

Research Article

Economic Efficiency of Implementing Monoproduct Concepts in Contemporary Restaurant Business

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Abstract

This study examines the economic efficiency of monoproduct restaurant concepts in scaling ethnic cuisine businesses, focusing on how process standardization, menu concentration, and operational discipline shape revenue quality and cost stability. The research is motivated by the growing interest in scalable food-service models that preserve product authenticity while maintaining consistent service outcomes across locations. The purpose of the study is to identify the mechanisms through which monoproduct specialization influences operational performance and expansion potential in ethnic restaurant formats. The research design is analytical and comparative, combining a structured review of academic and industry sources with conceptual synthesis and framework-based interpretation of operational and economic indicators discussed in the literature. The study uses comparative analysis, systems analysis, process decomposition, and interpretive synthesis to evaluate links between product architecture, training intensity, production variance, service speed, customer perception, and scalability. The principal results show that monoproduct concepts tend to reduce production complexity, shorten staff onboarding, improve process repeatability, and strengthen brand recall, thereby supporting more predictable unit economics and replication logic during geographic expansion. The study concludes that the economic advantage of monoproduct concepts emerges not from menu limitation alone, but from disciplined standardization and alignment between culinary process design and service operations. The article's contribution lies in proposing an integrated analytical framework linking operational simplification to scaling economics in ethnic cuisine businesses. The study is limited by its non-experimental design and reliance on published evidence rather than primary field measurements. Practical implications include guidance for founders and operators designing scalable ethnic restaurant formats. Social implications relate to the sustainable market adaptation of culturally specific cuisines without loss of product identity.

Keywords:

monoproduct restaurant concept, restaurant economics, operational efficiency, menu concentration, standardization, ethnic cuisine scaling, customer repeat visits, online reviews, social media impact, restaurant growth strategy.

1. INTRODUCTION

The contemporary restaurant market operates under simultaneous pressure from inflation in food inputs, labor cost growth, uneven customer traffic, platform-mediated competition, and rapid shifts in digital attention. Under such conditions, broad menus often result in hidden losses due to ingredient dispersion, unstable preparation times, training overload, forecasting errors, and declining consistency at peak loads.

The article addresses a practically significant research problem: whether a monoproduct concept can generate stable economic returns not only in mass-market formats but also in culturally complex cuisine formats where production technology is labor-

intensive and authenticity materially affects demand. This question is especially relevant for ethnic food businesses entering large metropolitan markets, where category awareness may initially be low, and consumer education becomes part of the business model.

The purpose of the article is to substantiate the economic efficiency of monoproduct restaurant concepts through an analytical model linking menu concentration, operational standardization, customer response mechanisms, and scalable growth outcomes.

The objectives are:

1. to identify the economic channels through which monoproduct concepts influence cost structure, throughput, and revenue quality;
2. to explain how digital engagement, online reviews, and authenticity signaling reinforce demand formation and repeat visitation;
3. to apply the analytical framework to an ethnic restaurant scaling case (Laghman Express) in the U.S. market, with attention to founder-led standardization and expansion potential.

The scientific novelty lies in combining restaurant operational economics with digital demand-shaping mechanisms and founder-dependent knowledge transfer within a single analytical framework tailored to the scaling of monoproduct ethnic cuisine.

2. MATERIALS AND METHODS

2.1. Research Design and Research Type

This study uses a non-experimental analytical research design and belongs to the category of conceptual and comparative research. The paper does not report primary field or laboratory measurements; instead, it synthesizes published academic and practice-oriented evidence to explain the economic mechanisms underlying monoproduct restaurant scaling in ethnic cuisine formats.

2.2. Research Period and Scope

The research was conducted during the manuscript preparation period from 2025 to 2026. The analytical scope covers publications and practice-oriented materials addressing restaurant process standardization, service operations, economic sustainability, food-service scalability, and ethnic cuisine business development.

2.3. Source Selection Criteria

Sources were included if they addressed at least one of the following topics: restaurant operational standardization, service-process optimization, staff training and onboarding in food-service settings, economic performance in restaurant operations, menu engineering, or scaling of culinary businesses. Preference was given to peer-reviewed journal articles, conference papers, and methodologically explicit analytical publications. Sources were excluded if they lacked relevance to restaurant operations or scaling economics, provided only promotional descriptions without analytical content, or duplicated findings already represented in stronger sources.

2.4. Units of Analysis and Analytical Categories

The units of analysis were published studies and analytical reports describing operational and economic relationships in restaurant management. The main analytical categories included product architecture, process variability, onboarding intensity, service speed, quality consistency, customer response signals, and expansion readiness.

2.5. Data Collection and Processing Procedure

Source collection and processing were carried out in four stages: identification of relevant literature and analytical materials; screening for thematic relevance and methodological adequacy; extraction of findings related to process standardization and economic outcomes; and cross-source synthesis into an integrated analytical framework explaining the pathway from operational simplification to scalable unit economics.

2.6. Analytical Methods

The study applied comparative analysis to identify convergent findings across sources, systems analysis to describe interdependencies between operational and economic variables, process decomposition to isolate repeatable operational mechanisms, and conceptual synthesis to construct an integrated explanatory framework for monoprodut restaurant scaling. Where quantitative indicators were discussed in the reviewed literature, the article used interpretive comparison rather than pooled statistical estimation.

The article introduces a ratio-based evaluation framework commonly used in restaurant performance analysis. The framework links process standardization, menu concentration, and service speed with measurable economic indicators. For the purposes of this article, the following analytical expressions were used:

$$COGS_t = BI_t + P_t - EI_t$$

where $COGS_t$ is the cost of goods sold during period t , BI_t is beginning inventory, P_t is purchases during the period, and EI_t is the ending inventory.

$$Food\ Cost\ \%_t = \frac{COGS_t}{TR_t} \times 100$$

where TR_t is the total revenue during period t .

$$CM_i = SP_i - VC_i$$

where CM_i is contribution margin of menu item i , SP_i is selling price, and VC_i is variable food cost per portion.

$$Prime\ Cost\ \%_t = \frac{COGS_t + LC_t}{TR_t} \times 100$$

where LC_t is total labor cost during period t .

$$RevPASH_t = \frac{TR_t}{S_t \times H_t}$$

where S_t is the number of available seats and H_t is operating hours.

In addition, for this study, a synthetic standardization-efficiency indicator is proposed in order to compare a monoprodut format with a broader menu format:

$$SEI = \frac{1}{3} \left(\frac{TT_b - TT_m}{TT_b} + \frac{W_b - W_m}{W_b} + \frac{TE_b - TE_m}{TE_b} \right) \times 100$$

where TT is average ticket preparation time, W is food waste, TE is training error frequency, subscripts b and m refer to broad-menu and monoprodut formats respectively. A higher SEI indicates a stronger operational gain from specialization.

2.7. Statistical Approach

No inferential statistical testing was performed because the study does not rely on primary sampling or experimental data. Instead, the analytical procedure used ratio interpretation, cross-format comparison, and equation-based economic

decomposition. The proposed calculations were used not for direct econometric estimation, but for formalizing the relationships between menu concentration, cost structure, throughput, and expansion readiness in monoprodut restaurant formats.

2.8. Ethical Considerations

The study used publicly available published materials and did not involve human participants, biological samples, or confidential organizational data requiring ethical approval.

3. RESULTS

The economic efficiency of a monoprodut restaurant concept is best understood not as a single cost-reduction effect, but as a cumulative reduction in operational variance across procurement, preparation, service, and demand forecasting. A concentrated menu changes the unit economics of production by shrinking SKU dispersion, lowering purchasing fragmentation, and increasing repetition frequency for a smaller set of processes. In restaurant management literature, efficiency gains are repeatedly tied to controllability of demand, pacing, and capacity use rather than only to nominal sales volume [2]. In practice, this means that a monoprodut concept with lower menu breadth may outperform a broader idea in contribution quality when queue stability, prep-time predictability, and waste control are stronger.

At the formal analytical level, the economic advantage of a monoprodut format can be expressed through a comparative set of ratios. First, the cost-side effect of specialization is captured through the difference in prime cost burden between the broad-menu and monoprodut formats:

$$\Delta PC = \text{Prime Cost } \%_b - \text{Prime Cost } \%_m$$

where a positive ΔPC indicates that specialization reduces the combined pressure of product and labor costs on revenue.

Second, throughput efficiency can be expressed through the difference in seat-time productivity:

$$\Delta RevPASH = RevPASH_m - RevPASH_b$$

where a positive value indicates stronger revenue generation per available seat-hour under the monoprodut model.

Third, item-level profitability can be compared through contribution margins of the core product:

$$\Delta CM = (SP - VC)_m - (SP - VC)_b$$

If $\Delta PC > 0$, $\Delta RevPASH > 0$, and $\Delta CM > 0$, the analytical interpretation supports the argument that specialization improves unit economics through lower process friction, higher seat productivity, and stronger profitability of the signature item. This formalization clarifies that the economic gain from a monoprodut concept is not reducible to menu reduction alone; it arises from the interaction among standardization, service compression, and demand concentration.

This logic becomes more visible in cuisines where the flagship product has a complex preparation process. In the case of laghman, the product is not merely a "dish" but a process-intensive culinary unit that involves dough handling, texture control, balance of broth or sauce, and a high sensitivity to execution consistency. Under a multi-item menu architecture, such a product competes for staff attention with simpler items, increasing process interference and the risk of quality drift. The literature on portioning and menu redesign in food-service settings supports the broader economic proposition that standardization at the product level shifts performance through repeatable production rules and measurable output control [3, 6].

At the same time, monoprodut efficiency cannot be reduced to internal process mechanics. Demand-side reinforcement is equally decisive. Studies on online reviews show that ratings and review framing materially influence visit intentions, with emotional appeals producing more substantial effects among lower-involvement consumers [1]. For a cuisine category unfamiliar to mainstream audiences, this finding has direct strategic relevance: initial demand formation depends less on deep product knowledge and more on trust signals, affective narratives, and visible customer testimony. The business implication is that operational consistency and digital reputation are economically linked. A kitchen that delivers stable product quality produces not only repeat guests, but also review assets that reduce future acquisition friction.

Recent work on online review skepticism adds a second layer to this mechanism. Behavioral intention in hospitality environments is influenced not only by exposure to positive reviews, but also by how credible and coherent the review information appears to the reader [8]. For monoprodut concepts, credibility formation is frequently stronger than for broad-format restaurants because customer narratives converge around a narrower set of experiences: product taste, texture, waiting time, portion value, and service rhythm. Such convergence lowers interpretive noise in digital feedback streams. From an economic standpoint, lower noise improves conversion efficiency of organic discovery and strengthens the marginal return on each satisfied customer who posts content or reviews.

A related pattern emerges in research on social media responsiveness in food and beverage markets. Digital engagement mechanisms—advertising, e-WOM, and influencer-mediated communication—shape customer response behavior beyond one-time exposure [7]. For monoprodut brands, content production economics is often more favorable than for diffuse menus because the product identity is more transparent and more narratively compressible. A single signature item can be shown repeatedly across multiple consumption contexts (preparation, serving, customization, group meals, catering scale, cultural storytelling), thereby increasing content productivity per unit of brand effort. In growth terms, this improves the ratio between marketing output and customer understanding of the offer.

These findings are especially relevant for ethnic restaurant businesses entering markets where category literacy remains limited. Research on local food business model innovation emphasizes the interdependence of value proposition design, value delivery configuration, and innovation strategy, rather than treating them as isolated managerial tasks [4]. A monoprodut ethnic concept fits this structure well because it can unify culinary authenticity, operational process design, and customer education into one coherent business model. In this configuration, the restaurant does not sell only meals; it institutionalizes a repeatable “format of explanation” for the cuisine. That educational effect has direct commercial consequences: once category uncertainty declines, repeat purchase and recommendation behavior tend to rise.

The relationship between authenticity, restaurant image, social media, and revisit intentions, as reported in recent culinary destination research, supports this interpretation [5]. Although such studies are frequently conducted in tourism-heavy or destination-specific settings, the underlying mechanism remains transferable to metropolitan ethnic food businesses: authenticity acts as a demand amplifier when it is legible, socially circulated, and operationally consistent. A monoprodut concept improves legibility because the customer learns one culinary grammar at a time, not ten at once. When product execution remains stable, authenticity ceases to be a niche marker and becomes a repeatable quality signal.

The service interface further shapes the economics of monoprodut implementation. QR-menu and digital ordering studies indicate that service technology affects satisfaction and perceived service quality, especially when perceived risk and ease of use interact [10]. In a monoprodut concept, digital ordering can be integrated with lower decision friction than in broad-menu formats, since customers face fewer branching choices. Decision simplification reduces ordering time and queue congestion, which carries measurable throughput implications during peak periods. The economic gain here is not merely labor substitution but cycle-time compression. A shorter front-end interaction increases usable capacity without immediate capital expenditure.

The literature on “internet-famous” restaurants introduces an additional cautionary dimension [9]. High digital visibility can accelerate trial, but customer satisfaction trajectories are not automatically stable across the life cycle of a popular venue. If demand spikes exceed operational discipline, reputational deterioration follows. For monoprodut concepts, this finding clarifies a strategic threshold: virality produces value only when the production system can absorb volume without damaging the signature product. In economic terms, the decisive variable is not reach alone but the conversion of reach into repeatable satisfaction. This is where monoprodut architecture and founder-led standardization intersect most strongly.

In the analytical case of Laghman Express (founder-provided business dossier), the growth pathway illustrates this mechanism in a practically salient form. The reported trajectory combines a product-centered model (Laghman and related tightly controlled menu architecture), founder-led recipe and process standardization, adaptation of traditional flavors for the U.S. market without full loss of authenticity, and team training under high-load kitchen conditions. The founder’s function extends beyond ownership into product authorship, sensory quality control, procedural codification, and staff skill transmission—particularly in techniques such as manual noodle stretching and sauce consistency calibration. This arrangement reduces the risk of uncontrolled quality drift during expansion because the brand’s product standard is actively transmitted as operational knowledge rather than documented solely as a recipe list.

The reported business signals—expansion from Brooklyn to Atlanta (Georgia), inbound investor and franchise interest, planning for additional U.S. cities, and approximately 60 jobs created—fit the hypothesis that monoprodut ethnic concepts can move from niche demand to scalable category formation when operational consistency and cultural storytelling are aligned. The founder-reported digital indicators (Instagram reach, UGC interaction, high-volume catering requests) and review performance

across locations (high rating levels with substantial review counts) strengthen the demand-side interpretation, while the replication of visible product features by competitors (imitative beverages, plating patterns, sauce styles) functions as a market-formation proxy: imitation typically rises after demand legitimacy has already been established inside the category.

In a founder-led ethnic restaurant case, the same framework can be extended to location-level growth monitoring. In such a setting, economic scaling is interpreted not only through current profitability, but through dynamic indicators of replication strength and demand retention:

$$Revenue\ Growth_t = \frac{TR_t - TR_{t-1}}{TR_{t-1}} \times 100$$

$$Repeat\ Visit\ Rate_t = \frac{RV_t}{GV_t} \times 100$$

$$Catering\ Revenue\ Share_t = \frac{CR_t}{TR_t} \times 100$$

$$Review\ Density_t = \frac{NR_t}{GV_t} \times 100$$

where RV_t is repeat visits, GV_t is total guest visits, CR_t is catering revenue, and NR_t is the number of new reviews during the period t . These indicators are especially relevant for a concept such as Laghman Express, where product specialization, digital visibility, and founder-controlled quality transmission jointly shape the pathway from a single-location ethnic format to a scalable multi-location business. Under such conditions, rising repeat-visit rates and stable review density are interpreted as signals of demand consolidation rather than short-term novelty.

A sound analytical synthesis for this article is presented below as an adapted Figure 1 that integrates the logic of local food business models with monoprodut restaurant economics. The diagram is conceptually adapted from the business model and innovation framework proposed in local food systems research [4], with restaurant-specific operational variables added for monoprodut implementation.

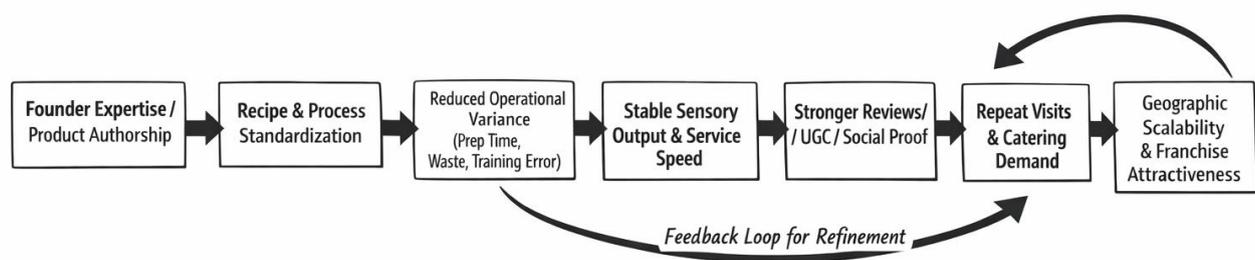


Figure 1. Analytical pathway of monoprodut restaurant economic efficiency in ethnic cuisine scaling (adapted from Fobbe & Hilletoft’s local food business model and innovation framework) [4]

The logic summarized in Figure 1 can be translated into a compact analytical chain. If process standardization reduces preparation time, waste, and training error frequency, then the standardization-efficiency indicator SEI increases; if SEI increases, food cost pressure and labor friction decline relative to revenue, improving Prime Cost %; if service time becomes shorter and seat utilization improves, RevPASH rises. In analytical terms, the monoprodut model becomes economically preferable when operational compression on the cost side is accompanied by stable or rising revenue per seat-hour and by positive contribution margins of the signature item.

From an economic perspective, the integrated evidence supports a non-trivial conclusion: the efficiency of monoprodut concepts in modern restaurant business is not explained by “fewer dishes” alone. The stronger explanation combines process concentration, standardized sensory delivery, clear demand communication, and digitally reinforced trust accumulation. In

ethnic cuisine formats, the founder’s tacit expertise becomes a productive asset that temporarily substitutes for category maturity in the target market. When codified successfully, that expertise ceases to be only personal capital and becomes the basis of a scalable operating architecture.

4. DISCUSSION

The analytical results indicate that the monoprodut concept produces economic gains through a coupled mechanism: internal variance reduction and external demand stabilization. For the Laghman Express-type case, the first mechanism is tied to recipe codification, kitchen choreography under load, and training around a narrow set of high-impact operations; the second is tied to authenticity signaling, review credibility, and social media circulation of a recognizable product narrative [1, 4, 5, 7, 8]. This combined interpretation is more suitable for founder-led ethnic restaurant scaling than a purely cost-accounting reading, because part of the economic return is generated through category education and trust-building, not solely through direct production efficiency.

Table 1 summarizes transferable findings and aligns them with economic channels relevant to monoprodut restaurant formats.

Table 1. Evidence-based channels linking monoprodut design decisions to economic outcomes in the restaurant business (analytical synthesis based on [1-10])

Monoprodut design decision	Primary operational effect	Demand-side effect	Expected economic consequence
Menu concentration around a signature product	Lower process variability; simpler prep sequencing	Clearer product identity	Better throughput consistency; lower hidden coordination cost
Standardized recipes and portions	Reduced output dispersion; easier quality control	More predictable customer experience	Waste reduction; margin protection; stronger repeatability
Founder-led sensory calibration + training	Faster correction loops; tacit knowledge transfer	Authenticity preserved in the scaling phase	Lower reputation loss risk during growth
Digitally legible product storytelling	Higher comprehension for first-time guests	Stronger trial conversion in low-literacy categories	Reduced customer acquisition friction
QR/digital ordering in a narrow menu environment	Shorter ordering interaction	Lower decision fatigue	Peak-hour capacity gain without immediate expansion of floor/kitchen labor
Review and UGC monitoring tied to operations	Faster issue detection	Higher credibility and trust stability	Better retention and improved review-to-visit conversion

The relationships presented in Table 1 can be formalized through a compact efficiency condition for monoprodut scaling:

$$E_{mono} > E_{broad} \text{ if } \Delta PC > 0, \Delta RevPASH > 0, \Delta CM > 0$$

A monoprodut restaurant format outperforms a broader menu architecture when it simultaneously reduces prime-cost pressure, increases revenue productivity per available seat-hour, and preserves a stronger contribution margin for the core product. The analytical relevance of this condition is especially high for ethnic cuisine businesses, where product complexity and founder-dependent quality control make process variance economically expensive.

In formal terms, monoprodut scaling becomes economically justified when the combined gain from cost compression and seat-time productivity exceeds the losses associated with menu narrowing. This relationship can be summarized as an analytical inequality:

$$(\Delta PC + \Delta RevPASH + \Delta CM + \Delta RVR) > 0$$

where ΔRVR denotes the change in repeat-visit performance. Under this condition, specialization strengthens the restaurant's economic sustainability not through variety reduction per se, but through a tighter alignment between product architecture, operational discipline, and demand retention.

A narrow menu alone is insufficient if standardization is weak, digital signaling is incoherent, or growth outpaces operational discipline. In that sense, the founder's capability profile becomes a measurable economic variable in early and intermediate scaling phases, especially in cuisines where technique and authenticity are inseparable from product value.

Table 2 refines the discussion by distinguishing between short-term, medium-term, and long-term implications. This separation is necessary because some gains (e.g., ordering speed) appear immediately, whereas others (e.g., category formation, clone effects, franchise attractiveness) accumulate over repeated market exposure and are mediated by reputation systems [4, 7, 9].

Table 2. Time-horizon interpretation of economic efficiency in monoprodut ethnic restaurant scaling (analytical synthesis based on [1-10])

Time horizon	Dominant mechanism	Observable indicators in practice	Economic interpretation
Short term (launch / early growth)	Product clarity + review signaling	First reviews, trial traffic, social shares, queue behavior	Demand formation under low category awareness
Medium term (stabilization)	Standardization + service repeatability	Stable ratings, lower complaints, faster staff onboarding, repeat visits	Margin stabilization and more reliable labor utilization
Long-term (scaling)	Codified founder knowledge + brand legitimacy	Expansion to new cities/states, franchise inquiries, imitators, and press attention	Category creation and scalable competitive moat (if quality is preserved)

A second discussion point concerns founder dependence. The brand is built around an authored product and a system that emphasizes taste, stability, and process integrity. The literature reviewed here supports a nuanced interpretation. Founder dependence strengthens quality in the early scaling phase, especially when market education and authenticity translation are still being built [4, 5]. Yet from a growth-governance perspective, the same dependence becomes a bottleneck unless tacit knowledge is converted into replicable operating standards, audit routines, and training modules [2, 9]. For a monoprodut ethnic brand aiming at Manhattan, Washington, Chicago, Los Angeles, and San Francisco, the economic question is no longer only whether the concept works, but whether the founder's quality logic can be transmitted without dilution. This article's analytical model suggests that the answer depends on the maturity of standardization more than on advertising intensity alone.

A third discussion point concerns the U.S. market significance of the case. The user brief frames the brand not only as a commercial entity but as a market-shaping actor: introducing consumers to Central Asian cuisine, building new taste habits, and generating employment and local economic activity. The reviewed sources do not directly measure cultural category creation in the specific Laghman Express context, but they provide a coherent explanatory scaffold for why such outcomes are economically plausible in a monoprodut format: more straightforward value propositions improve adoption; credible reviews reduce hesitation; social and digital engagement amplify responsiveness; and sustained satisfaction is required to avoid the post-virality decline documented in high-attention restaurant trajectories.

5. CONCLUSION

The study achieved the stated objectives by identifying the main economic channels through which monoprodut concepts increase efficiency in contemporary restaurant business, explaining the reinforcing effect of digital reputation and social media mechanisms on demand, and applying the resulting analytical framework to a founder-led ethnic restaurant scaling case in the U.S. market.

The most substantial performance effects are expected where operational repeatability and customer-facing authenticity are developed simultaneously, rather than treated as separate managerial tasks.

For the Laghman Express the interpretation indicates that the business model's strength is rooted in a rare combination: authored product expertise, codified kitchen processes, founder-led quality governance, and digitally amplified social proof. In monoprodukt ethnic cuisine formats, the loss of such a carrier frequently leads to quality degradation and reputational decline; therefore, the strategic priority for further expansion lies in translating founder expertise into scalable operating standards without sensory dilution. For the U.S. market, the case has broader significance through diversification of cuisine, category formation, small-business development, and the normalization of new consumer taste practices.

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