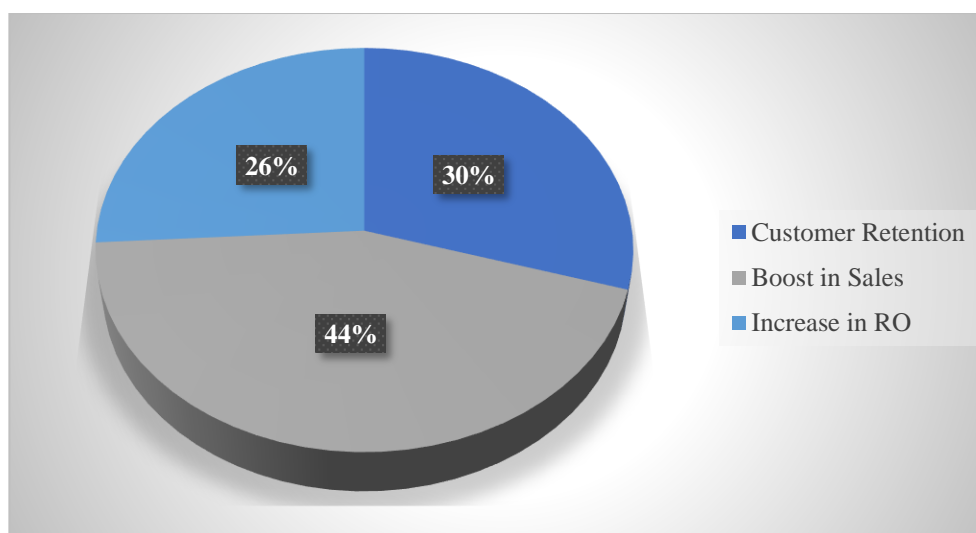
**FIGURE 5. Importance of Digital Marketing on the Success of SME**

The influence has been greatly impacting the better brand creation in SMEs to perform business operations effectively in the business market received by the participants in the Figure 6. In addition, it has been noted that the 4 participants have beliefs that strongly agree that the influencers have been helping to enhance the business performances in the Malaysia SME business market territory. Furthermore, it has been perceived that the 8 participants have been showing neutrality indicating that they believe influencers either helping or not in the context of enhancing business performances in the business market territory of Malaysia.



**FIGURE 6. Influencer Marketing Impacts Better Brand Creation in SMEs**

According to Figure 7, it shows that Email Marketing has been influencing the brand creation for SMEs in Malaysia. In addition, the 12 participants have shown that Email marketing influences the brand creation for SMEs in the Malaysian market and has been helping to enhance the business brand reputation in the business market territory. On the other hand, 8 participants believed that customer retention would improve with having the practices of email marketing in the SME organisational working boundaries. Furthermore, 7 participants have shown the increased RO of the SME with the proper implementation of Email Marketing in the organisational working territories of the SME in Malaysia. Therefore, it could be believed that email marketing has been shaping the brand creation of the SME and enhancing the business operation of the SME in the business market territory of Malaysia.



**FIGURE 7. Email Marketing Influences Brand Creation for SMEs in Malaysia**

The instrument test results have been carried out with the help of SPSS software, which resulted in the conclusion that the data used has met the validity and reliability requirements well. Through the results of the data consistency test with the Cronbach's alpha value, a score of 0.938 was obtained, which is above 0.70. Furthermore, the correlation test results also show that a total of 8 independent variables have been successfully used in this case including age, gender, occupation and more. The correlations for these three cases are 1.000, 1 and .084, respectively. The main reason for conducting a correlation test here is to successfully offer predictive ability and hypothesis validity along with data reduction (Bokrantz and Dul, 2023). In this study, the main reason for selecting this test was to provide insight into the predictive power of the dependent and independent variables.

**TABLE 2. Data Analysis Summary**

Model	Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	t	Sig.
	B	Std. Error	Beta		
(Constant)	0.000	0.000		-	-
Gender	0.000	0.000	0.000	-	-
Digital Marketing	1.000	0.000	1.000	-	-
$R^2 = 1.000$					
$R^2 \text{ adjusted} = 1.000$					
$F_{\text{sig.}} = 0.000$					

The testing performed here is considered as regression testing where coefficients, ANOVA and model summary are performed. The model numbers that have been reported here in this context are R square, R and standard error. According to table 3, both R and R square/adjusted are equal to 1,000. R square is considered the proportion of variance between dependent variables that can be predicted from the independent variables. This value indicates that 1,000% of the variance was successfully predicted from other variables. When predictors are added to this model, each predictor here will successfully explain other variables related to the dependent variable. In this section, analyzed responses to the survey and statistical findings are detailed with respect to the influence of digital marketing on SME brand creation in Malaysia. Analyzing survey data and SPSS analysis is very important because it provides valuable insight into the factors that will influence brand development in the digital era. This provides a broader perspective on understanding effective digital marketing strategies for SMEs and actionable recommendations that can be implemented to improve brand visibility and brand reputation in the competitive business landscape in Malaysia.

## Discussion

The research aimed to explore the exact relationship between brand formation and marketing strategy in the context of SMEs across Malaysia. Understanding the growing importance of digital platforms to shape consumer engagement and perception, this research investigates the process of SMEs using social media to



aspire to brand identity (Yong, 2023). Through examining various digital marketing techniques such as content creation, community engagement and influencer collaboration, this research was able to discover the extent to which all these potential strategies contribute to brand visibility, its loyalty among Malaysian customers (Jadhav et al., 2023). Realizing customer loyalty is critical for SMEs looking to thrive in a competitive market, where “effective digital marketing” can serve as a powerful tool for brand differentiation as brand performance grows (Yunus et al., 2022). This is also supported by research by Thaha et al. (2021) who revealed that digital platforms used by both SMEs and potential customers have had a positive impact by presenting opportunities for MSMEs and potential customers. In other words, MSMEs can gain business benefits by utilizing social media.

The effective influence of digital marketing, especially content marketing, on brand creation for SMEs across Malaysia is of paramount importance. Through implementing various strategies such as videos, blog posts, and content on social media, SMEs can effectively engage with their target audience (Omar et al., 2020). Through the help of these individual channels, SMEs can successfully convey their values, brand message and unique selling proposition, thereby increasing brand recognition and perception. Evaluating content engagement and reach across channels is critical to understanding its correlation with brand recognition and perception (Kraus et al., 2019). Metrics such as social media followers, shares, likes, and comments as well as conversion rates offer valuable insight into the effectiveness of content marketing efforts (Safko & Brake, 2009). Additionally, assessing sentiment and feedback from audiences can help SMEs refine their content marketing strategies to better suit their target markets (Amiri et al. 2023). Higher engagement rates often indicate a strong connection with an audience leading brands to increase recognition of a brand (Smith & Taylor, 2019). However, leveraging content marketing can effectively contribute to the creation of growth and branding for SMEs across Malaysia strengthening their individual presence across the competitive digital landscape. This study can be supported by the findings in research conducted by Ho et al. (2019) who emphasize that content marketing strategy is a significant driver of business success by increasing audience engagement through interesting content, as well as through delivering the value generated by the content. Furthermore, it is explained that the value generated by content is the result of the sophistication of the content, which can give rise to deeper relational involvement.

Across Malaysia, SMEs are successfully leveraging the optimization of search engines in enhancing their brand creation and presence online. Through strategic SEO tactics including the creation of quality content, keyword optimization and building backlinks, SMEs focus to enhance their rankings in search engines (Tan & Lee, 2018). As an outcome, developed visibility on the outcomes of search engine pushes for website traffic and higher visibility of the brand. This heightened presence online effectively attracts potential customers and at the same time, establishes trustworthiness and credibility for the company. With developed rankings of searching, SMEs can compete effectively to compete with larger operations of the business, gaining trust and recognition among the audiences that they have targeted (Ullah et al. 2023). The study of Ologunbe et al. (2023) emphasize the importance of SEO in increasing brand visibility, which can have a significant impact in increasing a business's opportunities to attract and retain customers. Brands that are easily found on search engines tend to gain credibility within their industry, resulting in higher visibility. Furthermore, it was explained that high brand visibility reflects that more potential customers are familiar with the brand, resulting in greater sales opportunities and revenue generation. Consequently, the increasingly effective improved visibility of the brand, enhanced credibility and cumulated website traffic significantly contribute to the process of creating a brand entirely for SMEs across Malaysia, promoting sustainability and growth across the digital landscape.

Furthermore, SMEs in Malaysia are cumulatively leveraging influencer marketing to enhance brand creation. By navigating SMEs, and using influencer marketing campaigns, their results can be best assessed in terms of credibility, brand awareness and customer trust. Influencer collaborations often result in increased brand visibility because influencers have significant influence online, reaching specific audiences effectively (Cheah et al. 2023). The strategy of collaborating with leading influencers was also found to increase the credibility of SMEs while increasing customer trust (Freberg et al., 2011). In comparison, influencer marketing appears to offer an authentic and personalized approach, making it well-received among modern customers looking for a genuine connection with a company (Haenlein et al., 2020). This personalized touch often results in higher engagement rates as well as a more positive brand image. However, it is important to compare the performance of influencer marketing with other marketing area channels on overall brand impact and profitability (Ahuja & Loura, 2020). Chopra et al. (2021) argued that it is important to utilize influencers who are able to provide recommendations according to real conditions. In addition, it is important for companies to utilize influencers who are able to provide authentic stories and must be compatible with the product category. The research results also identified that influencers act as facilitators in building empathy, relationships and connecting with consumers.

Another interesting finding was that across the dynamic landscape of SMEs in Malaysia, email marketing has emerged as an important tool for brand creation. Through scrutinising campaigns of email, encompassing metrics such as conversion rates, and click-through rates, a comprehensive recognition of its influences on creating a brand unfolds. Elevated rates that are open, signify primary engagement, while robust click-through

rates denote active interest in providing, both pivotal for exposure of the brand (Jadhav et al. 2023; Lin, 2021). However, the true test depends on the rates of conversion, illustrating returns that are tangible on conversion prospects and investment regarding the prospects of loyal patrons. Apart from that, the role of email marketing transcends a mere transaction; it acts as a conduit to nurture lasting relationships with customers, propelling sales and promoting loyalty to the brand (Peter & Vecchia, 2021). The personalised approach of marketing enables SMEs to resonate with potential audiences, promote a proper sense of affinity that can transcend the digital realm, and finally solidify the identity of the brand across the markets of Malaysia (James, 2021). Email marketing is also one of the oldest marketing channels and methods among other digital marketing strategies but the most effective, especially because of its low implementation costs and relatively high response rate (Peter & Vecchia, 2021).

The results of the survey and analysis through SPSS are completely parallel to the literature review and very clear in responding to the role of digital marketing strategies in brand development for SMEs. The use of social media marketing, content marketing, SEO, influencer marketing, and email marketing is dominant in brand-building activity related to identity construction and making the name of the brand more visible (Yong, 2023). It shows that Malaysian SMEs are putting these digital marketing channels to great use, keeping up with their audience, presenting brand messaging, building credibility, and driving brand recognition. Study results across studies may also differ as an outcome of a whole set of contextual factors, comprising market dynamics and industry specifics, or due to variations in implementation strategies. While, on the one hand, these findings are very positive and, thus, tend to corroborate earlier research, which was also very positive about the impact of digital marketing on brand creation, the nuances in these findings may be reflective of changing consumer preferences or technological advents or changing competitive landscapes (Jadhav et al. 2023). In general, this study would further add strength to the underpinning theories supporting digital marketing in branding development with empirical insights more specific to the Malaysian SME context.

## CONCLUSION

Current research aims to explore the correlation between brand creation and various marketing strategies in SMEs across Malaysia. In conclusion, the consequences of digital commerce on brand innovation for various SMEs mostly located in Malaysia are significant and varied. In this case, analysis has been carried out throughout this research by focusing on various marketing strategies which include digital marketing, social media marketing, content marketing, as well as online advertising and email marketing. This study found that an effective digital marketing strategy, especially content marketing especially on social media, will enable SMEs to communicate their values and unique selling proposition effectively. By engaging audiences across these platforms, SMEs can increase brand recognition and customer perception. Additionally, utilizing SEO tactics such as quality content creation and keyword optimization significantly increases an SMB's visibility in search engine results. This increased visibility not only increases website traffic but also builds credibility and trust among potential customers thereby leading to increased competitiveness of SMEs.

Influencer marketing also serves as another effective strategy for SMEs in Malaysia to support brand creation efforts. Collaborating with influencers helps SMEs reach target audiences more effectively, increasing brand awareness and credibility through authentic support and personalized relationships with consumers. Email marketing has been found to play a crucial role in brand creation by nurturing customer relationships and driving engagement through personalized communications. This research was developed based on the identification of research phenomena, in which SMEs have an influential opportunity to establish and improve their trademarks in the digital world. This research contributes to supporting policy formulation and the role of SMEs in increasing competitiveness. Through this research, it can be understood that digital marketing presents a targeted, cost-effective and measurable strategy to attract the attention of survey participants. This study also allows SMEs to compete with large companies in selected regions in Malaysia. Given that global technology continues to evolve and develop consumer behavior, it is important for SMEs to remain alert and adaptive to the direction of their digital marketing. Additionally, advances in automation, data analysis and artificial intelligence are expected to revolutionize the digital marketing landscape presenting both possibilities and challenges for various SMEs. Strategic innovation and technology can gain competitive advantages in the future, especially in brand creation and customer engagement. Future studies can investigate how advanced technology, especially artificial intelligence, can be adopted by MSMEs in developing their brands and marketing the products they offer. Further research can also explore other digital marketing strategies, especially in identifying opportunities in brand development.

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