

IMPROVING SALES REVENUE OF LEVANT GROUP SDN. BHD. USING  
SOCIAL MEDIA PLATFORMS DURING THE COVID-19 PANDEMIC

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IMPROVING SALES REVENUE OF LEVANT GROUP SDN. BHD. USING  
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## **DEDICATION**

This thesis is dedicated to my father, who taught me that the best kind of knowledge to have is that which is learned for its own sake. It is dedicated to my mother, who taught me that even the largest task can be accomplished if it is done one step at a time. It is also dedicated to my brothers and my friends, who supported me financially and morally.

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## **ABSTRACT**

The fast outbreak of the COVID-19 pandemic has become a real challenge that threatens companies' going concerns. In addition, the COVID-19 outbreak has created a new reality for businesses, which, requires immediate action and planning to adapt to such a unique situation. Governments around the world, including Malaysia, have issued several measures to stop the outbreak of the virus, which have negatively impacted firms' activities. Therefore, using a sample of Levant Group Sdn. Bhd managers and customers, this study aims to investigate the factors that caused the decline of Levant Group Sdn. Bhd's sales revenue during the COVID-19 and propose a new intervention that assists the company in improving its sales. The study used questionnaires and interviews to collect data from 50 customers and five managers. The purposive technique is used. The study findings indicate that Levant Group Sdn Bhd can exploit the opportunity of customers' shift to buying online instead of physically buying at the restaurants to increase the group's market share. Customers are willing to purchase food promoted through social media platforms.

## **ABSTRAK**

Wabak pantas pandemik COVID-19 telah menjadi cabaran sebenar yang mengancam kebimbangan berterusan syarikat. Di samping itu, wabak COVID-19 telah mencipta realiti baharu untuk perniagaan, yang memerlukan tindakan dan perancangan segera untuk menyesuaikan diri dengan situasi unik tersebut. Kerajaan di seluruh dunia, termasuk Malaysia, telah mengeluarkan beberapa langkah untuk menghentikan wabak virus itu, yang telah memberi kesan negatif kepada aktiviti firma. Oleh itu, menggunakan sampel Levant Group Sdn. Bhd pengurus dan pelanggan, kajian ini bertujuan untuk menyiasat faktor-faktor yang menyebabkan kemerosotan Levant Group Sdn. Bhd semasa COVID-19 dan mencadangkan campur tangan baharu yang membantu syarikat meningkatkan jualan. Kajian menggunakan soal selidik dan temu bual untuk mengumpul data daripada 50 pelanggan dan lima pengurus. Teknik bertujuan digunakan. Dapatan kajian menunjukkan bahawa Levant Group Sdn Bhd boleh mengeksploitasi peluang peralihan pelanggan untuk membeli dalam talian dan bukannya membeli secara fizikal di restoran untuk meningkatkan bahagian pasaran kumpulan. Pelanggan sanggup membeli makanan yang dipromosikan melalui platform media sosial.

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## LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

SWOT	–	Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, and Threats
TPB	–	The Theory of Planned Behavior
4PS	–	The Marketing Mix
MCO	–	Movement Control Order
CMCO	–	conditional movement control order

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# **CHAPTER 1**

## **INTRODUCTION**

### **1.1 Introduction**

This chapter aims to show the case of the study and discuss the research questions and objectives. It illustrates the significance of this study on both sides, theoretical and practical. Moreover, it demonstrates the scope of this study. At the end of this chapter, a chapter summary will be provided.

### **1.2 Company background**



Global Syrian Food Sdn. Bhd was founded in Malaysia in 2016 as a Limited by Shares Company under Registration No 201601041386 (1212328-T). The company became known as Levant Group Sdn. Bhd. in 2019. The company owns a series of restaurants distributed all over the Malaysian capital Kuala Lumpur. Furthermore, Levant Group Sdn. Bhd. has established new branches in Langkawi city and is planning to develop more branches across the states. The company plans to expand to wherever the customers are, and there is no limit to the expansion. The restaurants owned by Levant Group Sdn. Bhd. have gained substantial popularity in the Arabic food industry market and the local market. Levant Group Sdn. Bhd. has an ambitious vision to be the leading integrated food services group in Malaysia, providing high-quality products, services, and excellent customer-focused services to improve profitability and enhance shareholder value, contributing to sustainable economic growth.

### **1.3 Company information:**

➤ **Business Address:**

No. 49-0, Patinum Walk Jalan Langkawioff Taman Danau Kota, Setapak  
Kuala Lumpur Wilayah Persekutuan 53300

➤ Registered Address

113a Jalan Aminuddin Baki Taman Tun Dr Ismail Kuala Lumpur Wilayah  
Persekutuan 60000

➤ Nature of Business

Restaurants; Food or Beverage, Food and Beverage Preparation in Market  
Stalls/Hawkers; Activities of Holding Companies

➤ Type of Company

Limited by Shares

Private Limited

Levant Group Sdn. Bhd owns several restaurants; these restaurants' trading  
name is Damascus Kebab, as shown in Table 1.1.


**Table 1.1 Levant Group Sdn. Bhd. Branches.**




<b>Restaurant Name</b>	<b>Address</b>
Damascus Kebab Giant	Damascus Kebab @Giant Setapak, Giant Setapak, Selangor
Damascus Kebab Aeon	Aeon mall , Jalan R1, Seksyen 1 Bandar Baru, Wangsa Maju, 53300 Kuala Lumpur

Damascus Kebab Mytown	Mytown, Level 3, No.6, Jalan Cochrane, Seksyen 90, 55100 Kuala Lumpur, Wilayah Persekutuan Kuala Lumpur
Damascus Kebab Setapak	126 Metro Genting Kelang, Danau Kota 53100 Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia
Damascus Kebab Melawati	355, Jln Bandar Melawati, Pusat Bandar Melawati, 53100 Kuala Lumpur, Selangor

Besides the unique trading name. Levant Group Sdn. Bhd provides a different type of Arabic food; the company has an attractive menu that includes many distinctive sorts of Arabian food in general and Syrian cuisine in particular, as shown in Table 2:

**Table 1.2 Food menu provided by Levant Group Sdn. Bhd**

<b>Restaurant Menu</b>	<b>Description</b>
Lamb kabsa	

<p>Hummus with Chicken Slices</p>	
<p>Shawarma</p>	
<p>Mandi</p>	

#### 1.4 Problematic situation and problem formulation

The effect of COVID-19 on the economy and society can be seen from the city lockdowns across the world, labour mobility restrictions, airline suspensions, travel bans and most significantly, the economic slowdown. The outbreak of covid-19 went

global in February, and still, the case numbers are increasing rapidly daily. It is expected that the outbreak of COVID-19 will have vast consequences on global GDP growth (Shafi and Ren, 2020). Therefore, firms, regardless of size dependent upon Chinese inputs, have begun to experience production contractions. Moreover, panic among consumers and firms has distorted usual consumption patterns and created market anomalies (McKibbin and Fernando, 2020). The outbreak of COVID-19 has a significant effect on the fundamental activity of the economy. However, the extent of such an impact remains unknown due to the disease still spreading worldwide (Ramelli and Wagner, 2020). Therefore, the COVID-19 outbreak has created an unexpected, temporary shortfall in firm revenue in several industries (Dunford et al., 2020).

As a result of the COVID-19 outbreak in Malaysia, Levant Group Sdn. Bhd sales revenue has decreased tremendously since the start of the pandemic in Malaysia; therefore, its going concern status in the business environment has become threatened. This decline in sales revenue can be linked to the absence of social media marketing strategies. Since the establishment of Levant Group Sdn. Bhd. in 2016, social media marketing strategies have not received enough attention from the company management.

Thus, the company has faced several challenges to operate in light of the new reality caused by the COVID-19 outbreak in Malaysia. This new reality has made several changes to consumer behaviour. For example, most customers have tended to have their meals at home to avoid the crowds and minimise the chance of being

infected. Instead, food delivery service has become the primary option for the majority of customers. Therefore, the lack of a social media platform led the company to face many problems, such as social media for advertisement and communication for increased revenue. As a result of these mentioned points, the company sales revenue had declined significantly by 40% by the end of 2020. Therefore, promoting company products through different social media channels is crucial to increase the sales revenue of any company during the COVID-19 crisis.

## 1.5 SWOT Analysis

A SWOT analysis is done through the evaluation of internal and external analysis. The internal analysis consists of strengths and weaknesses. At the same time, the external environment analysis consists of opportunities and threats. SWOT analysis aims to evaluate and analyse the internal and external environment and develop the best business development strategy.

**Table 1.3: SWOT Analysis for Levant Group Sdn. Bhd.**

<b>Strengths</b>	<b>Opportunities</b>
------------------	----------------------

S	Pioneer in the factory food industry of Arabian foods providers in Malaysia.	O	Embrace new technologies such as food delivery applications like Grab and Food Panda to improve company sales.
	The quality of the food provided by the company is very high compared to other Arabian restaurants.		
<b>Weaknesses</b>		<b>Threats</b>	
W	The lack of planning for marketing strategies.	T	Economic downturn due to outbreak of COVID-19.
	The lack of having any social media platforms.		Fierce competition in the food industry.

Source: Author

The internal analysis helps companies diagnose and evaluate internal capabilities and resources to create a competitive advantage (Shaabani and Parsajoo, 2012). There are a few internal analysis components such as management, culture, management information systems and marketing, research and development. With the analysis, the management will obtain a more precise image of its actual position to strategise the business plan.

As shown in Table 1.3, one of the company strengths is being a pioneer in the factory food industry of Arabian foods providers in Malaysia. Potential customers and competitors will recognise its brand name as the customer's first choice when looking for Arabian food products in Malaysia. The company provides high-quality Arabian food with high professional customer flexibility, allowing them to customise their desired product and fulfil their needs.

However, the internal analysis has shown that the Levant Group Sdn. Bhd. has some weaknesses, contributing to its problem (the decline of revenue). One of the weaknesses is the lack of a platform on social media to promote company products. The company has no history of using the social media platform as a marketing strategy. Therefore, such weaknesses have brought several severe impacts on Levant Group Sdn. Bhd.

Based on the analysis, Levant Group Sdn. Bhd has a great chance to employ social media platforms as long as the company has the resources to adopt this strategy; furthermore, Malaysia is a developing country with high use and accessibility of the internet; therefore, Levant Group Sdn. Bhd can take advantage of those opportunities to adopt the use of social media platforms which are expected to add value to the company.



## **1.6 Research Question and Objective**

### **1.6.1 Research questions**

RQ 1. What factors drive the consumers' purchase intention of food provided by Levant Group Sdn. Bhd during the COVID-19 pandemic?

RQ 2. What marketing strategies can be implemented to enhance Levant Group Sdn. Bhd sales revenue during the COVID-19 pandemic?

RQ 3. Do the proposed social media marketing strategies effectively improve the sales revenue of Levant Group Sdn. Bhd during the COVID-19 pandemic?

### **1.6.2 Research objectives**

RO 1. To investigate factors that drive the consumers' purchase intention of food provided by Levant Group Sdn. Bhd during the COVID-19 pandemic.

RO 2. To propose effective intervention to enhance the sales revenue of Levant Group Sdn. Bhd during the COVID-19 pandemic.

RO 3. To evaluate whether the proposed social media marketing strategies effectively improve the sales revenue of Levant Group Sdn. Bhd during the COVID-19 pandemic or not.

## **1.7 Researcher role:**

The researcher role in this study is represented as follows:

An interview was conducted with the Levant Group Sdn. Bhd marketing director to identify the problem. During the interview, the researcher submitted a group of questions covering most of the company's marketing activities, followed by a discussion for all interviewing answers that identified the decline of sales revenue as a research problem.

For problem diagnosis, the researcher applied the fishbone diagram because it effectively evaluates the causes and sub-causes of one particular problem; moreover, the fishbone diagram provides a useful method that helps researchers uncover all the business problem symptoms.

Based on the study's problem diagnosis, the researcher had developed an intervention that relies on social media platforms that assist Levant Group Sdn. Bhd in overcoming the identified problem. Thus, the company management has agreed to appoint me as a social media marketer. This proposed intervention applied to the company during the current study period. The intervention was re-evaluated to

recognise whether it helps the company resolved the problem or if improvement is needed.

The required data was appropriately collected, taking into account the outbreak of COVID-19 in Malaysia; therefore, the study adopted the online questionnaire to collect responses. Also, further interviews were held at the company's office. Data was coded and analysed using the SPSS software program.

## **1.8 Research ethic:**

The researcher did not force anyone to answer the questionnaire. The responders were allowed to express their opinions and thoughts without any interference from the researcher, in order to ensure credibility and reliability. Further, the researcher made sure that all personal information of the respondents were confidential. Also, the researcher committed that all customers information were used only for educational purpose with confidentiality. Lastly, the researcher made sure that findings of this study was available for others, therefore, contributing to the knowledge transition and exploiting this knowledge to benefit companies, the economy, and the community.

## **1.9 Importance of the proposed research**

### **1.9.1 Theoretical**

Marketing strategies have gained significant attention from scholars due to their significant impact on company performance and customer communication. Moreover, there is almost a consensus about the importance of relying on long term marketing strategies that assist firms in accomplishing their objectives (Aghazadeh, 2015; Saif, 2015; Bang and Singh, 2016; Hult and Ketchen, 2017; Song *et al*, 2018; .Morgan *et al*, 2019; Mothersbaugh *et al*, 2019; Goncharova *et al*, 2019; Chou *et al*, 2020; Varadarajan, 2020; Rana *et al*, 2020). Scholars have started paying more attention to strategies of marketing, shedding light on customer behaviour and its linkages with marketing strategies, specifically the transition of customers to the use of social media platforms and the way that the market responds to such a shift (Patruti, 2016; Saura *et al*, 2017; Leite and Azevedo 2017; De Pelsmacker *et al*, 2018; Alghizzawi, 2019; Melović *et al*, 2020; Dwivedi *et al*, 2020; Finotto and Mauracher, 2020).

However, the number of studies investigating the use of social media platforms and how firms have responded to the COVID-19 outbreak via activating and enhancing the firm's online marketing strategies is low due to the short history of the issue. Therefore, this study provided great opportunities to understand the pandemic's

implications on the adopted marketing strategies, thus contributing to the extension of existing literature related to social media usage.

### **1.9.2 Practical**

Nowadays, Food and Beverages providers in Malaysia face real problems and challenges related to the outbreak of the COVID-19 pandemic. As a result of such an unexpected circumstance, many SME firms (Levant Group Sdn. Bhd.) have been forced to shut down their business or reduce the number of employees to minimise and control the losses. As a result of such procedures, a challenging social problem has occurred for thousands of families and creates a new hard reality.

Therefore, the outcome of this study is hoped to assist the Levant Group Sdn. Bhd. in particular and others in the same industry to address the problems related to COVID-19 and reduce its impact on their businesses. Furthermore, the finding of this study will shed light on the importance of using social media platforms and their effect on Levant group Sdn.Bhd revenue. Encouraging the company's management to recognise the marketing department's fundamental role can enhance company sales, providing more resources for the marketing department to operate effectively. The intervention plan proposed in this study can be a reference for the company's management to solve and quickly respond to similar problems in the future.

## **1.10 Summary of Chapter**

In summary, the problem facing the Levant Group Sdn. Bhd. was the decline in sales revenue due to the COVID-19 outbreak in Malaysia. Thus, the company declined in revenue was linked to several reasons, such as changing customer behaviour and measures issued by the Malaysian government to control people's movement. This research identified factors and provided solutions via using marketing strategies to assist Levant Group Sdn. Bhd. to address this problem. A comprehensive literature review of prior studies related to the research area were developed in chapter 2 as well as the study framework.

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