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## OWNER-MANAGER SKILLSET AND SMALL ENTERPRISES' PERFORMANCE: EVIDENCE FROM MALAYSIAN FOOD AND BEVERAGE SECTOR

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### ABSTRACT

The small, and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) contribute significantly towards economic growth, and improved income distribution, productivity, efficiency and economic structure in Malaysia. In view of this, the government invested substantially to assist SMEs through the provision of financial and credit assistance, marketing and market research, technical and training assistance, extension and advisory services, and infrastructure supports. Despite various forms of assistance provided for SMEs, their failure is still common. A potential key explanatory factor of SMEs' performance is the capability of the owner-manager to run and sustain the businesses. Accordingly, this study aims to document the current level of industry, financial, and Information Technology (IT) expertise among the owner-managers of small food and beverage firms and the links between these types of expertise and the firm performance. To this end, this study employs a survey distributed to small food and beverage firms listed in the SMART Selangor database. The findings of this study are expected to shed lights on the 'optimal' skillset for the owner-managers of small enterprises in Malaysia, particularly in the food and beverage sector. This study will be useful not only for the entrepreneurs but also for the lenders, and regulators as one of the screening tools in evaluating the small food and beverage firms' probability of surviving.

Keyword: SME, food and beverage