

JGB 1639

Influence of Social Media Strategies on the Brand Awareness of the Customers: The Case of Alfresco-Style Restaurants in Pampanga during the Pandemic

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Abstract

The COVID-19 pandemic has severely affected businesses in the Philippines, including malls, restaurants, retail shops, cinemas, and the like. Since the massive changes, businesses needed to think of ways to convince the public to go to their stores to keep the economy going. Hence, in the case of restaurants, the rise of alfresco dining. Therefore, this study focuses on the influence of social media strategies (informativeness, entertainment, irritation avoidance, and source credibility) on the brand awareness of alfresco-style restaurants in Pampanga during the pandemic. In this new digital world, significantly enhanced due to the pandemic, social media strategies are becoming more prominent in various industries, including the food industry. Gaining brand awareness is key to creating brand popularity and, in essence, increasing sales and, eventually, business growth. This study connects the concepts of social media strategies with brand awareness in the context of alfresco malls in Pampanga, which has not been explored to this day. This research offers an opportunity to understand the relationship between the social media views of consumers and brand awareness. The study used a descriptive correlational research method to test the

hypothesis. The data was gathered from 164 respondents who were customers of alfresco restaurants or had experienced eating in an alfresco-style restaurant in Pampanga. The results of this study show that informativeness, entertainment, irritation avoidance, and source credibility are all significant and are moderately correlated with the brand awareness of alfresco-style restaurants. With that, the study recommended how restaurants can use social media strategies to influence customers into recognizing and remembering their brand with the content on their social media platforms.

Keywords: *brand awareness, informativeness, entertainment, irritation avoidance, source credibility*

Introduction

The Coronavirus Disease (COVID-19) pandemic had a powerful impact on the business industry, such as malls and restaurants, causing them to shut down for months (Fabeil et al., 2020). Since the massive changes, businesses needed to think of ways to convince the public to go to their stores to keep the economy going. Hence, in the case of restaurants, the rise of alfresco dining. Due to the restrictions in almost every city, restaurants are not allowed to operate at their total capacity. Thus, sidewalks, parking lots, and parking spaces have become an extension of restaurants. (Stahl, 2021). Albeit alfresco dining is not relatively new, it jump-started the rise of the industry again while highlighting the importance of public spaces. Additionally, it will also be a new channel for revenue for restaurants. (Marks, 2021).

Brand awareness is defined as a consumer's ability to identify a brand in a specific category in sufficient detail to purchase. It is given with increasing familiarity because of frequent exposures. These repetitions improve recognition and remembrance through consumption, purchase, or product category (Cakmak, 2016). Companies releasing a new

product to their market must opt to utilize social media as it has proven its influence on the public awareness of the product. (Tritama & Tarigan, 2016). In the context of the Philippines, Atienza (2019) measures the effects of social media marketing on resorts in Batangas, Philippines. The research found that brand awareness is one of the positive effects of social media marketing.

Similarly, Lago et al. (2019) researched what influences consumers' attitudes towards social media marketing. It was also determined that social media marketing helps establish brand awareness, generate a solid brand image, and increase sales. Additionally, it was concluded that since Filipinos are more active on social media, using social media sites leads to a higher brand awareness rate. Based on the studies conducted within the Philippine context for social media strategies and brand awareness, there is a limited context for their relationship. Therefore, this study explored this relationship to provide a deeper discussion on the topic at hand. The findings of this study may then be applied within the context of the pandemic and within Pampanga.

Alfresco-style restaurants address the demands in shifting trends in the format of retail spaces due to the pandemic. This study provides excellent significance to managing alfresco-style restaurants, specifically within Pampanga, Philippines. The findings of this study may be used as a reference for the proper use of social media strategies to increase brand awareness.

Review of Related Literature

Sustaining the business in this time of Covid 19 is hard. They are learning a unique strategy for the new normal that will catch the attention of the customer and will make it as brand identity is the process of the new normal today. As stated in the paper of Lai et al. (2020), new practices must be implemented to survive in the new normal and adapt to change for the business to maintain its value. Brand awareness is the capacity of a brand to appear in

customers' thoughts when they are considering a particular product category. Thus, brand awareness is precious for business operations (Panchal et al., 2012). It is evident that the employment of social media strategies greatly influences brand awareness (ElAydi, 2018). Tritama and Tarigan (2016) noted how social media is an excellent way for consumers to participate quickly, share, and create content. Therefore, social media has become an excellent tool for creating brand awareness because of consumers' level of involvement in social media platforms. Rukuni et al. (2020) analyzed the influence of social media strategies on brand awareness at a small business consultancy firm in South Africa with informativeness, entertainment, irritation avoidance, and source credibility.

Informativeness

Informativeness pertains to the advertisement's capability to inform consumers of the necessary information that they can utilize in fulfilling their demands (Arora & Agarwal, 2019). In the study by Lee and Hong (2016), they found that quality information provided by social media advertising elicits positive consumer reactions. This led to their recommendation, which motivates advertisers and marketers to make more informative and creative advertisements. Furthermore, Lee et al. (2018) analyzed the effect of social media advertising on consumer engagement. Informative content, such as prices, availability, and product features, harms engagement when produced isolatedly. However, when combined with persuasive attributes, informative content increases engagement. Essentially, this proves that more information in advertising about product benefits, attributes, and features would result in the more excellent value of social media advertisements (Saxena & Khanna, 2013).

Entertainment

Reiencke et al. (2014) noted two types of entertainment. "Entertainment 1.0" refers to the traditional entertainment content distributed through the internet. On the other hand, the type of content manufactured through self-presentation and content creation is referred to as

"Entertainment 2.0". This indicates how entertainment is a prominent user motivation for using social media. Advertisers and marketers now utilize social media to promote and advertise their brands. Thus, social media platforms are now filled with advertisements. Mir (2017) found that users usually accept that the advertising contents they find on their timelines are part of the entertainment they would receive from social media platforms. Entertainment has become a valuable factor in social media strategies (Dehghani et al., 2016; Ferreira & Barbosa, 2017; Arli, 2017).

Irritation Avoidance

Irritation may be decreased by presenting a suitable message that provides value to the relevant target group, and non-irritating mobile viral marketing affects a good customer attitude (Ahmad & Lasi, 2020). Companies should develop non-irritating media according to paid, owned, and earned media typology. The typology says that a business that utilizes paid media should design commercials that fit the ideal paid media. This implies that for paid media, corporations should create entertaining, non-irritating, educational, and credible advertising and distribute them to a target demographic interested in the promoted product. (Mattke et al., 2019). When any advertisement is non-irritating and permission-based, the attitudes are favorable. Personalization, non-irritation, credibility, informativeness, amusement, and monetary reward positively influence the attitude toward short message service advertising. (Panie et al., 2014).

Source Credibility

The informational value of influencer-generated posts and some aspects of influencer credibility would increase followers' confidence in sponsored posts created by influencers, which can increase brand awareness and purchasing intentions. (Lou & Yuan, 2019). Social media influencers' lack of credibility regarding the product they recommended was discovered to have a negligible association with their attitude and buy intention. The critical

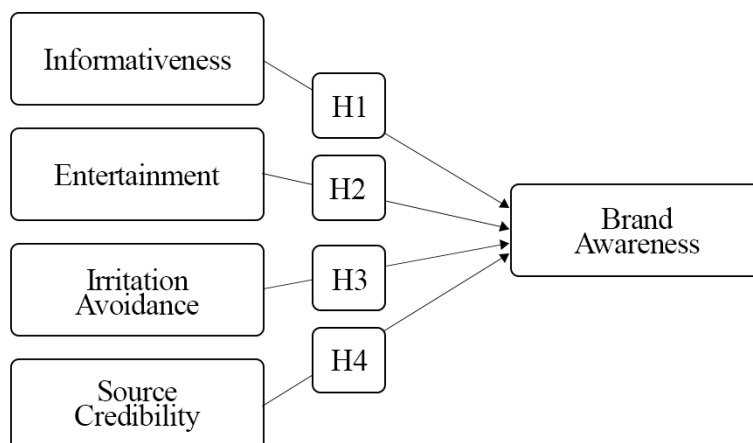
cause was social media influencers' lack of understanding of endorsed products. Social media influencers' product match-up is essential to purchasing intention and customer attitude (Lim et al., 2017). They discovered a partially mediated association between social media influencer power and customer attitudes toward the company due to the perceived social media influencer competence, goodwill, and trustworthiness (Nafees et al., 2021).

Framework

The study’s framework was grounded on the viral marketing conceptual model of Rukuni et al. (2020). This conceptual, theoretical model suggests a significant relationship between social media strategies and brand awareness. In this study, the independent variable of social media strategies is informativeness, entertainment, irritation avoidance, and source credibility. Moreover, brand awareness is the dependent variable. Additionally, this research would also consider a control variable: the specific social media platforms that customers use to encounter these social media strategies.

Figure 1

Conceptual framework



Based on the conceptual framework that the research adopted, the factors influencing the brand awareness of alfresco-style restaurants in Pampanga are social media

informativeness, entertainment, irritation avoidance, and source credibility. Thus, deriving the following hypotheses:

H1: There is a significant positive relationship between social media informativeness and brand awareness.

H2: There is a significant positive relationship between social media entertainment and brand awareness.

H3: There is a significant positive relationship between social media irritation avoidance and brand awareness.

H4: A significant positive relationship exists between social media source credibility and brand awareness.

Methodology

The study used a descriptive correlational research method since the entire paper revolves around testing the hypotheses and examining the relationship of variables. The paper's objectives are to determine the perceptions of customers on the social media strategies used by alfresco-style restaurants, to determine the overall level of brand awareness of respondents on alfresco-style restaurants, to understand how social media strategies affect brand awareness, and to provide recommendations to alfresco-style restaurants for their social media strategies to raise brand awareness.

The participants of this study were customers of alfresco restaurants or had experienced eating in an alfresco-style restaurant in Pampanga. Using a sample size calculator by *G*power* with a 95% confidence level and a 5% margin of error, the derived sample size of this study was 164 respondents. The study used an adopted questionnaire from the study of Rukuni et al. (2020). The questionnaire was divided into six parts: part one (1) the demographic profile of the respondents, part two (2) informativeness, part three (3rd) entertainment, part four (4) irritation avoidance, part five (5) source credibility, and part six

(6) brand awareness. The questionnaire was developed through Google forms as the main instrument for collecting primary information from respondents.

An additional 30 respondents, who were not included in the sample size for the study, were added for the pretesting of the instrument. Cronbach's alpha and factor analysis were utilized to ensure the reliability and validity of the research instrument. Field (2009) argues that the factor analysis should reach a minimum threshold of 0.4 to declare the instrument's validity. Moreover, the adopted survey form had a Cronbach alpha of 0.7, which is acceptable. The reliability test results ranged from .62 to .83. The results of the validity test ranged from .87 to .95. Survey questionnaires were distributed to customers of alfresco-style restaurants. Some questionnaires were distributed by giving out QR codes in restaurants, while others were distributed by posting the survey on social media or through personal messaging on Messenger. The data were collected, tabulated, analyzed, and interpreted using *Jamovi Software*.

Discussion of Results

Descriptive Statistics

Table 1

Demographic characteristics of respondents

Characteristics	Item	Frequency	Percent
Age	18-24 years old	118	72
	25-30 years old	35	21.3
	31-35 years old	7	4.3
	36 years old and older	4	2.4
	Total	164	100
Sex	Male	48	29.3
	Female	116	70.7
	Total	164	100
Discovery	Online reviews	16	9.8

	Recommendations	108	65.9
	Social Media Presence	36	22
	Others	4	2.4
	Total	164	100
Social Media Platform	Facebook	126	76.8
	Instagram	30	18.3
	Others	8	4.9
	Total	164	100

The descriptive analysis frequency distribution in Table 1 showed that the 164 participants, 118 are from 18 to 24 years old, 116 are female, and 118 are from generation z. Most of the respondents are female. Females were more likely to utilize social media than males (Perrin, 2020). Females used Facebook more frequently than males (Tufekci & Wilson, 2012). With the frequency of respondents are more likely to discover alfresco dining restaurants through social media recommendations. With the frequency of respondents are more likely to observe on the social media platform Facebook. As for the age group, 36 years old and above are less on social media discovery and social media platforms.

Mean and Standard Deviation

Table 2

Construct mean and standard deviation

Constructs	Mean	SD	Cronbach is a	Verbal Interpretation
Informativeness	3.94	0.794	0.964	Quite Informative
SMI1	4.05	0.888	0.965	
SMI2	3.99	0.847	0.965	
SMI3	3.77	0.963	0.965	
SMI4	3.91	0.861	0.965	
SMI5	3.91	0.945	0.965	
Entertainment	3.51	0.898	0.965	Quite Entertaining
SME1	3.71	0.912	0.965	
SME2	3.70	0.915	0.965	
SME3	3.65	0.944	0.965	
SME4	2.91	1.381	0.968	
Irritation Avoidance	4.19	0.578	0.966	Quite Non-Irritable

SMIR1	4.15	0.619	0.966	
SMIR2	4.14	0.670	0.967	
SMIR3	4.19	0.661	0.966	
SMIR4	4.20	0.675	0.966	
SMIR5	4.17	0.723	0.966	
Source Credibility	3.92	0.713	0.965	Quite Credible
SMS1	3.93	0.807	0.966	
SMS2	3.96	0.794	0.965	
SMS3	3.88	0.779	0.965	
SMS4	3.88	0.805	0.965	
Brand Awareness	4.21	0.666	0.965	Highly Brand Aware
BAW1	4.33	0.702	0.966	
BAW2	3.98	0.854	0.965	
BAW3	4.29	0.758	0.966	
BAW4	4.24	0.750	0.965	
BAW5	4.23	0.788	0.966	

Table 14 shows that the highest mean in the variables is 4.21, showing that most respondents react similarly to the questions. On the other hand, the lowest mean is 3.51, indicating that the respondents' responses to the questions are diverse. The highest standard deviation is 0.898, indicating that respondents' responses are dispersed. The lowest standard deviation is 0.578, which signifies a more clustered data set. According to the findings, four of the variables, which are Informativeness (SMI), Entertainment (SME), irritation avoidance (SMIR), and source credibility (SMS), have a quite effect on social media strategies of the alfresco dining restaurants in Pampanga.

For informativeness, the highest mean rating is "I find the social media posts of the restaurant informative.", with a mean rating of 4. Prior researchers have found that consumers expect to find highly informative and accessible information from restaurants' social media platforms (Kumar et al., 2020). For entertainment, the highest mean rating is "I find promotional messages received from the restaurant via social media entertaining." with a mean rating of 3.71. Prior researchers have found that consumers like to engage with an advertisement that contains funnier and off-the-cuff posts (Fox & Longart, 2016). For

irritation avoidance, the highest mean rating is "The restaurant's social media advertisements are not annoying." with a mean rating of 4.20.

Similarly, prior studies have found that excessive ad appearances irritate. Therefore, restaurants would avoid this type of social media conduct (Mbugua and Ndavi, 2021). For source credibility, the highest mean rating is "Content on social media pages of the restaurant is reliable." with a mean rating of 3.96. Amaral et al. (2014) also found that customers value the online content's reliability.

For brand awareness, the highest mean rating is "Social media strategies used by the restaurant lead to brand recognition." with a mean rating of 4.33. This indicates that diners tend to recognize a restaurant better because of the social media strategies employed by restaurants. Similarly, prior studies noted that effective viral marketing initiatives lead to the target audiences' brand recognition (Puriwat & Tripopsakul, 2021).

Correlation Matrix

Table 3

Path Relationship

Constructs	Hypothesis	Result	Spearman's rho	Significance
SMI → BAW	H1	Moderately Correlated	0.591	p<.001
SME → BAW	H2	Moderately Correlated	0.453	p<.001
SMIR → BAW	H3	Moderately Correlated	0.501	p<.001
SMS → BAW	H4	Moderately Correlated	0.560	p<.001

Shown in Table 17 are the results of the correlation analysis used to test the strength of the relationship between Informativeness, Entertainment, Irritation Avoidance, and Source

Credibility to Brand Awareness. The relationship between SMI and brand awareness (BAW) ratings was moderately correlated, $r=.591$, and was significant ($p<.001$). Similarly, SME and BAW ratings were moderately correlated, $r=.453$, and were significant ($p<.001$). Also, SMIR and BAW ratings were moderately correlated, $r=.501$, and were significant ($p<.001$). The relationship between SMS and BAW ratings was moderately correlated, $r=.560$, and was significant ($p<.001$). The study's framework confirmed that social media strategies correlate with brand awareness (Momany & Alshboul, 2016).

Regression Analysis

Table 4.

Linear Regression Analysis

Model	R ²	Beta (β)	Overall Model Test				Decision
			F	df1	df2	p	
SMI on BAW	0.459	0.568	138	1	162	< .001	Accepted H1
SME on BAW	0.309	0.412	72.4	1	162	< .001	Accepted H2
SMIR on BAW	0.197	0.512	39.9	1	162	< .001	Accepted H3
SMS on BAW	0.377	0.574	98.0	1	162	< .001	Accepted H4

Note: BAW = Brand Awareness, SMI = Informativeness, SME = Entertainment, SMIR = Irritation Avoidance, SMS = Source Credibility

Given that this study had four hypotheses and a Likert scale research instrument, conducting regression analyses was necessary. Table 4 presents the results of the linear regression analysis, and the four hypotheses are tested as follows:

A linear regression analysis was calculated to predict BAW ratings based on SMI ratings. The results of the regression indicated that the predictor explained 45.9% of the variance ($R^2=.459$, $F(1,162)=138$, $p<.001$). It was found that SMI significantly predicted

BAW ratings ($\beta=0.568$, $p<.001$) and therefore accepted H1. For every one increase in SMI, there is a 0.568 increase in BAW. This implies that informativeness has a direct effect on brand awareness. Social media content posted by restaurants on their social media has the information the customer is looking for, informative enough for the promotional messages that will result in brand awareness. Saleh et al. (2018) also stated that information is linked to brand awareness.

SME ratings were also utilized to predict BAW ratings. The results of the regression indicated that the predictor explained 30.9% of the variance ($R^2=.309$, $F(1,162)=72.4$, $p<.001$). It was found that SMEs significantly predicted BAW ratings ($\beta=0.412$, $p<.001$) and therefore accepted H2. For every increase in SME, there is a 0.412 increase in BAW. Entertainment, based on the results, positively affects brand awareness. Promotional messages that are entertaining and enjoyable are posted on the restaurant's social media platforms, leading to brand awareness. Similarly, Mir (2017) discovered that social network sites highly and significantly influence individuals' behavior as entertainment motivation, leading to brand awareness.

Moreover, to predict BAW ratings, SMIR ratings were also used. The results of the regression indicated that the predictor explained 19.7% of the variance ($R^2=.197$, $F(1,162)=39.9$, $p<.001$). It was found that SMIR significantly predicted BAW ratings ($\beta=0.512$, $p<.001$) and therefore accepted H3. For every increase in SMIR, there is a 0.512 increase in BAW. This implies that brands should avoid posting irritable content, ensuring that all posts published on their social media platforms are not irritating or do not contain viruses. Frade et al. (2021) also determined that if the purpose is brand awareness, the offer must not irritate or offend them because it would be impossible to encourage viewers in a streaming video.

Finally, SMS ratings were also used to predict BAW ratings based on SMS ratings. The results of the regression indicated that the predictor explained 37.7% of the variance ($R^2=.377$, $F(1,162)=98.0$, $p<.001$). It was found that SMS significantly predicted BAW ratings ($\beta=0.574$, $p<.001$) and therefore accepted H4. For every one increase in SMI, there is a 0.574 increase in BAW. Alfresco-style restaurants' information and content on social media are credible and reliable to be remembered by their customers. Source credibility affects supporters' loyalty and brand awareness, influenced by trust, appeal, and brand awareness (Lou & Yuan, 2019).

Conclusions

This study intends to analyze the social media strategies used by alfresco-style restaurants during the pandemic and how they influenced brand awareness. The significant aspect was that the four social media strategies used by alfresco-style restaurants in Pampanga during the pandemic had a relationship with brand awareness. The researchers measured customers' perceptions of the restaurants' social media strategies regarding social media informativeness, entertainment, irritation avoidance, and source credibility. The paper concludes that the social media strategies in Pampanga's alfresco-style restaurants can influence brand awareness. Restaurants can use social media to promote awareness and engagement in their social media content (Lepkowska-White et al., 2019). Through social media presence and recommendations, mainly on Facebook, restaurants attract customers and let their brands be remembered.

Social media, informative and entertaining posts, and promotional messages attract customers. Therefore, the researcher concludes that customers can recognize or remember the brand through the information and entertaining posts on their social media. Potential consumers easily recognize restaurants but using entertaining and informative posts to enhance the brand image and awareness may play a vital part in creating a restaurant's brand

recognition (Nurfarida and Sudarmiatin, 2021; Cha and Lyu, 2019). Another conclusion is that as long as the social media content avoids posting irritating content and only posts-credible and reliable sources on their page, it gives the customers that this restaurant is worthy and can be trusted to dine-in in this restaurant. Because irritation is directly linked to advertising avoidance, online platforms will also attract customers if they perceive credibility by improving consumers' purchasing thoughts and brand awareness (Nyheim et al., 2015; Kumar et al., 2020). These four factors are good social media strategies used by alfresco-style restaurants in Pampanga. The majority of the impact of social media advertising strategies on clients is shown in brand awareness. People who follow a company or restaurant on a social media page generate brand-related material or share their experiences, reflecting the brand's image and loyalty in their thoughts (Bilgin, 2018). The conclusion shows that social media strategies used by restaurants are effective and influence brand awareness. Due to the pandemic, open space or outdoor dine-in is what customers consider in a restaurant (Souza et al., 2022). Therefore, by using social media strategies, restaurants can attract customers since it also concluded that the four variables are influential and quite evident that it affects brand awareness. They can post what they can offer and what is the good thing regarding dining-in in alfresco-style restaurants.

Since the four variables are all significant and moderately connected with alfresco-style restaurant brand awareness, they contribute to top-brand recognition and perception. It helps customers remember the brand and is a valuable marketing strategy for alfresco-style restaurants to boost brand awareness. The four variables were operationalized in the following ways social media posts, content, ads, strategies, and promotional materials for alfresco-style restaurants. They are beneficial and provide insightful information about their products and services in terms of informativeness. They are entertaining in terms of entertainment, and their promotional messaging and social media posts contain a tremendous

amount of humor. They are not bothersome since they avoid causing aggravation; the material causes positive emotion, and no violation is intended. Lastly, the reliability of online content is measured by its source's legitimacy, reliability, and value.

Limitations and Recommendations for Future Research

Restaurants, social media managers, marketers, and handlers should apply or improve their social media posts regarding informativeness, entertainment, irritation avoidance, and source credibility. They mainly used Facebook since it is one of the most engaging social media platforms. However, other social media platforms such as Instagram, Twitter, and TikTok can also be used to reach out to other potential customers that do not use Facebook. Regarding informativeness, their content and promotional messages should be informative with helpful information about their products and services, the current setup, and the advantage of open space or outdoor dine-in during the pandemic. Most customers consider the price before they dine in; it will be a good idea to post and give information about the restaurant's price range and menu to show what they can offer. In connection with entertainment, social media handlers should be aware of what is on-trend nowadays to add humor to their posts. Entertaining or engaging posts are another factor to recognize the brand, such as amusing videos, pictures, choice of words, and even memes, especially regarding their promotional message. Concerning irritation avoidance, they should make sure that their posts are not irritating, annoying, or insensitive; that can trigger many factors. Even what they share or the link they provide should not contain any viruses. The restaurant's social media posts should be a source of credible information that they will provide. The information provided should be credible, reliable, accurate, and not misleading in connection with informativeness. These factors impact brand awareness; therefore, customers will recognize and remember the restaurants by their content on their social media platforms.

The restaurant owners can utilize social media and implement better social media strategies to influence brand awareness further. In the case of Alfresco-style restaurants in Pampanga, their strategies shall focus on informativeness, where they provide accurate information to inform consumers to attain their demands. As stated by Kioko (2010), when restaurants focus their social media strategies on informativeness, they build an impact on the restaurant's brand awareness. Then follows source credibility, irritation avoidance, and entertainment, respectively. This way, the local government unit and its respective government agencies, such as the Department of Trade and Industry (DTI) and the Department of Tourism (DOT), can benefit from it. If the restaurant has made a name on social media platforms, it can boost local tourism and promote the recognition of restaurants (alfresco or not) in Pampanga.

Future researchers can investigate other variables they believe should be studied, as this study is limited to a few factors and the province of Pampanga. They can also adapt the research topic to different places and conduct it with varied sample sizes and respondents. They may also change the framework we utilize because our variable is linked to brand awareness; they may consider researching consumer behavior based on the location of alfresco restaurants and how it influences customer purchasing behavior. This research could lead to more innovative and effective social media marketing, resulting in higher earnings and a better company image.

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