

The Influence of Social Media Platforms on Online Consumer Engagement in Malaysia's Food and Beverage Industry

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Abstract: *Recent technology changes have very much affected how customers in the Food and Beverages (F&B) sector interact with brands. This sector focuses on visual appeal and convenience. The F&B sector relies on customer continuous buying because it is very profitable. Using social media to obtain information and discover products is one of the customers behaviours that businesses in F&B sectors rely on. The purpose of the study is to build a relationship between social media usage and customer engagement in the sectors from the F&B consumers in Ampang Point, a very competitive food outlet and cosmopolitan area in Kuala Lumpur is very competitive. The study used a quantitative design and a convenience sampling method to gather from two hundred (200) customers. The study used SPSS to analyze the findings. The findings report that visual, interactive, and speedy engagement of the responding consumers to the outlet. A very strong correlation engagement online and participating in the trade is based on use of the WOM (Word of Mouth) theory. The study has a clear importance to consumers and businesses and digital marketing.*

Keywords: Online Consumer Engagement, Social Media Platforms, Food and Beverage Industry, Influencer Marketing, Electronic Word-of-Mouth (eWOM), Brand Loyalty

1. Introduction

Background of the Study

The rapid advancement of tech integration within society has changed the methods consumers utilize for searching for food options and determining food choices. Customers use social media applications such as Instagram, Facebook, and TikTok to evaluate food options, interact with brands, and share experiences through reviews, photos, and videos. The active social media presence of consumers in Malaysia, particularly in urban regions such as Ampang Point, has allowed digital platforms to dominate communication and marketing within the F&B sector. The changes in marketing communications have made it important for firms to comprehend the impact of various platform characteristics, such as the use of audio-visual materials, endorsements from digital influencers, and the presence of interactive elements, to elicit user engagement. The online engagement of social media users through posting likes, comments, shares, and reviews has overwhelmingly come to signify the presence of a relationship of interest and loyalty with the marketer. With the increased focus on the digital avenues for marketing communications, the F&B sector has had to prioritize as a focus the identification and comprehension of the factors that drive digital engagement as a means of fulfilling its broader objective of competition.

Problem Statement

Social media is an integral part of the F&B sector, yet many companies still struggle to appreciate exactly how every individual feature in the F&B sector's various social media marketing tools impacts consumer engagement positively or negatively. Affective, cognitive, and behavioural engagement go far beyond the simple actions of scrolling and 'liking', and constitute a more intense consumer-brand engagement. However, the literature is not yet fully developed in regard to the specific features in social media marketing of the F&B sector in Malaysia that exacerbate engagement. Consequently, many companies in this sector are unable to design a working digital marketing strategy that optimally fosters consumer engagement, brand loyalty, and purchase intention. A lack of engagement understanding also results in a waste of corporate resources due to the deployment of content designed to the company's marketing strategy, that will not engage or retain target consumers. A full investigation is, therefore, warranted to ascertain the social media characteristics that optimise engagement levels of individual consumers, and the extent to which consumer behaviour is subsequently impacted.

Research Questions

The research is underpinned by four main questions in order to encapsulate the concerns exposed in the problem statement. First, the research attempts to determine if there is a differential engagement confectionary and beverage consumer on social media platforms, such as, Instagram, Facebook, and TikTok. Second, it ascertains what pieces of content are interactivity or influencer participatory, and, most, engagement stimulating. Third, it assesses the influence of engagement on a consumer's purchase intention and loyalty to the brand. Lastly, it evaluates the extent to which confectionary and beverage companies can use the findings to improve their digital marketing efforts.

Research Objectives

This research is aimed at finding the elements driving the online consumer engagement process in the F & B Sector. More specifically the study will identify what drives consumer engagement in varied platforms, examine what consumer engagement components influence buying behaviours, and provide F & B businesses with actional recommendations for improving their online presence. Addressing these objectives will provide a comprehensive understanding of the correlation among the features of the platform, the consumer behaviour, and successful marketing.

Significance of the Study

This study has value for academia and industry stakeholders. From the academic standpoint, the study adds to the existing literature on digital marketing and consumer advocacy, uniquely showcasing the Malaysian context, which possesses diverse cultural inclinations, consumption patterns, and digital habits, as compared to the Western context. From the practical perspective, the study equips F&B enterprises situated within competitive urban settings with the tools to strategically devise marketing techniques. Knowing which attributes of social media facilitate consumer advocacy will enable enterprises to design marketing campaigns that optimize resource allocation, strengthen online partnerships, and foster customer advocacy. The study helps business owners, marketers, and entrepreneurs identify content that will help to achieve visibility, establish engagement, and create consumer loyalty.

Scope of the Study

The study focuses on consumers who frequent F&B outlets around Ampang Point and actively use social media platforms. It limits itself to three major platforms: Instagram, Facebook, and

TikTok, as they are widely used by Malaysian consumers. The study employs a quantitative method and uses self-reported data from 200 respondents. It does not examine rural consumers, other industries, or non-digital forms of customer engagement. The results should be interpreted within these boundaries, acknowledging that consumer behaviour may differ across locations and sectors.

Definition of Terms

- Online Consumer Engagement refers to the cognitive, emotional, and behavioural involvement of consumers with online content.
- Social Media Platforms in this study include Instagram, Facebook, and TikTok.
- Visual Content includes product images, videos, infographics, and creative posts designed to attract attention.
- Interactive Features refer to functions allowing two-way communication such as comments, reactions, polls, and message replies.
- Influencer Collaboration refers to promotional partnerships with individuals who have large online followings.
- Purchase Intention is the likelihood that a consumer will buy a product after engaging with content.
- Brand Loyalty reflects a consumer's repeated preference for a brand over competitors.

2. Literature Review

Online Consumer Engagement

Online consumer engagement has become a major idea in digital marketing, particularly in sectors where visual and experiential content substantially impacts purchase behavior, such as the food and beverage (F&B) industry. Engagement refers to the psychological and behavioral expressions that occur when customers connect with brand-related material on social media sites. Brodie et al. (2013) characterize engagement as a multifaceted phenomenon encompassing cognitive processing, emotional involvement, and behavioral participation. This indicates that engagement is not limited to outward activities like liking or sharing posts; it also encompasses interior emotions such as curiosity, pleasure, and attentiveness. In the context of the F&B sector, visual appeal, taste anticipation, and sensory stimulation are typically stimulated by photographs and videos posted online. Dessart et al. (2015) discovered that such emotional reactions may improve relational links between companies and customers, promoting more involvement.

Moreover, social media engagement fosters value co-creation, where customers do not only consume material but actively participate in constructing brand narratives by writing reviews, sharing experiences, and influencing others via electronic word-of-mouth (eWOM). This self-expressive activity boosts the trustworthiness of the company since customers prefer to believe authentic user experiences more than conventional advertising (Lou & Yuan, 2019). Engagement is further strengthened with rapid brand answers, interactive elements such as surveys and Q&A stickers, and tailored communications. Research has demonstrated that responsiveness promotes confidence and reveals that the company appreciates customer feedback, hence enhancing loyalty and happiness (Hudson et al., 2016). In Malaysia, Rahim et al. (2020) underline that customer are especially active on platforms that provide visual storytelling, making engagement a significant factor of consumer decision-making. Thus, online consumer engagement is not only a marketing result but a core part of digital brand-customer connections.

Social Media Platforms

Social media platforms serve as digital ecosystems where marketers and customers connect via numerous content types, including images, videos, captions, reviews, and live sessions. Each platform provides distinct characteristics that impact how people connect with F&B content. Instagram, for example, promotes visual storytelling via photographs, Reels, Stories, and curated aesthetic feeds. Its concentration on high-quality images makes it particularly influential for food-related marketing. Facebook, on the other hand, offers a more community-driven environment where people participate via conversation threads, reviews, and long-form material. Facebook's algorithm regularly prioritizes material with great interaction, allowing viral spreading. TikTok has evolved as a significant platform because to its short-form video style that promotes originality, comedy, authenticity, and trend-driven content. TikTok viewers, particularly younger audiences, typically depend on viral food reviews and recipe videos when selecting where to eat (Rosaro & Travassos, 2023).

Social media platforms also operate as social influencers where trends, peer recommendations, and social evidence change consumer opinions. Platforms allow companies to construct two-way communication channels, collect feedback, and give real-time information on promotions, menu changes, or customer service concerns. Hudson et al. (2016) emphasize that this interacting relationship enhances brand trust and promotes emotional ties. In Malaysia, urban consumers—particularly those residing in high-density commercial districts such as Ampang Point—depend significantly on social media for identifying F&B shops. Malaysian consumers demonstrate strong receptivity to visually attractive material, seasonal incentives, and influencer relationships (Rahim et al., 2020). Thus, understanding platform-specific dynamics is vital for firms wanting to build strategies that correspond with customer expectations and online behavior.

Conceptual Framework

The conceptual foundation for this research is predicated on the notion that social media platform characteristics greatly impact online consumer engagement, which consequently influences behavioral outcomes such as purchase intention and brand loyalty. At the foundation of the paradigm is the interplay between platform-specific qualities (Instagram, Facebook, TikTok), content factors (visual appeal, interactivity, influencer participation, responsiveness), and the engagement reactions of consumers. The paradigm is anchored on digital communication and consumer behaviour theories, claiming that high-quality, interactive material increases cognitive awareness, emotional engagement, and behavioral action. This is consistent with Brodie et al.'s (2013) conception of engagement as a process driven by emotional and behavioral inputs.

Furthermore, the framework employs an adaptive marketing viewpoint, meaning firms must alter their tactics depending on customer behavior patterns. For instance, customers who favor video content may react more strongly to TikTok-style short films, while those who enjoy reading reviews may interact more on Facebook. This implies that platform efficacy is impacted by both content type and user choice. The theory presents online consumer involvement as a mediating mechanism relating platform features to behavioral consequences. Engaged customers are more inclined to seek extra information, develop favorable views, and make buy choices. Thus, the conceptual framework demonstrates the sequential movement from platform characteristics → engagement → purchase intention → loyalty.

Word-of-Mouth (WOM) Theory

Word-of-Mouth (WOM) Theory is highly relevant to understanding digital consumer behaviour because it explains how information flows between individuals and influences decision-making. Traditionally, WOM referred to verbal recommendations shared among friends and family. However, with the rise of social media, WOM has evolved into electronic word-of-mouth (eWOM), where consumers share experiences, reviews, and recommendations online. Brown et al. (2021) highlight that eWOM is more persuasive than traditional advertising because consumers perceive peer-created content as more trustworthy and authentic. Social media accelerates the speed and scale at which WOM spreads, enabling a single post to reach millions within minutes.

In the F&B industry, eWOM plays a critical role in shaping consumer perceptions. Photos, videos, and reviews uploaded by customers often become direct decision-making cues that influence others' choices. Influencers also act as powerful WOM leaders whose endorsements can significantly boost engagement and brand visibility. Severin and Tankard (2023) explain that influencers' credibility, relatability, and social attractiveness contribute to stronger persuasion. In the Malaysian context, consumers often depend on TikTok food reviews, Instagram stories, and Facebook comments before deciding where to dine. Positive eWOM increases engagement, while negative eWOM can damage a brand's reputation quickly. Thus, WOM Theory underpins the idea that consumer engagement is shaped not only by brand-generated content but also by user-generated content.

3. Conceptual Framework & Hypothesis Development

Conceptual Framework Explanation

The conceptual framework integrates platform characteristics, content elements, consumer engagement, and behavioural outcomes into one cohesive model. It proposes that different social media platforms create distinct engagement environments shaped by their features—Instagram's aesthetics, Facebook's community orientation, and TikTok's creativity-driven content. Furthermore, the framework highlights four major content elements as stimuli: visual appeal, interactivity, influencer involvement, and responsiveness. These factors influence how consumers perceive the brand, how emotionally connected they feel, and how likely they are to interact with the content. Engagement acts as a bridge between content and outcomes, meaning the more engaged a consumer is, the higher their purchase intention and loyalty. The model acknowledges that engagement does not occur in isolation but is formed through continuous interactions influenced by platform algorithms and user preferences.

Hypotheses Development

Each hypothesis is grounded in established literature. H1 proposes that social media platforms affect engagement because platform design and algorithms shape user behaviour. H2 argues that visual appeal, interactivity, influencer collaboration, and brand responsiveness positively influence engagement, supported by past studies showing that high-quality visuals and interactions increase emotional involvement. H3 and H4 examine the behavioural outcomes of engagement, based on the idea that engagement strengthens trust and emotional connection. H5 proposes that purchase intention mediates the link between engagement and loyalty, reflecting the principle that engaged consumers first develop intention before forming long-term loyalty.

4. Methodology

Research Approach

This study adopted a quantitative research approach to examine the level of online consumer engagement and the use of social media platforms among customers of Food and Beverages (F&B) outlets located around Ampang Point, Kuala Lumpur. A quantitative method was chosen because it enables the collection of measurable data that reflect actual behavioural patterns and engagement trends associated with digital marketing. Through numerical data, this approach allows objective assessment of how consumers interact with different social media platforms and how these interactions influence their engagement levels. Quantitative techniques are also suitable for identifying correlations, measuring frequency of behaviour, and analysing predictors of consumer interaction, making them appropriate for the aims of this study.

Research Design

A descriptive, survey-based research design was employed to collect quantifiable insights on consumer behaviour. The primary instrument used was a structured questionnaire containing closed-ended questions. The questionnaire was divided into clear sections to ensure systematic data collection. Section A collected demographic details such as age and gender. Section B focused on respondents' social media usage patterns, particularly their engagement with F&B content on Facebook, Instagram, and TikTok. Section C measured levels of online consumer engagement, including activities such as liking, commenting, sharing, reviewing, and overall behavioural involvement with brand content. This research design was selected because surveys allow researchers to obtain large-scale responses efficiently, ensure standardised data, and directly measure variables relevant to the study, such as engagement activities and platform usage.

Population and Sample

The population of this study consists of individuals who frequently visit F&B outlets located near Ampang Point and actively engage with social media content related to these businesses. These consumers are regularly exposed to digital promotional messages and online marketing strategies across platforms such as Facebook, Instagram, and TikTok.

A convenience sampling technique was used due to its practicality and suitability for collecting data from easily accessible respondents. Customers who were physically present at selected F&B outlets or who followed these outlets online were invited to participate. This method ensured efficient data collection within the time frame available.

The targeted sample size for this study is 200 respondents. This number is sufficient to provide statistical reliability while also being manageable for data collection. A sample of 200 respondents allows the researcher to analyse engagement trends across different platforms and ensures adequate representation of consumer behaviour within the F&B sector in an urban environment.

Research Instrument

A structured questionnaire served as the main research instrument. It was designed to gather quantitative data from respondents in a clear and organised manner. The questionnaire consists of three sections:

- **Section A:** Demographic information (e.g., age, gender).

- **Section B:** Items related to social media usage and platform preferences, measuring exposure and interaction with F&B content.
- **Section C:** Items measuring online consumer engagement, which included behavioural indicators such as frequency of interactions, reviewing habits, and response tendencies. All measurement items used a 5-point Likert scale ranging from 1 (Strongly Disagree) to 5 (Strongly Agree), which allows respondents to express the intensity of their perceptions in a structured format. This scale is widely used in behavioural studies because it enhances comparability and facilitates statistical analysis.

Data Collection Procedure

Data were collected using an online survey distributed through Google Forms. This method was chosen because it provides easy access to respondents, especially those who actively use social media and frequently follow F&B content online. The online format also allows respondents to answer the questionnaire at their convenience, ensuring higher accuracy and honesty in responses. To diversify the respondent pool, the survey link was shared both online and offline. Offline data collection involved approaching customers at selected F&B outlets near Ampang Point and inviting them to participate by scanning a QR code. All questions were phrased clearly and neutrally to minimise response bias and ensure reliable data. Respondents' anonymity was maintained to encourage honest and uninfluenced answers.

Data Analysis

The collected data were analysed using the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS) software. SPSS was selected because it enables comprehensive statistical analysis and is suitable for descriptive and inferential methods. The analysis process involved several steps, including:

- Descriptive statistics to summarise demographic profiles and social media usage patterns.
- Correlation analysis to examine the relationship between social media platform usage and online consumer engagement.
- Graphical outputs such as charts and frequency tables to illustrate trends and patterns in a clear manner. SPSS allowed the researcher to identify meaningful associations between variables, interpret engagement levels across platforms, and present findings in a structured and understandable format.

5. Findings and Discussion

Frequency Analysis of Categorical Variables

Age

Table 1: Frequency Distribution of Age

Age	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
18 – 24	82	41.0	41.0	41.0
25 – 34	59	29.5	29.5	70.5
35 – 44	32	16.0	16.0	86.5
45 – 54	16	8.0	8.0	94.5
55 and above	11	5.5	5.5	100.0

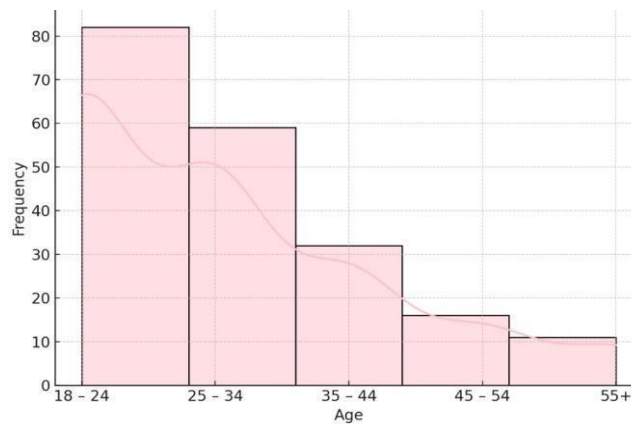


Figure 1: Bar Chart Frequency Distribution of Age

Table 1 presents the frequency distribution of participants' ages. The majority of respondents fall within the 18–24 age group, representing 41% of the sample. This is followed by those aged 25–34 (29.5%). Meanwhile, 16% of respondents are aged 35–44, 8% are aged 45–54, and only 5.5% are 55 years and above. These findings indicate that the largest proportion of participants are young adults aged 18–24.

Gender

Table 2: Frequency Distribution of Gender

Gender	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Female	124	62.0	62.0	62.0
Male	76	38.0	38.0	100.0

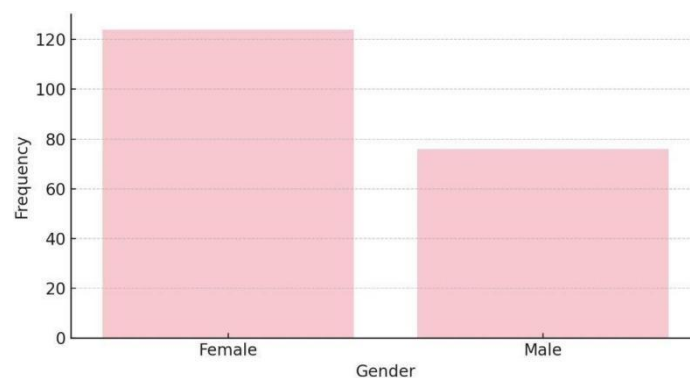


Figure 2: Bar Chart Frequency Distribution of Gender

Table 2 and Figure 2 show the gender distribution of respondents, with female participants representing 62.0% of the sample and male participants comprising 38.0%. This indicates that female consumers form the majority of social media users in this study. The noticeable gap suggests that women are more active and responsive to online content related to influencer marketing compared to men. This aligns with existing findings that female consumers tend to engage more frequently with online purchasing activities, especially in areas such as beauty, fashion, lifestyle, and food-related content. Therefore, F&B businesses and digital marketers may benefit from tailoring content that resonates with female audiences—such as visually appealing posts, influencer endorsements, and trend-focused materials—as these are likely to generate higher engagement and reach within this demographic.

Reliability Analysis

**Table 3: Reliability analysis of social media
Case Processing Summary**

		N	%
Cases	Valid	200	100.0
	Excluded ^a	0	.0
	Total	200	100.0

a. Listwise deletion based on all variables in the procedure.

Reliability Statistics

Cronbach's Alpha	N of Items
.715	4

Table 3 presents the reliability analysis for the independent variable measuring social media usage. The case processing summary indicates that all 200 responses (100%) were valid and included in the analysis, with no cases removed through listwise deletion. The reliability statistics show a Cronbach's Alpha value of .715 for the four items used to assess the social media construct. This coefficient reflects an acceptable level of internal consistency, indicating that the items reliably measure the same underlying construct of social media usage and are suitable for further statistical analysis.

Descriptive Analysis

Table 4: Descriptive analysis table of independent variables (social media)
SOCIAL MEDIA

		Statistic	Std. Error
SM	Mean	3.0913	.05192
	95% Confidence Interval for Mean	Lower Bound	2.9889
		Upper Bound	3.1936
	5% Trimmed Mean	3.0819	
	Median	3.0000	
	Variance	.539	
	Std. Deviation	.73420	
	Minimum	1.00	
	Maximum	5.00	
	Range	4.00	
	Interquartile Range	1.00	
	Skewness	.137	.172
	Kurtosis	.271	.342

Based on Table 4, the descriptive statistics for the social media variable provide a detailed overview of its central tendency and distribution. The mean score is 3.0913 with a standard error of 0.05192, and the 95% confidence interval ranges from 2.9889 to 3.1936, indicating that the true population mean is likely to fall within this interval. The 5% trimmed mean is slightly higher at 3.0819, suggesting minimal influence of outliers on the overall mean. The median value of 3.0 reflects a relatively balanced distribution around the central point. The variance is 0.539, while the standard deviation of approximately 0.7342 indicates a moderate level of variability among respondents. The data span a range of 4.00, from a minimum of 1.00

to a maximum of 5.00, with an interquartile range of 1.00, showing that the middle 50% of scores are moderately concentrated. The skewness value of 0.137 (standard error = 0.172) suggests a very slight positive skew, indicating that the distribution has a marginally longer right tail. The kurtosis value of 0.271 (standard error = 0.342) implies that the distribution is slightly flatter than a normal curve, but overall, it remains sufficiently close to a normal distribution for inferential analysis.

Correlation Analysis

Table 5: Correlation Analysis
Correlations

		SM	IF	OC	P	BC	OCE
SM	Pearson Correlation	1	.680**	.638**	.575**	.554**	.626**
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.000	.000	.000	.000	.000
	N	200	200	200	200	200	200
IF	Pearson Correlation	.680**	1	.675**	.622**	.643**	.593**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000		.000	.000	.000	.000
	N	200	200	200	200	200	200
OC	Pearson Correlation	.638**	.675**	1	.753**	.706**	.602**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	.000		.000	.000	.000
	N	200	200	200	200	200	200
P	Pearson Correlation	.575**	.622**	.753**	1	.649**	.529**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	.000	.000		.000	.000
	N	200	200	200	200	200	200
BC	Pearson Correlation	.554**	.643**	.706**	.649**	1	.543**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	.000	.000	.000		.000
	N	200	200	200	200	200	200
OCE	Pearson Correlation	.626**	.593**	.602**	.529**	.543**	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	.000	.000	.000	.000	
	N	200	200	200	200	200	200

Table 5 presents the correlation analysis for the social media (SM) variable, demonstrating strong positive relationships with all other variables in this study. The results indicate that social media usage plays a crucial role in enhancing users' experiences on digital platforms. Among the variables, social media shows the highest correlation with Influencer (IF) at .680, followed by Online Content (OC) at .638, and Online Consumer Engagement (OCE) at .626. These findings suggest that effective use of social media platforms is strongly associated with the presence of influencers, the quality of online content, and higher levels of consumer engagement. Additionally, social media maintains moderate positive correlations with Product (P) and Brand Collaboration (BC), further highlighting its importance across multiple digital marketing components. The correlations collectively emphasise the need for businesses to integrate strategic social media approaches into their digital marketing efforts to strengthen user engagement, improve content reach, and enhance customer relationship management.

Theoretical Implications

This research presents numerous key theoretical additions to the current literature on digital marketing and online customer behavior, specifically within the context of the F&B business in Malaysia. Firstly, the results corroborate and expand the understanding of online consumer engagement as a multifaceted entity driven by cognitive, emotional, and behavioral processes. By showing that visual appeal, interaction, influencer participation, and platform responsiveness greatly impact engagement, the research confirms prior conceptualisations by Brodie et al. (2013) and Dessart et al. (2015) but adds fresh data from a Malaysian urban environment. Secondly, the research enhances the application of Word-of-Mouth (WOM) Theory and electronic WOM (eWOM) inside social media-driven marketplaces. The findings suggest that user-generated content and peer interactions on platforms like TikTok, Instagram,

and Facebook continue to affect consumer views and purchase choices. This reinforces the premise that WOM remains very important in digital ecosystems, where suggestions, pictures, and influencers play key persuasive roles. Finally, the research adds to platform-specific marketing theories by proving that not all social media platforms effect engagement in the same manner. This underscores the necessity of contextualising interaction research within unique cultural, industrial, and technical situations rather than assuming universal consumer habits across platforms.

Managerial Implications

From a management viewpoint, the results give useful insights for food and beverage (F&B) firms wanting to increase their digital presence and attract consumers via social media marketing. First, the findings reveal that high-quality visual material is vital for catching customer attention, especially on visually focused platforms such as Instagram and TikTok. Businesses should invest in quality food photography, innovative video production, and aesthetic presentation to improve interaction. Second, interaction appeared as a big element driving engagement, indicating that marketers should leverage tools like as surveys, Q&A sessions, Instagram Stories, and comment responses to actively engage their audience. Third, influencer cooperation has a crucial impact in molding customer opinions, meaning that collaborations with micro- or macro-influencers may dramatically improve reach and credibility. Fourth, response matters—consumers demand prompt answers to messages, comments, and feedback. Brands that react fast generate stronger emotional ties and develop trust. Lastly, managers may utilize these data to deploy resources more efficiently by concentrating on platforms and content types that return the best engagement rather than distributing efforts over too many channels without a strategic strategy.

Limitations of the Study

Despite the valuable insights generated by this study, several limitations should be acknowledged to guide the interpretation of results and inform future research. First, the study relies on self-reported data collected through a structured questionnaire. This means that respondents' perceptions may not always reflect their actual behaviour due to biases such as social desirability or selective memory. Second, the study focuses only on consumers in the Ampang Point area of Kuala Lumpur, which limits the generalisability of the findings to other geographic areas, particularly rural regions or different cultural contexts within Malaysia. Third, the study uses a convenience sampling method, which may not represent the broader population accurately, especially when considering age, socioeconomic background, or varying levels of digital literacy. Fourth, the research only examines three social media platforms—Facebook, Instagram, and TikTok—while omitting other emerging platforms such as YouTube Shorts, X (Twitter), or WhatsApp Business, which also influence consumer engagement. Finally, the study emphasises correlation rather than causation, meaning that while significant relationships were found between variables, the research cannot definitively prove cause-and-effect relationships. Future studies could incorporate experimental or longitudinal designs to address this gap.

6. Conclusion

This study set out to examine how social media platforms and specific content elements influence online consumer engagement among F&B consumers in the Ampang Point area. The findings highlight that engagement is shaped by several platform-specific and content-specific factors, including visual appeal, interactivity, influencer collaboration, and brand responsiveness. These results emphasise that engagement is not merely a passive outcome but

a dynamic process influenced by consumer expectations, digital interactions, and platform design. The study also confirms that engagement plays an important role in shaping consumer behavioural outcomes, particularly purchase intention and brand loyalty. As social media continues to evolve and dominate consumer decision-making processes, F&B businesses must adopt strategic, personalised, and visually compelling digital marketing techniques to remain competitive. By understanding the drivers of engagement, businesses can design content that resonates with consumers, builds emotional connections, and strengthens long-term loyalty. Overall, this research contributes valuable insights to digital marketing literature and offers practical guidance to practitioners aiming to optimise online engagement within Malaysia's rapidly digitalising F&B landscape.

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Conflict of Interest Statement

The authors declare that there is no conflict of interest regarding the publication of this study.

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