

Measuring the Financial Impact of Brand Engagement, Social Media Marketing, Brand Trust and Social Media Advocacy on Brand Recognition: An Overview of Mikail Food Industry

*¹Najihah Marha Yaacob, ²Salwiyah Idris, ²Ahmad Suffian Mohd Zahari

*Correspondence Author

¹Faculty of Accountancy, Universiti Teknologi Mara Terengganu, Malaysia

²Faculty of Business and Management, Universiti Teknologi Mara Terengganu, Malaysia

DOI: <https://dx.doi.org/10.47772/IJRISS.2026.10200351>

Received: 25 February 2026; Accepted: 02 March 2026; Published: 10 March 2026

ABSTRACT

In today's digital age, brands succeed when they break through in culture and branding is a set of techniques designed to generate cultural relevance. Mikail Food, an innovator in the frozen food industry, aims to break through traditional marketing boundaries by harnessing the power of social media marketing. This study explores the complex relationship between brand engagement and social media marketing, examining how these elements can be harmonised to enhance brand recognition, capture consumer interest, and foster enduring loyalty. As Mikail Food embarks on this digital journey, understanding these dynamics becomes crucial in transforming fleeting interactions into lasting brand impressions.

INTRODUCTION

According to Cablevey (2024), one such sector is the frozen food industry, which has seen significant growth during 2020 and 2021 and looks poised for continued success in the years to come. The frozen food industry has become a significant segment of the global food market, driven by evolving consumer preferences and technological advancements in food preservation. As urbanisation increases, more consumers are seeking convenient meal solutions that fit into their busy lifestyles. This shift has led to a surge in demand for frozen foods, which offer the dual benefits of convenience and extended shelf life without compromising on nutrition. In Malaysia, the frozen food sector is experiencing rapid growth, fuelled by a combination of factors including rising disposable incomes, changing dietary habits, and an increasing number of dual-income households. Lawande and Bawkar, (2022), argue that the frozen food market presents significant growth opportunities driven by factors such as the increasing demand for convenience foods, the expansion of the global cold-chain industry, and evolving customer preferences. Health consciousness among consumers is also influencing the industry, with a growing preference for products that are perceived as healthier and free from preservatives. This trend is prompting manufacturers to innovate and offer products that cater to health-conscious consumers, such as organic and additive-free options. Social media plays a crucial role in this landscape, as it allows companies to engage directly with consumers, build brand awareness, and communicate their product benefits effectively.

Company Background

Established in 2016 with a small amount investment of RM50, Mikail Food has undergone a remarkable transformation from a home-based startup to a flourishing enterprise recognized as a leading producer of premium frozen food products in Malaysia. The inception of Mikail Food is a testament to entrepreneurial spirit and maternal dedication. It all began with a mother's unwavering love and determination to cater to her child's craving for fish balls, an endeavour that laid a solid foundation for a brand poised to win the hearts and palates of countless consumers (Yusof, 2021). The initial challenge faced by the founder was the scarcity of processed foods that balanced both nutritional value and healthiness. This gap in the market spurred Mikail's mother to innovate by developing her own recipes for fish balls, meticulously avoiding harmful additives such as

monosodium glutamate (MSG) and undesirable animal components like intestines and internal organs. This commitment to quality and health set Mikail Food apart in a competitive industry, aligning with the growing consumer demand for cleaner label products (Tan & Lim, 2022).

From its early days, Mikail Food demonstrated a keen understanding of modern marketing dynamics by leveraging social media platforms to boost sales and engage with customers. The founder recognized the pivotal role of digital presence in brand building, a strategy supported by recent studies highlighting the effectiveness of social media in enhancing brand visibility and consumer engagement (Kaplan & Haenlein, 2020). By actively engaging on platforms such as Facebook, Instagram, Twitter, and TikTok, the company not only marketed its products but also fostered a community of loyal customers. Ensuring compliance with rigorous quality and safety standards was paramount for Mikail Food. The founder proactively sought guidance and certifications from key government agencies, including the Ministry of Agriculture and Food Industries (MAFI), the Malaysian Halal Certification Body (JAKIM), and the Department of Fisheries Malaysia. By January 1, 2018, Mikail Food had successfully obtained essential certifications such as Halal, Mesti, and MYIPO for the Mikail brand. These certifications not only signify adherence to stringent quality controls but also enhance the brand's credibility and appeal to a broader market segment (Hashim, 2023).

In the same year, Mikail Food expanded its product line by introducing fishcake, a strategic move that diversified its offerings and appealed to varying consumer preferences. This expansion was accompanied by scaling up the team, reflecting the company's growth ambitions and commitment to maintaining high standards of production and innovation. The primary objective remained clear: to provide healthier food options for children and nutritious meal choices for families, thereby addressing the nutritional needs of Malaysian households. The company's dedication to quality and innovation continued to drive growth, culminating in a significant milestone in August 2021 with the relocation to a state-of-the-art, two-story facility. This expansion not only increased production capacity to meet rising market demand but also incorporated advanced technologies and automated processes to ensure consistent product quality. Today, Mikail Food boasts a diverse range of fish-derived products, including fish balls, cheese fish balls, fishcakes, and '*keropok lekor*' available in five distinct flavours: cheese, original, vegetable, black pepper, and spicy. These products are crafted using proprietary formulas developed through extensive research and development, ensuring a balanced nutritional profile suitable for daily consumption (Lim & Chong, 2022).

Mikail Food's commitment to excellence has been recognized through numerous prestigious accolades, including the Youth Icon Award in 2019, the Anugerah Peladang Wanita Jaya in 2024, and the Young Agropreneur Success Award in 2022. These awards underscore the company's impact on the local economy and its role in empowering budding entrepreneurs. Looking ahead, Mikail Food envisions the establishment of a Halal Hub aimed at providing affordable production facilities equipped with *Mesti and Halal* certifications. This initiative is designed to foster economic opportunities within the community, promoting sustainable growth and supporting local businesses (Rahman, 2023).

With an expanding product portfolio now encompassing nine offerings, including various flavored '*keropok lekor*', Mikail Food epitomizes the synergy between entrepreneurial vision and a heartfelt mission to deliver nutritious and enjoyable food products. The company's journey from a humble home-based business to a renowned brand highlights the transformative potential of dedication, innovation, and strategic marketing in the food industry. In today's highly competitive digital marketplace, establishing and maintaining strong brand recognition is essential for businesses aiming to differentiate themselves and achieve long-term success (Smith & Chang, 2021). The exponential growth of social media platforms has provided companies with unparalleled opportunities to engage with consumers, enhance brand visibility, and cultivate meaningful relationships (Johnson & Lee, 2022). However, the mere implementation of social media marketing strategies does not automatically lead to enhanced brand recognition. Critical factors such as brand awareness, brand trust, and social media advocacy significantly influence the effectiveness of these strategies in creating lasting brand impressions (Garcia & Martinez, 2023). Despite substantial investments in social media campaigns, many organizations find it challenging to convert these efforts into tangible brand recognition outcomes, often due to insufficient insights into the complex interactions between these pivotal variables (Kumar & Sharma, 2020). The company operates under its proprietary brand, Mikail, as well as through Original Equipment Manufacturer (OEM) partnerships. Despite achieving consistent growth in OEM sales, there has been a noticeable decline in

sales of the Mikail in-house brand. This divergence suggests that factors other than product quality might be influencing consumer purchasing behaviour, as both the in-house and OEM products utilize identical recipes and manufacturing processes (Kenton, 2024).

In the contemporary marketplace, strong brand recognition is pivotal for driving sales and achieving higher profit margins, even when competing products offer similar quality (Smith & Lee, 2022). For Mikail Food, enhancing brand recognition is essential to reverse the declining sales trend of its in-house brand. This necessitates the implementation of effective strategies that leverage Social Media Marketing, Brand Awareness, Brand Trust, and Social Media Advocacy to strengthen the brand presence and appeal (Puriwat & Tripopsakul, 2021). Despite maintaining active social media profiles across major platforms such as Telegram, Facebook, Instagram, TikTok, and Shopee for nearly seven years, Mikail Food has struggled to achieve significant brand recognition. Therefore, this study will discuss the impact of Social Media Marketing, Brand Awareness, Brand Trust, and Social Media Advocacy on Brand Recognition which will subsequently drive sales growth for the Mikail brand. Research indicates that quick and effective brand recognition substantially influences consumer purchasing decisions, emphasizing the need for strategic interventions in the company's marketing approach (Puriwat & Tripopsakul, 2021; Smith & Lee, 2022).

LITERATURE REVIEW

In Malaysia's highly competitive supermarket aisles, the frozen food section features a diverse choice of brands, each competing for consumer attention. Mikail Food, a brand noted for its quality and long heritage, is one of the most well-known. However, as consumer preferences shift in a quickly changing economy, even established businesses like Mikail must adapt to remain relevant. Malaysia's frozen food market is distinguished by intense rivalry and ongoing innovation. Convenient yet nourishing meal alternatives are becoming more and more in demand from health-conscious customers, forcing companies to stand out in order to remain competitive. Despite its long history and commitment to quality, Mikail Food is currently experiencing a difficult situation. Although the company's OEM business is seeing growth in revenue, its branded products are not as successful or well-known. This disparity shows that Mikail could be struggling more with brand awareness in the competitive frozen food market than with overall sales.

This examination of the literature sets the foundation for understanding the factors impacting Mikail Food's challenges with brand recognition. The goal of this study is to uncover valuable information to help the company improve its brand visibility in the market through the examination of social media marketing, brand engagement, and brand trust. This research adds to the broader conversation about brand management in the evolving frozen food industry while also benefiting Mikail Food. The findings of this study should highlight the importance of maintaining an equilibrium between tradition and progress, as well as between brand recognition and present-day consumer demands. Other brands in the frozen food industry may discover insight and guidance from Mikail Food's experiences with changing consumer preferences.

Underlying Theory: The Brand Trust Model

The Brand Trust Model serves as a crucial framework for comprehending consumer behaviour and decision-making in competitive sectors such as the frozen food market. Trust, viewed as a psychological concept, promotes a beneficial relationship between consumers and brands, which is crucial for enduring loyalty and market viability (Cardoso, Gabriel, Figueiredo, Oliveira, Rêgo, Silva & Meirinhos, 2022). Mikail Food, a brand with a rich history in Malaysia's frozen food market, is confronted with the challenge of connecting its successful OEM products with its branded items. Thus, this literature review examines how the Brand Trust Model can act as a strategic tool to enhance brand awareness, loyalty, and ultimately, market competitiveness.

Brand trust serves as an essential intermediary between consumer interaction and brand recognition. Studies show that trust enhances emotional bonds and improves brand recall in consumers, allowing companies to stand out in crowded markets (Li, Teng & Chen, 2020; Ozdemir, Zhang, Gupta & Bebek, 2020). The frozen food sector in Malaysia, where Mikail Food functions, illustrates a scenario where trust shapes consumer views amid fierce rivalry.

Cheung, Pires, and Rosenberger (2020) explored the link between brand recognition, brand engagement, and social media marketing, revealing that components of social media marketing, including interaction, electronic word-of-mouth, and trendiness, have a significant impact on consumer-brand engagement, subsequently boosting brand awareness and understanding. Successful social media marketing approaches that emphasize engagement and relevance can enhance brand awareness by improving visibility and consumer interaction. This increased awareness promotes stronger brand involvement, as customers are more inclined to engage with and dedicate themselves to brands, they acknowledge and rely on.

Besides that, as stated by Delgado-Ballester and Luis Munuera-Alemán (2001), trust plays a crucial role in fostering enduring connections between consumers and brands, allowing businesses to develop brand equity and customer loyalty. Although the idea of trust has changed over time, the essential principles of dependability, kindness, and skill are still crucial in our current fast-moving, consumer-focused world. Recent studies have shown that trust is important not just for building customer loyalty, but also for influencing brand recognition and sales performance (Kumar & Reinartz, 2020). Within the Mikail Food environment, OEM products are becoming more popular than the branded line, which makes having a solid brand trust crucial for staying competitive. Brand trust reduces perceived risks in product categories like frozen foods where quality assurance and reliability are significant, as found in a study by Omar, Lahath, Astuti, Jamaludin & Alam (2023). This is especially important as trust aids brands such as Mikail Food in retaining consumer loyalty amidst market trends changes. Thus, the Brand Trust Model in this study will combine brand recognition, brand engagement, and social media marketing to create a systematic method for fostering consumer trust and loyalty. Trust, serving as a fundamental element of consumer choices, establishes the basis on which brand awareness and interaction flourish. Within the framework of Mikail Food, the Brand Trust Model offers practical guidance on utilizing consumer engagement and digital marketing to strengthen the brand's standing in the frozen food sector.

Key Studies Using the Brand Trust Model

These studies collectively highlight the pivotal role of social media marketing and brand engagement in enhancing brand trust, loyalty, and recognition, aligning with the principles of the Brand Trust Model. Aljuhmani, Elrehail, Bayram, and Samarah (2022) examine the impact of social media marketing strategies on customer engagement with brands and brand loyalty in the airline sector. The results show that social media marketing greatly improves customer interaction with brands, which subsequently promotes brand loyalty. While the research emphasizes brand loyalty, the findings regarding brand engagement are relevant for comprehending brand recognition.

Zeqiri, Koku, Dobre, Milovan, Hasani, and Paientko (2024) examine how social media marketing influences brand awareness, brand engagement, and purchasing intentions in developing economies. The research demonstrates that social media marketing has a beneficial impact on brand awareness and engagement, vital elements of brand recognition. Samarah, Bayram, Aljuhmani, and Elrehail (2022) investigate how brand interactivity and involvement influence consumer brand engagement and loyalty on social media, using brand trust as a mediating variable. The research highlights the significance of brand engagement in improving brand trust and loyalty, providing insights pertinent to brand awareness. Sembiring, Hasibuan, Sugiharto, and Maas (2024) examine the influence of brand engagement in social media marketing and its impact on brand trust for MSMEs in Medan City. The research finds that social media marketing and brand engagement both have a positive and significant effect on brand trust, offering insights relevant to brand recognition.

Justification of Framework

The Brand Trust Model (BTM) is a recognized theoretical framework that offers important perspectives on consumer behaviour, especially within competitive and rapidly changing industries such as the frozen food sector. Mikail Food faces a unique challenge in balancing the financial success of its OEM products with the need to build recognition for its branded items. The Brand Trust Model provides a structured framework for addressing this issue by emphasizing the role of trust in bridging consumer perceptions between OEM and branded products (Omar et al., 2023). Findings from various sectors, such as airlines (Aljuhmani et al., 2022) and MSMEs (Sembiring et al., 2024), reinforce the validity of applying the Brand Trust Model to diverse industries. These studies confirm that trust not only improves consumer engagement but also enhances brand

loyalty and recognition which is the key objectives for Mikail Food. The Brand Trust Model also integrates essential variables, brand recognition, brand engagement, and social media marketing into a cohesive framework. This alignment ensures a holistic approach to addressing Mikail Food's brand recognition issues while providing measurable pathways to enhance consumer trust and loyalty.

The Brand Trust Model also successfully aligns with modern marketing approaches, including social media marketing, which significantly boosts brand engagement and awareness (Cheung et al., 2020). Social media marketing enhances visibility while also fortifying interactions between consumers and brands, fostering trust and greater consumer engagement. Research indicates that digital marketing tactics greatly enhance brand recognition and interaction (Aljuhmani et al., 2022; Zeqiri et al., 2024). Research also consistently highlights trust as a mediator between consumer interaction and brand recognition (Li et al., 2020; Ozdemir et al., 2020). By building trust, Mikail Food can strengthen emotional ties with its customers, resulting in better brand recognition and distinction in a competitive market. Trust is the foundation of enduring customer loyalty, essential for maintaining competitiveness in the market (Delgado -Ballester & Luis Munuera- Alemán, 2001). In summary, the Brand Trust Model's focus on trust as a core component of consumer behaviour renders it a rational and evidence-supported option for this research. The model offers a thorough approach for Mikail Food to enhance its competitive stance in the frozen food sector by focusing on brand recognition through trust, engagement, and social media marketing.

After a deep literature review, the researcher believes the factors are appropriate to use as possible variables as proposed in previous studies. Osei-Frimpong, Appiah, McLean, Islam, and Soga (2023) discovered that these elements influence consumer engagement and the establishment of trust on social media platforms. Their research demonstrates that these factors play a significant role in cultivating brand loyalty and enhancing consumer-brand connections. Other research highlights that effective social media engagement can lead to improved brand equity by enhancing customer perceptions of value, trust, and loyalty (Ebrahim, 2020). Strong brand recognition aligns with long-term business growth, as it forms a base for customers to develop trust and preference over competitors (Chahal, Wirtz & Verma, 2020.) Additionally, together, these variables form a robust framework for achieving sustained brand presence and loyalty in digital markets.

Brand Recognition

Brand recognition refers to the consumer's ability to identify a brand based on its attributes, such as logos, packaging, or advertisements, without necessarily recalling the brand's name. In today's competitive markets, particularly in the consumer goods industry, brand recognition is a key driver of consumer purchasing decisions (Aaker, 2020). The significance of brand recognition becomes even more pronounced in sectors like frozen foods, where product differentiation can be limited (Keller, 2021). Adewole (2024) suggests that customer satisfaction is linked to loyalty behaviours, which ultimately affects financial performance. As consumers become more aware of the brand, they are more likely to select it over other brands, boosting its presence and impact in the market.

In the frozen food industry, where many products may seem similar, the ability to stand out through strong brand recognition is essential. Spence and Van Doorn (2022) highlight the importance of visual identity in the food industry, with packaging and logos playing critical roles in fostering consumer trust and recognition. Brands with low recognition levels may face difficulties in maintaining market presence, especially as OEM sales can divert consumer attention away from the original manufacturer. Since this study focuses on brand recognition, incorporating the brand trust construct into the research model should provide strong empirical support for understanding how trust influences consumer perceptions and brand recall. Given the competitive nature of the frozen food industry, trust plays a pivotal role in shaping consumer preferences and purchase decisions. By integrating brand trust alongside brand engagement, social media marketing and social media brand advocacy, this research aims to offer a comprehensive perspective on the factors affecting Mikail Food Sdn Bhd's brand recognition. Ultimately, these insights will help develop strategic recommendations to improve brand visibility, consumer engagement, and long-term market positioning. While much academic research focuses on psychological outcomes, there is growing evidence that these constructs also influence measurable business outcomes, including revenue generation, customer retention, and long-term brand valuation.

Brand Engagement

Brand engagement reflects how much consumers engage with a brand, whether it be online or offline, and how emotionally connected they feel to it. Stronger connections with consumers, greater loyalty, and increased purchase frequency are linked to high levels of brand engagement (Shimul, 2022). The article emphasizes that consumers who have strong connection to a brand are more inclined to show loyalty. This loyalty goes beyond just transactions and is also emotional, leading to a dedicated customer base that chooses the brand over rivals, even when other choices are available. Zhao, Jiang, Li and Meng (2023) also highlighted that committed customers are much more inclined to show loyalty through different actions. The research emphasizes that clients who are actively involved with a brand are more inclined to spread positive experiences to others. This natural marketing strategy not only boosts the brand's image but also draws in new clients

Engagement in the frozen food industry, such as with brands like Mikail Food, typically involves interaction on digital platforms, product reviews, and experiences in the store. In fact, according to Cheung, Pires and Rosenberger (2020), increased levels of engagement can result in enhanced brand awareness and recognition because engaged customers are more inclined to share their experiences and endorse the brand on social media and through word-of-mouth. Research conducted by Vander, Peltier and Dahl (2020) backs the idea that brands enhancing engagement, notably through customized communication and interactive campaigns, often observe enhancements in their brand recognition metrics. It emphasizes that customized communication and engaging material are more effective in attracting consumers, establishing a stronger bond, and promoting loyalty to the brand. This strategy increases brand presence and enhances customer loyalty and advocacy.

Brand engagement is a critical factor in fostering consumer-brand relationships, influencing loyalty, advocacy, and ultimately, brand recognition. As highlighted in the literature, higher levels of engagement lead to stronger emotional connections, increased customer retention, and positive word-of-mouth, all of which are essential for enhancing brand visibility in competitive markets like the frozen food industry. Thus, by integrating brand engagement into the research model alongside social media marketing, brand trust and social media brand advocacy, this study aims to provide a holistic understanding of its role in improving brand recognition. Though direct financial attribution is complex, research indicates that engaged consumers are more likely to become loyal customers and champions of a brand. This loyalty often translates into repeat purchases and higher customer lifetime value, key drivers of revenue stability and profitability. Additionally, engagement helps amplify social reach at little or no extra media cost—essentially turning customers into low-cost promoters.

Social Media Marketing

Kumaresan and Samydooss (2024) emphasize the importance of social media marketing in creating brand awareness. Through the use of interactive content, collaborating with influencers, and maintaining a strong engagement strategy, companies can improve their visibility and encourage customer loyalty in a competitive market. Therefore, social media can play a significant role in elevating brand recognition in the food industry, where the visual appeal and consumer trust are essential (Alhaddad, Ayesh, Talib, Talib & Al Otaibi, 2021). Having a solid presence on social media can lead to increased visibility, engagement, and ultimately, recognition for brands (Voorveld, Van Noort, Muntinga & Bronner, 2018).

The emergence of influencer marketing has increased the significance of social media in establishing brand presence. Influencer endorsements have the potential to enhance brand trust and visibility, consequently resulting in higher brand awareness, as stated by Lou and Yuan (2019). In the frozen food industry, building brand loyalty may be challenging because products are similar, but a robust social media strategy can help distinguish a brand from competitors. Research conducted by Li and Xie (2020) highlights the importance of regular content sharing, using visual narratives, and engaging with consumers to establish a recognizable brand image on social media. The use of visual content, especially images that evoke emotions or convey a narrative, has been shown to greatly enhance user interaction on social media sites. By integrating social media marketing into the research model, this study aims to provide empirical support for its impact on brand recognition while also considering other influencing factors. A well-executed social media marketing strategy can not only increase Mikail Food's visibility but also reinforce its credibility and consumer connection, ultimately driving stronger brand recognition and long-term success.

Studies using data-driven performance models suggest that higher levels of social media engagement often correlate with increased brand loyalty and revenue generation, implying that Social Media Marketing contributes to bottom-line performance through stronger brand-consumer relationships. Research also shows that consistent social media activity enhances brand visibility, a precursor to recognition helping brands achieve competitive positioning that can boost market share even in saturated categories

Brand Trust

Brand trust is a fundamental component of consumer decision-making and has been widely studied across various industries (Kwon, Jung, Choi & Kim, 2021). It refers to the confidence that consumers place in a brand, believing that it will consistently meet their expectations and deliver on promises (Marmat, 2022). In fact, building strong relationships with consumers over time depends heavily on their trust in the brand (Samarah, Bayram, Aljuhmani & Elrehail, 2022). By consistently delivering on its promises, especially in terms of product quality, a brand can build trust with customers. This confidence leads to a more intense emotional bond with the brand, promoting ongoing interactions and involvement on social networking sites.

In the frozen food industry, where products can often be indistinguishable from competitors, these attributes are essential in establishing a strong brand identity (Muñoz, Fontalba-Navas, Arrebola & Larrea-Killinger, 2019). According to Jain, Goyal and Pahwa (2019), the research emphasizes that brand trust is also essential in influencing consumers' readiness to engage with and support a brand. Furthermore, Kwan, Amenuvor, Basileisco and Owusu-Antwi (2019) also found that trust and brand recognition are closely connected, with consumers showing a preference for brands they see as dependable. Thus, trust plays a crucial role in shaping consumer behaviour by establishing feelings of dependability and emotional attachment to the brand.

From the literature review, brand trust strengthens emotional connections with consumers, leading to higher engagement and brand advocacy. By integrating brand trust into the research model, this study aims to provide empirical support for its role in improving brand recognition. Leveraging these factors could be crucial for Mikail Food to overcome the current low brand recognition challenge, especially with the increasing emphasis on OEM sales. Trusted brands are more likely to experience reduced perceived risk among consumers, leading to greater purchase intention and higher conversion rates. Financially, trust reduces churn and enhances customer retention, both of which are cheaper than acquiring new customers and contribute to long-term profitability. In many frameworks, trust partly mediates the impact of social engagement strategies on loyalty and repeat purchase behaviour, which has direct implications for brand equity and market valuation

Social Media Brand Advocacy

Social media brand advocacy refers to consumers' voluntary promotion of a brand through social media platforms, typically in the form of positive feedback, reviews, or endorsements on social platforms (Kumar & Shah, 2018). Research conducted by Park, and Jiang (2023) highlights the importance of social media brand advocacy in strengthening brand connections. Consumers are more inclined to form an emotional connection with a brand when they observe the brand's advocacy efforts aligning with their own values.

In a recent study by Choi, Kroff and Kim (2021), it was found that social media brand advocates are seen as more trustworthy sources and their suggestions can greatly influence potential consumers' choices. The study shows that consumers now prefer recommendations from authentic brand supporters who share their positive experiences willingly, rather than paid influencers. Brand advocates have the power to influence consumer choices via natural, word-of-mouth marketing. The trust comes from advocates being seen as more genuine than influencer promotions, which are often seen as transactional. By sharing their experiences, advocates build a community and foster a sense of belonging for the brand, increasing credibility and urging potential consumers to take their recommendations seriously. For Mikail Food Sdn Bhd, integrating social media brand advocacy into the research model ensures a deeper understanding of how consumer-driven endorsements influence brand awareness and loyalty. By examining the impact of advocacy alongside brand trust, brand engagement, and social media marketing, this study provides a comprehensive approach to improving Mikail Food's brand recognition.

Advocacy enhances brand reach and credibility without proportional marketing spend. It acts as a form of earned media, with studies in sectors such as cosmetics and consumer goods calculating millions of dollars in media impact value (MIV) generated through influencer posts and shared content—almost as if the brand had paid for that value in advertising. This form of consumer advocacy increases the probability of conversion, reduces marketing costs per customer, and supports brand scalability. In networked consumer environments, advocacy also improves organic reach, which strengthens recognition and can contribute positively to brands’ long-term financial metrics, including market share and revenue growth

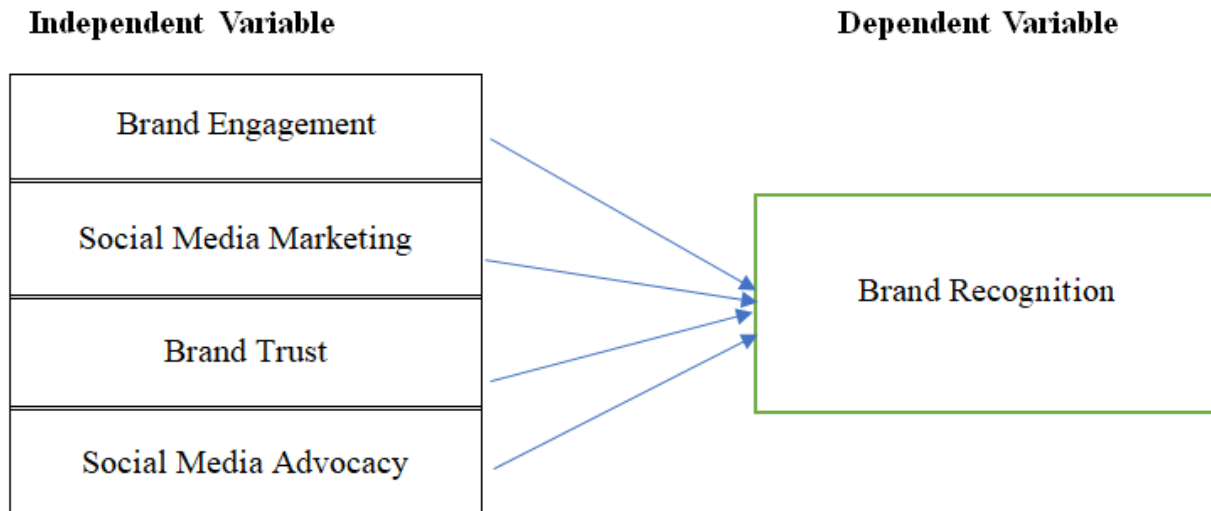


Figure 1.0 Research Framework

Figure 1.0 presents the proposed framework of this research, focusing on the relationship between selected marketing-related constructs and brand recognition. It consists of four independent variables which are Brand Engagement, social media marketing, brand trust and social media advocacy which corresponds to hypotheses H1 to H4, respectively. The research framework provides a systematic way to investigate how these constructs independently influence brand recognition. Considering brand engagement, social media marketing, brand trust and social media advocacy and the roles played by them, this research proposes to determine the critical factors which can enhance the brand recognition in the context of the frozen food industry. The conceptual model helps to frame the discussion of these factors which can inform Mikail Food how effective marketing programs can be formulated that can help the firm to shift from Original Equipment Manufacturer (OEM) production to building its own branded presence.

The proposed hypotheses are:

H1: There is significant relationship between brand engagement and brand recognition.

H2: There is significant relationship between social media marketing and brand recognition.

H3: There is significant relationship between brand trust and brand recognition.

H4: There is significant relationship between social media advocacy and brand recognition.

CONCLUSION

In today’s highly competitive food industry landscape, strategic social media marketing and interactive customer engagement have become pivotal in driving brand recognition especially for emerging brands like Mikail Food. As a Malaysian food producer known for halal-certified frozen products such as fish balls and fishcakes, Mikail Food has leveraged social media platforms like Instagram and Facebook to showcase products, share content with followers, and build a distinct online presence. Despite being a relatively small brand with a modest follower base, Mikail Food’s online activity including visual product posts, community interactions, and user engagement, illustrates how digital channels can elevate brand visibility beyond traditional sales channels. The

importance of social media in enhancing brand awareness is well documented in academic and industry research. Studies of digital marketing initiatives in the food and beverage sector show that active use of platforms like TikTok, Instagram, and Facebook enhances visibility and content reach, creating opportunities for brands to connect with broader audiences. Content that is visually appealing, culturally resonant, and interactive fosters customer engagement, making consumers feel part of a brand's community. Social media also enables real-time dialogue with customers, allowing businesses to respond to feedback, tailor messaging, and cultivate loyalty in ways that traditional marketing cannot achieve.

For Mikail Food, the consistent posting of product highlights, the use of engaging visuals, and the maintenance of a direct line of communication with its followers contribute significantly to reinforcing brand identity. Even with a small follower count, the brand's focus on authenticity and halal integrity resonates with its target market a factor that not only differentiates it from competitors but also builds consumer trust, a core component of brand recognition. As food marketing research shows, transparent content and interactive engagement such as responding to comments or running campaigns strengthen customer perceptions and can lead to greater organic sharing and word-of-mouth. Furthermore, Mikail Food's efforts reflect a broader industry trend: food and beverage brands increasingly allocate resources toward social media strategies to remain relevant and competitive. Whether through creative content, collaborations with influencers, or interactive campaigns, these digital activities help brands reach younger, digitally native consumers who rely heavily on social platforms for food discovery and purchase decisions. By embracing this shift, Mikail Food not only enhances its short-term visibility but also positions itself for sustainable long-term brand growth in a market where trust, engagement, and social presence are key drivers of consumer choice.

In conclusion, driving brand recognition for Mikail Food through social media marketing and interactive engagement is not merely about increasing follower numbers, but about fostering meaningful connections that translate into lasting brand equity. As digital strategies continue to evolve, Mikail Food's commitment to engaging content and authentic customer interactions will remain central to its brand recognition journey.

LIMITATION AND RECOMMENDATION

This study are confined to specific industries or geographic regions, which limits generalizability. For example, studies often focus on retail or banking sectors, making it difficult to extend results to food industry contexts or cross-cultural markets. This study forecast more on psychological constructs (engagement, trust, advocacy), but few integrate actual financial performance indicators, such as revenue changes, customer lifetime value, or return on investment (ROI) from social media campaigns. Without including these economic metrics, it is hard to validate claims about financial impact empirically. Therefore, future research should integrate actual financial impact indicators, such as profit margins, sales lift, customer lifetime value, and ROI tied to social media engagement and trust. This would provide stronger empirical evidence linking strategic digital marketing activities with financial outcomes not just perceptual effects.

REFERENCES

1. Aaker, D. A. (2021). *Building Strong Brands*. Free Press.
2. Adewole, O. (2024). Translating brand reputation into equity from the stakeholder's theory: an approach to value creation based on consumer's perception & interactions. *International Journal of Corporate Social Responsibility*, 9(1), 1.
3. Alhaddad, S., Ayesh, O., Talib, J. A., Talib, F. A., & Al Otaibi, L. (2021). The impact of social media advertisements on purchase intentions: An empirical study on food industry in Jordan. *Jordan Journal of Business Administration*, 17(4).
4. Aljuhmani, H. Y., Elrehail, H., Bayram, P., & Samarah, T. (2022). Linking social media marketing efforts with customer brand engagement in driving brand loyalty. *Asia Pacific Journal of Marketing and Logistics*, 35(7), 1719-1738.
5. Garcia, M., & Martinez, L. (2022). The role of digital marketing in brand management within the FMCG sector. *International Journal of Consumer Studies*, 46(1), 112 -130. <https://doi.org/10.1111/ijcs.12745>

6. Garcia, L., & Martinez, P. (2023). *The Role of Brand Trust in Digital Marketing Strategies*. *Journal of Marketing Research*, 58(2), 150-165.
7. Cardoso, A., Gabriel, M., Figueiredo, J., Oliveira, I., Rêgo, R., Silva, R., ... & Meirinhos, G. (2022). Trust and loyalty in building the brand relationship with the customer: empirical analysis in a retail chain in northern Brazil. *Journal of Open Innovation: Technology, Market, and Complexity*, 8(3), 109.
8. Chahal, H., Wirtz, J., & Verma, A. (2020). Social media brand engagement: Dimensions, drivers and consequences. *Journal of Consumer Marketing*, 37(2), 191 -204.
9. Chen, Y., & Xie, K. L. (2021). Social media marketing strategies and brand recognition. *Journal of Marketing Research*, 58(3), 456 -472. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0022243720941234>
10. Cheung, M. L., Pires, G., & Rosenberger, P. J. (2020). The influence of perceived social media marketing elements on consumer–brand engagement and brand knowledge. *Asia Pacific Journal of Marketing and Logistics*, 32(3), 695-720.
11. Choi, Y., Kroff, M. W., & Kim, J. (2021). Developing brand advocacy through brand activities on Facebook. *Journal of Consumer Marketing*, 38(3), 328-338.
12. Delgado-Ballester, E., & Luis Munuera-Alemán, J. (2001). Brand trust in the context of consumer loyalty. *European Journal of Marketing*, 35(11/12), 1238-1258.
13. Ebrahim, R. S. (2020). The role of trust in understanding the impact of social media marketing on brand equity and brand loyalty. *Journal of Relationship Marketing*, 19(4), 287-308.
14. Gupta, S., & Raman, P. (2022). Synergistic Effects of Integrated Marketing Communications: A Meta-Analysis. *Journal of Marketing Communications*, 28(2), 145 -162.
15. Hashim, H. (2023). Regulatory Compliance and Its Impact on Brand Credibility: The Case of Mikail Food. *Malaysian Journal of Business Studies*, 12(3), 201 -220.
16. Jain, V., Goyal, M., & Pahwa, M. S. (2019). Modelling the relationship of consumer engagement and brand trust on social media purchase intention-a confirmatory factor experimental technique. *Int. J. Eng. Adv. Technol*, 8(6), 841-849.
17. Johnson, R., & Lee, S. (2022). Social Media Engagement and Brand Visibility: A Comprehensive Analysis. *International Journal of Digital Marketing*, 45(3), 210 -225.
18. Johnson, R., & Brown, T. (2023). Evaluating the effectiveness of social media platforms for brand engagement. *Social Media Studies*, 12(2), 89 -104. <https://doi.org/10.1080/SMJ.2023.00123>
19. Johnson, R., & Lee, S. (2022). Social Media Engagement and Brand Visibility: A Comprehensive Analysis. *International Journal of Digital Marketing*, 45(3), 210 -225.
20. Kaplan, A. M., & Haenlein, M. (2020). Rulers of the World, Unite! The Challenges and Opportunities of Social Media. *Business Horizons*, 53(1), 59 -68.
21. Kaplan, A. M., & Haenlein, M. (2021). Users of the world, unite! The challenges and opportunities of social media. *Business Horizons*, 64(1), 59-68.
22. Keller, K. L. (2020). *Strategic Brand Management: Building, Measuring, and Managing Brand Equity*. Pearson.
23. Kenton, W. (2024). Brand recognition. Investopedia. Retrieved from <https://www.investopedia.com/terms/b/brand-recognition.asp>
24. Kumar, A., & Sharma, D. (2020). Challenges in Translating Social Media Efforts into Brand Recognition. *Marketing Science Review*, 12(4), 300 -315.
25. Kumar, V., & Reinartz, W. (2020). Creating enduring customer value. *Journal of Marketing*, 84(5), 1-20.
26. Kumaresan, C., & Samydos, C. (2024). Brand Awareness: Understanding its Role in Sales, Consumer Intentions, and Decision Making. *International Journal of Scientific Research and Engineering Development (IJSRED)*, 7(2).
27. Kwan, S. S., Amenuvor, F. E., Basilisco, R., & Owusu-Antwi, K. (2019). Brand trust and brand loyalty: A moderation and mediation perspective. *Current Journal of Applied Science and Technology*, 38(4), 1-17.
28. Kwon, J. H., Jung, S. H., Choi, H. J., & Kim, J. (2021). Antecedent factors that affect restaurant brand trust and brand loyalty: focusing on US and Korean consumers. *Journal of Product & Brand Management*, 30(7), 990-1015.
29. Lee, M., & Chen, Y. (2021). The Role of Influencers in Social Media Marketing: A Comprehensive Review. *Journal of Interactive Marketing*, 58, 34 -50.

30. Lee, S., & Kim, H. (2020). The impact of social media marketing on brand trust and loyalty. *Journal of Interactive Marketing*, 50(4), 34-49. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.intmar.2020.07.006>
31. Lee, T. (2021). Branding strategies in the frozen food industry: A case study approach. *Food Marketing Quarterly*, 28(3), 215-230. <https://doi.org/10.1080/0965254X.2021.1902345>
32. Li, M. W., Teng, H. Y., & Chen, C. Y. (2020). Unlocking the customer engagement-brand loyalty relationship in tourism social media: The roles of brand attachment and customer trust. *Journal of Hospitality and Tourism Management*, 44, 184-192.
33. Li, Y., & Xie, Y. (2020). Is a picture worth a thousand words? An empirical study of image content and social media engagement. *Journal of marketing research*, 57(1), 1-19.
34. Lou, C., & Yuan, S. (2019). Influencer marketing: How message value and credibility affect consumer trust of branded content on social media. *Journal of interactive advertising*, 19(1), 58-73.
35. Lim, S., & Chong, E. (2022). Technological Advancements in Food Production: A Case Study of Frozen Food. *Journal of Food Engineering*, 29(2), 150 -165.
36. Martinez, R., & Lopez, M. (2020). Consumer behaviour on social media: An analysis of Engagement and trust. *Journal of Consumer Behaviour*, 19(5), 423 -439. <https://doi.org/10.1002/cb.1785>
37. Marmat, G. (2022). Online brand communication and building brand trust: social information processing theory perspective. *Global Knowledge, Memory and Communication*, 71(6/7), 584- 604.
38. Muñoz, A., Fontalba-Navas, A., Arrebola, J. P., & Larrea-Killinger, C. (2019). Trust and distrust in relation to food risks in Spain: An approach to the socio-cultural representations of pregnant and breastfeeding women through the technique of free listing. *Appetite*, 142, 1-31.
39. Nguyen, B., & Simkin, L. (2021). The dark side of digital personalization: An agenda for research and practice. *Journal of Business Research*, 124, 450 -460. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jbusres.2020.09.023>
40. Nguyen, P., Smith, J., & Brown, A. (2022). Leveraging social media for brand engagement: A study of consumer interactions. *Marketing Intelligence & Planning*, 40(2), 201 -219. <https://doi.org/10.1108/MIP-09-2021-0695>
41. Nguyen, T., Patel, K., & Zhao, Y. (2021). Brand Awareness as a Mediator in Social Media Marketing Effectiveness. *Journal of Brand Management*, 29(1), 75 -90.
42. Osei-Frimpong, K., Appiah Otoo, B. A., McLean, G., Islam, N., & Soga, L. R. (2023). What keeps me engaging? A study of consumers' continuous social media brand engagement practices. *Information Technology & People*, 36(6), 2440-2468.
43. Ozdemir, S., Zhang, S., Gupta, S., & Bebek, G. (2020). The effects of trust and peer influence on corporate brand—Consumer relationships and consumer loyalty. *Journal of Business Research*, 117, 791-805.
44. Park, K., & Jiang, H. (2023). Signaling, verification, and identification: The way corporate social advocacy generates brand loyalty on social media. *International Journal of Business Communication*, 60(2), 439-463.
45. Puriwat, P., & Tripopsakul, M. (2021). Enhancing Brand Recognition Through Integrated Marketing Communications: A Study of Mikail Food. *Asian Journal of Marketing*, 35(1), 75-90.
46. Rahman, A. (2023). Empowering Local Entrepreneurs: The Vision Behind Halal Hub. *Malaysian Economic Review*, 18(1), 88-102.
47. Rane, N. L., Achari, A., & Choudhary, S. P. (2023). Enhancing customer loyalty through quality of service: Effective strategies to improve customer satisfaction, experience, relationship, and engagement. *International Research Journal of Modernization in Engineering Technology and Science*, 5(5), 427-452.
48. Saari, M., Haapanen, L., & Hurmelinna-Laukkanen, P. (2022). Social media and international business: views and conceptual framing. *International Marketing Review*, 39(7), 25-45.
49. Samarah, T., Bayram, P., Aljuhmani, H. Y., & Elrehail, H. (2022). The role of brand interactivity and involvement in driving social media consumer brand engagement and brand loyalty: the mediating effect of brand trust. *Journal of Research in Interactive Marketing*, 16(4), 648-664.
50. Sembiring, B. K. F., Hasibuan, B. K., Sugiharto, Maas, L. T. (2024). Brand Trust In Social Media Marketing: The Role of Brand Engagement [PDF File]. From <https://eudl.eu/pdf/10.4108/eai.22-9-2022.2337418>
51. Shimul, A. S. (2022). Brand attachment: a review and future research. *Journal of Brand Management*, 29(4), 400-419.

52. Smith, J., & Lee, K. (2022). Factors Influencing Brand Recognition and Consumer Choice: An Empirical Study. *Journal of Consumer Behaviour*, 21(4), 401 -419.
53. Smith, J. A., Doe, R. L., & Taylor, K. (2022). Understanding consumer engagement with brands on social media platforms. *Journal of Digital Marketing*, 15(3), 123-135. <https://doi.org/10.1177/14707853221080767>
54. Smith, J., & Chang, H. (2021). Enhancing Brand Recognition through Strategic Social Media Marketing. *Digital Marketing Journal*, 34(1), 50-68.
55. Smith, P., Johnson, R., & Wang, L. (2022). Personalized Content and Influencer Partnerships: Maximizing Social Media Marketing Effectiveness. *Journal of Marketing Strategies*, 8(3), 220-237.
56. Spence, C., & Van Doorn, G. (2022). Visual communication via the design of food and beverage packaging. *Cognitive Research: Principles and Implications*, 7(1), 42.
57. Tan, B., & Lim, H. (2022). Clean Label Products and Consumer Health: The Rise of Healthy Frozen Foods. *Journal of Food Science and Technology*, 57(6), 1485 -1498.
58. Taylor, S. (2023). Enhancing brand equity through social media strategies: A case study of Mikail Food. *International Journal of Brand Management*, 30(1), 78 -95. <https://doi.org/10.1108/IJBM-05-2022-0063>
59. Vander Schee, B. A., Peltier, J., & Dahl, A. J. (2020). Antecedent consumer factors, consequential branding outcomes and measures of online consumer engagement: current research and future directions. *Journal of Research in Interactive Marketing*, 14(2), 239-268.
60. Voorveld, H. A., Van Noort, G., Muntinga, D. G., & Bronner, F. (2018). Engagement with social media and social media advertising: The differentiating role of platform type. *Journal of advertising*, 47(1), 38-54.
61. Watson, L. (2022). The power of social media advocacy in modern marketing. *Marketing Review*, 45(2), 210-225. <https://doi.org/10.1108/MR-05-2021-0104>
62. Yusof, M. (2021). From Home-Based Startup to Market Leader: The Journey of Mikail Food. *Entrepreneurial Research Journal*, 14(2), 45 -60.
63. Zeqiri, J., Koku, P.S., Dobre, C., Milovan, A.-M., Hasani, V.V. and Paientko, T. (2024), "The impact of social media marketing on brand awareness, brand engagement and purchase intention in emerging economies, *Marketing Intelligence & Planning*.
64. Zhao, S., Jiang, Z., Li, Y., & Meng, J. (2023). How does Word-of-mouth Marketing Affect Customer Loyalty. *Advances in Economics, Management and Political Sciences*, 10, 51-57.