BRANDING AND DIGITAL TOUCHPOINTS AS THE COMPETITIVE EDGE FOR THE SERVICE FIRMS IN THE OMNI-CHANNEL ENVIRONMENT

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AUGUST 2021

Branding and Digital Touchpoints as the Competitive
Edge for the Service Firms in the Omni-channel
Environment

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A research project submitted in partial fulfilment of the
requirement for the degree of

Master of Business Administration

Universiti Tunku Abdul Rahman

Faculty of Accountancy and Management

December 2021

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DECLARATION

I hereby declare that:

(1) This Research Project is the end result of my own work and that due acknowledgement has been given in the references to all sources of information be they printed, electronic, or personal.

(2) No portion of this research project has been submitted in support of any application for any other degree or qualification of this or any other university, or other institutes of learning.

(3) The word count of this research project is <u>18073</u>.

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ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

First of all, I would like to express my heartfelt gratitude to my supervisor Assistance Professor Dr. Sia Bee Chuan for her continuous patience, guidance, support, motivation and expansive knowledge provided throughout my MBA research project journey. I am truly appreciative for her valuable advice and recommendations in assisting me to complete this research project.

Secondly, I take this opportunity to give special thanks to my family members who have supported my decision to pursue my studies in MBA with Universiti Tunku Abdul Rahman (UTAR). Their continuous encouragement and emotional support have been my source of strength to complete my MBA while working.

Thirdly, I would also like to express my gratitude to all the lecturers who have taught me throughout my MBA studies. It has been enlightening to learn and receive extensive knowledge from you all which I could apply in the work environment.

Last but not least, I would like to acknowledge and thank all the staff especially Pn. Zuraini from the Faculty and Institute of Postgraduate Studies and Research (IPSR) for being helpful throughout my MBA studies in UTAR. It has been a great experience for me at UTAR with your kind assistance.

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ABSTRACT

Financial services industry has been one of the vital industries that contributed towards the global economy. Many financial institutions have started to digitalize their business communications and operations with the advancement of technology. The usage of digital banking in Asia Pacific region has observed increase of trend in the adoption by consumers. Malaysia is one of the countries which has joined the race of digitalization even though still falling behind the regional peers. The lead regulatory of financial institutions of Malaysia, Bank Negara Malaysia (BNM) has made the decision to issue five digital bank licenses in the first quarter of 2022 which has shown the initiative to prepare financial services industry in the country for digital disruption. Hence, the main objective of this research is to determine the relationship of digital touchpoints namely functional touchpoints, social touchpoints and community touchpoints on brand image towards customers' loyalty intention in the financial services industry in Malaysia. A quantitative study was conducted on 300 respondents who are above 18 years old and has experience with financial service providers in Malaysia. The questionnaires were distributed online to the respondents using the non-probability (convenience) sampling method. Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS) version 22 was used to test the hypothesised relationships for this research. The findings revealed that all digital touchpoints have positive direct effect on brand image towards customers' loyalty intention. Therefore, this research suggested that service firms should put more focus on planning and implementing digital touchpoints that can enhance the brand image and subsequently customers' loyalty intention. Last but not least, the outcome of this research aims to provide beneficial insights on the branding and digital touchpoints impact towards customer loyalty from theoretical and practical perspective.

CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

Digitalization is not something new and has been in existence for some time. It has redefined the relationships between service firms and customers as technology penetrates into daily lifestyle of people from conducting financial transactions through internet banking, purchasing groceries online, finding a partner over dating website and many other online activities (Mühleisen, 2018). However, the recent pandemic COVID-19 has seen significant increase on the adoption of online channels by customers which drives many businesses to react by digitalizing their communications and operations (LaBerge et al., 2020). Digital channels usages over Email and social media were found to increase tremendously throughout the pandemic as this seems to be the only way to maintain relationship with customers while physical stores are closed during lockdowns (Gonzalo et al., 2020). Business branding has been known to be an asset of an organization that drives customer decisions, bottom line and differentiation for the customers (Claye et al., 2013). Thus, this research is carried out to have detailed study towards branding and digital touchpoints as the competitive edge for the service firms in the omni-channel environment. This chapter presents brief discussion on the concepts of digital touchpoints, brand image and customers' loyalty intention through research background, the problem which this research will address and research questions and objectives. The researcher will explain how this study make contributions to service firms as well as academicians who are interested in this research area.

Lastly, chapter layout is provided to guide readers through the rest of this research project.

1.1 Research Background

Touchpoints are essential to service firms as it is being defined as interaction points between customers and the brand. Even though the definition of touchpoint is found to be common amongst studies (Ieva & Ziliani, 2018; Lemon & Verhoef, 2016; Maechler et al., 2016a; Richardson, 2010). However, many researchers have categorised touchpoints differently. Richardson (2010) had categorised touchpoints into four (4) categories namely products, interactions, messages and settings which contribute towards customer journey. Customer journeys comprise of different phases such as pre-purchase, purchase, post-purchase and the length of journeys can vary depending on the types of industry, products or services, and pricing level (Maechler et al., 2016). Whereas some researchers have classified touchpoints into online and offline (Ieva & Ziliani, 2018), personal and non-personal (Payne et al., 2017), firm initiated and customer-initiated (Anderl et al., 2016). Furthermore, touchpoints can be managed and controlled by either the service firm itself, third party appointed by the service firm, customers and external factors (Lemon & Verhoef, 2016). Traditionally touchpoints are either through static or human interactions. Customers usually get information over conventional media such as newspapers, radio and television or they may visit physical stores to seek assistance from sales personnel (Vannucci & Pantano, 2019).

However, the Fourth Industrial Revolution has paved the way for digital transformative that drives changes to consumer's lifestyles and competitive landscape of many business sector including financial services. Generally, technological revolutions are seen to be highly disruptive due to the flexibility and penetration of new technology which may require adoption and adapting by the society in order to improve efficiency and productivity (Mühleisen, 2018). Based on a research conducted by McKinsey, it was found that the top three digital technologies deployed are traditional web technologies, cloud based services and mobile internet technologies (de la Boutetière et al., 2018). The rise of digital

platforms such as e-commerce and social media have changed customers interaction habits with their favourite brands. Even though digital technologies have been in existence for a period of time but the adoption has been relatively slow until the COVID-19 crisis which has expedite on the digital changes of business communications and operations which may took years (LaBerge et al., 2020). Although Malaysia has recorded second highest e-commerce consumers at 51.2% prior to COVID-19 in year 2018 but it was found that many customers (49.1%) still prefer to visit the physical stores before making any purchasing decision of a product or service (*E-Commerce Consumers Survey 2018*, 2019). In year 2020, e-commerce has recorded growth of two to five times as compared to the number prior to COVID-19 in eight countries (UK, China, US, Spain, Germany, India, France and Japan) (Lund et al., 2021). The e-commerce market in Malaysia has recorded a growth of 37% due to COVID-19 in year 2020 (*Malaysia - Country Commercial Guide*, 2021). Digitalization does not only affect the relationships between enterprises and customers but it also transforms the way employees work (Mühleisen, 2018). According to the research conducted by McKinsey in eight countries, as high as 25% employees may need to transition to new jobs by 2030 post-pandemic due to the shift in trend (Lund et al., 2021).

In the banking and finance industry, customers are shifting towards internet and mobile banking with the rapid adoption of technologies such as internet, smartphones, and other electronic devices. The penetration to population for internet banking increased from 72% in 2016 to 115.2% as of March 2021. As for mobile banking, penetration to population increased from 27.8% in 2016 to 64.8% as of March 2021 (*Internet Banking and Mobile Banking Subscribers*, 2021). This trend will likely to continue based on the increasing number of digital banking consumers especially during the pandemic COVID-19. According to *Internet users survey 2020* (2020), there is a total of 88.7% of the population who are internet user in year 2020. Besides that, internet users that carried out online banking and financial activities have increased from 54.2% in 2018 to 63.8% in 2020. With the pandemic COVID-19, internet users have been found to spend more hours online as compared to year 2018 where there is an increase of percentage for internet users spending above 5 hours onwards. In addition, smartphones are recorded as the most

popular devices used to surf internet at 98.7% (Malaysian Communications and Multimedia Commission, 2020).

In the past, customers tend to interact with their brands over limited offline touchpoints such as face-to-face interaction, telephone calls or through standard mail service. However, the evolution of communications with the appearance of Internet and later on smart devices have shifted it towards online where it provided convenience to customer's interaction. The technological advancement in communications have significantly changed how consumers can interact with brands from offline to online environment with the freedom to choose their preferred touchpoints (Rangaswamy & Van Bruggen, 2005; Payne et al., 2017; Vannucci & Pantano, 2019). This means that service firms and consumers will have wider choice of digital touchpoints for interaction with continuous advancement of technologies in the banking sector (Ganguli & Roy, 2011). Customers no longer need to make a visit to financial service branch to make enquiry or complaint as there are options through digital touchpoints such as website, Email, social media, live chat, and other channels made available to them. Based on a survey by McKinsey, it is observed that quality and availability of digital touchpoints in several sectors including financial services have positive influence on customer satisfaction (Breuer et al., 2020). Therefore, service firms need to focus to create a seamless integration of messaging strategies over multiple touchpoints as consumers today have better access and capabilities to determine which touchpoints that they prefer to use for interaction with the brand throughout the customer journey (Neslin & Shankar, 2009; Bell et al., 2014; Payne et al., 2017). Having said that, it does not mean that service firms should completely ignore offline touchpoints as customers are found to still desire human interactions during their customer journey (Angevine et al., 2018).

According to Rosenbaum et al. (2017), customer journey with high number of touchpoints will not be effective if customers are not engage in all of it. Therefore, service firms should focus and invest on the touchpoints that matter the most to the consumers as this may evolve into brand loyalty (Hogan et al., 2005). According to Singh & Ovsak (2013), consumers' feelings can be developed through touchpoints and this can generate a positive brand image. Ogba & Tan (2009) have discovered that brand image is positively related to consumer loyalty. Brand image and loyalty

needs to be developed over a period of time and this can only be achieved through consistencies of touchpoints across the customer journey (Iglesias et al., 2011; Rudkowski et al., 2020).

1.2 Problem Statement

Technology has played an important role in the evolution of communication. People used to communicate through face-to-face interaction, standard mail, electric telegraph and telephone before technology breakthrough (Rogers, 2019). As technology evolved, consumer habits changes with the availability of wide variety of channels for interactions. Customers are more well informed as they can conveniently conduct research of brands and products or services through online before making any purchasing decision (Hazan & Wagener, 2012).

Consumers that are engaged with multichannel tend to be loyal customers as compared to consumers that uses single channel for interaction (Venkatesan et al., 2007; Payne et al., 2017). Multichannel management refers to the "design, deployment, coordination, and evaluation of channels to enhance customer value through effective customer acquisition, retention and development" (Neslin et al., 2006). These channels may include physical stores, website, e-commerce, mobile platforms, and so on. Even though implementing multichannel strategy may have advantage over single channel but there are also limitations where multichannel does not provide synergetic effects since the channels are deployed independently with no integration of information between the channels (Shi et al., 2020). In comparison, omnichannel management is defined as combination of several available customer touchpoints to optimize customer experience. Information are exchanged between these implemented touchpoints to provide end to end customer experience (Payne et al., 2017). Omnichannel is viewed as a concept developed from multichannel (Kaczorowska-Spychalska, 2017).

Companies are implementing more digital touchpoints to interact with consumers with the technological advancement (Barwitz & Maas, 2018). As highlighted in previous section, findings by McKinsey survey had shown that expansive digital touchpoints tend to receive stronger feedback scores. Apart from that, customer

interest using digital touchpoints have been increasing in the financial services where 40% consumers use online channels to resolve nearly all their service enquiries and the percentage is expected to increase to 47% in future (Breuer et al., 2020). As such, there are many companies that have implemented various digital touchpoints for the sake of jumping into the bandwagon without really understanding the need for it (Straker & Wrigley, 2016). Even though there is an increasing demand for omnichannel from the consumers but companies are still not able to implement this effectively (Shi et al., 2020). Research in the past have proven that the success rate of digital transformation is relatively low. There is less than 26% success rate observed in tech savvy industries such as telecommunications, media and technology whereas there is even lower success rate (4% - 11%) for conventional industries like oil and gas, pharmaceuticals to transform digitally (de la Boutetière et al., 2018).

Digital touchpoints and omnichannel have been gaining popularity in recent years due to the technological development which has change consumer's communication behaviour. Mass broadcast of marketing messages or information using a single channel may no longer be effective as consumer seek for personalization of information that are relevant to their lifestyle (Lemon & Verhoef, 2016; Payne et al., 2017). Many companies have invested digital channels in the hope to replace traditional touchpoints and at the same time reduce cost of interactions. Nevertheless, that is not the case based on a research result where premature adoption of digital touchpoints for customer service can increased the cost per transaction by approximately 18% after implementation (Amar et al., 2019).

There are still very less studies found related to digital touchpoints and branding despite the increase of trend. Most precedent researches either focus on examining digital touchpoints as standalone or relationship of specific channels on brand equity. According to Straker et al. (2015), the researchers have identified digital typologies through content analysis of secondary data. It was suggested to extend the study in future through primary data on the impact of digital channel typologies on customer responses for better understanding so managers of service firm may plan effective digital channel designs.

Hence, it is important for service firms to determine the digital touchpoints that consumers prefer for interaction with the service providers and invest on it (Barwitz & Maas, 2018; Hogan et al., 2005). This research targets to fill up the gap by analysing impact of different digital touchpoints on brand image alongside its relationship toward customers' loyalty intention for service firms in the context of Financial Services industry in Malaysia.

1.3 Research Questions

1.3.1 General Question

The general question of this research is "How digital touchpoints and brand image can affect customers' loyalty intention for service firms specifically in the Banking and Financial industry in Malaysia?"

1.3.2 Specific Question

1. Does functional touchpoints has a positive direct effect on the brand image of a service firm?
2. Does social touchpoints has a positive direct effect on the brand image of a service firm?
3. Does community touchpoints has a positive direct effect on the brand image of a service firm?
4. Does the brand image of a service firm positively related to customers' loyalty intention?

1.4 Research Objectives

1.4.1 General Objective

The main objective of this research is to study the impact of digital touchpoints on brand image alongside its relationship toward customers' loyalty intention for service firms specifically in the Banking and Financial sector in Malaysia.

1.4.2 Specific Objective

1. To examine the relationship between functional touchpoints and brand image of a service firm.
2. To examine the relationship between social touchpoints and brand image of a service firm.
3. To examine the relationship between community touchpoints and brand image of a service firm.
4. To examine the relationship between brand image of a service firm and customers' loyalty intention.

1.5 Significance of the Study

From past literature, digital touchpoints has been the core of interactivity between companies and consumers (Barwitz & Maas, 2018; Shi et al., 2020; Straker et al., 2015). However, it has been acknowledged that implementing digital touchpoints without having any strategies are not wise for companies as this could be a waste of effort and resources (Hogan et al., 2005; Straker et al., 2015). Despite the increase of Malaysia's e-commerce market, but the rate of digital adoption by businesses in Malaysia is lower as compared to other Southeast Asian countries such as Thailand, Philippines, Vietnam and Singapore. Many small and medium enterprises (SMEs) are still not ready to make transition towards digitalization due to lack of finance and talent resources (*Challenges in Digital Adoption*, 2021).

However, recent study has shown that digital adoption among consumers and organizations have been accelerated to eight weeks from initial five years timeline as a result of the pandemic COVID-19. This has definitely drive changes towards the way customers interact with service firms as well as their behaviours. From the research, it has also been found that 75% of the digital channels first time users will continue with the way they interact with a brand post-pandemic (Baig et al., 2020).

Branding has been known to be an asset of a company as analysis had proven that strong brands consistently outperform market average and it is essential to stay relevant in the market through digitization (Perrey et al., 2015). Strong brand image is a competitive advantage and it is found to have significant correlation with

customer loyalty in the automotive sector in Malaysia (Mabkhot et al., 2017). According to Carluccio et al. (2021), there were more than 75% consumers that have changed their purchasing behaviour since COVID-19 and 79% consumers are more than willing to explore on other brands due to variety options available.

Hence, this research aims to study the positive effect of digital touchpoints on brand image alongside its relationship toward customers' loyalty intention for service firms specifically in the Financial Services industry in Malaysia where there are less researchers who have studied on this specific topic so far.

By studying this research topic, it will provide a great understanding and contribution to my career as a Customer Success Manager in a company that specializes in providing omnichannel communications and engagement solutions. Besides that, managers of Finance and Banking industry will be able to gain insights from this research for their strategy planning of digital channels for effective customer engagement. In addition, academicians will be able to extend their knowledge on this particular research area and it can be a guide for future research.

1.6 Chapter Layout

The research contains five chapters in total whereby each chapter focuses on different elements.

Chapter 1 begins with the introduction of this research which encompasses background of study, problem statement, research objectives, research questions, significance of the study, and chapter layout.

Chapter 2 will focus on the literature review which consists of all related sources relevant to the topic. In this chapter, there will be dependent variable (customers' loyalty intention) and also independent variables (functional touchpoints, social touchpoints, community touchpoints, brand image). Besides that, there will be development of conceptual framework from the review of relevant theoretical frameworks. Lastly, there will be a development of hypotheses to be tested.

Chapter 3 describes research methodology namely the types of research design, methods of data collection, and also sampling design. Apart from that, this chapter

will also discuss on the types of tools used to gather, compute and analyse data related to this research. This chapter will include the measurement of construct, pilot test, data processing and analysis.

Chapter 4 presents outcome of data collected that has been analysed. Statistical Package for Social Science (SPSS) will be utilized for testing of the hypothesized relationships. Analysed data are presented into tables and chart.

Chapter 5 will be the conclusion of the study where research findings will be summarized and the discussions of major findings. Furthermore, this chapter will also discuss on the research implications and limitations. Lastly, there will be recommendations for future research.

1.7 Chapter Summary

In summary, even though there is an increase in trend for consumers to communicate using digital touchpoints but many service firms still lack of the skills and knowledge to implement effective omnichannel design. Besides that, there is a lack of study on the impact of digital touchpoints on brand image and customers' loyalty intention in Malaysia. Hence, this research targets to have an in-depth study on the relationships of digital touchpoints, brand image and customers' loyalty intention in Malaysia to provide greater understanding of this topic to managers of service firms and academicians. In the next chapter, there will be a review on previous researchers' works on each variable and a conceptual framework will be proposed.

CHAPTER 2

LITERATURE REVIEW

The main objective of chapter two is to review theoretical and empirical literature of different researchers' work related to digital touchpoints, brand image, and customers' loyalty intention that will be adopted in this research. Besides that, this chapter will also introduce the conceptual framework. According to Court et al. (2009), brand perceptions are formed through interactions between customers and service firms over touch points which will influence customer purchasing behaviour. Individual touchpoints should not be treated independently but rather organization should focus to incorporate these touchpoints into the whole customer journey (Maechler et al., 2016). Customer nowadays have freedom to choose the touchpoints that they prefer to interact with a brand. Hence, it is crucial for service firms to focus on planning and implementing effective strategies for their touchpoints. Branding has always been known to be one of the important topic in marketing where strong brands usually outperform the market in terms of total return to shareholders (TRS) (Lehmann et al., 2020). Whereas there was a discovery that brand image has positive direct effect on customers' loyalty and may even enhance the customer commitment (Ogba & Tan, 2009). Therefore, the concepts of digital touchpoints, brand image and customers' loyalty intention are reviewed under this chapter.

2.1 Digital Touchpoints

There are many definitions on touchpoints by different academicians. According to Duncan & Moriarty (2006), brand touchpoint is created through exposure of brand activities such as advertisement, events, or any interactions that drives customer actions. Touchpoints serve to add value to service firms by improving the consumers brand experience. Whereas another research has defined touchpoint as the point of contact where service firms can interact with consumers whether digitally or physically (Bakhtieva, 2017). Prior to digital era, interactions between customers and brand are through traditional approach which can be either static or human touchpoints. Static touchpoints are such as newspapers, magazines, bill boards, and television which is usually one way direction and does not require any exchange of communication. As for human touchpoints, it involves physical presence and interactions between customers and the service firms employees (Vannucci & Pantano, 2019). Touchpoints that involves human interactions were found to have significant relationship with customer satisfaction in B2B mass customization companies (Aichner & Gruber, 2017).

Subsequently there is technological breakthrough which brought about the revolution of interactions (Butler et al., 1997). Digital touchpoints is derived from digital channels whereby it is referred as an individual digital channel (Straker et al., 2015). Meuter et al. (2000) has classified digital touchpoints as either informational or customer service related. Many companies have implemented digital touchpoints with the intention to provide higher reach towards their customers through technological advancement. Interactions with customers powered by technologies are shifting from broadcast to narrowcast mode where companies now can capture customer information at certain touchpoint and customize communication relevant to their customers (Butler et al., 1997).

 However, it is crucial for service firms to explore which touchpoints will have significant effect on the consumer behavior and brand loyalty so they can focus on investing in the effective touchpoints (Hogan et al., 2005). Touchpoints such as physical store, website, call to the contact center, email, live chat and other channels play an important role and can be found throughout the customer journey (Maechler et al., 2016a). A study conducted by Straker et al. (2015) has identified several

digital touchpoints and classified into several typologies namely functional, social, community and corporate. However, only functional, social and community touchpoints have been adopted for this research.

2.1.1 Functional Touchpoints

According to Straker et al., (2015), functional touchpoints is split between diversion, functionality and interaction. This type of touchpoints is usually run by the company administrators and it is usually one-way communication from the company to consumer. Examples of functional touchpoints are such as website, podcasts, application, online store, web enquiry, E-News and email. The most commonly used digital touchpoints under this typology are website and email. In contrast, research by Voorveld et al., (2013) suggested that websites with live chats, e-commerce and feedback features can be two-way communication that facilitates richer interactions between the company and consumers. Corporate websites are easily accessible through an internet search engine or advertisement from other sites. Majority of the banking websites contained information such as products and services, promotions, store locations, opening hours, help and support. However, designs and contents vary among different corporate websites.

It is crucial for service firms to have great quality websites which include well-designed and easy navigation as this will create good impression to the audiences and subsequently have positive impact on the corporate brand image (Ageeva et al., 2018; Da Silva & Syed Alwi, 2008; Voorveld et al., 2013). Based on the study conducted by Straker et al. (2015), there is a relationship found between website and email whereby a consumer will receive email newsletter when they make purchase or opt-in to receive information over the website. According to Voorveld et al., (2013) there is a significant positive relationship on the level of interactivity within the corporate website with brand image especially for people with little or no prior experience with using the brand.

2.1.2 Social Touchpoints

Social touchpoints include various channels of social media and they have a high degree of interactivity due to two-way communication and usually this is operated by administrators that have the ability to post updates and reply to consumers' comments on the social platform in real time. Social touchpoints include platforms such as Facebook (live updates & comments), Twitter (post and interact using tweets), Instagram, Pinterest and Flickr (updates via photo and video sharing). It is important to have consistency on the social touchpoints to keep the consumers engaged and captivated (Straker et al., 2015). According to Capitello et al. (2014), Facebook is the most popular touchpoint used by the companies with high number of followers on their page seeking for latest news, trivia and promotion of events.

Social touchpoints have positive effects on brand image which can develop committed consumers by affecting their emotions (Godey et al., 2016; Seo & Park, 2018). Young consumers perceived companies that owned social touchpoints as being differentiated from the competitors in the market and tend to place their trust on these firms (Sasmita & Suki, 2014). Besides that, social touchpoints should be leveraged as a brand image building tool to generate customer loyalty rather than using it as communication channel (Godey et al., 2016). In contrast, social media may have negative effects on brand image if someone intentionally create and spread false news of the brand name (Akram & Kumar, 2017). This is supported by another research where it is found that interactions over social touchpoints have negative relationship on brand image. The findings suggested that consumers may post more harm than improving brand awareness over social media platforms (Grewal et al., 2019).

2.1.3 Community Touchpoints

Brand community made up by a group of members and the relationships among them. Communities are usually identified through members that have common interest or identification (McAlexander et al., 2002). Harley-Davidson was one of the first brand that have built strong brand community since year 1983 to serve the people. (Fournier & Lee, 2009). According to Adjei et al., (2012) online brand

communities play an important role for service firms as it is one of the effective platform where consumers can gather information and share their experiences about a particular brand. Furthermore, online brand communities can foster relationships among consumers and bring them closer to the brand besides enhancing the brand loyalty. Community touchpoints comprise a group of users who shares information on a platform and able to control the contents, Blogs, Forums, and Vimeo are some examples of community touchpoints. Community touchpoints such as Blogs and Forums can be considered as a source of electronic word of mouth which have positive impact on the brand image (Ibrahim et al., 2017; Jalilvand & Samiei, 2012; Torlak et al., 2014).

These touchpoints must be constantly active with high degree of interactivity in order to keep the community who are usually made up of people with the same interests (Straker et al., 2015). Apart from that, higher level of engagement enhances brand image of a service firm (Ibrahim et al., 2017). Hence, it is important for firms to build a trustworthy community even though firms' brand image may be jeopardized through negative postings. In contrast, a study conducted by Shang et al., (2006) found out that brand loyalty cannot be improved through consumers' postings through virtual community.

2.2 Brand Image

Brand image is defined as the belief of a brand that created brand associations in the memory of consumers (Keller, 1993; Kotler et al., 2019). Brand associations may be based on several elements that either are product-related, non-product related attributes, functional, experiential or image benefits. Service firms with unique and strong brand associations are more likely to be successful as it provides competitive advantage over their competitors. According to Aaker (1991), brand image can facilitate consumers in the information gathering and create value for them to purchase a product or service. Therefore, service firms need to build a strong brand image in order to compete against other players in the market. As consumers nowadays tend to switch from one brand to another easily largely due to the increase of channels choices. It is essential that service firms take measures to protect and improve their brand image through sentiment, agility and

personalization. Sentiment is described as the user's emotions towards the brand and tracking of this measure should be done consistently. Agility involves getting customer's feedback within a short period of time. Whereas personalization allows service firm to build stronger relationship with customers by communicating relevant information and offering products or services based on their preferences (Lehmann et al., 2020).

According to several studies, it is found out that brand image has a positive significant relationship with brand loyalty (Hyun & Kim, 2011; Im et al., 2012; Mabkhot et al., 2017). However, some researches stated that brand image plays a role as moderator in explaining relationship with customer loyalty (Hsieh & Li, 2008; Nyadzayo & Khajehzadeh, 2016; Wang & Yang, 2010).

2.3 Customer Loyalty

Customer loyalty is defined from two different perspective in terms of behavioral and attitudinal (Chaudhuri & Holbrook, 2001; Aaker, 1991). Behavioral loyalty includes consumers repeating purchase of the brand while attitudinal loyalty involves a certain commitment by the consumers due to their strong preferences on a certain brand. Customers' loyalty has been found to have positive relationship with profitability of a firm. Besides that, loyal customers tend to repeat purchase and being less price sensitive (Bowen & Chen, 2001).

According to (Lewis & Soureli, 2006), consumers that are loyal in the banking industry are measured in terms of length of time they are attach with a bank, number of engaged services and the frequency of service use. It is more difficult to conceptualize loyalty in the service industry as compared to the sector that offers product due to intangibility and lack of standardization in the services provided (Dick & Basu, 1994; Mittal & Lassar, 1998). Research by Lewis & Soureli (2006) found out that consumers are cognitively and affectively loyal to their banks from the attitudinal perspective. Consumers are cognitive loyal when they associate loyalty based on the value they received from the bank. Whereas consumers can be affective loyal when they are involved in the purchasing decision of service and have a strong preference towards their primary bank as compared to others. Based

on research conducted in hospitality industry, it was found that loyal customers spread positive word-of-mouth and made recommendations (Bowen & Chen, 2001). In contrast, an empirical study has shown that the relationship between customers' loyalty and profitability is relatively weak with correlation coefficients between 0.20 – 0.45 in various industries namely retail, service provider, brokerage and mail-order. Loyal customers were found to hardly generate any profit whereas most of the profit came from short term customers (Reinartz & Kumar, 2002).

However, that does not mean a service firm should completely forgo their efforts in gaining loyal customer. Many service firms put heavy emphasize on the development and maintenance of customer loyalty rather than gaining new customers as it can be costly as compared to retaining the existing customers (Mabkhot et al., 2017). Surveys have found out that there were 68% consumers in Thailand and 80% of consumers in Philippines who have switched brands mainly due to brand unavailability during the pandemic which has severely impacted customers' loyalty (Davies et al., 2021). Hence, having an understanding and able to induce customer loyalty can be a great success for service firms.

2.4 Review of Relevant Theoretical Framework

In the previous section, there were many digital touchpoints categories which were defined by different researchers. However, this research has adopted the digital touchpoints categorised by Straker et al. (2015). The researchers have identified a total of thirty-four digital touchpoints. These touchpoints were then categorised into four key typologies namely functional, social, community and corporate touchpoints across sixteen industries. Main goal of the research was to have a better understanding on digital channel design based on the type of industry as it was found out that many companies do not have sufficient understanding and knowledge on how to fully utilize new digital channels. The researchers explored on the use of digital channels on various industries through unique content analysis with the aim to identify and differentiate characteristics of diverse digital typologies and touchpoints. Below Table 2.1 shows the typologies and touchpoints identified in the research.

Table 2.1 : Typologies and touchpoints

Digital channel typology	Digital touchpoint
Functional	Website
	Podcasts
	Tutorials
	Application
	Online Store
	Live Chat
	Web Enquiry
	Emails
	E-News Letters
Social	LinkedIn
	Facebook
	Twitter
	Instagram
	Pinterest
	Reddit
	Foursquare
	Flickr
	Google +
Community	Forums
	Blogs
	YouTube
	Vimeo
Corporate	Digital Media Releases
	Digital Magazines
	Digital Catalogues
	Digital Feedback Forms
	FAQ
	Digital
	Advertisement
	Competitions
	Digital Campaigns
	E-Commerce Retailers
	Digital Membership
	Digital Loyalty Programs

Note. Adapted from Straker, K., Wrigley, C., & Rosemann, M. (2015). Typologies and touchpoints: Designing multi-channel digital strategies. *Journal of Research in Interactive Marketing*, 9(2), 110–128.

The following theoretical framework by researchers Hallikainen et al. (2019) studied on individual preferences of digital touchpoints through latent class analysis. Researchers of this study have adopted digital typologies specifically functional touchpoints, social touchpoints and community touchpoints from Straker et al. (2015). In the study, it was revealed that there were four prominent segments namely anti-digital, anti-social media, majority and digital channel enthusiasts.

Based on this research, it was found out that functional touchpoints are preferred across all segments. Besides that, the researchers concluded that their findings supported previous studies where service providers need to reach out to their customers through various digital channels and touchpoints. The developed conceptual framework is illustrated in Figure 2.1.

Figure 2.1: Individual preferences of digital touchpoints: A Latent class analysis
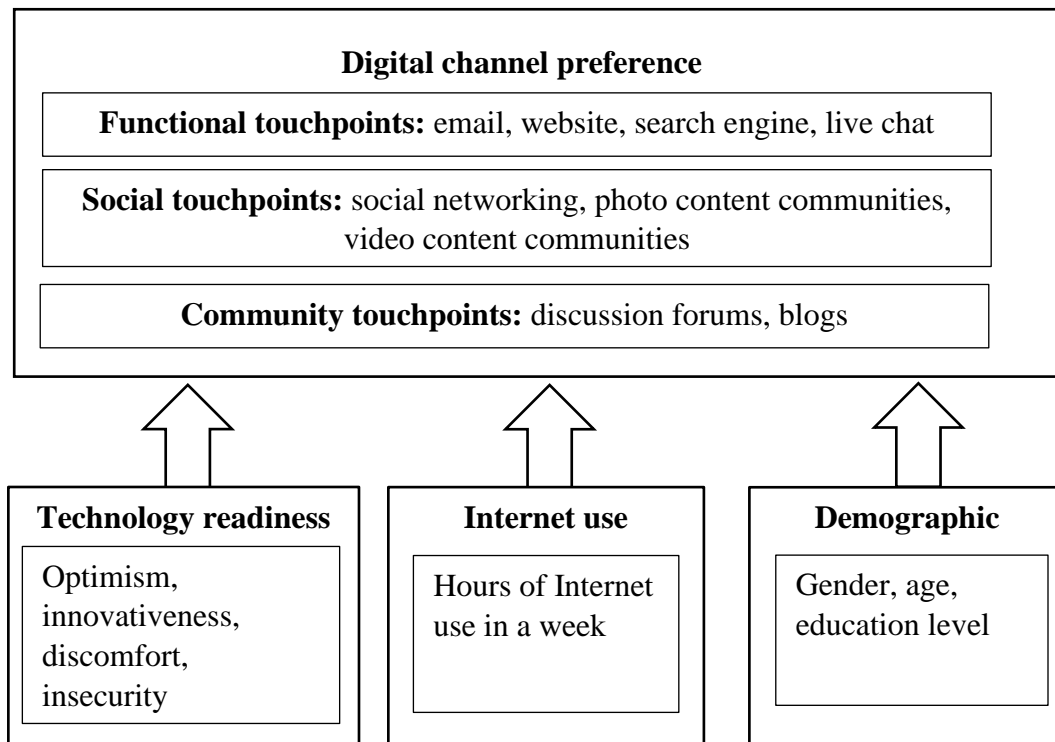
Note. Adapted from Hallikainen, H., Alamäki, A., & Laukkanen, T. (2019). Individual preferences of digital touchpoints: A latent class analysis. *Journal of Retailing and Consumer Services*, 50, 386–393.

The third theoretical framework is developed by Ieva & Ziliani (2018) where the researchers study the importance of selected twenty four touchpoints towards its contribution on customer loyalty intentions. Two ordinary least square regression models were employed to test the relationship between touchpoint exposure (reach, positivity, frequency) and customer loyalty intentions within the mobile service industry. Results from the research shown that there were only 13 out of 24 touchpoints which have significant contributions towards customer loyalty intentions. There were eight touchpoints in which touchpoint reach positive correlation with customer loyalty intentions whereas nine touchpoints were identified to be related to touchpoint positivity and has significant relationship with

customer loyalty intentions through the control of touchpoint frequency variable. From this research, mobile service providers are able to have better planning on customer experience strategies with understanding on the importance of each touchpoint. Research findings were that touchpoint reach has great relationship with customer loyalty intentions from eight touchpoints perspective. The framework is illustrated in below Figure 2.2.

Figure 2.2: Role of customer experience touchpoints in driving loyalty intentions
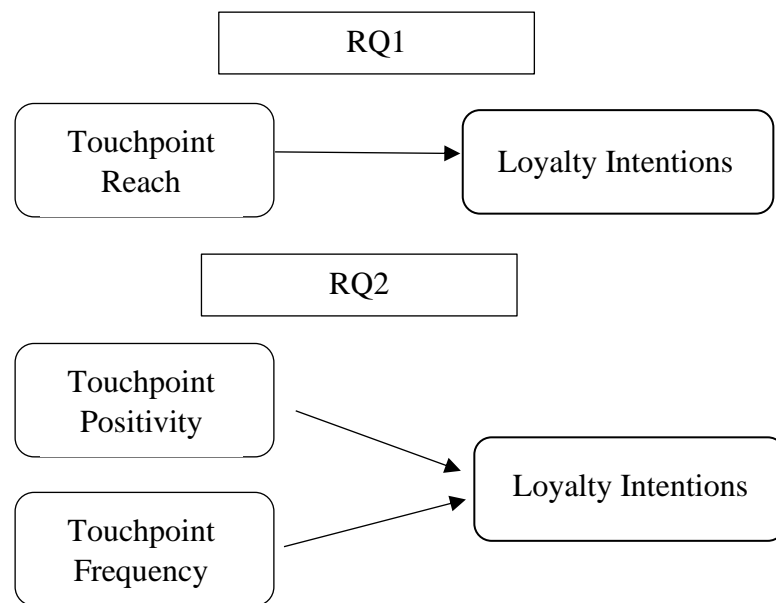
Note. From Ieva, M., & Ziliani, C. (2018). The role of customer experience touchpoints in driving loyalty intentions in services. *TQM Journal*, 30(5), 444–457.

The fourth theoretical framework was developed by Baxendale et al. (2015) with the purpose to determine the importance of several touchpoints on brand consideration. The researchers have selected six touchpoints which are brand advertising, retailer advertising, in-store communications, word-of-mouth (WOM), peer observation and traditional earned media for study on the relationship with change of brand consideration in the context of consumer categories which are electrical goods, technology products, mobile handsets, and soft drinks. Real-time experience (RET) methodology has been employed for analysis. From the findings, touchpoint positivity was found to be in positive relationship on brand consideration for all touchpoints. In terms of ranking, in-store communication has highest impact Next are peer observation, brand advertising, word-of-mouth, retailer advertising

and traditional earned media. Apart from that, touchpoint frequency also has significant relationship with brand consideration change for most of the touchpoints except for WOM and traditional earned media.

Figure 2.3: Impact of different touchpoints on brand consideration
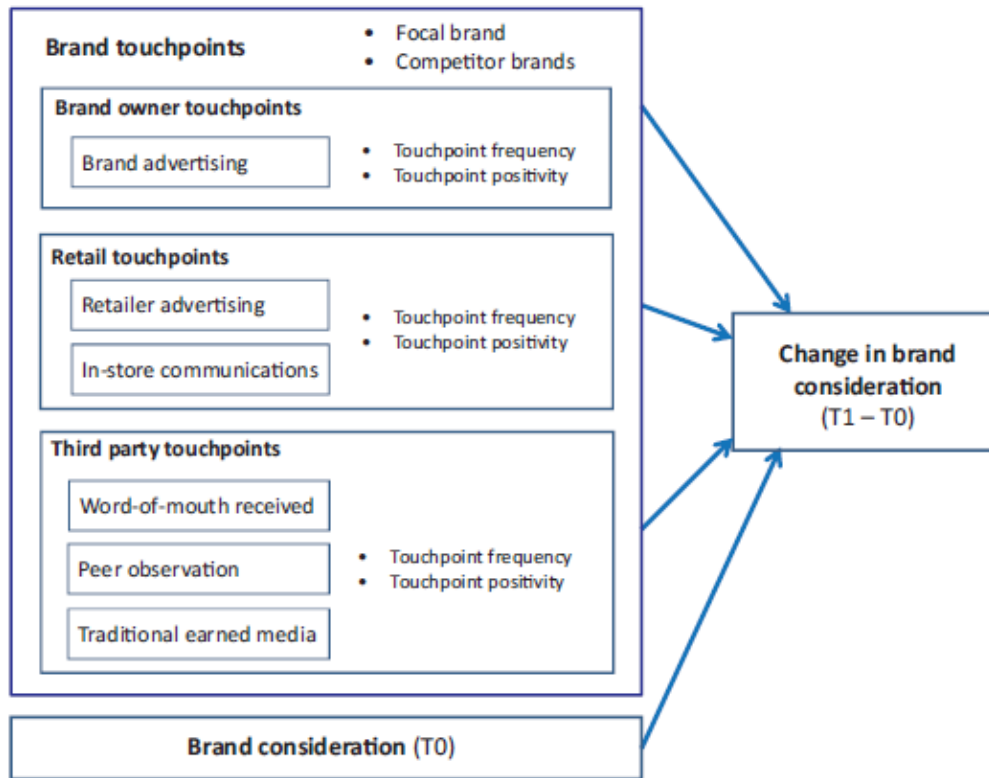
Note. From Baxendale, S., Macdonald, E. K., & Wilson, H. N. (2015). The impact of different touchpoints on brand consideration. *Journal of Retailing*, *91*(2), 235–253.

2.5 Proposed Theoretical Framework

Figure 2.4 is the conceptual framework developed by researcher through adoption and modification of various theoretical framework from previous section. The conceptual framework illustrates the relationship between digital touchpoints, brand image and customer loyalty intention.

Service firms uses brand touchpoints to differentiate themselves from competitors and gain consumers loyalty through brand image which can improve attitudes of consumers towards a brand and subsequently maintain the relationship with them (Sundar, 2018).

There are three independent variables which are functional touchpoints, social touchpoints and community touchpoints. These independent variables will be tested on the relationship with brand image towards customer loyalty intention. Dependent variable of the conceptual framework is brand image towards customer loyalty intention.

Figure 2.4: Conceptual Framework of Digital Touchpoints on Brand Image and Customer Loyalty Intention

```
┌─────────────────────────┐
│   Digital Touchpoints   │
│  ┌───────────────────┐  │
│  │    Functional     │  │────(+)──┐
│  └───────────────────┘  │         ▼
│  ┌───────────────────┐  │    ┌──────────────┐  (+)  ┌──────────────────┐
│  │      Social       │  │─(+)─►│ Brand Image │──────►│ Customer Loyalty │
│  └───────────────────┘  │      └──────────────┘      │ Intention        │
│  ┌───────────────────┐  │  (+) ▲                      └──────────────────┘
│  │    Community      │  │──────┘
│  └───────────────────┘  │
└─────────────────────────┘
```
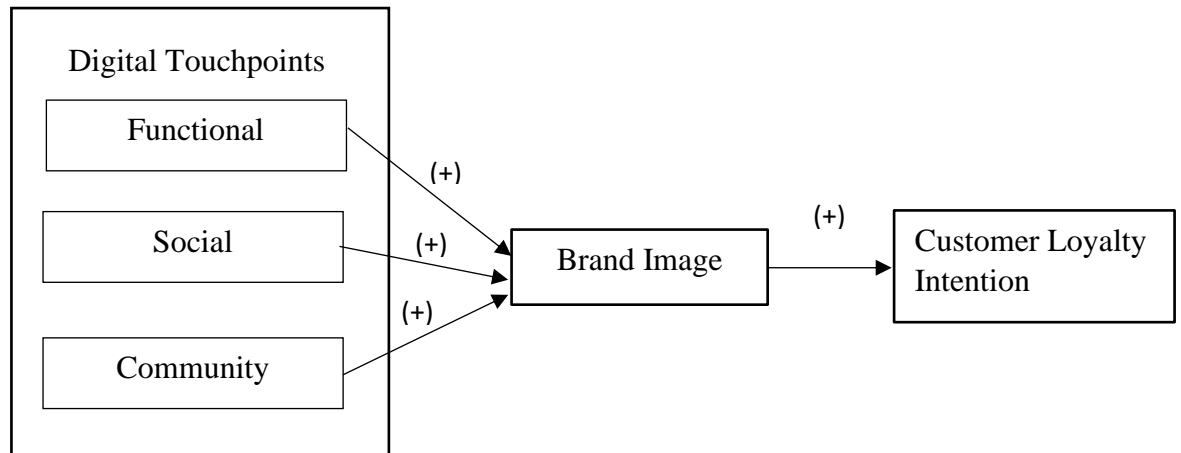
Source: Developed for research

2.4 Hypotheses Development

2.4.1 The Relationship of Functional Touchpoints and Brand Image

Thus far there is less study that specifically examine the relationship between functional touchpoints and brand image. However, there were a few research conducted to study on the impact of channels especially Website on brand image. One of the researches is by Rahi et al. (2017) where the authors examined the relationship between web design, brand image and intention to adopt internet banking. It was suggested by the researchers based on their analysis that a financial service provider should have a website with sufficient and accurate content to increase brand image and intention to adopt internet banking. Another empirical study has also shown positive relationship of website interactivity on brand image which subsequently results in strong relationships building (Voorveld et al., 2013). E-marketing communication has a positive direct effect on brand image. It was

proposed by the researchers that Email communication impact on brand loyalty should include factor such as brand image (Mullatahiri & Ukaj, 2019).

Since there is less research done particularly on functional touchpoints as a whole, the following hypothesis is formulated:

H1: Functional touchpoints has a positive direct effect on the brand image of a service firm.

2.4.2 The Relationship of Social Touchpoints and Brand Image

According to Yunus et al. (2016), brand image plays a mediating role between e-WOM through Instagram channel and purchase intention based on the findings. Furthermore, social media channels such as Facebook and Twitter were proven to have significant relationship with brand image in the education industry (Momen et al., 2020). Moreover, most consumers discovered unknown brand features through Facebook and it has also provided them with a positive effect on the brand image of a particular brand (Coelho et al., 2014). Besides that, Facebook and LinkedIn play a significant role on employer's brand image as it was found to be effective in recruitment (Carpentier et al., 2017). Another research by Bilgin (2018) has also shown positive relationship between social media communications and brand image. It was suggested that social media marketing activities may contribute towards generating leads, increase e-WOM and drive customer loyalty.

There were many researches on different types of social media channels effect on brand image and majority are with positive relationship results. Based on various literature review, so far there is no research found with insignificant relationship between social media channels and brand image.

Although there were quite a number of researches related to social media and brand image in the past. This researcher is proposing the following hypothesis:

H2: Social touchpoints has a positive direct effect on the brand image of a service firm.

2.4.3 The Relationship of Community Touchpoints and Brand Image

Community touchpoints include blogs, YouTube, forums, and other community related communication platform (Straker et al., 2015). Video blogs (vlogs) are found to have increased the brand image and subsequently trigger purchase intention in consumer luxury products (Lee & Watkins, 2016). This is supported by another research findings where YouTube videos which are created and uploaded by public were found to have positive influence on increasing brand image of a brand (Byun, 2020). Consumers tend to search for reviews through community touchpoints if they feel uncertain towards a particular product. Communication channels such as blogs and forums serve as both informants and recommenders and it is found that there is moderation effect of brand image on the relationship between e-WOM and purchase intention (Lin et al., 2013). Credible online reviews were found to have more effect on hedonic brand image as compared to functional brand image in consumer electronic products (Chakraborty & Bhat, 2018). Thus, the present research proposed that:

H3: Community touchpoints has a positive direct effect on the brand image of a service firm

2.4.4 The Relationship of Brand Image and Customers' Loyalty Intention

Various past research have found that there were positive relationship between brand image and customer loyalty (Chao et al., 2015; Da Silva & Syed Alwi, 2008; Dam & Dam, 2021; Hsieh & Li, 2008; Ogba & Tan, 2009). According to Neupane (2015), brand image has positive effect on customer loyalty intention in the UK retail industry. Besides that, another study had shown that brand image significantly influence customer loyalty in the telecommunication services (Sirapracha & Tocquer, 2012).

However, there were also previous studies which have shown that effect of brand image on customer loyalty intention is insignificant. Based on research conducted by Suhartanto et al. (2018), Islamic bank with poor brand image does not have any direct impact on the customers' loyalty of the bank. Having said that, the researchers

have encouraged future studies to include brand image factor when examining the relationship with customer loyalty intention.

Even though there were many research done in the past to analyse the relationship between brand image and customers' loyalty intention. There is hardly any specific study on relationship of brand image on customers' loyalty intention of a service firm in financial industry in Malaysia.

Hence, the following hypothesis is proposed:

H4: Brand image of a service firm is positively related to customers' loyalty intention

2.5 Chapter Summary

Chapter two focuses on the review from both published and unpublished secondary sources information that is related to various digital touchpoints, brand image and customers' loyalty intention. In this chapter, there are literature review on the variables. Besides that, review on relevant theoretical framework related to digital touchpoints, brand image and customers' loyalty intention. Conceptual framework is then proposed followed by development of hypotheses of this study. In the next chapter, it will be on research methodology where the methods to carry out this research will be discussed.

CHAPTER 3

METHODOLOGY

In this chapter, the researcher will explain the research method of this study. Areas that are mentioned in this chapter include design of research, method of data collection, sampling design, research instrument, construct measurement, pilot test, data processing and data analysis. The main reason of this chapter is to ensure that proper research procedures were followed in the completion of the research project.

3.1 Research Design

According to (Ranjit, 2019), a research design is an overall plan in which researcher determines and communicates to others by addressing the type of study design used, selection of respondents, gathering, measuring and analysing of data along with how to present the findings table and chart. Research design has two (2) major purpose namely to layout the methodology of a study and to ensure highest effect of independent variable on the dependent variable while maintaining a minimal effect of extraneous and chance variables (control of variance) to achieve valid, unbiased and precise results to address the research questions (Kerlinger, 1978).

3.1.1 Descriptive Research

This research will advance on descriptive research. According to Saunders et al. (2009), descriptive research refers to the population characteristics, phenomenon or variables of interest in a context. The main objective of descriptive study is to set out what is generally accepted in regards to the issue of research (Ranjit, 2019).

Descriptive research relies on measurement and observation to form conclusions (Borg & Gall, 1989). Besides that, descriptive studies usually use graphs, charts and tables to organize data for easier understanding.

3.1.2 Quantitative Research

Quantitative research emphasizes on gathering numerical analysis of data through questionnaires, surveys or polls (Babbie, 2010). Apart from that, quantitative research designs have better structure and are more specific as compared to qualitative study which may have lesser structural depth (Ranjit, 2019). Quantitative research aims to identify the relationship between independent and dependent variables. Effect statistics will be used to express the findings of the relationship (Creswell, 2009). This research focuses on cross-sectional study using questionnaires for data collection with the objective to generalize a population from a sample. Cross-sectional is selected as it is found to be suitable for this study. Apart from that, this method has also been employed on similar research related to touchpoints by Ieva & Ziliani (2018). Cross-sectional studies have major drawback where it cannot measure change (Ranjit, 2019). In this study, online surveys will be employed to collect data for analysis and provide an overview of a population's opinion.

3.2 Data Collection Method

3.2.1 Primary Data

Researchers that collect data themselves is considered as primary data. There are three (3) ways to collect this category of data and this includes observation, interview and questionnaire. It is crucial to choose a suitable method of data collection based on the research objective, resources availability and skills of researcher to achieve high quality of data (Ranjit, 2019).

Questionnaire has been selected as the method to gather primary data as it is most commonly used for research. The collected primary data will be used to in-depth

study on the impact of digital touchpoints on brand image alongside its relationship toward customers' loyalty intention for service firms specifically in the Banking and Financial sector in Malaysia. The questionnaire method consists of a list of questions provided to respondents for their answers. Respondents will have to read the questions, interpret and answer based on their opinion. According to Ranjit (2019), it is essential for researcher to set questions with clear instructions and easy to answer since the questionnaires are circulated online and there is no personal interaction to explain meaning of the questions to respondents.

3.2.2 Secondary Data

Secondary data are data that were collected previously by other researchers. Any type of primary data can be served as secondary data and can be used for other purposes besides research. In addition, secondary data can be retrieved easily from official data archive via Internet (Hox & Boeije, 2005). Secondary data may be grouped into several categories such as government or quasi-government publications, previous research works, personal records, mass media and others (Ranjit, 2019).

There are few advantages of using secondary data. Researchers can have lower cost and faster access to important and related information by using secondary data because gathering new data require more time, cost and energy (Hox & Boeije, 2005). However, there may be disadvantages using secondary data. One of the disadvantages is validity and reliability where it varies across different sources. For example, information obtained from academic journal is likely to be more valid and reliable as compared to personal blog. Besides that, information obtained from certain secondary sources such as personal blogs, newspapers and magazines may have issue of personal bias as the author is likely to be less objective as one would expect (Ranjit, 2019).

In this research, secondary data are obtained from internet and online databases such as Google Scholar, Emerald, Science Direct, UTAR database and Institutional Repository. These sources are used to find related electronic academic journals. Furthermore, relevant academic and business books are used for additional support of the theories in this research. The collection of secondary data is limited to

electronic academic journals, government publications and books to maintain the quality of data in this research.

3.3 Sampling Design

Sampling design is defined as the strategy used to choose required sample from a sampling population. It is considered as an important aspect in research as it can provide accurate results by selecting appropriate samples (Zikmund et al., 2010).

3.3.1 Target Population

This is classified as a group of people that has met criteria set on this research as it determines whether the individual is eligible or not to answer the questionnaire (Lavrakas, 2008). The target population of this research are adults above 18 years old staying in Malaysia with access to internet and being a customer of at least one financial service provider. There are no specific criteria set in terms of race, gender, education level, occupation and others.

3.3.2 Sampling Frame and Location

In this research, non-probability sampling (convenience) will be employed. There is no predetermined sampling frame. Sample location of the study is within Malaysia. Questionnaire is provided to anyone who has access to internet, chat application and social media to increase coverage and obtain diverse backgrounds respondents. Sampling frame is defined as a list of elements from which the sample may be drawn (Zikmund et al., 2010).

3.3.3 Sampling Elements

Elements of sample are known as unit case for instance a person, member of an organisation or residents of an area (Ranjit, 2019). The target respondents of our study have to be adults above 18 years old who has access to internet and has experience with financial service provider. Clear instructions are provided before

respondent's participate in the questionnaire to ensure that they meet the minimum requirements. The questionnaire is targeted towards individuals of different age groups, gender, educational level, occupation and it is on voluntary basis.

3.3.3 Sampling Technique

Non-probability convenience sampling technique is used on this study. Convenience sampling is defined as acquisition of sampling units or people that are available in a convenient way (Zikmund et al., 2010). This sampling of technique is widely employed by researchers as it is commonly used (Saunders et al., 2009).

There are two types of sampling techniques namely probability and non-probability sampling which are available for researcher to use. Probability sampling is a technique where the selection of each case from population is known whereas for non-probability it is not known (Saunders et al., 2009).

3.3.4 Sampling Size

Sample size contributes towards quantitative research since it will be used to represent the sampling population. Hence, having large sample size is recommended so the research can include people with diverse backgrounds to achieve better findings that represent the study population (Ranjit, 2019).

In this research, total number of three hundred respondents are established as the sample size with additional of thirty respondents for pilot test. Questionnaires will be distributed prior to the formal questionnaire for pilot test purpose. Subsequently, questionnaires will be provided to the respondents to answer online upon validation of reliability test.

3.4 Research Instrument

This section describes about the details of the tools used for data gathering, measuring and analysed on the study. This research is using the questionnaire adopted from past research for collection of primary data.

3.4.1 Questionnaire

Questionnaire is a set of questions used to collect information from respondents based on their answers to the questions. For this method, it is crucial to make the questions clear and straightforward as the researcher may not be available to explain the meaning of questions to each respondents (Ranjit, 2019). Primary data is collected by circulation of questionnaire to respondents to determine impact that digital touchpoints have on brand image alongside its relationship toward customers' loyalty intention for service firms specifically in the Banking and Financial sector in Malaysia. The questionnaires will be fully distributed through online channels due to the pandemic COVID-19 situation where majority of the people still prefer contactless interaction. Questionnaires were administered by using Google Form through channels such as Facebook, WhatsApp, and Email.

3.4.2 Questionnaire Design

Researcher should prepare the questionnaire carefully as it will determine the quality of information collected (Ranjit, 2019). Besides that, having clear structure of questionnaire and providing simple instructions on the purpose of data collection will increase the response rates, validity and reliability (Saunders et al., 2009). This research will use self-administered questionnaire specifically internet-mediated questionnaire where respondents will complete answering the questions electronically through Internet. The design of questionnaire for this research is through adoption of questions from other studies.

Open-ended and closed ended questions are the types of questions available for researcher to select. Open-ended question is question that requires respondent to express his or her answers in own words. Closed-ended question is question that requires respondent to select one answer that best represents his or her opinions from a limited number of choices (Saunders et al., 2009).

Questionnaire of this study is organized in two sections namely Section A and Section B with closed-ended questions. Section A consists of six questions related

to general information such as gender, age group, education level, occupation, time spend on internet and type of device used to surf internet. List and category questions are used in Section A.

Additionally, Section B consists of twenty-seven questions that are related to perceptions of the financial service provider. There are five categories in this section which are functional touchpoints, social touchpoints, community touchpoints, brand image and customer loyalty intention. Six-point Likert rating scale was employed where respondents need to select one answer based on scales of Strongly Disagree (1), Disagree (2), Somewhat Disagree (3), Somewhat Agree (4), Agree (5) and Strongly Agree (6). Respondents are required to select one answer that best represent their opinion based on the statement provided.

3.5 Construct Measurement

Scale refers to an instrument whereby respondents are differentiated from the ways their responses vary from each other on the variables of interest to a study (Sekaran & Bougie, 2009). In this research project, our questionnaire is divided into two primary sections, which are Section A and B.

Section A consists of demographic profile and general information. The items in this section are measured by nominal scale as well as ordinal scale. Nominal scale is differentiated by category which they belong to and it is not possible to rank it Saunders et al. (2009). In contrast, ordinal scale is a form of ranking scale that assign numbers to objects to represent the extent, so that the objects possess certain distinctiveness. Gender, type of device and employment uses the nominal scale whereas other questions such as age group, education level and time spend on internet employed ordinal scale.

Section B of the questionnaire uses the Likert scale which are usually viewed as interval scale even though it is an ordinal scale (Wu & Leung, 2017). The six-point Likert scale will be employed on this section that requires a respondent to specify a point of agreement or disagreement towards a series of statements about the items.

3.5.1 Origin of Construct

Below Table 3.1 presents the origin of construct for functional touchpoints, social touchpoints, community touchpoints, brand image and customers' loyalty intention. Each of the touchpoints has six items and the questions were adopted from a research on social media and brand image by (Jokinen, 2016). Brand Image contains 4 items adopted from (Davis et al., 2009). Lastly, customers' loyalty intention consists of 5 items by (Zeithaml et al., 1996).

Table 3.1: Summary of Origin of Construct

Variable	Source	Items
Functional Touchpoints	Jokinen (2016)	• Communication on social media can make a brand more reliable. • Communication on social media can make a brand more credible. • Communication on social media can make a brand more attractive. • Communication on social media can make a brand more desirable. • Communication on social media can make a brand more memorable. • Communication on social media may create a more positive image for a brand.
Social Touchpoints		
Community Touchpoints		
Brand Image	Davis, et al. (2009)	• Our firm (this provider) is known as a company that takes good care of their trade partners.

		• Our customers (we) can reliably predict how we (this provider) will perform.
		• In comparison to other logistics service providers, we are (this provider is) known to consistently deliver very high quality.
		• In comparison to other logistics service providers, we are (this provider is) highly respected.
Customers' Loyalty Intention	Zeithaml, et al. (1996)	• Say positive things about XYZ to other people.
		• Recommend XYZ to someone who seeks your advice.
		• Encourage friends and relatives to do business with XYZ.
		• Consider XYZ your first choice to buy _____ services.
		• Do more business with XYZ in the next few years.

Source: Developed for the research

3.6 Pilot Test

Pilot test is a study performed in smaller scale to test the questionnaire to reduce problem of respondents answering the questions and also for validation and reliability test on questionnaire (Saunders et al., 2009). As such, researcher has to conduct a pilot test prior to distribution of questionnaires to avoid any serious risk. Thus, pilot test is carried out with thirty respondents that stay in Malaysia. The researcher is able to minimize the error and improve on the quality of questionnaire with feedback from respondents of this pilot test. Cronbach's Reliability Analysis

was performed through software SPSS to determine the scale reliability. The results generated are as shown below:

Table 3.2: Cronbach's Reliability Analysis

Construct	Alpha Coefficient	Number of Items
Functional Touchpoints	0.891	6
Social Touchpoints	0.891	6
Community Touchpoints	0.928	6
Brand Image	0.844	4
Customer Loyalty Intention	0.922	5

Source: Developed for the research

3.7 Data Processing

It is essential for the data to be collected and coded properly or not the research results will be consider as "garbage". There are several stages that the data has to undergo before it is analyzed. These stages include checking, editing, coding, transcribing, and some other special treatments on the data before it is sent for analyzing (Zikmund et al., 2010).

It is very important for researchers to check through the questionaire so that it is given in a complete and appropriate manner to respondents. Editing is a process of checking and adjusting data so that they are more consistent, readable and complete. Whereas coding is a procedure of using numbers or other character symbol from previous edited data to permit the transfer of data from questionnaire into computer (Zikmund et al., 2010).

Data for this research are gathered through respondents' participation on the survey questionnaire. After collecting the questionnaires from the respondents, every set of questionnaires will undergo a thorough checking to ensure that all questions are being answered. It is also important to check and see whether all the questions are answered correctly according to instructions stated in the questionnaire. This is to

ensure that data collected is accurately and can be analysed properly. The data collected from the respondents are kept confidential and used for this research purpose only.

3.8 Data Analysis

3.8.1 Descriptive Analysis

Descriptive statistics explained the characteristics of sample or population. (Zikmund et al., 2010). It is applied to summarize raw data of the sample through numbers, tables, charts and graphs. Descriptive analysis allows researchers to simplify big data set in a logical manner (Burns & Burns, 2008). Summarization ranges from the use of content analysis to classify the data into categories so that we can use descriptive statistic, such as frequency distributions and measures of central tendency which include the mean, median and mode. Furthermore, descriptive statistics diminish plenty of data into an absolute summary (Zikmund & Carr, 2012).

Descriptive statistics are suggested when the objective is to describe and discuss a data set more generally and conveniently than it would be possible using the raw data alone. It also depicts the categories in tables or graphs to provide a pictorial description of the sample, the use of descriptive statistics to further elaborate the individual variables and also the use of statistical analysis to determine the association among categories or variables (Burns & Burns, 2008).

3.8.2 Inferential Analysis

According to Zikmund et al. (2010), the main objective of inferential analysis is to make deduction of the studied population from information gathers based on data set gathered from sample. Inferential statistics is interpreted as the division of statistics that based on sample data and make assumption about the whole population. Besides that, inferential statistics employed the probability distribution method and it is usually used in empirical research.

3.8.3 Reliability Analysis

Reliability analysis is one of the significant criteria for good measurement and it is mainly used to measure internal consistency. Moreover, it can determine the correlation between individual items within a scale. Hence derived from repeated measurement, the more reliable scale has a higher degree of correlation between the scores. Coefficient or Cronbach's Alpha is the most common method used to test multiple-item scale's reliability where it represents average of split-half measurements (Zikmund et al., 2010). The reliability of multiple-item scale in this research were determined using Cronbach's Alpha. Cronbach's Alpha result ranges from 0 (no consistency) to 1 (complete consistency). Strength of reliability based on the scale of coefficient, α is shown in below table.

Table 3.3: Cronbach's Strength of Reliability

Coefficient Alpha	Strength of reliability
< 0.60	Poor
$0.60 \leq \alpha < 0.70$	Fair
$0.70 \leq \alpha < 0.80$	Good
$0.80 \leq \alpha < 0.95$	Very Good

Note. From Zikmund, W., Babin, B., & Griffin, M. (2010). *Business Research Methods* (8th Ed.). Cengage Learning.

3.8.4 Pearson's Correlation Coefficient Analysis

Pearson correlation analysis is used to measure the degree of linear relationship between two variables when the data (X and Y values), consists of numerical scores from an interval or ratio scale of measurement (Burns & Burns, 2008). Besides that, Pearson's correlation is preferred for the reason that correlation can be determined without concerning the amount of variation revealed by each variable. So, Pearson correlation can determine the correlation between two variables, it could be either positive or negatively correlated (Zikmund et al., 2010).

Formula of correlation coefficient for two variables X and Y is shown below,

$$r_{xy} = r_{yx} = \frac{\sigma_{xy}}{\sqrt{\sigma_x^2 \sigma_y^2}}$$

Where,

$\sigma_x^2 = variance\ of\ X$

$\sigma_y^2 = variance\ of\ Y$

$\sigma_{xy} = covariance\ of\ X\ and\ Y$

With

$$\sigma_{xy} = \sum_{i=1}^{n} \frac{(X_i - \overline{X})(Y_i - \overline{Y})}{n}$$

The strength of relationship through size of coefficients is illustrated in table below.

Table 3.4: Interpreting Correlation Size

Correlation Coefficient	Strength of Correlation	Strength of Relationship
0.90 – 1.00	Very high correlation	Very strong relationship
0.70 – 0.90	High correlation	Substantial relationship
0.40 – 0.70	Moderate correlation	Moderate relationship
0.20 – 0.40	Low correlation	Weak relationship
0.00 – 0.20	Slight correlation	Relationship so small as to be random

Note. Adapted from Burns, R. P., & Burns, R. (2008). *Business research methods and statistics using SPSS*. SAGE Publications Ltd.

3.8.5 Simple Linear Regression Analysis

Simple linear regression analysis attempts to predict the values of Y from specific known values of independent variable (Zikmund et al., 2010). The regression line

is presented through a straight line in scatter graph where it provides an overview of the relationship between two continuous variables. The results may provide either a positive or negative linear relationship as well as no relationship (Burns & Burns, 2008). This technique is employed to find out the relationship of brand image and customers' loyalty intention of service firms in the Banking and Financial sector.

The simple linear regression equation is as follows:

$$Y = \alpha + \beta X$$

Where,

Y = continuous dependent variable

α = Y-intercept

β = slope coefficient

X = independent variable

3.8.6 Multiple Regression Analysis

Multiple regressions analysis is derived from simple linear regression analysis where it is to test the effect of two or more independent variables on a single interval-scaled dependent variable, either internal or ratio (Zikmund et al., 2010). The partial regression coefficient of an independent variable, β, represents the increase that will occur in the value of Y from a one-unit increase in that independent variable if all other variables are held constant. This method is used to identify whether there are significant relationships between digital touchpoints and brand image of service firms specifically in the Banking and Financial sector.

The multiple regression equation is as follows:

$$Y = \alpha + \beta_1 X_1 + \beta_2 X_2 + \beta_3 X_3 + \ldots + \beta_n X_n + e$$

Where,

Y = dependent variable

α = constant value/ Y-intercept

β_n = unstandardized regression coefficients

X_n = independent variables

e = random error

Researchers are able to identify the statistical significance of both multiple correlation coefficient (R) in general and for each beta (β). As a result, the researcher will be able to conclude based on the outcome of multiple regression analysis whether the relationship between the variables is positive or negative.

3.9 Chapter Summary

Overall, this chapter described the methodology that is used in this research. In this study, both primary and secondary data were obtained. Besides that, non-probability convenient sampling was employed for this research. Reliability has been tested through pilot test before distribution of questionnaire to respondents. SSPS software has been utilized for analysis of the data and next chapter four provides comprehensive explanation and interpretation of the results generated.

CHAPTER 4

DATA ANALYSIS

Chapter four focuses on the deliberation of results for this research performed on the data collected from respondents through online questionnaire. Data analytics are performed using Statistical Package for Social Science (SPSS) version 22. Descriptive analysis, scale measurement and inferential analysis are components covered under this chapter.

4.1 Descriptive Analysis

Descriptive analysis is being used for Section A (General Information) where the questionnaire gathers data related to demographic characteristics of the respondents. Characteristics such as gender, age group, education level, type of employment, hours spend on internet and type of device used to surf internet. The data collected is analysed to make general observations on the data.

4.1.1 General Information

Total of three hundred respondents have participated in this research voluntarily and all questions were answered. The questionnaires were distributed to Malaysian population who has met the minimum requirement to participate in this research.

4.1.1.1 Gender

Table 4.1 and Figure 4.1 showed result of demographic profile in terms of gender of respondents who have participated in this research. There is a higher number of female respondents recorded at 163 as compared to male respondents, 137. The percentage distribution of female and male are 54.3% and 45.7% respectively.

Table 4.1: Respondents' Gender

Gender	Frequency	Percentage (%)	Valid Percentage (%)	Cumulative Percentage (%)
Male	137	45.7	45.7	45.7
Female	163	54.3	54.3	100.0
Total	300	100.0	100.0	

Source: Developed for research

Figure research 4.1: Respondents' Gender
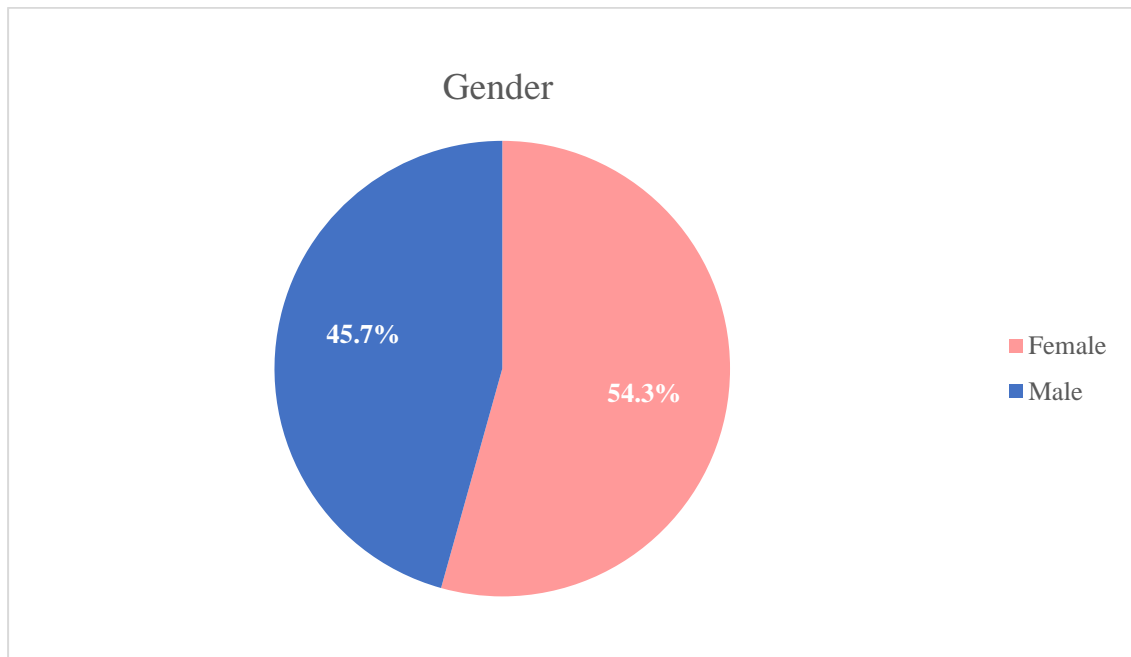
Source: Developed for research

4.1.1.2 Age Group

Table 4.2 and Figure 4.2 presented results of respondents' age group. The statistics showed that more than half of the respondents are above 56 years old with record of 132 (44.0%), followed by 18 – 35 years old age group with 95 respondents (31.7%) and 36 – 55 years old reported with 73 respondents (24.3%).

Table 4.2: Respondents' Age Group

Age Group	Frequency	Percentage (%)	Valid Percentage (%)	Cumulative Percentage (%)
18 – 35 years old	95	31.7	31.7	31.7
36 – 55 years old	73	24.3	24.3	56.0
Above 56 years old	132	44.0	44.0	100.0
Total	300	100.0	100.0	

Source: Developed for research

Figure 4.2: Respondents' Age Group
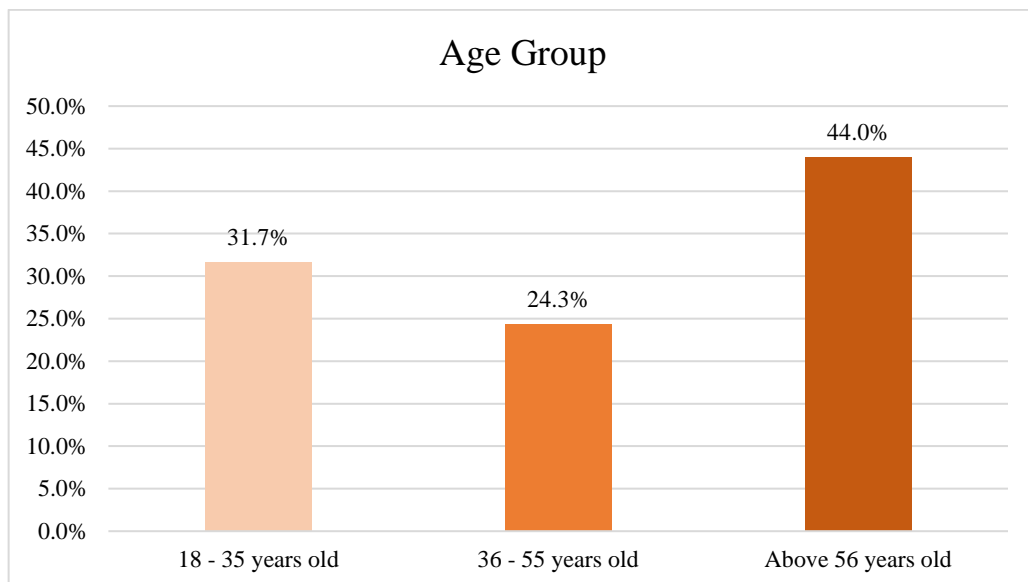
Source: Developed for research

4.1.1.3 Highest Education Level

Table 4.3 and Figure 4.3 showed the respondents' highest education level. Based on the results of analysis, 157 respondents have Bachelor's degree as their highest education level which is 52.3% of total respondents. The second highest education level is certificate or diploma with 51 respondents or 17.0%. Next is followed by Postgraduate recorded with 49 respondents at 16.3%. There are 27 out of 300 respondents or 9.0% with high school or below as their highest education level. Lastly, the lowest number is at 5.3% with 16 respondents who have Professional certificate as their highest education level.

Table 4.3: Respondents' Highest Education Level

Education Level	Frequency	Percentage (%)	Valid Percentage (%)	Cumulative Percentage (%)
High school or below	27	9.0	9.0	9.0
Certificate or Diploma	51	17.0	17.0	26.0
Professional certificate	16	5.3	5.3	31.3
Bachelor's degree	157	52.3	52.3	83.6
Postgraduate	49	16.3	16.3	100.0
Total	300	100.0	100.0	

Source: Developed for research

Figure 4.3: Respondents' Highest Education Level
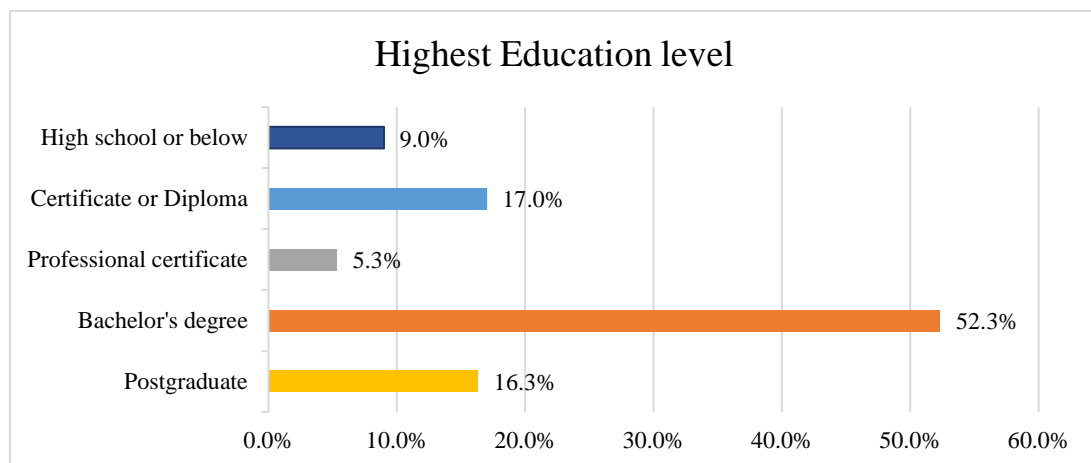
Source: Developed for research

4.1.1.4 Employment

Table 4.4 and Figure 4.4 exhibited the results of respondent's employment. Majority of the respondents are either retiree or not in work force with the number of 91 out of 300 respondents (30.3%). The second highest is professional position with 83 respondents or 27.7%. Third highest is executive or managerial position with 48 respondents (16.0%). There are a total of 26 respondents (9.0%) that are either business proprietors or self-employed. Besides that, 22 respondents or 7.3% of total respondents are unemployed. Other employment that are not listed on the questionnaire has recorded a total of 14 respondents out of 300 (4.3%). Others include employment such as research assistant, pastor and engineering. Next is followed by clerical/administrative/secretarial and production/manufacturing position with the number of respondents 9 (3.0%) and 7 (2.3%) respectively.

Table 4.4: Respondents' Employment

Employment	Frequency	Percentage (%)	Valid Percentage (%)	Cumulative Percentage (%)
Professional position	83	27.7	27.7	27.7
Production/Manufacturing position	7	2.3	2.3	30.0
Business Proprietors/Self-employed	27	9.0	9.0	39.0
Executive/Managerial position	48	16.0	16.0	55.0
Clerical/Administrative/Secretarial	9	3.0	3.0	58.0
Retiree/Not in the work force	91	30.3	30.3	88.3
Unemployed	22	7.3	7.3	95.6
Others	13	4.3	4.3	100.0
Total	300	100.0	100.0	

Source: Developed for research

Figure 4.4: Respondents' Employment

Employment

- Retiree/Not in the work force
- Professional position
- Executive/Managerial position
- Business Proprietors/Self-employed
- Unemployed
- Others
- Clerical/Administrative/Secretarial
- Production/Manufacturing position

3.0% 2.3%
4.3%
7.3%
9.0%
16.0%
27.7%
30.3%
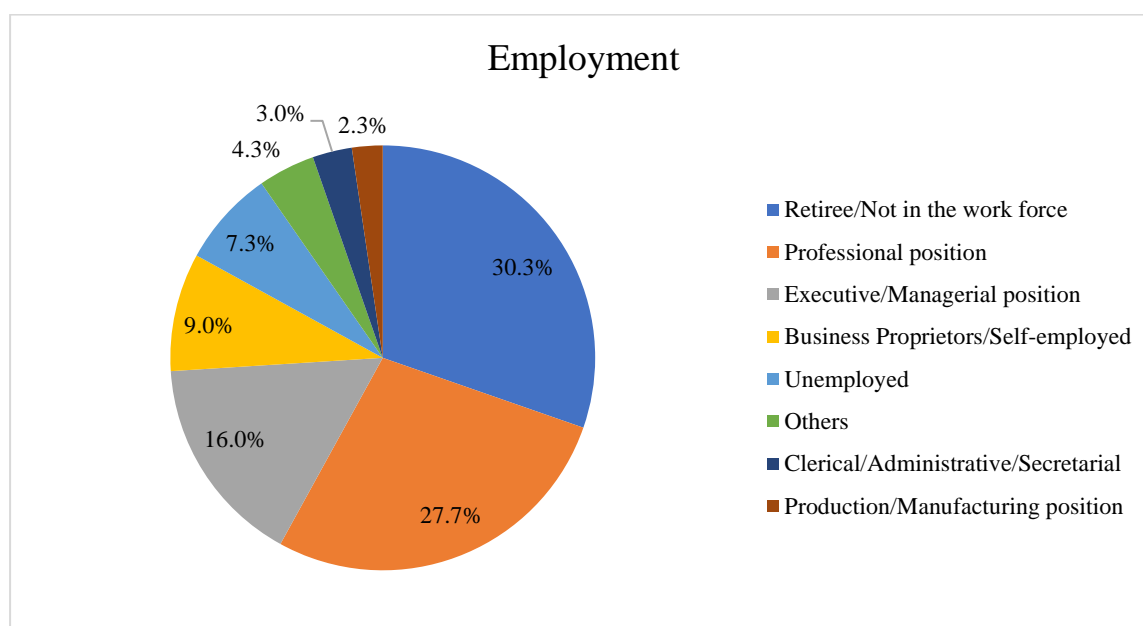
Source: Developed for research

4.1.1.5 Number of hours spent on Internet per day

Based on the analysis as illustrated on Table 4.5 and Figure 4.5, total of 158 respondents or 52.7% spent on average between 1 to 5 hours per day on the Internet. This is followed by 79 respondents who spend 6 to 10 hours on Internet per day with representation of 26.3%. Furthermore, 13.7% or 41 respondents have spent above 10 hours on Internet on daily basis. Lastly, there are 22 respondents or 7.3% who spend less than an hour on Internet per day based on their feedback collected from the questionnaire.

Table 4.5: Number of hours spent on Internet per day

Number of hours	Frequency	Percentage (%)	Valid Percentage (%)	Cumulative Percentage (%)
Less than 1 hour	22	7.3	7.3	7.3
1 – 5 hours	158	52.7	52.7	60.0
6 – 10 hours	79	26.3	26.3	86.3
Above 10 hours	41	13.7	13.7	100.0
Total	300	100.0	100.0	

Source: Developed for research

Figure 4.5: Number of hours spent on Internet per day

Number of hours spent on Internet per day

Category	Percentage
Less than 1 hour	7.3%
Above 10 hours	13.7%
6 - 10 hours	26.3%
1 - 5 hours	52.7%
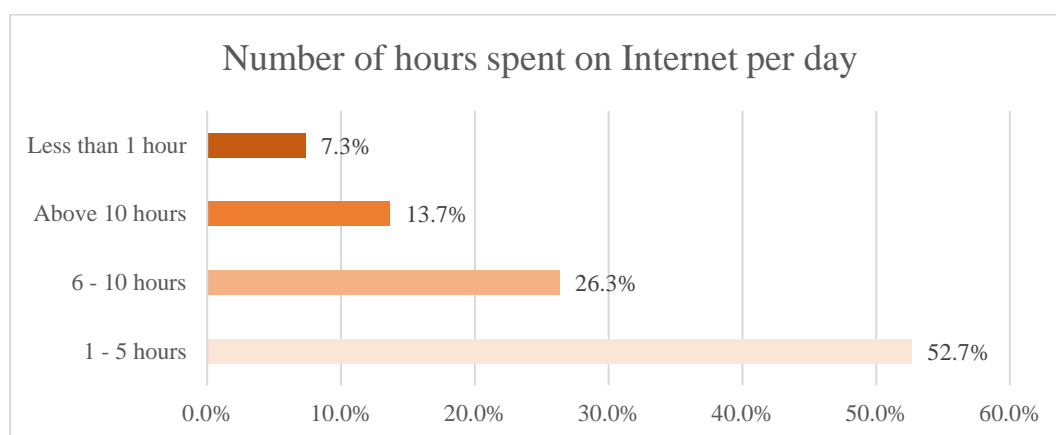
Source: Developed for research

4.1.1.6 Type of device most used to surf the Internet

Majority number of respondents used smartphone to surf internet with records of 216 respondents (72%) from Table 4.6 and Figure 4.6. Besides that, second highest most used device to surf the Internet is computer such as desktop and laptop. A total of 78 respondents (26%) have chosen computer as the most used device to surf Internet. Apart from that, there are small number of respondents, 6 person (2.0%) who mostly used tablet to surf Internet. Subsequently, none of the respondent has use any other type of device besides the one listed for their choice on the questionnaire.

Table 4.6: Type of device most used to surf the Internet

Type of device	Frequency	Percentage (%)	Valid Percentage (%)	Cumulative Percentage (%)
Smartphone	216	72.0	72.0	72.0
Tablet	6	2.0	2.0	74.0
Computer (eg. Desktop or Laptop)	78	26.0	26.0	100.0
Others	0	0	0	
Total	300	100.0	100.0	

Source: Developed for research

Figure 4.6: Type of device most used to surf the Internet
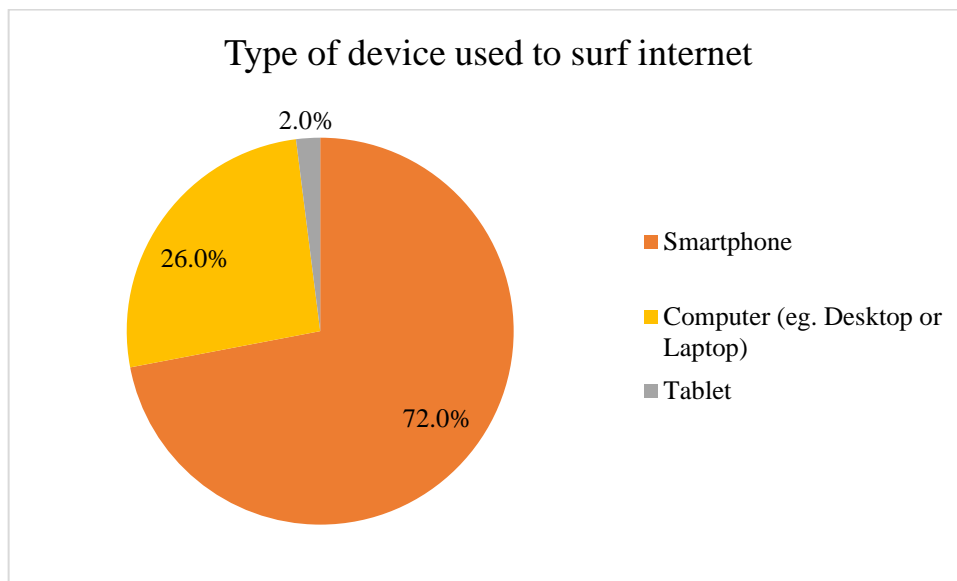
Source: Developed for research

4.2 Descriptive Statistics

4.2.1 Reliability Test

Table 4.7 displayed the internal reliability results assessed using Cronbach Alpha method. Reliability of 6 item scale for functional touchpoints presented an alpha of 0.951 which is considered to be very good. Besides that, social touchpoints and community touchpoints have both recorded alpha of 0.955 and 0.0962 respectively which is highly acceptable. Furthermore, reliability of 4 item scale for brand image was also conducted and it was found to be very good with alpha of 0.945. Lastly, Cronbach Alpha test produced an alpha of 0.960 for 5 item scale of customers' loyalty intention. Based on the results, all the variables are tested with alpha above 0.900 which showed that the variables have very good reliability and it is supported.

Table 4.7: Reliability Test

Construct	Alpha Coefficient	Number of Items
Functional Touchpoints	0.951	6
Social Touchpoints	0.955	6
Community Touchpoints	0.962	6
Brand Image	0.945	4
Customers' Loyalty Intention	0.960	5

Source: Developed for the research

4.2.2 Central Tendencies Measurement of Construct

Table 4.8 presents the summary of mean, standard deviation and variance for functional touchpoints. Based on the results, FT3 recorded the highest mean of 4.64 and FT6 has the second highest mean of 4.62. Item scale FT2 and FT4 ranked third highest with mean value 4.51. Next is followed by FT5 and F1 which have mean of 4.45 and 4.43 respectively.

Besides that, FT1 has reported the highest standard deviation and variance at 1.242 and 1.543 in that order. FT3 has second highest values (standard deviation = 1.206, variance = 1.455) followed by FT5 (standard deviation = 1.191, variance = 1.419). FT6 has shown fourth highest values with standard deviation of 1.186 and variance 1.407. Next ranked FT2 with standard deviation of 1.184 and variance 1.401. Lastly, FT4 has lowest values of standard deviation and variance at 1.167 and 1.361.

Table 4.8: Functional Touchpoints

Communication on functional touchpoints…	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Variance
Can make a brand more reliable (FT1)	300	4.43	1.242	1.543
Can make a brand more credible (FT2)	300	4.51	1.184	1.401
Can make a brand more attractive (FT3)	300	4.64	1.206	1.455
Can make a brand more desirable (FT4)	300	4.51	1.167	1.361
Can make a brand more memorable (FT5)	300	4.45	1.191	1.419
May create a more positive image for a brand (FT6)	300	4.62	1.186	1.407

Source: Developed for research

Table 4.9 depicts descriptive statistics of social touchpoints in terms of mean, standard deviation and variance. ST3 has the highest mean value at 4.65 for the scale of social touchpoints. Second highest mean value is recorded by ST4 at 4.58. Thereafter ST6 and ST5 have mean values of 4.56 and 4.52 in that order given. ST2 has mean value of 4.39 whereas ST1 has the lowest mean value of 4.30.

Furthermore, ST1 has highest standard deviation (1.209) and variance (1.463). Following is ST2 with standard deviation of 1.161 and variance of 1.384. ST6 has reported third highest values with standard deviation (1.145) and variance (1.311). Next highest standard deviation (1.142) and variance (1.305) values are under ST3. Last but not least, both ST4 and ST5 recorded same standard deviation and variance at 1.132 and 1.281 accordingly.

Table 4.9: Social Touchpoints

Communication on social touchpoints…	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Variance
Can make a brand more reliable (ST1)	300	4.30	1.209	1.463
Can make a brand more credible (ST2)	300	4.39	1.161	1.384
Can make a brand more attractive (ST3)	300	4.65	1.142	1.305
Can make a brand more desirable (ST4)	300	4.58	1.132	1.281
Can make a brand more memorable (ST5)	300	4.52	1.132	1.281
May create a more positive image for a brand (ST6)	300	4.56	1.145	1.311

Source: Developed for research

Table 4.10 shown the results of mean, standard deviation and variance of scale items for community touchpoints. It was found that CT3 has highest mean of 4.54 followed by CT4 with mean value of 4.48. CT6 ranked third highest with mean of 4.47, CT5 has recorded mean of 4.45 and CT2 with mean value of 4.32. The least mean value among the scale items is CT1 at 4.27.

In addition, sequence of the results for standard deviation and variance are as follows CT1 (standard deviation = 1.184, variance = 1.402), CT3 (standard deviation = 1.160, variance = 1.346), CT5 (standard deviation = 1.160, variance = 1.346), CT2 (standard deviation = 1.156, variance = 1.335), CT6 (standard deviation = 1.152, variance = 1.327), and CT4 (standard deviation = 1.126, variance = 1.267).

Table 4.10: Community Touchpoints

Communication on community touchpoints…	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Variance
Can make a brand more reliable (CT1)	300	4.27	1.184	1.402
Can make a brand more credible (CT2)	300	4.32	1.156	1.335
Can make a brand more attractive (CT3)	300	4.54	1.160	1.346
Can make a brand more desirable (CT4)	300	4.48	1.126	1.267

	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Variance
Can make a brand more memorable (CT5)	300	4.45	1.160	1.345
May create a more positive image for a brand (CT6)	300	4.47	1.152	1.327

Source: Developed for research

Table 4.11 presents the mean, standard deviation and variance values of brand image scale items. B.IMAGE4 recorded the highest mean value at 4.32 and second highest value is at 4.31 under B.IMAGE1. Besides that, B.IMAGE3 has mean value of 4.30 and B.IMAGE2 with lowest mean of 4.21.

In terms of standard deviation and variance, B.IMAGE1 has the highest values at 1.165 and 1.357 respectively. B.IMAGE3 reported second highest values (standard deviation = 1.126, variance = 1.269) followed by B.IMAGE4 (standard deviation = 1.117, variance = 1.248). Lastly, B.IMAGE2 has standard deviation of 1.089 and variance of 1.185.

Table 4.11: Brand Image

	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Variance
The financial service provider is known as a company that takes good care of their customers (B.IMAGE1)	300	4.31	1.165	1.357
Customers can reliably predict how the financial service provider will perform (B.IMAGE2)	300	4.21	1.089	1.185
In comparison to other financial service providers, this financial service provider is known to consistently deliver very high-quality service (B.IMAGE3)	300	4.30	1.126	1.269
In comparison to other financial service providers, this financial service provider is highly respected (B.IMAGE4)	300	4.32	1.117	1.248

Source: Developed for research

Table 4.12 described the values of mean, standard deviance and variance of customers' loyalty intention variable. Based on the results of analysis, it was found that item C.LOYALTY2 has the highest mean of 4.38, followed by C.LOYALTY5 with second highest value of 4.29. C.LOYALTY1 and C.LOYALTY4 recorded similar mean value at 4.27. The least mean value is presented by item C.LOYALTY3 with 4.24.

 Based on the statistics of standard deviation and variance, C.LOYALTY1 has the highest values at 1.104 and 1.220 respectively. Next highest is C.LOYALTY4 (standard deviation = 1.090, variation = 1.188), followed by C.LOYALTY3 (standard deviation = 1.081, variation = 1.168) and C.LOYALTY2 (standard deviation = 1.068, variation = 1.140). Lowest standard deviation (1.065) and variance (1.135) values are recorded by scale item C.LOYALTY5.

Table 4.12: Customers' Loyalty Intention

	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Variance
I will say positive things about the financial service provider to other people (C.LOYALTY1)	300	4.27	1.104	1.220
I will recommend the financial service provider to someone who seeks my advice (C.LOYALTY2)	300	4.38	1.068	1.140
I will encourage friends and relatives to do business with the financial service provider (C.LOYALTY3)	300	4.24	1.081	1.168
I will consider the financial service provider as my first choice of service provider (C.LOYALTY4)	300	4.27	1.090	1.188
I will engage more services with the financial service provider in the next few years (C.LOYALTY5)	300	4.29	1.065	1.135

Source: Developed for research

4.3 Inferential Analysis

4.3.1 Pearson Correlation Analysis

Table 4.13 presented summary of the correlation matrix for the five examined variables namely functional touchpoints, social touchpoints, community touchpoints, brand image and customers' loyalty intention. Community touchpoints are found to have the strongest correlation with brand image variable (r=0.618) out of the three digital touchpoints. Next is followed by social touchpoints with r=0.592 and functional touchpoints with r=0.582. Besides that, brand image is found to be in a significant positive relationship with customers' loyalty intention with r=0.727. All the correlations are significant at 0.01 level. Thus, the results of data analysis indicated positive relationship among the variables.

Table 4.13: Pearson's Correlation Analysis

		Functional Touchpoints	Social Touchpoints	Community Touchpoints	Brand Image	Customer's Loyalty Intention
Functional Touchpoints	Pearson Correlation	1.000				
	Sig. (2-tailed)					
	N	300				
Social Touchpoints	Pearson Correlation	.732**	1.000			
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000				
	N	300	300			
Community Touchpoints	Pearson Correlation	.673**	.740**	1.000		
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	.000			
	N	300	300	300		
Brand Image	Pearson Correlation	.582**	.592**	.618**	1.000	
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	.000	.000		

	N	300	300	300	300	
Customers' Loyalty Intention	Pearson Correlation	.568**	.555**	.574**	.727**	1.000
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	.000	.000	.000	
	N	300	300	300	300	300

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

4.3.2 Multiple Regression

A standard multiple regression was performed between brand image as the dependent variable and functional touchpoints, social touchpoints and community touchpoints as independent variables (predictors). Preliminary analyses were conducted to ensure there is no violation on the assumptions of normality, linearity, multicollinearity and homoscedasticity. The results of multiple regression analysis are presented below on Table 4.14 (Model Summary), Table 4.15 (ANOVA), and Table 4.16 (Coefficient).

The Model Summary Table 4.14 shows that the multiple correlation coefficient (R), using all the independent variables (predictors) simultaneously, is 0.666 (R^2 = 0.444) and the adjusted R^2 is 0.438, meaning that 43.8% of the variance in brand image can be predicted from functional touchpoints, social touchpoints and community touchpoints combined.

Table 4.14: Multiple Regression Analysis (Model Summary)

Model Summary[b]

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate	Durbin-Watson
1	.666[a]	.444	.438	.80061	2.091

a. Predictors: (Constant), Functional Touchpoints, Social Touchpoints, Community Touchpoints

b. Dependent Variable: Brand Image

The ANOVA Table 4.15 shows that F (3,296) = 78.669, p < 0.001 which indicates that the combination of independent variables (functional touchpoints, social touchpoints, community touchpoints) significantly predicts brand image.

Table 4.15: Multiple Regression Analysis (ANOVA)

ANOVAᵃ

Model		Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
1	Regression	151.273	3	50.424	78.669	.000ᵇ
	Residual	189.727	296	.641		
	Total	341.000	299			

a. Dependent Variable: Brand Image
b. Predictors: (Constant), Functional Touchpoints, Social Touchpoints, Community Touchpoints

The following linear equation is formed from Table 4.16:

Brand Image = 1.054 + 0.218 (Functional Touchpoints) + 0.180 (Social Touchpoints) + 0.319 (Community Touchpoints) + e

Based on above equation, unstandardized coefficient of functional touchpoints is 0.218 which implies that the brand image will increase by 0.218 units when functional touchpoints value increases by 1 unit while other independent variables are held constant. Besides that, the unstandardized coefficient of social touchpoints is 0.180, which implies that brand image value increases by 0.180 units when social touchpoints value increases by 1 unit while other independent variables remain. Furthermore, community touchpoints value is 0.319, which indicates that brand image will increase by 0.319 units when the community touchpoints value increases by 1 unit while the other independent variables are held constant.

Referring to Coefficient Table 4.16, all three independent variables were statistically significant, with Community Touchpoints recording highest beta value ($\beta = 0.331$, $p < 0.001$), followed by Functional Touchpoints ($\beta = 0.227$, $p < 0.01$) and Social Touchpoints ($\beta = 0.181$, $p < 0.05$).

Table 4.16: Multiple Regression Analysis (Coefficient)

Coefficientsᵃ

Model		Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	t	Sig.	Collinearity Statistics	
		B	Std. Error	Beta			Tolerance	VIF
1	(Constant)	1.054	.218		4.837	.000		
	Functional	.218	.064	.227	3.413	.001	.426	2.349
	Social	.180	.073	.181	2.484	.014	.352	2.837
	Community	.319	.065	.331	4.913	.000	.415	2.410

a. Dependent Variable: Brand Image

4.3.3 Simple Linear Regression

A linear regression analysis was conducted to evaluate the prediction of customers' loyalty intention from brand image. Preliminary analyses were conducted to ensure there is no violation on the assumptions of normality, linearity, and homogeneity. The results of simple linear regression analysis are presented below on Table 4.17 (Model Summary), Table 4.18 (ANOVA), and Table 4.19 (Coefficient).

The relationship between independent variable (brand image) and dependent variable (customers' loyalty intention) was reflected in coefficient (R) of 0.727 and adjusted R^2 of 0.527. Approximately 52.7% of the variance of customers' loyalty intention was accounted for by its linear relationship with brand image.

Table 4.17: Simple Linear Regression Analysis (Model Summary)

Model Summaryᵇ

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate	Durbin-Watson
1	.727ᵃ	.529	.527	.72195	2.098

Source: Developed for research
a. Predictors: (Constant), Brand Image
b. Dependent Variable: Customer Loyalty Intention

The ANOVA Table 4.18 shows that F (1,298) = 334.700, p < 0.001 which indicates that independent variable, brand image significantly predicts customers' loyalty intention.

Table 4.18: Simple Linear Regression Analysis (ANOVA)

ANOVAᵃ

Model		Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
1	Regression	174.449	1	174.449	334.700	.000ᵇ
	Residual	155.321	298	.521		
	Total	329.770	299			

a. Dependent Variable: Customer Loyalty Intention
b. Predictors: (Constant), Brand Image

The following linear equation is formed from Table 4.19:

Customers' Loyalty Intention = 1.214 + 0.715 (Brand Image)

Based on above equation, unstandardized coefficient of brand image is 0.715 which implies that the customers' loyalty intention will increase by 0.715 units when brand image value increases by 1 unit.

Referring to Coefficient Table 4.19, independent variable (brand image) has significant relationship with customers' loyalty intention with $\beta = 0.727$, $p < 0.001$.

Table 4.19: Simple Linear Regression Analysis (Coefficient)

Coefficientsᵃ

Model		Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients		
		B	Std. Error	Beta	t	Sig.
1	(Constant)	1.214	.173		7.012	.000
	Brand Image	.715	.039	.727	18.295	.000

a. Dependent Variable: Customer Loyalty Intention

4.4 Hypotheses Testing

Significant value of functional touchpoints is 0.001 ($p < 0.01$). Hence, H1 is supported and confirmed to have positive direct effect on brand image of a service firm.

Besides that, the significant value of social touchpoints is 0.014 ($p < 0.05$). Thus, H2 is supported and confirmed to have positive direct effect on the brand image of a service firm.

Furthermore, significant value of community touchpoints is 0.000 ($p < 0.001$). Therefore, H3 is supported and confirmed to have positive direct effect on the brand image of a service firm.

Last but not least, significant value of brand image is 0.000 ($p < 0.001$). H4 is supported and confirmed to be positively related to customers' loyalty intention.

Table 4.20: Test of Significant

Hypothesis	Supported/Rejected
H1: Functional touchpoints has a positive direct effect on the brand image of a service firm.	Supported
H2: Social touchpoints has a positive direct effect on the brand image of a service firm.	Supported
H3: Community touchpoints has a positive direct effect on the brand image of a service firm	Supported
H4: Brand image of a service firm is positively related to customers' loyalty intention	Supported

Source: Developed for research

4.5 Chapter Summary

In this chapter, the descriptive analysis, descriptive statistics and inferential analysis have been generated and were used to analyse the outcome of the data being collected. Subsequently, further study has been conducted to determine the relationship between digital touchpoints on brand image towards customers' loyalty intention as well as demographic profiles of respondents of research. In chapter five, the researcher discussed on major findings, implications, recommendations for future research and finally concluding the research.

CHAPTER 5

DISCUSSIONS, CONCLUSION AND IMPLICATIONS

Chapter five defines outcome of the results as well as to provide clear discussions, conclusion and implications of the results. This chapter will look into the summary of statistical analyses, deliberation of major findings, limitations faced during research, suggestions to improve future research as well as the conclusion of the research.

5.1 Summary of Statistical Analyses

Based on the data analysis from chapter four, more than half of the respondents are female at 54.3% aged above 56 years old. Besides that, most of the respondents possesses bachelor's degree as their highest education level. Other respondents have at least certificate or diploma and postgraduate. Most of the respondents are either retiree, not in the work force or in a professional position. Furthermore, majority of the respondents spent on average of one to five hours daily on Internet with second highest number of people spending between 6 to ten hours. This is in line with the research conducted by MCMC as highlighted in chapter one, where people spend more time on internet during the pandemic as compared to previous years (Malaysian Communications and Multimedia Commission, 2020).

Apart from that, it was also found that majority of the respondents frequently use smartphone to surf the Internet as compared to other devices. This is also supported by a study where penetration of smartphone in Malaysia is almost reaching 100% (Malaysian Communications and Multimedia Commission, 2020). There were

approximately quarter of the respondents who uses computer as their most frequent used device to surf Internet.

In addition, the reliability test conducted has shown very good reliability in all the variables in which the Cronbach Alpha are all more than 0.900. The independent variables of functional touchpoints, social touchpoints and community touchpoints have a significant relationship against the brand image towards customers' loyalty intention. Besides that, the results have also shown strong correlation between brand image and customers' loyalty intention.

Moreover, it was found through multiple regression analysis that 43.8% of dependent variable (brand image towards customers' loyalty intention) can be explained through independent variables functional touchpoints, social touchpoints and community touchpoints. Previous researches have supported these findings (Bruhn et al., 2012; Fournier & Lee, 2009; Rahi et al., 2017; Voorveld et al., 2013). Touchpoints such as website, mobile application, social media, blogs, and many other channels have provided convenience for customers to gather information and share their reviews online (Adjei et al., 2012; Amar et al., 2019). Subsequently, interactions through these touchpoints will strengthen the relationships with customers and build brand image (Sundar, 2018). Whereas 56.2% of the variation could be due to other factors. As highlighted by previous literature review, service firms should not focus only on touchpoints as a standalone but rather the entire customer journey as customers perception of a brand is based on their end to end experience rather than their experience at a particular touchpoint (Amar et al., 2019).

The p-value of independent variables functional touchpoints (p < 0.01), social touchpoints (p < 0.05) and community touchpoints (p < 0.001) indicates strong relationship with brand image. Community touchpoints has the highest influence on brand image. Brand community has been known to be one of the platforms that can provide useful information and support to customers (Milington, 2021). Customers that are strongly connected through community beliefs tend to build stronger brand image (Fournier & Lee, 2009).

Based on the simple linear regression analysis, 52.7% of dependent variable customers' loyalty intention can be explained by the independent variable brand

image. The p-value is less than 0.001 which presented a significant relationship between brand image and customers' loyalty intention. This is supported through a study in China whereby brand image have positive effect on customers' loyalty intention in the mobile phone market (Ogba & Tan, 2009). Another study has the same results where brand image were found to be positively correlated with customer loyalty in the telecommunications industry (Sirapracha & Tocquer, 2012).

5.2 Discussions of Major Findings

Since the previous section of this chapter focuses on the summary of analysis for descriptive and influential data. This section will mainly focus on the discussions of major findings.

Table 5.1: Summary of Statistical Analysis

Hypothesis	Significant	Conclusion
H1: Functional touchpoints have a positive direct effect on the brand image of a service firm.	0.001, p < 0.01	Supported
H2: Social touchpoints have a positive direct effect on the brand image of a service firm.	0.014, p < 0.05	Supported
H3: Community touchpoints have a positive direct effect on the brand image of a service firm	0.000, p < 0.001	Supported
H4: Brand image of a service firm is positively related to customers' loyalty intention	0.000, p < 0.001	Supported

Source: Developed for research

5.2.1 The relationship between functional touchpoints and brand image

H1 indicates that functional touchpoints have a positive direct effect on the brand image of a service firm in Malaysia. The results have shown that the p-value is 0.001 and β-value is 0.227 which implies that H1 is supported. According to Melewar et al. (2017), website plays an important role for service firms as it helps

to boost brand image of the company to enhance customer's loyalty. Foroudi et al. (2020) concurred that website is an essential communication channel which can provide a service firm with competitive advantage against other players in the market. Furthermore, customer's expectations on functional touchpoints performances such as site speed and stability have prompted many service firms to optimize their website for better customer experience (Briedis et al., 2020). Customers usually visit company's website to research on a product or service offering during the early state of decision making process (Claye et al., 2013). The brand experience from the start of a customer journey is essential as it drives brand perception and success of a service firm (Lehmann et al., 2020). Previous studies on functional communication channels and brand image have shown significant and positive direction relationship (Rahi et al., 2017; Voorveld et al., 2013).

5.2.1 The relationship between social touchpoints and brand image

H2 specifies that social touchpoints have a positive direct effect on the brand image of a service firm in Malaysia. The results have presented p-value of 0.014 and β-value of 0.181 which explains that H2 is supported. Communication over social media has provided service firms with higher reach to customers. Apart from that, social media has been found to provide service firms with free "earned" media through their customer's recommendations and positive comments which subsequently drives positive brand image and customers' loyalty intention (Bughin, 2015). However, service firms should not only track on the clicks and likes of their social media page but rather they should collect and analyse the user sentiment expressed on their social media platform and act upon it (Lehmann et al., 2020). When a service firm has strong social media communications, this could lead to stronger positive effect on brand image as compared to traditional media (Bruhn et al., 2012).

5.2.1 The relationship between community touchpoints and brand image

H3 suggested that community touchpoints have a positive direct effect on the brand image of a service firm in Malaysia. Results have shown that p-value is 0.000 and β-value is 0.331 which implies that H3 is supported. Online brand communities

have been gaining popularity especially during the pandemic where there is an increase observed in digital community interactions. For example, one of the popular sports brand Nike has seen increase of 80% weekly active users in China since the launch of their virtual workouts (Briedis et al., 2020). In addition, there has been increasing trend of brand communities which are hosted through online platform where the members can post their questions and seek advice from another member within that platform (Milington, 2021). Apart from that, L'Oréal's Garnier beauty consumer products brand has engaged well known bloggers to increase their brand image over community touchpoint (Fournier & Lee, 2009). There are several past research which have put emphasis of community touchpoints impact on brand equity and correlation with customer loyalty (Hickman & James, 2009)

5.2.1 The relationship between brand image and customers' loyalty intention

H4 revealed that brand image of a service firm is positively related to customers' loyalty intention. Based on the analysis, it was found that p-value is 0.000 and β-value is 0.727, which express that H4 is supported. Brand image requires proper planning and protection as it can serve as an intangible asset of a service firm especially when in competitive market where there is no distinction on the products or services. A strong brand image builds trust among customers and this can result in customer loyalty and profitability growth (Rahi, 2016). This is supported by past research where brand image was found to have positive relationship with customers' loyalty in the mobile phone market in China (Ogba & Tan, 2009). Additionally, brand image has quasi moderation effect on customer loyalty and internet banking (Rahi, 2015). Branding is crucial and remains relevant to customers until today despite change of their lifestyle having more touchpoints for interactions (Lehmann et al., 2020). According to Aufreiter et al. (2003), brand is not just about showing the functional characteristics and benefits, but it should include image of the brand as well which provides a service firm with competitive advantage and customer loyalty.

5.3 Implications of the Study

Based on the research objectives, the researcher has investigated the relationship of digital touchpoints, brand image and customers' loyalty intention in Financial Services industry. The findings of this study help managers and academicians to gain better insights on digital touchpoints impact on brand image towards customer loyalty intention in Malaysia. This investigation has confirmed the positive relationship between digital touchpoints on brand image towards customers' loyalty intention.

The academic and practical implications from this research are as follows. Firstly, there are very little companies that focus on a single or individual touchpoint as customers nowadays are interacting with their brands using various touchpoints (Payne et al., 2017). In order to create meaningful customer engagements, service firms are suggested to create seamless communication using omnichannel approach by integrating functional, social and community touchpoints to provide a single user experience and optimize customer engagement. For example, a customer might conduct their research of a particular product or service first through community touchpoints such as YouTube, blogs and forums. Thereafter, reach out to a service firm functional touchpoints such as email to make enquiries before making purchase online through the service firm website. Customers may post their reviews or share the service firm's social media page over social touchpoints. It is important for service firm to manage well the digital touchpoints for consistent customer's experience as it has become a common behaviour for customers to shift from one touchpoint to another during their service journey (Amar et al., 2019). Establishing great relationships with customers through high level of customer engagement may lead customers to be a strong advocate of the service firm which could gain them a competitive advantage over competitors.

Second, even though all three digital touchpoints have significant relationship with brand image towards customers' loyalty intention but financial service providers should prioritize on touchpoints that have higher positive effect on brand image to develop relationship with customers which subsequently drives customer's loyalty.

Managers of the service firms may plan and create customer journey by incorporating community touchpoints which have the most significant value on brand image. Online brand communities were found to be the most important channel for service firms as it serves as a platform for customers to share their brand experiences and read on the reviews of other consumers related to the brand. It is essential for service firms to take note on the ongoing communication through these platforms to understand what are the expectations of their customers and continuously improve their services to boost brand image and eventually gain customer loyalty (Simon et al., 2016).

Lastly, in terms of theoretical implication, it was found that all three digital touchpoints play significant roles on the brand image towards customers' loyalty intention in financial service industry. This has fill up the gap of previous studies which were mostly focus on individual role of channels. In addition, this study has also provided insights on the relationship between digital touchpoints on brand image which is less explored.

5.4 Limitation of the Study

There are several limitations on this study. First, the data was collected based on non-probability sampling (convenience sampling), it was only distributed online to family and friends that reside in Malaysia. Thus, the findings for this study may only reflect the opinion of the sample taken and does not provide generalization of the whole Malaysian population.

Second, the data was collected during pandemic Covid-19 where there is a rise in e-commerce and digital transformation due to lockdowns. There was a significant increase on the internet usage in Malaysia with 36% new digital service consumers observed (MIDA, 2020). Therefore, opinion of respondents at that particular time may represent only the pandemic trend where most of the activities are conducted online.

Third, the research is conducted in general context and not focus on any particular stage of customer journey such as pre-purchase, purchase or post-purchase.

Although this research provided significant findings that contributed to managers and academicians. However, the results are not reflective of any particular customer journey stage and this may limit the full understanding of digital touchpoints impact on brand image towards customers' loyalty intention.

Lastly, this research employed the quantitative study instead of qualitative. The findings of quantitative study may provide general overview rather than in depth since respondents were requested to provide opinion based on limited answers available on the questionnaire and analysis was based on numerical data. Digital adoption by general customers in the financial services have been increasing. As opposed, it was found that digital adoption is still little among premium segment customers who generate higher revenue to the bank (Chan et al., 2019). Therefore, qualitative research may provide a more meaningful analysis on the opinions and experiences of these premium customers through interview. With these limitations identified in this study, there are several recommendations for future research discussed in the next section.

5.5 Recommendation for Future Research

There are a few recommendations to address several limitations which were identified in previous section. First limitation highlighted was data collection which may be bias since the questionnaire was distributed to close family and friends and there is no control on the geographical coverage within Malaysia. Hence, it is suggested that future research should consider a more suitable method to improve on the data collection to include more diversified samples and control should be implemented to ensure that respondents who participated are from various states of Malaysia, age group and races.

Besides that, future research should also consider longitudinal study to analyse on the respondent's behaviour across time. As highlighted, the current study is conducted during pandemic Covid-19 which may provide favourable results on the impact of digital touchpoints on brand image towards customers' loyalty intention due to increase of internet usage from lockdowns. Therefore, longitudinal study will provide researchers with an opportunity to determine the changes in the sample

behaviour over time. Managers of service firm will also be able to have better insights on the market changes so they can stay on top of the game against competitors.

Apart from that, future research should focus on the study of digital touchpoints impact on brand image towards customers' loyalty intention in the context of customer journey stages. McKinsey's research has suggested that customer journey drive predictive desired outcomes which contributed towards customer satisfaction. It was found that most customers were dissatisfied not because of touchpoints but rather interactions experience across customer journey (Maechler et al., 2016). Thus, understanding perception of customers on digital touchpoints and branding at different stages of customer journey will fill in the gap of current research where only general overview was provided.

As highlighted in the previous section, premium customers contributed higher revenue as compared to general segment customers. In essence, service firm should try to understand why the adoption is still low among premium customers to ensure that they implement communication strategies that are suitable for this group of customers (Chan et al., 2019). Qualitative method is recommended for future research as this could provide more accurate insights into the reasons premium customers slower adoption of digital touchpoints as compared to general customers.

5.6 Conclusion

Nowadays many service firms have digitalized their communications and business operations especially when the pandemic Covid-19 hit the global market and hugely impacted businesses who were still operating their business traditionally. As such, financial service providers in Malaysia should develop effective communication strategies to improve on their customer journey and experience in order to build trust and loyalty among their customer. As discussed in previous section, brand image plays an important role in differentiating a service firm from its competitors when there is no distinction of their products or services in the market.

Hence, this research has contributed several noteworthy findings where it has provided strong emphasis on the significant impact of digital touchpoints namely functional, social and community on brand image towards customers' loyalty

intention for financial service industry of Malaysia. An analysis has found that there seems to be a large gap between the supply and demand of digital marketing communications in the Malaysian banks industry. Consumers were found to be ready for consumption of these digital touchpoints based on the survey results which have shown that there were 56% consumers who spend more time reading news online and 50% on social media. However, companies in Malaysia still fall behind as compared to other ASEAN countries in terms of digital marketing strategies (Davies et al., 2021). Based on the findings, managers of service firms may plan and implement effective communication strategies to improve the brand image and subsequently customers' loyalty intention.

Even though this research revolves around digital touchpoints and put heavy emphasis of its importance but that does not mean that offline touchpoints are no longer relevant. As study shows that integration across physical and digital touchpoints can generate up to 15% revenue increase from the customer base. Most of the personalization happens through digital touchpoints in industries such as retail and hospitality. Although more than 80% of sales still occur over physical touchpoints in these industries (Gitter et al., 2020). In view of the fact that customers still desires human interactions (Angevine et al., 2018). This proves to be true for premium segment customers of financial services where they prefer interactions with their dedicated relationship manager for personal touch as well as security reasons on complicated transactions (Timokhina et al., 2021).

Future research is suggested to study digital touchpoints impact in the context of customer journey to provide deeper understanding on customer's end-to-end experience. Moreover, it is recommended that future research includes qualitative study as part of the research method for collection of non-numerical data such as opinion and experiences of customers especially for premium segment in banking industry to have detailed analysis and findings.

In conclusion, this research has provided both theoretical and practical insights on how relevant parties may apply this knowledge to benefit their organization. Through this research findings, this would assist them to have better strategy on digital touchpoints which will eventually drive them to achieve competitive advantage and increase their profitability in order to be sustainable in the industry.

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APPENDICES

Appendix 1: Survey Questionnaire

Dear Respondent,

I am a student pursuing Master of Business Administration programme at Universiti Tunku Abdul Rahman (UTAR), Malaysia. I am currently conducting a research to study the impact of digital touchpoints on brand image alongside its relationship toward customers' loyalty intention for service firms specifically in the Banking and Financial sector in Malaysia. This research study is being conducted as a partial fulfilment of the requirements of my master degree. Your participation is very much appreciated to increase the understanding of brand image and loyalty intention of customers with the banks in Malaysia.

This questionnaire contains two (2) sections, which should take you approximately 15 minutes to complete.

Please be informed that all information provided by you will be kept strictly private and confidential. Your participation in this survey is on a voluntary basis.

Thank you for your time and participation in this survey.

Yours sincerely,

Su Wei Wen

Section A: General Information

Please specify your answer by ticking √ the box ☐ that represents the most appropriate response.

1. What is your gender?

- ☐ Male
- ☐ Female

2. What is your age group?

- ☐ 18 – 35 years old
- ☐ 36 – 55 years old
- ☐ Above 56 years old

3. What is your highest education level?

- ☐ High school or below
- ☐ Certificate or Diploma
- ☐ Professional certificate
- ☐ Bachelor's degree
- ☐ Postgraduate
- ☐ Others (please specify) _____

4. Which one of the following best describes your employment?

- ☐ Professional position
- ☐ Production/Manufacturing position
- ☐ Business Proprietors/Self-employed
- ☐ Executive/Managerial position
- ☐ Clerical/Administrative/Secretarial
- ☐ Retiree/Not in the work force
- ☐ Unemployed
- ☐ Others (please specify) _____

5. How many hours per day do you spend on Internet?

- ☐ Less than 1 hour
- ☐ 1 – 5 hours
- ☐ 6 – 10 hours
- ☐ Above 10 hours

6. Which of the following device do you use the most to surf the Internet?

- ☐ Smartphone
- ☐ Tablet
- ☐ Computer (eg. Desktop or Laptop)
- ☐ Others (please specify) _____

Section B: Perceptions of the Financial Service Provider

The following section relates to your perceptions of the financial service provider (i.e. bank or insurance company) that you are engaging for their services. For each of the statements listed below, please select **one (1)** answer which best represents your opinion the most.

Functional touchpoints

(Refer to Website, Application, Email, Web Enquiry, E-news, Podcasts, and others)

No	Statements	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Somewhat Disagree	Somewhat Agree	Agree	Strongly Agree
	Communication on functional touchpoints…						
1	Can make a brand more reliable.	1	2	3	4	5	6
2	Can make a brand more credible.	1	2	3	4	5	6
3	Can make a brand more attractive.	1	2	3	4	5	6
4	Can make a brand more desirable.	1	2	3	4	5	6
5	Can make a brand more memorable.	1	2	3	4	5	6
6	May create a more positive image for a brand.	1	2	3	4	5	6

Social touchpoints

(Refer to Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, Pinterest, and others)

No	Statements	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Somewhat Disagree	Somewhat Agree	Agree	Strongly Agree
	Communication on social touchpoints…						
1	Can make a brand more reliable.	1	2	3	4	5	6
2	Can make a brand more credible.	1	2	3	4	5	6
3	Can make a brand more attractive.	1	2	3	4	5	6
4	Can make a brand more desirable.	1	2	3	4	5	6
5	Can make a brand more memorable.	1	2	3	4	5	6
6	May create a more positive image for a brand.	1	2	3	4	5	6

Community touchpoints

(Refer to Youtube, Blog, Forum, Vimeo, and others)

No	Statements	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Somewhat Disagree	Somewhat Agree	Agree	Strongly Agree
	Communication on community touchpoints…						
1	Can make a brand more reliable.	1	2	3	4	5	6
2	Can make a brand more credible.	1	2	3	4	5	6
3	Can make a brand more attractive.	1	2	3	4	5	6
4	Can make a brand more desirable.	1	2	3	4	5	6
5	Can make a brand more memorable.	1	2	3	4	5	6
6	May create a more positive image for a brand.	1	2	3	4	5	6

Brand Image

No	Statements	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Somewhat Disagree	Somewhat Agree	Agree	Strongly Agree
1	The financial service provider is known as a company that takes good care of their customers.	1	2	3	4	5	6
2	Customers can reliably predict how the financial service provider will perform.	1	2	3	4	5	6
3	In comparison to other financial service providers, this financial service provider is known to consistently deliver very high-quality service.	1	2	3	4	5	6
4	In comparison to other financial service providers, this financial service provider is highly respected.	1	2	3	4	5	6

Customer Loyalty Intention

No	Statements	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Somewhat Disagree	Somewhat Agree	Agree	Strongly Agree
1	I will say positive things about the financial service provider to other people.	1	2	3	4	5	6
2	I will recommend the financial service provider to someone who seeks my advice.	1	2	3	4	5	6
3	I will encourage friends and relatives to do business with the financial service provider.	1	2	3	4	5	6
4	I will consider the financial service provider as my first choice of service provider.	1	2	3	4	5	6
5	I will engage more services with the financial service provider in the next few years.	1	2	3	4	5	6

Appendix 2: Ethical Approval for Research Project

UNIVERSITI TUNKU ABDUL RAHMAN

Wholly Owned by UTAR Education Foundation (Company No. 578227-M)

Re: U/SERC/260/2021

2 November 2021

Dr Sia Bee Chuan
Department of International Business
Faculty of Accountancy and Management
Universiti Tunku Abdul Rahman
Jalan Sungai Long
Bandar Sungai Long
43000 Kajang, Selangor

Dear Dr Sia,

Ethical Approval For Research Project/Protocol

We refer to your application for ethical approval for your research project (Master student's project) and are pleased to inform you that your application has been approved under <u>Expedited Review</u>.

The details of your research project are as follows:

Research Title	Branding and Digital Touchpoints as the Competitive Edge for the Service Firms in the Omni-channel Environment
Investigator(s)	Dr Sia Bee Chuan Su Wei Wen (UTAR Postgraduate Student)
Research Area	Social Sciences
Research Location	Malaysia
No of Participants	300 participants (Age: 18 and above)
Research Costs	Self-funded
Approval Validity	2 November 2021 - 1 November 2022

The conduct of this research is subject to the following:

(1) The participants' informed consent be obtained prior to the commencement of the research,

(2) Confidentiality of participants' personal data must be maintained,

(3) Compliance with procedures set out in related policies of UTAR such as the UTAR Research Ethics and Code of Conduct, Code of Practice for Research Involving Humans and other related policies/guidelines; and

(4) Written consent be obtained from the institution(s)/company(ies) in which the physical or/and online survey will be carried out, prior to the commencement of the research.

Kampar Campus : Jalan Universiti, Bandar Barat, 31900 Kampar, Perak Darul Ridzuan, Malaysia
Tel: (605) 468 8888 Fax: (605) 466 1313
Sungai Long Campus : Jalan Sungai Long, Bandar Sungai Long, Cheras, 43000 Kajang, Selangor Darul Ehsan, Malaysia
Tel: (603) 9086 0288 Fax: (603) 9019 8868
Website: www.utar.edu.my

Should you collect personal data of participants in your study, please have the participants sign the attached Personal Data Protection Statement for your records.

The University wishes you all the best in your research.

Thank you.

Yours sincerely,

Professor Ts Dr Faidz bin Abd Rahman
Chairman
UTAR Scientific and Ethical Review Committee

c.c   Dean, Faculty of Accountancy and Management
       Director, Institute of Postgraduate Studies and Research