Impacts of marketing strategies on casual restaurant sales

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C H R O N I C L E	A B S T R A C T
	This study aims at investigating the impact of marketing strategies, i.e., digital marketing, green marketing, and sensory marketing, on restaurant sales a s well as examining the mediating role of sensory marketing in the effect of digital marketing and green marketing on restaurant sales. Developing a literature-based questionnaire to harvest data from a sample consisting of owners or managers of small and medium-sized casual restaurants and analyzing such data using SmartPLS 3.0, it was acknowledged that restaurant sales as an endogenous variable is significantly influenced by these three marketing strategies. Moreover, it was revealed that sensory marketing is a significant mediator in the effects of digital marketing and green marketing on restaurant sales. The originality of this study is that it expands the literature emphasizing the importance of marketing strategies integration to achieve higher sales. Specifically, the study contributes to the literature indicating that restaurants must consider sensory marketing strategy as a key mechanism to enhance the efficiency of digital marketing and green marketing efforts.

1. Introduction

Sales as a vital vein for business success gained great attention from academics and practitioners as a measure of business performance. Hence, the firms' managers look for the factors that help achieve or exceed sales targets. In this regard, scholars highlighted the importance of marketing strategies in boosting marketing performance and sales. Particularly, the focus of prior works in the last decade has been laid on numerous strategies including digital marketing (e.g., Bin-Yamin, 2017; De Pelsmacker et al., 2018; Dastane, 2020; Phiri, 2020; Singh et al., 2022; Munir et al., 2023; Dogra & Kaushal, 2023; Wu et al., 2024; Raji et al., 2024), green marketing (e.g., Hasan & Ali, 2015; Dangelico and Vocalelli, 2017; Yahya et al., 2021; Moon, 2021; Chang & Bayardalai, 2024), and sensory marketing (e.g., Randhir et al., 2016; Hoang & Tučková, 2021; Nadanyiova et al., 2018; Satti et al., 2019; Isaac, & Keelson, 2023).

Firstly, scholars recognized numerous positive outcomes of digital marketing strategy such as online purchase intention (Dastane, 2020), customer loyalty and satisfaction (Khan & Islam, 2017; Purnomo, 2023), sales growth (Phiri, 2020; Hawaldar et al., 2022; Purnomo, 2023; Munir et al., 2023), competitive advantage and performance of food firms (Asikin et al., 2024), marketing performance (Hardiansyah et al., 2024) as well as firm competitiveness (Singh et al., 2022). Secondly, scholars emphasized positive consequences of green marketing strategy, for example, improving green purchase intention and customer trust (Dangelico and Vocalelli, 2017; Yusiana et al., 2020), customer purchase intention (Wang et al., 2016; Abbas & Hussien, 2017), enhancing customer satisfaction (Erawan et al., 2024), lifting brand image and customer attitude (Jeong & Jang, 2013). Finally, positive results of sensory marketing strategy were documented in the literature including customer purchase behavior (Randhir et al., 2016), customer satisfaction (Satti et al., 2019; Hoang & Tučková, 2021) building brand value (Nadanyiova et al., 2018) and service quality (Isaac, & Keelson, 2023). However, little guidance is presented concerning the effects of these marketing strategies as simultaneously integrated strategies on restaurant sales, therefore, the aim of this study is to explore the effects of digital marketing, green marketing, and sensory marketing on restaurant

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sales in addition to investigating the mediating role of sensory marketing in the effect of both digital marketing and green marketing strategies on restaurant sales.

2. Literature review and hypotheses development

2.1 Restaurant sales

Generally, marketing research employed three key indicators to measure firms' financial performance, which are profitability, market share, and sales growth (Memon et al., 2019). These measurements are related to marketing performance indicators such as increased number of customers, enterprise's enhanced profitability and boosted sales (Alanazi, 2022). Sales performance refers to the sum of money a firm makes each year before subtracting discounts and costs (Lambert et al., 2021). For the current study, restaurant financial performance was restricted to restaurant sales. Digital marketing strategy shows significant effects on enterprises' performance in terms of sales growth (Adiyono et al., 2021; Pandiangan et al., 2022), green practices such as preventing pollution, developing green products, and green supply chain management practices are common drivers of enterprises' performance (Miroshnychenko et al., 2017). Concerning the effects of sensory marketing strategy on business performance, very few studies (e.g., Nadanyiova et al., 2018) were found in the literature in which this strategy was regarded as a crucial factor in promoting sales using human senses.

2.2 Digital marketing

Digital marketing strategy refers to promoting goods or services using Internet-based real-time connections via vehicles including search engine optimization, influencer marketing, content marketing, data-driven or data analysis marketing, social media marketing, and paid advertising (Bin-Yamin, 2017; Dastane, 2020; Purnomo, 2023). Concerning the outcomes of digital marketing strategy, it was established that this strategy exerts significant effects on sales growth (Alafeef, 2014; Lucas & Sines, 2019; Adiyono et al., 2021; Pandiangan et al., 2022), customer behavior (Alnaim & Albarq, 2023), operating revenues (Elrayah, 2021), sales and customer satisfaction (Purnomo, 2023) as well as business performance (De Pelsmacker et al., 2018) and restaurant competitiveness (Singh et al., 2022). In fact, digital marketing strategy aims at reaching targeted audiences, improving customer engagement, offering accurate measurements of marketing campaigns performance, exploring new innovative marketing means, and producing cost-effective conversions (Purnomo, 2023). Based on these studies, it was supposed that restaurant sales as a dependent variable is positively influenced by digital marketing strategy as stated in the following hypothesis:

H₁: *Digital marketing strategy significantly boosts restaurant sales.*

2.3 Green marketing

Analyzing the definitions of green marketing, Dangelico and Vocalelli (2017) indicate that this term suggests providing a remedy for environmental problems, company response to the environmental effects of product design, production, packaging, and use, in addition to meeting customer and society needs, and marketing activities which companies carry out to decrease the negative effects of products to deliver environmentally safe products. In terms of its impacts, green marketing strategy exerts significant effects on other dependent variables such as customer purchase intention and brand image (Wang et al., 2016), Specifically, some dimensions of green marketing strategy such as lean green marketing and shaded green marketing have significant effects on marketing performance (Alsheikh, 2020). Overall, green marketing affects the financial performance of enterprises (Hidayat et al., 2024) either positively (e.g., Memon et al., 2019) or negatively (e.g., Akuma et al., 2024). Therefore, the following hypothesis was introduced:

H₂: *Green marketing strategy significantly boosts restaurant sales.*

2.4 Sensory marketing

Sensory marketing has been defined as "marketing that engages the consumers' senses and affects their perception, judgement, and behavior" (Krishna, 2012, p. 332). Such strategy refers to a marketing strategy by which enterprises try to inspire customer emotions by pleasing the five human senses, i.e., sight, sound, smell, taste, and touch (Isaac, & Keelson, 2023). Sight (visual marketing) represents visualization of products, sound (auditory marketing) signifies audible sensation in voice form such as using music in restaurants, smell (olfactory marketing) implies products aroma, taste (gustative marketing) entails taste sensation as sweet, sour, bitter, or salty, and finally, touch (tactile marketing) embodies customer willingness to feel and try products (Randhir et al., 2016; Isaac, & Keelson, 2023). Effects of sensory marketing as found in literature include enterprises' financial performance such as on-site sales (Nadanyiova et al., 2018) and non-financial performance indicators such as customer satisfaction and loyalty, service quality, customer repeat purchase and positive word-of-mouth (Isaac, & Keelson, 2023). To investigate the effect of sensory marketing strategy on restaurant sales, the following hypothesis was presumed:

H₃: *Sensory marketing strategy significantly boosts restaurant sales.*

2.5 Mediating role of sensory marketing strategy

A mediator factor in the effect of an independent variable on a dependent one refers to the mean by which such an effect arises (Judd et al., 2014), hence, investigating the mediating role of a variable help answering key questions related to how and why the independent variable exerts an effect of the dependent variable (Wu & Zumbo, 2008). In the current study, sensory marketing strategy was assumed to play a significant role in the effect of digital marketing strategy on restaurant sales and the effect of green marketing strategy on restaurant sales. Such an assumption was derived based on previous studies. This assumption was built on the fact that restaurants can use digital marketing as a communication method (Satti et al., 2019) to create brand awareness and customer experience as well as promoting customer emotions (Randhir et al., 2016). Though sensory marketing senses require physical connections, visual marketing can be utilized through digital vehicles such as content and influencer marketing. In the same manner, restaurants can address customer emotions to high-light their green marketing aspects such as delivering environmentally safe products. In order to examine the mediating role of sensory marketing strategy suing the current research data, the following two hypotheses were suggested:

H4: *Sensory marketing strategy significantly mediates the effect of digital marketing strategy on restaurant sales.*

H5: *Sensory marketing strategy significantly mediates the effect of green marketing strategy on restaurant sales.*

3. Research methodology

3.1 Research sample

The population of this study consists of all managers of casual targeted small and medium sized restaurants and their employees in marketing departments. A convenient sample was selected from this population to gather the required data. Totally, 215 valid responses were collected from 75 restaurants. A key criterion of restaurant inclusion is using digital technologies, engaging in green initiatives, and utilizing sensory marketing activities. Data were collected using a questionnaire developed referring to previous related works and administered by hand. It was anchored using Likert's five-point design in which responses were gauged by five degrees ranging from (1) "strongly disagree" to (5) "strongly agree".
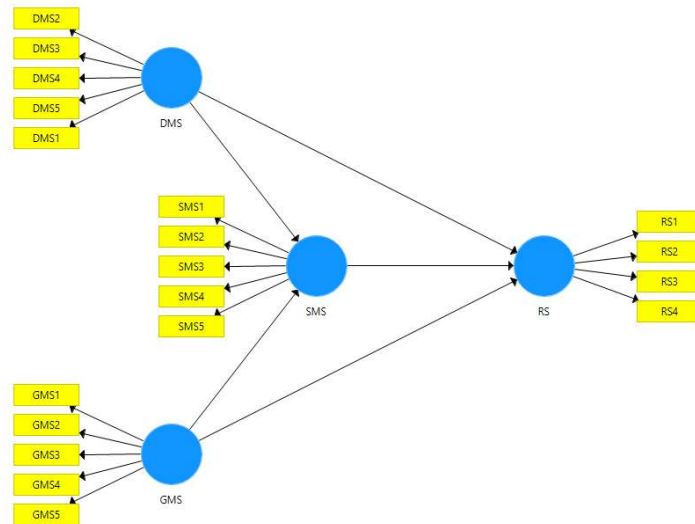
3.2 Research measures

The model of this study comprises four variables: digital marketing strategy, green marketing strategy, sensory marketing strategy, and restaurant sales. As shown in Table 1, digital marketing strategy, green marketing strategy, and sensory marketing strategy were measured using 15 items, and restaurant sales as a dependent variable was measured using 4 items. These measures were adapted from previous works. Digital marketing strategy signifies using digital means to attain marketing objectives, green marketing underlines a restaurant environment-oriented care, and sensory marketing depends on human five senses.

Table 1
Questionnaire items of variables measurements

Variables	Codes	Items	Reference
Digital marketing strategy	DMS1	Using social media platforms to enhance customer interaction.	Lucas & Sines, 2019; Dastane, 2020; Purnomo, 2023.
	DMS2	Promoting products and services via social media platforms.	
	DMS3	Distributing high quality digital content to attract customers.	
	DMS4	Benefiting customers through receiving electronic feedback.	
	DMS5	Meeting customer preferences following their changing trends.	
Green marketing strategy	GMS1	Adopting environmentally friendly processes.	Erawan et al., 2024; Abbas & Hussien, 2017; Miroshnychenko et al., 2017.
	GMS2	Encourage customers to take away uneaten dishes.	
	GMS3	Motivate customers to be green customers.	
	GMS4	Persuade customers to safe water and power.	
	GMS5	Reducing the negative effects on the environment.	
Sensory marketing strategy	SMS1	Stimulating customer emotions.	Krishna, 2012; Nadanyiova et al., 2018; Satti et al., 2019; Isaac, & Keelson, 2023;
	SMS2	Influencing customer behavior based on human five senses.	
	SMS3	Expanding restaurant communication with customers.	
	SMS4	Considering human five senses to influence customer attitudes.	
	SMS5	Attracting customers to increase restaurant sales.	
Restaurant sales	RS1	Restaurant make more money in the last two years	Lambert et al., 2021; Memon et al., 2019; Hidayat et al., 2024
	RS2	Digital marketing strategy results in increased sales.	
	RS3	Green marketing strategy improves restaurant sales.	
	RS4	Sensory marketing strategy enhances restaurant sales.	

3.3 Research conceptual model

The conceptual model of the study as portrayed in Fig. 1 illustrates the hypothesized effects of marketing strategies (digital marketing strategy, green marketing strategy, and sensory marketing strategy) on restaurant sales and well as the mediating role of sensory marketing strategy in the effects of digital and green marketing strategies and on the same dependent variable.

Fig. 1. Research conceptual model

4. Data analysis and results

4.1 Reliability and validity

Reliability was measured by Cronbach's alpha coefficient (CAC) and composite reliability (COR), values of these two indicators should be higher than 0.70, on the other hand, validity was measured by items outer loadings (OFL) and the average variance extracted (AVE), values of these two indicators should be more than 0.50 and 0.70, respectively. Results of reliability and validity are shown in Table 2.

4.2 Model fit

Mode fit was assessed using three indicators, which are the determination factor (R^2), effect size (f^2) and Stone-Geisser (Q^2). The results showed a good predictive power of the model as marketing strategies explain about 74% of the variance in restaurant sales ($R^2 = 0.743$), a good effect size of digital marketing strategy on restaurant sales ($f^2 = 0.454$), a very small effect size of green marketing strategy on restaurant sales ($f^2 = 0.083$), and a small effect size of sensory marketing strategy on restaurant sales ($f^2 = 0.125$). The predictive relevance of the model was good as the values of construct cross-validated redundancy for restaurant sales ($Q^2 = 0.577$) and sensory marketing strategy ($Q^2 = 0.577$) were higher than zero.

Table 2
Results of reliability and validity

Variables	Codes	OFL	AVE	COR	CAC
Digital marketing strategy	DMS1	0.844	0.778	0.946	0.929
	DMS2	0.867			
	DMS3	0.879			
	DMS4	0.919			
	DMS5	0.901			
Green marketing strategy	GMS1	0.832	0.740	0.934	0.912
	GMS2	0.841			
	GMS3	0.861			
	GMS4	0.897			
	GMS5	0.869			
Sensory marketing strategy	SMS1	0.777	0.528	0.848	0.790
	SMS2	0.738			
	SMS3	0.708			
	SMS4	0.703			
	SMS5	0.702			
Restaurant sales	RS1	0.845	0.784	0.935	0.908
	RS2	0.912			
	RS3	0.898			
	RS4	0.884			

### 4.3 Hypotheses testing, results and discussion

Five hypotheses were postulated and tested as shown in Figure 2 and Table 3. It was hypothesized that digital marketing strategy is a significant predictor of restaurant sales. In line with previous works (e.g., Lucas & Sines, 2019), this hypothesis (H1) was supported ($\beta = 0.622$, $p = 0.000$), indicating that restaurants utilizing digital marketing strategy, mainly social

media marketing, gain higher sales. Such as result can be justified through emphasizing the role of digital marketing in enhancing restaurant relationships with existing and potential customers along with attracting potential customers through electronic word-of-mouth (Lucas & Sines, 2019), building brand credibility, promoting products and services, and increasing customer engagement (Purnomo, 2023), as well as promoting sales (Alafeef, 2014; Lucas & Sines, 2019; Adiyono et al., 2021; Pandiangan et al., 2022). The second hypothesis (H2) was also supported (β = 0.290, p = 0.000) showing that restaurant sales as a dependent variable is significantly and positively influenced by green marketing strategy. This result in agreement with previous studies (e.g., Hidayat et al., 2024; Memon et al., 2019) showed that the financial performance in terms of sales is related to green marketing strategy in which restaurants adopt environment-oriented processes to reduce any negative effects of their operations and products and motivating customers to be green customer through lessening water and power consumption (Abbas & Hussien, 2017; Miroshnychenko et al., 2017).

Table 3
Results of hypotheses testing

Research hypotheses						Total Effects		Direct Effects		Indirect effects		Result
						β	P	β	P	β	P	
H1	DMS	→	RS	-	-	0.622	0.000	0.507	0.000	-	-	Yes
H2	GMS	→	RS	-	-	0.290	0.000	0.208	0.000	-	-	Yes
H3	SMS	→	RS	-	-	0.254	0.000	0.254	0.000	-	-	Yes
H4	DMS	→	SMS	→	RS	0.622	0.000	0.507	0.000	0.114	0.000	Yes
H5	GMS	→	SMS	→	RS	0.290	0.000	0.208	0.000	0.082	0.001	Yes

Likewise, the third hypothesis (H3) was supported (β = 0.254, p-value = 0.000) meaning that restaurants can enhance their sales through adopting sensory marketing strategy (Nadanyiova et al., 2018) in which restaurants can influence customer behavior and attitudes (Randhir et al., 2016; Hoang & Tučková, 2021; Isaac, & Keelson, 2023).
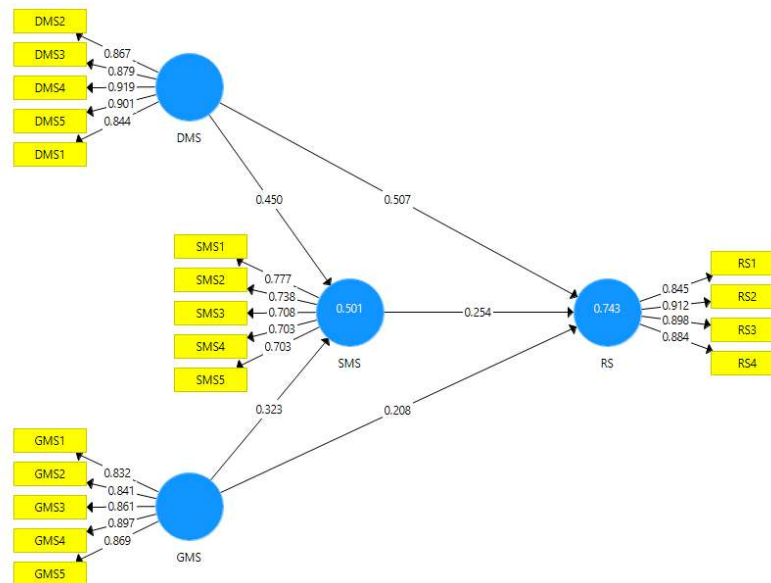
Fig. 2. Research structural model

The last two hypotheses on the mediating role of sensory marketing strategy were also supported as sensory marketing strategy mediated the effect of digital marketing strategy on restaurant sales (β = 0.114, p = 0.000) and mediated the effect of green marketing strategy on restaurant sales (β = 0.082, p = 0.001). In fact, the mediating role of sensory marketing strategy in this context was not investigated in the literature, however, these results suggest that sensory marketing strategy is a good mechanism by which restaurants can enhance their digital marketing and green marketing activities.

5. Research conclusion and implications

This study aims at identifying the effects of digital marketing strategy, green marketing strategy, and sensory marketing strategy on growth of restaurant sales, as well as determining the mediating part of sensory marketing strategy in the effects of both digital and green marketing strategies on restaurant sales. The hypothesized effects for the purpose of this aim were all accepted. As stated in the above-mentioned results, these three marketing strategies exert significant and positive effects on restaurant sales, meanwhile, sensory marketing strategy mediates the effect of the other two marketing strategies on restaurant sales. Therefore, it was concluded that restaurant sales as an endogenous variable is a function of integrating more than one marketing strategy. That is, digital marketing strategy, green marketing strategy, and sensory marketing strategy are three pillars of restaurant sales growth. Theoretically, these results expand strategic marketing literature through

filling a research gap on the effects of digital marketing strategy, green marketing strategy, and sensory marketing strategy on restaurant sales in addition to the mediating role of sensory marketing strategy in this regard. Empirically, restaurants on the basis of these studies are required to not only adopt marketing strategies but also consider a simultaneous implementation of these marketing strategies. For instance, restaurants can utilize social media platforms and other digital means to improve customer interaction, promote restaurant dishes, receive customer feedback, acknowledge customer changing trends, and attract customers. These platforms can be used to communicate restaurant green marketing practices along with the physical practices of green marketing activities. Moreover, customer behavior and emotions can be stimulated by sensory marketing strategy. Digital marketing is a crucial means for restaurants to publicize their products and services, build long-lasting relationships with customers, and propagate their environmentally friendly efforts, but without missing out on customer emotions.

6. Research limitations and future work agenda

This study is limited to a cross-sectional design which gives moment insights on the effects of marketing strategy on restaurant sales, hence, a longitudinal research design is required for future studies. Secondly, the current results are limited to a sample of managers of small and medium-sized casual restaurants, therefore, further studies are required to expand the application of the current model using other samples from fast food restaurants. Finally, the present results are limited to the current measurements of research variables. Thus, taking these results should consider these measurements. For example, the items of restaurant sales focus on subjective aspects such as sales growth in the last years and participants' direct responses on the effects of marketing strategies.

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8

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