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| RESEARCH ARTICLE

Business Performance of Small-scale Online Sellers in Manila: A Proposed Marketing Strategies

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| ABSTRACT
The study assessed and evaluated the conditions and difficulties faced by online food vendors in running their operations during and post-COVID-19 address the gaps in the efficacy of various marketing strategies contributing to the long-term e- commerce economy through the business performance of the online sellers. The significant difference in the marketing strategies of the online food sellers with respect to their demographic profile underscores the influence of the respondent's demographic profile and their strategies in tailoring marketing approaches to fit one's capacity, lifestyle and audience that ensures a more efficient and effective engagement. This is attributed to the significantly different business environment during and after the COVID-19 Pandemic which influenced the buying behavior and preference of the customers and forced the online food sellers in Manila to indulge in the application of digitalization to cope with this drastic change. The significant relationship between the respondents' business performance and marketing strategies on the other hand indicates the pivotal role of the marketing strategies on their daily operations and business performance during and after the pandemic. The proposed marketing strategy in this study was presented as a marketing strategy matrix that serves as a guideline for small-scale entrepreneurs to align their promotional efforts with their personal resources as constrained by the challenges being encountered and their market conditions.

| KEYWORDS
Online Food Sellers, Food Business in Manila, Marketing Strategies, Business performance, Demographic Profile, Mixed Method

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1. Introduction
The effects of the Coronavirus disease 2019 (COVID-19) on the supply chain of food have recently been the subject of studies to see what steps should be taken to solve these difficulties. Aday & Aday (2020) elaborated in their research that the pandemic has influenced the food supply chain from food production to consumption. The issues on food supply raised concerns on food production, processing, and distribution. Further, their research proposed that governments should have a part in expediting the distribution of workers and agri-food items to reduce these problems. In terms of food distribution, the COVID-19 pandemic has forced many food businesses to adapt or pivot their operations to meet the challenges of the current market. This has meant shifting to online food ordering and delivery for many restaurants and food businesses. While this has been a necessary change for many businesses, it has also come with its own set of challenges.

The general global economy's loss due to the COVID-19 pandemic has contributed to the changes seen in the market and consumer behaviors (Gu et al., 2021). The behavior of the market and consumers have radically shifted e-commerce platforms, such as online shopping, and has been an indispensable part of the global retail framework in many sectors, including the food industry (Coppola et al., 2021). The same trend has been observed among food sellers in the Philippines, and this expansive growth can be attributed to its benefits to consumers and sellers. Online platforms made it possible to improve the current commerce environment and significantly provided more opportunities that benefit both the buyers and the sellers. And one of the most important catalysts for the increasing inclination of consumers and sellers to the online shopping setup is the COVID-19 pandemic. In the study of Pham et al. (2020), it was mentioned that their study realized the role of the sudden pandemic in moderating the changed perception of consumers in engaging in online shopping. For the buyers, online stores offer alternative and accessible shopping options to those who lack the time, energy, or other resources to secure purchases outside their homes. Furthermore, the threat from the coronavirus pandemic diminished the current state of the physical marketplace, making online shopping an option that would satisfy the minimum health protocols necessary to combat the pandemic. The tight competition among the increasing number of sellers also results in more product options and generally lower prices of products in the market. On the other hand, for the sellers, online selling allows them to start a business in the comfort of their homes, with less or almost no capital requirement.

These social, economic, and health changes have suddenly impacted all aspects of the commercial field in the Philippines. It can be observed that restaurants and other food establishments are in a very parallel situation to this e-commerce trend. Most notably, restaurants and other food establishments within the National Capital Region (NCR) are very much affected. The minimum health standards, including social distancing protocols, the mandatory wearing of facemasks, constant sanitation of facilities, and travel restrictions, made the food industry one of the most negatively affected industries by the COVID-19 pandemic. To cope, survive, and continue to generate income, existing and new food businesses also needed to transition online to serve their target market while the virus was still around (Mallorca, 2020).

Currently, there had been few existing scientific data that analyzes the experiences of online food sellers amidst the COVID-19 pandemic, or what people also refer to as "new normal". In fact, Limon (2021) declared that small-scale online food sellers are not have to get a sanitary permit or food certification. These food vendors collaborate with motorcycle riders or car owners to deliver orders to certain areas and/or meet customers at nearby landmarks. Meanwhile, according to Gumasing et al. (2022), the COVID-19 pandemic had impacted consumers' food ordering tendencies as the e-commerce provides a safer means to acquire basic necessities for the household. Yang et al. (2022) looked at how the pandemic affected young people's meal-ordering habits in China, which were linked to dietary practices and may have long-term effects on their health condition in later life if the trend continues. Their findings revealed that under lockdown, they noticed a significant shift in the weight status and eating habits of adolescents. According to the research carried out by Alaimo et al. (2020), the COVID-19 pandemic led to an increase in both the stockpiling of food and online buying. In order to comply with government-implemented measures like as social distancing and lockdowns, the pandemic directed to a rise in e-commerce as individuals purchased products and food online.

However, the existing studies mentioned are more concentrated on how customers are affected by online food delivery during the pandemic. The study by Limon (2021) focused on the food safety practices of online food sellers. With these observations, there has not been any discussion on the challenges of online food sellers that arose during and after pandemic, and on how online sellers and business owners are affected in the same period**.** Also, the studies that were mentioned were not able to prove as how the COVID-19 pandemic affects the food supply

chain which in turn affects online food vendors. When addressed promptly, these problems will greatly impact the country's economy and municipal productivity as the rise of e-commerce and online food sellers, notably, was able to boost the country's productivity and economy through social benefits as well as high economic turnout amidst the global crisis. Therefore, the focus of this study on the conditions and difficulties faced by online food vendors in running their operations during and post-COVID-19 sheds some light on the efficacy of various marketing strategies supported by quantitative analysis of demand and sales, and later contributing to the long-term e- commerce economy through the enhanced business performance of the online sellers themselves.

1.1 Statement of the Problem

The main objectives of the study are to investigate the status and challenges encountered by online food sellers after the COVID-19 pandemic and to test the efficacy of their adopted marketing strategies in generating sales.

Specifically, the study seeks to answer the following research questions:

1. What is the demographic profile of respondents in terms of the following:
    - 1.1 Age;
    - 1.2 Civil Status;
    - 1.3 Location;
    - 1.4 Computer Proficiency;
    - 1.5 Sex;

1.6 Occupation; and

1.7 Personal Income?

2. Is there a significant difference in the marketing strategies when the respondents are grouped according to their demographic profile?
3. What is the business performance of the online food sellers during and after the COVID-19 pandemic in terms of:

2.1. Monthly Sales;

2.2. Type of food sold online;

2.3. Number of buyers/customers; and

2.4. Advertisements Utilized?

4. Is there a significant relationship between the business performance and the effectiveness of the market strategies employed by the online food sellers during and after the COVID-19 pandemic?
5. What is the extent of effectiveness of the following marketing strategies in relation to the business performance of online food sellers during and after the COVID-19 pandemic:

4.1 Digital advertisement;

4.2 E-payment solutions;

4.3 Online Platforms;

4.4 Delivery Facilities;

4.5 Sales?

6. What marketing strategies can be proposed to improve the business performance of the online food sellers?

1.2 Hypotheses

Using a non-experimental-comparative research design, this study aims to test the following hypotheses:

Ho1: There is no significant relationship between the business performance and the effectiveness of the market strategies employed by the online food sellers during and after the COVID-19 pandemic?

Ho2: There is no significant difference in the marketing strategies when the respondents are grouped according to their demographic profile

1.3 Significance of the Study

This study is conducted to investigate the independence of the challenges encountered by online food sellers after COVID-19 and their marketing strategies. It also seeks to generate information on the strategies' effectiveness in generating sales during and post-COVID-19. Through this study, the researcher hopes to provide:

Existing online food sellers with valuable data and information on the challenges encountered by online food businesses and marketing strategies that help their direct and indirect competitors in generating sales;

Future entrepreneurs with knowledge of the challenges they might encounter and potential marketing strategies that can help them generate more income after COVID-19 or during any other future pandemics;

Marketing professionals and students with practical and evidence-based information on effective marketing strategies in times of crisis like the pandemic;

The Local Government Units (LGU), Department of Trade and Industry (DTI), and lawmakers with findings on the challenges experienced by their constituents and insights on the current status of the online food-selling business in the country to guide them in crafting new policies and law that can benefit the sellers;

Future researchers to extend and use this study to continue, revise, and recommend academic research relevant to online selling during and after a health crisis.

1.4 Scope and Limitation

This study focuses on the status and challenges of the online food-selling business owners in the country post-pandemic and the impact of various marketing strategies implemented. The respondents of the study are online food sellers operating their online businesses in the City of Manila during and after the COVID-19 pandemic. That is, the respondents' businesses are active and operating from 2020 up to the present. These respondents will represent the population of online sellers in the food sector in the country

Moreover, the present study highlights the relationship of their demographic profile to their status in online food-selling during and after COVID-19. Respondents' demographic data which include the respondents' age, address, civil status, computer competence, sex (in this study is limited the biological orientation of respondent upon birth), and occupation and personal income will be collected as well. This study in particular will establish whether the age and civil status of the respondent is a factor in doing online food selling.

The study will also need to gather respondents' information on digital advertisement; e- commerce platforms; delivery facilities; e-payment solutions; computer competency and eCommerce skills; number of competitors; and sales. Meanwhile, the marketing strategies adopted, such as live selling, posting in marketplaces, promoting and posting on business pages or personal social media accounts, online engagement, offering products to personal networks, and using online food applications, will also be examined.

Online food in this study is limited to the following items, canned goods, frozen foods, beverages (packed and prepared), locally available produced fruits and vegetables, meat, poultry and sea food dishes (home cooked and prepared with or without rice), savory snacks and baked goods and desserts as mentioned in Limon (2021) study on food safety practices of food handlers and home engaged in online food business during the COVID-19 pandemic in the Philippines.

The small-scale online food sellers' business performance in terms of monthly income and number of buyers/customers are near-estimates values in a month of the respondents while others such as the type of food being sold online and type of advertisements utilized are based on the most efficient memory recall of the respondents.

The challenges are the same with regard to during and after as affirmed by a pre-survey conducted. To account for additional challenges, the respondents are asked to provide context of the additional challenge/s per period through short answer spaces. The study was conducted from January 2020 to present, with the period specified during the pandemic to be the period from January 2020 to June 2022 and after the pandemic study period is limited from July 2022 to July 2024. Thus, it will not cover the pre-existing issues that may be present before the pandemic started and will not compare how the challenges improved or worsened when the pandemic hit, if applicable. It is further assumed that the respondents have access to the same online platforms and online food delivery applications and are aware of the City ordinances and national laws and programs covering such practice.

1.5 Definition of Terms

For a better and more precise understanding of this study, the following terms were defined operationally.

Advance (Computer Competency). The ability of using the computer/laptop or any computerized device in the next higher level from beginners including the use of e-commerce platform and social media in regularly promoting and advertising their business via content creation (including vlogging, reels etc.).

Novice (Computer Proficiency). This refers to the ability of using the computer/laptop and other computerized devices for basic online selling activities such as to - browse and use e- commerce platforms such as online shopping platforms including social media (simple posting to advertise) and delivery apps.

Business Performance. This pertains to how well an individual online seller achieved in terms of estimated sales, types of food sold online, number of buyers/customers engaged and advertisements utilized to promote the business of online selling.

Computer Competence. This refers to the level of skills or digital literacy of the respondents which is in terms of novice, advance of expert.

Delivery Facilities. This refers to the process of the transportation or delivery of the goods to the consumers.

Digital Advertisement. This refers to a type of marketing done in online channels such as websites, streaming platforms, and so on.

E-commerce. This is the shorter version of the word 'electronic commerce', and refers to the buying and selling of goods or services using the Internet.

E-payment Solution. This is shortened form for electronic payment which is a digital transaction involving two parties that are often in the form of bank transfers, mobile payment, digital wallet, and others.

Expert (Computer Competence). This refers to the ability to maximize the use computers/laptops and other computerized devices to access e-commerce platforms, design thei own advertisement collaterals and marketing materials and launch such in different medias, monitor market activity and maintain own/exclusive page for the business.

Online Platforms. This refers to the information and communications technology infrastructures and systems used in a business or organization (e.g., the software, hardware, firmware, networks, and the company websites).

Marketing strategies. This refers to actions that business personnel take to advertise their commodities and/or services.

Monthly Sales. The estimated average monthly income the respondents get from online food selling.

Online selling. It refers to the act of selling products and services via online websites, online classified ads, online shops, and online social networking sites.

Personal Income. The salaries, allowances and the likes, the respondents receive in a month.

Sales. the money or compensation received in return to a product sold or services rendered.

Small-Scale Online Sellers. Random people in Manila who decided to engage in online food selling during and after the COVID-19 pandemic.

Types of Food Sold Online – are the variety of foods the respondents of this study sold on line, which is limited to canned goods, frozen foods, beverages (packed and prepared), locally available produced fruits and vegetables, meat, poultry and sea food dishes (home cooked and prepared with or without rice), savory snacks and baked goods and desserts.

1.6 Related Literature

The management and execution of various businesses have undergone massive changes during and after the pandemic. These changes have been crucial that failure to adjust and conform could be detrimental to the entrepreneurs and could even cause them to lose their businesses altogether. The currently available literature has various academic conclusions and recommendations regarding the challenges online sellers face in building their most effective marketing strategies.

However, the articles included will help in explaining further the topics relevant to the current study.

1.6.1 *Taking a look back at COVID-19 Pandemic at the International Setting*

Coronavirus disease (COVID-19) is an infectious disease caused by the SARS-CoV-2 virus. A person infected with the virus experience mild to moderate respiratory illness and recover without requiring special treatment. However, some will become seriously ill and require medical attention such as older people and those with underlying medical conditions (comorbidities) like cardiovascular disease, diabetes, chronic respiratory disease, or cancer are more likely to develop serious illness. Anyone can get sick with COVID-19 and become seriously ill or die at any age. The entry point of the virus is through a person's mouth or nose via aerosols and droplets (or small liquid particles) when they cough, sneeze, speak, sing or breathe (WHO, 2023).

As per WHO, "the best way to prevent and slow down transmission is to be well informed about the disease and how the virus spreads. Protect yourself and others from infection by staying at least 1 metre apart from others, wearing a properly fitted mask, and washing your hands or using an alcohol-based rub frequently. Get vaccinated when it's your turn and follow local guidance."

By December 2019, COVID-19 cases monitoring data bases are working available to the public to provide 24/7 updates on the confirmed cases and other measures to prevent the spread of the virus. Peaking of the cases was noted between 2021 and 2022 based on the WHO Corona virus (COVID-19) Dashboard (WHO, 2022) which recorded the following metrics

Table 1.1. Peaking Number of Confirmed Cases of COVID-19 per Region

(Global) Region https://covid19.who.int/)	Date	No. of confirmed cases
Americas	January 20, 2022	8,462,284
Europe	January 24, 2022	12,311,003
West Pacific	December 19, 2022	42,225,968
Southeast Asia	May 3, 2021	2,880,197
	Jan 10, 2022	1,711,154
Eastern Mediterranean	January 31, 2022	808,300
	August 2, 2021	502,302
Africa	December 27, 2021	288,277
	July 5, 2021	216,403

The confirmed cases of COVID-19 regionally, was characterized to be fluidly fluctuating which forced the international ruling authorities to enforce restrictions and regional lockdowns to prevent the spread of the virus. The WHO further set up the Public Health and Social Measures (PHSM) Dashboard which categorizes the areas of the world based on COVID-19 Severity index which is the composite measure of the 6-severity index of each region and area based on the following:

Table 1.2. Measures Adopted to Address the Spread of the COVID-17 Virus

Area	Indicators
Mask	Use of facial coverings or face mask
Schools	Adaptation or Closure
Business	Adaptation or Closure
Gatherings	Limits and restrictions on public or private meetings and gatherings
Domestic Movements	Restrictions on domestic movements, public transport and stay at home orders
International Travel	Restriction as to entry, quarantining and testing

1.6.2 COVID-19 Pandemic in the Philippines

The first confirmed COVID-19 in the Philippines was lodged on January 30, 2020. By the middle of March of 2020, Luzon, was already in lockdown. Suspension was issued on domestic travel by land, air, and sea, and the whole region was placed under Enhanced Community Quarantine (ECQ) by the government, the National Capital Region (NCR), in particular (Bautistta, 2020). By August 2020, the Philippines recorded the greatest number of COVID-19 cases in Southeast Asia (PWC, 2020).

Induced Closures and Cancellations due to the spread of COVID-19 virus

The COVID-19 crises is characterized by panic-buying food and medical supplies which caused major shortages and supply chain problems (Charumilind, 2021). In addition, events and functions of all kinds were postponed or cancelled, educational institutions closed their campuses and switched to online classes, and a great deal of businesses were forced to close and shut down either temporarily or permanently. The closure of restaurants and other dine-in places also followed and about Php 1.1 trillion was lost to cancelled flights and closures of airports, malls, retail trade, including non-food and non-health manufacturing services (Sanchez, 2020).

COVID-19 triggered Job Losses and Unemployment

The International Labour Organization (ILO, 2020) reported around 1.2 million Filipinos lost their jobs in 2020 along due to the COVID-19 Pandemic, while Asian Development Bank (ADB, 2020) projected that the Philippines' economy contracted 9.5% in 2020, exacerbating the employment situation.

The National Economic and Development Authority (NEDA) estimated that about 1.8 million Filipinos would lose their jobs at a maximum due to the pandemic. However as of December 2020, the number of people who lost their jobs had gone up to 10.9 million Filipinos or so (Lazo, 2022). Of this number, an estimated 7.3 million Filipinos have already lost their jobs permanently (APMDD, 2020) The Luzon Enhanced Community Quarantine (ECQ) which ended on May 31, 2020 resulted to a massive significant decline in employment levels. According to Meyer (2020) the loss of jobs and other means of income immediately translates to economic hardship which will require the need to tighten belts until such a time normalcy is restored. Less money in hand means less money is generally circulating in the region, bringing more sensitivity to what is affordable and not affordable including food items.

Changes in Consumer Behavior and Buying Preference

COVID-19 has brought about changes in consumer behavior and buying preference as well. In 2020, (from February to April 2020), the foot traffic plummeted to 82% in retail and recreation facilities such as restaurants, shopping malls, and cinemas. In particular, there is a 60% drop in foot traffic in the groceries and pharmacies because of people going out less often (PWC, 2020). As cities underwent lockdowns and alternated back and forth between closing and opening businesses for store hours, consumers have changed what, when, how, and where they purchase items, as well as what they need or want.

According to Sanchez (2020), for a long time, the Philippines was known to be one of the countries that still practiced cash-based transactions and adhered mainly to brick-and-mortar shops. Inevitably, COVID-19 resulted to an increase in the online shopping traffic as the Filipino consumers began to purchase more from ecommerce stores despite continuing to question as to how long it would take for them to receive their items. The COVID-19, thus, has forced the country to embrace the digital world. This is despite if the fact that, among the Southeast Asian countries, the Philippines had the highest web traffic in online shopping and reached 4.9 billion total sessions on shopping mobile applications usage which was a 53% increase from pre-COVID era (Meyer, 2020).

1.6.3. Manila, Philippines and the Respondent's General Demographic Profile

Manila is a coastal highly urbanized city in the National Capital Region (NCR). It is currently the national capital of the Philippines and also the regional center of the NCR.

The city has a land area of 24.98 sq. km. or 9.64 sq. mi. with a population as determined by the 2020 census at 1,846,513. This represented 13.69% of the total population of the NCR, with a population density computed at 79, 920 inhabitants per sq.km or 191,547 per sq. mi. The city center of Manila is situated at approximately 14° 35' North, 120° 59' East, in the island of Luzon. Elevation at these coordinates is estimated at 3.1 meters or 10.2 feet above mean sea level.

Manila has a total of 387,255 households (see Appendix A). The Table below provides a background of the household distribution per municipality, indicating the municipality of Tondo to have the most number of household contributing to 34.5% (133, 574) of the total households in Manila, followed by Sampaloc contributing 21.3% (82, 618) and Santa Ana at 11% (42,416) of the total households in Manila. Other municipalities like contributing 5-7% of the total household in Manila were the municipalities of Santa Cruz (7%), Malate (5.5%) while the rest were at a lower than 5% contribution to the total household in Manila (Pandacan – 4.5%, Paco-4.3%, Port Area-4.2%, San Nicolas-2.5%, Quiapo-1.8%, Ermita-1.2%, San Miguel-1% and Intramuros-0.4%).

The most recent description of the population by age group in Manila is a 2015 census (PSA) mentioning that the highest population in Manila in terms of age group is the 20-24 years old group with 191,512 count, while the lowest count was known to be the 10,650 individuals belonging to the 80 years old and older group. In addition, those aged 14 and below including infants and babies make up an aggregate of 508,272 while those aged 15-64 who were considered economically active population in Manila who are members of the actual workforce constitute a total of 1,200,381 individuals and those that are old dependent population consisting of senior citizens aged 65 to 80 years old are at 71,495 counts.

Manila also has a computed age dependency ratio of 42/100 or there are 42 youth dependents for every 100 working people in Manila; with 6 aged/senior citizens also dependent to 100 working people, this provided an overall age dependency ratio of 48 aged and youth dependents to 100 working people in Manila of simple 48/100. In addition, a determined median age of 25 years old for Manila indicated that half of the entire or whole population of Manila are aged less than 25 years old and the other half are aged more than 25 years old (Philatlas.com, 2024).

Manila is considered to have a thriving economy with an average annual regular revenue of Manila for the fiscal year of 2016 was ₱10,154,964,750.07.

In terms of computer competency, Sanches (2020) reported that 64.41% of the population are using internet, indicating a proficiency in using computers or mobile phone. In 2018, this increased to 67.13% and further increased to 70.65% in 2019. The years 2020 onward have eventually put Manila and the Philippines into a computer literate and proficient category as it registered a 72.7% increase in the use of internet in 2020, and this is predicted to reach to 77% by 2025.

1.6.4 Business Performance of Online Food Sellers

Estimating Monthly Sales

The disastrous spread of the COVID-19 pandemic altered the worldwide landscape of the food sector. The shock caused by the limits compelled food manufacturers to make substantial modifications to their marketing methods and overall business plans. As a result, the food industry shifted onto online platforms in an effort to continue contacting customers while also expanding their reach to meet their financial demands. Thankfully, the changeover of these companies coincided with the growing popularity and accessibility of "distribution middlemen" (Reardon et al., 2021). During COVID-19, these two variables work together to guarantee that food businesses are able to create their items and transport them to consumers in a secure manner. Reardon et al. (2021) also emphasized the pandemic's catalytic effect on the need for exponential innovation among food small businesses. This modification addressed the issue of food insecurity that arose in the early stages of the pandemic.

In the most recent data from Statista (Mar 2024), the Philippine online food delivery in terms of grocery and delivery is projected to reach a revenue of US$ 4.55 billion by 2024 with an expected annual growth rate (CAGR) of 10.04% from 2024-2029. This projection includes the effect of the Russian-Ukraine war in the global market. By this projection them it is expected that the Philippine online food delivery market size will be at US$ 7.3 billion by 2029.

In addition, the meal delivery trend is expected to reach 24.9 million users by 2029 with an expected user penetration of 17.2% by 2024 with an expected gross revenue of US$ 2.07 billion in 2024 to US$ 2.60 billion by 2029. This means that post-pandemic, the online food delivery market in the Philippines will experience a rapid growth due to increasing demand for the convenience and variety in dining options. This is supported local the local studies of Baguio et al. (2022) and that of Jacinto et al. (2022) both citing the ease of using the e-commerce platforms, food selection, ease of delivery and affordability as the few advantages of the (small-scale) foods sold online that makes it more attractive to buyers and customers of all ages.

In a study by Diaz-Gutierrez et al. (2023) on whether the impacts on online shopping and in-store behaviors will last post pandemic through structural equation modelling (SEM) they found out that people's online and in-store shopping frequencies during the pandemic was affected by their perceived health risks, attitudes toward shopping and pre-pandemic shopping frequencies which is not so different post pandemic. This in turn, according them ensures stable income to the online sellers. Another reason they cited is that even restrictions eased post pandemic, many consumers may continue to favor online shopping due to its convenience and efficiency. The study further indicates that significant portions of consumers who increased their online shopping during the pandemic intend to maintain these habits post pandemic. This sustained behavior has contributed to steady income for online sellers This is supported by Totolo & Baijal (2020) that even the retail landscape has deeply changed due to the movement restriction measures during pandemic, such landscape is anchored on the basic need of providing and acquiring food for everyday requirement translating to the trend of embedding finance and extending it beyond e-commerce emphasizing that firms operating in the value chain may follow a similar pattern and have a common financial pattern.

Foods Usually Sold Online

Food items usually sold on line in Manila is in terms of canned goods, frozen foods, beverages (packed and prepared), locally available produced fruits and vegetables, meat, poultry and sea food dishes (home cooked and prepared with or without rice), savory snacks and baked goods and desserts as mentioned in Limon (2021) study on food safety practices of food handlers and home engaged in online food business during and post COVID-19 pandemic in the Philippines. Statista (2021) in collaboration with Rakuten Insights have indicated that 93% of the surveyed respondents stock piled dry food during and even after the pandemic. This ranges from canned to preserved foods which are usually easy to prepare and consume.

In a study by Morales & Rubio (2023), they reported how the COVID-19 pandemic had a severe impact on the restaurant industry and increased the demand for online food products leading to improved business performance for many online sellers. Further, their study has shown that online ordering and home delivery services positively influenced the financial performance of online sellers including restaurants during and even after the pandemic, in synch to the fact that food delivery platforms provided a lifeline for struggling restaurants, with many reporting significant revenue increases from these services.

Customers and Buyers

Many business owners have moved their operations from conventional ways to internet operations in order to thrive. Even though digitization was on the rise before to the pandemic, the COVID-19 pandemic served as an accelerant and catalyst for company digitalization. It altered the manner in which businesses are done and changed customer patterns and habits. The health limitations increased customers' reliance on internet items and services. It allowed for the purchase of more items, and the promotion of contact between consumers and sellers on an internet platform (Guilen-Royo, 2019). In a sense, e-commerce reactivated the ailing economy during the height of the pandemic, and online selling has shown its efficacy and vitality even after the limitations were restored (Zou & Cheshmehzangi, 2022). Approximately 78.7% of customers now say they purchase online, compared to 39% of people before the pandemic (Leone et al., 2020).

Further, the Philippines has been religiously compliant to the COVID-19 protocols since still more than half (54%) of the respondents are still trying to limit their social contact until they are vaccinated or the pandemic is fully under control in the country, while 51% of them agree that food delivery saves time as compared to dining our which spares them from reservation or queue. On the other hand, 27% will continue to order foods from online apps because they have good experiences with the quality of service from food delivery apps, with another 21% are convinced that one way to make them order for again is because it is cheaper than dining out.

In an article by Prime Commerce Asia in 2023, the COVID-19 Pandemic and the Post Pandemic era has across generations, with consumers of different age groups responding differently to the crisis. For example, Gen Z and Millennials in US found that 96% of these generation are concerned about the pandemic and its effects on the economy, which led them to change their behavior in a more dramatic fashion than other generations, which include cutting back on spending, stocking up on items and spending less on experiences. On the other hand, Gen X and the Boomers are less concerned than the Gen Z and Millennials, letting the COVID-19 pandemic economy impact their shopping habits.

Advertisements utilized

During the COVID-19 pandemic, heightened competitiveness has been one of the most significant obstacles for online food merchants. There has been a rise in the number of businesses that sell food online due to the growing popularity of online shopping as a means to avoid stepping out in public. This has made it tough for a great number of internet retailers to stand out and be recognized. Arora & Sanni (2018) analyzed published publications on social media marketing and synthesized research in social media marketing sectors that are in the process of growing. With a focus on social media, the use of social networking sites by businesses, social media metrics and social media measurement, consumer decision-making, consumer perceptions, and the use of social media marketing across countries and cultures, they examined the usage of social media marketing concepts through interpretation and synthesis-based evaluation. In order to enhance social media-based promotions, social media marketing, social commerce, and social capacity for increased worldwide brand loyalty and firm value, cultural and international views are crucial moderating elements, according to the authors. Moreover, Komodromos (2018) said that using social media channels and other platform technologies is a vital tactic for businesses to boost operational efficiency. This is what Alghizzawi et. al. (2023) have stressed as embracing of their digital marketing experience to enhace customer engagement and achieve adaptable business performance, thus demonstrating the varying degrees of digital adoption has effects on market resiliency, revenue creation and customer engagement. Furthermore, Waseem et. al. (2024) added that integration of e-commerce an and social media strategies has been shown to significantly boost market performance. Lambrecht & Tucker (2013) in their study reported that targeted digital ads significantly influence customer behavior and purchase decisions which validates increased ad spending as a viable strategy for growth. Moreover, Chaffey & Ellis-Chadwick (2019) stated that strong sales response enables marketers to fine-tune audience targeting, ad creatives, and budget allocations to maximize results, this digital advertisements and marketing platforms such as Facebook, Google, and Instagram provide performance analytics that allow business to optimize campaign in real time, while one drawback of this is that heavy reliance on digital advertising for sales, growth introduces risk of additional expense for ads and may resut to decline in sales when advertising budget or frequency is reduced (Fulgoni & Lipsman, 2022)

1.6.5 Online Marketing Strategies for Online Selling

Digital Advertisement

Current business niches continue to be competitive and difficult, as each organization desires improved income and client reach. The vendors may overcome obstacles on the internet market by installing and using these technologies to their benefit. Consequently, small firms have several options to raise their sales, get a higher rate of return on their investments, and provide additional employment prospects for their workers and their families (Lockett, 2018). Komodromos (2018) conducted qualitative research using interview questions to examine students' acceptability of online purchasing. This research demonstrates that students find online buying "extremely engaging and enjoyable." In addition, the respondents said that the most compelling aspect of their e-shopping personal interactions was its efficiency, since it cuts them time and offers customers more competitive pricing. This research demonstrates that even students' perceptions of e-commerce may provide excellent SMP use chances for small enterprises.

Even if social media is employed as a marketing tool, Ryu and Park (2020) argue that nothing is known about whether or how customers regard it as a purchasing tool or how such advantages might impact their social media buying behavior. Their study examined the relationship between consumers' multidimensional views of social media's advantages, their commitment to the platform, their actual usage of social media for purchase, and their inclination to offer positive feedback about their social media purchasing experiences. Their results indicate that consumers feel that employing SMP has economic and symbolic advantages, display logical, objective, and ethical attitudes, use it for buying, and engage in the online dissemination of positive word-of-mouth

The convergence of business performance and marketing strategies is pivotal for online sellers aiming to thrive particularly in the digital marketplace. Effective marketing strategies not only enhance visibility but also directly influence sales, customer engagement and overall profitability.

Online Platforms

In the Philippines it is in the likes of GrabFood, Food Panda, Zomato. Platform-to- Consumer on the other hand are the ones that need 3rd party food delivery. In that sense, they do not handle their own delivery processes (Sanchez, Statista, 2020). The 3rd party food delivery marketplace is a centralized hub or portal for restaurants and food outlets for consumers to explore and order food from. Orders and payments are received and executed in a single platform and deliveries are processed either by the food establishment itself or a 3rd party delivery service (Lalu, 2020; Fat Bit Technologies, 2021). These 3rd party online food delivery marketplaces earn revenue by charging commissions from each customer order, just as many other 3rd party booking agencies have been doing for a while now (as per Lalamove, Toktok, Borzo and the likes, who accepts bookings for food and grocer deliveries). In addition, most of these online food delivery marketplaces, for a fee, also offer marketing and advertising options within their respective mobile applications to help increase the exposure of the food vendors.

Even as the advent of 3rd party online delivery systems continue to take hold of the Philippines, food delivery applications have provided better access to prepared meals and enabled food establishments to continue operating during the pandemic. From a consumer perspective, groups and individuals are offered easy access to a wide range of food options that are available beyond their local surroundings. By doing so, online food delivery apps help expand the food environment of a certain group or an individual to a wider reach on top of their current location.

These online food delivery apps require efficient real-time delivery services. At the beginning of lockdown, all public transportation services were suspended hindering operations of food deliveries (Matt, 2020). Yet, shortly thereafter, delivery apps were permitted to operate.

In August 2020, food establishments in Metro Manila could operate and deliver 24/7, beyond curfew hours (Lalu, 2020). The top food delivery apps in the Philippines are GrabFood, FoodPanda, and LalaFood. In February 2021 however, Lalafood was discontinued. Nonetheless, mobile applications experienced significant sign ups from food retailers during the pandemic (Matt, 2020) and food businesses saw mobile delivery applications like Grab as a need and means to survive in the midst of the pandemic (Chan, 2020).

BSP (2022) reported that online platforms help online sellers tap into several customer segments like converting less tech savvy to tech savvy people. The presence of online platforms also supports e-payment systems and then tap the previously unbanked and underbanked segment, thereby broadening the customer base and enabling more frequent transactions.

E-Payment Solutions

The introduction of the National Retail Payment System in the Philippines in 2015 helped catalyze digital payments because of its interoperability feature among the payment service providers (BSP 2020). Through this framework, the introduction of the National QR Code Standard or QR Ph has also been made possible. The potential of QR Ph, especially in the person-to-merchant (P2M) case, allows economic actors like MSMEs to participate in the digital payment system. While the uptake of the P2M QR Ph area is increasing, the BSP (2020) has identified a number of challenges that hamper the participation of the other economic Factors such as the MSMEs, including: [1] the low level of trust toward this system and low confidence in the security of the digital transactions and [2] the unreliable internet connectivity in the Philippines shown by its rank as having the 4th slowest internet speed among 88 countries in the OpenSignal 2018 State of LETE. According to the BSP (2020), efforts to address some of these challenges are underway such as the following: [1] providing capacity-building programs for the MSMEs, especially on online selling and adoption of digital payments; [2] enhancing further the digital infrastructure; [3] conducting studies to determine how to reduce the costs of converting to digital payments like offering zero fees for microtransactions; [4] transitioning into the ISO 20022 International Messaging and Communication Standard for interoperability, financial integration, and interconnectivity at the domestic and international levels; and [5] promoting educational drives and measures to build confidence in digital payment. Moving towards business recovery, the contemporary literature has emphasized that the digital shift is vital for businesses and firms to thrive under the new normal. However, only a modicum amount of attention has been given to the prior growth conditions of the firms, which may affect the adoption of digital payment.

While, study of Fat Bit (2021) indicated two-thirds of the firms across the country employed digital payment technology, and 55% of these firms started using the technology during the pandemic period. Logit analysis was conducted to analyze the determinants of digital payment adoption. Being relatively younger, operating under a partnership business structure relative to sole proprietors, employing more human resources, having IT facilities, and experiencing business growth before the pandemic were found to be predictive of the adoption of digital payments in the business operations of these firms. While younger firms are more receptive to this new payment technology, digital capacity development programs may further revitalize businesses and industries. Such mechanisms need to be put in place targeting vulnerable enterprises: firms under sole proprietorship, without infrastructure for IT, with relatively fewer employees being relatively smaller organizations, and in decline in terms of business growth even prior to the pandemic.

According Laudon & Traver (2021), digital payments allow businesses to collect customer transaction data, which can be used for personalized marketing, dynamic pricing and inventory management. This data driven capability enforces the link between payment systems and strategic growth, while OECD (2020) reiterated that offering variety of convenient payment options enhances customer trust and boost purchase frequency.

On the other hand, dependence to e-payment systems exposes business to technical outages, cybersecurity breeches, or regulatory changes that can halt or delay transactions leading to lost sales and customer dissatisfaction (PwC, 2021). KPMG (2020) added that increased digital payment volumes may lead to a rise in payment fraud, fake transactions and chargebacks which can erode profitability and customer trust if not managed with string security protocols., while World Bank (2022) warns that heavy dependence on e-payments may unintentionally exclude older or less tach savvy customers limiting market segments in regions with low digital literacy or internet connectivity.

Delivery Facilities

Currently, e-commerce is the re-incarnation of olden day gold mines, that proved to be the source of wealth, and fortunes of individuals and corporations from all around the world, as far as commercial activities and transactions are concerned. As online sites and mobile applications like Amazon, ebay, Alibaba, Uber, Etsy, and other such sites have taken the center stage helping their owners and operators become millionaires and billionaires, many times over; brick-and-mortar stores have been struggling to keep their heads above the water, a good number of them, in fact, have closed their doors permanently due to their inability to cope up with the modern trend of on- line transactions (Fat Bit Technologies, 2021). Even though the above-mentioned online sites dominate the field, they are not the only players in this ever-expanding and continuously profitable online business environment because other minor players, like Singapore-based Grab, also entered the market and their entries and expansions is then treated as front-line service especially during the COVID-19 pandemic when people are forced stay in the comfort of their homes to look for ways of doing their shopping activities via the online platforms. The ever-increasing internet and social media presence and usage in the Philippines, have opened the perspective among Filipinos to pursue online business activities. It is within this space that many small e-commerce businesses in the Philippines including small-scale online food businesses stepping forward every day (Crismundo, 2020).

Online food delivery services, can operate in a limited amount of space, if needed, and thus reduce their overhead operating costs. From an economic perspective, this offered more opportunities for employment most especially for riders/drivers who deliver the food orders to the customers. It also helped consumers to continue purchasing without needing face-to-face contact with vendors or storekeepers. According to Statista, The Digital Market for online food delivery can be a Restaurantto-Consumer includes the deliveries that restaurants directly carry out through their own website or direct calls, in that they do not usually employ the food delivery apps.

GrabFood and the Grab App

The start-up application Grab is the umbrella company of GrabFood. Grab is a Singapore- based application that has become Southeast Asia's "super-app" for various services including rides, financial services, health care, digital payments, and deliveries, particularly during the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic up to presentt. Other than GrabFood which is aimed at food delivery services, Grab has also GrabMart and GrabExpress for the delivery of daily goods and parcels, respectively. By means of such expansion, Grab's delivery services have grown by about 20-30% during the COVID-19 pandemic. In an interview with Fortune, Grab CEO Anthony Tan said that pre-pandemic, these delivery services and digital payment options were only deemed as "nice-to- have" by businesses he said that "A lot of SMEs were traditional, mostly offline. Penetration of food and grocery e-commerce, and mobile payments was still very slow. COVID took what was clear about the future and brought it forward by years." The COVID-19 pandemic, however, made them the primary source of business for many retailers. Grab, to date, is classified as an essential service in some here in the Philippines (Chan, 2020).

Sales

In 2020, there were about 8.8 million users of online food delivery apps. By 2024, projected user penetration rate rises to 12.7% which will increase the number of users to 14.7 million. These forecast projections have been adjusted by Statista for expected impact of the COVID-19 pandemic. The projected revenue for online food delivery in 2021 is US$ 312 million with US$ 218 million in Restaurant-to-Consumer and US$ 3.5 million in Platform-to-Consumer.

The Restaurant-to-Consumer segment has a projected 12.4% annual growth rate making the expected revenue US$ 310 million by 2024. On the other hand, Platform-to-Consumer has a high expected annual growth rate of 19.4%, making projected revenue US$ 161 million by 2024. The average revenue per user (ARPU) for Platform-to-Consumer is also higher than Restaurant- to-Consumer, with US$ 25.66 and US$ 23.87 respectively (Statista, 2021).

The sudden shift of the corporate climate brought about by the COVID-19 pandemic was one of the most significant hurdles facing companies today. The limitations that accompanied it prohibited businesses from operating regularly, so dramatically lowering their sales. Asian Development Bank estimated a worldwide GDP decline of 2.3% to 4.8% in 2020. These effects were anticipated to mostly hit micro, small, and medium-sized enterprises (MSMEs), which are regarded as the backbone of economies. MSMEs are reliant on recurring transactions and have limited resources to implement the required modifications, in contrast to big businesses and multinationals (Shafi et al., 2020).

Similar results were seen in the food business. An unproportional effect on access to food exacerbated global food insecurity. Reduced availability to food by the general population has prompted coping mechanisms such as bulk purchasing, meal delivery, and online food ordering. Nonetheless, these coping methods amplified the challenges in food availability during the pandemic, resulting in even greater food insecurity. In addition, the prevailing socioeconomic challenges of employment loss at the outset of the tight lockdowns intensified food insecurity (Leone et al., 2020).

Consequently, one strategy for reducing job loss and food insecurity is to sell food on a new platform. SMPs used as an online e-commerce platform enabled clients to order meals online and have it delivered to their homes or be available for pick-up. This technique to selling food online also serves the goal of eliminating in-person interaction in stores, which may significantly reduce COVID-19 transmission in the community (Chang & Meyerhoefer, 2020). Both consumers and sellers have expanded their use of e-commerce, which has swiftly become a key component of the retail economy.

1.6.6 Challenges Encountered by Online Food Sellers During COVID-19 Pandemic

A unique way to operating food enterprises during the COVID-19 pandemic encountered obstacles. Locally, online food retailers had difficulties with technology, the internet, finance, and government rules and assistance. In order to do online business, a dependable and consistent internet connection is essential. The majority of the time, service providers in the Philippines provide unreliable internet speeds. The usage of online platforms in the Philippines on one poin is affected by the internet speed. The internet speed available in the country. In July 2022, the fixed internet download speed was at 102.93 Mbps, and mobile broadband download speed was 52.33 Mbps (Manila Bulletin, July 2022), this ranked the Philippines 46th out of 182 in terms of fixed internet speed and 84th out of 140 as of mobile speed. This ranking, however, moved down several places in 2023 as the fixed internet download speed was down to 91.56 this Q3 2022, putting the Philippines now at the 49thth rank, while our Mobile download speed also lowered down to 25.88 Mbps putting us at the 89th rank. This is rather slow as compared to the 205.77 Mbps Mobile download speed and 238.28 Mbps Fixed Broadband download speed of UAE who ranked 1st in mobile speed and 4th in fixed broadband speed. In Asia alone, Singapore has the fasted fixed broadband speed of 247.44 Mbps, putting Singapore in rank 1 in terms of the fixed broadband speed, while Thailand is 5th at 211.28 Mbps. South Korea on the other hand, has the fastest mobile speed in Asia ranking 5th all over with mobile download speed of 140.49 Mbps (Speed Test Global Index, 2023).

In addition, logistics and trade facilitation were not properly established before to the pandemic. Not all items can be transported for long distances, especially perishable items like food. The lack of cold chain storage limits vendors of perishable items to deliveries within a certain distance only. As food goods are perishable and have a very limited shelf life, local food dealers also struggled to choose the best delivery method. As online transactions have become more widespread, it is necessary to designate a virtual payment method. Unfortunately, the Philippines are still not completely cashless. According to a survey from the Banko Sentral ng Pilipinas (BSP), around 66% of Filipinos do not possess bank accounts and just 8% own credit cards (ITA, 2020).

The fact that other firms have incorporated e-wallets to provide Filipino people with quicker access and less hassles is a positive development.

The malfunction of supply networks is another obstacle that online food retailers have had to face. Due to the number of closed or reduced-hours companies, it has been difficult for certain merchants to get the necessary materials to manufacture their items. This has resulted in order delays and even cancellations, which is irritating for both merchants and purchasers.

In one of their publications, Aday & Aday (2020) studied the consequences of COVID-19 on the agricultural and food sectors and created a list of suggestions for mitigating and containing the pandemic's effects. Their research indicated that COVID-19 negatively impacted the food supply chain monetarily, as well as by limiting worker mobility, affecting consumer demand, shutting food production facilities, and limiting food trade rules.

Next challenge is the digital payment penetration in the Philippines. The Banko Sentral ng Pilipinas (BSP), the Central Bank of the Philippines, reported about 66% of Filipinos do not have bank accounts or do not use banks at all, and only 8% of Filipinos have credit cards. To meet some of the above challenges, E-commerce platforms are quick to adapt to this environment by providing a Cash-On-Delivery (COD) payment option and a payment center option. Examples of payment centers are leading convenience stores like Mini Stop and 7-Eleven, and local express delivery services like LBC. This has also reduced the security concerns of consumers who are wary of transacting online due to the threat in cybersecurity. In addition, telephone companies, banks, and fintech start-ups have rolled out e-wallets such as PayMaya by PLDT, GCash by Globe,1 and PESONet by BSP. These e-wallets allow the “unbanked population” to transfer funds in the Philippine Peso currency to another user of the participating bank, e-money issuer, or mobile money operator (ITA, 2020).

1.6.7. The Philippines’ transit to the Post Pandemic Era

The evident impact of the COVID-19 Pandemic to the Philippines have taught the country valuable lessons in terms of trade and commerce. The during pandemic data is a testament that a country’s trade and commerce industry needs and will find a way to move forward regardless of the era. The worldwide pandemic then can be classified as one obstacle towards economic growth.

In the article published by the Department of Finance (DOF) in January 2024, they mentioned that the Philippines' labor market continues to improve with its unemployment rate reaching the lowest level since 2005 at 3.6 percent in November 2023 with the underemployment rate in November 2023 maintained at 11.7 percent, which is lower than November 2022, 14.4 percent.

DOF added that the employment rate in November 2023 soared to 96.4 percent, from 95.8 percent in both November 2022 and October 2023. This translates to 49.6 million employed individuals in November 2023, slightly lower than the November 2022 employed individuals at 49.71 million, but higher than 47.80 million in October 2023. The wage and salary workers made up 61.5 percent of the total employed persons, followed by those who are self-employed at 28.6 percent.

Inquiro in their article published in October 2023 entitled "Consumer Trends in the Philippines for Business Success" stated that in 2021, eCommerce reached $17 billion due to the 73 million users making purchases. In 2023, consumer behavior trends are evolving rapidly due to technology and shifting preferences. It was revealed that 68% of the Filipinos check product pricing before buying due to higher cost and that mobile shopping become the primary access for purchases since there are about 79 million Filipino uses the internet by 2022. This access to the internet also were related to the 51% accounted for card payments, seconded by alternative payment methods which included e-wallets in 2022. This indicates that the contactless payment scheme during the pandemic has brought a lot of realizations to the Filipinos including the ease and speed of transaction.

1.7 Synthesis

Since the peak of the pandemic, the expected economic repercussions of COVID-19 before it became a big worldwide issue were consistent with the actual reality of businesses and consumers. When Shafi et al. (2020) examined the actual effects of the pandemic on MSMEs in Pakistan, they confirmed that the ADB's predicted economic harm was accurate. According to Guilen-Royo (2019), the role of digitization during the pandemic was validated by data from two distinct research. Zou & Cheshmehzangi (2022) demonstrated that e-commerce was perceived as the resurgent force during and after COVID, but Leone et al. (2020) shown that the number of online consumers nearly doubled before and during COVID-19. These studies examined the connection between modernization, COVID-19, and internet buying behavior. The present study will also evaluate how local food vendors modernized their operations and marketing tactics during and after the epidemic, as well as the impact of these changes on their income streams. However, it will not address the economic impact of the pandemic on local food vendors, although earlier research on this subject will be valuable for comparing the money produced during and after the pandemic to a baseline.

The disruptive impacts of the pandemic on the global food supply system were demonstrated by Leone et al. (2020). Chang & Meyerhoefer (2020) gave answers for how e- commerce was able to triumph over these obstacles, particularly those that forced food companies to shut and cease operations entirely. Reardon et al. (2021) provided additional evidence for these statements by highlighting the significant role that delivery intermediates have played in the execution of online food industry transactions. Collectively, these studies provided an overview of the difficulties faced by the food business and the advantages of online retailing. Similar to previous research, the current study will analyze the obstacles faced by online food vendors in the nation and how their online techniques enabled them to overcome these obstacles during and after the epidemic.

An article from the International Trade Administration (ITA, 2020) and Aday & Aday (2020) described the difficulties food manufacturers face in both the global and local markets. The disturbance in the transit of products and labor manifested in minimal operations, with inconsistent internet connectivity and a lack of cashless payment options among Filipinos cite as two of the greatest obstacles to online food sales. In spite of this, Arora & Sanni (2018), Lockett (2018), and Ryu & Park (2020) all concurred that SMPs play a vital and pivotal role in online marketing tactics. According to Komodromos, the successful deployment of these outcomes in a favorable response from customers (2018). This study will illustrate how social media marketing and other digital advertising tactics impact the earnings of online food vendors, given that the majority of Filipino online food retailers adopt SMP.

The literature referenced in this study gave an overview of the commercial effects of COVID-19, the online adjustment of food companies, and their marketing methods. However, while the implications of the COVID-19 pandemic on the food industry and e-commerce in general has been adequately examined in previous studies, there are few new studies that examine what negative effects remain now that people are living in the new normal or what measures implemented during the pandemic have resulted in post-pandemic benefits. The present study intends to address this issue by examining the problems and marketing methods utilized by local online food merchants during and after the epidemic, as well as the effect of these on their income.

With the current literature and studies presented and made available, it is definite that online food selling became a "big thing" during and even after the covid-19 pandemic. Since 2019 and even today, online food sellers become a major group to penetrate the food business and trade. While it was reiterated by Statista (2022) and Rakuten Insights (2021), the food delivery apps have supported the online food sellers and vice versa. With a significant number of customers and buyers still willing to continue buying from small scale online food sellers, it is not remote for this study to gather substantial information on the business performance of the online food seller and as well as gather primary data on their demographics and effectiveness of their marketing strategy and identify their challenges and opportunities, which will pave way in the formulation of an enhanced or improved marketing strategy that will make their business survive the post-COVID 19 pandemic demands of the market.

1.8 Theoretical Framework

1.8.1 Consumer Buying Process Model (John Dewey, 1910)

The Consumer Buying Process model was proposed by John Dewey in 1910 first introduced the five-stage decision process, it has been a widely accepted concept and still serves as the central pillar of a popular consumer behavior model. These stages are Problem Recognition, Information Search, Alternative Evaluation, Choice, and Outcomes. These five (5) steps are all crucial in the process of getting a consumer to buy a product, and possibly become a repeat customer. Using this framework, businesses can look at the different stages consumers go through when they are thinking about purchasing a product and identify the areas they can improve on as they enter the e-commerce industry.

John Dewey’s Consumer Buying Process Model (1910)

Problem Recognition is the first stage of the consumer buying process where the consumers are able to have a hint or totally recognize the problem. In this stage, the online businesses need to consider how consumers experience problems that cause them to have a certain need or want. Consumers either have a natural need for something or they are being influenced by external factors that cause them to want something. Consumers buy products to solve this problem. Food is an essential need and because of the restrictions brought about by the COVID19 pandemic, online food deliveries somewhat became a necessity for individuals and families who were unable to prepare their own meals at home. Aside from this natural need, new food trends also made their way into social media that made consumers want to try them. With consumers being in quarantine or lockdown and with adequate spending power, purchasing food items that has become trendy, which consumers want to try can be done in just a few taps/clicks on their mobile devices.

Information Search. This is how consumers find information about how to get their needs/wants and is usually where businesses use promotion to stimulate consumer demand. Consumers will search from online food delivery mobile applications first because these platforms offer a single hub for consumers to search and complete their orders. Social media can only go so far with the use of hashtags and tagged locations in gaining customers but providing more information in these social media platforms can help persuade consumers to choose a certain food retailer over another.

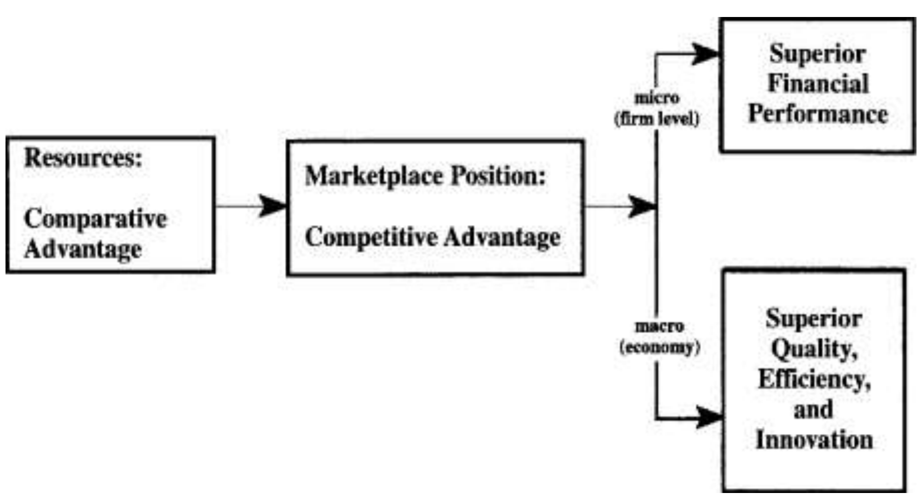
Evaluation and Selection. Various but similar online businesses may have the tendency to sell the same type of products that are hard to distinguish from one another. The reality is complicated by the fact that it is quite easy for consumers to compare products online as everything can be found in one device and in similar online marketplace platforms. The reputation of a particular e-commerce business is very crucial in this step as this can highly influence the consumers’ choice. Creating, uploading, and sharing good content increase the likeliness of a consumer to choosing a certain food e-tailer as an alternative over its competitors. In addition, good reviews provide better insight to consumers on how well food e-tailers perform in terms of their service, the quality of their food, and how satisfied their customers are. This step replaces the in-person or face-to-face contact, hence the crucial importance of creating a good online image cannot be underestimated.

Store Choice and Purchase. The fourth step of the consumer buying process is the purchase decision. This does not mean the customer will buy the product – customers can still walk away and decide not to push through with the purchase. It is important for e-commerce businesses to find ways to bring them back if they walk away. This may be a little more difficult because there is no face-to-face interaction. One way of doing this is to look for customers who have left items in their carts and never checked out. E-commerce businesses can retarget them by offering special promotions and/or discounts to further push them into taking the purchase action. The purchase is the most significant of all the above, because without an actual purchase action, everything else will be worthless and meaningless. Online business entities must make sure that their purchase process is a seamless process. They are responsible for constantly checking that their platforms are functioning smoothly from the perspective of their consumers. Are there too many steps? Is the application or platform loading too slow? Are the payment platforms working securely? These are just a few things that e-commerce businesses need to check to ensure that the online purchase experience remains convenient for the consumers. Third-party online marketplaces like GrabFood and Food Panda, in the Philippines, have already been providing a seamless way for consumers to fully process their orders. On the other hand, if the online food retailers want to avoid exorbitant fees charged by these mobile applications, they must ensure that their own ordering and delivery system run smoothly and that consumers will not encounter any problems while the order is being fulfilled.
Post-Purchase Processes. The last step is the Post-Purchase Evaluation where consumers decide on how they felt about their purchase. This is the step where consumers usually experience cognitive dissonance or buyer's remorse. Online business initiative must make sure that they keep their consumers happy, not merely to avoid returns, but also to encourage repeat purchase. E-commerce businesses may also follow up with their customers via the online marketplace platform or e-mail to thank them for their purchase, and possibly to ask for a review and points of improvement. Online food retailers are expected to have a clear understanding of these separate, yet linked processes and utilizing them for their own advantages. As consumers attempt to solve their food problem by searching the online platforms and fulfilling their need by choosing the best possible solutions in procuring the kind of food that they need/want, vendors have to pay intense attention to how they help address the food problem needs/wants of their customers, if they want to maintain and grow their business in profitable and sustainable manner. As well, evaluation of interventions undertaken by the vendors is necessary not just to see that the customers are satisfied and contented about the food items they had purchased, but also to find out the ways in which vendors could improve their services.

1.8.2. The Comparative Advantage Theory of Competition

The comparative advantage theory of competition postulated by Hunt and Morgan (1995)is drawn from the neoclassical theory of perfect competition, the comparative advantage theory of competition replaces the assumptions of a perfect economy with actual micro and macroeconomic driving forces of market competition (see Figure 3) For example, it assumes that there is a heterogenous demand within industries, and consumer and firm's information are imperfect and costly rather than being perfect and costless. Most importantly, it is based on the assumption that competition is driven by comparative advantage defined as any rare resource that a firm has which enables it to generate market offerings that are perceived to have superior value or cheaper to produce.

Because of the low barriers to entry, online food sellers are subject to fierce competition especially during the surge of COVID-19. The high number of food businesses that adapted online means of distribution has more likely remained post-pandemic, keeping the same competition even though the demand may have been reduced because food establishments are now allowed to open their physical stores. The comparative theory of competition can serve as a guide in investigating the status and challenges experienced by Filipino online food sellers.



Hunt and Morgan's Competitive Advantage Theory of Competition (1995)
The competitiveness of these entrepreneurs is driven by factors at a national level such as technology dimension (eCommerce Platforms). The industry level factors include logistics and trade facilitation and availability of e- payment solutions, while company level factors are their e-commerce skills. The same theory can be used to understands the marketing strategies employed by online food sellers during and after COVID-19. Competitive advantage also mentions the most effective utilization of the available resources to produce a competitive advantage against competing firms. In e-commerce, online selling platforms and the effective use of them could be a significant advantage against competitors if used appropriately. Using this theory as the framework for this study, the researcher will be able to understand the relationship among the variables being studied.

Figure 1 presents the theoretical framework of the study on the business performance of small scale online food sellers in Manila grounded in two theories earlier recognized (1) the John Dewey's Consumer Buying Decision Process Model which outlines the 5 key stages a consumer typically goes through when making a purchase significantly supports online food sellers' marketing strategy by helping them align their tactics with each stage of the buyer's journey. These tactics of promoting their business can be rooted on the seller's demographic profile. As to problem recognition and information search, the seller's marketing should focus triggering cravings or highlighting needs which is connected to food options, prices and menus which is being addressed by the strategies used by the sellers in crafting digital advertisements while, in terms of evaluation of alternatives, purchase decision and post-purchase behavior which the sellers must emphasize unique selling points of the food on sale, food options, as well as the price, including smooth ordering and check out process, incentives and post purchase follow ups are the main considerations in formulating marketing strategies in terms of e-payment solutions, online platforms, delivery facilities and sales. Overall, understanding Dewey's model, online food sellers in consideration of their demographic attributes can design marketing strategies that guide customers from initial need (hunger or cravings) to repeat purchases, increasing conversations

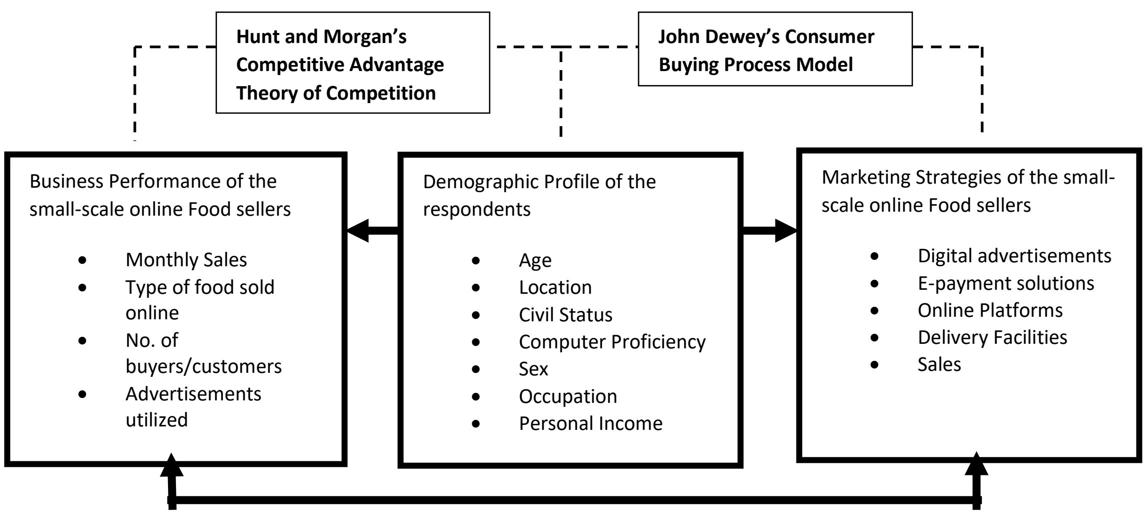


Figure 1. The Dewey-Hund and Morgan's Theoretical Framework on the Business Performance of Small Scale Online Food Sellers in Manila: A Proposed Marketing Strategies (Dewey, 1910; Hunt and Morgan, 1995)

These demographic attributes then identify the level of implementation and success of each marketing strategy; (2) the Hunt and Morgan's Competitive Advantage Theory of competitiveness was found to support the online food seller's performance provides a powerful framework for understanding how online food sellers can achieve optimal business performance in a competitive environment. As the competition is dynamic and innovation driven, online food sellers must continuously innovate in the hope of boosting monthly sales, offering the required type of food, increasing buyers and boosting business engagement. Overall, the theory supports online food sellers understand that superior performance comes from developing and deploying unique, valuable resources. Rather than a race to the bottom pricing, the theory supports lasting (sustainable) advantages through innovation, service and strategic resource use. Also, the relationship of business performance to the marketing strategy indicates an indirect link on the demographic profile, meaning the level and extent of business performance may also vary with respect to the respondent's demographic profile.

A strong and effective relationship between online food seller's business performance and marketing strategy, in the essence, can directly improve business performance by increasing sales through innovative products and services, enhancing customer reach and relationships and building a sustainable competitive advantage (monthly sales, types of food sold online, no. of buyers/customers and advertisements) while inculcating an effective marketing strategy through effective customer acquisition, customer retention and loyalty, customer engagement and experience, ease of doing business as well as brand positioning and differentiation (digital advertisements, online platform, e-payment systems and sales).

1.8.3 Conceptual Framework

The following conceptual framework was developed to illustrate the relationship of the variables being studied following the Consumer Buying Model and the Comparative advantage theory of competition. By careful analytical evaluation of the two models, the relationship between the variables of the study was illustrated in Figure 2. The consumer buying process model is one theory related to the buying process of the general public during and after the pandemic is theoretically linked to performance of any form of business even without the pandemic. On the other hand, the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic added another layer to the relatedness of the business performance of small-scale online food sellers, since food as a primary need during the pandemic has been favored by the governments and with the lockdowns imposed, a definite leverage was established on online food selling. While in the competitive advantage theory of competition have been linked to small-scale online food sellers' performance, since each must uniquely arrive at their own value proposition concerning price and quality as main vectors to focus as they compete.

With the established theoretical framework of this study, the independent variable is then considered to be the business performance of the small-scale online food sellers which will be determined in terms of monthly sales, type of food on sale, number of buyers and customers and advertisements, is then found to be directly influenced by the demographic profile of the respondents as to age, location, civil status, computer proficiency, sex, occupation and personal income. Thus, demographic profile is then identified as an intervening variable to the business performance of the respondents, which is expected to affect or influence also the marketing strategies they employ as they operate their business. The dependent variable in this study is the proposed marketing strategy in terms of digital advertisements, eCommerce platforms, delivery facilities, e-payment solutions and sales which is expected to improve the business performance of the small scale online food sellers in Manila. The relationship between the business performance and the marketing strategy is determined to identify and assess the strength of the business operations the differences in the marketing strategies with respect to their demographic profile will then identify what is intrinsically needed to further strengthen the business performance and leverage the market.

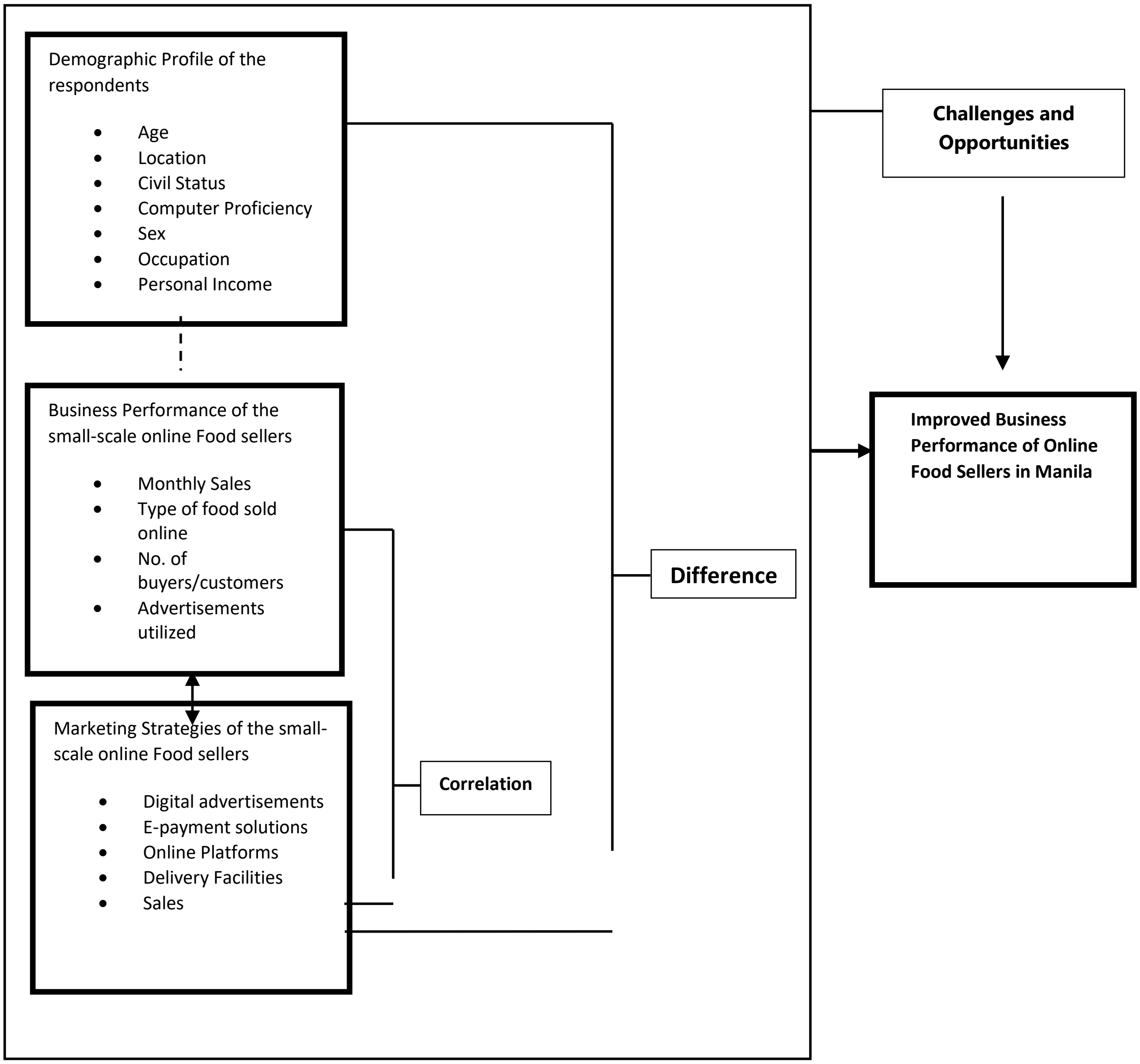


Figure 2. Conceptual framework on Business Performance of Small-scale Online Sellers in Manila: A Proposed Marketing Strategies

The interaction between the independent variable and the intervening variables which will be assessed and evaluated cross-sectionally as during post covid-19 pandemic will lead to the determination of the challenges and opportunities of the small-scale online food sellers will be thematically analyzed to come up with an enhanced or improved marketing strategy for the online small scale online food sellers as they deal with their business in the post-covid 19 era or the new normal.

2. Methods

This study aims to identify the challenges met and marketing strategies implemented by online food sellers during and after the COVID-19 pandemic. Moreover, this study intends to test the independence of the status, challenges, and marketing strategies of online food sellers in Manila during and after COVID-19 on their business profiles. Through this study, the researcher also seeks to gain valuable information on the effectiveness of the respondent's marketing strategies in generating sales. This chapter will discuss four (4) subsections, namely, research design, data management, sampling design, and statistical treatment.

2.1 Research Design

This study utilized the mixed methods research design which is an approach that combines both quantitative and qualitative data collection and analysis within a single study to achieve a more complete understanding of a research problem. This design integrates the numerical precision of quantitative methods with the contextual depth of qualitative insights, allowing researchers to examine different dimensions of a phenomenon. According to Creswell and Plano Clark (2020), mixed methods provide a practical way to explore complex research questions by drawing on the strengths of both traditions. Specifically, the data with regards to the demographic profile of the respondents, business performance and marketing strategies were collected quantitatively via descriptive type of research while qualitative data in terms of the online food sellers' experienced challenges and identified opportunities are collected through a structured interview. The quantitative data were processed statistically while qualitative data was processed through a thematic analysis based on the process described by Braun and Clarke (2017).

Determination and description of the respondents' demographic profile, their business performance as smalls- scale online food sellers and the effectiveness of their marketing strategies was conducted via the implementation of a survey tool. These described the existing relationship between the business performance of the respondents and their marketing strategies. The respondents were then further grouped according to their demographic profile and describe the difference in the utilized marketing strategies based on their profile. The consensus definition of a descriptive research method—describing existing phenomena as accurately as possible—aligns with the objectives of the current study (Atmowardoyo, 2018). The design obeys a cross-sectional design type as it focused on a specific time frame which for this study is limited to during and after the COVID-19 pandemic.

For the qualitative data from the interviews, the Thematic Analysis Protocol by Braun and Clarke (2017) was employed. The researcher followed this process in executing the qualitative approach: 1) familiarization with the data, 2) creating initial codes and categories, 3) searching for themes, 4) reviewing themes, 5) defining and naming themes, and 6) producing the report.

Triangulation of data will be used for validation, to create an in-depth analysis of the research, and interrogate inconsistencies in research findings (Nightingale, 2020). In this study, the process will include the utilization of quantitative data correlating it with the qualitative analyses of the research and merging the two sets of data and results to arrive with deeper insights and further strengthen the results of the study, thus substantiating the findings of the study.

2.2 Data Management

Data collection were done using a survey questionnaire to be distributed online through Google Forms. The questionnaire was sent via the social media pages of online food sellers in the City of Manila. Primary sources of data include surveys and casual unstructured interviews, that are specifically designed to answer the research question at hand (Benedictine University, n.d.). For the purpose of this study, primary data provide more accurate and useful information for the topic being studied.

The questionnaire is divided into four parts: inclusion criteria, challenges, marketing strategies, and effectiveness in generating sales. Aside from the estimated monthly sales which are continuous data, all of the information to be collected in this study fall under the categorical type of data. Categorical data refers to variables consisting of alphanumeric inputs that are treated as distinct symbols. No mathematical operation can be used and only the "is equal" or the logical operator can be applied (Kotu & Deshpande (2019).

Categorical data can be further classified as nominal or ordinal data. The four parts of the survey required nominal data where the respondents chose among the choices written as "names" or "strings of letters." These choices are not numerical in nature and, thus, have no intrinsic order. On the other hand, the part of the survey that requires the respondents to rate the effectiveness of given marketing strategies on a scale of 1 to 4. The last part asks for ordinal data, which are written "names" in the form of a scale, which, unlike nominal, comes with a hierarchy or distinct order (Dettori & Norvell, 2018). The responses on this question were treated as continuous data or numbers where mathematical operations can be performed.

The data to be generated from the online survey was organized using the built in data organization module of google forms. Google forms has a built-in excel results worksheet that presents the itemized responses of the respondents on the questions. These excel results sheets are further processed to code the data in preparation to the data processing which converts translated responses and data into meaningful insights and generalizations (Mendoza, 2017).

2.3 Sampling Design

The researcher obtained data on online food sellers in the City of Manila. Since the researcher conducted an online survey, Convenience and snowball Sampling (Non-Probability) was used. Specifically, the researcher uploaded the questionnaire to social media groups composed of online sellers in Manila and share the questionnaire with known online food sellers until the target number of responses is obtained. The respondents who also answered the said online survey were also asked or solicited with referrals regarding who other online sellers they know can participate the survey within their location.

2.3.1 Sample Size Determination
Table 1 in Appendix A presents the number of household population in Manila as of 2020 (PSA, 2020) with a total of 387,195. Considering that an increase in 53% usage in the shopping mobile app recorded in 2020 (Meyer, 2020) and the increase in Grab food deliveries of 30% during COVID-19 pandemic (Chan, 2020), this study assumes that about 42% of the residents in Manila engaged in one food selling during the pandemic and is still operating as of the conduct of this study. With this, the total population of online food sellers in Manila is estimated to be at about 162,000. This was used as the estimated population (N) to calculate the study's sample size based on the Cochran's Formula for large sample size calculation in appendix I (Qualitrics, 2024).

2.3.2. Respondents
The food industry is among the worst affected industries by the COVID-19. In order for food businesses to survive and continue their operations, they have to adapt. There has been an increased demand for catering to online consumers. Thus, these food businesses must transition to online platforms to help them reach their target customers. Given this scenario, the researcher came up with this study which focuses on online food sellers to understand their challenges and marketing strategies during the new normal.

In the Philippines, the minimum employment age for non-hazardous jobs is 15 years old (Official Gazette, n.d.). Filipinos who are 15 years old but below 18 years old, are allowed to work for 40 hours a week. In addition, working beyond the required 8 hours per day, are not allowed. Based on this, the study will include respondents between the age of 18 to 65. Aside from the age of the respondents, geographic location was also a factor for participating in the study. The geographic area of respondents is limited to the City of Manila, located in the National Capital Region. The size and location of the city have been used as a basis for the study's respondent inclusion. More business transactions occur in this city. Thus, focusing on this city can provide useful information on how the LGU and the related private sectors can improve the experiences of many online sellers in this location. It also provides a practical advantage for the researcher being a resident of Manila and the University being located in the same area.

Since the study revolves around online sellers and their perceived success despite their faced challenges, the respondents must have an existing online food business operating since January of 2020 through Facebook, Instagram, and other social media platforms, and is assumed to be continuous service. This criterion helps the researcher ensure that the respondents have faced the drastic transition brought by the COVID-19 pandemic, which peaked its impact during 2020. Moreover, online sellers in social media platforms such as Facebook, who sell ready-to-eat foods, frozen goods, or non-perishable goods for human consumption are all welcome to partake as respondents.

In summary, the qualified respondents were selected with the help of the social media platforms like Facebook, Instagram, Tiktok and the likes. The respondents should be between 18 – 59 years old, during the conduct of this study, residing in Manila, selling food products online for human consumption, and have begun their business by January 2020 or earlier and still actively operating at present.

2.3.3 Research Instrument
The lack of available research instruments employing descriptive comparative research design on the same topic required a researcher-constructed questionnaire (RCQ) specifically designed for the purpose of this study. The questionnaire developed for this study is composed of 7 pages with four (4) major parts, found in Appendix B.

Eligible participants of this study will be answering a 7-page, 4-part survey tool. Part 1 solicits the demographic profile of the respondents as to their age, location, civil status, computer proficiency, sex, occupation and personal income. This part will take about 3-5 minutes to accomplish.

The second part generates information on the business performance of small-scale online business sellers in terms of estimated monthly sales, types of foods sold online, monthly number of buyers/customers and advertisements utilized, duplicated to correspond to their responses during and post pandemic. This portion requires 5-7 minutes to finish.

The 3rd part of the survey questionnaire are questions regarding the perceived effectiveness of the marketing strategies of the small-scale online food sellers as to live selling, posting in marketplaces, promoting/posting in personal social media account, online engagements through online platforms, offering of products to personal network and use of online food delivery apps. The effectiveness of the marketing strategy will be directly measures using a 4-point Likert scale where 4 corresponds to highly effective, 3 is for effective, 2 is for slightly effective and 1 for not effective. The questions are also duplicated to correspond for the during and post pandemic assessment. This portion will take about 5-7 minutes to accomplish.

For the challenges encountered by online food sellers during the new normal, seven general categories are being studied, namely, digital advertisement, e-commerce platforms, delivery facilities, e-payment solutions, computer competence and ecommerce skills, number of competitors, and sales. Some of these broad categories were adopted from United Nation's report on COVID-19 and E-Commerce: Impact on Businesses and Policy Responses (UNCTD, 2020). The sub-categories were modified to apply to the Philippine setting, as summarized in Appendix B. This portion is estimated to take 7-10 minutes.

Overall, this survey tool can be accomplished in about 20 minutes.

2.3.4 Control Procedure

Data validation in quantitative research refers to the extent to which a study successfully addresses the research questions and hypotheses that prompted it. High validity is crucial for research to be accepted as reliable and to be certain about the accuracy of the results. The goal of data validation is to provide a program the clean, accurate, and valuable information it needs to function properly. It employs procedures, often referred to as "Validation Rules" to validate the information that is entered into the system. Data dictionary automation features or a specific application program validation subject are two options for enforcing the rules. One way to ensure the data is within the limits set by the system analyst is to use this technique. The face, content and context validation of the survey tool will be established by selecting at least three validators who have an established expertise in the field of research, business administration, and statistics. After the integration of the recommendations by the validators, the tool will be finalized for reliability.

A total of 15 pilot respondents was utilized to implement the design study protocol and establish the reliability of the tool. All responses are quantified and coded to convert the data into interval type of data and Cronbach Alpha coefficient of reliability was determined to assess the quality of questions formulated. Collins (2007) emphasized that Cronbach of alpha is one way of establishing the reliability of a set of questions grouped together and assessed through a multi-level of responses based on comparing the co-variance and relative variance of the said items. The type of questions is determined based on the magnitude of the Cronbach Alpha Coefficient, of which, analysts frequently use 0.7 as a benchmark value for Cronbach's alpha. At this level and higher, the items are sufficiently consistent to indicate the measure is reliable. Typically, values near 0.7 are minimally acceptable but not ideal. It is therefore a rule of thumb in Cronbach Alpha that the reliability coefficient of each dimension of a tool or individual indictor must have a value of 0.7 or higher (Mendoza, 2015).

The Cronbach alpha of the research tool for this study was found to be 0.78 in terms of business performance and 0.89 in terms of marketing strategies, indicating that the questions under the two domains of the tool are acceptable and good, respectively. An overall Cronbach Alpha coefficient of 0.91 indicates that the in general the tool constitutes excellent questions excellent internal consistency or reliability. The excellent Cronbach alpha further indicates that the questions as well as the major parts of the tool are highly correlated with each other, enabling the tool to measure consistently the underlying construct.

Table 2.1. Reliability of the Research Instrument of the Study

Tool Domain	***Cronbach Alpha***	***Interpretation***
Business Performance	*0.78*	*Acceptable*
Marketing Strategies	*0.89*	*Good*
Overall	***0.91***	***Excellent***

2.4 Statistical Treatment

All statistical calculations in this study was performed using excel for simple calculations, while the tests on hypothesis will be performed using MINITAB Statistical software version 18. All tests of hypotheses were performed at 0.05 level of significance and a confidence level of 95%. The following statistical treatment are implemented to address chronologically the objectives of this study.

To generate insightful data on the demographic profile of the respondents as well as the business performance of the online food sellers in Manila during and post pandemic, descriptive statistics in terms of frequency, relative frequency (percentage) was used to summarize and present the data collected in the study.

To determine the effectiveness of the marketing strategies of the online food sellers during and after/post pandemic, descriptive statistics in the form of counts and weighted mean was utilized. The 4-point Likert scale are converted into its weighted equivalent scale to provide more depth in the extent of effectiveness based on Table 2.1 (Mendoza, 2017).

To determine the relationship between the respondents' business performance and effectiveness of their marketing strategies, multiple regression was employed leveraging on the Pearson correlation coefficient to quantitatively determine the relationship between the variables with descriptive equivalents indicated in Table 2.2

Table 2.2 Weighted and Descriptive Equivalent of the Likert Scale Used in this Study.

Likert Scale	Weighted Equivalent	Descriptive Equivalent
4	3.26 – 4.00	Highly Effective (HE)
3	2.51 – 3.25	Effective (E)
2	1.76 – 2.50	Slightly Effective (SE)
1	1.00 – 1.75	Not Effective (NE)

Table 2.2. Pearson Correlation Coefficient Convention

Pearson r Range	Type of Correlation
0.00 - ±0.20	Negligible
±0.21 - ±0.40	Low Positive/Low Negative
±0.41 - ±0.50	Substantially Low (Positive/Negative) /Moderately Related (Positive/Negative)
±0.51 - ±0.80	High Positive/ High Negative
±0.81 - ±1.00	Very High Positive/Very High Negative

A correlation coefficient approaching ±1.00 indicates a very strong relationship between the business performance and marketing strategies.

To determine the difference in the effectiveness of marketing strategies according to the profile of the respondents, a studentized t-test will be used using a two-sample mean test for bivariate analysis, while multiple analysis of variance (MANOVA) was utilized for a multivariate analysis. Bivariate analysis comprised of 2 factors or levels being compared for each data set. In the case of the significant difference in the effectiveness of marketing strategies, when the respondents are grouped according to sex, which by limitation of this study is the binary gender male and female. Other demographic profiles were observed to be of multiple levels, thus, utilizing the single ANOVA to determine the differences between the demographic profiles which is then considered as an independent variable and the effectiveness of the marketing strategies is the independent variable. Since, ANOVA is an omnibus method (Kenton, 2023), of which, it only indicates that if there is a significant difference or not across a series of average values, a post hoc analysis using Tukey's Method will be performed on significant data sets after each implementation of the ANOVA to provide deeper insights through pairwise mean analysis and presented a more concrete generation of the origin and cause of the significance. All tests of hypothesis are significant at p- values less than 0.05.

2.5 Ethical Consideration

This paper, "Business Performance of Small-scale Online Sellers in Manila: A Proposed Marketing Strategies", focuses on the status and challenges encountered by online food sellers after COVID-19, and its influence with the profile of the respondents. This research also tackles the marketing strategies employed to remain competitive, and the effectiveness of such strategies as perceived by the sellers and reported in terms of estimated monthly sales. Thus, having the online food sellers as the respondents deems that ethical considerations are essential in this study.

2.5.1. Conflict of Interest

There is no conflict of interest to arise in the conduct of this study since the study will be conducted as an independent study and not at all coinciding to the current professional engagement of the researcher. The researcher's involvement in this research is solely for the purpose of contributing to scientific knowledge and advancing the field without any personal, financial, or professional biases that could influence the outcomes or interpretation of the results.

2.5.2 Privacy and Confidentiality
To ensure the protection of the personal information of the participants, those who opt to not disclose their personalities will remain anonymous throughout the whole research from data collection to data analysis. Their identification will be kept unknown, and their names will not be mentioned. Pseudonyms will be used to protect respondents' identities. To manage data confidentiality, a master list (excel file) will be stored separately and to be destroyed as soon as reasonably possible, 3 years after the completion of the study. Electronic data files will be password-protected while hard copies will be stored in a locked to safety. The information gathered will only be used for this study. This research also ensures that all protocols implemented comply to the mandates of the 202 Data Privacy Act of the Philippines.

2.5.3 Informed Consent Process
An informed consent form (see Appendix D) will be distributed to the participants before the conduct of the survey to inform them of their basic rights upon participation in this study. The inform consent form outlines what the study is all about and the extent of their participation in the study. The form also discusses the importance of process of volunteerism and the guidelines or procedure how to withdraw in case they feel no longer capable and comfortable doing so. The participants are also assured that the researcher and the educational institution maintains an open communication specially if untoward incidents related to the conduct of the online survey.

2.5.4 Vulnerability and Possible Risks
The proponent of this study assures that respondents' participation has no risks. The survey questionnaire will only involve descriptive statements that best describe the experiences, observations, or perceptions of the respondents. If the respondent feels uncomfortable in answering any of the questions, he/she can freely refrain or withdraw from participating in this activity. No vulnerable participants will be considered in this study.

2.5.5 Recruitment
The surveys will be organized and conducted online through the help of google forms. The respondents will be receiving the survey form via email, and such is accessible thru a link through their social media accounts. The survey form will require the respondents to tick appropriate answers. The survey questionnaire will obtain demographic information and gather data useful in determining the required data on the experiences of the small-scale online food sellers in the City of Manila.

The participation of the respondents in the study will be voluntary. The study will obtain consent before they agree to participate in the study. The participants will be informed of their rights to discontinue or withdraw from their participation during the data collection process without prejudice to their current professional and personal engagements. Likewise, the participants will be informed that they will not be given any financial or material benefit from their participation in the study and will be also informed that the findings of the study may be presented in fora, conferences, or publication.

2.5.6 Possible Benefits
There are no direct benefits on respondents' participation. However, it is hoped that the study's results will contribute to the future researcheThe Cronbach alpha of the research tool for this study was found to be 0.78 in terms of business performance and 0.89 in terms of marketing strategies, indicating that the questions under the two domains of the tool are acceptable and good, respectively. An overall Cronbach Alpha coefficient of 0.91 indicates that the in general the tool constitutes excellent questions excellent internal consistency or reliability. The excellent Cronbach alpha further indicates that the questions as well as the major parts of the tool are highly correlated with each other, enabling the tool to measure consistently the underlying constructrs and be beneficial to the community.

2.5.7 Compensation, Incentives or Reimbursements
The participants will be informed about the nature and extent of their involvement in the study. There is no direct contact to the respondents of the study so, there will be no compensation, incentives, reimbursements or any other financial consideration involved in participating this study.

2.5.8 Community Considerations
The online survey will be conducted from May – June 2024, and will take 10 to 20 minutes to complete. Online date gathering is considered to value the time of the respondents of this study. All respondents of this study will be verified adults in sound mind and of legal age to ensure the integrity and quality of the data to be generated as the results of the study will be shared to the community through appropriate platforms such as print or media publications, conferences and scientific fora to also generate comments and suggestions from experts and scholars in the field. The results of the study will be available upon request to those who are interested to have a full copy of the manuscript

3. Results

This sections presents the substantial findings based on the data processing techniques and strategies discussed in the methods section. Descriptive comparative and correlational techniques were employed to the quantitative data gathered which is the demographic profile of the respondents as well the business performance and marketing strategies before and after the pandemic. The results of the tests of hypothesis were also presented, all in the chronological order as presented in Chapter 1 of this study. The results of the Thematic analysis performed on interview data were also presented.

3.1. Demographic Profile of the Respondents

Figure 3.1a
Age of the Respondents

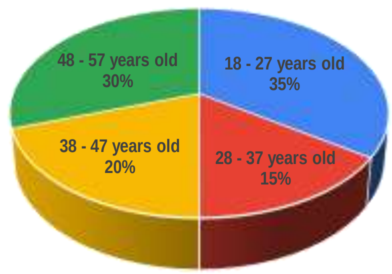


Figure 3.1a illustrates the demographic profile of the respondents in terms of age. It was revealed that 35% of the respondents are in the 18-27 years old age group, followed by the nest 30% who were in the 48-57 years old age group, the remaining 35% were comprised if 20% in the 38-47 years old age group and 15% in the 28-37 years old age group. These statistics shows that there is a diverse composition of age groups among online food sellers during and after the pandemic. This can be attributed to the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic itself when people are forced to stay at home and look for ways either to earn money or to buy time because of being suddenly isolated.

From Figure 3.1b, 56% of the online sellers are married while 44% were single. As what can be seen from the percentages, there is not much difference in the proportions of the civil status, since the COVID-19 pandemic itself have rendered most of the people confused and wondering what to do. The higher percentage of married online food sellers in Manila have manifested that many of the displaced workers during pandemic can be married people who tried hard to survive the financial challenges brought by the pandemic, while these financial challenges did not spare the single people, who felt the urge of engaging in to a non-contact business.

Figure 3.1b
Civil Status of the Respondents

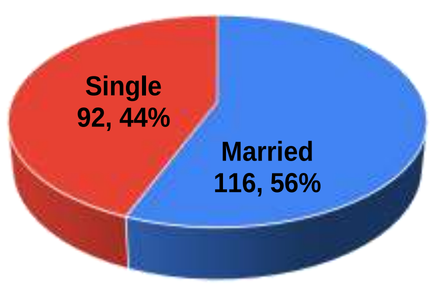
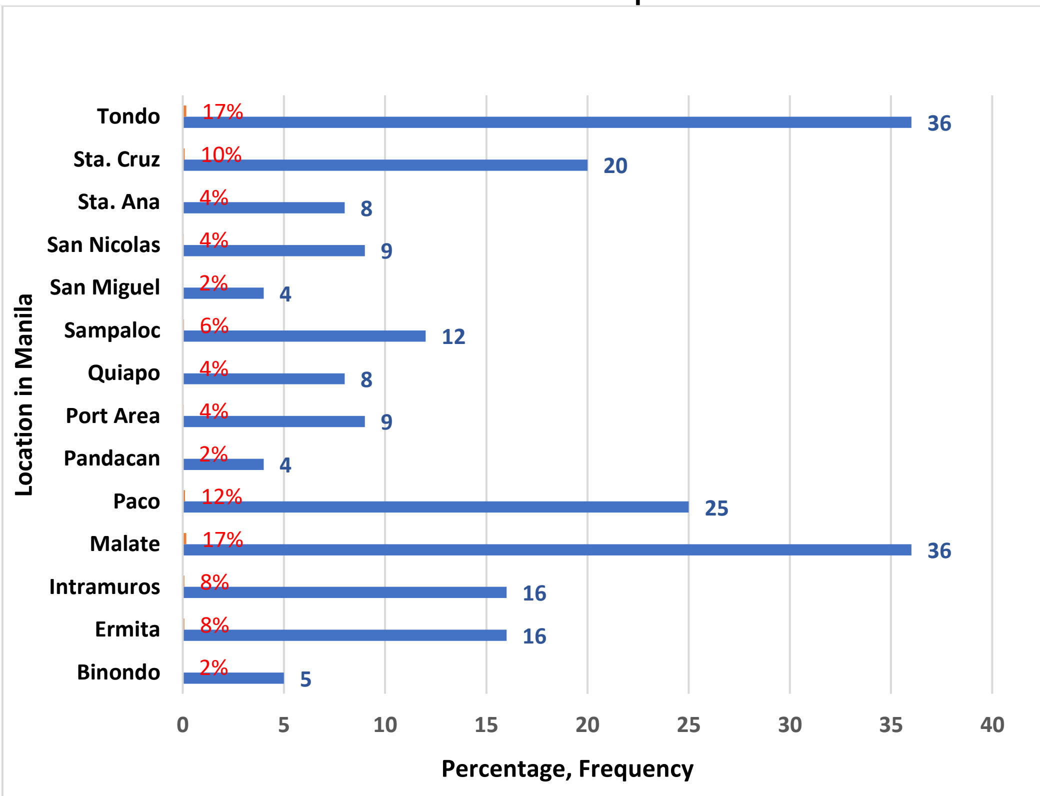


Figure 3.1c displays the distribution of the respondents in terms of their business location. It was found out that a total of 17% of the respondents were from Tondo and Malate, respectively. Paco housed the businesses of the 12% of the respondents, followed by 10% respondents who had their business location in Sta. Cruz and 8% has their businesses in Intramuros and Ermita, respectively, while 6% of them are located in Sampaloc. Overall, top business location of the online food sellers in Manila were Tondo, Malate, Paco, Sta. Cruz, Intramuros, Ermita and Sampaloc. As per PSA, these are also the top populated areas in Metro Manila since they house majority of important landmarks and attractions such as Universities, popular churches, historical landmarks, theme parks, etc.

Figure 3.1c
Business Location of the Respondents



As per computer literacy, it was found that almost ¾ or 75% of the respondents have advanced computer proficiency. Thirteen percent (13%) considered themselves novice while the remaining 11% assessed themselves as novice. It is expected that majority of the respondents are knowledgeable in using the computer since the mode of selling is online. Several novice respondents actually seek help and assistance from family members or friends who are good in computer, to proceed and be able to transact online orders.

Figure 3.1d C
Computer Proficiency of the Respondents

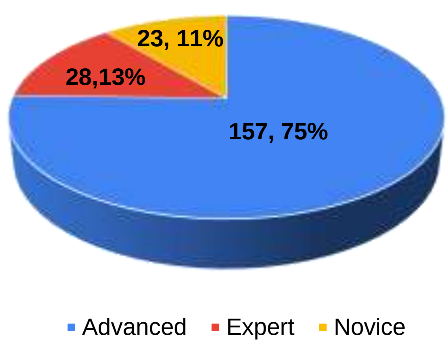
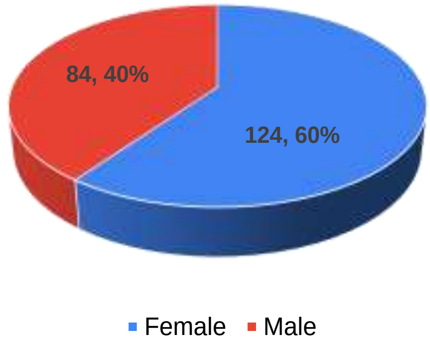


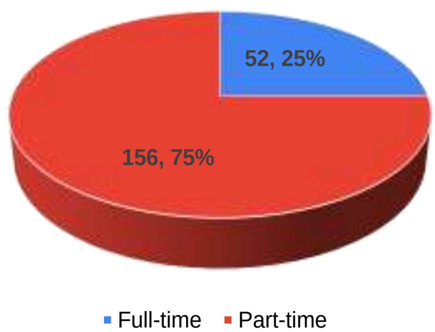
Figure 3.1e
Respondents' Sex



As expected, in terms of sex, majority or 60% of the respondents were female (see Figure 3.1e). This can be attributed to the fact that majority of women in the Philippine household still manages the kitchen. Foods are most of the time made in the kitchen by females in the households rather than men.

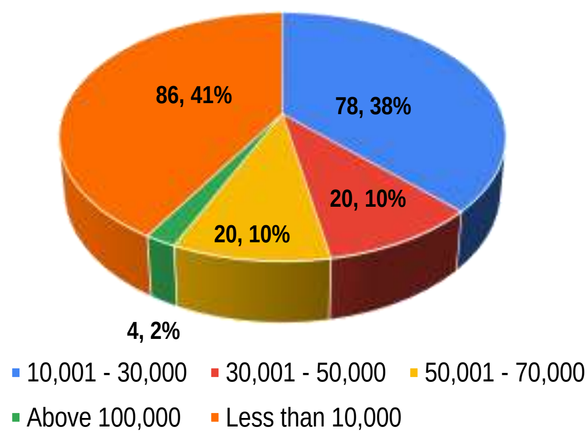
Figure 3.1f shows that ¾ or 75% of the online seller respondents were part time sellers while 25% were full time. This indicates that majority of the online food sellers in Manila are doing online food selling as an added income, on top of the income that they receive from their full-time engagements, while Figure 3.1g affirms that 41% of the respondents earns less than Php 10,000 in a month as an online food seller. It was further revealed that 38% of them earn Php 10,001 to Php30,000 in a month, followed by the 20% of the respondents earning Php 30,001

Figure 3.1f
Occupation as an Online Food Seller



to Php 70,000.00, and 2% of them earns more than Php 100,000 a month. It was also found that majority if the full-time online food sellers in Manila are in the monthly income range of Php 30,000 and above. As such, the personal monthly income of the respondents is influenced by several key factors, while time and type of merchandise are two of the several factors that were found to impact such personal monthly income.

Figure 3.1g
Respondent's Personal Monthly Income



3.2. Relationship between Business Performance and Effectiveness of the Market Strategies of the Online Food Sellers in Manila during and After COVID-19 Pandemic

Illustrated in Table 3.2 is the result of the test on the relationship of the business performance of the respondents and their market strategies during and after the pandemic.

Overall, it was revealed that there is a significant relationship between the business performance of the online food sellers in Manila and their marketing strategies. This is depicted by all p-values under 0.05 which resulted in the rejection of the null hypothesis. Further, indicating the direct influence of the marketing strategies of the online sellers to their business performance.

It can also be gleaned from the table that the relationship between the respondent's business performance and their marketing strategies during the pandemic ranges from significantly moderate to very high relationship. This means that the higher or the more effective their marketing strategies become, the better will be their business performance.

On the other hand, the results revealed a noticeable trend between the respondent's business performance and their marketing strategies. Across all marketing strategies, there yields a very high correlation between the two sets of variables considered. For instance, in terms of the relationship between digital advertisement strategies and their performance as to advertisements utilized, a very high correlation was obtained between the two during (R=0.96) and after (R=0.93) the pandemic implies that an intensified utilization of digital advertisement will correspond to an improved performance as to advertisement utilization. This further implies that the level of utilization of digital advertisement directly influence the advertisement utilization of the respondents in a greater level as compared its influence to the monthly sales, types of food sold online and the number of buyers.

Similarly, these trends can be treated also as true in terms of the relationship between the strategies for sales and their business performance as to monthly sales during (R=0.97) and after (R=93). The R values both corresponds to a very high relationship while p-values (p=0.025-during; p=0.001-after) both lower than 0.05 indicated a significant relationship between the 2 variables. This also implies that the enhancement of the marketing strategies for sales will significantly result in an increased business performance particularly in terms of the monthly sales, while influencing the types of food, no. of buyers and advertisement utilization in the moderate to high extent.

Table 3.1 Business Performance and Effectiveness of the Marketing Strategies of Online Food Seller During and After Covid-19 Pandemic

Marketing Strategies	Business Performance/ Period/Statistics	Monthly Sales		Types of Food Sold Online		No of Buyers		Advertisements Utilized	
		During	After	During	After	During	After	During	After
Digital Adverisements	*R*	0.54	0.72	0.68	0.64	0.74	0.63	**0.96**	**0.93**
	Type of Relationship	High	High	High	High	High	High	**Very High**	**Very High**
	p-value	0.002	0.000	0.001	0.028	0.000	0.033	**0.040**	**0.024**
	Interpretation	Significant	Significant	Significant	Significant	Significant	Significant	**Significant**	**Significant**
E-payment Solutions	*R*	0.79	0.72	0.66	0.58	**0.95**	**0.90**	**0.82**	**0.88**
	Type of Relationship	High	High	High	High	**Very High**	**Very High**	**Very High**	**Very High**
	p-value	0.005	0.008	0.041	0.039	**0.000**	**0.034**	**0.005**	**0.039**
	Interpretation	Significant	Significant	Significant	Significant	**Significant**	**Significant**	**Significant**	**Significant**
Online Platforms	*R*	0.63	0.30	0.57	0.49	**0.90**	**0.87**	**0.93**	**0.92**
	Type of Relationship	High	Low	Moderate	Moderate	**Very High**	**Very High**	**Very High**	**Very High**
	p-value	0.012	0.001	0.018	0.032	**0.030**	**0.048**	**0.007**	**0.000**
	Interpretation	Significant	Significant	Significant	Significant	**Significant**	**Significant**	**Significant**	**Significant**
Delivery	*R*	**0.94**	**0.94**	0.79	0.71	**0.96**	**0.91**	**0.91**	**0.89**
	Type of Relationship	**Very High**	**Very High**	High	High	**Very High**	**Very High**	**Very High**	**Very High**
	p-value	**0.044**	**0.003**	0.000	0.020	**0.001**	**0.027**	**0.011**	**0.014**
	Interpretation	**Significant**	**Significant**	Significant	Significant	**Significant**	**Significant**	**Significant**	**Significant**
Sales	*R*	**0.97**	**0.93**	0.52	0.69	0.75	0.63	0.56	0.67
	Type of Relationship	**Very High**	**Very High**	Moderate	High	High	High	Moderate	Moderate
	p-value	**0.025**	**0.001**	0.002	0.041	0.015	0.031	0.039	0.042
	Interpretation	**Significant**	**Significant**	Significant	Significant	Significant	Significant	Significant	Significant

On the other hand, there are several marketing strategies that were found to significantly impact multiple business performances. The strategies for delivery, for instance has very high relationship between monthly sales (R=0.94-during; R=0.94-after), number of buyers (R=0.96-during; R=0.91-after), and advertisements utilized (R=0.91-during; R=0.89-after). This indicates the high sensitivity of the business performance to the strategies for delivery as depicted by the p-values that were all lower than 0.05. The same trend in relationship between E-payment solutions and online platforms strategy and that of the no. of buyers and advertisement utilized during and after pandemic is observed. The very high relationship between e-payment solution strategies to that of the business performances as to no. of buyers (R=0.95-during; R=0.90-after) and that of advertisements utilized (R=0.82-during; R=0.88-after) during and after the pandemic illustrates the direct bearing of the marketing strategy on e-payments solutions and the business performance, in general. The same trend is observed in terms of the strategies for online platforms, which is also found to be very highly correlated to the business performance in the no. of buyers (R=0.90-during; R-0.87-after) and advertisements utilized (R=0.93-during; R=0.92-after) during and after the pandemic. The significance in the relationship between the marketing strategies previously discussed over the business performance mentioned were supported by their p-values which were all less than 0.05 leading to the rejection of null hypothesis.

Overall, the high to very high significant relationships between Business Performance and Effectiveness of the respondent's marketing strategy leads to several positive implications and risks. On the significant relationship between the advertisements and monthly sales, no of buyers, types of foods sold online and advertisements utilized, indicate that digital advertisements influence the seller's revenue generation, the varieties of the foods they sell, their number of customers and the type of advertisements they use to market the product. This also indicates that the sales, products being sold, the customers as well as the promotions are highly responsive to the changes of advertising intensity underscoring the importance of digital marketing a key driver of business performance. Further, these significantly high relationships can lead to increased ROI (Lambrecht & Tucker, 2013) and will enable the sellers to fine-tune audience targeting and creatives and well as budget allocations to maximize results (Chaffey & Ellis-Chadwick, 2019), while on the downside, if a business developed heavy reliance on digital advertising requires budget for digital platforms (Fulgoni & Lipsman, 2015).

On the high to very high significant relationship between e-payment solutions and online platforms and the business performance as to monthly sales, types of food sols, number of customers and advertisements utilized suggests seamless accessible and secure payment systems are critical enablers of revenue growth, product diversification, clientele and promotional systems. This means that the high relationship between e-payment systems and monthly sales and that no of buyers implies that the e-payment solutions being utilized contribute to sales growth and customer conversion. OECD (2020) in their study stated that offering a variety of convenient payment options (like GCash, Paymaya, bank transfers, etc.) enhances customer trust and boosts purchase frequency. In addition, BSP (2022) mentioned that e-payment systems help the online sellers tap into previously unbanked and underbanked customer segments while allowing the sellers to collect customer transaction data which can be used for customized marketing, dynamic pricing and inventory management (Laudon & Traver, 2021). In terms of associated risks on the high reliance to e-payment systems and online platdorms, KPMG (2020) emphasized that increased digital payment volumes may encourage payment fraud and other forms of fraud, which can erode the profitability and customer trust if not managed efficiently, in addition to the possibility of exclusion of non-digital customers or 0those older and less "tech savvy" customers limiting market segments in regions with low internet connectivity and low digital literacy (World Bank, 2022).

The generally very high significant relationship between delivery facilities and that of the business performance as to monthly sales, types of food sold online, no. of customers and advertisements utilized indicates that the efficiency, reach and reliability of logistics and delivery operations are one of the critical factors driving onsumer purchasing behavior specially on terms of small scale online food selling. This means that businesses with better delivery services experience greater customer retention, higher sales volumes, patronage to product diversity and more accepted promotional ads. (World Bank, 2022). ADB (2020) added that advanced delivery capabilities allow sellers to unlock new demand which may redound to addition or modification of the types of foods currently being offered while continued increase in sales volume due to very satisfactory delivery capabilities results to brand perception and customers trust. On the risks associated to these relationships, it can be noted that the daily operations then of the business becomes dependent to the delivery capabilities which may equate to dependence on logistic systems making the business very disturbed of delays including sluggish internet connectivity, in addition to the higher investment requirement when they aim for faster delivery facilitation.

3.3. Business Performance of Small-scale Online Food Sellers in Manila During and After the Pandemic

Shown in Table 3.3a is the monthly sales of the respondents during and after the pandemic. Majority of the respondents are earning more than Php 5,000 and above as indicated by the 41% earning more than Php 10,000, 13% earning Php 7,0001 to Php 10,000 another 10% earning Php 5,001 to Php 7,000. This results in a cumulative proportion of 64% earning above Php 5,000 during the pandemic. The same trend was observed in their monthly sales after the pandemic, while such cumulative proportion increased to 72%, comprising of 43% of the online sellers earning more than Php 10,000, 19% earning Php 7,001 to Php 10,000 and 10% earning Php 5,001 to Php 7,000.00. The slight increase in the proportion of online food sellers in Manila earning above Php 5,000 can be attributed to the easing of the quarantine guidelines and totally lifting the ban by 2021. People tend to execute more engagements, alleviating the demand for foods that will just be consumed outright.

The test on the difference in the monthly sales during and after pandemic of the online food sellers in Manila yielded an t-value of 0.44 and a p-value of 0.622 which is higher than 0.5. This resulted on the acceptance if the null hypothesis indicating that even though the proportion of those who are earning above Php 5,000 increased from 64% 50 74% and the other changes in percentage, are not significant. This means that overall, there is no significant difference in the monthly sales of the online food sellers in Manila during and after the pandemic. As such, online food sellers in Manila have steady income during and even after the pandemic. This stability in the income during and after the pandemic can be attributed to the adoption of e-commerce as a platform to providing what people need regardless of the actual business environment (Diaz-Guttierez et al., 2023). This, in addition can also be qualified under as a sustained consumer behavior Post Pandemic that they mentioned to contribute to steady income streams for online sellers. The rise of e-commerce, busy lifestyles and the convenience of the same-day or next-day deliveries as discussed by Totolo & Baijal (2020) in their article, in this study, have resulted in the exponential growth of online food purchase in Manila during and after the pandemic and this same reasons provide convenience to the customers even after pandemic creating a dynamic but stable financial pattern.

Table 3.3a. Monthly Sales

Monthly Sales (PhP)	During Pandemic		After Pandemic	
	f	%	f	%
Less than 1,000	24	12	12	6
1,001 - 3,000	12	6	12	6
3,001 - 5,000	40	19	36	17
5,001 - 7,000	20	10	20	10
7,001 - 10,000	26	13	39	19
Above 10,000	86	41	89	43
Totals	208	100	208	100
Ave: Php 7,866.39 (D) Php 7,529.85 (A)	**t-value**	**p-value**	**Decision on Ho**	**Interpretation**
During vs. After Pandemic Monthly Sales	***0.44***	***0.622***	***Accept***	***Not Significant***

Shown in Table 3.3b are the types of foods sold online by the respondents. In terms of single food product sold during pandemic, most types of food sold are prepared beverage (24%), desserts (8%), frozen foods (6%), while baked goods, (packed) beverages, locally produced fruits and vegetables, meat, poultry and seafood dishes, all are observed to be at the proportion of 2%, respectively. The same trend is exhibited in terms of single food types sold online after pandemic but with a slight increase of percentage in terms of prepared beverages (25%), while majority of the other food types lowered such as desserts lowered down to 6%, frozen foods also down at 4%. Baked goods, (packed) beverages, meat and poultry dishes all stayed at 2% each while locally produced fruits and vegetables was no longer sold online after pandemic.

While in most cases, the respondents sell several combinations of food. Classic example is that some 19% of the online food sellers during the pandemic and 21% of them after the pandemic are selling canned goods together with frozen foods, while 5% of them both during and after pandemic sells (packed) beverages together with (cooked with rice) meat, poultry and seafood dishes. Other ventured into a more diverse set of foods to sell online like selling frozen foods together with (packed) beverages (4% both periods). While some food combinations which were not offered during pandemic is offered after pandemic namely (packed) beverages and (prepared) savory snacks, canned goods, as well as combination of meat, poultry and seafood dishes (cooked with rice) and desserts. On the other hand, food combinations such as frozen foods together with meat, poultry and seafood (cooked with rice) and baked goods were sold only during the pandemic. I was also revealed that the average monthly sales of the respondents are at Php 7866.39.

The difference in the types of foods sold online before and after the pandemic were found to be significant with a t-value of -15.92 and a p-value of less than 0.001, which resulted in the rejection of the null hypothesis. This indicates that the types of food particularly the combination of the types of foods sold online during the pandemic is totally different from the ones sold after the pandemic. The significance in the difference of the types of food sold during and after the pandemic in Manila can be compared to the seller tends to modify their food combination depending on the need of the situation. This is particularly true in the case of the sales of locally produced fruits and vegetables which were only done during the pandemic but not after. This is mainly because of the restrictions during lock downs that people themselves chose not to go out and buy these for themselves, instead rely by trust on different online food seller, particularly the ones nearby or within their locality, while after the pandemic, specially, when the pandemic was lifted by WHO (2023), people felt safe going out again and restoring majority of their daily routine, which included going to market places to buy and select their own local fruits and vegetables.
In summary, the pandemic significantly influenced the variety of foods sold online which in turn impacted the business performance of online sellers. The shift in consumer behavior towards online food purchasing during and after the pandemic led to both national and global diversification of online food offerings increasing demand of online food products impacting the seller's business performance. This is consistent as that of the previous findings, as Morales & Rubio (2023) mentioned how this online ordering habit will positively influence the financial performance of the seller.

Table 3.3c presents the number of buyers of foods sold online before and after the pandemic. The table revealed that the online food sellers were able to maintain their number of buyers, on the other hand, sellers with less than 10 buyers (8%) during the pandemic were observed to have increased reach after the pandemic evidenced by the lowering of the proportion to 4% after pandemic. This means that this lowering of the buyer in this level results in the increase in the next level of the number of buyers. This is the same trend that can be observed in terms of those with 31-50 buyers (39%) during the pandemic which is lowered to 34% after the pandemic, which was compensated in terms of the 51-70 buyers per month at

18% during the pandemic but increased to 24% after the pandemic, which can also be the case in the 71-100 buyers and above 100 buyers per month.

On the other hand, test on the difference in the number of buyers during and after the pandemic was found to be not significant as depicted by a t-value of -0.15 and a p-value of 0.884. The obtained p-value of 0.884 which was found to be higher than 0.5 influenced the acceptance of the null hypothesis indicating that the number of buyers during and after the pandemic neither increase nor decrease, rather they are just being commuted to the next higher tier, which is obvious in this set of data. This indicates that even though the pandemic era was felt across generations from Gen X, Boomers, Gen Z to Millennials (Prime Commerce Asia, 2023), the generational gap was not significant to effect the buying behavior of the consumers. The important caveat is that the period of the study which is during and after Pandemic is rapidly evolving so the preferences and responses of the customers and buyers are quickly subject to change due to the circumstances.

Table 3.3b. Type of Foods Sold Online

	During Pandemic		After Pandemic	
Types of food Sold Online	**F**	**%**	**f**	**%**
Baked Goods (bread, puto, etc.)	4	2	4	2
Baked Goods (bread, puto, etc.), Desserts (prepared sweets)	8	4	8	4
Beverages (packed, i.e. non-alcoholic bottled drinks)	4	2	4	2
Beverages (packed, i.e. non-alcoholic bottled drinks), Beverages (prepared – nonalcoholic such as milk tea, shakes, smoothies, brewed coffee, etc.)	20	10	20	10
Beverages (packed, i.e. non-alcoholic bottled drinks), Savory Snacks (cooked and prepared such as pancit, spaghetti, lumpiang gulay, etc.)			***4***	***2***
Beverages (packed, i.e. non-alcoholic bottled drinks), Meat, Poultry and Seafood Dishes (cooked with or with rice)	10	5	10	5
Canned Goods			***4***	***2***
Canned Goods, Desserts (prepared sweets)	4	2	4	2
Canned Goods, Frozen Foods (frozen uncooked meat, poultry, seafood, processed foods)	***40***	***19***	***44***	***21***
Desserts (prepared sweets)	***16***	***8***	***12***	***6***
Frozen Foods (frozen uncooked meat, poultry, seafood, processed foods)	***12***	***6***	***8***	***4***
Frozen Foods (frozen uncooked meat, poultry, seafood, processed foods), Beverages (packed, i.e. non-alcoholic bottled drinks)	8	4	8	4
Frozen Foods (frozen uncooked meat, poultry, seafood, processed foods), Locally Produced Fruits and Vegetables	***8***	***4***	***4***	***2***
Frozen Foods (frozen uncooked meat, poultry, seafood, processed foods), Meat, Poultry and Seafood Dishes (cooked with or with rice)	***4***	***2***		
Locally Produced Fruits and Vegetables	***4***	***2***		
Locally Produced Fruits and Vegetables, Meat, Poultry and Seafood Dishes (cooked with or with rice)	4	2	4	2
Meat, Poultry and Seafood Dishes (cooked with or without rice)	4	2	4	2
Meat, Poultry and Seafood Dishes (cooked with or without rice), Desserts (prepared sweets)			***5***	***2***
Meat, Poultry and Seafood Dishes (cooked with or without rice), Desserts (prepared sweets)			***5***	***2***
Meat, Poultry and Seafood Dishes (cooked with or without rice), Baked Goods (bread, puto, etc.)	***5***	***2***		
Meat, Poultry and Seafood Dishes (cooked with or without rice), Savory Snacks (cooked and prepared such as pancit, spaghetti, lumpiang gulay, etc.)	4	2	4	2

	t-value	p-value	Decision on Ho	Interpretation
During vs. After Pandemic Types of Food Sold Online	***-15.92***	***<0.001***	***Reject***	***Significant***

Table 3.3c. Number of Buyers

Monthly Buyers (Transactions)	During Pandemic		After Pandemic	
	f	%	f	%
Less than 10	16	8	4	2
11 – 30	61	29	61	29
31 - 50	82	39	70	34
51 - 70	37	18	49	24
71 - 100	8	4	4	2
Above 100	4	2	20	10
Totals	208	100	208	100
Average No. of Buyers: 43 / 39cowhich	**t-value**	**p-value**	**Decision on Ho**	**Interpretation**
During vs. After Pandemic Number of Buyers	***-0.15***	***0.884***	***Accept***	***Not Significant***

On the advertisements utilized by online food sellers (see Table 3.3d), it was revealed that all of 100% of the respondents maintains at least 1 social media account to use in their online selling activities. Majority of them uses Facebook, with 38% of them utilizing Facebook alone during the pandemic, while about 50% of them utilize Facebook with other social media platform like Instagram and twitter, together with other means of advertisements in the form of SMS, text blast to conventional advertisements in the form of posters, flyers and pamphlets. IT was also revealed that about 12% of them utilized other social media platforms not included in the checklist for this study, to name a few are carousel, Shoppe and Lazada selling platform and the likes.

After the pandemic, the number of online sellers utilize Facebook lowered down to 36% while the number of sellers utilizing Facebook, particularly in combination with other social media platform and conventional advertisement media increase by 2-4%. Similarly, it was observed that online food sellers defer to using Instagram as a sole advertisement media, while the number of sellers utilizing posters, pamphlets, SMS and Text Blast increased also by 4%. The difference in the advertisement utilized by online food sellers during and after the pandemic was tested and yielded a t-value of 8.73 and a p-value of 0.002 which is lower than 0.05, resulting in the rejection of the null hypothesis. This means that there is a significant difference in the advertisements utilized by the online food sellers in Manila during and before the pandemic. Obviously, Facebook, in combination with other social media platform and conventional advertisement media proved to be the best way to utilize their business, while the significant difference in the utilization of advertisement during and after the pandemic can be brought about by the transit if the respondents from Instagram to Facebook and conventional advertisement media such as posters, pamphlets, SMS/Text blasts and even brochures.

Table 3.3d. Advertisements Utilized

Advertisements Utilized	During Pandemic		After Pandemic	
	f	%	f	%
Facebook	***78***	***38***	***74***	***36***
Facebook, Instagram	***20***	***10***	***36***	***17***
Facebook, Instagram, Others (social media platform not listed above)	***8***	***4***		
Facebook, Instagram, Posters, Others (social media platform not listed	***4***	***2***		
Facebook, Instagram, Posters, SMS/Text Blast			***8***	***4***
Facebook, Instagram, SMS/Text Blast			***4***	***2***
Facebook, Instagram, Twitter	***21***	***10***	***17***	***8***
Facebook, Instagram, Twitter, Others (social media platform not listed above)	4	2	4	2
Facebook, Instagram, Twitter, Posters	***4***	***2***	***8***	***4***
Facebook, Instagram, Twitter, Posters, Pamphlets, SMS/Text Blast, Others (social			***8***	***4***
Facebook, Instagram, Twitter, SMS/Text Blast	4	2	4	2
Facebook, Others (social media platform not listed above)	12	6	12	6
Facebook, Posters	***4***	***2***		

Facebook, Posters, Pamphlets, SMS/Text Blast					***4***	***2***
Facebook, Posters, SMS/Test Blast, Others (social media platform not listed above)			***4***	***2***		
Instagram					***4***	***2***
Facebook, SMS/Test Blast			***4***	***2***		
Posters, Pamphlets, SMS/Text Blast					***4***	***2***
SMS/Text Blast, Others (social media platform not listed above)					***4***	***2***
Others (social media platform not listed above)			***25***	***12***	***17***	***8***
	t-value	**p-value**		**Decision on Ho**		**Interpretation**
During vs. After Pandemic Advertisements Utilized	***8.73***	***0.002***		***Reject***		***Significant***

This may be again influenced by the surge of people having lesser capability to use the internet due to increased mobility and increased work demand for bandwidth, while some who went back to work had server restrictions to social media. When asked to expound on this, some companies and even government agencies do not allow employees to use Facebook during office hours to the extent of restricting their servers, making these people unable to surf

Facebook and other advertisements using company PCs and laptops. Having a pamphlet or poster to picture on and go back, or an SMS to scroll up or down is easier to go back to the contact details of these online.

3.4. Difference in the Marketing Strategies and the Online Food Seller's Demographic Profile

Table 3.4a illustrates the test on the difference in the marketing strategies of the respondents when grouped according to age during and after the pandemic. Significant differences in the marketing strategies of the online food sellers were observed in terms of their age during and after the pandemic. The significant difference in the marketing strategies were indicated by an F-value of 58.53 and a p-value OF <0.001 which is less than 0.05 in relation to their age which obtained an F-value of 75.12 with a p-value of <0.001 which is also less than 0.05, indicating that each age group has a pronounced difference in the marketing strategies. For instance, the age group of 18027 years old have different sets marketing strategies to that of 28-37 years old and so on.

The significant difference in their strategies according to age during and after the pandemic is depicted by an F-value of 15.40 and a p-value of <0.001 which is also less than 0.05, leading to the rejection of the null hypothesis, thus, supporting the conclusion in the overall, that there are significant differences in the marketing strategies when the respondents are group according to their age during and after the pandemic. This also confirms the significant interaction between age and the marketing strategies employed by the online food sellers in Manila.

Similar trends were noted in the significant difference in the marketing strategies employed by the respondents when grouped according to business location, civil status, computer literacy, sex, status as an online seller and monthly sales. All have exhibited significant differences in terms of marketing strategies during and after the pandemic, and statistically proven interact with one another during and after the pandemic.

The significant difference in the marketing strategies as to business location during and after pandemic can be brought about by the changes in consumer behavior and buying preference during the pandemic (PWC,2020), which tends to be carried over after the pandemic. As Fat Bit Technologies (2021) have sited, the current e-commerce which was directly influenced by the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic is comparable to the reincarnation of the olden day goldmines, which was then the source of wealth, and fortunes of individual and corporations around the world as far as commercial activities and transactions are concerned. According to them, business men, by the onset of the pandemic has to site-specifically reformulate their marketing strategies in an attempt to dominate the business field as they know that they are not the only players in an ever expanding online business environment because other minor players, equating the significant difference in the marketing strategies in terms of business location during and after the pandemic to be significantly attributed to the dynamics of market competition particularly during the pandemic that was significantly carried over after the pandemic. This was supported by Guilen-Royo's (2019) study citing that many business owners have moved their operations from conventional ways to internet operations in order to thrive.

Similarly, the significant difference in the marketing strategy when the respondents are grouped according to civil status and sex during and after the pandemic is also associated to the dynamism and volatility of market competition. This is also in relation to Chang & Meyerhoefer's (2020) findings that people of in all sorts of life, married or single, male or female need to strategize for the reduction of job loss and food insecurity and selling food online (as new platform) is ventured and considered.

Table 3.4a Difference in the Marketing Strategies of the Respondent's in Relation to their Demographic Profile During and After the Pandemic

Source of Variation	*SS*	*df*	*MS*	*F*	*P-value*	*Interpretation*
AGE	1.543	1	1.543	75.12	<0.001	Significant
Strategies	4.809	4	1.202	58.53	<0.001	Significant
Period	1.265	4	0.316	15.40	<0.001	Significant
Within	0.616	130	0.020			
Total	8.233	139				
Source of Variation	*SS*	*df*	*MS*	*F*	*P-value*	*Interpretation*
LOCATION	4.937	1	4.937	24.02	<0.001	Significant
Strategies	11.301	4	2.825	13.75	<0.001	Significant
Period	3.364	4	0.8411	4.09	0.004	Significant
Within	26.718	130	0.2055			
Total	46.321	139				
Source of Variation	*SS*	*df*	*MS*	*F*	*P-value*	*Interpretation*
CIVIL STATUS	0.785	1	0.785	45.13	<0.001	Significant
Strategies	2.356	4	0.589	33.85	<0.001	Significant
Period	0.540	4	0.135	7.76	0.004	Significant
Within	0.174	110	0.017			
Total	3.855	119				
Source of Variation	*SS*	*df*	*MS*	*F*	*P-value*	*Interpretation*
COMPUTER LITERACY	1.157	1	1.157	28.674	<0.001	Significant
Strategies	2.950	4	0.737	18.279	<0.001	Significant
Period	0.586	4	0.147	3.633	0.022	Significant
Within	0.807	120	0.040			
Total	5.500	129				
Source of Variation	*SS*	*df*	*MS*	*F*	*P-value*	*Interpretation*
SEX	0.769	1	0.769	66.04	<0.001	Significant
Strategies	2.242	4	0.560	48.10	<0.001	Significant
Period	0.523	4	0.131	11.23	0.001	Significant
Within	0.116	100	0.012			
Total	3.651	119				
Source of Variation	*SS*	*df*	*MS*	*F*	*P-value*	*Interpretation*
STAT. SELLER	0.726	1	0.726	44.19085	<0.001	Significant
Strategies	2.227	4	0.557	33.90784	<0.001	Significant
Period	0.522	4	0.130	7.944018	0.004	Significant
Within	0.164	10	0.016			
Total	3.638	149				
Source of Variation	*SS*	*df*	*MS*	*F*	*P-value*	*Interpretation*
MONTHLY	2.217	1	2.217	60.60	<0.001	Significant

SALES						
Strategies	6.207	4	1.552	42.42	<0.001	Significant
Period	1.447	4	0.362	9.89	<0.001	Significant
Within	1.829	150	0.037			
Total	11.700	159				

This is also because both consumers and sellers have adjusted to their needs and become a key component of the retail company.

The significant difference on the marketing strategy as to computer literacy, status as a seller and monthly sales during and after pandemic is brought about also by the changes in the landscape of sudden shift of the business environment as many business owners have moved their operations from conventional ways to digitization during the pandemic. Leone at al. (2020) in relation to this have confirmed the reduced availability of food by the general population has prompted coping mechanisms such as bulk purchasing, meal delivery and online food ordering. Shifting their strategies often from time to time have made the online food business to thrive, which later was used also to address the prevailing socioeconomic challenges on employment loss. As per the study of Arora and Sanni (2018), the satisfactory equilibrium in the application of social media-based promotion, social media marketing, social commerce and social capacity have increased the requirement on knowledge to handling computers and digital instruments to increase their firm's value, and more and more, men and women tend to engage into the online business even in the full or part-time capacity.

One of the demographic profiles exhibiting a twist in the significant difference during and after the pandemic is their marketing strategies as to their personal monthly income (see Table 3.4b). As illustrated, an F-value of 7.36 and a p-value of 0.010 which is lower than 0.05 in the monthly income and an F-value of 7.02 with a p-value of <0.001 proves that there is a statistically significant difference in the marketing strategies of the respondents when they are grouped according to monthly income. This means that each respondent belonging to a unique monthly income range has their own marketing strategy being implemented, significantly different from the others belonging to the next or other monthly income range/level. On the other hand, an F-value of 2.03 with a p-value of 0.109 which is greater than 0.05 indicates that such difference in the marketing strategy is not significantly different during and after pandemic when monthly sales is considered. This means that though each are implementing different marketing strategies, such difference is not visible when monthly sales during and after the pandemic is considered. This means that the interaction between the monthly sales and marketing strategies is not time-bound, and that pandemic or not, online business food sellers in Manila will continue to modify their strategies not only because of the pandemic, but it will be more on the business dominance or business resiliency.

Table 3.4b Relationship of Marketing Strategies to the Respondent's Personal Monthly Income During and After the Pandemic

Source of Variation	*SS*	*df*	*MS*	*F*	*P-value*	*Interpretation*
MONTHLY INCOME	1.600	1	1.600	7.36	0.010	Significant
Strategies	6.093	4	1.523	7.02	<0.001	Significant
Period	1.762	4	0.440	2.03	0.109	Not Significant
Within	8.684	40	0.217			
Total	18.137	49				

3.5. Extent of Effectiveness of the Marketing Strategies of Online Food Sellers during and after the COVID-19 Pandemic

Shown in Table 3.5a is the effectiveness of marketing strategies in terms of digital advertisements in the business performance of the respondents during and after the pandemic. Results revealed that the respondents believe that promoting and posting in their personal social media account during (WM=3.71) and after (WM=3.59) the pandemic is highly effective, which obtained the highest weighted mean also from both periods. This is supported by the findings in Table 3.5 which indicated that greater majority of the respondents utilizes Facebook as their social media platform in promoting their businesses online.

Moreover, during the pandemic, the respondents believe that promoting/posting in social media page is also highly effective (WM=3.36), while this becomes effective (WM=3.18) after the pandemic. Overall, the respondents could have been under this perception as people during the pandemic tend to be more responsive online, as this is the only mode of communication due torestricted outside activity. In addition, the respondents also believe that posting in the market places is equally effective during (WM=3.11) and after (WM=3.11) the pandemic. On the other hand, live selling which was also found out be effective during (WM=2.55) and after (WM=2.88) the pandemic obtained the lowest weighted mean among the other indicators. This, according to the casual interviews conducted among respondents maybe due to fact the most of them does not believe that live selling is the best way to promote food products on line as it is good or a product that easily degrades over time. Some foods are best consumed while hot, while some are best consumed while cold or frozen, and waiting for a buyer to "mine" such item will have a significant effect on the quality of the food itself.

Overall, it was also found out that the responses of the online food sellers in Manila in the effectiveness of their marketing strategy on digital advertisements is effective during (WM=3.18) and after (WM=3.19) the pandemic as depicted by the calculated t-value of 0.89 and a p-value of 0.913 which is higher than 0.05, leading to the acceptance of the null hypothesis that indicated equal effectiveness during and after the pandemic. As Crismundo (2020) have stated, this may be due to the ever-increasing internet and social media presence and usage in the Philippines, which have opened the perspective among Filipinos to pursue online business activities. It is within this space that many small e-commerce businesses in the Philippines including small-scale online food businesses stepping forward every day.

Table 3.5a. Effectiveness of Digital Advertisements in the Business Performance of the Respondents

A. Marketing Strategies for Digital Advertisements	During Pandemic		After Pandemic	
	WM	Interpretation	WM	Interpretation
1.Live selling (N=85; N/A = 123:	2.55	Effective	2.88	Effective
2.Posting in marketplaces (N=172; N/A = 36: N=184; N/A=24)	3.11	Effective	3.11	Effective
3.Promoting/Posting in social media business page (N=160; N/A = 48: N=184; N/A=24)	3.36	Highly Effective	3.18	Effective
4.Promoting/ Posting in personal social media account (N=200; N/A=8: N=200; N/A=8)	3.71	Highly Effective	3.59	Highly Effective
Overall Mean and Interpretation	**3.18**	**Effective**	**3.19**	**Effective**

	t-value	*p-value*	*Decision on Ho*	*Interpretation*
During and After Pandemic Effectiveness of Advertisements	**0.89**	**0.913**	**Accept**	**Not Significant**

Table 3.5b. Effectiveness of Marketing Strategies for E-Payment Systems in the Business Performance of the Respondents

B. Marketing Strategies for E-Payment Systems	During Pandemic		After Pandemic	
	WM	Interpretation	WM	Interpretation
1.Use of e-wallets such as g-cash and paymaya, etc for non-COD payments (N=208)	3.62	Highly Effective	3.87	Highly Effective
2.Allow use of online/digital bank transfers for non-COD payments (N=140; N/A=68; N=194; N/A=14)	3.41	Highly Effective	3.79	Highly Effective
3.Allow the use of both e-wallets and bank transfers for COD payments (N=172; N/A=36: N=208)	3.26	Highly Effective	3.45	Highly Effective
Overall Mean and Interpretation	**3.43**	**Highly Effective**	**3.70**	**Highly Effective**

	t-value	*p-value*	*Decision on Ho*	*Interpretation*
During and After Pandemic Effectiveness of Advertisements	**1.29**	**0.728**	**Accept**	**Not Significant**

In terms of the marketing strategies for e-payment system (see Table 3.5b), it was revealed that overall, the respondent believe that their strategies are highly effective during (WM=3.43) and after (WM=3.48) the pandemic. This overall high effectiveness is brought about by high effectiveness in the use of w-wallets such as gcash, paymaya, etc for non-COD payments during (WM=3.62) and even after (WM=3.87) the pandemic, high effectiveness in allowing the use of online/digital bank transfers for non-COD payments during (WM=3.41) and after (3.79) the pandemic and the high effectiveness in allowing the use of both e-wallets and bank transfers for COD payments during (WM=3.26) and after (WM=3.45) the pandemic.

It was also revealed that overall, the marketing strategies during and after the pandemic is equally highly effective as illustrated by a t-value of 1.29 and a p-value of 0.728 which is greater than 0.05 supporting the acceptance of the null hypothesis. This further indicate the online food seller in Manila, in general has been fully aware of the use and benefits of e-wallets and bank transfers which is not attributed anymore with the pandemic, rather in the ease of doing business, including safety of financial transactions. This is supported by Sanchez, 2020 and Meyer, 2020 the COVID-19 pandemic has forced the country to embrace the digital world, and recognizing its benefits, the respondents have maintained consistent implementation of the strategies until the lifting of the ban and restrictions.

As illustrated in Table 3.5c is the effectiveness of marketing strategies for online platforms in the business performance of the respondents. It was found out that the respondents believe that their strategies in terms of online engagement through online platforms in promoting products or building network through comments or discussions is highly effective during the pandemic (WM=3.84) while such effectiveness downgrades to "effective" after the pandemic (WM=2.81). This could have been attributed to the ample time people have in engaging with online conversations and communications during the pandemic as compared after the pandemic where majority of the usual daily activities are being restores in particular, the activities related to work which limits then and individual's use of social media platforms.

Table 3.5c. Effectiveness of Marketing Strategies for Online Platforms in the Business Performance of the Respondents

	During Pandemic		After Pandemic	
C. Marketing Strategies for Online Platforms	**WM**	**Interpretation**	**WM**	**Interpretation**
1.Online engagement through online platforms (promoting products or building network through comments or discussions) (N=143; N/A = 65; N=204; N/A=4)	3.84	Highly Effective	2.81	Effective
2.Use more than 1 online/social media platforms to have more reach (N=195; N/A=13: N=204; N/A=4)	3.76	Highly Effective	3.88	Highly Effective
3.Use the online platforms in gaining knowledge about market and competitors (N=129; N/A = 79: N=134; N/A=74)	3.08	Effective	3.25	Effective
Overall Mean and Interpretation	**3.66**	**Highly Effective**	**3.22**	**Effective**

	t-value	*p-value*	*Decision on Ho*	*Interpretation*
During and After Pandemic Effectiveness of Advertisements	**11.24**	**0.046**	**Reject**	**Significant**

On the other hand, the respondents believe that their strategy on online platforms as a way to promote their business is highly effective when it come to the use of 1 or more social media platforms to have more reach during (WM=3.76) an after (WM=3.88) the pandemic, while such social media platform is effective in gaining knowledge about market and competitors during (WM=3.08) and after (WM=3.25) the pandemic. Overall, it was found out the respondents believe that their strategy on using social media platforms for business promotion is highly effective during the pandemic (WM=3.66) and downgrades to being effective after (WM=3.22) the pandemic. The significant difference in the responses of the respondents is evidenced by a t-value of 11.24 and a p-value of 0.045 (which is lower than 0.05) suggesting the effectiveness of the marketing strategies on online platforms for business performance is totally different during and after the pandemic. As expected, the highly effective strategies during the pandemic is influenced by the ample time of people/buyers or consumers to do online communication and transactions during the pandemic as compared to their online exposure and utilization after the pandemic.

Table 3.5d. Effectiveness of Marketing Strategies for Delivery in the Business Performance of the Respondents

D. Marketing Strategies for Delivery	During Pandemic		After Pandemic	
	WM	Interpretation	WM	Interpretation
1.Using online food delivery apps (Food Panda, Grab Food, etc.) (N=204; N/A= 4: N=204; N/A=4)	3.70	Highly Effective	3.76	Highly Effective
2.Use own delivery facility for safer transactions (N=208)	3.88	Highly Effective	3.92	Highly Effective
3.Use combination of own delivery and online food app (N=204; N/A=4: N=184; N/A=24)	3.28	Highly Effective	3.47	Highly Effective
Overall Mean and Interpretation	**3.62**	**Highly Effective**	**3.72**	**Highly Effective**

	t-value	*p-value*	*Decision on Ho*	*Interpretation*
During and After Pandemic Effectiveness of Advertisements	**2.37**	**0.591**	**Accept**	**Not Significant**

From Table 3.5d is the effectiveness of marketing strategies for delivery in the business performance of the respondents. It was revealed that the respondents believe that they have highly effective strategies in terms of the use of online food delivery apps during (WM=3.70) and after (WM=3.76), that they have highly effective strategies in terms of the use of their own delivery facility during (WM=3.88) and after (WM=3.92), which assures safer transactions and believe that they have highly effective strategies as to the use of the combination of online food delivery apps and their own delivery facility during (WM=3.28) and after (WM=3.47) the pandemic. An overall weighted mean of 3.62 and 3.72 believes that the respondents in general, believe that their marketing strategies for delivery during and after the pandemic is highly effective.

As the difference in the marketing strategies for delivery was tested, it obtained a weighted mean of 2.37 and a p-value of 0.591, which is higher than 0.05 resulted in the acceptance of the null hypothesis, indicating that the respondent's perception of their marketing strategies on delivery as highly effective is the same during and after the pandemic. This further indicate, the strategies for delivery as to business performance and promotion is not influenced by whether, there is pandemic or none, as delivery is a very essential aspect of an online food business. This is due to the fact that delivery facilities are the sole means for each online food products to reach the end user and is the last tool for the sales to materialize. As such, this aspect of the business must be as resilient as possible to withstand adversities brought about by bought the business and the environment. Ina addition to this, Chan (2020) mentioned that the COVID-19 pandemic, made delivery facilitation as a primary business for many, making it an essential service up to this day in the Philippines. This enables a more efficient and effective route of the online food products towards the consumer market and end users.

Table 3.5e displays the effectiveness of the respondent's marketing strategies for sales in relation to their business performance. It was revealed that the respondents believe that they have highly effective strategies in offering products to personal networks during (WM=3.68) and after the pandemic (WM=3.68). This is due to the fact that one of the first markets that business men in general recognize are their friends, family and relatives. It was also revealed that the respondents believe that they have highly effective strategies in offering promotion in the form of freebies (which can be food or non-food) during (WM=3.92) and after (WM=3.96) the pandemic, while they believe that they are effective in offering discounts and other money-saving promotions such as vouchers, coupons or buy 1 get one offers during (WM=3.21) and after (WM=3.29) the pandemic. Overall, the respondents believe that their marketing strategy for sales is highly effective during (WM=3.60) and after (WM=3.64) the pandemic.

Table 3.5e. Effectiveness of Marketing Strategies for Sales in the Business Performance of the Respondents

E. Marketing Strategies for Sales	During Pandemic		After Pandemic	
	WM	Interpretation	WM	Interpretation
1.Offering products to personal network (family, friends, acquaintances, colleagues, etc.) (N=188; N/A=20: N=200; N/A=8)	3.68	Highly Effective	3.68	Highly Effective
2.Offer promotion in the form of freebies (food or non-food)	3.92	Highly Effective	3.96	Highly Effective
3.Offer discounts and other money-saving promotions such as vouchers, coupons or buy1 get1 offers	3.21	Effective	3.29	Highly Effective

Overall Mean and Interpretation		3.60	Highly Effective	3.64 Highly Effective
	t-value	*p-value*	*Decision on Ho*	*Interpretation*
During and After Pandemic Effectiveness of Advertisements	**0.22**	**0.614**	**Accept**	**Not Significant**

Further test on the difference on the perceived effectiveness of the marketing strategy for sales obtained a t-value of 0.22 and a p-value greater than 0.05 (0.614) which resulted in the acceptance of the null hypothesis. This means that there is no significant difference in effectiveness of the marketing strategy for sales of the respondents during and after the pandemic.

3.6. Challenges and Opportunities of Online Food Sellers on their Marketing Strategies During and After COVID-19 Pandemic

Table 3.6a illustrates the challenges on the marketing strategies as recognized by the online food seller-respondents. From the, it was found out that the absence of the initiative for paid online advertisements is the primary challenge being faced by 75% of the respondents in terms of digital advertisements. This is followed by 43% of them admitting that their online business had no access to photo or video editing software that will help produce digital advertisements, while 29% of them believes that their online business does not encounter the previously identified challenges, while 30% of them added that they have no poster or video advertisement and 24% has no initiative to share the online food business to friends and family.

In terms of the challenges on E-commerce platform, nearly half or 49% have complained of unreliable internet connection and 47% affirms that high internet cost is a challenge. This is followed by the 29% respondents believing that lack of initiative to improve internet access is challenge, while 29% believes they have no issue at all regarding e-commerce platform.

The challenges on the respondents marketing strategy as to delivery facilities, it was revealed that the top most challenge of the respondents is the high delivery cost (77%) followed by the difficulty in transporting ingredients or goods from the suppliers (71%) and security concerns during meet-up or delivery (63%) which is significantly felt during the pandemic. While difficulties in delivering orders to customers (57%) and unreliable riders (57%) as well as the insufficient supply of ingredients and goods are the 3 trailing challenges. The delivery facilities are also one of the marketing strategies that 100% of the respondents agree it is the strategy that cannot do without any challenge during and even after that pandemic. It is also the only dimension of the respondents marketing strategies which 5/6 of the challenges were all greater than 50%.

In terms of the challenges on the E-payment facilities of which the topmost challenge are those customers that prefer COD transactions (73) and those that has no access to e-payment options (69%) as well as the high transaction fees (47%). Trailing challenges are in terms of the unavailability of e-payment options (28%) and the respondent's non-access to payment options (10%), while 16% of them believes that they never encountered any of the challenges identified in terms of e-payment facilities.

Table 3.6a. Challenges on Marketing Strategy During and After the Pandemic

Challenges on Digital Advertisements	*During and After Pandemic*	
	f	***%***
1. No initiative to share the online food business to friends and family	49	24
2. No poster or video advertisement posted on line	61	30
3. Our online business has no access to photo or video editing software that will help produce digital advertisements	90	43
4. No initiative for paid online advertisements	155	75
5. Our online business does not experience any of the challenges above	61	29
Challenges on E-Commerce Platforms	***During and After Pandemic***	
	f	***%***
1. High Internet Cost	98	47
2. Unreliable internet connection	102	49
3. No initiative to improve internet access	53	26
4. Our online business does not experience any of the challenges above	61	29
Challenges on Delivery Facilities	***During and After Pandemic***	

	f	%
1. Insufficient supply of ingredients or goods	78	37
2. Difficulties in transporting ingredients or goods from the suppliers	147	71
3. Difficulties delivering orders to customers	118	57
4. Higher delivery cost	159	77
5. Unreliable riders	118	57
6. Security concerns during meet-up or delivery	131	63

Challenges on E-Payment Facilities	***During and After Pandemic***	
	f	***%***
1. High transaction fees	102	49
2. Unavailability of e-payment options	57	28
3. Customers' preference for COD (cash on delivery)	151	73
4. Customers have no access to e-payment options	143	69
5. Our business has no access to e-payment options	20	10
6. Our online business does not experience any of the challenges above	33	16

Challenges on Computer Literacy and E-commerce Skills	***During and After Pandemic***	
	f	***%***
1. Limited knowledge on using social media platforms	135	65
2. Lack of access to food delivery services (Food Panda, Grab Food, etc.)	102	49
3. Lack of knowledge on competition and pricing	65	31
4. Our online business does not experience any of the challenges above	94	45

Challenges on Number of Competitors	***During and After Pandemic***	
	f	***%***
1. Lack of knowledge about names of other businesses of the same category	86	41
2. Lack of knowledge about the prices of commodities of other businesses of the same category	73	35
3. Lack of knowledge on speed of service of other businesses of the same category	73	35
4. Lack of knowledge about quality of products of other businesses of the same category	82	39
5. Our online business does not experience any of the challenges above	86	41

Challenges on Sales	***During and After Pandemic***	
	f	***%***
1. Unsafe or unsanitary products	16	8
2. Issues on refund or replacement of products	78	37
3. Customers' complaints on overcharged products	25	12
4. Too much bad reviews on products	12	6
5. Our online business does not experience any of the challenges above	122	59

For the challenges on computer literacy and e-commerce skills (see Table 3.7e), it was observed that 65% of them identified the limited knowledge on using social media platforms is their primary challenge. This is followed by the 49% recognizing their lack of access to food delivery service, while 31% of them believes that lack of knowledge on competition and pricing and almost half or 45% believe that they did encounter any of the challenges previously mentioned.

On the challenges pertaining to the number of competitors (see Table 3.7f), the primary challenge was found to be the Lack of knowledge about names of other businesses of the same category (41%), while the same percentage of 41% believe that they do not experience any challenge at all when it comes to the number of competitors. The Lack of knowledge about quality of products of other businesses of the same category was found to be experienced by 39% of the respondents while the lack of knowledge about the prices of commodities of other businesses of the same category and the Lack of knowledge on speed of service of other businesses of the same category.

Illustrated in Table 3.7g are the challenges in the marketing strategies of the respondents in terms of sales. More than half or 59% believed that they do not feel any challenge at all as to issues on refund and replacement of products (37%), customer complaints on overcharged products (12%), unsafe or unsanitary products (8%) and too much bad reviews on products (6%).

Table 3.6b presents the thematic analysis of opportunities solicited from the respondents of this study. Six themes were identified based on the responses of the respondents namely; financial stability, network build and expansion, market driven business, digitalization, innovation and flexibility.

Table 3.6b. Thematic Analysis on Recognized Opportunities of Online Food Sellers in Manila

Theme	Concept	Significant Statements
Financial stability	Business growth	"Business growth and connection" "Most important opportunity is to earn during the pandemic" "Additional income"
Network build and expansion	Connection Social media reach	"Business growth and connection" "I was able to meet more people, widening my network" ""… and sana maimprove yung network" (and hopefully to improve the network) "Use of social media for promotions" "Engaging with your target market" "A good way to meet people" "meet new people" "boosting" "happy when I see them happy" "Those who were featured in blogs and posted videos somehow get more sales that those like us who stay in the traditional side of the business"
Market Driven Strategies	Market Dynamics and Trends Segmentation and Niche Opportunities Pricing Models and Profit Margins Sustainability Marketing and Branding	"The food delivery industry has witnessed exponential growth in recent years. Factors such as busy lifestyles, urbanization, and the rise of online platforms have fueled this surge. "word of mouth" "food preference increases over time adaptability to market fluctuation" "Not all food delivery services are created equal. understanding the market segments allows you to identify niches where you can thrive" "flexible market expansion" "Pricing strategies vary subscription models, delivery fees, or commission-based structures" "madali magdagdag ng mga products na ibebenta hindi ako nagwoworry sa tax" (*easy to add new products to sell since I do not worry about tax)* "Once you have the reach you can venture into other additional food products" "Consumers increasingly value eco-friendly practices. Opt for sustainable packaging and minimize food waste" "Your brand identity matters. leverage social media, and creative campaigns." "I was able to intensify my knowledge in branding and creating advertisements according to the resources and materials I only have at hand." "able to apply unique market strategies"

Digitalization	Digital Society	“A milestone showing how digital society is becoming ever more influential” “The opportunities I identified upon engaging in online food selling business are the target customers are reached especially in group pages.” “If they know they're near our shop via social media, they will go to buy. The list of menu we have are posted also online so the customers are already informed what drinks they want from our shop before going” “live selling on tiktok” “Use of social media for promotions” “OK mag sell online ng foods basta marunong ka mag computer or kahit CP lang pwede ka namn magtransact, naappreciate ko ung ICT malaki naitututlong nya sa business”
	Technology and User Experience	(It is OK to sell foods online as long as you know how to use the computer or even just the cellphone (CP) you can transact; I appreciate (the subject) ICT since it helps a lot in the business)
	Digital Literacy	“Seamless ordering experiences, efficient delivery tracking, and user-friendly apps are” essential. Investing in technology can set you apart. “ “Improve my own computer literacy”

As revealed, financial stability is found to be related to business which was then became a motivating factor to online sellers during the pandemic. The 2nd opportunity is network build and expansion, which is in terms of connection and social media reach. This is in short, the widening of the reach of the business as to the increase of the people they meet, particularly the new once and how far it reaches, based on the location of these additional and new people they meet. The third opportunity is the onset or implementation and furthering market-driven strategies as to market dynamics and trend, market segmentation and niche opportunities, pricing models and profit margins, sustainability and marketing and branding. Digitalization was found to be the 4th opportunity which pertains to the digital society or the rapid spread of the need to go online on all transactions, technology and user experience and the digital literacy. Innovation in terms of the respondents' mindset and creativity also surfaced as an opportunity, which is then followed by Flexibility which can be time-efficiency and location accessibility-related.

Actual Survey Responses on Opportunities (verbatim)

business growth and connection

Market Dynamics and Trends: - The food delivery industry has witnessed exponential growth in recent years. Factors such as busy lifestyles, urbanization, and the rise of online platforms have fueled this surge.

Segmentation and Niche Opportunities: - Not all food delivery services are created equal. understanding the market segments allows you to identify niches where you can thrive. Technology and User Experience: - Seamless ordering experiences, efficient delivery tracking, and user-friendly apps are essential. Investing in technology can set you apart.

Pricing Models and Profit Margins: - Pricing strategies vary subscription models, delivery fees, or commission-based structures. Understand the financial implications.

Sustainability and Packaging: - Consumers increasingly value eco-friendly practices. Opt for sustainable packaging and minimize food waste. Marketing and Branding: - Your brand identity matters. leverage social media, and creative campaigns.

A milestone showing how digital society is becoming ever more influential. An opportunity also to develop my ideas and thinking while having my efforts recognized from day one as a food online seller. I was able to meet more people, widening my network. This business is one of the most convenient in a part time basis. I can be productive even when I am not in the office. A replacement for being idle. I was able to intensify my knowledge in branding and creating advertisements according to the resources and materials I only have at hand.

Most important opportunity is to earn during the pandemic. Online selling is a good business to enter into in a part time or full time basis. The business can be continued even after the pandemic. The opportunities I identified upon engaging in online food selling business are the target customers are reached especially in group pages. If they know they're near our shop via social media, they will go to buy. The list of menu we have are posted also online so the customers are already informed what drinks they want from our shop before going. Don't need to have physical store meet more people able to apply unique market strategies live selling on tiktok additional income and sana maimprove yung network

- Use of social media for promotions - Availability - Increasing consumer interests - Engaging with your target market

Additional income

boosting

marketing strategy

Happy when seeing them happy

Word of mouth

flexible market expansion - food preference increases over time adaptability to market fluctuation enhancement of creativity and innovative mindset

can target customers far from business area

Improve my own computer literacy Look and study more in-depth through actual experience how I can improve each aspect of my business in terms of customer engagement, e-payment systems, delivery systems and other products to offer to increase sales Those who were featured in blogs and posted videos somehow get more sales that those like us who stay in the traditional side of the business

learning to explore new ways to increase sales

food business is a very informative business

A good way to meet people

The ability to be innovative on you business strategy based on the need. People has different activities and needs during and after that pandemic.

online food business is an attractive business itself, but you must have the honestly, integrity and accountability always with you as you engage

madali magdagdag ng mga products na ibebenta hindi ako nagwoworry sa tax

Once you have the reach you can venture into other additional food products

OK mag sell online ng foods basta marunong ka mag computer or kahit CP lang pwede ka namn magtransact, naappreciate ko ung ICT malaki naitututlong nya sa business

Food as a basic need is an opportunity itself. The next opprtunity is making these food available to as many as possible, pandemic or not. Pandemic is actually an unpredictable

natural occurrence which somehow pushes people to the limit to make ends meet.

hindi ko maisip sa ngayon

Realization of what entrepreneurship is all about Ability to develop strategies to make the business work

meet new people

how to expand the business

3.7. Proposed Marketing Strategy for Online Food Sellers in Manila

The matrix found in Table 3.7 provides a quick guide on the proposed enhance market strategies that current online food sellers in Manila can adopt for a better thriving business. The proposed marketing strategy is anchored on a multi-pillar approach to informed-decisions on how online food sellers in Manila can upgrade their business performance though reformulating and upgrading their marketing strategies. The major pillars of this marketing strategy matrix are the foregoing results of the study in terms of the direct influence of the current marketing strategy to their business performance, which is also influenced by the underlying theories of John Dewey's Consumer Buying Process Model, the Hunt and Morgan's Competitive Advantage Theory of Competition, business sustainability as constrained by the challenges recognized.

The matrix provides a tiered market strategy where gray highlighted regions is where the relationship between business performance and marketing strategy is very high, indicating the direct influence of one over the other. The strategies suggested for this is merely exploration, consideration and promotion to encourage certain level of due diligence before its execution. This is because of the very high influence of such strategy to the performance which require utmost care during implementation so as not to make such strategy redundant. The non-highlighted cells are where the study suggests the need of a more aggressive marketing strategy to enhance the business performance. The last column is the resources column where the users of the matrix may find substantial informationthrough examples, adds and other related materials that will provide basic information on how to start or initiate the implementation of the strategies.

On monthly sales with regards to digital advertisements, respondents are suggested to monitor their social media engagement thru their reach or setting a certain target multi-media mileage. This can provide baseline data and leads that may generate more sales. Some social media platforms like Facebook has data analytics that can be boosted to increase your current reach to generate leads for the business. On types of foods in terms of digital advertisements, the respondents are then suggested to explore food choices by benchmarking from latest trends. One classic site where we can see current trends in Philippine foods and beverage industry is the annual IFEX Food and Beverage tradeshow that showcases different trends when it comes to foods and beverage, while in terms of no. of buyers and digital advertisements, the respondents are suggested to utilize available chat aps and create group chats (GS) for better communication and client reach. Today, there are several social media platforms in the country that can be utilized in creating GCs (thru messenger, Viber, Wechat, Tiktok, X, IG, telegram and whatsapp) particularly for institutional clients or buyers that are usually from a company or office.

Table 3.7. Propose Marketing Strategy Matrix for Small Scale Online Food Sellers in Manila

Marketing Strategies	**Business Performance**				**Resources**
	Monthly Sales	**Types of Foods Sold Online**	**No. of Buyers**	**Advertisements**	
Digital Advertisements	Monitoring of social media engagement thru social media reach, setting (target) media mileage targets	Explore other food choices by benchmarking from latest trends	Utilization of available chat apps and creation of GCs for better communication and reach	Explore crafting a the more innovative and creative ads for your business using free video editing apps and free accounts	https://developers.facebook.com/docs/analytics/ https://www.ifexconnect.com/ **Messenger, Viber, Wechat, Tiktok, X, IG, telegram, whatsapp** https://www.canva.com/en_ph/
E-Payment Solutions	Offering discounts or Freebies for the use the use of e-wallets, bank QRs	Intensify promotion of low-sugar/ low calorie diets thru customized sugar level, ice, rice, etc	Promoting the use of e-payment and cashless solutions as an approach to sustainable business	Introduction of low-cost stickers/cards and small items that contain contact details and socmed acct of the business, free for a certain amount of purchase	https://www.statista.com/statistics/1357979/philippines-popular-e-payment-services/ https://www.cdc.gov/nutrition/php/resources/healthy-eating-benefits-for-adults.html https://www.pinterest.com/faisaladewale/sticker-design/
Online Platforms	Cost-benefit analysis on the creation of own website and how to integrate fees in the current pricing (initial step) Enhancing internet connectivity	Creation of own or socmed page highlighting foods that perfectly comes in pairs/set	Setting up a membership card or system where referrals will be given discounts or freebies	Posting of advertisements on a low-cost website (host)	**Top 5 Low-cost domains: GoDaddy, blueHost, IONOS, Domain.com, namecheap** https://www.facebook.com/luckybobamilkteaph/photos/luck-is-on-your-side-present-your-lucky-card-and-enjoy-buy-one-get-one-free-on-o/864548625695425/
Delivery Facilities	Sales upgrade, offering a higher size or serving, or a new menu	Increase percentage or dry foods to prevent spills	Consider discounted pick-up orders for	Explore upload/download of discount vouchers for	https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=7F8G8FLj4To https://www.foodsafetyma

		and wastage Or enhance food storage practice	nearby buyers Consider other carbon neutral delivery (bike)	nearby pickups who will bring own packaging	**rket.com/en-ca/blog/guidelines-for-dry-food-storage** **https://sg.pickupp.io/en/pickupp-zero**
Sales	Conducting Satisfaction Survey				**https://applova.io/blog/benefits-of-customer-surveys-to-restaurants/**

4. Discussions

This section presents comprehensive analysis of the findings gathered in relation to the business performance of the small scale online food sellers in Manila, with particular attention to their demographic profile, their business performance and the marketing strategies they employ and the challenges they encountered during and post COVID-19 pandemic as well as comparisons and correlation studies on the variables mentioned, and a comprehensive thematic analysis of the identified opportunities, as well. The data is interpreted in the light of existing literature to highlight trends, alignments and deviations. By examining these deviations and relationships, the study seeks to understand the current status if the business in Manila of small scale online food sellers and influence the crafting of proposed marketing strategies, thus offering targeted and effective marketing approaches for online food sellers in Manila.

4.1. Conclusions

Based on the foregoing findings of the study and the significant trends and variations revealed, this section provides the key insights drawn from the research and highlights their implications for both current and inspiring online food sellers.

1. The rise of digital platforms has transformed how food sellers reach and engage customers. Understanding how the demographic profile of these online food sellers influence marketing strategies is crucial in tailoring efforts for general business sustainability. In a study by Tatoy et al. (2022) on the demographic analysis of customer reference using online food applications, they have emphasized how the respondents' demographic profile play a pivotal role in shaping the marketing strategies of the online food sellers.

The diverse age distribution of the online food sellers in Manila during and post COVID-19 pandemic have been attributed to the onset of the pandemic itself, where people, young and old were forced to stay at home and look for ways either to earn money or buy sometime because of being isolated. This resulted also in the diversity of marketing strategies per age group, as each age group has their own preference and concepts on how to implement their marketing strategy. This is confirmed by the significant difference obtained between the respondents marketing strategies and their age group. It can be deduced that young sellers primarily 18-35 years old is more inclined to utilize social media platforms like Instagram, Tiktok and Facebook for marketing purposes, some of them, to the extent employ collaborations with influencers and viral content to attract fellow and younger demographics while older sellers 36 years old and above may prefer traditional marketing methods or and use the social media less aggressively. Their strategies may focus more on community engagement and word-of-mouth referrals which is less likely to boost the business during and after the pandemic.

The same is somehow related to significant differences in marketing strategy and computer literacy as the young sellers are most likely to have high proficiency in computers skills. This is also due to the fact that greater percentage of the respondents have rated their proficiencies in the advanced level, which enables them utilize advance digital marketing tools stemming from social media campaigns to advanced marketing tools. Similarly, the marketing strategies significantly differs with reference to the location of business and the time spent on online selling significantly differs, as the more you engage in promoting your goods, the more marketing strategies is being tested and learnt, which is effective and which is not on a location that say is more urbanized or not. Classic example is that there must be a different marketing strategy when you are in university belt area, the port area or the city center.

2. The significant relationship between the business performance and the marketing strategies can be considered deeply rooted the time the business was operating. As to these variables, one commonality is that its operation was during and after pandemic which provides a totally different context when it comes to business environment. During pandemic, people both sellers and buyers are confined at home increasing trust rating with each other and other external stakeholders for the system and process to work well. From product and goods requisition to product delivery, payment and after sales, the limitation of not engaging personally becomes a main character of the whole process, while after the pandemic, these situations totally took 180 degrees turn, where opposite of everything took its toll. This significance in the time frame that bounds all variables have largely affected both an individual sell's performance through adjustment of their marketing strategies over time, resulting in significant correlations, which majority fall under high to very high. This confirms the relationship of business performance and marketing strategy during and after the pandemic.

There is an interplay between business and performance and the marketing strategies. The low to very high effectiveness assessment of their strategies were primarily attributed to the fact that their business is still thriving even after the pandemic. The non-significance in the difference in their strategies during and after pandemic indicated the resiliency and determination of each respondent to sustain their business by achieving at least a consistent strategy that will bring in sustainable sales. The significant difference on the marketing strategy as to online platforms during and after the pandemic, and the positive t-value which is less than 1 indicates their self- assessed effectiveness during pandemic is significantly higher than their assessment after the pandemic. This difference is attributed to the reduced engagement to the online business as the restrictions were relaxed then gradually lifted after the pandemic. As the people began to gradually go back to their offices, their engagement to the social media which is the primary tool of the online sellers to advertise also is reduced. This is even true in those companies that sets- up filters on Facebook and Instagram in the workplace.

3. On the Business Performance of the respondents during and after the pandemic, earning an average of Php 7,866.39 during and Php 7,529.85 after the pandemic. This is comprised of about 41% during and 43% after pandemic respondents earning Php 10,000 and above. It was found out that there is no statistical significant difference in the monthly sales of the respondents during and after the pandemic. On the types of foods sold online, it was revealed that respondents either sell a single variety of food while some ventured into selling several varieties. Greater percentage of the respondents are in the sale of prepared beverages such as milk tea, coffee, smoothies and the likes which is at 24% and 25% during and after pandemic, followed by desserts at 8% to 6% during and after pandemic while canned goods in combination to selling frozen foods and 19% and 21% during and after pandemic tops the types of food sold online as to food combinations. Significant statistical differences were observed on the types of food sold during and after pandemic. An average of 43 during and 39 after pandemic were observed in terms of the number of buyers, while highest proportion during pandemic are those respondents with 51-70 customers and 31-50 customers which is 34% of the respondents after pandemic with 31-50 customers/buyers. No significant difference was found in the number of respondents during and after the pandemic. On the advertisements utilized, it was revealed that more than 90% of the respondents are using Facebook, and about 78% are using more than 1 social media account. Most are Facebook and Instagram, while some utilize those social media platforms together with conventional advertisement modes like SMS and the likes. Those who use only Facebook decrease from 38% during pandemic and then down to 36% after pandemic. Significant difference in the advertisement utilization during and after the pandemic are attributed to the use of conventional advertisement measures when the F2F engagements resume.

The respondents have exerted extreme effort into the business that they decided to embrace it to go about it even after the pandemic. They have been self-sufficient on the application of each marketing strategies. While it is moot and academic that these are all done to at least maintain as sustainable monthly sales, the non-significance in the difference in the monthly sales and the number of buyers/customers and the consistence use of more than 1 social media account to promote the business during and after pandemic enable them to feel their performances are optimal, this redounded to the significant differences in the types of food they sell during the pandemic. Form single food sale to multiple/combination of foods sold, they were able to understand the dynamism of the market and used it as a tool to sustain their business, with the evident ongoing business after the pandemic.

4. Difference in marketing strategies when the respondents are grouped according to their demographic profile, it was found out that significant differences exist in the marketing strategies in relation to their age, location, civil status, computer literacy, sex, status as a seller and their monthly sales. This means that the marketing strategies tend to differ when the respondents belong to a different level of that demographic profile. This also means that the aforementioned demographic profile will tend to influence the marketing strategies during and after the pandemic. On the other hand, while significant differences are

found in the marketing strategies and the monthly income of the respondents, it was found that these marketing strategies is not influenced by time-or during and after the pandemic, indicating that pandemic or not, monthly income and marketing strategies will not be affected, pandemic or not.

The significant differences found in marketing strategies according to their demographic profiles during and after pandemic. These significant differences in the marketing strategies in terms of age, business location, civil status, computer competency, sex status as a seller including monthly sales can be attributed also to the commonality of the time frame of business operation. While the initial relationship of business performance and marketing strategy found in the previous section which the direct effect of the time frame of the business operation, this differences in the marketing strategies according to their demographic profile confirms the interaction of between the marketing strategies and their profiles as one of the key influencer of their strategies during and after the pandemic. This means that one age group implements the marketing strategy at a different level of effectiveness over the other age groups during and after the pandemic. Similarly, it is noteworthy also to conclude that men and women, or even males and female sellers implements a statistically significantly different level of marketing strategies at distinct level of effectiveness during and even after the pandemic. In addition, it is also statistically proven by this study, for example the direct interaction of computer competency to their marketing strategies during and after the pandemic. This conclusion thus in general covers all demographic profile, except in terms of monthly sales which was found to be unaffected by the time frame. The non-significance in the difference in the marketing strategies according to monthly sales during and after the pandemic indicates that the business operation time frame does not have direct bearing on the difference in the marketing strategies according to time frame. This means that during pandemic or not, respondents must have set a target monthly sales to hit, and some of them tend to mellow once they hit this milestone or some relaxes operations once they feel they are already a bit above the breakeven point. This is also confirmed by some of the respondents themselves in an unstructured interview to those who have been surveyed physically, particularly those engaging in a part-time basis, emphasizing that once they feel they have recouped the capital for the day, they tend to relax, rest and unwind.

5. The effectiveness of the marketing strategies of the respondents were evaluated. In term of digital advertisements, an overall mean of 3.18 corresponding to effective was obtained during the pandemic and 3.19 corresponding to effective after the pandemic, indicating a belief that they do have effective marketing strategy as to digital advertisement during and after the pandemic. It was also found out that the extent of effectiveness in their digital advertisement is the same, pandemic or not. The same trend is obtained in terms if the e-payment system strategies which was believed to be highly effective during and after the pandemic and are not statistically different from each other as tested. No significant difference is also obtained in terms of the strategies for delivery during and after the pandemic. This means that the respondent's marketing strategy were highly effective during and after pandemic. The same is true in terms of the respondents' marketing strategies in terms of sales, which both were perceived to be highly effective during and after the pandemic.

Of all the marketing strategies presented, it is only the strategies in terms of online platforms, exhibited a wide distance in the values of the weighted mean in terms of during and after pandemic data, which is was found to be statistically significant during and after the pandemic.

6. Online food sellers in Manila, like other businessmen experience challenges and issues as they go about their activities. With regards to the challenges in digital advertisements, the absence of an initiative for paid online advertisement predominate. In terms of the e-commerce platforms, topmost challenge is the unreliable internet connection and high internet cost. For computer literacy, one of the greatest challenge was in terms of the limited knowledge on using the social media platforms. It is the lack of knowledge about names of other businesses of the same category when it comes to the number of competitors, while more than half of the respondents believe that they have no issues or major challenge in terms of strategies on sales.

It is the delivery facilities that proved to be the major challenge as this is the only marketing strategy where all have disclosed an issue, and not a single one said they have no issue. This mean that this is a strategy that need to be focused on when enhancement programs will be formulated to enhance the current strategies.

Majority of the respondents have recognized the same challenges pertaining to their business., while in all the challenges presented to them, there were a small percentage of them honestly disclosing that they did not encounter such challenges, stating in general hat they have no challenges experience implementing their marketing strategies. This confirms the results in terms of the high to very high relationship between business performance and marketing strategies. Some of them did not feel limited at all, except for the strategies in terms of delivery facilities. The delivery facilities are the only domain where 100% of the respondents admitted their individual challenges and not even one said they don't. This therefore, manifests the very important influence of the marketing strategies in terms of delivery facilities, which is considered to be the strategy that will close the sale and determines the continuity of the supply chain.

On the opportunities, this study was able to discover several themes that allow the identification of the opportunities in the online food business in Manila, which is financial stability, network build and expansion, market-driven strategies, digitalization, innovation and flexibility. Each opportunity they have freely disclosed appeared to be addressing specific challenges. The opportunity for financial stability and market-driven strategies may address the challenges related to sales and digital advertisements, while the opportunity for a market –driven strategies/ business may cater also the challenges in delivery, e-commerce and online platform as well as the number of competitors and sales. The opportunity for network build and expansion, digitalization and innovation altogether may address the challenges on digital advertisement, delivery, e-commerce and online platforms and the sales, while the opportunity for innovation and flexibility targets challenges related of sales. This proves on the other hand that one food sellers in Manila has the capability to evaluate and recognize the criticality of their business and later convert this criticality to opportunity – a skill that will close the supply chain and allow sustainable and circular online business environment.

4.2 Recommendations

Based on the foregoing results of this study, the following are therefore proposed and/or recommended for an enhanced online food seller business ecosystem in Manila:

1. The rejection of the null hypothesis of this study resulted in the acceptance of the alternative hypothesis that there is a significantly high to very high relationship between business performance and marketing strategies of the online food sellers in Manila indicates that there is an online food seller ecosystem in Manila that can be nurtured and considered as one sector that is contributing to the economic development of each municipality and to that of the whole Manila itself. Strengthening stakeholder presence therefore must be a priority which can be achieved through:

   - Set-up of a online food seller in Manila business association. This is a small group that may even thrive to a larger one, with the primary purpose of creating a platform of dialogue between the one sellers which will give them opportunity to share experiences, explore best practices and exchange resources for an enhance Manila online food seller supply chain. This group may also start forming committees that will address key components of online food selling for consumers such as delivery, food safety and security, and sustainability practices, among others.
   - Supply Chain Mapping for online food sellers in Manila in general, to be able to address promptly and specifically the challenges in the marketing strategies recognized in this study. This will also give way to furthering the opportunity by localizing such supply chain to empower other businesses related to online food seller.

2. The rejection of the null hypothesis on the difference in the Marketing Strategy with reference to the online seller's demographic profile resulted in the acceptance of the alternative hypothesis indicating that, the demographic profile of the respondents has direct bearing to the effectiveness of their marketing strategies. Thus, investing on human capital is essential for these ecosystem of online business to thrive. On the other hand, it must be noted that the respondents are small scale online food sellers might not be into paid trainings, workshops or immersions so the need to intensify their capability to seek low-cost solutions for capacity building must be encouraged if not enhanced. The set-up of an industry association as indicated in recommendation no. 1 can expand to collaborations to private and government agencies that provides free to low-cost capacity building projects as form of their social responsibility. These trainings to prepare the current online food sellers to be resilient and pandemic proof may consider the following:

   - The use of a future-ready marketing strategy as proposed in this study as this types of strategy can be tested and piloted further enhance its capability to withstand adversities, in particular the onset of pandemics such as what the online sellers of this study have undergone. Also this plan will explore capacity building for a more adversity-ready online seller.

- Design Thinking trainings for MSMEs while universities can also offer capacity building worskshops that will teach online sellers needed skills for computer literacy, marketing and practical graphic design and SMEs usually administered by the Department of Trade and Industry (DTI).

3. Future entrepreneurs to always consider in their plans a future-ready and resilient business performance through informed decision making. This study, therefore can be expanded to other products and services being offered online. The path to sustainable business and finance is already in front as such, business that must be set up must not only be economically and financially viable but also consumption and production responsible.

4. Marketing Professionals and students are recommended to benchmark on other related studies and explore other correlations not covered in this study. A worldwide pandemic

might not be occurring in the next 100 years, but the important idea here is what the next marketing professionals' generation needs to do to contribute to economic resiliency that will pave way to lesser damage to the economy and the society. Bank/Financial Institutions accessibility for small scale business owners to help them prepare all needed materials for their business.

5. For the LGU, DTI and the Solons to utilize the findings of this study to provide frameworks for policy recommendation and business incentivization and taxation guidelines that will help the small scale online food sellers develop the niche and the ecosystem to contribute to the national economic development.
6. Future searchers using the results of this study, to explore higher level related studies such as future-proofing supply and value chain, turning challenges to opportunities and the likes.

4.3 Implications of the Study

The findings of this study offer several practical and theoretical implications for small-scale online food sellers in Manila. First, the study highlights the critical role of targeted and adoptive marketing strategies in improving the business performance most specially during a constrained but competitive times like the COVID-19 pandemic where people have different sets of needs and requirements and booming digital environment. Sellers with higher computer proficiency and better knowledge of social media tools demonstrated stronger performance, suggesting that digital literacy training could significantly boost marketing effectiveness. On the hand this training might not be easy to achieve as small scale online food seller barely save for knowledge build and funded training and education. It is in this instance that the importance of private and public social responsibility can be tapped provide a platform for this new breed of entrepreneurs immerse in the business ecosystem.

Second, demographic factors such as age, location, computer proficiency, time dedicated to the business, monthly income, business location and even sex influence directly the marketing strategies and indirectly the overall business performance. This indicates the need for revisitation and recalibration of marketing strategies that are tailored not only to customer preferences but also to seller's capacity and background and business sustainability as well. It can be said and noted that younger sellers may benefit from dynamic, trend-based marketing campaigns, while older or part-time moms and sellers may achieve better outcomes through consistent, relationship-based marketing.

Lastly, the proposed marketing strategy informed by the study serves as a guideline for small-scale online food sellers and other entrepreneurs to align their promotional efforts with their personal resources and market conditions. It also underscores the importance of continuous adaptation and customer engagement to sustain and grow online food business in a highly urbanized and competitive city like Manila.

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