



The Digital Transformation of Traditional Culinary Businesses Towards Online Success

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Abstract. The digital transformation of traditional culinary businesses has become a critical pathway for achieving sustainable growth and competitiveness in the digital age. This study explores how these businesses transition to online platforms, the challenges they face, and the benefits they achieve. A mixed-methods approach was employed, combining qualitative interviews with traditional culinary business owners and quantitative analysis of business performance data before and after digital adoption. The study also examined case studies of businesses successfully utilizing digital tools such as food delivery platforms, social media marketing, and AI-based analytics. Findings reveal that businesses adopting digital tools experience significant growth in revenue (up to 40%) from 2019-2024, improved operational efficiency, and enhanced customer engagement. However, challenges such as a lack of digital literacy and initial investment costs remain substantial barriers. Successful case studies demonstrate that leveraging partnerships with delivery platforms and effective social media marketing are key strategies for success. Digital transformation provides opportunities to widen market reach, preserve culinary heritage, and enhance customer experiences. To overcome barriers, governments and private organizations can play a role by offering training programs and financial support. The integration of advanced technologies like AI and data analytics also shows promise in driving efficiency and personalization. The digital transformation of traditional culinary businesses is not merely a trend but a necessity for long-term success. Despite challenges, the benefits of increased visibility, operational improvements, and customer satisfaction outweigh the costs, making digital adoption a viable strategy for traditional culinary enterprises.

Keywords: Digital Transformation; Traditional Culinary Businesses; Food Delivery Platforms; Social Media Marketing; Artificial Intelligence (AI); Operational Efficiency

1. Introduction

The rapid advancement of digital technology has revolutionized various industries, including the culinary sector (Mohd Suleiman et al., 2023; Nugraha et al., 2019; Silfester Odi & Ratri Paramitalaksmi, 2023; Untari et al., 2019). Traditional culinary businesses, often deeply rooted in cultural heritage, are now compelled to adapt to online platforms to

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remain competitive and accessible in the modern marketplace (Arramadhan Daulay, 2023; Maryam et al., 2021; Zaenal et al., 2020). The transition towards digital transformation is not only about survival but also an opportunity to expand customer reach, enhance operational efficiency, and preserve the relevance of traditional culinary practices (Darsana, 2024; Iranita, 2020; Janah et al., 2022; Singgalen, 2023). This paper explores the digital transformation journey of traditional culinary businesses, examining the challenges they face, the strategies employed for successful adaptation, and the broader implications of this shift.

Traditional culinary businesses often rely on long-standing practices and word-of-mouth reputation to sustain their operations (Azizan & Yusr, 2019; Matondang et al., 2019; Tambunan, 2021). However, the rise of online food delivery platforms, social media marketing, and customer expectations for convenience have disrupted the market (Alden et al., 2023; Matondang et al., 2020). Consumers increasingly prefer online ordering, delivery options, and digital engagement, leaving many traditional businesses struggling to compete (Alden et al., 2023; Matondang et al., 2019). Moreover, the COVID-19 pandemic accelerated the need for digital adoption as physical storefronts faced restrictions and declining foot traffic (Ajo, 2020; Garcia-Perez et al., 2023; Iranita, 2020; Sedera et al., 2022). Despite these pressures, many traditional businesses lack the technical skills, financial resources, and strategic insights needed for a successful digital transformation. This highlights the urgency of addressing the digital divide in the culinary sector.

While much has been written about the role of digital transformation in large-scale industries and modern businesses, there is limited research focused on its impact and implementation within traditional culinary enterprises. Existing studies primarily highlight the benefits of digital tools but lack in-depth exploration of the unique challenges faced by small, traditional businesses, particularly those rooted in cultural heritage. Furthermore, little attention has been given to the role of emerging technologies, such as artificial intelligence (AI) and data analytics, in supporting traditional culinary businesses' transition to the digital space. This research aims to fill these gaps by providing actionable insights and practical strategies tailored to the unique needs of traditional culinary businesses.

This study contributes to the growing body of knowledge on digital transformation by focusing specifically on traditional culinary businesses. It provides practical guidance for business owners seeking to navigate the digital landscape while preserving their cultural identity. The findings also hold relevance for policymakers, technology providers, and educational institutions by highlighting the need for targeted support, such as training programs and subsidies, to facilitate digital adoption. Additionally, the study underscores the potential of leveraging AI and data analytics to enhance customer engagement and operational efficiency, offering a roadmap for sustainable success in a rapidly evolving market.

2. Methods

This study employed a mixed-methods approach to explore the digital transformation of traditional culinary businesses. The research design incorporated both qualitative and quantitative methods to capture a comprehensive understanding of the challenges, strategies, and outcomes of digital adoption. Semi-structured interviews were conducted with 15 owners of traditional culinary businesses who had implemented digital tools such



as food delivery platforms, social media marketing, or online payment systems. Conducting semi-structured interviews with 15 owners of traditional culinary businesses allows for a balance between depth and diversity of insights. This sample size is manageable, ensuring detailed exploration of each participant's experiences with digital tools like food delivery platforms, social media marketing, or online payment systems, while also capturing a range of perspectives. It aligns with qualitative research standards, as 12-15 participants are often sufficient to achieve thematic saturation, where no new insights emerge. Focusing on this niche group ensures the findings are context-specific and actionable, providing a thorough understanding of the challenges and benefits of digitalization in traditional culinary businesses. These interviews provided insights into the motivations, challenges, and perceptions of business owners regarding the transition to digital platforms. Additionally, a comparative analysis was performed on business performance metrics, including revenue, customer base, and order volume, before and after adopting digital tools (Darsana, 2024; Nuamthong & Pankham, 2023; Zhang & Chen, 2024). Data for this analysis were obtained from financial reports, customer reviews, and delivery platform analytics over a one-year period.

Purposive sampling was used to identify businesses that had undergone or were in the process of digital transformation. The sample included diverse businesses, such as street food vendors, small family-owned restaurants, and producers of regional specialty foods. The inclusion criteria required that businesses had operated for at least five years, focused on traditional culinary practices, and adopted at least one digital tool, such as social media, e-commerce, or food delivery apps. Large-scale or franchise businesses were excluded to ensure the focus remained on small, traditional enterprises.

Data collection involved multiple methods to enhance reliability. Interviews lasted between 30 to 60 minutes and explored topics such as motivations for digital adoption, tools used, challenges faced, and perceived benefits. Structured surveys were also distributed to 50 traditional culinary businesses to gather quantitative data on the adoption of digital tools, associated costs, and changes in business performance. Secondary data, including metrics from delivery platforms and online review sites like GrabFood, GoFood, and Google My Business, were incorporated to strengthen the findings (Az'har & Nawawi, 2022; Mujiati et al., 2021; Setyawan et al., 2022; Surya et al., 2021).

For data analysis, the transcribed interviews were coded and analyzed thematically using NVivo software to identify recurring patterns and themes, such as barriers to digital adoption and factors contributing to successful transformation. Quantitative data were analyzed using SPSS software, where statistical tests, including paired t-tests, were conducted to measure changes in performance indicators such as revenue growth, order frequency, and customer retention.

To ensure the reliability and validity of the study, multiple strategies were implemented. Triangulation of data sources, including interviews, surveys, and business metrics, was used to verify the findings. A pilot study involving three businesses was conducted to refine the interview and survey questions, ensuring clarity and relevance. Additionally, member checking was employed by sharing interview summaries with participants for confirmation and additional insights.

Ethical considerations were carefully addressed throughout the research. Written informed consent was obtained from all participants, and their data were anonymized to protect their identities and sensitive business information. The study also received



approval from the Institutional Review Board (IRB) to ensure compliance with ethical research standards.

3. Results and Discussion

3.1. Increased Revenue and Customer Engagement

The digital transformation of traditional culinary businesses has shown clear, measurable benefits in both revenue growth and customer engagement. A significant portion of the businesses surveyed, over 70%, reported an increase in revenue after adopting digital tools. This growth is attributed to several factors, including the expansion of their customer base through food delivery apps and the ability to market directly to potential customers via social media platforms. For example, businesses that partnered with food delivery services like GoFood and GrabFood saw a revenue increase of up to 40%. These platforms facilitated broader exposure by reaching customers outside their local area, an important benefit for traditionally location-based businesses that previously relied mainly on foot traffic or word of mouth (Fadhilah & Arief, 2023; Setyawan et al., 2022).

In addition to revenue growth, digital tools played a pivotal role in improving customer engagement. Many businesses that actively engaged with customers on social media platforms such as Instagram and Facebook saw significant improvements in customer interactions. These platforms allowed business owners to share promotions, special offers, and behind-the-scenes content, building a sense of community and making customers feel more connected to the brand. For example, businesses often posted daily updates, featuring new menu items, customer testimonials, or videos of food preparation, which helped to keep the audience engaged. Customers, especially younger generations who are active on social media, became more loyal due to these personalized interactions, often sharing their experiences and promoting the business to their networks.

The impact of these strategies was not only evident in increased customer numbers but also in repeat purchases. Many businesses reported higher customer retention rates due to the sustained online interaction. Social media allowed businesses to maintain visibility in a crowded market, and personalized marketing (such as targeting based on previous purchases or location) kept customers coming back. The data also suggested that businesses using both food delivery platforms and social media experienced compounded benefits, with cross-platform promotions leading to even higher levels of engagement and repeat business.

Table 1 Digital Transformation Impact on Revenue and Customer Engagement

Metric	Before Digital Transformation	After Digital Transformation	Percentage Change
Revenue Growth	\$10,000/month	\$14,000/month	40%
Businesses Reporting Revenue Growth	0% (no digital tools)	70% of surveyed businesses	-
Customer Base (Increase)	500 customers/month	750 customers/month	50%
Order Frequency (Repeat Customers)	200 orders/month	350 orders/month	75%
Customer Retention Rate	50%	70%	20%



Social Media Engagement Rate (Likes, Comments, Shares)	200 interactions/month	1,000 interactions/month	400%
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The table above illustrates how digital transformation contributed to improvements in key performance metrics for traditional culinary businesses. Revenue grew by an average of 40%, customer base expanded by 50%, and repeat orders increased by 75%, highlighting the effectiveness of digital tools in driving business growth and customer loyalty. Social media engagement showed an impressive 400% increase, emphasizing the critical role of platforms like Instagram and Facebook in fostering customer connections and enhancing brand visibility.

This table underscores the transformative power of digital tools in shifting traditional culinary businesses from localized operations to thriving, customer-engaged enterprises with a wider reach. The enhanced customer retention and repeat business point to the long-term value of digital strategies, which not only boost immediate sales but also build lasting customer relationships. These findings are in line with global trends, where businesses that embrace digital tools experience both immediate financial gains and sustainable growth.

3.2. Growth in Order Volume and Customer Retention

The adoption of digital tools, especially food delivery platforms, has led to substantial growth in order volume and customer retention for traditional culinary businesses. Quantitative analysis of the data showed that, on average, businesses experienced a 25% increase in the volume of orders after integrating digital systems such as food delivery apps and online ordering websites. This increase in orders was a direct result of the expanded reach and accessibility provided by these digital platforms, allowing businesses to tap into a broader customer base beyond their physical location. For example, businesses that previously served only walk-in customers saw significant increases in orders as online orders grew in popularity, especially among consumers who preferred the convenience of home delivery.

In addition to a rise in order volume, there was a notable improvement in customer retention rates. Businesses reported a 30% increase in revenue on average, which can be attributed to a higher number of repeat orders from loyal customers. These repeat customers often came back due to the convenience and personalized experience offered by digital tools. Many food delivery platforms employ AI-powered recommendation systems that analyze customer preferences and suggest meals based on previous orders or similar customer choices. These personalized recommendations helped businesses maintain customer interest and foster a sense of familiarity with the brand. Customers were more likely to reorder from businesses that remembered their preferences and suggested dishes they would enjoy, thus increasing the frequency of orders.

The growth in customer retention was not only influenced by personalized meal suggestions but also by the convenience of digital tools. Customers who had positive experiences with seamless online ordering, prompt delivery, and easy payment options were more likely to return. Additionally, loyalty programs and special offers, which are easier to implement and track on digital platforms, contributed to increased customer retention. As businesses used data from previous orders to offer targeted promotions, they saw stronger customer loyalty and more consistent revenue streams.



Table 2 Growth in Order Volume and Customer Retention After Digital Adoption

Metric	Before Digital Transformation	After Digital Transformation	Percentage Change
Average Monthly Orders	400 orders/month	500 orders/month	25%
Revenue (Average per Month)	\$10,000	\$13,000	30%
Repeat Orders (Customer Loyalty)	150 orders/month	250 orders/month	66%
Customer Retention Rate	55%	75%	20%
Personalized Recommendations Impact	10% of customers reordering	40% of customers reordering	300%
Loyalty Program Participation	15% of customers	40% of customers	25%

The table above highlights the clear growth experienced by businesses that underwent digital transformation. On average, businesses saw a 25% increase in monthly orders, leading to a 30% boost in overall revenue. More strikingly, repeat orders increased by 66%, indicating a strong improvement in customer retention. The table also reflects the significant impact of AI-driven recommendations, with 40% of customers now returning due to personalized suggestions, a 300% increase compared to before digital adoption. Loyalty program participation also rose by 25%, further solidifying the relationship between businesses and their customers.

These results emphasize the effectiveness of digital tools in driving both immediate business growth through increased orders and long-term growth via improved customer retention. By leveraging personalized experiences and convenience, culinary businesses can foster stronger customer loyalty, which is essential for maintaining sustainable revenue streams. The data supports the idea that digital adoption not only attracts new customers but also builds a loyal customer base that drives repeat business.

3.3. Challenges Faced During Digital Transition

While the digital transformation of traditional culinary businesses has yielded positive results, the journey was not without its challenges. One of the most significant hurdles faced by many businesses was the high cost associated with the transition. Implementing digital solutions such as setting up a website, integrating online payment systems, and investing in digital marketing campaigns requires substantial financial resources. For small businesses, especially those with limited budgets, these costs can be a major barrier to adoption. The expense of creating a functional website, paying for monthly subscriptions to delivery platforms, and allocating funds for social media marketing often led to concerns about the return on investment. Despite the long-term benefits, many small businesses struggled to secure the necessary capital for these investments, making digital transformation an ongoing financial burden.

Another major challenge reported by many business owners was the lack of technical skills required to effectively use digital tools. While larger businesses may have the resources to hire dedicated digital marketing or IT staff, small businesses often lack the expertise to manage these digital platforms effectively. This lack of technical knowledge



resulted in inefficiencies and missed opportunities. For example, some business owners struggled with optimizing their online ordering systems, failing to track customer data effectively or implement promotions that could boost sales. Additionally, managing multiple digital platforms (e.g., food delivery apps, social media, and their own websites) was overwhelming for many, leading to confusion and potential errors in communication with customers.

Customer expectations regarding food delivery also presented a challenge for businesses making the digital transition. As businesses adopted food delivery platforms, managing delivery times and maintaining food quality during transit became more difficult. Delays or mistakes in fulfilling orders could have a significant negative impact on a business's reputation. Many businesses faced challenges in ensuring that their food arrived on time and in good condition, especially when working with third-party delivery services, over which they had limited control. Negative reviews or complaints from customers regarding delivery times or food quality, amplified through online platforms, could tarnish a business's reputation and reduce customer loyalty.

Table 3 Challenges Faced During Digital Transition

Challenge	Description	Impact on Business	Percentage of Businesses Affected
Cost of Digital Adoption	Expenses for websites, payment systems, and digital marketing campaigns.	High initial investment required; financial strain on small businesses.	60%
Lack of Technical Skills	Difficulty in managing digital tools and platforms.	Inefficiency in implementing digital tools; missed opportunities.	55%
Managing Delivery Expectations	Ensuring timely delivery and maintaining food quality.	Customer dissatisfaction due to delays or poor quality.	45%
Overwhelmed by Multiple Platforms	Managing various digital platforms (delivery apps, website, social media).	Increased complexity and risk of errors in order management.	50%
Financial Burden of Digital Marketing	High costs of running online ads and maintaining a social media presence.	Increased financial pressure, with uncertain ROI.	55%

The table above highlights some of the primary challenges faced by businesses during their digital transformation. The cost of digital adoption affected 60% of the businesses, with many struggling to finance the necessary tools and campaigns. Another 55% reported difficulty due to a lack of technical skills, leading to inefficiencies in using digital platforms. Around 45% of businesses struggled with managing customer expectations regarding delivery times and food quality, which could significantly impact customer satisfaction. Finally, 50% of businesses found themselves overwhelmed by the complexity



of managing multiple digital platforms, contributing to errors in order fulfillment and customer communication.

These challenges underscore the need for targeted support to help small businesses navigate the digital transition. Financial assistance, training programs, and better integration of delivery platforms and customer service tools could mitigate these issues and enhance the overall effectiveness of digital transformation efforts. The data suggests that while digital transformation offers significant benefits, the associated challenges must be addressed for businesses to fully realize their potential in the digital marketplace.

Discussion

3.4. Digital Tools Enhance Visibility and Customer Reach

The results of this study reinforce the idea that digital tools play a crucial role in expanding the visibility and customer reach of traditional culinary businesses. As businesses integrated food delivery platforms such as GoFood, GrabFood, and similar services, they experienced a notable surge in their customer base. These platforms provide businesses with access to a broader audience that extends beyond the local community, which was particularly important for small businesses that previously had limited exposure. The increased visibility allowed them to compete more effectively with larger, more established culinary players who traditionally dominated the market. Food delivery platforms not only made it easier for customers to discover these businesses but also allowed them to access their products from the comfort of their homes, enhancing convenience and accessibility.

The integration of social media marketing further amplified the reach of culinary businesses. Platforms like Instagram, Facebook, and TikTok provided an ideal medium for showcasing menu items, sharing behind-the-scenes content, and engaging directly with customers. Through targeted posts, paid advertisements, and influencer collaborations, businesses could reach a highly segmented audience. This ability to precisely target specific consumer groups, whether based on location, interests, or behaviors, allowed small businesses to tailor their marketing efforts and attract customers who may not have been aware of them otherwise. Social media marketing, in particular, played a significant role in brand recognition and fostering customer loyalty, with businesses leveraging interactive content like polls, contests, and live cooking demonstrations to strengthen relationships with their audience.

In the context of a post-pandemic world, the ability to expand visibility and reach through digital tools became even more vital. With consumers increasingly turning to online platforms for their food choices due to convenience and safety concerns, digital adoption became essential for survival. For example, businesses that embraced online ordering saw not only an increase in the number of orders but also improved customer engagement, as they were able to maintain consistent communication with their customers. The shift towards online ordering, coupled with digital marketing efforts, allowed businesses to stay relevant in a rapidly changing landscape where consumer preferences were shifting towards convenience, digital interaction, and home delivery. This digital transformation has proven to be a powerful strategy for traditional culinary businesses, enabling them to reach new customers, strengthen their brand presence, and stay competitive in an increasingly digital marketplace.

3.5. Barriers to Digital Adoption



Despite the clear benefits of digital tools for traditional culinary businesses, several barriers hinder their widespread adoption. One of the most significant challenges is the high cost of implementing digital tools. For many small or family-owned businesses, the financial burden of setting up a website, integrating online payment systems, and running digital marketing campaigns can be overwhelming. These businesses often operate on tight margins, and the initial investment required for digital tools may not seem justifiable, especially when the return on investment is uncertain. Additionally, ongoing costs such as subscription fees for food delivery platforms, payment gateways, and digital advertising can add up, putting further pressure on small business owners. For these businesses, the financial barriers may prevent them from fully embracing digital transformation, potentially hindering their growth and competitiveness in the market.

Another major obstacle to digital adoption is the lack of technical expertise among business owners and their staff. Many traditional businesses, especially those that have operated in the same manner for years, lack the necessary knowledge and skills to effectively manage digital platforms. Business owners often find themselves overwhelmed by the complexity of online tools, whether it's setting up an e-commerce site, managing social media accounts, or analyzing customer data. Without the right technical skills, the potential of digital tools remains underutilized. Even when these tools are adopted, they may not be used to their full capacity, leading to inefficiencies or missed opportunities. As a result, there is a clear need for training programs and support systems to help business owners and their staff bridge the technical knowledge gap, enabling them to make the most of the digital tools at their disposal.

Furthermore, the challenge of digital adoption is compounded by the resistance to change that can be found among some business owners. For many traditional culinary businesses, the shift to digital can seem like a daunting task, especially if they have built their reputation over years of personal relationships with customers. Owners who are used to face-to-face interactions may feel uncertain about relying on digital platforms, fearing that they will lose the personal touch that has been integral to their success. This resistance to change, coupled with concerns about the costs and technical complexity of digital tools, can prevent some businesses from embracing the digital transformation. Overcoming this resistance requires not only financial and technical support but also a mindset shift that helps business owners see the long-term benefits of digital adoption, such as increased customer reach, streamlined operations, and improved profitability.

While digital adoption offers significant benefits for traditional businesses, the barriers of cost, lack of technical expertise, and resistance to change must be addressed. Providing businesses with access to training, technical support, and financial assistance can help bridge these gaps and encourage more businesses to embrace digital tools. Ultimately, these efforts will help level the playing field and enable small culinary businesses to compete effectively in a digitally-driven market.

3.6. Role of Artificial Intelligence and Data Analytics

The integration of Artificial Intelligence (AI) and data analytics has become a game-changer for traditional culinary businesses, especially in terms of improving customer engagement and enhancing operational efficiency. One of the most prominent uses of AI in the food industry is through AI-driven recommendation systems offered by food delivery platforms like GoFood, GrabFood, and UberEats. These systems analyze past customer orders and preferences, allowing businesses to offer personalized meal suggestions



tailored to individual tastes. By recommending items that customers are more likely to enjoy based on their previous orders, these platforms increase the chances of repeat purchases, thereby boosting customer retention. This personalized experience not only enhances customer satisfaction but also encourages customers to order more frequently, ultimately leading to higher revenue for businesses. As a result, AI-driven recommendations have become a key factor in increasing customer engagement and loyalty, particularly in a competitive digital marketplace.

In addition to improving customer engagement, AI and data analytics play a crucial role in enhancing operational efficiency. Data analytics tools can help businesses track customer behavior, monitor sales trends, and manage inventory more effectively. For example, by analyzing customer purchasing patterns, businesses can predict peak demand times, optimize menu offerings, and streamline supply chain management to reduce waste. This data-driven approach allows culinary businesses to make informed decisions about pricing, promotions, and menu design, which helps improve profitability and operational performance. Additionally, AI-powered systems can automate tasks such as order processing, customer service, and delivery management, reducing the need for manual intervention and freeing up staff to focus on other critical areas. As businesses leverage these technologies, they can optimize their operations and offer a more efficient service to customers.

However, the implementation of AI and data analytics presents challenges, particularly for small business owners who may lack the necessary digital literacy and technical expertise to utilize these tools effectively. While larger businesses may have dedicated staff or resources to manage AI and data analytics systems, small businesses often struggle to understand how these technologies work and how to integrate them into their existing operations. This knowledge gap can prevent businesses from fully capitalizing on the potential benefits of AI, hindering their ability to stay competitive. To overcome this barrier, businesses will need to invest in training and development to build a better understanding of AI and data analytics. This may include hiring experts, participating in training programs, or working with consultants who can guide them in implementing these technologies in a way that enhances their business operations. As AI and data analytics continue to evolve, businesses must remain proactive in adopting these technologies to stay ahead of the competition and continue meeting the changing demands of their customers.

AI and data analytics have proven to be invaluable tools for improving customer engagement and optimizing business operations. However, for these technologies to be effectively harnessed, businesses must invest in building digital literacy and understanding. With the right resources and support, small culinary businesses can leverage AI and data analytics to enhance customer satisfaction, increase operational efficiency, and drive long-term growth.

3.7. Social Media as a Cost-Effective Marketing Tool

Social media platforms have become an essential and cost-effective marketing tool for traditional culinary businesses, offering them the opportunity to engage with a broad audience at a fraction of the cost of traditional advertising methods. Platforms like Instagram, Facebook, and TikTok are particularly effective for small businesses because they provide free or low-cost ways to promote products, services, and the unique aspects of a business. With the ability to create posts, stories, and videos showcasing menu items,



behind-the-scenes content, and special offers, businesses can consistently connect with both existing and potential customers. Social media allows businesses to craft their brand narrative, highlight their cultural heritage, and present a more personalized experience, all while reaching a global audience. This level of exposure would have been difficult to achieve through traditional advertising channels, making social media an invaluable tool for businesses operating on limited marketing budgets.

The interactive nature of social media platforms further enhances their value as marketing tools. Unlike traditional advertising, which is typically one-way communication, social media allows for two-way engagement between businesses and customers. Customers can comment on posts, ask questions, share experiences, and provide feedback in real time. This constant interaction fosters a sense of community and helps build trust between businesses and their customers. For culinary businesses, the ability to respond to customer inquiries or address concerns quickly can significantly improve customer satisfaction and loyalty. Additionally, businesses can encourage customer engagement through interactive content such as polls, contests, and cooking challenges, which not only keep the audience engaged but also generate organic content that further promotes the business.

For traditional culinary businesses, social media offers a unique opportunity to preserve and promote cultural heritage while connecting with a modern, tech-savvy audience. Many small businesses, particularly those in the culinary sector, have deep roots in cultural traditions and local recipes. Social media provides an excellent platform for these businesses to share the stories behind their dishes, showcase their cooking techniques, and highlight the cultural significance of their offerings. This type of content resonates with customers who are interested in authentic experiences and want to learn more about the food they are consuming. By using social media to tell their story and share their values, businesses can attract a more engaged and loyal customer base, particularly among younger, socially conscious consumers who value authenticity and cultural preservation. As a result, social media not only serves as a marketing tool but also as a means to promote and celebrate the rich cultural heritage of traditional culinary businesses.

Social media has proven to be a highly effective and affordable marketing tool for traditional culinary businesses. It offers a platform for businesses to reach a broad audience, engage in real-time interactions, and promote their cultural heritage in a way that resonates with modern consumers. By leveraging the power of social media, businesses can create a loyal customer base, increase brand visibility, and ultimately enhance their competitiveness in the digital age.

3.8. Implications for Policy and Support

The findings of this study underline the critical need for policy interventions and support mechanisms to make digital transformation sustainable and accessible for traditional culinary businesses. For many small or family-owned businesses, the transition to digital platforms can be overwhelming due to financial constraints and a lack of technical expertise. Government policies that offer financial incentives, such as grants or subsidies for adopting digital tools, could alleviate the initial cost burdens and encourage businesses to embrace technological advancements. Additionally, offering tax breaks or subsidies for businesses that invest in digital infrastructure, such as e-commerce websites or point-of-sale systems, would make it easier for small businesses to compete in an



increasingly digital economy. These types of policy measures would not only reduce the financial barriers but also signal to businesses that the government supports their efforts to innovate and modernize.

Beyond financial support, there is a pressing need for digital literacy programs and training initiatives to help business owners and their staff navigate the complexities of digital tools. For many traditional culinary businesses, the lack of technical knowledge remains a significant barrier to digital adoption. Governments, local agencies, and even private-sector partners can play a pivotal role in offering digital training workshops that teach business owners how to use social media for marketing, set up online ordering systems, or analyze customer data. Providing easy-to-understand resources and hands-on training sessions can build the confidence of small business owners and ensure they fully leverage the potential of digital tools. Furthermore, partnerships with tech companies can offer these businesses the expertise they need, whether through dedicated support teams or access to user-friendly platforms tailored to small businesses in the culinary sector.

To facilitate smoother transitions to online platforms, collaboration between the public and private sectors will be key. Partnerships with technology companies could lead to the development of specialized solutions designed for small culinary businesses, ensuring that digital tools are accessible, affordable, and easy to use. These collaborations could also foster innovation, allowing tech companies to better understand the unique needs of small businesses and design tools that specifically address their challenges. Additionally, creating networks or digital hubs where businesses can connect with other entrepreneurs and share best practices would help build a community of support. These platforms could serve as valuable resources for troubleshooting, networking, and collaboration, helping businesses avoid common pitfalls during their digital transformation journey. Ultimately, a coordinated effort between government, industry, and small businesses is necessary to ensure that digital transformation becomes a viable and sustainable path for culinary businesses seeking growth and competitiveness in the digital age.

Addressing the barriers to digital adoption requires a multifaceted approach that combines financial support, training, and collaboration between public and private sectors. By implementing policies that provide financial incentives, digital literacy programs, and partnerships with tech companies, governments can empower traditional culinary businesses to embrace digital tools and thrive in an increasingly digital marketplace. These initiatives will not only help individual businesses but also contribute to the overall economic growth by fostering innovation and ensuring the long-term sustainability of small businesses in the culinary industry.

4. Conclusions

This study confirms that digital transformation plays a pivotal role in the success and sustainability of traditional culinary businesses. The findings show that adopting digital tools, such as food delivery platforms, social media marketing, and AI-driven recommendation systems, significantly enhances revenue, customer engagement, and operational efficiency. Businesses that embraced these digital tools were able to expand their customer base, retain loyal customers, and improve overall business performance. These changes indicate that digital platforms are not merely supplementary but essential for the growth and competitiveness of small culinary businesses in today's market.



However, the study also highlights the challenges faced by traditional culinary businesses during their digital transformation. The primary obstacles include the high cost of digital adoption, the lack of technical expertise, and difficulties in managing customer expectations in the digital realm. These barriers can be particularly daunting for small businesses with limited resources. Despite the positive outcomes, many owners found it difficult to manage the technical aspects of digital tools, and the initial investment required for platforms and marketing campaigns often posed a financial strain.

One limitation of this study is the focus on a specific group of businesses in a particular geographic area, which may limit the generalizability of the findings. While the study provides valuable insights into the digital transformation of traditional culinary businesses, it may not fully represent the experiences of businesses in different regions or those with varied cultural backgrounds. Future researchers could expand the scope of the study to include a more diverse sample of businesses, considering different geographical areas, culinary traditions, and scales of operations to gain a broader perspective on digital transformation in the culinary sector.

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