



INVESTIGATING BRAND AWARENESS DURING COVID-19 PANDEMIC IN THE MALAYSIAN HOTEL INDUSTRY

Haziqah Fatinah Binti Sulaiman^a, Daria Gom^{b*}, Mary Monica Jiony^c

^{a,b,c} *Labuan Faculty of International Finance, University Malaysia Sabah, Labuan, Malaysia.*

**Corresponding author's email: daria@ums.edu.my*

ABSTRACT

This research aims to investigate brand awareness during the COVID-19 pandemic in the Malaysian hotel industry. It specifically focuses on how brand awareness among Malaysian consumers during the COVID-19 pandemic is influenced by customer engagement and perceived quality. The population of the research consists of the customers who have patronised any hotels in Malaysia. In this research, quantitative method has been used and research data has been obtained via online questionnaires shared on social media. Convenience sampling method was applied and a total of 211 questionnaires were collected. To test the hypotheses, the social science statistical package (SPSS) version 27 was used. The findings clearly demonstrated that brand awareness among Malaysian customers during the COVID-19 pandemic is positively influenced by perceived quality and customer engagement. This study extends the limited literature on hospitality in the Malaysian hotel industry. Additionally, these findings have implications for improving customer engagement, perceived quality, and brand awareness in order to retain customers and gain a competitive advantage.

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1. INTRODUCTION

The hotel industry in Malaysia is in the throes of the most severe crisis ever as a result of the COVID-19 outbreak. The corona infection epidemic initially struck Wuhan, China in 2019 and was brought on by travel globally. Until June 10th, 2020, the Malaysian conditional movement control order (MCO) was replaced by a more permissive version referred to as Recovery Movement Control Order (RMCO). Hair salons, barbershops, and the most important domestic tourism operations are among the permitted activities that were allowed to operate. Interstate travel was permitted and was a pleasant news for the hotel industry, that is currently battling for its very existence while also planning for the

future (Shari et al, 2020).¹ The unprecedented COVID-19 pandemic is expected to pass, and the hotel industry will thrive once more in the face of new operating procedures and changes in customer behaviour (Deloitte, 2020).²

Malaysia's hotel industry is growing, because of the rising contribution of tourism (Boon, Chin, Brian, & Mansori, 2018).³ The hotel industry is critical to tourism because it provides places for travellers to stay (Makhsun et al., 2018). The level of competition among Malaysia's hotels is increasing, as the number of hotels that have opened since 2015 has increased significantly. In addition, the increasing number of Malaysians renting hotels has a significant impact on the country's economy (Anne & Sonia, 2018).⁴ Tourism is the second-fastest expanding industry in the world, according to Sushila et al. (2015). After manufacturing, tourism is Malaysia's second-largest contribution to GDP. Malaysia has a vast range of tourist attractions, such as natural wonders, cultural landmarks, historical sites, outdoor activities, and other forms of entertainment. Currently, the worldwide hotel industry is growing at a rapid pace. People are increasingly using hotels when they travel for a variety of reasons, such as work trips, family visits, and vacations.⁵

The hotel industry is constantly evolving, but this is not because of its nature, but rather because of the needs of the time. There have been several new and advanced hotel concepts introduced to the market over the years, leading to the emergence and growth of new hotel trends. The hotel industry caters to those who are willing to pay a premium for the hotel's services while they are away from home. In general, customers are treated as guests, which is why hotels are referred to as "homes away from home." Hotel revenue is directly tied to the number of guests using the hotel's amenities, such as its restaurants, bars, event rooms, spa, gym, beauty salon, and swimming pools, regardless of how opulent the hotel may be. It is a direct customer-based industry focused on customer pleasure and retention in order to earn long-term loyalty towards their brand (Hussain et al., 2019).⁶

The COVID-19 pandemic is a problem that impacts the whole world. Travel restrictions, cancellations of events, and people's reluctance to travel all have had a substantial influence on the hotel and tourism industries, as well as the aviation sector. Instead of choosing to lay off their employees during this worst moment, government assists all industries by providing subsidies through the stimulus package. However, the stimulus package is insufficient. Additional measures must be put in place, as well as assistance from the public and private sectors, in order for the hotel industry to recover and regain their former strength (Shari et al., 2020).¹

One critical factor in the success of hospitality firms is developing a strong brand (Xu et al., 2015; Rubio et al, 2014).⁷ A strong and reputable brand creates customer value and attractiveness for hospitality firms as it generates significant portrayals in the memory of consumers. Past research has revealed that there are customers who are unaware of hotel brands, due to the weak branding strategies of hotel establishments. For example, some customers have no idea what hotel chain they stayed at. Successful brand identification relies heavily on brand awareness since it provides customers with both visual and

¹ <http://abrn.asia/ojs/index.php/jpcbr/article/view/102>

² <https://www2.deloitte.com/content/dam/Deloitte/ca/Documents/consumer-industrial-products/ca-future-of-hospitality-pov-aoda-en.pdf>

³ <https://doi.org/10.1108/IJQSS09-2017-0081>

⁴ <https://doi.org/10.1108/IJTC-04-2017-0023>

⁵ <https://doi.org/10.1108/WHATT-06-2015-0026>

⁶ https://www.researchgate.net/publication/341991327_Challenges_Faced_by_Hospitality_Industry_in_India

⁷ 10.1080/09720073.2015.11891712.

auditory signals to identify the brand. According to numerous research, brand awareness affects customer decision-making. Products with greater brand recognition will do better in the market and help the business earn a profit (Shahid et al., 2017). As a result, clients who are not familiar with the brands have a difficult time deciding between them and may take a long time to make a purchase (Macdonald & Sharp, 2003). As an example, when presented with a choice between two similar brands, shoppers are more likely to select the more well-known one. Against this background, the research objectives formulated for this study are as follows:

- i. To determine the effect of customer engagement on Malaysian customers' brand awareness of the hotel industry and
- ii. To examine the influence of perceived quality on Malaysian customers' brand awareness of the hotel industry.

The first section of this paper discusses the Malaysian hotel industry and the significance of a strong hotel brand as one of the measures for hotels success in the face of the current COVID-19 pandemic situation. The section that follows provides a brief review of the literature on brand awareness, customer engagement, and perceived quality. The section then moves on to the research method, data analysis, results, discussion and conclusion. The study's implications, limitations and future research are presented in the final section.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 Brand awareness

The strength of a brand in a consumer's mind is known as brand awareness. To put it another way, it refers to the degree to which a brand is ingrained in the minds of consumers (Foroudi, 2019). The degree of consumer acceptance, recall, and brand recognition constitute brand awareness (Bilgin, 2018). As favourable cues are ignited in a consumer's mind, brand awareness is regarded as a significant factor in brand equity and purchasing intention (Usman & Qonita, 2019).⁸ In a study done by Sigit (2018), consumers' attitudes about a brand and the advertising attitude of a brand are interdependent and contribute to higher awareness of a brand. Additionally, Świtała et al., (2018) expressed that brand recognition is critical because it is the first thing customers think about before making a purchase decision. According to the author, when a buyer gets the "I recognize that brand!" moment, they are more likely to reach or even purchase the well-known brand before any other unfamiliar brand. As previously said, brand recognition can only occur if a product or service leaves a lasting impression on the mind of the customer. This could imply that brand awareness occurs even if the consumer's knowledge of the brand is associated with unpleasant emotions. As a result, brand recognition must be associated with good feelings for businesses to reap the rewards (Alhaddad, 2015b).

2.2 Customer engagement

Customer engagement can be defined as the degree to which customers are involved with a product or service (Pansari and Kumar, 2017). Earlier studies have shown that keeping customers engaged is critical to long-term business success. It has been described as an effort made by a business to encourage, empower, and measure customer participation in marketing activities (Harmeling et al., 2016).⁹ Based on Venkatesan's study (2017), he found that customers are constantly linked to other brands, businesses, and organizations.

⁸ <https://doi.org/10.2139/ssrn.3511716>

⁹ [10.1007/s11747-016-0509-2](https://doi.org/10.1007/s11747-016-0509-2).

Samala et al. (2019) found that customer engagement results in increased consumer focus on brand awareness, while Abbasi et al. (2020) discovered that customer engagement enhances brand recognition via word-of-mouth communication. An important part of customer engagement is that it encourages customers to stay and learn more about the hotel and its brand if they had a pleasant experience there. The favourable feelings that customers experience, then, will lead to increased enthusiasm and immersion (Cheung, Shen, Lee, & Chan, 2015). As a result, the following can be said:

H1: Customer engagement has a positive effect on brand awareness among Malaysian customers in the hotel industry.

2.3 Perceived quality

Perceived quality can be described as a consumer's assessment of a product or service's excellence and superiority in a market (Marakanon & Panjakajornsak, 2017). To put it another way, customers evaluate a product or service based on how well it compares to others on the market. Regarding brand awareness, perceptions of quality play a big role. Consumers who value a product's perceived quality spread the word about it. According to Alhaddad's (2015a) study, consumers' perceptions of a product's performance are what determine perceived quality. Perceived quality was also found to have a significant impact on brand loyalty and recognition in this research. Customers are more likely to make a purchase from a company with a better reputation for quality. According to Khuong & Tram (2015), consumers are more likely to become aware of a brand if they believe the product's quality to be higher. According to Ho et al., (2015), a product with a higher perceived quality has a greater brand awareness, and customers are more likely to buy the product. As a result, the following can be said:

H2: Perceived quality has a positive effect on brand awareness among customers in the hotel industry.

3. METHODOLOGY

This study aims to investigate the impact of customer engagement and perceived quality on brand awareness during COVID-19 pandemic within the hotel industry. The primary data was collected from Malaysian customers who have patronised any hotels in Malaysia. Convenience sampling method was applied in this study.

A survey questionnaire was developed to collect the primary data. There are four (4) sections in the questionnaire: the demographic profile, brand awareness, customer engagement, and perceived quality. A five-point Likert scale was used, with the options being strongly agree, disagree, neutral, disagree, and strongly disagree. The research questionnaire items were adapted from earlier studies by Yoo & Donthu (2001) and Kumar & Pansari (2016) and amended accordingly to reflect the COVID-19 situation.

The questionnaire was created in Google Forms and distributed through social media platforms (WhatsApp, Facebook, and Instagram). Primary data obtained for this study were analysed using SPSS version 27. The research framework of this study is presented in Figure 1.

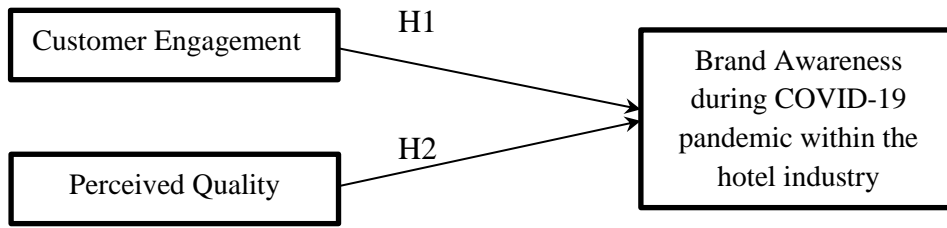


Figure 1: Conceptual Research Framework

4. RESULTS

A total of 211 usable questionnaires were collected from this research. Out of the 211 respondents, 120 (56.9%) were female and 91 (43.1%) were male. Besides, there are three groups of age categories in this study that were gathered. The age ranges between 15 to 22 years old, accounting for 136 people (64.5%) as the highest percentage of the respondents that answered the questionnaires. The age category of 23 to 30 years old had the second-highest response rate with 62 respondents (29.4%). Meanwhile, only 13 people aged 31 and above answered, making it the lowest response percentage of any age group at 6.1%. In addition, this research used data from the 13 states in Malaysia. Areas in Sabah had the largest percentage of responders, with 112 people answering the survey (53.1%). The second-highest percentage (7.6%) came from Selangor, with 16 people responding. Meanwhile, Terengganu residents had the lowest response rate with just one person (0.5%). Furthermore, 113 respondents (53.6%) had a bachelor’s degree, while 60 (28.4%) respondents possessed STPM or a college diploma and 30 (14.1%) respondents with SPM/certificate and below. Table 1 presents a summary of the respondents’ profiles.

Table 1: Profile of respondents.

Demographic Variables	Categories	Frequency	Percentage
Gender	Female	120	56.9
	Male	91	43.1
Age	15-22	136	64.5
	23-30	62	29.4
	31 and above	13	6.1
State of Residence	Johor	9	4.3
	Melaka	7	3.3
	Negeri Sembilan	3	1.4
	Selangor	16	7.6
	Wilayah Persekutuan	10	4.8
	Pahang	2	0.9
	Pulau Pinang	12	5.7
	Terengganu	1	0.5
	Kelantan	14	6.6
	Kedah	6	2.8
	Perak	4	1.9
	Perlis	2	0.9
	Sabah	112	53.1
	Sarawak	13	6.2
Level of Education	SPM/certificate and below	30	14.2
	STPM/College Diploma	60	28.4
	Bachelor’s Degree	113	53.6
	Master’s Degree	7	3.3
	Doctoral Degree	1	0.5

Source: Developed for the research

4.1 Factor analysis

According to Ather & Nimalathan (2009), factor analysis (FA) aims to uncover common dimensions or factors that connect disparate variables together and, as a result, provides insight into the underlying data structure to clarify complicated and dynamic interactions between a series of variables.

Table 2: KMO and Bartlett's Test.

Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin Measure of Sampling Adequacy.		0.900
Bartlett's Test of Sphericity	Approx. Chi-Square	1269.341
	Df	66
	Sig.	0.000

Table 3: Total variance explained.

Component	Extraction Sums of Squared Loadings		
	Total	% Of Variance	Cumulative
Brand Awareness	5.935	49.458	49.458
Customer engagement	5.058	42.147	42.147
Perceived quality	2.266	18.884	61.031

Extraction Method: Principal Component Analysis.

Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin (KMO) was applied to measure the adequacy of the data. A high value (close to 1-0) generally indicate that a factor analysis might be useful for the data. This sample index has a range of 0 to 1. This measurement's significant values ranging from 0.5 to 1.0 are considered high, while values below 0.5 are regarded as low (Hair et al, 2006). As presented in Table 2, the study's KMO sample adequacy score is at 0.900, which indicate that the data supported the use of factor analysis, that allows grouping the data into smaller set of underlying factors. Bartlett's sphericity test has a sig value of 0.000, which is considered to have a 95% confidence level. This implies that there were ample associations between the variables to continue with the study of the factor. The three extracted components together explained 61.03% of variance, as presented in Table 3.

4.2 Reliability analysis

Cronbach's Alpha was the first test to be run as part of reliability analysis in SPSS. Cronbach's α -coefficient is used to check the consistency of items' reliability measures. The maximum value of Cronbach's α is 1, and a higher Cronbach's α value indicates greater internal consistency. The best Cronbach's α -coefficient is found at 0.7 and higher. If the result is less than 0.7, the test is considered unreliable because the test items do not measure the same thing (Dempster & Hanna, 2015). As presented in Table 4, Cronbach's α values for customer engagement (0.914) and perceived quality (0.715) are greater than 0.7, indicating that the research findings are reliable. There is a good convergent validity for the measurement model as demonstrated in Table 4. The higher the AVE, the more valid the construct, and the individual variables are (Hair et al., 2006). The average variance extracted (AVE) for customer engagement is 0.6151, and perceived quality is 0.5219, indicating the validity of the respective constructs that exceeds the threshold of 0.50. Composite reliability was also used to verify internal consistency, with a value of

over 0.70 being regarded as appropriate (Fornell & Larcker, 1981). All the variables have reliability coefficients that exceed 0.7; therefore, all the variables are statistically reliable and should not be deleted. Consumer engagement (0.9270) and perceived quality (0.8117) both have composite reliability (CR) of over 0.70.

Table 4: Reliability analysis.

Variables	No. of Items	Cronbach's Alpha	AVE	CR
Consumer Engagement	8	0.914	0.6151	0.9270
Perceived Quality	4	0.715	0.5219	0.8117

Note: Average Variance Extracted (AVE) and Composite Reliability (CR).

4.3 Descriptive analysis

Table 5 shows descriptive statistics for the variables, namely brand awareness, consumer engagement, and perceived quality. The scale used to measure the items is a five-point Likert scale. The mean, as used in statistics, reflects the average value across all observations. The higher the mean, the more respondents agreed with the variables, while the lower the mean, the more respondents disagreed or had a negative opinion toward the variables. Standard deviation, on the other hand, is a statistic that is calculated as the square root of the variance and is used to measure the dispersion of a data set in relation to the mean. The higher the standard deviation, the greater the data dispersion. Researchers frequently prefer the smaller standard deviation because it indicates less dispersion in a dataset and provides more precise information from the dataset because it indicates that it is closely clustered around the mean.

Brand awareness consists of 12 items, with mean values ranging from 3.2 to 4.13 and standard deviations ranging from 0.944 to 1.280. The item “I recognize the hotel brand because I used to pay and rent it before” score the highest mean compared to other items, and the item that has the highest standard deviation is “I only recognize popular hotel brands such as Hyatt Hotel, Dorsett Hotel, Shangri-La Hotel, and etc”. Consumer engagement consists of 8 items, with the mean ranging from 3.68 to 4.08 and the standard deviation ranging from 0.977 to 1.218. When compared to other items, the item “I only spend more time on hotels I find interesting” has the highest mean, while the item “I will make hotel purchases if the hotel is engaging” has the highest standard deviation in consumer engagement. Perceived quality consists of 4 items, with a mean range of 3.05 to 3.79 and a standard deviation range of 1.002 to 1.342. The item “I assume that the more popular a brand, the better quality is the hotel” has the highest mean among the items, while the item “Quality is the most important aspect of a hotel” has the highest standard deviation.

Table 5: Descriptive statistics.

	Mean values	Std. Deviation
Brand Awareness	3.2 to 4.13	0.944 to 1.280
Consumer Engagement	3.68 to 4.08	0.977 to 1.218
Perceived Quality	3.05 to 3.79	1.002 to 1.342

4.4 Correlation matrix

Coefficients are computed by applying correlation analysis to two sets of numerical data (Nargundkar, 2008). If the correlation coefficient value is -1, it indicates a negative correlation between the variables; however, if it is 1, it indicates a positive correlation

between them (Baker & Hart, 2016). While values from 0.10 to 0.29 are regarded as poor, those from 0.30 to 0.49 are deemed medium, and those from 0.50 to 1.0 are considered strong (Wong & Hiew, 2005).

Table 6 displays the correlation matrix using Pearson correlations. The average score for a construct was derived from several items, and this average score was then used in the correlation analysis. Brand awareness correlates positively with consumer engagement ($r = .647, p < 0.001$), and a medium positive correlation with perceived quality ($r = .416, p < 0.001$). Customer engagement has a medium positive correlation ($r = .352, p < 0.001$) with perceived quality.

Table 6: Correlation analysis.

	Brand Awareness	Consumer Engagement	Perceived Quality
Brand Awareness	1		
Consumer Engagement	.647**	1	.
Perceived Quality	.416**	.352**	1
Mean	44.6857	31.5640	13.9431
SD	9.36635	6.82987	3.50056

Note: ** Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

4.5 Regression analysis

The hypothesised relationship between the independent and dependent variables was tested using multiple regression analysis. It was performed to analyse the link between perceived quality (an independent variable), brand awareness (an independent variable), as well as consumer engagement (an independent variable) and brand awareness (dependent variables).

To determine whether there is a significant relationship among the variables, the t -statistic and p -value were analysed. As a result of these findings, the formulated hypotheses were either accepted or rejected. R^2 , known as the coefficient of determination, was used in the multiple regression analysis to gauge the model's overall strength. It measures how closely the fitted regression line resembles the original data. R square 1 is the ratio of residual variability minus one. The R^2 will fall at the value from 0 to 1.0 depending on the independent variables related to the dependent variable. The R^2 can also be used to explain the strength of each independent variable. The standardised beta coefficients are used to compare the strength of each independent variable's effect on the dependent variable after the R square is evaluated. In general, the stronger the effect of an independent variable is, the higher the beta coefficient. The beta coefficient measures the change in the outcome variable as a result of a 1-unit change in the predictor variable. The standardised beta coefficients can range from -1 to +1. To put it another way, a negative beta coefficient means that for every unit increase in one of the predictor variables (the independent variables), the outcome variables will decrease by that same amount (the dependent variables). Standardised beta coefficients can then be used to compare the relative importance of independent variables in a regression model.

4.5.1 Multiple regression analysis of consumer engagement with brand awareness

Customer engagement and perceived quality were analysed using multiple regressions, as shown in Table 7 (independent variables). Regarding H1, customer

engagement has a beneficial impact on brand awareness among Malaysian consumers in the hotel industry; the link was determined at $\beta = 0.647$, t -value = 12.248, and $p = 0.000$). The p -value is < 0.01 and the t -value > 1.96 . In other words, the results supported H1 and confirmed the existence of a significant link between customer engagement and brand awareness. The standardised beta coefficient of this model is $\beta = 0.647$ indicating a clear correlation between increased brand awareness and customer engagement. Brand awareness rose by 0.647 for every unit increase in customer engagement.

Table 7: Multiple regression analysis of consumer engagement with brand awareness.

Coefficients														
Model		Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficient S	T	Sig.	95.0% Confidence Interval for B		Correlations			Collinearity Statistics		
		B	Std. Error	Beta			Lower Bound	Upper Bound	Zero Order	Partial	Part	Tolerance	VIF	
1	(Constant)	16.666	2.340		7.121	0.000	12.052	21.280						
	SE	0.888	0.072	0.647	12.248	0.000	0.745	1.031	0.647	0.647	0.647	1.000	1.000	

a. Dependent Variable: SA

Note: $R^2=0.419$, Adjusted $R^2=0.416$

4.5.2 Multiple regression analysis of brand awareness with perceived quality

Table 8 shows the multiple regression analysis of brand awareness with perceived quality as an independent variable.

Table 8: Multiple regression analysis of brand awareness with perceived quality.

Coefficients ^a													
Model		Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficient S	T	Sig.	95.0% Confidence Interval for B		Correlations			Collinearity Statistics	
		B	Std. Error	Beta			Lower Bound	Upper Bound	Zero Order	Partial	Part	Tolerance	VIF
1	(Constant)	29.149	2.424		12.023	0.000	24.370	33.929					
	SQ	1.114	0.169	0.416	6.606	0.000	0.782	1.447	0.416	0.416	0.416	1.000	1.000

a. Dependent Variable: SA

Note: $R^2=0.173$, Adjusted $R^2=0.169$

Overall, the R^2 indicated 0.173, which means 17% variation in brand awareness explained by perceived quality in the model. Regarding H2, perceived quality having a favourable impact on purchase intention and brand awareness among Malaysian consumers in the

hotel industry, as per the results at $\beta = 0.416$, t -value = 6.606, $p = 0.012$. The p -value is < 0.05 and the t -value > 1.96 . Therefore, the finding validates H3 and confirms the existence of a strong link between perceived quality and brand awareness. Having a standardised beta coefficient of $\beta = 0.416$, this showed that perceived quality has a significant influence on brand awareness. Brand awareness rises by 0.416 for every unit increase in perceived quality.

5. DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSIONS

The goal of this study is to examine the cause and effect of the variables on one another. Customer engagement, and perceived quality are the independent variables and brand awareness is the dependent variable.

SPSS, a statistical analysis package was utilised to analyse the data collected from this research. The tests include measuring all variables above the recommended Cronbach's alpha test value of 0.905 and 0.715 for dependent and independent variables respectively, and above 0.5 for average variance extracted (AVE). Multiple regression analysis examines the correlation between the variables to test the hypotheses. According to the results, customers' engagement and perceived quality have a significant impact on brand awareness. The results of the two hypotheses of the study are presented in Table 9.

Table 9: Results of hypotheses

Hypotheses	Decision
H1: Customer engagement has a positive effect on brand awareness among Malaysian customers in the hotel industry.	Supported
H2: Perceived quality has a positive effect on brand awareness among Malaysian customers in the hotel industry.	Supported

Several significant findings emerged from this research. First, the results indicated that customer engagement positively influences Malaysian customers' brand awareness (H1). There is a strong link between the Malaysian customers' engagement and brand awareness. This is because loyalty and trust are built through reliability and consistency; the same holds true for customer engagement (Genco, 2020).¹⁰ According to NielsonIQ (2018), a company's ability to secure a market for its products is determined by how well it builds a brand and drives brand awareness.¹¹ As a result, hypothesis H1 is supported.

The customers' positive perception of the quality of the hotel promotes brand awareness of the hotel (H2). According to the findings, customers' brand awareness is positively impacted by perceived quality. Perceived quality is the most important factor in creating customers' brand awareness through the bond of customer loyalty towards the brand (Biedenbach & Marell, 2009).¹² Past research have reported that customers who have a positive image of a brand have a favourable attitude toward the brand's products and, as a result, toward the brand's product quality (Burton et al. 2001). Therefore, hypothesis H2 is supported.

¹⁰<https://bettermarketing.pub/how-consistency-reliability-and-trust-achieve-influence-without-persuasion-7d2a9e306a3>

¹¹ <https://www.nielsen.com/us/en/insights/resource/2018/improve-brand-performance/>

¹² <https://doi.org/10.1057/bm.2009.37>

6. IMPLICATION OF THEORY AND PRACTICE

Customer awareness of perceived quality and management of brand awareness are two key takeaways from this research for marketers or practitioners. This study looked at the link between customer engagement and perceived quality to see if it had an impact on the growth of brand awareness. According to Venkatesan (2017), customers are constantly linked to other brands, firms, companies, and so on. To attract and retain customers, a company must manage and engage their customers. Table 10 summarises the implications for management theory and practice, as well as areas of agreement and disagreement across the research.

According to the findings, there is a strong link between customer engagement and perceived quality and brand awareness. Based on Banytė and Gadeikienė's study (2015), when a customer's emotions are linked to a brand, it affects the frequency of customer engagement. This means that the more a company tries to connect with its customers on an emotional level, the more frequently customers engage with the company. Additionally, increased customer-brand interaction will boost brand awareness and encourage customer retention and/or loyalty. Perceived quality, or how a customer views the brand's quality, is another factor that contributes to brand awareness. According to Alhaddad's research (2015a), perceived quality has a significant impact on brand loyalty and awareness. The strong implication is that how a customer perceives a brand and its connection to brand awareness should be acknowledged.

To summarise, when trying to raise or develop brand awareness, marketers should acknowledge the role of customer engagement and perceived quality. Customers' perceptions of a brand will be shaped by the importance of these two factors. Increasing the market presence of a brand is critical for marketers because it demonstrates capability and merits recognition.

Table 10: Implication for theory and management

Issues raised by findings	Agreements and disagreements in literature	How the findings support/disagree with previous Research	Implication for theory /Management
Customer engagement has a significant effect on brand awareness	<p>Agreement</p> <p>Customer engagement that has proven to be valuable should be maintained because it can lead to increased brand awareness and loyalty (Venkatesan, 2007).</p>	<p>Support</p> <p>According to the results of this research, customer engagement has a significant impact on brand awareness.</p>	<p>Marketers should cultivate customer engagement through direct or indirect communication because it can increase the amount of time they spend actively using, hearing, seeing, or feeling the brand, which can aid in the creation of an emotional and behavioural connection.</p>
Perceived quality has a significant effect on brand awareness	<p>Agreement</p> <p>Perceived quality has a significant impact on brand loyalty and brand awareness (Alhaddad, 2015a).</p>	<p>Support</p> <p>According to the findings of this study, perceived quality has a significant impact on brand awareness.</p>	<p>Marketers must ensure that the quality of a brand's product is correctly and carefully marketed in order to avoid customer disappointment.</p>

7. LIMITATION AND FUTURE RESEARCH

The study's focus is on brand awareness in the hotel industry in the context of customer engagement, and perceived quality among Malaysians, as well as the effects of customer engagement, and perceived quality on brand awareness.

There are several limitations that exist in this study. The first limitation is the possibility of biases and sampling errors due to the use of a convenient sampling method to obtain data. This sampling technique is highly susceptible to selection bias and are beyond the control of the researcher. It also has a significant sampling error since numerous respondents may be pressed for time or seeking to conceal their true feelings in order to avoid answering the questionnaire correctly. The second limitation is that only participants who had access to the internet can participate in the survey. It lacks generalizability in understanding what other groups of consumers think about the Malaysian hotel industry.

In addition to expanding the body of knowledge, it may be worthwhile to conduct qualitative research to acquire a deeper understanding of hotel customers' brand awareness. Future research should also delve deeper into other potential variables to gain a better understanding of the role of brand awareness. For instance, cross-cultural research has discovered that social culture and customs influence consumers' choice of a specific brand. They will then have an impact on the importance of brand awareness.

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