Our group was very determined to overcome the challenges created by the Coronavirus to complete a research project for the module SMI108: Survey Design and Data Collection. As the name states, this module is about developing a survey design and data collection skills. The research project consists of three parts. First, to create and distribute an online survey. This is followed by an SPSS analysis of the collected data and finally, an individually written report to discuss our findings. With the onset of COVID-19, our ability to effectively work together was significantly impeded. This was largely due to our group being unable to physically meet and the university quickly being moved to remote learning. This impact was exacerbated by team members being based in two different countries and time zones. The seven-hour time difference between Malaysia and the UK made working together quite challenging. Despite this, we adapted to the changing circumstances and were able to find new ways to effectively communicate and divide tasks, completing our work to a high standard.

The team consisted of five members who were based in the UK and Malaysia. Siti Nurfaiqah Shairulfezel, Hui Yen Tan, Wan Amirah Binti Wan Aznainizam Yusri, Ismail Haider & Dominic Lanham.

We used a combination of approaches to working together, but we mainly focused on using technology to communicate. First, a Google Hangout meeting was arranged with our module tutor. This was an alternative to attending a physical appointment for guidance on how to handle the project amid these drastic circumstances. The meeting resulted in 4 main messages. First, we had to cancel the two face-to-face cognitive interviews that were originally to be conducted, due to the high risk it entailed. Second, at least 50 survey responses for our research was sufficient. Third, we clarified the content of a consent form that we had to attach to the survey. Lastly, communication within the group should be consistent.

A few approaches were taken to foster a culture of high communication. As opposed to physically being in each other's presence, the first approach employed the use of a shared google drive. This was the most efficient way of planning the structure of our questionnaire. This enabled us to rationalise which tasks were to be completed and by whom, as well as what segment of the questionnaire needed tending to. The second approach utilised the function of email frequently and as an alternative if ever Google Drive was inaccessible. However, WhatsApp was the central form of communication for the group as email proved ineffective. Due to the quick response time with WhatsApp, this was where the majority of our interaction occurred. As a result, more urgent matters could be dealt with swiftly and efficiently. We did not solely use these platforms to set up arrangements for working. It was also used for informal interaction and encouragement, for building and keeping morale high, whilst everyone was abiding by lockdown restrictions.

The impact of cloud documents facilitated the ease in which we could all work together simultaneously despite being far apart & in different time zones. In response to the team not being able to conduct two cognitive interviews each, the changed approach we had taken was to aim for a higher response rate of 50 upon the publication of the survey. In the end, we received a total of 89 recorded responses, however, only 66 of them were completed responses. This was still more than our initial target of 50. This change had an impact on the way we executed our analysis as we now had more responses to explore which no doubt likely led to a more accurate analysis of what we were tasked of researching.

Apart from communication, we also had a shared document on Google drive to collaborate and outline the structure of our survey and the responsibilities each member had in an equal and fair manner. Ensuring that members had a document to check what they were to be held accountable for. Everyone gave input & suggestions until agreement was reached for their respective contributions. Everyone's block of questions was amalgamated for the survey. We collectively tweaked and reorganised the order and flow of our survey questions. This was achieved through constant feedback and discussion. All members came forward asking for suggestions on their block of the survey for the sake of improvement. Before distributing the survey, another member examined the whole survey to check if the questions were not only appropriate & up to a high standard, but also if the survey made sense and had a good flow. There was also collective collaboration on the consent form. We were the first group to get consent from our module leader to publish and distribute our survey. Generally, it was an open court. This was made evident by the morale of the group that everyone had a voice and a responsibility.

Subsequently, something the group maybe could have done differently was arrange more group calls so that all members could work concurrently as this would have the effect of improving understanding amongst each other. I say this because being too passive can potentially lead to each other's visions being distorted with regards to the task at hand, as this typically slows down productivity. Being productive in different time zones was difficult as inevitably, there was some delay in the response times. The main takeaway for the group was the development of resilience during such conditions. Whenever a dilemma arose the vital element of communication allowed for resolutions to effortlessly be agreed upon. Generally, there were little to no disagreements as there weren't any alternative solutions to the things that were being suggested. Thus, we enabled ourselves to progress onto the next thing on the agenda.

The tips deemed necessary for those undertaking remote group work in the future are; keeping both formal and informal communication high is imperative to boost morale & enthusiasm; setting up a cloud space for simultaneous collaboration to enable efficiency in the workflow & planning out the best time for all to work together concurrently so there is increased understanding of what you should expect from each other. All this incentivises dedication to the agenda.