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# MALAYSIA SMALL AND MEDIUM-SIZE ENTERPRISES PHYSIQUE BRAND IDENTITY PERSUASIVENESS IN SOCIAL MEDIA MESSAGE CONTENT

*Mohd Remie Mohd Johan*  
Universiti Malaya, Malaysia  
remiejohan@yahoo.com

*Md. Azalanshah Md. Syed*  
Universiti Malaya, Malaysia  
azalan@um.edu.my

*Hamed Mohd Adnan*  
Universiti Malaya, Malaysia  
hamed@um.edu.my

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## ABSTRACT

This study focuses on how Malaysian Small and Mid-Size Enterprises (SMEs), in this case, food truck businesses, could digitally utilize social media as an effective branding tool for their products and services and create significant customer value to survive in the local competitive market. Malaysian SME operators must convince their customers through social media message content, specifically on what is being posted on their social media page. Thus, we examined the different aspects of persuasive message content taking place on social media. A qualitative approach using semi-structured interviews was employed to explore the SME food and beverage service industry. In addition, interviews were conducted with independent food truck founders and owners in Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia. This study yielded results that showed respondents' interest in physique brand identity persuasion on social media platforms. Creating an excellent physique brand identity persuasion recognized by its customers through social media has become an important activity for food truck owners to communicate their brand digitally.

**Keywords:** *Small and Medium-Size Enterprises, food truck, social media, persuasiveness*

## INTRODUCTION

In developed countries, social media platforms are growing in popularity and are increasingly being used in the day-to-day operations of small and medium-size enterprises (SMEs). Thus, despite the growing importance of social media usage by SMEs for their marketing

activities, the utilization of social media as an effective branding tool among Malaysian food trucks to create customer value and engagement has received little attention. Social media is a phenomenon that has transformed the interaction and communication of individuals throughout the world, and social media is often used as a source of information and the spread of knowledge, changing people's views and opinions (Rugova & Prenaj, 2016). Additionally, social media is also used to instil brand awareness, stimulate communication, facilitate relationships, spur information exchange and innovation, and track customers' voices, but the measurement aspects of social media marketing initiatives are limitedly discussed (Jania et al., 2017).

Social media usage and usefulness have been an important concept in the study of SME performance and providing significant customer value that creates competitive advantages for SMEs in Malaysia's local competitive market has become a critical focus. A factor analysis indicated that SME owner-managers perceived the usefulness of digital media to engage with marketplace stakeholders, and young owner-managers from large SMEs were more likely to utilize digital media than their smaller counterparts (Camilleri, 2019). Tajvidi and Karami (2021) highlighted that marketing capabilities, namely branding and innovation, positively and significantly mediate the association between social media usage and firm performance. Consumers desire products that provide meaningful experiences. Therefore, a marketer's success often depends on familiarizing consumers with the unique experience a product offer (Goode et al., 2010). Social media reviews dramatically impact customer satisfaction, and when promotions interact well with service operations, the level of customer satisfaction is significantly affected (Ramanathan et al., 2017). A survey shows that social media can have a significant impact on business and that many social media users perceive that social media content can indeed persuade people to purchase products or services offered (Hassan et al., 2015). The majority of those who responded to this item believed that it is critical for food truck operators to be able to convince and persuade their customers via social media content messages, specifically what is posted on their social media page.

The last decade has seen an increase in the use of social media for communication, and platforms such as Facebook, Twitter, WhatsApp, and Instagram have become known for connecting individuals through text, pictorial, and video messaging, creating a way of instantly passing information to customers in a way that creates appeal. Taking pictures of one's food and posting them on social media, a phenomenon is affectionately known as "foodstagramming," has become wildly popular (Steinmann, 2019). Posting food photos has become a pervasive phenomenon on social media platforms and has significant marketing implications for restaurants. Food photos serve as a form of self-expression, which in turn leads to an enhanced dining experience (Zhu et al., 2019). The Nuseir (2020) study identified the reciprocal relationships that businesses have with their customers via the four main social media platforms. This relationship has been created because customers feel they have an individual space on social media, and because the businesses that advertise on social media use personalized messaging to their advantage.

This study addresses a significant issue as Malaysia is moving forward to be a developed country in the year 2030 and SMEs play an important role in ensuring the nation's economic growth. This study is focusing on how Malaysian micro-SMEs, in this case, food truck businesses, can utilize social media as an effective branding tool for their products and services digitally and create significant customer value to survive in the local competitive market.

## LITERATURE REVIEW

It is crucial for Malaysian SME (food truck) operators to be able to convince their customers through social media message content, specifically through what is being posted on their social media page. Thus, we examined the different aspects of persuasive message content taking place on social media as proposed by Dahl (2018). According to Simons (1976), a persuasion is a form of attempted influence in the sense that it seeks to alter the way others think, feel, or act, but it differs from other forms of influence. Therefore, Dahl (2018) proposed the 7S Framework principles that can be applied across a range of persuasion attempts using social media, including beyond mobile applications. Persuasion is a symbolic process in which communicators try to convince other people to change their attitudes or behaviour regarding an issue through the transmission of a message, in an atmosphere of free choice (Perloff, 2003). The framework's seven design principles include simplification, signposting, self-relevance, self-supervision, support, suggestion, and socialization. Simplifying involves the presentation of simple rules to engage the customer, which may include simple rules to follow in order to achieve desired behavioural results or make content engagement simple. The rationale for ensuring simplicity lies in the fact that people are likely to become irritated or bored if a simple task is presented with too much detail (Dahl, 2018).

In addition, trendy, updated, and useful information available on social media brand pages drives consumers' intention to read and share that information (Liu et al., 2018). User experience design increases client happiness and engagement by making social media campaigns easier and more pleasant to use. Molinillo et al. (2020) explore and argue the influence of social support and community factors on customer engagement and the subsequent effects on customer loyalty toward social commerce websites, and find that social support significantly affects customer engagement. In conclusion, the 7S Framework's focus is clearly on application design and personalized communication. Some features can, however, be replicated in non-application, social media environments. For instance, signposting and simplifying can be used to design messages posted on brand or organizational pages or as status updates (Dahl, 2018).

Although many attempts at persuasion via social media have been widely explored, the message's credibility and validity are directly related to the sender's reputation. The term "source credibility" refers to the favourable traits of the sender that influence the receiver's acceptance of a message. The source's credibility in social media information is generally based on the trustworthiness of people or groups publishing and disseminating information. McCroskey (1966) defined credibility as a term that refers to a perceiver's attitude toward a source. Gunther (1992) suggests that perceived source credibility was determined more by viewers' responses than by any quality of the communication source. Lafferty and Goldsmith (1999) argued and referred to credibility as the degree to which a source is believed to have relevant expertise and can be relied upon to provide an objective judgment on the issue.

In addition, O'Keefe (2002) defined credibility as a perceiver's judgments on a communicator's belief in worthiness. Thus, simply put, credibility can be defined as believability where credible people are believable people; credible information is believable information (Fogg & Tseng, 1999). The persuasive impact of source credibility is examined in two situations: a highly credible source was more effective when the communication recommended buying a product, advocacy which message recipients viewed unfavourably; and a moderately credible source was more persuasive when the message advocated leasing the product, a position subjects generally supported (Harmon & Coney, 1982). Fogg and Tseng

(1999) classified credibility into four types: presumed, reputed, surface, and experienced. Thus, persuasive content appears to be the key to successful engagement, whereas informative content (price, availability, and product characteristics) decreases engagement when contained in communications but boosts engagement when combined with persuasive traits. Social media has the benefit of developing trust between customers and businesses in ways that conventional media has never seen.

The trustworthiness rated an organization's moral attributes to what extent did people perceive an organization in a communication context, to be honest, trustworthy, and recognizable (Hu, 2015). Thus, SMEs perceived brand image and relevance of a brand to the public have a direct impact on its social media credibility. Brand communication via social media is a two-way street that may engage customers and prospects. These interactions contribute to the development of brand trust and the formation of a community around the SME brand. SMEs require trust in order to develop a stronger relationship with their consumers and to drive repeat purchases and referrals. Due to their unique abilities, specialized expertise, or personality, opinion leaders have a direct or indirect influence on consumers' opinions and purchasing decisions.

Extensive research in social media demonstrated that celebrity, instafamous, and influencer endorsements drew attention and increased brand promotion as they are publicly recognized, attractive, and trustworthy, and they show a more positive attitude toward the endorsed brand and have a stronger social presence (Lim et al., 2017; Lou & Yuan, 2019; Jin et al., 2019; Weismueller et al., 2020). To execute an effective marketing strategy, SMEs must partner with skilled social media celebrities, instafamous, and influencers that share their brand values and collaborate to grow their company's social media reach. According to the current study, the credibility dimensions of opinion leaders (i.e., attractiveness, trustworthiness, and expertise) have a positive impact on consumers' online engagement (AlFarraj et al., 2021). The technology affordances in digital media triggered cognitive heuristics to affect people's assessments of credibility by offering auto-generated cues or markers on social media (Hu, 2015). In the context of social media, technology affordance that promotes communication and interactivity handled by a human agent is more appealing than machine-controlled accounts. Effective communication interactivity is more crucial for new SMEs who use social media as their medium of interaction. Thus, engaging consumers in interactive marketing communication is instrumental in building and developing business-customer relationships (Zhang & Lin, 2014).

### **Social Media Uses by SMEs**

The use of social media among SMEs in Malaysia is still low with a percentage of less than 20% of the SME sector (Hassan et al., 2012). Malaysian SMEs are facing stiff competition as a result of the entry of an international brand into the market, and in order to capture consumer intent, SMEs must begin to plan various communication and media channel usages (Hashim et al., 2015). SMEs are often left behind when compared to large firms in the adoption of modern technologies (Chan & Kumar, 2017) and little attention has been given to understanding the adoption and impact of social media in SMEs (Sharif et al., 2017).

Digitalization, particularly social media, has been claimed to transform consumer behavior (Kaplan & Haenlein, 2010) and SME communications and interactions with

stakeholders (Camilleri, 2019). Malaysian SMEs would be at a disadvantage if they were not competitive and unable to adapt to the smart technology application for Industrial Revolution 4.0 (Utusan Online, 2017). One of the most significant current discussions in social media usage and utilization is that many SMEs are unable to promote their products and services on social media, such as Facebook and Instagram, which make consumers unaware of the SMEs' products and services, and traditional marketing techniques through word-of-mouth seem to be irrelevant as consumers are more active in browsing for products or brands through social media (Nor Afzan, 2018). Hassan et al. (2015) indicate that social media has a significant impact on business and the majority of social media users perceive that social media content can indeed persuade people to purchase products or services offered, which also significantly influences purchasing decisions. Additionally, Dahl (2018) identifies social media message content as being divided into three different features and levels, such as persuasiveness, engagement, and electronic word-of-mouth. However, in this study, we are focusing on the context of persuasiveness level in social media message content from the food truck business perspective.

### Malaysian SMEs Definition

The new SME definition was made in lieu of the current economic situation and developmental changes in government economic policy and the business competitive environment. The definition is periodically reviewed to reflect the economy as it relates to SMEs (Kumar, 2018). This new definition is more appropriate for SMEs to meet new business challenges in a more competitive global business environment. Generally, SMEs were defined differently among countries, which had their own guidelines based on various criteria, including number of employees, annual sales, and total capital. In 2018, Bank Negara Malaysia (BNM), through SME Corp. Malaysia, redefined the SME criteria based on sales turnover and number of employees. Malaysian SMEs are classified into three categories, which are micro, small and medium. Malaysian SMEs were also divided into two main sectors, which are manufacturing and services, among others.

**Table 1: Malaysian SME Definition, Sectors, Categories & Criteria**

Size	Micro		Small		Medium	
	Sales Turnover	Employees	Sales Turnover	Employees	Sales Turnover	Employees
Manufacturing	< RM300,000	< 5 employees	RM300,000 to < RM15 million	5 to < 75 employees	RM15 million to ≤ RM50 million	75 to ≤ 200 employees
Service & Others			< RM300,000 to < RM3 million	5 to < 30 employees	RM3 million to ≤ RM20 million	30 to ≤ 75 employees

*(Source: SME Annual Report, 2017/2018)*

The Malaysian economy continued to demonstrate considerable resilience in the face of multiple headwinds by registering a moderate growth of 4.7% in 2018 (2017: 5.7%) (SME Corp, 2019). In addition, the diversified characteristics and performance of SMEs have not only enhanced their resilience but have resulted in a higher contribution to the economy in 2019 despite the challenging economic environment during the year (SME Corp, 2021). However, in 2020, the growth of SMEs' GDP registered at negative 7.3 percent, which is lower than Malaysia's GDP for the first time over the past 17 years since 2003 (DoSM, 2021) mainly due to the health crisis caused by the Covid-19 pandemic in 2020. The COVID-19 pandemic has caused numerous impacts on the global socio-economic environment, affecting the business communities, particularly SMEs that continue to struggle for survival (Hu & Kee, 2021).

### **Malaysian Services & Other Sectors (F&B)**

Malaysia has a growing domestic F&B market, driven by a growing population and rising income among the Southeast Asian countries. In the modern urban lifestyle, consumers prefer an assortment of merchandise, including convenient foods and beverages (F&B) (Faizal et al., 2019). In 2015, the economic census recorded 167,490 food and beverage establishments, with an annual growth rate of 5.1% since 2010. According to Malaysia's Department of Statistics (DoSM) (2019), the economic census of food and beverage services revealed that the gross output generated by the services in these establishments was RM66.4bil, representing an annual growth of 12.2% or a total of RM29.1bil since 2010. Considering the uniqueness of food, beverages, and food cultures, Malaysia can simply be regarded as a gastronomic paradise (Abubakar, 2010). Gastronomy encompasses an appreciation for diverse social, cultural, and historical components, as well as literature, philosophy, economics, and religion, all of which revolve around food. The street food vendors and hawkers in the night market have continued to grow in recent years due to a more attractive business model with promising income. The physical trucks have distinct personalities. The uniqueness of the food they offer has made gourmet food trucks a popular dining choice, and a fusion of taste is the best way to describe the innovative food creations that food trucks are known for (Ibrahim, 2011). The term "food truck" refers generally to a motorized vehicle often customized from which an operator sells food to consumers where these trucks typically contain cooking facilities the operator uses to prepare food, sometimes customized according to a particular consumer's order (Linnekin, 2011). The food and beverage industry is now turning to mobile vendors, including food trucks, as a new and promising business proposition. With the current trend, the vendor's creativity and consumer's demands influence the evolution of the food truck business in Malaysia (Rahman, 2019). In Malaysia, mobile eateries, the new generation of food trucks, are undergoing a revolution. Food trucks are a fun-oriented business that has the potential to grow over time, which means a daily basis of profit can be earned with the right plan for a younger, enthusiastic new generation. The food truck model has been fairly popular among people due to an increase in youth spending, middle-class spending, conscious consumerism, mobile lifestyles, and the need for food on the go. Creating a social media brand identity and to survive in today's competitive business environment, food truck operators must seek out novel methods of communicating with their consumers and stakeholders. Social media is a tool for food truck operators and consumers to create relationships. Additionally, social media marketing is one of the most effective tools for capturing millennials' attention and influencing their purchasing decisions for any type of product or business. Brands and

companies are beginning to focus on improving their social media presence and the initiatives they take on and how they approach consumers (Sayyed & Gupta, 2020).

## **METHODOLOGY**

This study engaged in a qualitative research approach. It involves collecting and analyzing non-numerical data (text, audio, and images) to understand concepts, opinions, and experiences. Because digital and social media transformation and utilization have received significant critical attention, this study focuses on the influence of brand identity persuasion in social media platforms among Malaysian food truck operators. As this study is a phenomenon-based research design, the main argument against considering a quantitative research approach is its inability to explain an in-depth underlying meaning and provide a fruitful explanation in this context of research. This study employed the realism paradigm in a qualitative research approach to further understand small businesses' processes of physique brand identity persuasion features on social media platforms. Phenomenology qualitative research design was chosen as it is a useful tool to examine, comprehend, and illustrate the experience of an individual or a group with a specific phenomenon (Creswell, 2014).

For this study, the concept of physique brand identity persuasion in the food and beverage industry is the main focal point of the study. Since the phenomenological perspective is tied to a broad range of theoretical frameworks and schools of thought in the social sciences (Taylor et al., 2016), the views of Malaysian micro-SMEs food truck operators motivated the researchers to look deeper to comprehend the physique brand identity persuasion phenomena. The sample representative for the qualitative part will be derived equally from Malaysian SME food truck owners who operate in a specific location, TAPAK Urban Dining Street around Klang Valley, Kuala Lumpur. The qualitative sample was recruited at random from Malaysian SME foodtruck proprietors operating in and around Klang Valley. Twelve food truck operators (founders/owners) from various TAPAK areas participated in this study. Interview sessions were conducted during Malaysia 2021 Movement Control Order (MCO) from January 2021 to March 2021. Every interview session was voice recorded for 45 minutes to an hour. The majority of interviews were conducted in the local language (Bahasa Melayu), with only a few conducted in English. Each participant was given a pseudonym by the researchers in order to protect their privacy and identity. There is a random alphabetical human name, such as Mr. A, as well as a numerical number for a food truck, such as FT1. This is done to keep participants' data safe and secure. The semi-structured interview questions in this research were split into four sections. Part 1 focuses on the SME (Food Truck) profile and company history. The following sections are related to the study's research aims and objectives. The researcher chose instruments such as face-to-face semi-structured interviews for the purpose of data gathering. Through these instruments, the researchers obtained an understanding of why certain behaviors and experiences occurred and how these took place in the research context of building physique brand identity persuasion on social media platforms.

## **FINDINGS AND DISCUSSIONS**

Social media is being increasingly used as a platform to conduct marketing and advertising activities as well as to attract customers and motivate them to purchase their brands (Alalwan, 2018). Thus, social media advertising, often known as social media targeting, is the practice of serving adverts to users of social media sites. As one interviewee commented:

So we started to put more of our day-to-day stuff, more pictures of barbecue. Basically, pictures of food, videos or what we do in the kitchen, things like that. So that definitely increased. We got a lot of inquiries, too. After we started, we consistently doing that for our Instagram.

(Mr. N., FT3, Jalan Ampang, 2021).

However, food truck social media activity must be updated on a regular basis to maintain customer interest. As one interviewee said:

Yes, there is indeed a change. We just need to diligently update/post on social media sites.

(Mr. J., FT4, Tasik Permaisuri, 2021).

As businesses are shifting their marketing strategies towards social media for promoting their products and services, online video advertisements are one of the fastest-growing platforms of social media advertising (Jain et al., 2018). One informant commented:

I do a lot of videos. So, every week I will do one video, just a simple video to make your brand well-known.

(Mr. B., FT11, Cyberjaya, 2021).

Thus, attracting customers' attention to video marketing stimuli is critical for establishing and renewing brand memories, as well as boosting their proclivity to purchase. The trend has progressively moved from online picture advertising to online video advertising in recent years, with online video advertising having an impact on customers' buying habits through two sorts of reasons: encouraging video binge viewing and engendering sentiments. A unique short video advertisement through social media brings more attention and creates brand awareness for the targeted customer. As one interviewee added:

We can convince consumers to buy our products with the form of advertising we create, such as showing the year our business was started, which can show our credibility as a reliable business.

(Mr. H., FT6, Tasik Permaisuri, 2021).

Among the distinctive online video advertisements created by food truck owners via social media, viral marketing, the concept of leveraging users' social interactions to spread awareness of businesses, has garnered great attention in recent years among small business enterprises. Viral marketing has also generated substantial attention in recent years owing to its new concept of utilizing social media to increase product awareness. Information can be disseminated widely and rapidly through online social networks with "word-of-mouth" effects and viral marketing that act as typical application in which new products or commercial activities are advertised by some seed users in online social networks to other users in a cascading manner (Tang et al., 2016). In addition, viral marketing can be considered as the modern version of the ancient "word-of-mouth" advertising in which companies choose a

restricted number of people, considered “influential”, to recommend products or services that will be thus interactively suggested (Castiglione et al., 2020). As one participant commented:

When the public starts to think we have that pasta; they know how quality is they automatically will post on their Instagram. When they post on Instagram they then will tag me on Instagram, I will repost. Actually, it is genuine feedback from customers so we post on our instastory, we always update our instastory they will tag us there and I will repost it. When people repost, people praise and others who never tried, they see that they have followed our Instagram but have never tried, so when they see they will order, contact us to come find where this SG is.

(Mr. R., FT12, Jalan Ampang, 2021).

The widespread of food truck viral marketing content and videos positively increases social interaction, which also leads to satisfied customers with food truck persuasive brand discussion. A small set of users in a social network who, when convinced to adopt a product, shall influence others in the network in a manner that leads to a large number of adoption (Aslay et al., 2018). Each customer will at least spread the news if they are satisfied with the product offered by the food truck to their colleagues and family members. Therefore, enterprises could strengthen their interaction with customers, regularly respond to their contributions and opinions, give them the feeling that the enterprises always care about their consumers (Nguyen & Nguyen, 2020). In sum, while viral marketing is an effective means of reaching a large number of customers, building a successful viral marketing strategy needs an in-depth understanding of how marketing messages travel and how marketers may affect this spread. While effective viral marketing on social media leads food trucks to widely spread their brand awareness among customers, it also has the capability to dwindle their brand image. In addition, viral marketing makes use of technological communications to distribute brand messaging over a large network of customers, the process is sometimes characterized as an uncontrollable bottom-up phenomenon over which marketers have little influence.

Marketers should be mindful of the risks associated with viral marketing initiatives since it is hard to control a message after it has spread like a virus over the web. Many marketers are risk-averse and experience has taught them to be reticent about consumer-generated media due to their inability to control the message (Miller & Lammas, 2010). van der Lans & van Bruggen (2010) also argue that consumers are free to forward any message. It is difficult to control what message consumers are writing to their peers. Consumers can influence each other’s preferences through comments that they share over social media (Ilgaz Sümer, 2019). Viral marketing content and videos on social media may also build negative buzz towards the food truck brand and the product offered. Negative buzz on viral marketing content and videos occurs when the content is “too good to be true” and below the expectations of consumers. Consumers, therefore, most likely spread bad things rather than the good things that food trucks may suffer. Viral marketing content and videos may also become like spam mail, which customers are likely to delete and ignore instead of forwarding the persuasive message to other people. As the consequences of the drawbacks in viral marketing content messages in social media towards brand persuasiveness, some food truck operators remain true to their unique ways of persuading their own customers. As one participant commented:

For me, friendly service to customers. In addition, with reviews from customers, we can attract others to try it if we have a new menu.

(Ms. E., FT5, Cyberjaya, 2021).

One critical feature of a business exceeding customer expectations is empathy, which demonstrates concern and customized attention to the client. The customer's perceived quality of the menu and services offered also need to be reviewed by the customer. Additionally, for gourmet food trucks, a favourable link between service quality and client happiness was substantial. The food truck industry has become a phenomenon and gained popularity around the world, and three major attributes of the dining experience in terms of food quality, price, and service quality have been found to have significant relationships with customers' repeat purchases (Saber et al., 2020). Exceeding service quality standards is critical for gaining a competitive edge in the restaurant sector since excellent service quality likely leads to improved client satisfaction and hence future patronage. In addition, exceeding customer expectations also depends on service reliability by the food truck operator. Reliability is defined as the capacity to deliver on a promise in a timely and correct manner. As one interviewee put it that shows a high concern for her food truck's service reliability as a unique way to promote their brand persuasiveness.

If we get a customer complaint, we would take action. We would take note of whose fault it was, whether it was the runner's or our own staff. We will take accountability.

(Ms. A., FT9, Jalan Ampang, 2021).

Furthermore, Saber et al. (2020) study of the Malaysian food truck industry dining experience shows that price has a significant relationship with customers' repeat purchases. This also shows how Malaysian food truck operators remain true to their unique ways of persuading their own customers. In one case, the participant commented that:

"I think the persuasion is coming from the price point. Does the price point for pasta start at RM5? Where can you get RM5 pasta for 200g? 200g of fullness, I personally eat to fullness. That's what attracts customers. That's what I'm talking about persuasion.

(Mr. D., FT8, Jalan Ampang, 2021).

Mr. D. (FT8) remains his unique way of persuading the customer through a competitive pricing strategy. Mr. D. (FT8) believes that the other food truck operators prioritize the food offered pricing aspect as well because the food truck concept is only street food, which differs from the high-end, exclusive types of business. Food truck operators also gave priority attention to brand persuasiveness through taglines and slogans. Catchy and funny taglines and slogan phrases are important to break the deal and be chosen by the customer in making a decision. As one interviewee put it:

"We create fans for our brand. We have people who buy for the first time who want to buy many more times. I make sure to give my all from the bottom of my heart because even our tagline is "Extra heart in every cup".

(Mr. I., FT10, Shah Alam, 2021).

Distinct brand taglines and slogans significantly affect food truck brand recall and brand persuasiveness, which lead to customer repurchase of food truck products. Appropriate and memorable taglines and slogans enhance products' differentiation and sale as well as the customer decision-making process stage (Rybaczevska et al., 2020). The concision, rhythm, and melody of a phrase are critical components in improving client memory and identification of food truck. Customer brand recall and recognition were also developed when food trucks participated in and took part in local food festivals and corporate events. Local food festivals and corporate events also contribute to food truck brand persuasiveness when they provide an opportunity to directly engage with new potential customers. As one interviewee said:

We enter a program that has exclusive value. because we already have the value we created. It is a perception through social media.

(Mr. R., FT12, Jalan Ampang, 2021)

In addition, the perceived advantages of consuming are most likely what attendees take away, communicate via word of mouth, and use to determine whether or not to return to the event. It is an important aspect for digital-based food truck entrepreneur platforms to convince new customers, collaborators, investors, and even competitors when participating in local food festivals and corporate events. It is likely, therefore, that the new customer can be convinced by the pleasure of food consumption and its emotional condition relates to feelings of happiness or joy, stimulating involvement, and excitement (Sandybayev, 2018). The credibility of brand persuasion in social media has a significant relationship and impact on food truck business performance. The results of this study indicate that more than 80% of food truck operators are able to convince and persuade their customers through social media content messages, specifically on what is being posted on their social media pages (pictures, videos, taglines, and viral marketing). For new goods, brand memory and persuasion performance were more closely connected than for existing products, and the most important single executional element impacting advertising success was a brand-differentiating assertion in the commercial. The results in this study reflect those of Schivinski & Dabrowski (2014), who also found that firm-created social media communication had a positive influence on brand attitude and influenced customer purchase intention. As one respondent commented:

For me, the persuasion that is seen to have a significant impact is through interviews or videos of our customers' reviews about the taste, quality of our drinks. We write our 'content' using these videos.

(Ms. E., FT5, Cyberjaya, 2021).

Therefore, using social media strategically for marketing is perceived to have a significant positive impact on small business entrepreneurs and indirectly on economic growth. This finding is also consistent with that of Hassan et al. (2015) who indicate that social media has a significant impact on business and many social media users perceive that social media content can indeed persuade people to purchase products or services offered, which also significantly influences purchasing decisions. Furthermore, the availability and widespread use of social media has made it the preferred medium for companies wanting to spread product information, create public opinion and gain followers (Jaitly & Gautam, 2021). The results of this study also indicate that food truck operators are satisfied and can perceive significant changes in customer acceptance towards their products and services offered

through social media content messages. Social media content messages and communication have a positive influence and do persuade customer behaviours. The comment below illustrates the significant changes in customer acceptance as a result of what is being posted on their social media pages (pictures, videos, and viral marketing).

There is. Once we post something on our social media page, someone will definitely ask. And if they go to our place, business happens physically then only they will be our regular customers.

(Mr. J., FT4, Tasik Permaisuri, 2021).

We also have customers who give positive reviews as well as on WhatsApp applications, Facebook and from there, we will continue to work to make it better.

(Mr. H., FT6, Tasik Permaisuri, 2021).

Basically, we have 80% of these customers, 90% of them are all returning customers, who have eaten, who know this northern soup, they will come repeat.

(Mr. K., FT7, Tasik Permaisuri, 2021).

When people repost, people praise and others who never tried, they see that they have followed our Instagram but have never tried, so when they see they will order, contact us to come find where this Street Gourmet is.

(Mr. R., FT12, Jalan Ampang, 2021).

The above participant comments are also consistent with those of Alalwan (2018), who indicates that social media is being increasingly used as a platform to conduct marketing and advertising activities and successfully attract customers and motivate them to purchase their brands. Social media platforms have a substantial impact on customer trust, affecting clients' purchase decisions and boosting brand recognition. Alalwan (2018) discovered that social media activities and postings significantly impact the organization's performance expectancy, hedonic motivation, interactivity, informativeness, and perceived relevance to purchase intentions. Similarly, Hooda and Ankur (2018) found that social media users like to click on advertisements posted on social media platforms and make purchases on social media sites, indicating that consumers have begun to accept social media as a marketing tool rather than just a social engine. Social media postings and advertisements have a significant positive effect on the buying behavior of online customers (Hooda & Ankur, 2018).

In summary, social media has a substantial influence on business, and the majority of social media users believe that social media material may really convince others to acquire items or services offered. Jackson (2020) suggests that small business owners should align their social media and marketing strategies to match their online target audience, and the application of online media strategies could help increase the profitability and client base of a small business. Social media communication platforms such as Facebook, Twitter, WhatsApp, and Instagram demonstrate the pivotal role for food truck owners to utilize in order to convince and persuade their customers successfully. Social media marketing is an emerging concept for businesses to capture the attention of their target customers, engage the customers, and persuade them of their preferences and purchase decisions.

**Table 2: Summary – Persuasiveness in Social Media Message Content**

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Attractive Pictures / Images
Short Video Advertising
Brand Taglines and Slogans
Viral Marketing Content
Other Unique Ways

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## CONCLUSION

It is critical for food truck founders and owners to be able to convince and persuade their customers using social media content messages focused on what is being posted on their social media page. This is because social media platforms have become well-known for connecting individuals via text, image, and video communications, thereby enabling businesses to communicate and engage with customers instantaneously. Text and content writing appear to be the trend these days, and quality content is no exception when creating fan interactions on social media. Texting and taking photographs of one's food and sharing them on social media, a practice fondly dubbed "foodstagramming," has grown in popularity in recent years. The activities of foodstagramming hyperrealist photos are motivated by the desire to leverage and portray one's social status in order to gain a reputation. However, food truck social media activity must be updated on a regular basis to maintain customer interest.

As businesses increasingly rely on social media to market, promote, and advertise their products and services, online video advertisements have emerged as one of the fastest-growing forms of social media advertising. The results have various implications for brand managers' social media strategy and improve consumer persuasiveness on social media platforms. This study is significant for practitioners who want to utilize social media as part of their marketing plan since it helps them understand how customers behave. The widespread distribution of viral marketing video content positively supports social interaction, resulting in changes in consumer behaviour, satisfaction, and food truck physique brand persuasiveness. While the benefits of viral marketing in social media lead food trucks to widely spread their brand awareness among customers, it also has the capability to dwindle their brand image. Viral marketing content and videos on social media may also build negative buzz toward the food truck brand and the product offered. However, an increase in negative buzz is accompanied by an increase in brand awareness, positive feelings, and purchase intention among customers. This suggests that there are circumstances when negative buzz should not be suppressed (Han et al., 2020). Thus, negative buzz provides a chance for food truck businesses to communicate with their consumers and allows them to reconnect with old friends. Food truck owners should be able to turn negative buzz into something beneficial by accepting constructive criticism.

This study also makes a significant addition to the understanding of how food truck physique brand identity can be a great digital brand through social media message content features. The last decade has seen an increase in the use of social media for communication, and platforms like Facebook, Twitter, WhatsApp, and Instagram have established a reputation for successfully executing persuasive efforts. This is crucial as Malaysian SMEs' digital transformation provides significant customer value that creates competitive advantages in the local competitive market. Thus, developing a strong digital brand perception via social

media has become a critical activity for food truck owners looking to communicate their brand digitally.

The unit of analysis in this study is limited to SME businesses in the food and beverage service sector (food trucks), and the sample is drawn from participants who operate their businesses in the Klang Valley. As a result, opinions on what constitutes a strong and recognizable brand identity may vary due to differences in belief and nature of the business. The limitation of self-reported data is that it is rarely verifiable independently. Thus, self-reported data contains a number of potential sources of bias and should also be viewed as a research limitation. Qualitative cross-language research is conducted when researchers and participants are separated by a language barrier. Data and information gathered from this study's interview session faced a communication and language barrier. Participants who are unable to communicate effectively provide difficulties for researchers attempting to elicit responses and information. Future research may also examine how buyers perceive a brand. Additionally, it is vital to comprehend the brand's perception (brand image) in the minds of customers on various social media platforms. This is to elicit further information on customers' perceptions of the brand based on their interactions and experiences with the brand, as well as their views about what the brand could be. Another future study avenue is the inclusiveness of other social media platforms and their brand activities, such as TikTok and YouTube. Additionally, there are additional untapped tools and features that SMEs may and should leverage to develop a strong brand on social media platforms where customers also use other social media platforms to seek product information and express feedback.

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