Volume: 11 Issues: 80 Special Issue [January, 2026] pp. 82 – 95
Journal of Islamic, Social, Economics and Development (JISED)
eISSN: 0128-1755
Journal website: academicinspired.com/jised
DOI: 10.55573/JISED.118007

AGILE MARKETING SPRINT MODEL: A RAPID-RESPONSE APPROACH IN HANDLING VIRAL SOCIAL MEDIA BACKLASH

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Article history
Received date : 22-11-2025
Revised date : 23-11-2025
Accepted date : 28-12-2025
Published date : 15-1-2026

To cite this document:
Yusoff, Y., Mustapha, R., Yusuf, N., Sapiai, N. S., & Mohd Zain, R. (2026). Agile marketing sprint model: A rapid-response approach in handling viral social media backlash. *Journal of Islamic, Social, Economics and Development (JISED),* 11 (80), 82 – 95.

Abstract: *Standard crisis communication models for a drained media environment are becoming increasingly irrelevant in the face of viral social media outbreaks Today's institutional crises claim that responses not only strategically appropriate but also must be fast, nimble and synchronized. This study introduces the Agile Crisis Sprint Model (ACSM) as part of a broader agile marketing ecosystem to enhance and build up a quick response while still aligning strategy, brand consistency, and compliance characteristics. This is an exploration and applicability of 10 components for agile marketing and crisis response, where Nominal Group Technic (NGT) method was employed to solicit feedback from seven experts. Result Based on the result it seems that ACPM, Hybrid Sprint Synchronization Tool and RIAF were scored as (12) a most importance level point which indicate that all the listed element proposed score are highly approved (consensus above 75%). ACSM also scored as applicable, indicating its importance as a rapid-response tool for management of viral crises through microsprints, cross functional coordination and real-time monitoring of social media. The practical implication is that the study presents a structured, evidence-based model for institutions to teach skillful crisis response behaviors, faster decision-making and increased professional resistance in high-stress digital environments. Its contribution is theoretical, as its suggested extension of agile to crisis communication particularly in marketing area.*

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Keywords: *Agile crisis management; Agile marketing; Social media backlash; Nominal Group Technique (NGT); Crisis communication; Viral crises; Rapid-response frameworks; Digital reputation management*

Introduction

Isolated crises can expand into damages in a matter of hours, putting exceptional pressure on crisis management teams, corporate communications professionals and senior leadership. The speed with which information blowouts over social media networks has transformed the disposition of crisis communication. It is now requiring almost fast, organized and strategic responses that are ahead of traditional crisis management systems. The challenge now for businesses is the immense task of handling viral bad press, soothing internal stakeholders, tackling external media attention and managing with 24/7 coverage in which every slip-up or miscommunication is expanded. Misguided responses could lead to brand impairment, financial penalties, legal battles, and ultimately the loss of stakeholder relationships that have been built over years. The psychological and operational pressures of dealing with these high-risk circumstances is consequently a vital issue for businesses today.

For instance, universities are struggling to help students cope with the viral social media crisis. This is due to the pressure on students in crisis management and digital communications is expanding. Literature has shown that institutions are not capable to replicate in in short time, due to lack of information, clarity and complexity of decision processes that exist in today's social media communication. Students become fatigued by the gap between classroom-taught crisis management theories and the experiences that they confront in internships or entry-level roles. Students are not prepared for crisis situations and are expected to react quickly in making decisions that could change the rules of the business. The separation between academic readiness and professional demands is triggering concern among professionals who realize that a poorly worded tweet or a slow response during a crisis could jeopardize their careers and the long-term survival of their institution.

On the other hand, the students are at even higher risk when they end up in a career in public relations, corporate communications or digital marketing. This is because they must not only adopt new technologies but also need to think about it strategically, how emotional intelligence influences their decisions and where rapid decision-making needs to take over. The diverse and changing landscapes of various social media platforms make the students not only need to be 'experts' in certain platforms but also have some knowledge of cross-platform dynamics. This includes how such channels may work in support of one another and have the tendency to refocus public scrutiny on crisis events. Many learners experience “imposter syndrome” and career anxiety since they lack real-world skills and find it difficult to meet the high standards of employers. Many stakeholders consider that digital natives have crisis management and issues management scrubbed into their brains because they used social media throughout their childhood years for recreational purposes.

The problem arises is the traditional crisis communication frameworks, such as Coombs's Situational Crisis Communication Theory and the four-stage crisis lifecycle model, were established in an era when crisis development took days or weeks rather than hours or minutes. This left institutions with time for comprehensive analysis of stakeholders, messaging and legal reviews, as well as coordinated response delivery. While established models that are theoretically and empirically validated before the beginning of social media, they lack

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procedural agility and time-to-response capability required to handle viral spread. A viral crisis can disperse to millions of users before a traditional world class crisis management has a chance to control it. Institutions worsen from diagnostic immobilization, caught between the need for fast response and legitimate concerns typically practiced in traditional crisis communication. The result is often a delayed response, arriving too late after critics, competitors, or misled stakeholders have already dominated public opinion, interpreting messages ineffectively.

Additionally, traditional crisis management commonly involves multiple layers of approval, from frontline communicators to middle managers, legal counsel, and senior executives. The problem outspreads beyond response speed and it lies in the ultimate mismatch between hierarchical organizational structures and the social media crisis expansion. This generates bottlenecks, deterring timely responses, as every minute of delay permits misinformation and negative notion to transmit over the digital network. While engaging traditional crisis management processes, institutions often find their official statements published hours after the crisis reaches its peak, by which time public opinion has already become clear. This forces the institution into a defensive position rather than actively supervising public opinion. The discrepancy between institutional crisis response capabilities and the rapidly changing demands of social media crisis management generates a determined vulnerability that even well-managed, which reputable institutions are not resistant to.

Hence, institutions need the operational agility of software development methodologies to address these complicated challenges. In addition, an innovative crisis management framework is also needed that incorporates the strategic difficulty of established crisis communication. Agile and scrum principles is capable in responding to the viral spread of social media mainly to build a crisis management model. This study proposed The Agile Crisis Sprint Model to represent a paradigm shift in crisis management thinking, moving from a sequential, stages maneuver to an iterative, sprint-based response. This enables institutions to establish initial responses within seconds, consistently optimize messaging based on real-time feedback and sentiment analysis, and maintain strategic consistency while operating at supreme speed. Institutions can lessen the response time while maintaining strategic consistency by forming pre-authorized response protocols, cross-functional crisis sprint teams with decision-making authority, and clear escalation paths for different levels of toughness. Agile methodologies is to address crisis scenarios and generate an evidence-based framework that balances speed with strategic considerations, empowers frontline communicators while maintaining organizational accountability, and stipulates procedural precision. Hence, reducing the burden on crisis management professionals and improving organizational outcomes in the face of high-risk viruses.

Literature Review

Over the past three decades, literature in the field of crisis communication has grown significantly, with some pioneering works on fundamental frameworks that continue to impact academic research and professional practice. Situational Crisis Communication Theory (SCCT) was one of the first theories introduced in early and mid-1990s. SCCT continues being one of the main theoretical lenses for academics and practitioners analyzing crisis responses from institutions. This approach argues that crisis response tactics must specifically fit an organization's characteristics, missions and prior reputation, and the nature of crises (Coombs & Holladay 2002). SCCT suggests that institutions in victim crises need different communication strategies than those suffering preventable crises. This theory suggests that, as

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organizational responsibility grows, response orientation should become more accommodating. Demonstrating the prediction power of SCCT with empirical evidence in diverse crisis contexts Positing the theoretical utility of SCCT to explain and guide stakeholder response. The main claim of the theory about the link between crisis type, response strategies and reputational outcomes is additionally supported by meta-analysis evidence (Claeys, Cauberghe & Vyncke, 2010). However, critics raise questions about its applicability to the drastically different social media information environment and contend that the development and validation of SCCT is primarily based on experimental studies of stakeholder responses to crisis scenarios presented in traditional media formats. In light of the environment, stakeholders are involved in crisis-related conversation and not just at receiving organizational information (Austin, Fisher Liu and Jin, 2012). In addition, although the theoretical nature of SOR offers clear advice for practitioners, others have criticized it for oversimplifying the multifaceted strategic dimensions of crisis decision-making in action and for its neglect of temporal dynamics of crisis development, especially considering how a traditional 4-hour 20-minute time frame (Freberg, 2012) may be surreptitious to escalating, peaking, and subsiding during the digital landscape.

The emergence of social media as a mainstream communication channel has led to an increase in research focusing on how the digital tools are reshaping crisis communication. It has been shown that social media crises have similarities as well as differences to traditional media crises in dissemination speed, stakeholder involvement, information distribution and narrative control. Social Media Crisis Communication (SMCC) Model was suggested by Jin, Liu, and Austin (2014). The model proposed that the crisis communication environment in social media is constructed by network groups, and algorithm-based content amplification; involving the mix and overlap of information from institutions, traditional news coverage, and user-generated content. The organization has to watch and be in multiple information streams at once. Their study also indicates that stakeholders' perceptions per se do not merely stem from the official organizational information but are composed of a mixture of sources including traditional news media, web-based peer networks and their own on-site observations which together will form an "integrated crisis message" that cannot be controlled by institutions (Austin, Fisher, Liu & Jin, 2012). Follow-up research has established that social media fundamentally redefines stakeholders' expectations regarding organizational transparency and responsiveness, and conversational involvement. Scholars have discovered that the expectations of stakeholders when using social media are that companies post about a crisis on a social media site within an hour of the start of the crisis and respond to requests for information from the public in 3-4 hays—far shorter than what is suggested by existing frameworks (Utz, Schultz, & Glocka, 2011; Veil & Buehner & Palenchar, 2011). Nevertheless, the academic community still argues whether such an artificial sense of time really helps manage crises better or simply rushes policy makers toward a premature and mis-coordinated action. Some research indicates that fast but insufficient replies can strengthen stakeholder anger and prolong the crisis as a result of requiring to make corrective action later on (Liu, Austin & Jin, 2011).

One extensive gap in the crisis communication literature is the failure to examine how organizational processes and structures work against, or enhance, rapidity of crisis response. Attention still needs to be given in terms of how information is handled and action can be performed, notably in regard to the operational processes for day-to-day routines within institutions: detecting, gathering data on or against the issue at stake, analyzing it and finally acting upon or reacting towards this sudden crisis. Although we know some about organizational crisis readiness using concepts of response plans, crisis communication teams,

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and the ability to learn from due to previous crises (Bundy, Pfarrer, Short & Coombs 2017), research regarding processes of sensemaking in real-time decision making or dynamics within a team managing a crisis are weaker. Limited knowledge exists about the activities of crisis teams, but a study has demonstrated that in companies with well-functioning crisis management systems organizational ranking and data approval cause delays in implementation of responses measures that are instrumental rather than due to lack of knowledge (Johansen et al., 2012). In addition, studies on the psychology of crisis management work show that working with crises is usually associated with feelings of stress, emotional fatigue and decision anxiety among crisis managers (Falkheimer & Heide 2015). Furthermore, organizational forms and processes must be in place that will help lessen cognitive overload, clarify decision authority, and offer psychological support to those who need it most when the time crisis is on. The results indicate that strengthening crisis response capabilities would require more than just resilient strategic architecture.

The agile methodologies in crisis management literature are scarce and often more theoretically oriented than empirical yet expanding in academic research area. Resulting from the dominion of software development practice, agile principles endorse short feedback loops and adaptive planning, iterative development, multi-disciplinary collaboration, and have been adopted magnificently in a various institutional setting namely marketing, product development and organizational change management (Rigby et al., 2016). Agile crisis management has been renowned by researchers as signifying enclosed of agile principles that contain favoring rapidity over perfection in planning (Ward, 2009). It is also the enhancement over comprehensive solutions, and using small, flexible teams endowed with significant levels of deliberation for decision making (Cottmeyer & Premo 2008; Riggins & Lacity, 2016). Agile principles are also intuitively out of conformity with activities one does when managing SMCs people trust.

With regard to crisis communication, some people contend that an agile approach may or may not be readily transferable for the unique nature of software development. They argue that communication failures are often integrated into the crisis story being told and taking on new meanings changing as they become part of everyday institutional narratives (Coombs & Holladay, 2012). The existing literature on agile crisis management is found to cover technology companies and startups of firms with more informal decision process methods where agile flexibility can be applied. It is, thus, still a question whether agile principles can be realistically implemented in larger and more hierarchical institutions that have greater risk management and legal compliance needs. This is significant because firstly, organizations manage socially viral crises in social media are situated inside these more regulated environments and, secondly, the dynamic nature of the crises entails the combination of theory-based claims with theoretical insights from organizational crisis management literature.

Literature on crisis response time discloses an ongoing debate on what composes a perfect reaction strategy for viral crises on how institutions' responses enforce their experiences during crises. Several studies have demonstrated that swift organizational reaction to social media crises is linked with more positive stakeholder perception, slower spread of negative sentiment, and shorter crisis length proving what some scholars describe as the pivotal "viral race" in which institutions must leverage a response before negative sentiment prevails (Veil et al., 2011; Schultz et al. 2011) Yet, other research has revealed a fine-grained interplay between speed and quality of information: fast but defensive, evasive or simply incorrect responses do worse in life than slow yet thorough and strategic information (Ott & Theunissen, 2015). Van der Meer and Verhoeven (2014) discovered that although, in surveys, stakeholders'

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preferences for fast organizational responses were pronounced, their actual benefit evaluations of an organization at its crisis event were less determined by the temporality of a response strategy than by the appropriateness of it, indicating that the over-representation of speed in practice may be deceptive. Moreover, the results on "preemptive disclosure effect" in opposition to rule of speed. This is because proactive disclosure demands institutions recognize and admit problems before they focus on crises. This is basically distinct from reactive responses and viral spread (Rossen, 2000). These contrasting results encounter the need for timely response, a basic conflict that lies at the heart of crisis communication research. Demanded by time driven social media logic, yet which is contradictory with the more thoughtful, legitimate and precise process acclaimed in traditional theories of crisis management. The Agile Crisis Sprint Model developed in this paper is an attempt to address this paradox by proposing a framework for rapidly acting within preapproved bounds early and having the possibility of iteratively tuning the action later as more information flows in, although it still needs empirical validation across different institutions and crisis scenarios.

Methodology

The main methodology used for the current study was the Nominal Group Technique (NGT). There are five agile development and social media experts that were invited to participate. There being no opportunity to meet the experts in person, an online NGT meeting was performed through Google Meet by the researchers. The meeting lasted three hours. Using NGT, the panel of experts brainstormed and a pool of ideas and solutions was taken from their feedback. Subsequently, the investigators conducted NGT to perform selected calculations and arrive at results that met the study objectives.

NGT technology steps

The Nominal Group Technique (NGT) is an interactive group process that directly brings out the opinions of a group regarding a subject matter. It was initially developed to be a "participatory technology in the context of social planning" (Delbecq, Van de Ven and Gustafson 1975, p107); social planning consists of four elements, exploratory research; citizen participation; multidisciplinary expert participation and program review. This method has been utilised for a range of group contexts, such as in the empirical research in social sciences. However, there is still limited research carried out using this type of technology for educational purposes (O'Neil & Jackson 1983; Lomax & McLeman 1984; Lloyd Jones et al.1984)

The NGT procedure is a very organised method that incorporates four separate stages:

(1) Independent generation of ideas in response to a stimulus question.
(2) Sharing (and listing) of these ideas in round-robin fashion with no discussion.
(3) Clarification of each individual idea and grouping of similar ideas together.
(4) Individual voting to prioritise ideas.

NGT group processes tend to last between 1.5 and 2 hours (Gibson & Soanes, 2000), with groups averaging between five and ten participants (Delbecq, Van de Ven, & Gustafson, 1975; O'Neil & Jackson, 1983). The role of the researcher in NGT is that of facilitator and chair so there is less contamination with the data (Lloyd-Jones et al. Lomax and McLeman (1984) remarked that "in many methods of prospective research proposed, the researcher's assumption is embedded in the construction of questions through which replies are solicited and [in] coding the responses" (184). This is less the case with NGT, as ordering, categorisation and prioritization of responses are prescribed by the group members. But the formulation of

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challenging questions is an important part of the success of the technique, and researchers must know what they want to learn through it. Delbecq et al (1975) contrasted NGT with FDM.

Participant Profiles

Table 1: Participant Profiles

They participated.	number	experience	mechanism
The impact of social media	3	15	Instagram and TikTok
Marketing experts	2	20	private companies

Data Analysis

This study employed the Nominal Group Technique (NGT) method. During the study, data was entered into NGT-PLUS software. After discussing all topics, experts voted in front of all invited experts. Following the experts' responses to each topic, data analysis was performed using NGT-PLUS software.

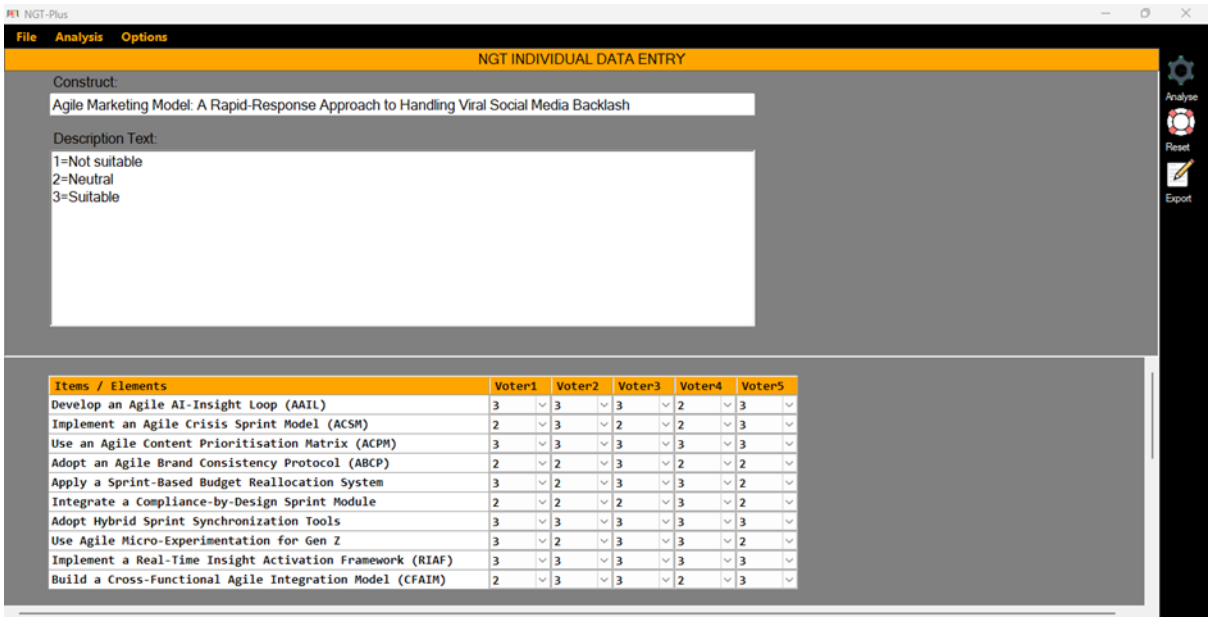

Figure 1: NGT-PLU Input

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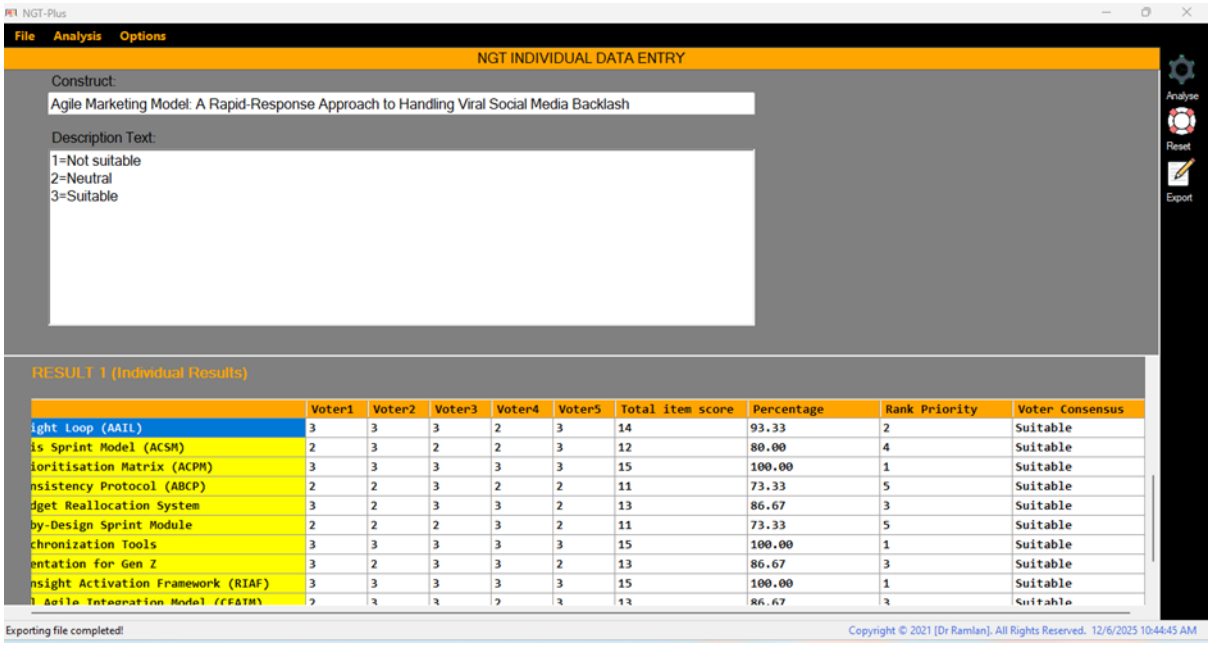

	Voter1	Voter2	Voter3	Voter4	Voter5	Total item score	Percentage	Rank Priority	Voter Consensus
ight Loop (AAIL)	3	3	3	2	3	14	93.33	2	Suitable
is Sprint Model (ACSM)	2	3	2	2	3	12	80.00	4	Suitable
ioritisation Matrix (ACPM)	3	3	3	3	3	15	100.00	1	Suitable
nsistency Protocol (ABCP)	2	2	3	2	2	11	73.33	5	Suitable
dget Reallocation System	3	2	3	3	2	13	86.67	3	Suitable
by-Design Sprint Module	2	2	2	3	2	11	73.33	5	Suitable
chronization Tools	3	3	3	3	3	15	100.00	1	Suitable
entation for Gen Z	3	2	3	3	2	13	86.67	3	Suitable
nsight Activation Framework (RIAF)	3	3	3	3	3	15	100.00	1	Suitable
l Agile Integration Model (CEAIM)	2	3	3	2	3	13	86.67	3	Suitable

Figure 2: Data analysis using NGT-PLU

Table 2: NGT Data Output

Project/ Element	Voter 1	Voter 2	Voter 3	Voter 4	Voter 5	Total Project Score	Percentage	Ranking priority	Voter consensus
Building an Agile Artificial Intelligence Insights Loop (AAIL)	3	3	3	2	3	14	93.33	2	according to
Implement the Agile Crisis Spur Model (ACSM)	2	3	2	2	3	12	80	4	according to
Use the Agile Content Prioritization Matrix (ACPM)	3	3	3	3	3	15	100	1	according to
Use the Agile Brand Consistency Protocol (ABCP)	2	2	3	2	2	11	73.33	5	according to
Use a sprint-based budget reallocation system	3	2	3	3	2	13	86.67	3	according to
By designing and integrating compliance sprint modules	2	2	2	3	2	11	73.33	5	according to

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Use hybrid Sprint synchronization tools	**3**	**3**	**3**	**3**	**3**	**15**	**100**	**1**	**according to**
Targeting Generation Z, employ agile micro-experiments.	**3**	**2**	**3**	**3**	**2**	**13**	**86.67**	**3**	**according to**
Implement the Real-Time Insight Activation Framework (RIAF)	**3**	**3**	**3**	**3**	**3**	**15**	**100**	**1**	**according to**
Build a cross-functional agile integration model (CFAIM)	**2**	**3**	**3**	**2**	**3**	**13**	**86.67**	**3**	**according to**

*** NGT data must have more than 75% consistency.*

The Nominal Group Techniques (NGT) results show that experts were highly consistent in their assessment of the applicability of most proposed agile marketing innovations, with some standing out as priorities based on total score and percentage ranking. The top-scoring solutions ACPM, Hybrid Sprint Synchronization Tool, and RIAF gained 100% marks. This signifies a consensus between experts on their importance and relevance. AAIL scor2 93.33%, which indicates high applicability and ranking second overall. Other solutions scored 86.67%, including a sprint-based budget reallocation system, micro-experiments for Gen Z, and the CFAIM, indicating consistent expert support, but less importance than the top-scoring solutions. ACSM, BCP and CDSM as lower-level components had lower percentages ranging from 73.33% to 80%, signifying that while beneficial, they are not immediately urgent. Inclusively, the scores showed a high degree of consensus among experts, with all projects considered appropriate and the highest-scoring innovations reflected the most effective priorities for agile marketing enhancement.

Table 3: Final output

	Element
Use the Agile Content Prioritization Matrix (ACPM)	Rating system ● (Trend relevance × Expected coverage × Resource investment) can refine content backlog and help the team make decisions. *What, where and when to publish content* to lessen unnecessary content loading.
Use hybrid Sprint synchronization tools	Asynchronous use ● attitude, ● Shared Kanban boards (Jira/Trello/Monday) ● Leveraging AI-assisted task reminders helps maintain coordination and consistency across hybrid teams, ensuring a high iteration speed.

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Implement the Real-Time Insight Activation Framework (RIAF)	A system that changes raw data into workable insights through real-time dashboards. • Automatic anomaly detection • Data review based on sprint This ensures that insights are implemented immediately.
Building an Agile Artificial Intelligence Insights Loop (AAIL)	Cycle of integrated real-time analysis • Dashboard • Automatic emotion detection, and • Weekly micro-sprints are carried out so that marketers can rapidly alter their messaging based on AI-driven deviations in user behavior.
Use a sprint-based budget reallocation system	Review marketing campaign performance monthly or bi-weekly and use agile sprints to dynamically reallocate budgets to high-performing channels to prevent waste and maximize ROI.
Targeting Generation Z, employs agile micro-experiments.	Conduct small-scale, rapid testing of content formats, user-generated content sharing, and trending topics. Each iteration tests only one variable, allowing marketers to quickly understand which content resonates with Generation Z.
Build a cross-functional agile integration model (CFAIM)	Connect the marketing, IT, legal, creative, and sales departments in the following ways: • Unified Sprint Plan • Shared mission • Cross-team retrospective meeting To remove information silos and reduce approval postponements.
Implement the Agile Crisis Spur Model (ACSM)	The structured response system utilizes: • 2-hour micro-operation • Cross-functional Crisis Operations Room • Real-time social monitoring tools • Reaction Game Book Template This reduces crisis response time from days to hours.
Use the Agile Brand Consistency Protocol (ABCP)	The framework includes brand "checkpoints" for each iteration cycle: • Message alignment check • Tone/Style Review • Visual consistency check While ensuring speed, we must not damage the brand image.
By designing and integrating compliance sprint modules	Embedding preliminary compliance reviews into the agile development cycle can be done in the following ways: • Automated PDPA/AI rule checking • Joint Sprint Marketing Method • Risk scoring tools Ensure the event proceeds quickly**and**obedient.

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This table indicate how ten agile marketing solutions and their core elements, directly improves marketing efficiency, speed, and accuracy to better address modern challenges.

These recommendations include tools such as the ACPM, which uses scoring factors to coordinate content decisions; hybrid sprint synchronization tools that enhance collaboration through asynchronous staging, shared dashboards, and AI alerts. Meanwhile, RIAF converts raw data into instantaneous action using real-time dashboards and automated tracking. Additionally, AAIL used to address AI-driven moves in consumer behavior; sprint-based budget reallocation for increased financial flexibility; and microexperiments to boost Gen Z engagement. Moreover, CFAIM removes information silos, the ACSM for rapid crisis response, the ABCP to maintain brand integrity, and an abidance design sprint module that enroots regulatory reviews directly into agile workflows. These elements together validate how agile methodologies can build a fast, coordinated, data-driven, and amenable marketing ecosystem.

Final model

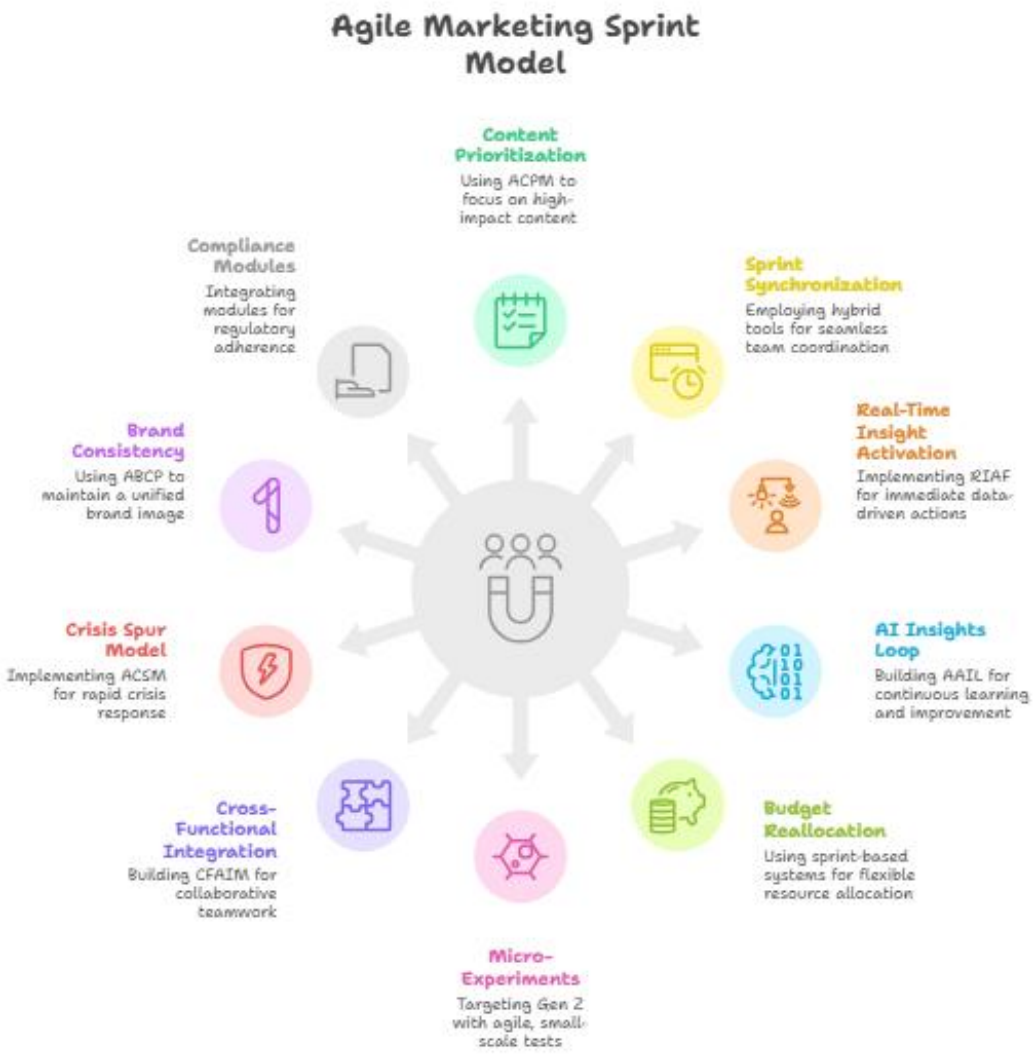

Figure 3: Final Output

Source: Yuslina Yusoff

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Conclusion

The findings of this NGT study illustrate that experts have shown a high degree of consensus concerning the pertinency of the proposed agile marketing frameworks, to address current digital marketing and crisis-related contends. Experts agree that agile-based solutions are critical for managing rapidly growing marketing environments, where all frameworks achieved a consensus surpassing the minimum threshold of 75%. Agile Content Prioritization Matrix (ACPM), Hybrid Iterative Synchronization Tools, and Real-Time Insight Activation Framework (RIAF), were rated as the most vital and instantly applicable agile marketing practices. Results validate that experts highly value structured content decisions, seamless hybrid team collaboration, and the ability to transform real-time data into actionable visions.

The second stage of research discovered strong support for the AAIL, sprint-based budget rearrangement systems, agile micro-experiments targeting Generation Z, and the CFAIM, with all models achieving approval rates exceeding 85%. These models are vital for attaining marketing responses, addressing challenges such as AI-driven consumer behavior, financial uncertainty, developing customer preferences, and institutional obstacles. High scores reveal the expanding superiority of iterative experimentation, real-time budget optimization, and cross-functional collaboration in nurturing marketing performance and institutional agility. These models are perceived as empowering factors for strengthening strategic flexibility, rather than complying to succeeding operational needs.

Lastly, despite moderately low scores for the Agile Crisis Sprint Model (ACSM), experts collectively suggested them as qualified. These results advocate that experts view them as contextual or situational significances rather than universally applicable. Meanwhile crisis response, brand governance, and regulatory compliance are key components of the agile marketing ecosystem. Overall, the results confirm that the effectiveness of agile marketing relies on consolidation of speed, data responsiveness, and coordinated implementation, affirmed by governance instruments that certify sustainability, compliance, and brand integrity in an uncertain digital environment.

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DOI: 10.55573/JISED.118007

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Volume: 11 Issues: 80 Special Issue [January, 2026] pp. 82 – 95
Journal of Islamic, Social, Economics and Development (JISED)
eISSN: 0128-1755
Journal website: academicinspired.com/jised
DOI: 10.55573/JISED.118007

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