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***Research paper***

# Identifying Success Factors of Mamak Restaurants in Malaysia

**Mohhidin OTHMAN [1]*, Tachaini KANDASAMY [2], Ainul Zakiah ABU BAKAR [3], Bee Lia CHUA[4]**

[1] *Food Service and Management Department, Faculty of Food Science and Technology University Putra Malaysia, 43400 UPM Serdang, Selangor, Malaysia*
[2] *Food Service and Management Department, Faculty of Food Science and Technology University Putra Malaysia, 43400 UPM Serdang, Selangor, Malaysia*
[3] *Food Service and Management Department, Faculty of Food Science and Technology University Putra Malaysia, 43400 UPM Serdang, Selangor, Malaysia*
[4] *Food Service and Management Department, Faculty of Food Science and Technology University Putra Malaysia, 43400 UPM Serdang, Selangor, Malaysia*
**Corresponding author E-mail: mohhidin@gmail.com*

**Abstract**

The foodservice industry is among one of the largest industries that contribute significantly to Malaysia's economic growth. The restaurant businesses are operating as a highly competitive market as many food operators are competing with each other in attracting customers. Mamak restaurant is one of the well-established ethnic-based restaurants in Malaysia which is usually seen fully packed with customers most of the time. Despite, the popularity of Mamak restaurant has been acknowledged in many previous studies, there is no attempt done to explore factors that enable the Mamak restaurant to be successful. Therefore, this paper intended to explore success factors of Mamak restaurant in Malaysia based on the customers' perspective and the managerial practices of the Mamak restaurant operators. This paper also aimed to create a business model of success factors of the Mamak restaurant which could be a benchmark by prospective restauranteurs and researchers. The data was collected using an in-depth interview with customers and restaurant operators based on a purposive sampling. The huge data transcription was analyzed in detail to classify codes and categories that summarize and describe the success factors of Mamak restaurant. This study found that location, environment, product, facilities, service, and price of Mamak restaurant have positively contributed to the success of Mamak restaurants. Thus, other food operators can emulate the strategies and practices of Mamak restaurants' management to maximize the potential of their restaurant business.

***Keywords***: *Foodservice industry, Mamak restaurant; Management practices; Small and Medium Sized Enterprises (SME) Restaurant operators; Success factor*

## 1. Introduction

The foodservice industry is described as the fastest growing industry in the global market and it is developing rapidly in Malaysia. This can be seen in the emergence of a vast variety of restaurants with a different type of products and concepts. According to Stanton (1), Malaysian consumers prefer to dine in at different ranges of establishments available in Malaysia such as full-service restaurants, fast food restaurants, and fine dining. These trends have created demand in the Malaysian foodservice industry as a whole which has led to a stiff competition among entrepreneurs to ensure sustainability of their business (2). According to Mohsin, (3) foodservice establishment is facing challenges in finding the right mix of attributes that influence revisit intention of the customers. Despite of all the challenges, Malaysian foodservice industry is expected to continuously develop in future due to rapid urbanization which has led to changes in Malaysian lifestyle (4).

Malaysia consists of an alluring combination of people, customs, and food. The unique characteristic of Malaysia as a multi-ethnic country has contributed significantly to the potpourri of local foods (5). The total numbers of ethnic-based restaurants are also increasing with unlimited choices in Malaysia, which is in line with the growth of the foodservice industry (6). Among these, *Mamak* restaurants are seen to be very popular among Malaysians and it will continue to flourish over the years (7).The consumption of cross-ethnic food is very common phenomenon in Malaysia which is one of the reasons for the *Mamak* restaurants to be widely accepted by most Malaysians.

According to the President of Malaysian Muslim Restaurants Operators Association (PRESMA), *Mamak* restaurant industry generates lucrative revenue and contributes approximately RM 8 billion to Malaysians economy(8). This indirectly proves that *Mamak* restaurant as SME restaurant operators is very successful in contributing a large amount of revenue to the country's economy compared to another ethnic restaurant. Thus, the objective of this study is to shove deeply into the integral elements of the *Mamak* restaurant business practices that enable it to be successful in the competitive market by exploring the factor of high survival rate of *Mamak* restaurants among Malaysians. The managerial strategies of these restaurants that were able to attract more customers will be uncovered by exploring deeply into the core factors and practices employed by the restaurant operators. Thus, this study also aims to develop a business model of *Mamak* restaurants in Malaysia which comprise of mainly the strength of the restaurant and strategies used by the management to sustain the popularity of the restaurant.

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## 2. Literature Review

### 2.1 The Restaurant Industry in Malaysia

The restaurant is basically defined as an organization providing food, beverages, and services at a specific location (9). Restaurant sector is situated within the foodservice industry and it is identified as one of most developing foodservice sectors in Malaysia (6). Since the restaurant business having a very low entry barrier, it falls under one of the most demanding and complicated businesses to run (10). Malaysians restaurants are rich in terms of reflecting their diverse cultures among Malaysians which consist of Malay, Chinese, Indians and many more ethnics. As a modern and developing country, Malaysia is moving fast in line with trends in the foodservice industry as other developed countries around the world. This is due to modernization in Malaysians lifestyle which encourages more people to dine in outside their homes (6).

### 2.2 Factors of Customers Choosing a Restaurant

Several types of research have been carried out on factors influences consumers to choose a particular restaurant. Quality of service has been described as the most important factor that makes customers satisfied. Meanwhile, the least important factor is place and ambiance (11). However, there is a contradictory statement from the previous researcher where design and concept of the restaurant were identified as a very important factor that has influenced the customer to dine out (12). According to Auty,(13), some of the factors that have influenced customers to select a restaurant were identified as food type, food quality, value for money, image and atmosphere, location, the speed of service, recommendations, new experiences, and also the operating hours. A study from Sweeney, Johnson, and Armstrong, (14) found that price of the meal, past experience with similar type of restaurant, the reputation of restaurant among people, the convenience of location, the appearance of employee and the premise were the factors influencing consumers to choose a restaurant. Meanwhile, Akbar and Alaudeen, (2) noted that the main reason for consumers choosing a particular full-service restaurant was because they like to be at the restaurant, convenient location, quality of food, variety of foods and price. From their previous research, Akbar and Alaudeen (2) have derived six factors which are price, quality of service, food quality, location, restaurant environment, and trustworthiness.

### 2.3 *Mamak* Restaurants and its Attributes

*Mamak* restaurants are well known and popular among Malaysians and it has been recognized as one of the fastest and consistently growing restaurants in Malaysia. These restaurants are mainly operated by Indian Muslims and the owners of *Mamak* restaurant are locally known as "Mamak". In recent times Mamak restaurants are mushrooming almost everywhere in Malaysian cities(15) . The consumption of cross-ethnic food among Malaysians is quite common as all ethnic groups can be seen dining in a *Mamak* restaurant frequently (15). As the profile of their patrons become ethnically diverse it is not surprising that most *Mamak*-restaurants nowadays also serve Chinese, Malay, Thai, and Western foods apart from the original Indian Muslim foods which they have initially started (16). Mamak restaurants' popularity was observed through full patronage at most of the time (6). Mamak restaurant is very popular with their hot milk tea drink which is known as T*eh Tarik* (Pulled Tea), the tasty *Roti Canai* (Flatbread) and their curry (17). The restaurants are seemed to be successful in attracting customers by setting giant screen for sports screening and they also make use of the road outside their restaurant with chairs and table as open eating areas (16). One of the specialties of *Mamak* restaurants that noted by Omar *et al*., (17) was its operating hour which is 24 hours a day and 365 days a year. Meanwhile, *Mamak* restaurants also able to fulfill customers' needs and wants by providing a variety of foods and beverages from breakfast to supper (7).

### 2.4 Success Factors of a Restaurant

Parsa, Self, Njite, and King, (18) have emphasized that there are only a few definitions of restaurant success and it is difficult to find a universal definition for a successful restaurant despite the definition will have a significant effect on the success rate. A successful restaurant cannot be sustained without several predominant factors. Dickinson, Ferguson, and Sircar, (19) found that critical success factor consists of internal and external factors. Internal factors are the restaurants' unique characteristics that may have ability to directly influence the survival of restaurant in the market. Meanwhile, external factors are outside of the management control such as economic rate, market condition and etc. Numerous researchers have investigated the influence of quality dimension towards customer satisfaction which leads to a restaurant success (20). In Mandabach, Siddiqui, Blanch, and VanLeeuwen, (21) study, product served; customers; management of restaurant and personal goal and philosophies have a positive effect on the restaurant success. Besides that, Budhwar, (22) suggested that restaurant operators' knowledge on customer need and wants, tendency to underestimate the competition and failure to meet the product and service standard will also affect the success of restaurants. According to Parsa *et al*., (17), food quality is the critical success factor for a restaurant's success. The authors further added that excellent food alone would not assure the success of the restaurant.

## 3. Methodology

### 3.1. Qualitative Study

This study aims to explore the success factors that enable *Mamak* restaurants to thrive in Malaysia. Therefore, this study has applied a qualitative research approach where the nature of the method and data collection is to drive the researchers closer to the participants to gain an in-depth understanding of their point of view according to Merriam and Tisdell, (23). Previous studies in this area have mostly employed quantitative methodology, where the assessing factors are predetermined in the questionnaire. Thus, this study applied the qualitative research methodology to reconfirm on the results obtained from previous research on this area of study and also to explore deeply on customers' preferences and understand *Mamak* restaurants' successful business practices. Deficiencies in the literature on *Mamak* restaurants' concepts that able to attract customers and also in the understanding on nature of their business strategies are one of the reasons for this in-depth qualitative study. According to Denzin and Lincoln, (24), the qualitative approach will be the most appropriate method to understand the deeper point of view from the informants on the phenomenon of the real world rather than from a manipulated setting.

### 3.2 In-Depth Interview

Interviews help the researcher to discover, understand, and gain insights from the informants. In-depth face to face interviews with *Mamak* restaurants' customers and the operators were carried out around Klang Valley. Customers that were dining in at *Mamak* restaurants were conveniently selected for the interview. Hence, the sampling procedure used was purposive sampling to serve the objectives of the research. Then, based on customer responses and the interview questions prepared for the restaurant operators, both owners, and staffs of *Mamak* restaurants were also purposively chosen as informers to explore their opinions on reasons for the success of the foodservice business. This is to triangulate the customers' insight and to probe deeper into the managements' daily

operational practices. The interview questions consist of a series of open-ended question where the researcher has the flexibility of adjusting the questions according to different informants and situations (25). Similar to other qualitative methods, the interviewer is the key instrument during the data collection. The interviews were conducted at various restaurant premises itself to ensure the customers and the operators experience in *Mamak* restaurant are still fresh in their mind. All the responses from informants were recorded using a digital audio-recorder and at the same time, important points including non-verbal behavior were noted down.

### 3.3 Data Analysis

All interviews were transcribed verbatim, while the transcriptions based on interviews that were conducted in Malay, Tamil were translated into English. Next, to ensure the clarity and validity, the transcriptions were reviewed several times by the independent judges. The transcriptions then went through content analysis to classify data categories and codes accordingly to simplify the data to get the significant results (26). Coding was done to generate new categories and subcategories. The development of the categories and data analysis phase stopped when there is no additional information can be added. The codes, categories, and themes were cross-checked with the original transcript to ensure all the information was categorized accordingly. To ensure the reliability of the study, inter-judge reliability method was adopted to establish a correspondence on the unit of analysis (27). The quality of the finding was improved based on the level of agreements between judges.

## 4. Results and Discussion

### 4.1 Customer's Profile

Table 1 shows the summary of the demographic composition of the customers of *Mamak* Restaurants. A total of eighteen informants was interviewed. A number of males were greater than a female with 67% and 33% respectively. In term of race, informants were well distributed representing three dominant races in Malaysia. Malay consists of 45% of the population, Chinese consists of 17%, 33% were Indian and 5% were from other races. The age of informants ranged from 20 to 54 years old and the majority of participants' age ranged from 20-29. Occupation of the informants is varying such as student, engineer, bank officer, Taxi/Lorry driver and etc. With respect to the frequency of their visit to Mamak restaurant in a week, the majority of the informants mentioned that they visited Mamak restaurant on average six to seven times per week.

**Table 1:** Demographic data of informants

| Demographic | Frequency | Percentage (%) |
|---|---|---|
| **Gender** | | |
| Male | 12 | 67 |
| Female | 6 | 33 |
| **Races** | | |
| Malay | 8 | 45 |
| Chinese | 3 | 17 |
| Indian | 6 | 33 |
| Others | 1 | 5 |
| **Age** | | |
| 20-29 | 9 | 50 |
| 30-39 | 5 | 28 |
| 40-49 | 3 | 17 |
| 50 and above | 1 | 5 |
| **Occupation** | | |
| Student | 5 | 28 |
| Police | 1 | 5 |
| Engineer | 2 | 11 |
| Administrative | 6 | 34 |
| IT | 2 | 11 |
| Taxi/Lorry driver | 2 | 11 |
| **The frequency of visit per week** | | |
| Once | 3 | 17 |
| 2-3 times | 4 | 22 |
| 4-5 times | 4 | 22 |
| 6-7 times | 7 | 39 |

### 4.2 Success Factors of *Mamak* Restaurant

Customer loyalty is one of the important reasons for the success factor of a restaurant business. Thus, in order to explore the success factor of *Mamak* restaurants, customers were probed on the reasons motivating them to patronize Mamak restaurant as compared to other restaurants and the *Mamak* restaurant operators were probed on their daily practices and managerial strategies used to develop their business. There are six emerging themes identified which are location, products, services, environment, facilities, and price.

#### 4.2.1 Strategic Location

Most of the informants in this study have consistently cited that the locations of *Mamak* restaurants are the key factor that influences them to visit the restaurant frequently. They highlighted that *Mamak* restaurant can be found almost everywhere which is very convenient for them. The strategic location of Mamak restaurant around Klang Valley which is easily accessible is one of the strengths of the business that facilitates the crowds all the time. Parsa *et al*. (18), highlighted that location of the restaurant as the primary factor in determining the success or failure of a restaurant. The following informants shared a similar thought:

*"I choose this restaurant because it is near to my house (Customer A, male, 31)*

*"The main reason I choose a Mamak restaurant to eat is that I can find it almost everywhere.*

*It is nearby my office, nearby my residential area, at the center of town…everywhere..." (Customer R, Male, 38)*

Restaurant owners were probed on how they able to choose a strategic location for their restaurant. The owner suggested that their location is one of their marking strategies to introduce their outlet to consumers. Thus, they tend to choose a strategic location which is highly visible and easily accessible to consumers so that they can notice the restaurant easily. Also, *Mamak* restaurants are targeting only corner shops to run their business as they feel corner shop or end lot unit may attracts customers' better compare to the intermediate unit restaurant.

*"Location is very important to the business. Firstly, before choosing a location for my new business, I will check the demographics of the population and the facilities around the location. This is to ensure to target the right customers. If there are fewer people in the area, surely our business won't run successfully (Owner D, 39).*

*"We will choose our location in the busy area which always bustling with people of various age groups. Normally, at the center of town because people are always coming here for their personal and official needs such as to the bank, to the clinic, to buy groceries and etc. We will choose corner shop to attract the customers. This is because; corner shop is more attractive than the shop in the middle. Customer will notice us better if the shops are in corner unit not only for the restaurants but also for other businesses (Owner B, 45).*

#### 4.2.2 Environment

Another unique strategy of *Mamak* restaurants to sustain the business is in maintaining the environment. Informants have quoted they choose the *Mamak* restaurant because of its cheerful environment, open-air concept, and its comfortable ambiance. According to them, Mamak restaurant provides them a different atmosphere experience compares to other restaurants. Omar *et al*. (17) highlighted that environment of the restaurant can be a marketing tool in creating positive feelings among the consumers. *Mamak* restaurants' environment especially the open air concept, the crowds, and lightings have stimulated perceptual responses in consumers. One of the informants' responses is shown as below:

*"I usually come to Mamak restaurant with my husband after work. After a busy and stressful day, we will come here to eat and the environment which has an open-air concept with the feel of breeze is really relaxing (Customer F, Female, 30).*

The *Mamak* restaurant operators are now investing more in the physical environment to improve on their restaurants' ambiance. Thus, most of the restaurant design and concepts of *Mamak* restaurants are quite similar to each other. They also tend to choose corner shop which is one of the advantages of the restaurant. According to the restaurant operators:

*"We select corner shop to give customer 3D view. Customers can view all the sides when they dine in. Customer prefers this type of view nowadays to relax. Our corner shop is one of our strategies to introduce our shop to the customer." (Owner C, 48)*

*"We did renovations to our shop because nowadays customer care for the restaurant's looked and design as well, so my boss has installed a different type of lightings to give a new perspective of the restaurant. Even the name board has been changed and replaced with new one that has lightings around it to attract more customers…" (Manager G, 35)*

**4.2.3 Product**

Products of *Mamak* restaurant play an important role in the success of their restaurants business. The product includes their famous *Roti Canai, Teh Tarik,* the authentic foods of *Mamak* such as their curry, and also the variety of menu choices available in *Mamak* eateries. Roti Canai is very popular among Malaysians and it is served mostly in all Mamak restaurants in Malaysia (17). Roti Canai has become a signature item for the *Mamak* restaurants as most of the customers mentioned that Roti Canai at *Mamak* restaurants is very delicious and more likely to choose *Mamak* restaurant if they decided to eat Roti Canai even though it is also available at Malay and Indian restaurants. Customers also noted that *Mamak* restaurants have a variety of food choices. Their menu nowadays is extensive with a variety of food choices that provide almost all type of foods such as Malaysians foods, western foods, and Thai foods. Apart from that, some of the informants mentioned that *Mamak* foods contain many Indian herbs and spices that make the food very tasty. In line with this, Omar *et al*. (17) have suggested earlier that *Mamak* foods contain Indian style of curries and ingredients and the dishes will be cooked in Malaysians style. This has also been supported by the Mamak restaurant operators where they said they will use only quality Indian herbs and spices which become customer's favourite. The informants' responses are shown as following:

*"I love to eat Roti Canai at Mamak shops especially during breakfast and tea time, and the Roti Canai here is very tasty compared to other restaurants. (Customer C, Male 24)*

*"We usually come here because of a variety of foods here. I like the Roti Naan with Tandoori Chicken and my children like Chicken Chop and Fries" (Customer I, Male, 44)*

*"I love their curry specifically because it is thick and very tasty. The herbs and spices they used are different from another restaurant. That's why I prefer to come here for lunch." (Customer B, Male, 32)*

A chef from one of the *Mamak* restaurant highlighted that:

*"Roti Canai is a well- known food among Malaysians. All Malaysians like to eat it. That's why it is available 24 hours in our restaurant. We always have the dough for roti canai prepared all the time due to Malaysians' habit of eating eat Roti Canai at any time of the day. I have experience in making Roti Canai for over 20 years. People said that I make a very tasty Roti Canai."*

**4.2.4 Facilities**

Servicescape or facility consists of non-human factors like equipment, layout, lighting, and color which give effects on human behavior (28). Facilities available in *Mamak* restaurants such as the big projector screen, TV, Wi-Fi, and convenient parking space also one of the factors that contribute to the success of *Mamak* restaurant business. The above-mentioned facilities provided by Mamak restaurants are remarkable among consumers as these facilities are hardly available in any other restaurants. One of the customers of Mamak restaurant said:

*"I came here to watch football. This service can only be enjoyed at Mamak restaurants as they have a big screen outside with full of people enjoying watching football. Whenever I feel like hanging out with friends or watch football I will just drop by here. Not only me, my friend's first suggestion will be a Mamak restaurant too because they like to watch sports on the big screen in a group compared to TV at home." (Customer M, Male 22)*

According to the restaurant owner:

*"We have large parking space for our customer. We have to buy the parking lots. Before this, we bought it for RM 800 but now the prices have increased. Sometimes, it is allocated by the government. We also have big screen and TV, especially for our football lovers. Apart from our foods, most of our customers visit our restaurant just to watch football. So we have provided big screen at night. We only remove the screen in the morning because some match will finish at dawn."*

**4.2.5 Service**

The service is one of the significant factors that influenced customers to dine in at *Mamak* restaurant. Customers highlighted that the Mamak restaurants provide an excellent and fast service. They emphasized that the staffs are very good at taking orders, responds to additional orders and serving foods. Staffs of *Mamak* restaurant is one of the main factors for the fast service as the number of staffs is quite large compared to other restaurants and they tend to treat customer very well. This has been supported by Fraser, Zahari, and Othman, (29) that *Mamak* restaurant is successful when compared to Malay restaurant because of its ability to deliver fast service to their customers. According to a restaurant manager, apart from an adequate training given to the staffs, they are treated very well and this is the main reason for the staff to show their satisfaction by reflecting it to customers by being friendly and responsive to them:

"*Having a well-trained staff or good quality staff is not only through training. It's all started with how we treat our employee and the environment that they live in. If we treat them right and keep them happy, they will be motivated to work and they will automatically reflect their enthusiasm in work and to the customers. This is how our staffs are able to provide excellent service to our customers."*

This was supported by one of the staff of *Mamak* restaurant who highlighted that:

*"We have given informal training by the seniors and managers on how to attend and serve the customers, about the menu, cleanliness and etc. Our management is very good to us. My boss treats us like a family. He always listens to our problem and helps us if we have any concerns. We work for 12 hours and then we take rest for the next 12 hours. Since we are foreigners and our families are apart we don't have anything to do here apart from our daily work. Therefore, we are very dedicated to our job and to our customers as customer is our first priority."*

At the same time, one of the customers stated that:

*"I am not a person with much patience. I don't like waiting too long for food. Some restaurants will take half an hour to serve foods. I even shouted at the manager because the food came very late. Here, the services are very fast and the staffs are excellent in providing a quick response. They have fantastic staffs that know how to treat the customer. Today once I arrived, the staff immediately attended me and they served the foods within 10 minutes". That's very fast, right? (Customer P, Male 50)*

#### 4.2.6 Price

Price also was identified as a fundamental factor that contributes to the success of the *Mamak* restaurant business. The restaurant customers mentioned that the menu price in Mamak restaurant is reasonable and affordable for all group of people. This finding is in line with the research done in most of the western country that price has the greatest influence on food choice among customers (30). One of the customers highlighted that:

*"The price here is cheaper here compared to other restaurants. As I am a student I live within the budget so I usually choose Mamak shops to eat to save the money." (Customer 0, Female 27)*

According to the managers:

*"Customers consider our restaurant is cheaper because we never overcharge the customers. Even though our economic condition was not so good, we never increased the price of foods. We charge according to the value of the food. Some Mamak restaurants charge higher than us. This depends on the location. Some restaurants have to pay high rental due to the living cost of the area is higher. So the owners charge a bit higher."*

#### The Business Model on the Success of *Mamak* Restaurant

The business model is defined as an alternative approach to business practices for firms to consider, not only in terms of what is being done, but also in terms of how it's done (31). The model is shown below (Figure 1) consists of *Mamak* restaurants' operational practices and strategies that lead to the success of the restaurant. The restaurant business practices are strongly influenced by the management strategies and the staffs' practices by complying with the management concepts and ideas. Based on the staffs' response on their motivation to work in a challenging environment, it can be concluded that *Mamak* restaurant human resource management practices have a strong impact on their performance and moulded attitude of the employees. This was also reported by Allen, Shore, and Griffeth, (32) that human resource practices have an effect on the employee's desirable attitudes.

The operational strategies described in the model are the efforts and practices of the *Mamak* restaurant management in utilizing the opportunities and overcome the threats available in the market. *Mamak* restaurant operators have understood and utilized very well on the behavior and eating habit of Malaysians. One of the examples is that they are operating for 24 hours to accommodate Malaysians eating habit anytime. Malaysians staple food is rice and they love to eat rice thus, *Mamak* restaurants operators take this opportunity by offering a variety of rice starting from breakfast to supper. For instance, currently, there is a trend to serve Nasi lemak during dinner which is initially served only during breakfast. Furthermore, they also utilized the advantage of youth that loves to watch football with their peers by providing big screens during football matches. Now, many Indian and Malay restaurants are also seen adopting a similar strategy by setting up the big screens during football matches.

*Mamak* restaurants seem to overcome certain threats to the business such as maintaining the price of some foods as the customers are becoming more price concerns. Also, to overcome the cleanliness issues of *Mamak* restaurants, the staffs are seen with a neat uniform. Another noticeable threat to them is the increasing numbers of competitors with a different type of concepts and creative menus. However, based on the informant' responses, *Mamak* restaurant management seemed not to be so worried about their competitors. They never take any steps to know details or strategies of their competitors. They have very little knowledge of their competitors but always continue to work hard.

*Mamak* restaurants' staff's motivation mainly came from the fair benefits given by the management. In fact, this is acting as a moderator that positively encouraged them to work in the challenging environment. Strategic location, environment, price, facilities, service, and product were identified as core competencies of the *Mamak* restaurants that lead to an excellent value proposition of restaurant. These values of *Mamak* restaurant business have created loyalty in consumers' mind which turns into revisit intention among customers. Most of the customers that were interviewed have mentioned they will revisit to get the same experience again and customers who are very satisfied with the restaurant more than willing to recommend to others by word of mouth. The customer has formed an image based on the information given by others and also through their own personal experiences. The positive restaurant image of Mamak restaurants among the Malaysian consumers has led to the success factor of *Mamak* restaurant. Mayo and Brown, (33) have quoted that model is a key to the interdependent process that creates a competitive business. In line with the author's earlier statement, this success factors model of Mamak restaurant shown in Figure 1 below displays how the restaurants' unique concepts and practices are able to sustain the restaurant as a competitive business in the foodservice industry in a long term.

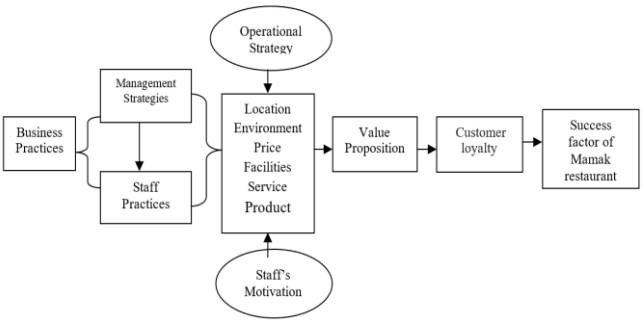



**Figure1.:** The business model indicating the success factors of *Mamak* restaurant.

## 4. Conclusion

*Mamak* restaurant operators have developed a unique concept and practices in accordance with customer's needs and wants. This research has been able to identify the specific factors that contribute to the success of Mamak restaurant in Malaysia. The unique aspects and concepts that have led to the Mamak restaurants' sustainability are Location, Environment, Product, Facilities, Price, and Service. This study further uncovered a deep understanding of *Mamak* restaurants competitive advantage and how operators manage the business to continuously sustain in the market. Thus, this paper contributes to extending the body of knowledge by investigating Mamak restaurants success factors. This will act as guidance to any foodservice practitioners to develop effective operation management strategies to increase the business performance and sustainability of their restaurant in the future. Theoretically, this study able to bridge the gap and extends the existing literature by investigating deeper into Malaysians consumers' patronage preferences which subsequently translated into a business model. This study provides managers with information on how to optimize their resources based on the needs and wants of the customers thus minimize threats towards failure. Besides, customers' loyalty is an important factor and they will remain loyal as long as their expectations are being fulfilled. This study also has room for improvements which open direction for future research. It is suggested that comparative study between *Mamak* restaurants and other prominent ethnic restaurants specifically Malay or Indian restaurants can be carried out to benchmark the best practices and strategies used by the restaurants. It is also recommended that future research may consider testing quantitatively the above models in order to further enhance the findings of this study.

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