

The Marketing Mix Strategy to Promote Local Malaysian Food: From the Perspective of SME Restaurant Business

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Abstract

Marketing strategy is essential for all types and sizes of restaurant businesses, including Small and Medium Enterprises (SMEs), to obtain local market share and profit. Studies showed that an effective marketing strategy can help a restaurant differentiate itself from its competitors by emphasizing its distinct products, thereby increasing its visibility, and attracting more customers. Customers are less likely to return if they do not appreciate their dining experience, regardless of how well the restaurant provides quality food and service and employs strategic marketing to promote itself. In contrast, a positive experience may encourage positive word-of-mouth marketing and build a strong brand image. Therefore, this paper aims to analyze the implementation of marketing mix in promoting local Malaysian food through interviews with the SME restaurant businesses owners. Data will be transcribed, coded, and analyzed for themes. Based on the concept and understanding of marketing mix strategy, this paper further discusses on the marketing mix strategy concept and application within the local Malaysian food restaurant setting. This helps to provide a better understanding on relevant marketing strategies and articulate the principal idea of marketing mix and its role towards promoting and sustaining the SME restaurants in Malaysia.

Keywords:

Small and Medium Enterprise; Restaurant Business; Marketing Strategy; Marketing Mix; Local Malaysian Food.

1 Introduction

Generally, Small and Medium Enterprises (SMEs) are globally recognized for their vital role in driving economic and industrial progress. Many restaurants cease operations within the initial five years after commencing business. For even the most experienced restaurant proprietors, there exists a daunting reality and substantial danger. Therefore, it is imperative for small enterprises engaged in competition with established chains to implement efficient marketing tactics. Nevertheless, according to the Malaysia Department of Statistics (2021), the contribution of SMEs to Malaysia's Gross Domestic Profit experienced a decline in 2020. This downturn can be attributed to the measures taken in response to the Coronavirus Disease 2019 also known as COVID-19 pandemic, which forced the suspension of most business activities in March 2020. These measures, aimed at curbing the spread of the virus, had a profound impact on the Malaysian economy. They included movement restrictions and the closure of potentially infected premises (Thompson et al., 2019; Craven et al., 2020). The rapid and widespread nature of the pandemic affected a significant number of individuals and had far-reaching consequences for global economic growth (Craven et al., 2020), resulting in economic instability (Gursky, 2011). The pandemic has resulted in disruptions to economic activities, particularly affecting SMEs, and the most significant impact has been experienced within the realm of culinary tourism (Supriono et al., 2022).

Furthermore, SMEs, particularly those in accommodation and food services, were severely affected by this external shock, leading to a considerable number of them facing bankruptcy (Gourinchas et al., 2020). Despite these setbacks and unmet targets, it is worth emphasizing that the service sector, which includes industries like hospitality, tourism, and the food sector, remains the primary driver of SME activities in Malaysia (Malaysia Department of Statistics, 2021). According to Adel et al. (2020), it is imperative for SME entrepreneurs to implement a well-structured marketing strategy to enhance their business performance and contribute to the economy's development. There is a trend towards reconnecting with local communities within the dynamic and intensely competitive restaurant industry. More restaurants are currently refocusing their marketing strategies on local audiences. This shift reflects an appreciation for the value of local marketing, including consumer loyalty, brand recognition, and community engagement.

Depending on the size of their establishment, restaurant owners may encounter different marketing obstacles. Smaller business owners and entrepreneurs rely more on individual efforts (Hayes, 2023; Mustafa & Yaakub, 2018). Larger business owners and operators have more structure and a more hierarchical decision-making process. In contrast, SME restaurateurs who engage in marketing view the concept from a distinctive angle (Jian et al., 2021). Astuti et al. (2018) argues that scholars construct marketing strategy theories for larger organisations on average. Amin (2021) drew a similar conclusion, stating that large organisations most likely participate in strategic planning, whereas smaller businesses struggle with the concept. In contrast, Dlodlo and Dhurup, (2010) believed that basic marketing skills may suffice for operating and

administering SME restaurant businesses. Depending on the size of their business, restaurant owners may alter their marketing strategies to increase operational efficiency and sustain their business. By differentiating the strategies through the provision of higher-quality products or services, SME restaurant businesses can compete more effectively with larger organisations (Husin et al., 2021).

Moreover, it was found that the restaurant industry struggles with a multitude of challenges when it comes to maintaining its presence in the market. These challenges encompass the absence of a robust marketing strategy (Juniansih et al., 2020) and the proper execution of the marketing mix (Devi & Triyuni, 2021; Atmoko & Widyaningsih, 2020). A noteworthy statistic presented by Ha (2020) reveals that nearly half (i.e., 50%) of food and beverage establishments face difficulties in sustaining their operations for more than 5 to 10 years. Thomas-Beard (2022) claimed small restaurant business owners require effective strategies to ensure the sustainability of their operations for more than five years. Additionally, a critical issue within the restaurant sector is the tendency of SMEs to overlook potentially beneficial marketing strategies that could enhance their product and overall business performance (Razak et al., 2018). This provides a comprehensive overview of the importance of marketing strategies for businesses, especially in the restaurant industry, as it becomes a crucial framework for restaurant owners to make decisions guiding marketing operations to increase restaurant revenue.

In addition, Xavier et al. (2022) argue that the absence of diversity in marketing strategies among SME entrepreneurs has led to detrimental outcomes, including price wars and market saturation. This suggests a need for restaurant owners to engage in marketing strategy to safeguard the longevity and success of their businesses. Sanip et al. (2021) stated that one potential avenue for differentiation lies in the promotion of local food specialties. This proposition calls attention to the imperative for SMEs to better understand the marketing strategies to navigate competitive landscapes and sustain relevance in dynamic market environments. Thus, the researcher's intent to analyze the implementation of marketing mix in promoting local Malaysian food by the SME restaurant businesses.

Numerous studies have delved into customer loyalty, consumer behavior, and purchasing decisions, primarily focused on an international setting and examining different types of restaurants (Napitulu et al., 2022; Devi & Triyuni, 2021; Atmadi, 2021; Chun & Park, 2021; Haryati et al., 2021; Sahir & Rosmawati, 2020; Manvi, 2020; Sudari et al., 2019). Nevertheless, despite the wealth of research available, there exists a noticeable knowledge gap pertaining to the specific implementation of the marketing mix in promoting local Malaysian food by SME restaurants. This research gap could hinder SME restaurateurs' ability to identify the right marketing strategy to address the intensifying competition in the restaurant industry. By addressing this gap, it is hoped that this study could contribute to the body of knowledge on the marketing mix employed by SME restaurant businesses to promote local Malaysian food. Such remark gives an indication on the importance of conducting research to help SME restaurants in developing marketing strategies that align with their business requirements, cater to

customers' demands, and gain a competitive advantage by implementing best practices identified in the study, with a focus on identifying effective approaches tailored to the local market dynamics.

The study will be conducted in Selangor, and informants will be selected based on criteria such as sales turnover not exceeding MYR 20 million or having full-time employees not exceeding 75 employees, as outlined by SMECORP Malaysia (2023). Additionally, selected restaurants must offer local Malaysian food, owned by local Malay, Chinese, or Indian entrepreneurs, and have been operational for more than three years. Restaurants not meeting these criteria will be excluded from the study. Hopefully, these findings will offer valuable insights for SME restaurateurs, policymakers, and industry stakeholders ultimately contributing to enhancing the competitiveness and sustainability of the Malaysian restaurant industry.

2 Literature Review

2.1 Small and Medium Enterprises (SMEs)

SMEs are significant contributors to economic development, and they are often considered a backbone of the national economy due to their role in creating wealth and fostering progress (Tuselim & Yaacob, 2022). In 2019, SMEs accounted for 48.4% of the employment and made up 38.9% of Malaysia's GDP (Department of Statistics Malaysia, 2020). The flexibility and diversity of SMEs play a crucial role in driving innovation and resilience within the Malaysian economy, contributing to its overall competitiveness. The term SMEs, in the context of the restaurant industry, pertains to businesses that are defined by their size, operational scope, and revenue generation. Specifically, within the restaurant sector, SMEs are identified as businesses employing fewer than 75 individuals or generating annual sales turnover of less than MYR20 million (SME Corp Malaysia, 2020). This classification serves to distinguish smaller, independently operated dining establishments from larger corporate chains, emphasizing the pivotal role played by SMEs in shaping the diverse and dynamic culinary landscape in Malaysia.

The majority of SMEs in Malaysia are primarily concentrated within the services sector, and within this sector, the foodservices industry alone accounts for more than 140,000 SMEs (Ong et al., 2015). This substantial figure underscores the significant presence of SMEs in the restaurant industry. In 2020, Vaghefi and Jo-Yee (2021) discover that SMEs suffered a substantial decline in sales revenue, largely due to diminished demand in both domestic and international markets, with approximately 34% of them witnessing a sales drop of more than 20% compared to 2019. This raises a concern on the resilience and sustainability of SMEs in Malaysia.

Consequently, SME restaurants have been confronted with many issues and challenges such as access to marketing (Razak et al., 2018), poor marketing strategy (Haryati et al., 2021), lack of marketing skills (Karim et al., 2021), limited on promotional activities (Atmoko & Widyaningsih, 2020). These challenges have made it hard for SME restaurants to compete in the market, emphasizing the need for marketing support to

help them gain competitive advantage and sustain in the market. Moreover, findings from Omar et al. (2020) claim that SMEs should adopting innovative marketing platforms and technologies, which highlights the varying internal strategic resources and capabilities among SMEs, influencing their ability to adapt alternative strategies in response to any drastic circumstances. Additionally, Manvi (2020) suggested that the owner of Lamun Ombak restaurant, should enhance the application of the marketing mix to attract more customers to the restaurant. For instance, Ambad et al. (2020) reveal that SMEs face marketing strategy barriers, including a lack of effective promotional tactics (e.g., brochures, business cards, banners, signboards, discounts), insufficient creative content in advertisements, and the failure to use social media for promotion, making it difficult for them to retain existing customers.

2.2 Marketing Mix for SME Restaurants Business

The marketing mix, often referred to as the "4Ps", is a foundational framework in marketing that helps businesses plan and execute their marketing strategies (Utomo et al., 2020; Sudari et al., 2019). It consists of four key elements (product, price, place, and promotion) that a company can control and adjust to influence the demand for its products or services (Ng et al., 2022; Manvi, 2020; Supawan & Deebhijarn, 2020; Kotler, 2003). The core 4Ps remain the foundation of marketing strategies in providing effective business frameworks, tailoring their marketing plans in meeting the needs of their target audience to thrive in today's competitive business landscape (Thabit & Raewf, 2018). The marketing mix potency lies in its ability to streamline marketing management, enabling the separation of marketing from other aspects of business operations, and facilitating the delegation of marketing responsibilities to specialized professionals.

Several previous studies have found the marketing mix to be the most important pillar and basic entity in restaurant businesses in improving business performance. Erlina and Hermawan (2021) point out that applying the marketing mix concept is one of the marketing strategies that can be used in achieving business goals. Study done by Amin (2021) found that that the combined influence of these four variables explained a substantial 67.5% of the variability observed in SME performance. This empirical evidence linking promotion, pricing, place, and product strategy to SME performance reinforces the importance of these elements in driving the success of SMEs. Another finding reveals that within the marketing mix, affordable pricing, a strategic location, and active promotional efforts are the key factors shaping the success of Bu Hartin restaurant in the competitive business landscape (Atmoko & Widyaningsih, 2020). Thus, SME restaurants should continue to prioritize and adapt their marketing mix to remain competitive and thrive in dynamic markets.

A product encompasses everything capable of fulfilling a need and is presented in the market to attract, be purchased, and be consumed or utilized by individuals (Išoraitė, 2020). It includes anything that can meet desires and requirements and is available in the market for the purpose of garnering the attention, acquisition, and utilization by consumers. The significance of the connection between products and consumer

purchasing decisions is profound, as organizations are committed to meeting consumer needs and desires through the products they provide (Sukata & Muis, 2022).

Price represents the financial exchange for a product or service, with variable pricing influenced by individual needs and negotiation skills (Išoraitė, 2020). It greatly affects a restaurant's competitiveness and market share, particularly in shaping consumers' perceptions of product quality, especially when information is limited (Sahir & Rosmawati, 2020). While Sudari et al. (2019) concluded that price significantly influences customer satisfaction among food and beverage product SMEs in Malaysia, Ng et al. (2022) argued differently, suggesting that price does not have a significant impact on customer satisfaction, particularly in the context of Haidilao Hotpot, where high prices are not proportionate to product quality. Consequently, restaurants should carefully consider market trends, affordability, and profitability when setting prices as part of their product marketing strategies.

Place in the marketing mix encompasses both the physical location where a business sells its products and the distribution channels involving interconnected organizations that ensure the accessibility of products or services to consumers (Išoraitė, 2020). This requires a decision on whether to sell directly to individuals or through intermediaries like distributors, wholesalers, and retailers (Thabit & Raewf, 2018). Notably, Adhiansyah et al. (2020) found that place significantly influence consumer purchasing decision at The Abraham and Smith restaurant. Therefore, it can be concluded that location serves as both the site where services are rendered and an essential determinant of a company's overall success.

Promotion involves the methods used to promote business product or service, allowing them to communicate its value effectively through a marketing campaign tailored to specific target audience (Išoraitė, 2020). It encompasses a range of activities within a company, involving communication and the presentation of products to target markets, such as sales, advertising, sales force, public relations, and direct marketing, with an emphasis on educating consumers about products they are interested in for current and future understanding (Sahir & Rosmawati, 2020). Additionally, Jocelyn and Amelia's (2022) prior research demonstrated that the promotional variable significantly influences customer purchase decisions, particularly in the context of Marutama Ramen restaurant. Promotion fundamentally entails the process of introducing, informing, and reinforcing awareness about products and services offered by providers to both potential and existing consumers, aiming to stimulate their interest and guide them through the purchasing journey (Atmoko & Widyaningsih, 2020).

The elements within the 4P framework are not merely trade-offs; they represent the essential marketing concerns that must consistently be tackled. Nevertheless, the 4Ps model is considered outdated in today's rapidly evolving business landscape. Much like other facets of traditional business, the contemporary market necessitates adaptations to view matters from a customer-centric perspective. Consequently, Robert Lauterborn (1990) suggested that 4Ps model change to 4C framework.

The 4Ps can be redefined as the 4Cs, with product becoming customer value, price becoming customer cost, place becoming customer convenience, and promotion becoming customer communication (Smith, 2003). The 4Cs marketing mix model shifts the marketing focus from producers to consumers, emphasizing the increasing significance of convenience and online interaction in contemporary marketing practices (Khoirunnisa et al., 2022; Beebe, 2019). Customer value encompasses various stakeholder groups that a company engages with, including current clients, potential customers, and even investors (Nezakati et al., 2011). This necessitates a profound comprehension of customers' unique needs, preferences, and desires through extensive market research and customer insights. Customer cost should consider not only monetary expenses but also the effort and time customers invest in acquiring the product or service, all within the context of justifying the broader cost through perceived value (Zeng & Yuan, 2023). Customer convenience, crucial for product accessibility, extends beyond physical locations to encompass ease of discovery, purchase, and utilization across multiple channels, including digital platforms (Hester, 2019). Customer communication entails a bidirectional process, involving the dissemination of information to customers across various touchpoints (in person, online, or over the phone), which also incorporates feedback from customers to suppliers (Nezakati et al., 2011).

Interestingly, prior studies have argued that a limited number of SMEs acknowledge the importance of the 4Cs in their marketing endeavors, with many of them giving priority to the 4Ps to bolster their competitiveness (Idris, 2021). The research conducted by Hasibuan and Alfikri (2022) reveals that @taukotembung employs smart reviews as part of their communication strategy to effectively convey information regarding the culinary items they promote or review. Considering the research findings suggesting the effective use of smart reviews in @taukotembung's communication strategy and the prevailing focus of SMEs on the 4Ps for competitiveness, it is advisable for SMEs to consider reevaluating their marketing strategies. SME restaurants should explore incorporating the 4Cs model, emphasizing customer value, cost, convenience, and communication, to better align with contemporary consumer-centric trends and potentially enhance their competitive edge in the market.

Furthermore, there is a growing trend towards the adoption of the 4As model, which consists of affordability, accessibility, awareness, and acceptability, originally formulated by Professor Jagdish Sheth and Dr. Rajendra Sisodia, emphasizing a customer-centric approach (Dodd, 2015). The 4As model underscores actions aimed at improving the effectiveness of marketing efforts targeting end consumers, leveraging all available promotional tools (Nezakati et al., 2012). Affordability refers to pricing strategies that significantly influence a product's success in the market, necessitating the establishment of competitive and justifiable prices to ensure that customers perceive the product or service as valuable for its cost (Kumar, 2023). Accessibility addresses the ease with which customers can acquire and use the product or service, considering a reasonable level of effort within the given context (Kadir et al., 2019). Awareness relates to how well customers are informed about the attributes of a product

or service, how effectively they are persuaded to give it a try, and, if necessary, how well they are reminded to make repeat purchases (Arsat et al., 2023). Acceptability relates to the extent to which a company's product or service offering not only meets but also surpasses customer expectations, which are benchmarked against competing alternatives (Dadzie et al., 2017).

The research conducted by Arsat et al. (2023) highlights a direct connection between the 4As marketing mix and customer preferences, emphasizing the need for restaurants to continuously adjust their strategies in response to evolving marketing landscapes and technological advancements. Similarly, the study by Dadzie et al. (2017) in Accra Ghana, concludes that market share is significantly influenced by the affordability and accessibility elements within the 4As marketing mix, with all 4As activities together contributing to enhanced financial performance. This valuable insight can assist companies in optimizing their marketing efforts and adopting a well-rounded approach to both expanding market share and ensuring financial sustainability.

In essence, the marketing mix is evolving, and successful organizations in the foodservice industry must consider a blend of these frameworks to remain competitive and responsive to customer needs, whether through the traditional 4Ps, the customer-centric 4Cs, or the customer-focused 4As, the key to success lies in adapting and aligning marketing strategies with the ever-changing demands of the market.

The literature review highlights a clear research gap in the evolution of marketing mix, specifically in the transition from the conventional 4P's model to both the customer-centric 4C's model and the customer-focused 4A model. Although the existing research emphasizes the importance of 4P, 4C and 4A in restaurant businesses, the extent of implementation of this strategy among SME restaurants in promoting Malaysian local food, has not yet been adequately explored. This indicates a potential misalignment between academic insights and practical implementation, particularly within the SME restaurant sector. Moreover, in the context of marketing mix for restaurants, there are significant gaps in understanding how the implementation of marketing mix components collectively impacts the performance of SMEs that prioritize the restaurant owner perspective. Therefore, there is need for a study on the implementation of marketing mix in promoting Malaysian local food by SME restaurant.

2.3 The Concept of Malaysian Local Food

In general, Malaysian food represents the cultural heritage of the country, showcasing its diverse gastronomy and serving as a reflection of its cultural diversity (Abidin et al., 2020). With the Malays and Bumiputera accounting for 69.9% of the overall population, the Chinese at 22.8%, Indians at 6.6%, and the rest belonging to minority groups (0.7%), Malaysia consists of a multiracial ethnic composition enriched with a multitude of traditions and cultures (Department of Statistics Malaysia, 2022).

Malay food, as defined by Mason and Omar (2003), is rooted in the culinary tradition of Malays, utilizing locally sourced ingredients, indigenous equipment, and recipes passed down through generations. It serves as a cherished repository of knowledge and

skills consistently transmitted from Malay ancestors to their grandchildren. Prominent in Malay cuisine are a wide range of rice dishes such as *nasi lemak*, *nasi minyak*, *nasi impit*, *ketupat*, *nasi tomato*, *lemang*, *nasi dagang*, and *nasi kerabu* (Wong, 2021; Abdullah & Isa, 2020; Kim, 2015). Notable Malay dishes include Asam Pedas, Rendang, Masak Lemak, Sambal, and Pais (Abdullah et al, 2021).

Indian food is known for its spicy, flavourful, and pungent cuisine (Kim, 2015). The current Malaysian Indian cuisines were developed through the blending of southern and northern Indian recipes, offering an exciting food culture for Malaysian palates (Omar & Omar, 2018). Some popular Indian dishes in Malaysia include *chapatti*, *naan*, *roti paratha*, *nasi briyani*, *banana leaf rice*, *dosa or thosai*, and *paneer tikka* (Mandal & Tsai, 2020; Nahar et al., 2018; Nandy, 2004).

Whilst Chinese food in Malaysia is one of the most enticing and diverse cuisines, deriving from mainland Chinese but influenced by regional cooking methods. It also inherits culinary traditions from Cantonese, Szechuan, Hokkien, Hakka, Teo Chew, and Hainanese (Farrer, 2015). Popular Chinese dishes in Malaysia include *char kuay teow*, *hainanese chicken rice*, *lay pot rice*, *kung pao chicken*, *bak kut teh*, and *hokkien mee* (Hutton, 2012). Ng and Karim (2016) mention that this cuisine also incorporates local ingredients such as daun kesum, bunga kantan, galangal, daun kadoh, lemongrass, cencalok, and stink beans in their cooking.

In the context of Malaysian local food, it is referred to as "multicultural" or "multi-ethnic" cuisine and has also been referred to "fusion cuisine" because it was influenced by the main ethnic groups of Malay, Chinese, and Indians (Jalis et al., 2014). This unique blend of culinary traditions has the potential to attract tourists through the showcase of distinctive local delicacies that reflect the country's unique identity. Thus, it is crucial for restaurants to adapt their cuisine to local preferences and adopt successful strategies from other international cuisines to enhance global recognition (Abidin et al., 2020). (Abidin et al., 2020).

The term "local food" refers to the food that is served at a specific location, made with ingredients that are sourced locally, with recipes passed down from generation to generation (Gupta et al., 2021; Elfrida et al., 2020). The combination of different spices in local cuisine creates a distinctive and delectable culinary experience (Nahar et al., 2018). These local foods provide tourists with useful information about the country's food and culture (Osman et al., 2021). This local food can be an important gastronomic product that can attract more international tourists in exploring Malaysia as an attractive tourist destination.

Thus, the term "Malaysian local food" is used to describe food is produced and prepared from local people and local ingredients in a particular location consisting of three ethnic groups in Malaysia. Malaysian local food has the potential to attract international tourists due to its distinctive and diverse offerings, which reflect the diverse cultures, beliefs, and practices of Malaysia's ethnic groups.

3 Methodology

This study was conducted using descriptive research design to analyze the implementation of marketing mix in promoting local Malaysian food by the SME restaurant businesses. This study utilizes a phenomenological research approach and a cross-sectional design to understand the phenomenon of marketing mix through data collected from participant within a single time frame.

The target population in this study is SME restaurants registered under SME corporation in Selangor. Additionally, for this study, the researcher will select 3 restaurants in each of the 9 districts in Selangor, resulting in a total sample size of 27. This approach ensures a diverse representation of restaurants across Selangor's districts while maintaining a manageable sample size for the study. However, the actual sample size will be contingent on data saturation during data collection. The potential informants will be approached from selected SME restaurants with qualifying criteria of sales turnover not exceeding MYR20 million OR full-time employees not exceeding 75 employees (i.e., refer to SMECORP Malaysia, 2023). Only restaurant that primarily offer local Malaysian food will be selected for this study. In addition, the SME restaurants should be owned by local Malay, Chinese, and Indian entrepreneurs and have been in operation for more than three years. Purposive sampling, a sub-category of non-probability sampling is chosen herein the researcher's selection of aligning with the research objectives.

The researchers will conduct semi-structured interviews, construct questions based on a literature review from Arsat et al. (2023), Khoirunnisa et al. (2022), Devi et al. (2021), Ge and Mahmud (2021), and Thabit and Raewf (2018), utilizing both English and Malay languages to accommodate the preferred languages of the potential informants. The researchers also will collect and analyze marketing collateral, both printed and non-printed, as well as other documents from SMEs restaurant businesses pertaining to local Malaysian food marketing, to ensure a thorough understanding of strategic planning and potentially inform interview question development.

The data collection process will be conducted within three months from May 2024 to July 2024. Researchers will initiate interviews by contacting restaurant owners or managers via phone calls, explaining the study's purpose, and seeking their agreement to participate. Additionally, the researcher will reschedule interview appointments as necessary to accommodate the availability of restaurant owners or managers, ensuring the inclusivity of all interested informants in the study.

This study will be utilized thematic analysis to delve into qualitative data obtained from SME restaurants. Through this approach, researchers will be explored underlying themes and meanings associated with the marketing mix strategies employed by these establishments. Specifically, the study aimed to analyze the implementation of marketing mix in promoting local Malaysian food by SME restaurant businesses.

4 Conclusion

SME restaurants in Malaysia play an important role in driving the country's economic development. Post-2020 economic challenges highlight the need for SME restaurants to thrive in a rapidly changing industry, as their adaptability and diversity foster innovation and resilience. The correct implementation of the marketing mix is essential for SME's restaurant in improving business growth and performance. On top of that, the concept of 4A marketing mix is relatively new, with limited awareness among individuals. Even the 4C framework, which represents an advancement beyond the traditional 4Ps, remains relatively unclear. Furthermore, the literature review regarding the 4Ps, 4Cs, and 4 As is scarce and must be interpreted in a very detail form to understand it from restaurant owners' perspective instead of customer perspective. Additionally, the literature review has a limited knowledge on the implementation of marketing mix particularly in promoting Malaysian local food by SME restaurant. Apart from that, Malaysian local food is a significant part of the country's cultural heritage that reflect the three main ethnic in Malaysia which are Malay, Chinese and Indian. Malaysian local food is a major attraction for tourists, contributing significantly to the country's tourism industry and economy. This is essential for maintaining cultural identity and heritage in an increasingly globalized world. Future research would provide more detailed information regarding marketing mix strategy, allowing restaurants to design more effective marketing campaigns in promoting Malaysian local food.

Additionally, restaurants are increasingly adopting a sustainability trend and embracing the farm-to-table movement, resulting in a shift towards sourcing ingredients from local suppliers. This programme is in accordance with the principles of environmental sustainability and functions as a local marketing mix strategy. SME restaurant businesses, perhaps, could exhibit a dedication to excellence and community by endorsing the utilization of locally sourced ingredients through their restaurant local food specialization (i.e., Malay, Chinese, and Indian), hence enhancing customer loyalty and attracting new clientele who prioritize similar values. The implementation of local marketing strategies empowers restaurants to develop marketing campaigns that are more focused and tailored to the specific needs and preferences of their target audience. SME restaurants may effectively customize their menus, specials, and marketing to cater to distinct cultural tastes and seasonal demands by directing their attention towards the local audience.

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