

The effects of social media and event marketing on brand awareness in a culturally positioned MSME: Evidence from Kedai Rasta



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ABSTRACT

This study examines how social media marketing (SMM) and event marketing (EM) contribute to brand awareness for Kedai Rasta, a culturally grounded MSME based in Bandung. The central premise is that cultural identity, when strategically mobilised, can function as a meaningful branding resource that shapes how both digital and experiential marketing activities build brand visibility. Using a quantitative cross-sectional design, data were collected from consumers through Likert-scale questionnaires and analysed via multiple linear regression. The results confirm that both SMM and EM are positively and significantly associated with brand awareness, though each operates through distinct pathways. Social media marketing strengthens awareness primarily through content quality and audience connection, while event marketing works largely through direct consumer involvement and immersive experiential engagement. Dimensions related to interaction intensity showed comparatively limited influence in both channels, pointing to communication barriers that restrict broader audience reach and slow message diffusion beyond existing communities. The study further finds that cultural identity plays a dual role. Rather than functioning straightforwardly as an asset, it acts as both an enabling and a bounding resource, amplifying brand awareness when translated into shareable digital content and immersive offline experiences, yet narrowing its reach when interactions remain concentrated within culturally homogeneous groups. These findings contribute to literature on SME branding, cultural marketing, and integrated marketing communications by underscoring the value of pairing culturally distinctive online content with well-designed experiential marketing as mutually reinforcing elements of a coherent brand strategy. Future research would benefit from multi-firm, longitudinal, or experimental designs, and from incorporating digital analytics and behavioural indicators alongside self-reported measures to develop a more comprehensive understanding of brand awareness formation in culturally oriented enterprises.

Keywords: Social Media Marketing; Event Marketing; Brand Awareness; MSME; Cultural Branding



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INTRODUCTION

Indonesia's digital landscape has expanded rapidly over the past decade, accompanied by a substantial increase in internet adoption. By 2024, internet penetration had reached approximately 221 million users, representing 79.5% of the national population (APJII, 2024). This development has transformed the way businesses communicate with consumers, with social media platforms such as Instagram and TikTok becoming important channels for marketing activities and customer engagement (We Are Social, 2024). For MSMEs, digital platforms provide new opportunities to promote products and reach wider audiences at relatively low cost. However, many businesses still face challenges in developing consistent content strategies and maintaining effective online engagement (Tarbiyah et al., 2021).

Kedai Rasta, a culinary MSME located in Bandung, represents an interesting example of how cultural identity can be integrated into business positioning. Rather than competing solely through products, the business differentiates itself by incorporating elements of Eastern Indonesian culture, particularly those associated with Papua, NTT, and NTB, into its offerings and customer experience. Traditional dishes such as papeda, ikan kuah kuning, ayam woku, and pisang goreng sambal are complemented by Eastern Indonesian music, visual artwork, and community-oriented activities that create a distinctive cultural atmosphere. Its location near a Papua student residence has helped establish a strong connection with Eastern Indonesian youth communities, while also attracting visitors from other backgrounds who are interested in experiencing a different cultural environment.

Despite maintaining an active presence on Instagram and TikTok, the contribution of social media to customer acquisition remains relatively limited. Based on interviews with the business owner, only around 15% of customers first became aware of Kedai Rasta through these platforms. In contrast, offline activities such as Panggung 59, cultural performances, talk shows, and community-led gatherings appear to play a more prominent role in generating attention and encouraging consumer engagement. Beyond serving as promotional activities, these events reinforce the cultural identity of the brand and stimulate word-of-mouth communication among participants. Previous studies have highlighted the importance of such interpersonal communication in strengthening consumer relationships and supporting brand development (Kotler & Keller, 2016; Devita, 2016; Tjiptono, 2017).

Although both social media marketing and event marketing have been studied separately in MSME branding research, fewer studies compare their relative contribution within a culturally distinctive business model or examine how regional identity shapes consumer awareness in F&B branding (Andata et al., 2022; Ramanda et al., 2017; Rita & Nabilla, 2022; Holt, 2004). Kedai Rasta therefore offers a useful case for examining how culture-based positioning, when combined with digital and experiential marketing, influences brand awareness.

This study seeks to explore the following questions:

1. What is the influence of social media marketing on Kedai Rasta's brand awareness?
2. What is the influence of event marketing on Kedai Rasta's brand awareness?
3. How do social media marketing and event marketing simultaneously affect Kedai Rasta's brand awareness?
4. What strategic recommendations can be proposed to enhance brand awareness through both channels?

The study focuses on Kedai Rasta as a single-case MSME operating in the culinary sector in Bandung, Indonesia. The analysis is centered on Instagram as the primary social media platform, and on event-based promotional activities that emphasize Eastern Indonesian cultural values. While the findings offer insights for similar culture-driven MSMEs, they may not be generalizable to other industries or markets. In this research, “positioning” refers to Kedai Rasta’s market positioning namely, its deliberate use of Eastern Indonesian cultural identity in offerings and experiences not the stance of the present study. Our study examines how social and event-based tactics operate within that cultural positioning to heighten brand awareness.

LITERATURE REVIEW, RESEARCH FRAMEWORK, AND HYPOTHESIS

This study is grounded in foundational theories of marketing, digital communication, consumer behavior, and branding, with a specific focus on their application in the context of culturally driven micro, small, and medium enterprises (MSMEs) in the food and beverage (F&B) industry. It draws from classic and contemporary contributions by Kotler and Keller (2016), Kotler and Armstrong (2017), Aaker (1991, 2020), Keller and Swaminathan (2019), and empirical research in digital and event marketing strategies for brand development.

Marketing and Promotional Strategies

Marketing is broadly defined as a social and managerial process by which individuals and groups obtain what they need and want through creating and exchanging value (Kotler & Keller, 2016). From this standpoint, marketing does not merely sell a product, it creates a relationship between the brand and the consumer. The marketing mix, comprising product, price, place, and promotion (Kotler & Armstrong, 2017), serves as a tactical framework for implementing marketing strategy. Among these, promotion plays a pivotal role in fostering brand visibility and emotional engagement, particularly in saturated industries such as culinary MSMEs.

Digital Marketing and Social Media Marketing

The rapid advancement of information technology has fundamentally reshaped how businesses promote their products and services. Digital marketing, in particular, has opened up channels that are not only interactive and measurable but also far more accessible than traditional promotional methods (Sifwah et al., 2024; Ahmas et al., 2022). Among the various strategies that fall under this umbrella, social media marketing (SMM) has attracted considerable attention for its ability to connect businesses with consumers in real time, allow for personalised engagement, and nurture a sense of community around a brand.

Gunelius (2011) identifies four dimensions that characterise effective social media marketing: content creation, content sharing, connecting, and community building. Together, these activities allow organisations to reach and engage their audiences, facilitate the exchange of information, and cultivate sustained relationships through ongoing interactive communication. For MSMEs in particular, social media offers a relatively low-cost pathway to broader visibility, one that does not necessarily disadvantage smaller players simply because of their scale (Harto et al., 2023). That said, visibility alone is not enough; choosing platforms that genuinely reflect the habits and preferences of the intended audience is equally important if engagement is to be meaningful rather than merely nominal (Swartz, 2020).

Event Marketing

Where digital strategies operate at a distance, event marketing works through proximity through in-person, interactive experiences that embed branding directly into physical and social environments. At their best, events create encounters that are immersive and difficult to forget, strengthening brand associations while encoding meaningful cues into consumer memory (Kotler & Keller, 2016). Drawing on Ramanda et al. (2017), this study approaches event marketing as an experiential strategy in which customer involvement, interactive engagement, and message immersion are the primary drivers of brand recognition and recall.

Events, in this sense, are about more than promotion. They are opportunities for consumers to encounter a brand in ways that feel personal and tangible, through live music, cultural food experiences, community-based interactions, and other forms of participatory engagement. In the context of Kedai Rasta, programmes such as Panggung 59 offer precisely this kind of encounter: experiences that are rooted in the cultural identity of Eastern Indonesia while actively inviting audience participation. Over time, such moments can deepen consumers' emotional connection to the brand, making it both more recognisable and more memorable (Schmitt, 1999; Close et al., 2006). It follows, then, that event marketing can meaningfully contribute to brand awareness and cultivate more favourable consumer perceptions in the process.

Cultural Engagement

Cultural engagement, as understood in this study, refers to the broader contextual frame within which Kedai Rasta stages its experiences, specifically the deliberate expression of Eastern Indonesian identity (encompassing Papua, NTT, and NTB) through music, cuisine, language, symbols, and narratives. Rather than treating cultural engagement as a separate measurable construct in the regression model, this study positions it as the underlying meaning system through which audiences make sense of both event and social media stimuli.

This approach is consistent with cultural branding scholarship, which argues that brands draw on shared cultural codes to generate resonance and build iconic associations over time (Holt, 2004). Through this lens, Kedai Rasta's cultural cues function as interpretive scaffolds, frameworks that make event messages legible and memorable not only to those who identify with Eastern Indonesian heritage, but also to those who encounter it as an open, inclusive cultural experience. In practice, this cultural grounding lends additional meaning to both the brand's social media content and its event activities, creating a distinctive quality that makes the brand easier to recognise and recall. For these reasons, cultural identity is treated in this study as the contextual backdrop rather than as a standalone variable in the statistical analysis. The empirical focus, accordingly, rests on how social media marketing and event marketing each relate to brand awareness, with cultural engagement serving as the interpretive foundation through which that relationship unfolds.

Brand Awareness

Brand awareness refers, at its core, to a consumer's capacity to recognise or recall a brand across a range of circumstances (Keller & Swaminathan, 2019). Aaker (1991, as cited in Az-zahra, 2024) conceptualises this capacity as a hierarchy, moving from a state of complete unawareness through brand recognition and recall, and arriving ultimately at top-of-mind awareness, the point at which a brand comes to mind first and most readily

within its category. Each level in this hierarchy reflects the degree to which a brand has secured mental availability among its target consumers.

Aaker (2020) further argues that one of the most effective means of building brand awareness is through what he calls "signature stories", authentic, emotionally resonant narratives that are not only compelling in the moment but genuinely easy to retain. Beyond storytelling, brand awareness is shaped by a constellation of factors: repeated exposure, distinctive brand identity elements such as logos and slogans, the quality of customer experience, social media presence, participation in events, and the strength of broader brand associations (Aaker, 2020). Understanding how these factors interact, and which carry the most weight in specific contexts, remains a central question for both researchers and practitioners working in brand management.

Empirical Synthesis and Research Gap

A number of empirical studies have consistently shown that both SMM and EM exert a positive and statistically significant influence on brand awareness within MSME contexts. Andata et al. (2022), for instance, found that Instagram-based SMM alone accounted for 57.76% of brand awareness growth for the "Somethinc" brand — a striking figure that underscores the platform's reach among younger consumers. In a similar vein, Nur et al. (2023) confirmed how Facebook, WhatsApp, and Instagram collectively strengthened brand recognition for Salad Alvi, a locally operated MSME.

Event marketing has yielded comparably compelling results. Ramanda et al. (2017) reported that thoughtfully executed events contributed 56.6% to brand awareness formation, driven largely by emotional engagement and the distinctiveness of the event experience itself. These findings resonate with those of Wulandari et al. (2015) and Dinah & Sutisna (2023), both of whom highlight how immersive experiential design can leave a lasting imprint on consumer memory.

Taking this a step further, Rita and Nabilla (2022) demonstrated that when social media advertising and event marketing are deployed together, their combined effect on both brand awareness and purchase intention is notably stronger than either approach alone. This points to a growing understanding that online and offline promotional efforts are not competing strategies but rather complementary forces, each amplifying the impact of the other.

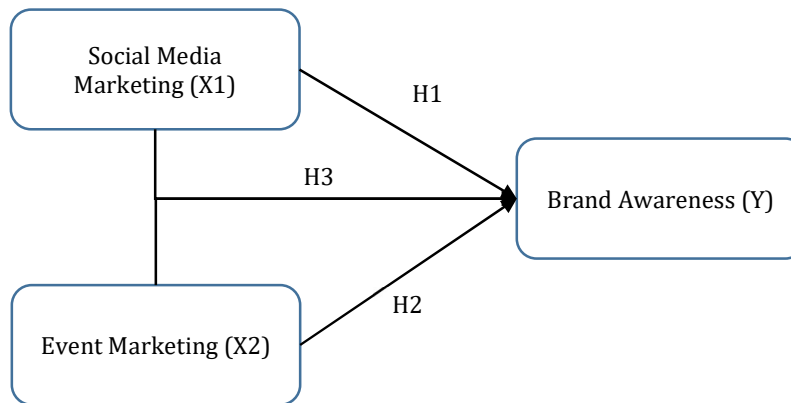
That said, two important gaps in the literature remain. First, most existing studies treat SMM and EM as independent variables, rarely examining how they interact or compare when applied simultaneously. Second, there is a noticeable absence of research focused on culturally grounded MSMEs such as Kedai Rasta where regional identity is not merely a backdrop but a core component of the brand's value proposition. Cultural relevance, particularly within F&B MSMEs, remains a largely underexplored dimension in understanding how marketing strategies translate into brand awareness outcomes.

Positioning of the Present Study

In response to these gaps, this study proposes a conceptual model that evaluates the individual and joint effects of social media marketing and event marketing on brand awareness, with Kedai Rasta as a focal case. The study positions cultural identity not only as a context but as a strategic resource that shapes how consumers engage with and remember a brand. Through this framework, the research aims to illuminate how culturally rich MSMEs can optimize both digital and experiential tools to elevate their market presence.

Research Model

The research model was designed to provide a clear conceptual representation of the relationships among the study variables. In this model, Social Media Marketing (X1) and Event Marketing (X2) serve as the independent variables, while Brand Awareness (Y) serves as the dependent variable. The model (see Figure 1 Research Model) functions as the basis for formulating hypotheses and conducting empirical tests, ensuring that the analytical strategy is aligned with the theoretical propositions articulated in the conceptual framework.



Source: Authors' illustration, 2026

Figure 1
Research Model

Consistent with the role of hypotheses in quantitative inquiry, the present study formulates provisional answers to the research questions prior to data collection and statistical testing. In this sense, a hypothesis constitutes a theoretical answer, derived from relevant literature and the proposed model, rather than an empirical conclusion (Sugiyono, 2019). Guided by the model and prior scholarship discussed in the conceptual framework, the following hypotheses are advanced:

- *H1. Social Media Marketing (X1) has a positive effect on Brand Awareness (Y) among Kedai Rasta consumers.*
- *H2. Event Marketing (X2) has a positive effect on Brand Awareness (Y) among Kedai Rasta consumers.*
- *H3. Social Media Marketing (X1) and Event Marketing (X2) jointly have a positive effect on Brand Awareness (Y) among Kedai Rasta consumers.*

These hypotheses operationalize the expectation that digitally mediated communication (X1) and culturally rooted, experiential engagement (X2) each contribute to enhanced consumer recognition and recall of the Kedai Rasta brand, which will be evaluated through the subsequent empirical analyses.

METHOD

his study adopts a quantitative research approach with an associative causal design, aiming to examine the influence of social media marketing (SMM) and event marketing

(EM) on brand awareness (BA) through statistical testing of relationships among variables (Creswell, 2014; Sekaran & Bougie, 2017). Quantitative methods are suitable for explaining relationships among variables through statistical analysis and testing hypotheses using measurable data (Creswell, 2014). The study specifically investigates whether SMM and EM have a partial or simultaneous effect on the level of brand awareness experienced by consumers of Kedai Rasta.

The primary data collection method employed in this study is a structured questionnaire. The questionnaire was designed using a 5-point Likert scale (1 = strongly disagree to 5 = strongly agree) to measure the degree of agreement with statements related to each construct: SMM, EM, and BA. Each dimension is derived from validated indicators in the literature:

- SMM indicators are adapted from Gunelius (2011) and include content creation, sharing, connectivity, and community-building.
- EM indicators follow Ramanda et al. (2017), encompassing emotional involvement, interaction, intensity, and uniqueness.
- BA indicators are based on Aaker (1991, as cited in Az-zahra, 2024), focusing on brand recognition and recall.

The questionnaire was distributed online via Google Forms to obtain a sufficient sample of Kedai Rasta consumers, targeting those who have had experience engaging either through social media or event participation.

This study utilizes primary data gathered from direct responses to the questionnaire. The target population consists of customers who are aware of or have visited Kedai Rasta in Bandung. A non-probability purposive sampling technique was applied, where respondents were selected based on specific criteria: (1) they follow Kedai Rasta on social media or (2) they have attended one or more Kedai Rasta events. A total of 97 valid responses were collected and included in the analysis. The number was deemed adequate for statistical testing, considering the model used involves two independent variables and one dependent variable.

The collected data were analyzed using descriptive and inferential statistics with the aid of IBM SPSS Statistics software. The analysis consisted of several stages, including validity and reliability testing, classical assumption testing, and multiple linear regression analysis to examine the relationships among the study variables (Ghozali, 2021; Hair et al., 2014). Specifically, validity and reliability tests were conducted to ensure that the measurement instruments were accurate and consistent. Classical assumption tests, including normality, multicollinearity, and heteroscedasticity tests, were performed to verify the suitability of the data for regression analysis. Finally, multiple linear regression analysis was employed to assess the partial and simultaneous effects of Social Media Marketing (SMM) and Event Marketing (EM) on Brand Awareness (BA) (Ghozali, 2021).

The regression model applied is as follows:

$$Y = a + b_1X_1 + b_2X_2 + e$$

Where:

Y = Brand Awareness

X₁ = Social Media Marketing

X₂ = Event Marketing

a = Constant

b_1, b_2 = Regression Coefficients
 e = Error Term

The significance level for hypothesis testing was set at $\alpha = 0.05$, consistent with conventional statistical practice. Individual regression coefficients were evaluated using t-tests, whereas the overall model significance was assessed using the F-test (Hair et al., 2014).

Operational Variable

Operational variables translate abstract constructs into observable indicators so that they can be measured consistently across respondents. Table 1 presents the operational definitions, dimensions, indicators, and response scale used in this study (Sekaran & Bougie, 2017; Ghozali, 2021).

Table 1
Operational Variable

Variable	Dimension	Code	Indicator	Scale
Social Media Marketing (X1)	Content	CNT1	Kedai Rasta's social media content provides information I need (menu, events, etc.).	Likert Scale (1-5)
		CNT2	Kedai Rasta's visual display is distinctive and attracts my attention.	Likert Scale (1-5)
	Interaction	INT1	Kedai Rasta actively interacts with customers via comments or direct messages on social media.	Likert Scale (1-5)
		INT2	Kedai Rasta's social media enables customers to share information.	Likert Scale (1-5)
	Connection	CON1	Kedai Rasta's social media connects customers who share similar interests.	Likert Scale (1-5)
		CON2	Kedai Rasta's social media makes it easy to share information about its Instagram and TikTok accounts.	Likert Scale (1-5)
Event Marketing (X2)	Involvement	INTG1	Cultural elements (e.g., decor, music, menu) during events at Kedai Rasta create a memorable experience.	Likert Scale (1-5)
		INTG2	Events at Kedai Rasta create a unique atmosphere by blending Eastern culture, making me feel comfortable.	Likert Scale (1-5)
	Interaction	INTR1	Kedai Rasta offers opportunities for visitors to participate in its events.	Likert Scale (1-5)
		INTR2	Kedai Rasta's events enable interaction among customers and participants.	Likert Scale (1-5)
		INTR3	Kedai Rasta's events provide space for consumer suggestions or feedback.	Likert Scale (1-5)
	Intensity	INTS1	Events held by Kedai Rasta showcase its unique identity (e.g., Eastern-origin talents).	Likert Scale (1-5)
		INTS2	Events help strengthen Kedai Rasta's brand image in consumers' minds.	Likert Scale (1-5)
		INTS3	Events provide an experience consistent with Kedai Rasta's unique identity.	Likert Scale (1-5)
	Brand Awareness (Y)	Brand Recall	BRCR1	I can recall the name "Kedai Rasta" without seeing its logo.
BRCR2			I immediately think of Kedai Rasta when I hear the phrase "Eastern-style coffee shop," especially in Bandung.	Likert Scale (1-5)
BRCR3			I often talk about Kedai Rasta when recommending Eastern-style hangout places to others.	Likert Scale (1-5)
Brand Recognition		BRRG1	I can recognize Kedai Rasta just by seeing its logo.	Likert Scale (1-5)

BRRG2	I can recognize Kedai Rasta's content or posts on social media without seeing the brand name.	Likert Scale (1-5)
BRRG3	Events held by Kedai Rasta help me recognize the brand.	Likert Scale (1-5)

Source: Authors' compilation based on Gunelius (2011), Ramanda et al. (2017), and Aaker (1991), 2026.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

This chapter presents a detailed analysis and interpretation of the research findings, focusing on the relationship between social media marketing, event marketing, and brand awareness in the context of Kedai Rasta. The discussion is structured into several sections: instrument testing, classical assumption tests, regression analysis, and an in-depth interpretation of the results with reference to relevant literature.

The objective is to examine whether and how each independent variable, social media marketing and event marketing, significantly influences brand awareness in a culturally themed MSME setting.

Prior to hypothesis testing, we describe the respondent profile (n = 97) to clarify the composition of the sample and its potential implications for brand-awareness outcomes. Details are shown in Table 2.

Table 2
Respondent Demographic

Domain	Sub-category	n	%
Gender	Male	42	43
	Female	57	57
Age bands	< 18	17	17
	18-25	63	65
	26-35	14	14
	> 35	3	3
Origin identity	Eastern Indonesia (Papua + NTT)	82	85
	Non-Eastern (Bandung + others)	15	15
Event attendance	Ever attended (min.1)	97	100
Social media	Ever see social media content (min.1)	97	100

Source: Primary data processed by authors, 2025.

Instrument Testing: Validity and Reliability

Before conducting the main analysis, the validity and reliability of the instrument were tested. The validity test used Pearson correlation with a significance threshold of 0.05. Results showed that all indicators for the three core variables (X1: Social Media Marketing, X2: Event Marketing, and Y: Brand Awareness) achieved Sig. < 0.05, confirming their construct validity.

In terms of reliability, Cronbach's Alpha was calculated to ensure internal consistency. The resulting values were:

- Social Media Marketing = 0.788
- Event Marketing = 0.860
- Brand Awareness = 0.874

All values exceeded the minimum threshold of 0.6 (Hair et al., 2014), indicating that the instruments were statistically reliable.

Classical Assumption Tests

The classical assumptions for linear regression analysis were tested. The normality test, assessed via histogram and Normal P-P Plot, showed that the residuals were

approximately normally distributed (Ghozali, 2021). Multicollinearity was not present, as all variables displayed tolerance values greater than 0.10 and VIF values below 10, indicating the absence of strong correlations among independent variables (Hair et al., 2014; Ghozali, 2021). Additionally, the heteroscedasticity test, examined through scatterplot analysis, confirmed the absence of a discernible pattern, suggesting homoscedasticity in the data (Ghozali, 2021). These results validate the assumptions underlying the regression model.

Regression Analysis and Hypothesis Testing

We estimated a multiple linear regression of Brand Awareness (Y) on Social Media Marketing (X₁) and Event Marketing (X₂):

$$Y = a + b_1X_1 + b_2X_2 + e$$

As shown in Table 3, model fit indicates substantial explanatory power: $R^2 = 0.633$, meaning 63.3% of the variance in brand awareness is explained by the combined influence of social media marketing and event marketing. The omnibus test confirms joint significance, $F(2, 94) = 82.023$, $p < .001$, supporting H3 (simultaneous effect).

Table 3
Regression Model Summary and Hypothesis Decisions

Component	Statistic	Value	Decision
Model fit	R^2	0.633	Explains 63.3% of variance
Model fit	$F(2,94)$	82.023	$p < .001$; model significant
Social Media Marketing (X ₁)	t	5.039	H1 supported ($p < .001$)
Event Marketing (X ₂)	t	5.465	H2 supported ($p < .001$)

Source: Authors' compilation from the reported SPSS output, 2026.

As shown in Table 3, partial tests show that both predictors are positive and statistically significant: Social Media Marketing ($t = 5.039$, $p < .001$) and Event Marketing ($t = 5.465$, $p < .001$), thereby supporting H1 and H2. Given the cross-sectional design, these results are interpreted as associations rather than causal effects.

At the dimension level (diagnostic analysis), the effect of SMM is asymmetric: content and connection dimensions contribute significantly to brand awareness, whereas interaction does not. This suggests that scalable content cues and perceived connectedness are the primary levers for awareness in this context, while interaction, at least as currently operationalized—adds limited incremental value. Given the cross-sectional design, these findings should be interpreted as associations rather than causal effects.

Descriptive analysis shows that CNT1 “Kedai Rasta’s social media content provides the information I need (menu, events, etc.)”, yields the highest mean within the content dimension. This pattern clarifies how SMM works in this case: informational clarity anchored in culture. Kedai Rasta’s posts and Stories systematically announce core offerings and time-sensitive cultural menus (e.g., papeda availability), which reduce search costs and raise functional awareness while simultaneously encoding cultural cues (Eastern dishes, music, and décor). This mechanism aligns with Gunelius (2011), who stresses that distinctive, informative content drives traffic and attention, and with Keller

and Swaminathan (2019), who argue that salient brand associations here, Eastern Indonesian identity, enhance recognition and recall. In other words, content at Kedai Rasta is not merely promotional; it serves as a cultural narrative device that repeatedly signals “who we are” and “what makes us different,” thereby lifting brand awareness in a crowded Bandung café market.

Within connection, CON2 “Kedai Rasta’s social media makes it easy to share information about its Instagram and TikTok accounts” registers the highest mean and shows a significant link to awareness. This result indicates that peer-to-peer diffusion is active: customers forward menus, event flyers, and ambience clips that carry explicit Eastern identity markers. The finding is consistent with Andata et al. (2022), who document a positive connection–awareness pathway on Instagram usage. In Kedai Rasta’s case, the diffusion process is not only informational but cultural: sharers become cultural advocates who transmit Eastern cues (food names, music snippets, visual motifs) to new audiences, extending awareness beyond the café’s immediate community.

By contrast, the interaction dimension does not significantly predict awareness, despite INT2 “Kedai Rasta’s social media allows customers to share information” scoring relatively high descriptively. Interview evidence helps explain the insignificance: administrator replies to comments are inconsistent; many consumers use hidden mentions in Stories; and dialogic exchange remains concentrated among Eastern Indonesian students. These usage patterns create intra-cultural loops (conversation stays within the core community) rather than inter-cultural bridges (conversation expands to Bandung-based non-Eastern audiences). Prior work shows that dialogic features typically enhance awareness (e.g., Harto et al., 2023), but this case illustrates a contingency: without visible, reciprocal responses, interaction fails to broaden reach. Thus, SMM at Kedai Rasta currently raises awareness through content and connection, while weak interaction limits cultural diffusion beyond the core.

Synthesis with prior studies. The significant role of content and sharability echoes Nur et al. (2023) and Andata et al. (2022). The non-significant interaction dimension refines that literature by showing how platform practices (admin responsiveness, hidden mentions) can mute otherwise expected dialogic gains in awareness, even when community engagement exists.

The Relationship Between Event Marketing and Brand Awareness

Event marketing (EM) similarly demonstrates a significant positive effect on brand awareness ($t = 5.465$, $p < .001$), though its involvement–interaction–intensity profile mirrors the asymmetry seen earlier: of the three dimensions, only involvement emerges as statistically significant.

Among the survey items, INTG2 recorded the highest mean score, suggesting that respondents strongly perceived Kedai Rasta’s events as cultivating a unique and comfortable atmosphere through the deliberate integration of Eastern Indonesian cultural elements. This is telling. It implies that the cultural dimension of the events is not merely decorative — it actively shapes how visitors experience the space. Programmes such as Panggung 59, live Eastern Indonesian music, culturally themed décor, and community-driven interactions collectively construct an environment that feels distinctive enough to draw consumers in and keep them engaged. This finding sits comfortably within experiential marketing theory, which holds that sensory, emotional, and symbolic experiences of genuine meaning can deepen consumers’ connection to a brand and render it more memorable over time (Schmitt, 1999). For Kedai Rasta, then, the effectiveness of event marketing appears to be inseparable from its capacity to deliver

culturally resonant experiences that nurture engagement and, by extension, brand awareness.

The non-significance of interaction is perhaps more surprising, given that items INTR1 and INTR2 — capturing opportunities to participate and interact — received high endorsement scores. Interview data, however, shed light on this apparent contradiction. Participation at these events tends to circulate within a relatively closed network: Eastern-origin attendees are more likely to take part, MCs frequently direct their engagement toward Eastern guests, and new visitors typically arrive through personal invitations from Eastern friends. In Bourdieu's (1986) terms, this dynamic generates bonding capital within the Eastern community but produces limited bridging capital to those outside it. This helps explain why the present findings diverge from studies that report positive interaction effects (e.g., Ramanda et al., 2017; Wulandari et al., 2015), the question is not simply whether interaction occurs, but between whom. When interaction remains predominantly within-group, it may deepen loyalty and solidarity among existing members while contributing comparatively little to broader market-wide awareness.

Intensity, too, falls short of statistical significance, a result that warrants closer examination given that INTS1, the item capturing perceptions of Kedai Rasta's unique identity through Eastern-origin talents, scores highest within its dimension. Interview findings point to two probable explanations. First, brand-related messages including menu narratives, origin stories, and calls to action, are delivered inconsistently by MCs, leaving the communicative intent of the events somewhat fragmented. Second, event announcements tend to be made on short notice and disseminated primarily through owned channels, which limits their ability to reach audiences beyond those already familiar with the brand. These conditions echo the boundary condition identified by Ratih et al. (2017): exposure, however rich, rarely translates into awareness unless the message architecture explicitly and consistently anchors the experience to the brand. Lay (2017) illustrates the contrasting scenario when intensity is paired with active audience guidance and deliberate activation strategies, awareness outcomes improve markedly. At Kedai Rasta, intensity succeeds in signalling identity, but without structured storytelling and wider promotional reach, that signal does not reliably convert into lasting recall.

Taken together, the significant effect of involvement aligns well with the findings of Ramanda et al. (2017) and Dina & Sutisna (2024). Yet the non-significance of interaction and intensity adds an important layer of nuance: they suggest that audience composition and message architecture function as meaningful moderators along the pathway from event exposure to brand awareness, a dynamic that may be particularly pronounced in culturally themed MSMEs where the brand experience is deeply embedded in community identity.

SMM and EM Both Matter-Differently

The model-level statistics ($R^2 = .633$; $F = 82.023$, $p < .001$) imply that SMM and EM jointly explain a substantial share of awareness variance. The Kedai Rasta context clarifies why:

- SMM builds awareness efficiently through content and connection that are easy to scale and share (menus, papeda drops, event teasers).
- EM deepens awareness effectively through involvement that embeds visitors in Eastern cultural meaning (music, décor, emceeing, talent).

This pattern also clarifies why SMM is significant even though only a minority of visitors report Instagram as their first touchpoint. Although owner interviews indicated

that only ~15% of visitors first heard about Kedai Rasta via Instagram, our dependent variable is awareness, not visitation. The model shows that SMM significantly raises perceptual salience (via content and connection), while EM deepens experiential salience (via involvement). This resolves the apparent contradiction: SMM scales breadth of recognition; EM builds depth of memory, and both pathways are significant.

The asymmetries (SMM interaction non-significant; EM interaction and intensity non-significant) stem from operational bottlenecks visible in the data and interviews: inconsistent admin replies, hidden mentions, within-group participation, short-notice promotion, and uneven message delivery. These are not generic deficits; they are culture-process frictions, they keep awareness concentrated within the Eastern community and limit diffusion to non-Eastern Bandung audiences.

The case also reconciles an apparent contradiction in the thesis: interviews noted that only ~15% of visitors first heard about Kedai Rasta via Instagram, yet SMM is statistically significant. The resolution lies in the construct: the dependent variable is awareness (a perceptual outcome), not visitation or conversion. SMM content and sharing evidently raise awareness broadly, even if those exposures do not immediately translate into visits, while EM raises awareness depth through cultural immersion among attendees.

The findings indicate that social media marketing contributes to brand awareness primarily through content quality and consumer connectivity. Informative and culturally distinctive content appears to help consumers recognize and remember the Kedai Rasta brand, while sharing activities facilitate the dissemination of brand-related information to broader audiences. In contrast, the interaction dimension did not demonstrate a significant effect on brand awareness. This suggests that the presence of interaction alone may not be sufficient to enhance awareness unless it is supported by meaningful engagement and effective communication. Therefore, Kedai Rasta should continue to develop relevant and culturally distinctive content while encouraging consumers to share and engage with brand-related information across social media platforms. These findings are consistent with previous studies emphasizing the importance of content quality, information sharing, and consumer engagement in strengthening brand awareness (Andata et al., 2022; Nur et al., 2023; Gunelius, 2011).

Implications for Event Marketing (EM)

On the offline side, involvement stands out as the only dimension of event marketing that significantly predicts brand awareness, while interaction and intensity remain largely muted. Read together, the data point toward cultural immersion as the operative mechanism: when events genuinely embed guests within Eastern music, décor, emceeing, and food, awareness is reliably heightened. The picture is not without its complications, however. Participation tends to circulate within Eastern-origin attendees, and brand messages are delivered with inconsistent clarity across events, two friction points that temper the broader reach of an otherwise promising strategy.

Three evidence-based adjustments emerge from these findings. Since consumer involvement proved to be the most influential dimension of event marketing, future events would benefit from a stronger emphasis on storytelling — particularly narratives that foreground the distinctiveness of Eastern Indonesian culture, cuisine, and community values. Alongside this, deliberate efforts to welcome and activate visitors from outside the existing community could help extend brand awareness to new audience segments that currently remain at the periphery. Finally, more consistent communication before, during, and after events is essential to ensure that the cultural experience is

unambiguously and repeatedly associated with the Kedai Rasta brand. When cultural narratives are woven into meaningful consumer experiences with intention and structure, they have the potential to reinforce the brand's distinctive positioning while simultaneously opening it to a wider market.

Stepping back, the results paint a nuanced portrait of culture as what might be called an enabling–bounding resource in MSME branding. Culture enables awareness when it is encoded in scalable SMM content and enacted through immersive event involvement. It bounds awareness, however, when interaction and intensity remain confined within the in-group, or when events lack the structured narratives needed to connect lived experiences back to the brand itself. This case therefore contributes a meaningful refinement to MSME branding discourse — not by simply affirming that culture matters, but by specifying the conditions under which cultural value becomes measurable awareness: first, when cultural meaning is rendered legible and shareable through content; second, when involvement transforms cultural cues into emotional memory; and third, when dialogic and promotional structures are deliberately designed to bridge communities rather than merely consolidate those that already exist.

CONCLUSION AND SUGGESTION

This study demonstrates that both social media marketing (SMM) and event marketing (EM) are positively and significantly associated with brand awareness for Kedai Rasta, a culturally positioned MSME. SMM operates chiefly through content and connection: distinctive, informative posts such as timely updates on *papeda* or visuals of Eastern décor and music, and peer-to-peer sharing elevate recognition and recall. The interaction dimension is not significant, largely due to limited administrator responsiveness and hidden mentions that restrict public visibility. EM contributes primarily via involvement: immersive experiences that integrate Eastern music, décor, emceeing, and food deepen emotional attachment and brand memory, whereas interaction and intensity are muted when participation remains within-group and event messaging is inconsistent. Together, these mechanisms explain a substantial share of variance in awareness, indicating that online scalability and offline immersion are complementary pathways.

The results suggest that brand awareness is influenced through different mechanisms across marketing channels. In the social media context, content quality and consumer connectivity play a central role in increasing brand recognition and recall. In contrast, event marketing is more effective when it creates immersive experiences that encourage consumer involvement. Meanwhile, interaction does not appear to significantly enhance brand awareness when communication is not actively maintained or extended to a wider audience. Culture functions not merely as context but as an active mechanism with an enabling–bounding duality: it differentiates the brand and facilitates awareness when rendered legible and shareable online and experientially engaging offline, yet it can confine awareness when communication remains bonding rather than bridging or when events lack explicit narratives linking experience to brand identity.

Practically, managers should institutionalize social media response protocols, encourage public tagging and re-shares, maintain a content calendar that consistently foregrounds Eastern distinctiveness, and track platform analytics to monitor diffusion. On the event side, scripted cultural storytelling by MCs, audience-bridging rituals that invite non-Eastern guests (e.g., guided tastings of *papeda* or *ikan kuah kuning*), and earlier, multi-channel promotion can widen the top of the funnel; post-event live streams and recap reels can reinforce online–offline integration. These steps translate the study's mechanism-level insights into actionable levers for culturally differentiated MSMEs.

Future research could further investigate the mechanisms through which culturally oriented marketing activities influence brand awareness. In particular, examining the roles of cultural familiarity, emotional engagement, perceived authenticity, and community identification may provide a deeper understanding of why certain dimensions of social media marketing and event marketing are more effective than others. In addition, future studies may explore whether marketing interactions primarily strengthen relationships within existing communities or help expand awareness to broader audience groups.

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