

Marketing Management Strategies of Local Food Industries in Sta. Maria, Ilocos Sur: A Customer's Perspective

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ABSTRACT

This study aimed to assess the marketing management strategies of local food industries in Sta. Maria, Ilocos Sur, from the perspective of their customers. Specifically, it examined the profiles of customers, the level of marketing strategies in terms of product, price, promotion, place, and people, and the relationship between customer demographics and marketing effectiveness. A descriptive-correlation research design was employed, surveying sixty (60) customers using a validated questionnaire. Data were analyzed using frequency, percentage, mean, and simple correlation analysis.

The results indicated that the majority of customers were young adults between the ages of 26 and 30, primarily comprising women who are single and hold college degrees, implying that these demographics prefer dining out due to convenience and available disposable income. Customers expressed strong agreement regarding the high performance of local food businesses in every marketing aspect, such as product quality, reasonable pricing, effective promotional strategies, convenient locations, and well-informed staff. Furthermore, no notable correlation was observed between customer demographic factors and the perceived effectiveness of marketing techniques, suggesting that marketing initiatives resonate widely across various customer demographics.

Based on the findings, the recommendations include upholding high standards across all marketing dimensions, enhancing digital visibility via social media platforms and online ordering systems, prioritizing consistent quality and customer satisfaction, and promoting local ingredients, cultural traditions, and community support to foster customer loyalty and regional pride. This study offers essential insights for business proprietors, policymakers, and stakeholders to refine marketing strategies, boost customer engagement, and promote sustainable development within the local food sector of Sta. Maria, Ilocos Sur.

Keywords: local food industry, marketing management strategies, and customer perception

INTRODUCTION

To deal professionally with the wide range of elements affecting a business's potential to expand and succeed, managers want innovative processes that they believe will facilitate the business's optimal positioning in its competitive environment. Strategic management allows for such positioning since it enhances preparedness for unforeseen internal or competitive demands. Strategic management is a comprehensive method for developing, implementing, and evaluating managerial decisions for the firm to achieve its goals. Hence, strategic management in a local food industry provides planning, innovation of products, and marketing strategies through promotional activities with quality products or services.

The Philippine archipelago is packed with scenic views coming from its wealthy characteristic wonders. Usually, the essential reason why both neighborhood and remote tourists are so enthusiastic to explore the islands. On this part, the Philippines is one of the most popular in terms of the food industry, it comprises the local foods which are so popular and unexpected taste of the foods. Filipino cuisine reflects with people, history, and culture of the region or island that has a unique or own trademark of foods. Food is very important to the Filipino

lifestyle and the best way to acquire knowledge about the deep understanding and diverse culture within the Philippines.

The local food of the Philippines is unique in its distinction of flavor, texture, aroma, and symbolism of history. From the Qatar Tribune (2022) of Gomes, one of the restaurant consultants, celebrity Chef Adrillana says that “Filipino cuisine centers around sweet (tamis), sour (asim), and salty (alat) as the base cooking flavor with a variety of textures. Most dishes are served alongside glutinous rice. They have rice in almost every course, from appetizers to desserts.

The Food Industry gives nourishment and refreshments fundamentally together with settlement or lodging establishment for a cost. The industry comes beneath the benefit category where the client is advertised not as if it were neighborliness but as a whole-some feasting encounter. The Food Industry is diverse and full of changes and developments over a year that provides customer needs and satisfaction. This industry is one of the foremost quickly developing businesses, it includes the global industry supply chain that incorporates food handling, packaging, branding, and conveyance. This industry, includes restaurants, bars, bed and breakfast accommodations, resorts, and others that are connected by the industry that commits to serving the people with the right quality food at the right price, giving the right demand and unexpected beyond service. In addition, the food industry contributes to the economy with its more profitable part under the tourism industry.

According to the UNESCO, Ilocos Sur is world-famous for not one, but two UNESCO World Heritage Destinations that let you travel back in time. UNESCO depicts Ilocos Sur’s capital city, Vigan, as “the best-preserved illustration of an arranged Spanish colonial town in Asia.” In the interim, Santa Maria Church brags for one of the foremost memorable architectural plans of the entire nation, capturing the European Florid fashion and adjusting it to the Philippine environment. Ilocos Sur has a rich heritage and unique culture that is preserved for the next generation because it is observed that many of these traditions, songs, dances, and other Ilocano cultures are no longer familiar to the younger generations. Since Ilocos Sur could be a coastal area, the Spaniards built a few watchtowers around the area to ensure its communities from privateers.

The food industry has been one of the most booming industries in Sta. Maria, Ilocos Sur, Nonetheless, Sta. Maria is said one of the riches in terms of culture and history. Because of this, a lot of people from nearby towns and the rest of the Philippines visit this rich and historical abode to experience its diverse and unique offerings. With this, food industries within the Sta. Maria increased abruptly over the last few decades. Having said that, Sta. Maria ventured into this industry and it is good to note that there are local food business owners who were lucky enough to elevate the quality of their life through this.

This study signifies to assess the marketing management strategies of local food industries in Sta. Maria, Ilocos Sur, lies in understanding on how these strategies impact customer engagement, sales growth, and local economic development. This study helps identify which marketing approaches effectively attract and retain customer. It can provide insights for local businesses to innovate and adapt their marketing efforts, ensuring the sustainability of the food industry in Sta. Maria while promoting the rich cultural heritage and unique food products of the area. Furthermore, the study supports local government units and stakeholders in crafting policies and programs that enhance the competitiveness of local food enterprises, contributing to community empowerment and tourism growth. This focus on Sta. Maria, Ilocos Sur, highlights the importance of its unique local food products and shows the need to update marketing strategies to fit changing market conditions. It contributes valuable information for improving the local food industry and adds to research in this area in a simple and clear way.

Objectives/ Statement of the Problem

The study generally aims to determine the level of strategies of local food industries in Sta. Maria, Ilocos Sur.

Specifically, it sought to answer the following questions:

1. What is the profile of the respondents in terms of the following:

- 1.1.age,
- 1.2.gender,
- 1.3.civil status, and
- 1.4.educational attainments?
2. What is the level marketing management strategies of local food industries in Sta. Maria, Ilocos Sur terms of the following:
 - 2.1. product;
 - 2.2. price;
 - 2.3. promotion; and
 - 2.4. place?
3. Is there a significant relationship between the profile of the respondents and their level of marketing management strategies of local food industries in Sta. Maria, Ilocos Sur?

Hypothesis of the Study

The study has significant relationship between the profile of the respondents and the level of marketing management strategies of local food industries in Sta. Maria, Ilocos Sur.

Significant of the Study

This study provides valuable insights that can benefit the following stakeholders by enhancing:

1. Local food business owners: improving their marketing strategies to effectively connect with customers and boost brand loyalty.
2. Customers/consumers: gaining better access to quality, fresh, and authentic local food products aligned with their preferences.
3. Community and tourism promoters: leveraging local food as a cultural and economic asset to attract visitors and promote regional identity.
4. Policymakers and local government units: crafting informed policies and support programs that foster sustainable growth in the local food sector.
5. Marketers and brand managers: developing community-focused campaigns that increase consumer trust and engagement through social and environmental responsibility.

REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE/ CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

From the study of Usman et al. (2019) highlight that this preference also stems from cultural and habitual factors where cash is trusted as a straightforward and universally accepted medium of exchange. Even with the increasing presence of mobile payment technologies and digital financial services, the dominance of cash reflects socio-economic realities and the need for inclusive payment systems that cater to all segments, especially in less urbanized communities where local food industries often operate.

Furthermore, effective inventory tracking is essential for businesses in the food sector, as highlighted by research like that of Kumar and Anbanandam (2020). It prevents stockouts, ensuring customers have continuous access to products, which is particularly vital in the food industry where freshness is critical. Adequate inventory control

improves customer satisfaction by avoiding scenarios where favorite items are unavailable, thus minimizing customer annoyance and enhancing the overall shopping experience. In addition, effective inventory systems allow companies to uphold product quality by monitoring expiration dates and reducing waste, which also leads to savings on operational costs. Sophisticated inventory management techniques, such as real-time monitoring and automated restocking, enable businesses to swiftly adapt to changes in demand, maintaining ideal stock levels. This ability to respond fosters customer confidence and loyalty, as customers can depend on the steady availability and freshness of local food products. Consequently, implementing strong inventory monitoring systems is essential for maintaining customer satisfaction and improving business performance within local food industries.

According to Grunert (2005), it is clear that the perceived quality significantly impacts consumer trust in food products. Consumer trust is shaped not only by the inherent attributes of food, such as flavor, texture, and freshness, but also by external indicators like branding, packaging, pricing, and the point of purchase. Grunert's Total Food Quality Model illustrates that the perception of food quality is a complex construct that influences purchasing decisions at every stage, including before, during, and after consumption. Trust develops when the anticipated quality, based on these indicators, is consistent with the actual quality experienced. This trust is essential in the food industry as it fosters repeat purchases and customer loyalty.

Ramirez and Goldsmith (2018) reinforce the concept that a variety of products enhances customer satisfaction by meeting a range of preferences and needs. Their study indicates that offering an extensive selection of products enables customers to discover items that best match their unique tastes, dietary needs, and lifestyle choices, leading to greater overall satisfaction with local food businesses. Furthermore, product variety can improve perceptions of service quality and fair pricing, resulting in a more positive shopping experience.

Widjaja and Giovanni (2018) note that the uptake of online transaction systems in local markets is significantly shaped by consumers' familiarity with technology and their trust in these systems. This suggests that individuals who are more at ease and experienced with digital platforms tend to prefer online payment methods. Additionally, trust is a crucial factor, as consumers require confidence in the security, dependability, and confidentiality of their transactions before fully committing to digital payments. In local market settings where cash payments have traditionally prevailed, these elements become even more critical. Enhancing consumer trust through transparent processes, dependable technology, and positive user experiences can facilitate the wider acceptance of online transactions.

This observation aligns with the concept of cost-plus pricing, a well-known pricing strategy in which companies secure profitability by adding a markup to their production expenses (Nagle & Müller, 2018). For local food businesses, this method entails calculating the total expense of creating a food product—including ingredients, labor, overhead, and other costs—and then applying a predetermined profit margin to establish the selling price. Cost-plus pricing offers consistent profit margins, streamlines pricing choices, and assists in covering all incurred costs. It is especially beneficial in the food sector where managing expenses is essential for maintaining sustainability.

The research conducted by Channa and Pitafi (2023) indicates that competitive dynamics play a crucial role in shaping pricing strategies, particularly in small and medium-sized food enterprises. In markets characterized by competition, companies must meticulously assess their competitors' pricing, differentiate their products, and meet customer expectations to effectively position their own prices. The fierce competition among rivals often compels food businesses to modify their prices in order to preserve their market share, while the negotiating power of both buyers and suppliers also influences price-setting decisions.

Recent empirical research, including a study by Orteza et al. (2024), reveals that consumers' willingness to pay (WTP) for local food items fluctuates in accordance with demand trends, leading local producers to alter their pricing. This variability implies that producers strategically determine prices not only based on production expenses but also by evaluating customers' maximum willingness to pay, which can change due to seasonality, shifts in consumer preferences, and evolving market conditions. Gaining insight into WTP enables local food producers to refine their pricing strategies to optimize revenue while ensuring customer satisfaction, thus striking a balance between profitability and accessibility.

The research aligns with the findings of Ilbery and Maye (2005), which emphasize that local food systems are significantly influenced by regional socioeconomic and environmental factors. Their study indicates that these contextual variables affect not only the processes of production and supply but also the pricing strategies in local food markets. For instance, elements like geographic location, infrastructure quality, availability of local labor, and environmental conditions impact production expenses as well as supply chain effectiveness, thereby influencing price determinações. In addition, social elements such as community values, local culture, and consumer expectations are crucial in shaping the demand side of the local food economy, influencing pricing strategies as well.

As noted by Thilmany et al. (2018), the cost structure includes both direct costs—like raw materials, ingredients, and labor—and indirect costs encompassing utilities, rent, and marketing expenditures. Food businesses often utilize cost-plus pricing, which involves calculating the total production cost and then adding a markup to secure profitability. This approach offers a clear and dependable method for pricing, enabling businesses to cover all expenses incurred while sustaining viable profit margins. Furthermore, a thorough understanding of cost components allows businesses to strategically modify prices in response to market fluctuations, competition, and customer demand, ensuring they remain competitive and economically viable.

Research in marketing reveals that digital channels such as Facebook, Instagram, and company websites significantly boost visibility, customer interaction, and brand recall for various businesses, including those in the local food sector. According to Duffett (2017) and Ahmad et al. (2019), these platforms provide businesses with the capability to swiftly reach broader audiences and engage customers through interactive content, promotional efforts, and direct communication.

Research consistently shows that personal recommendations are among the most reliable and effective forms of marketing, often outperforming paid advertisements (Jalilvand & Samiei, 2012). Unlike paid advertisements, which can be seen as biased or disruptive, word-of-mouth (WOM) promotions inherently carry trust because they come from personal connections like friends, family, or colleagues who provide genuine experiences. Studies reveal that personal referrals establish immediate credibility and greatly affect consumer choices, with referred customers showing a higher likelihood to trust, engage with, and buy from a business. Furthermore, the research indicates that while food delivery apps greatly enhance visibility and sales, their effectiveness varies depending on the extent of technological adoption and the size of the market, in line with findings by Li, Miroso, and Bremer (2020).

The research conducted by Widjaja and Giovanni (2018) examined how Online-to-Offline (O2O) service quality and brand image impact customer satisfaction and repeat purchase intentions. Their findings suggest that high O2O service quality (such as responsiveness, reliability, and empathy) and a positive brand image lead to greater customer satisfaction and an increased likelihood of repeat purchases. This supports the notion that local food businesses utilizing digital ordering channels (phone, email, online) not only enhance convenience but also foster customer trust and loyalty, which aligns well with the high ratings customers give these ordering methods.

According to research by Ilbery and Maye (2005), regional brands often act as signals of quality that convey authenticity, safety, and cultural heritage, thereby boosting consumer confidence in local products. Regional branding can further distinguish products by highlighting their unique geographical origins, traditional production techniques, and sustainability credentials, all of which resonate with the increasing consumer values centered around health and environmental awareness. Empirical evidence reveals that regional brand endorsement, particularly when supported by government certification or community recognition, enhances brand trust and positively sways purchase intentions.

Research by Batat (2021) highlights that personal interactions, familiarity, and physical presence are essential elements that continue to influence customer loyalty in local food markets. Customers tend to appreciate the direct relationship with producers or sellers, which cultivates a sense of trust, authenticity, and belonging to the community. This interpersonal connection strengthens loyalty as customers feel more engaged and supported, viewing the local food experience as more than merely a transaction. Studies indicate that such personal engagement can result in more effective word-of-mouth promotion and repeat business, which are crucial for the sustainability of local food enterprises.

According to Mount (2012), local food systems are crucial for fostering community engagement and enhancing market dynamism. These systems encourage active involvement by local residents in food production, distribution, and decision-making, fostering a sense of ownership and shared responsibility. Community participation enhances social relationships, promotes collaborative efforts, and leads to the creation of local initiatives like farmers' markets, food festivals, and community-supported agriculture programs. This proactive engagement not only improves access to fresh, culturally relevant foods but also builds resilience by forming adaptive networks that cater to local needs and challenges. The vitality of local food markets is further bolstered by this culture of participation, which stimulates innovation, sustainability, and equitable food access.

Thilmany et al. (2018) state that localized food supply chains contribute to job creation and reinforce regional economic resilience. Their findings show that local food systems generate a greater level of regional economic activity, including employment opportunities and contributions to gross domestic product (GDP), when compared to traditional food supply chains. This is because local production and processing heighten the demand for local labor, support small and medium-sized businesses, and foster the circulation of money within the community, thereby enhancing overall economic stability.

The SERVQUAL model developed by Parasuraman, Zeithaml, and Berry (1988) highlights five essential dimensions of service quality that influence customer satisfaction: responsiveness, assurance, reliability, empathy, and tangibles. Of these dimensions, responsiveness denotes the readiness and capability of employees to assist customers swiftly, while assurance pertains to the employees' expertise, politeness, and ability to instill trust and confidence. Competent and knowledgeable employees enhance the brand image by being seen as dependable and trustworthy, which markedly increases customer faith in the business. This model stresses the importance of consistently providing high-quality service across these areas to boost customer satisfaction and encourage loyalty, which is particularly significant for local food businesses seeking to establish enduring customer connections.

Research by Singh and Khan (2012) shows that the effectiveness of upselling improves when staff exhibit strong interpersonal skills and are familiar with the products. When employees have a deep understanding of the products, they can make personalized and relevant recommendations, which enrich the customer experience instead of coming off as pushy. Employees with strong interpersonal abilities can connect with customers through empathy and responsiveness, fostering trust and raising the chances of acceptance. This synergy not only enhances immediate sales but also promotes customer satisfaction and loyalty, as customers feel they are being valued and supported. Thus, for local food businesses, equipping staff with knowledge about products and communication skills is vital for achieving successful upselling that benefits both customers and the business.

As noted by Tsaur and Lin (2004), investing in employee training enhances their service behavior, competence, and confidence, which in turn leads to improved service quality. This improvement, coupled with job satisfaction and organizational support, creates a positive feedback loop that enhances customer experiences and strengthens loyalty. Proper training allows staff to address customer needs more effectively, boosting responsiveness, reliability, and assurance, all of which are crucial for satisfaction. Therefore, local food businesses should prioritize comprehensive employee training programs to raise service standards and cultivate a loyal customer base.

The research conducted by Homburg, Müller, and Klarmann (2011) reveals that a strong customer focus and engagement are vital traits associated with increased brand trust and more effective customer interactions. Their results indicate that when employees and sales staff display a sincere concern for customer needs and nurture emotional and relational bonds, it enhances trust in the brand. This trust, in turn, leads to stronger customer loyalty and deeper engagement, generating a favorable cycle of positive brand experiences. Customer engagement, which reflects emotional and behavioral commitment to the brand, is a crucial intermediary between service quality and trust, amplifying customer preference and advocacy. This highlights the necessity for businesses, including local food enterprises, to focus on customer-centric strategies to effectively boost brand trust and engagement.

According to Alonzo et al. (2025) studied innovative marketing techniques for small pastry businesses in Iligan City, finding that social media platforms greatly improve visibility and customer interaction by facilitating

targeted promotions and immediate feedback. Furthermore, distinguishing products through unique flavors and enhancements in quality closely matches the changing consumer demands for novel treats. Moreover, initiatives aimed at community involvement, such as participating in local events and forming partnerships, strengthen loyalty and competitiveness by creating genuine relationships that appeal to customers looking for culturally relevant and accessible food alternatives.

From the study of Sanchez & Apritado, (2021) discovered that tourists exploring the Ilocos Region show significant awareness and satisfaction regarding authentic Ilocano cuisine, highlighting the importance of cultural heritage preservation in promoting these local dishes. Their research emphasizes that upholding authenticity boosts the marketing potential of Ilocano specialties, drawing in travelers who appreciate genuine culinary experiences and contributing to the region's allure in gastronomic tourism by fostering repeat visits and favorable recommendations.

From Traya (2024) examined the marketing tactics employed by micro and small food MSMEs in the Philippines. The research emphasizes that establishing a robust online presence through social media channels, captivating content like attractive food photography, and engaging promotions can boost visibility and foster customer interaction. Furthermore, Santos highlights the benefits of capitalizing on local food trends, collaborating with influencers and other enterprises, participating in community food events, and strategically utilizing discounts that appeal to the value-oriented nature of Filipino consumers, all of which aid in broadening the customer base and maintaining a competitive edge in the local food industry.

Theoretical Framework

The research grounded in the Marketing Mix Theory, particularly the 4Ps of marketing—Product, Price, Place, and Promotion—offers a thorough theoretical framework that is apt for evaluating the marketing approaches of local food sectors in Sta. Maria, Ilocos Sur from a consumer's viewpoint. Product pertains to the distinct local food items, highlighting their authenticity, quality, and cultural relevance, which are vital for attracting and fulfilling consumer needs. Price includes the establishment of competitive and value-oriented pricing strategies that consider the local economic environment and perceived customer value, enabling affordability while ensuring profitability. Place focuses on distribution and accessibility, making sure that local food products are available to consumers in key locations such as local markets, stores, or through online avenues, thereby enhancing convenience. Promotion covers the communication and advertising strategies used to showcase the advantages and uniqueness of local foods, which incorporate digital marketing, social media outreach, and community involvement aimed at raising awareness and fostering customer loyalty. This framework corresponds with the study's emphasis by providing a systematic method to evaluate how these marketing components affect customer perceptions and behaviors, assisting local food enterprises in Sta. Maria in customizing their marketing tactics for improved customer interaction and sustainable growth.

The Extended Theory of Planned Behavior indicates that the decision for customers to purchase local food in Sta. Maria, Ilocos Sur is influenced by three primary factors: their attitudes towards local purchasing (such as appreciating freshness and supporting local culture), the social influences they encounter from family and friends to buy local, and their perceptions of the ease or difficulty in actually acquiring local food (considering aspects like price and availability). Additionally, customers who have previously purchased local food or feel a moral obligation to aid local producers are generally more inclined to continue buying it. This theory benefits marketers by illustrating ways to enhance positive attitudes, leverage community influence, and simplify the purchasing process for local foods—cultivating a loyal customer base.

Conceptual Framework

The paradigm that guided the researcher in the conduct of this study was presented below.

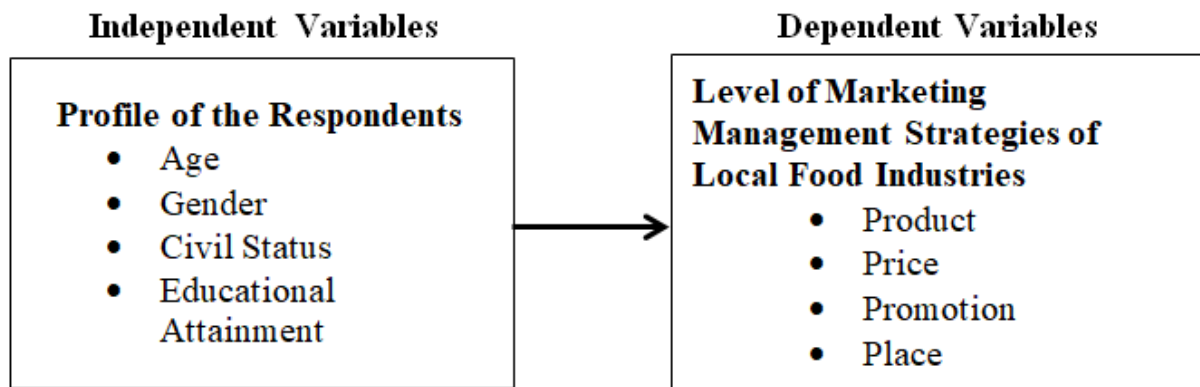


Figure 1. “The Research Paradigm”

The paradigm illustrates the variables included in the study. The variables were correlated to determine their significant relationships. It is focused on the profile of the respondents and the level of marketing management strategies of local food industries.

METHODOLOGY

This section of the study presents the research design, population of the study, data gathering procedure, statistical treatment of data, and ethical considerations.

Research Design. The study utilized a descriptive-correlation research design, which aims to describe variables and examine their associations without establishing causality. This design was used to describe the respondents’ profile variables and determine their relationship with the marketing strategies of local food industries.

Population of the Study. The population of the study were customers from a selected local food industry located in Sta. Maria, Ilocos Sur. Data was collected using a total enumeration sampling method based on customers who were accessible during the data collection period. In total, sixty (60) customers took part in the survey as respondents.

Data Gathering Instrument. The questionnaire was adapted based on the study of Guzman (2022) entitled Indigenous Industries in the First District of Ilocos Sur. The questionnaire was validated by a pool of experts with a mean rating of 4.90 validity index.

The data-gathering instrument covered two (2) parts. Part I enclosed the profiles of the respondents in which the variables include their age, gender, civil status, educational attainment, and monthly salary, while Part II covered the marketing management strategies included the items product, price, promotion, place and people.

The following norms for interpretation were used in the study to determine the level of marketing strategies of local food industries in Sta. Maria, Ilocos Sur:

Statistical Range	Item Descriptive Rating	Overall Descriptive Rating
4.21 – 5.00	Very Highly-Implemented (VHI)	Very High (VH)
3.41 – 4.20	Highly Implemented (HI)	High (H)
2.61 – 3.40	Implemented (I)	Fair (F)

1.81 – 2.60	Less Implemented (LI)	Low (L)
1.00 – 1.80	Not Implemented (NI)	Very Low (VL)

Data Gathering Procedure. The researcher requested permission from the Office of the Municipal Mayor of Sta. Maria to secure a list of local food industries. Then, a printed questionnaire was used in data gathering. Lastly, the questionnaire was administered and retrieved by the researcher personally from the customers.

Statistical Treatment of Data. The following statistical tools were used in the treatment of the data; (1) Frequency and percentage were used to describe the profile of the respondents in terms of age, sex, civil status, and educational attainment. (2) Mean was used to describe the level of marketing strategies of local food industries. Lastly, (3) Simple Correlational Analysis was used to determine the significant relationship between the level of marketing strategies of local food industries.

Ethical Considerations. The study adhered to essential ethical principles. There were no conflicts of interest, as the focus was solely on gathering data for research purposes. The confidentiality and privacy of participants were safeguarded by securely keeping their information in locked cabinets and subsequently disposing of the documents. Participants were thoroughly informed about the purpose of the study through a formal letter and an orientation session prior to completing the questionnaire. They chose to participate voluntarily and were aware that they could withdraw their responses at any time. The research-maintained respect for the dignity and autonomy of the participants. While no monetary compensation was provided to respondents, they gained value from the findings, which aim to enhance production, marketing techniques, and support initiatives. This methodology ensured that the study was conducted in an ethical, respectful, and transparent manner.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

This study examines the marketing management strategies utilized by local food industries in Sta. Maria, Ilocos Sur. It encompasses customer profile data and the extent of marketing management strategies employed, along with an analysis of the connections between personal factors impacting these industries.

Table 1: Frequency Distribution of the Respondents based on Personal Profile

Personal Profile	<i>f</i>	%
Age		
19 years old and below	6	10.0
20 to 25 years old	15	25.0
26 to 30 years old	17	28.3
31 to 35 years old	11	18.3
36 years old and above	11	18.3
Total	60	100
Gender		
Men	21	35.0
Woman	24	40.0
Lesbian	-	-

Gay	11	18.3
Bisexual	4	6.7
Transgender	-	-
Total	60	100
Civil Status		
Single	46	76.7
Married	12	20.0
Widowed	1	1.7
Separated	1	1.7
Total	60	100
Educational Attainment		
Elementary Graduate	1	1.7
High School Undergraduate	5	8.3
High School Graduate	8	13.3
Vocational/ Technical Course Graduate	3	5.0
College Undergraduate	13	21.7
College Graduate	21	35.0
Masters Undergraduate	1	1.7
Masters Graduate	7	11.7
Doctorate Undergraduate	1	1.7
Total	60	100

On Age. The data reveals that a great percentage (17 or 28.3%) belonged to the age bracket of 26 to 30 years old, while the age bracket from 19 years old and below was the least (3 or 1.8%) percentage of customers. This may indicate that middle age does not have time to cook, so they prefer to eat outside or offer local food restaurant.

On Gender. A great number (24 or 40.0%) are women, whereas the least customers (4 or 6.7%) are bisexual. This may indicate that women are most likely to eat outside or go to the local restaurant.

On Civil Status. The data present that a great percentage are single (46 or 76.7%) while the least number of married customers (12 or 20.0%). This may imply the idea that single customers love to eat in the local restaurant to try new food and products of the establishment.

On Educational Attainment. A great percentage of college graduates (21 or 35.0%) while the lowest percentage was high school graduates (8 or 13.3%). This may indicate that the respondent shows an interest to eat at the

local food industries and that the customers who are college graduates can afford the local food industries' products.

Table 2: Mean Distribution on the Marketing Management Strategies of Local Food Industries Based on Product

Product	Mean	Descriptive Rating
1. The availability of products is regularly monitored.	4.63	VHI
2. Products are inspected for quality in terms of their dimensions and features.	4.58	VHI
3. Products are ensured to offer a variety of choices in sizes and designs.	4.53	VHI
4. Goods are sold on a cash basis.	4.65	VHI
5. Purchases are made using online banking or money transfers (e.g., GCash/ Paymaya/ online application of banks).	4.12	HI
Sub Mean	4.50	VH

Table 2 presents the marketing management strategies employed by local food industries in Sta. Maria, Ilocos Sur, from a product-oriented perspective. The sub-mean score of 4.50, interpreted as “Very High”, signifies that customer strongly believe that the product-related marketing strategies of local food businesses in Sta. Maria, Ilocos Sur are effective and consistently executed. This elevated score implies that customers perceive local food industries as attentive to aspects such as product quality, availability, and ease of purchase—essential factors that impact consumer satisfaction and encourage repeat visits. The top-rated item, “Goods are sold on a cash basis” with a mean score of 4.65 and a descriptive rating of “Very Highly Implemented”, illustrates the continued reliance on and convenience of cash transactions within local contexts. This finding aligns with the research by Usman et al. (2019), who explain that many local and rural markets favor cash payments due to their accessibility, speed, and consumer preference, despite the rising trend of digital payment methods.

Next in line is the item concerning regular tracking of product availability with a mean score of 4.63, which is described as “Very Highly Implemented” and emphasizes the significance of maintaining consistent stock levels. Research shows that effective inventory management helps prevent stockouts and boosts customer satisfaction, particularly in food-related sectors where freshness and availability are crucial (Kumar & Anbanandam, 2020). The rating for quality inspections of product attributes, which is 4.58 and categorized as “Very Highly Implemented”, signifies that customer acknowledge the efforts to uphold quality—consistent with Grunert's (2005) findings that perceived quality plays a crucial role in building consumer trust in food products.

The customers also assigned a high score to product variety at 4.53, categorized as “Very Highly Implemented”, which indicates that having a range of options in sizes, designs, or types is appreciated. This is corroborated by Ramirez & Goldsmith (2018), who discovered that product variety positively affects customer satisfaction by catering to diverse preferences. The lowest score, although still high, relates to payments via online banking or money transfers, rated at 4.12 and described as “Very Highly Implemented”, reflecting an increasing acceptance of digital payment methods that is not yet widespread. This observation aligns with the insights from Widjaja and Giovanni (2018), who remarked that the uptake of online transaction systems varies based on technological familiarity and consumer trust—elements particularly pertinent in local markets.

In summary, the consistently high mean scores across all metrics indicate that customers view the local food industries as being attentive to product quality, adaptable in payment options, and responsive to customer demands, thereby underscoring the effectiveness of their product-focused marketing strategies.

Table 3: Mean Distribution on the Marketing Management Strategies of Local Food Industries Based on Price

Price	Mean	Descriptive Rating
1. The price of the products is based on the supply and demand of the customers.	4.55	VHI
2. The price of the products is based on production costs and expenses.	4.45	VHI
3. Competitors influence the prices of the products	4.57	VHI
4. Environmental and demographical factors affect the price of the products.	4.50	VHI
5. The markup of the product affects the price of the products.	4.63	VHI
Sub Mean	4.54	VH

Table 3 indicates a sub-mean of 4.54, interpreted as "Very High," signifying that customers overwhelmingly agree that the pricing strategies employed by local food businesses in Sta. Maria, Ilocos Sur are well-structured and rooted in logical and strategic reasoning. This suggests that customers view pricing as something that is not arbitrary but rather anchored in economic realities and market conditions. The indicator with the highest rating, "The markup of the product affects the price of the products" with an average of 4.63 categorized as "Very Highly Implemented," implies that customers recognize the importance of profit margins in determining prices. This finding is in line with the concept of cost-plus pricing, where companies add a markup to production costs to ensure they are profitable—a method widely acknowledged in pricing literature (Nagle & Müller, 2018).

Moreover, customers rated the influence of competitors highly, with an average of 4.57 described as "Very Highly Implemented," which denotes an awareness among customers that local food businesses closely observe the pricing of their competitors. This aligns with the research by Channa and Pitafi (2023), which noted that competition significantly impacts pricing practices, especially among small and medium-sized food enterprises. Additionally, the notion of supply and demand as a basis for pricing received an average of 4.55 and was rated as "Very Highly Implemented," indicating that customers perceive prices as responsive to market demand. This observation is corroborated by empirical studies demonstrating that consumer willingness to pay (WTP) fluctuates with demand trends, prompting local producers to adjust their prices accordingly (Ortez et al., 2024).

The rating for the effects of environmental and demographic factors was 4.50, categorized as "Very Highly Implemented," indicating that customers acknowledge broader context-driven influences on pricing, such as location, income levels, and demographic attributes. This finding is consistent with Ilbery and Maye's (2005) research, which indicated that local food systems are influenced by regional socioeconomic and environmental factors, subsequently affecting pricing.

Finally, although slightly lower at an average of 4.45, the impact of production costs and expenses still received a "Very Highly Implemented" rating, showing that customers understand the importance of ingredient prices, labor, and operational costs as essential factors in determining product pricing. This is backed by numerous studies that illustrate how cost structures play a critical role in pricing decisions within the food industry (Thilmany et al., 2018). Overall, the consistently high means suggest that customers believe local food businesses adopt a balanced, context-conscious, and economically rational method in their pricing strategies.

Table 4: Mean Distribution on the Marketing Management Strategies of Local Food Industries Based on Promotion

Promotion	Mean	Descriptive Rating
1. Various social media platforms like Facebook, Instagram, Twitter, and the like are used to endorse the local food establishment.	4.65	VHI

2. Print media and flyers are used to promote the local food establishment.	4.65	VHI
3. A website or online page is used to promote the local food establishment.	4.65	VHI
4. A viral marketing campaign or “word of mouth” is used to stimulate the local food establishment.	4.53	VHI
5. The local food establishment is promoted through the food delivery hub (e.g., Food Panda, Toktok, Pasabuy, Wen Boss, and others)	4.27	VHI
Sub Mean	4.55	VH

Table 4 demonstrates that a sub-mean of 4.55, interpreted as “Very High,” reflects strong customer perceptions of the local food industries in Sta. Maria, Ilocos Sur actively and effectively employing various promotional strategies. This overall high rating indicates that promotional efforts are varied, contemporary, and attuned to current consumer behavior, particularly in the digital sphere. The indicators with the highest ratings were the utilization of social media platforms, print media, and websites or online pages, each recorded with a mean of $\bar{x}=4.65$, classified as “Very Highly Implemented,” suggesting that customers view these as the most prominent tools for promoting local food businesses. This observation is consistent with marketing research indicating that digital channels such as Facebook, Instagram, and business websites significantly improve visibility, customer interaction, and brand recall (Duffett, 2017; Ahmad et al., 2019). The strong rating for print media highlights the ongoing importance of traditional promotion in rural or semi-urban areas, where local markets still appreciate flyers, posters, and community announcements.

The utilization of viral marketing or word-of-mouth, with a mean of $\bar{x}= 4.53$ described as “Very Highly Implemented,” remains a notably effective strategy. This aligns with studies that suggest interpersonal recommendations are among the most reliable forms of promotion, often influencing customer choices more effectively than paid advertisements (Jalilvand & Samiei, 2012). The slightly lower, yet still very high, mean for promotion through food delivery platforms, at $\bar{x}= 4.27$ categorized as “Very Highly Implemented,” indicates that while customers acknowledge digital delivery services as beneficial, they may not serve as the primary promotional medium for all local food businesses—potentially due to limited regional reach or uptake by smaller vendors. This insight corresponds with research showing that while delivery applications enhance exposure and sales, their effectiveness varies based on technological adoption and market size (Li, Miroso, & Bremer, 2020). Overall, the consistently high averages suggest that customers view local food industries as proactive in integrating traditional media, digital channels, personal communication, and delivery systems to enhance their promotional reach and competitiveness.

Table 5: Mean Distribution on the Marketing Management Strategies of Local Food Industries Based on Place

Place	Mean	Descriptive Rating
1. The local food establishment takes orders and sells them through phone calls, emails, or online mode.	4.65	VHI
2. The local food establishment caters to all walk-in customers.	4.58	VHI
3. The local food establishment creates demand for products in the market.	4.57	VHI
4. The local food establishment creates a positive image with local products.	4.60	VHI
5. The local food establishment creates jobs for people and sources resources within the locality.	4.50	VHI
Sub Mean	4.58	VH

Table 5 presents the average perception of marketing management strategies employed by local food industries, specifically in terms of distribution. The sub-mean of 4.58, characterized as “Very High,” indicates that customers have a strong belief in the effectiveness and execution of distribution strategies in local food businesses in Sta. Maria, Ilocos Sur. This elevated overall score reflects the establishments' success in providing accessibility, convenience, and integration within the community. The highest-rated aspect, “The local food establishment takes orders and sells them through phone calls, emails, or online mode” (\bar{x} =4.65 with a descriptive rating of “Very Highly Implemented”), highlights the customers’ appreciation for the availability of diverse ordering methods. This aligns with the findings from Widjaja and Giovanni (2018), who explored how Online-to-Offline (O2O) service quality and brand imagery affect customer satisfaction and intentions to repurchase. This reinforces the concept that the integration of digital ordering options (phone, email, online) in local food businesses not only enhances convenience but also fosters customer trust and loyalty, which corresponds with the high ratings given to these ordering options by customers. The subsequent highest score pertains to “creating a positive image with local products,” exhibiting an \bar{x} =4.60 and labeled as “Very Highly Implemented,” suggesting that patrons regard these establishments as significant advocates for local identity and culture, in line with research indicating that regional branding boosts consumer trust and preference for local foods (Ilbery & Maye, 2005).

Almost equally rated is the item concerning service for walk-in customers, denoted as “Very Highly Implemented” with a score of \bar{x} =4.58, which signifies the importance of maintaining physical accessibility despite advancements in digital platforms. Studies indicate that personal interactions, familiarity, and physical presence are critical factors influencing customer loyalty in local food markets (Batat, 2021). The rating for stimulating product demand in the market is categorized as “Very Highly Implemented” with a mean of \bar{x} =4.57, reflecting the establishments’ ability to generate consumer interest and maintain market relevance, which is backed by research highlighting that local food systems foster community engagement and enhance market dynamism (Mount, 2012). Although slightly lower, the average for generating local jobs and procuring resources is \bar{x} =4.50 and labeled as “Very Highly Implemented,” underscoring customer appreciation for the economic impacts of local food industries. This finding aligns with evidence suggesting that localized food supply chains contribute to job creation and bolster regional economic resilience (Thilmany et al., 2018). Collectively, the consistently high average scores affirm that customers perceive local food industries as accessible, community-focused, influential in local branding, and essential for the local economy.

Table 6: Mean Distribution on the Marketing Management Strategies of Local Food Industries Based on People

People	Mean	Descriptive Rating
1. The employees are properly trained, well-motivated, and have the right attitude towards the customers and co-employee.	4.58	VHI
2. The employees are knowledgeable and well-spoken to answer questions posed by prospects and customers.	4.63	VHI
3. The employees are well informed about the features of products to be sold.	4.57	VHI
4. The employees are technologically prepared in processing purchases online.	4.42	VHI
5. The employees are well equipped in upselling products and services.	4.60	VHI
Sub Mean	4.56	VH

Table 6 presents the average ratings of marketing management strategies employed by local food businesses as perceived by customers. The sub-mean of 4.56, interpreted as Very High, suggests that clients view the people or employee-focused strategies of local food industries in Sta. Maria, Ilocos Sur as highly effective. This indicates a strong customer trust in the skills, professionalism, and service attitude of the staff—crucial aspects of service-centric sectors like food and hospitality. The item rated highest, “The employees are knowledgeable and well-spoken to answer questions posed by prospects and customers,” described as “Very Highly Implemented” with a mean of 4.63, reflects customers’ considerable admiration for staff expertise and

communication abilities. This is consistent with the findings of Parasuraman, Zeithaml, and Berry (1988), in their SERVQUAL model, highlighting responsiveness, assurance, and employee competence as important factors influencing customer satisfaction. Well-informed employees are viewed as more reliable and trustworthy, thereby enhancing customer confidence in the establishment.

The next highest mean, “Employees are well equipped in upselling products and services” at 4.60, also rated as “Very Highly Implemented,” suggests that customers recognize staff as proactive in providing additional value. This supports research indicating that the effectiveness of upselling increases when employees possess solid interpersonal skills and product knowledge (Singh & Khan, 2012). Following this is the statement regarding employees being adequately trained, motivated, and displaying positive attitudes, with a mean score of 4.58 and a descriptive rating of “Very Highly Implemented,” highlighting the significance of employee morale and training in delivering exceptional service. Research in the fields of hospitality and food services affirms that well-trained and motivated employees play a significant role in enhancing customer satisfaction and loyalty (Tsaur & Lin, 2004).

The item “Employees are well informed about product features” (mean of 4.57 with a descriptive rating of “Very Highly Implemented”) also achieved a very high score, confirming customers' acknowledgment of staff product knowledge—an attribute associated with increased brand trust and effective customer interaction (Homburg, Müller, & Klarmann, 2011). The slightly lower, yet still “Very Highly Implemented,” rating for “Employees are technologically prepared in processing purchases online” (mean of 4.42) indicates an area that could be improved. This aligns with the findings of Widjaja and Giovanni (2018), which indicate that employee readiness and service quality in Online-to-Offline (O2O) platforms affect customer satisfaction and repeat purchase behavior. Overall, the consistently high ratings suggest that employees of these local food industries are regarded as capable, knowledgeable, customer-oriented, and essential contributors to both operational success and positive customer experiences.

Table 7: Correlation Matrix of the Relationship between the Level of Marketing Management Strategies along with the Profile of the Customers

Customer's Profile	Marketing Management Strategies
Age	0.146
Gender	-0.035
Civil Status	-0.104
Educational Attainment	0.129

Legend: *. Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed).

The correlation matrix from Table 7 reveals that there was no significant relationship between the level of marketing management strategies of local food industries along the age, gender, civil status, and educational attainment of the customers in Sta. Maria, Ilocos Sur.

CONCLUSION

Based on the findings, the following conclusions were drawn.

1. The majority of patrons at local dining establishments in Sta. Maria, Ilocos Sur are young adults between the ages of 26 and 30, indicating that they often choose to eat out due to their busy lifestyles, leaving them with less time to prepare meals. A higher proportion of female diners suggests that they may have a greater interest in exploring local cuisine. A significant number of these customers are single, which could imply they enjoy the flexibility to try new dining experiences. Additionally, many patrons are college graduates, suggesting that those with higher education, who likely have better incomes, are more inclined to dine at local restaurants.

2. The local food industry in Sta. Maria, Ilocos Sur excels across all facets of marketing—product, price, promotion, place, and people. Customers largely agree that these businesses provide high-quality offerings, set fair and reasonable prices, utilize effective promotional strategies, offer convenient ordering processes and accessible locations, and have knowledgeable and friendly staff.
3. There was no notable correlation between the effectiveness of marketing management strategies of local food industries and the age, gender, marital status, or educational level of customers in Sta. Maria, Ilocos Sur.

RECOMMENDATIONS

From the conclusions drawn, the following recommendations are hereby forwarded.

1. Given that the majority of customers are young working professionals, local food industries might continue to prioritize convenient and fast-service options. Furthermore, they could introduce meal bundles, economical combo meals, and ready-to-eat dishes to better attract this busy demographic.
2. Local food industries may continue to enhance all marketing aspects that customers already view positively. This entails maintaining high product quality, offering competitive pricing, ensuring consistent promotions, providing convenient locations, and keeping employees well-trained and approachable. To bolster this, businesses should regularly train their staff, refresh their menus, and consistently enhance customer service. In addition, while traditional promotions still hold value, businesses can expand their reach further by enhancing their online presence. They should engage actively on social media, invest in an app for easy ordering, and consider partnering with various food delivery services. Boosting digital visibility will facilitate more convenient ordering and help overall.
3. Since demographic factors such as age, gender, marital status, and education do not heavily influence marketing effectiveness, local food industries may choose to focus on delivering outstanding service to all customers without differentiation. Prioritizing consistent quality and customer satisfaction proves to be more crucial than targeting based on demographics. Local food industries can also leverage customer feedback mechanisms like surveys, suggestion boxes, or social media polls to gather insights into preferences and continuously refine their offerings.
4. Local food industries may continue to highlight the use of local ingredients, traditions, and products while supporting local suppliers and workers to foster customer loyalty and enhance community pride.

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