
| RESEARCH ARTICLE

On Seafood Grill: Experiences of Restaurant Operators

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| ABSTRACT

This study explored the experiences of seafood and grill restaurant operators in Cebu during 2022-2023, focusing on their business profiles, challenges, and aspirations for improvement. A descriptive phenomenological design was used to explore the lived experiences of 11 seafood and grill restaurant operators in Cebu Province. Data were collected through open-ended interviews, recorded with consent, transcribed verbatim, and analyzed thematically. For the experiences of the participants as seafood and grill restaurant operators' emergent themes created were: Cultivating Reasons and Motivations, Establishing Stable Business Financial Flow, Maintaining Supply, Volume and Scale of Seafood Stocks/Goods, Monitoring Traceability on the Existing and Past Seafood Supply, Handling Impact of Customer Demand to Seafood Supply, and Securing a Sustainable and Consistent Supply. For the aspirations of the participants to improve their operations, the themes created were: Staying Passionate and Driven in Operating the Seafood Restaurant, Optimizing Restaurant Operations to Align with Business Goals, and Commitment to Launching the Seafood Restaurant Despite Facing Major Difficulties. It suggested to have an exploratory study in customer behavior and marketing dynamics in relation to seafood restaurants, expand the geographical scope of future research to include seafood and grill restaurant operators from other provinces or regions outside Cebu, conduct comparative studies between urban and rural locations in terms of seafood and grill restaurant operations. Furthermore, is to use findings to inform curriculum design in hospitality, culinary, and business programs and reference future studies in policy formulation for local government units or tourism departments promoting local culinary businesses.

| KEYWORDS

Seafood and grill restaurant, restaurant operators, restaurant operators experiences, seafood restaurant sustainability, restaurant operators aspirations.

| ARTICLE INFORMATION

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INTRODUCTION

The food service market is a cut-throat and high-risk environment with high failure rates. The challenge is much greater for specialty restaurants, especially those for seafood, as they must constantly procure and stock fresh ingredients while keeping their menu unique. Maintaining a good flow of high-quality seafood, however, can be logistically challenging and financially burdensome, so streamlining operations and maintaining operational efficiency is key to long-term success.

This complex landscape poses unique challenges for operators of seafood and grill restaurants, as they must leverage strategic planning and adaptive management methods to thrive. Their non-technical responsibilities are just as numerous, and many will likely come for the first time as business owners or managers. To solve these problems, they have to face regulatory compliance issues, negotiate with suppliers, and meet customer expectations, all of which can highly affect their emotional stability, physical strength, and mental stability.

There are many reasons people open seafood and grill restaurants, there are; passion, legacy, opportunity, and access. Some force it upon themselves because it's woven into the fabric of the local culture and economy, and others reconceptualize it to trace a line back to their culinary roots or career aims. Whatever the reason, operating their business is never without its fair share of challenges.

This study was conducted to explore effective operational strategies for seafood and grill restaurants and to address the challenges that come with sustaining such businesses. As someone with a background in food and beverage management, I have seen firsthand how restaurant owners struggle to balance financial stability with product consistency. Moreover, my personal interest in understanding the demands of running a specialized food service establishment, particularly in a highly competitive market, drives my commitment to this research. By examining these challenges, I aim to contribute valuable insights that can help business owners navigate the complexities of the industry more effectively.

This study aims to understand the experiences of seafood and grill business operators. By interviewing selected restaurant owners in Cebu Province, it explores the advantages and challenges they encounter in sustaining their businesses.

On the other hand, the researchers gained deeper insights into the experiences of restaurant operators, broadening their knowledge and gaining fresh perspectives. It also clarified the connection between lived experiences and the theories applied, which contributed to the development of new ideas.

Furthermore, the interviews were conducted in each selected seafood and grill restaurant for the researcher to actually see the operations and understand the views and experiences of the participants

LITERATURE REVIEW

This study is anchored on the Resource-based Entrepreneurship Theory of Alvarez and Busenitz (2001). This study is supported by the Theory of Practical Reasoning by Dewey (1933) and the Innovation Theory of Schumpeter (1942).

According to the Resource-based Entrepreneurship theory, entrepreneurs require resources in order to launch and maintain their firms. Since time and money alone are insufficient for a successful business, entrepreneurs need resources to make their work effective. The theory's primary goal is to highlight the value of personal, social, and financial resources while simultaneously enhancing a person's talents (Alvarez & Busenitz, 2001).

Building on the previous principle, the Theory of Practical Reasoning of Dewey (1933) introduces a human-centered dimension that explains how reasoning and reflection shape the practical application and continuous improvement of a firm's resources and strategies. It represents a means–ends continuum, in which means are not fixed tools but are continuously reconstructed through experience. This view bridges the gap between thought and action, positioning reasoning as both a cognitive and moral activity that guides intelligent decision-making in everyday life (Pappas, 2008).

In connection with the two mentioned theories, Innovation Theory of Schumpeter (1942) provides one of the most influential frameworks for understanding the dynamic processes that drive economic growth and transformation. This theory focuses on internal resources, more recent studies have elaborated how RBV intersects with organizational learning (Greve, 2020) and how startups manage resource-constraints through resourcefulness (Zahra, 2021).

METHOD

This research adopted a qualitative research plan that uses a descriptive phenomenological approach to investigate the viewpoints of seafood and grill restaurant operators, owners, and managers through their lived experiences. The source of data was individual interviews with the use of an interview guide that contained open-ended questions to enable the participants to communicate their viewpoints in depth. Within the area of the seafood and grill restaurant industry in Cebu Province, the study involved respondents who were operating the outlets which had successful patterns of behavior and sought to explore it further.

Correspondingly, the participants of this study were seafood and grill restaurant operators managing their respective establishments, each specializing in the preparation and service of a wide range of fish and shellfish dishes. These marine products were prepared using various cooking methods, including grilling, frying, soups, and even raw preparations. All participants were individually interviewed to gain deeper insights into their unique experiences and practices.

Owners and/or operators of seafood and grill restaurants were purposively invited to participate in the interviews, which were conducted using a pre-approved interview guide designed to explore their lived experiences in depth. Each interview session was audio-recorded with the participants' consent, transcribed verbatim, and subsequently subjected to thematic analysis. Successful interviews were voice-recorded, and all replies were then transcribed, thematically examined, and interpreted. With this method, researchers looked for patterns in a set of data to pinpoint themes. In order to identify reoccurring themes, topics, or phrasings, researchers meticulously go over the data. Both the inductive and the deductive methods of theme analysis were used in this research. In this study, the data were approached with certain predefined themes that were previously anticipated to be discovered based on the anchoring ideas. Additionally, it examined fresh themes drawn from the data.

The study adhered to established ethical principles by ensuring voluntary participation, obtaining informed consent, maintaining participants' confidentiality and anonymity, using respectful and non-discriminatory language, properly acknowledging all sources through APA referencing in accordance with the University of Cebu Research Center Manual, and complying with the provisions of the Data Privacy Act of 2012 (R.A. 10173). To ensure the trustworthiness of the study, the researchers addressed the four criteria of qualitative rigor: credibility through theory triangulation; transferability by providing rich descriptions of the research context, participants, and procedures; dependability by documenting the research process to ensure consistency and replicability; and confirmability by maintaining an audit trail and ensuring that the findings accurately reflected the participants' responses rather than the researchers' biases.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The captivating nine (9) emergent themes were created after thoroughly gathered the data formulated meanings and clustered themes into special categories.

I generated six (6) themes for the experiences of the participants in the operations of the seafood and grill restaurants, namely: Cultivating Reasons and Motivations, Establishing Stable Business Financial Flow, Maintaining Supply, Volume and Scale of Seafood Stocks/Goods, Monitoring Traceability on the Existing and Past Seafood Supply, Handling Impact of Customer Demand to Seafood Supply, and Securing a Sustainable and Consistent Supply.

1. Cultivating Reasons and Motivations

In this theme, it is revealed that there are diverse motivations for establishing or managing seafood and grill restaurants. I made this theme to emphasize that there are several operators, managers and owners that leveraged existing family resources and inherited skills, highlighting the advantage of social and human capital as emphasized in the Resource-Based Entrepreneurship Theory of Alvarez & Busenitz (2001). During the interviews, it became evident that many participants involve family members or relatives in the operations of their seafood and grill restaurants. Several businesses stemmed from long-standing family traditions or enterprises, which the participants often shared with pride. For instance, I observed some participants described how family knowledge and business background served as key motivators and entry points. However, there were participants that identified their ventures as a way of life or capitalized on the limited competition and high demand for fresh seafood, echoing market opportunity recognition discussed by Shane & Venkataraman (2000). Theory of Practical Reasoning of Dewey (1933) further

supports this by framing entrepreneurial decision-making as context-driven, based on coherent actions derived from experience and perceived needs. Ardichvili et al. (2003) also note that entrepreneurial alertness, prior knowledge, and social networks shape this process.

Eckhardt & Shane (2003) emphasize that opportunities emerge from market disequilibrium and individual differences. This aligns to Schumpeter's Innovation Theory (1942) that implies, as some ventures adapt traditional practices into innovative, market-responsive models.

In food-related ventures, lifestyle, tradition, and cultural values are often central motivations (Lumpkin et al., 2013). These theories and studies underscore how personal context, market awareness, and cultural familiarity guide entrepreneurial decisions in the seafood dining industry. These seafood and grill restaurant operators, owners and managers, in this case, act not only as resource mobilizers but as innovators who transform inherited skills and insights into viable enterprises shaped by cultural familiarity and strategic foresight which in lines to Innovation Theory of Schumpeter (1942).

2. Establishing Stable Business Financial Flow

This theme highlights the participants' experiences in establishing a stable financial flow within their seafood and grill restaurant businesses, as shared by various operators, owners, and managers. Important strategies for maintaining and enhancing seafood and grill restaurant operations were disclosed by the participants' narratives. Maintaining food quality, offering quality customer service, growing the company by branching out, and improving internal communication were mentioned by the participants. The Resource-Based Entrepreneurship Theory by Alvarez & Busenitz (2001), which stresses using internal resources, like trained employees, customer feedback, and operational know-how, to sustain competitive advantage, is in line with these practices.

Moreover, Innovation Theory of Schumpeter (1942) supports the participants' emphasis on growth and service improvement as essential entrepreneurial traits that drive progress. Expanding to new locations, incorporating feedback systems, and fostering teamwork suggest a dynamic adaptation aligned with Schumpeterian innovation through process improvement and organizational change.

Literature supports that internal communication and customer service are vital for sustainable operations in the foodservice industry (Lumpkin et al., 2013). I find these prominence of how personal values of the seafood and grill restaurant owners, operators, and managers , teamwork, and strategic innovation drive long-term success in resource-constrained entrepreneurial settings.

3. Keeping Up with Supply Volume and Scale of Seafood Stocks/Goods

This theme specifically focuses on how restaurant owners, managers, and operators manage the availability, quantity, and consistency of seafood ingredients or products needed for daily business operations.

Most participants reported a weekly consumption of less than 100 kilograms, while a few noted usages exceeding 140 kilograms, with one estimating up to 2 tons monthly for oysters alone. I detected some strategic ordering practices, such as purchasing quantities good for 2–3 days to preserve freshness, were common. Some operators stock in bulk for a month or scale up supplies during peak seasons. However, competition with larger resorts for local seafood resources presents sourcing challenges, especially when suppliers prioritize high-volume buyers, affecting smaller businesses' procurement capabilities.

These experiences are consistent with the Resource-Based Entrepreneurship Theory (Alvarez & Busenitz, 2001), which highlights how competitive advantages are produced by having access to and control over important resources, like seafood supply chains. In a similar manner, I believe Schumpeter's Innovation Theory is applicable as business owners use local networks and creative sourcing techniques to overcome supply constraints. Additionally, I believe that Dewey's Theory of Practical Reasoning supports the idea that decision-making in dynamic business environments—like food perishability and fluctuating demand—requires experience-based, adaptive judgment.

These observations are corroborated by research on supply chain management in the food service industry. According to Kittipanya-Ngam & Tan (2020), small food establishments usually struggle to keep a steady supply because of their low purchasing volume and the pressure from larger companies to compete. Furthermore, in order to maintain cost effectiveness and guarantee customer satisfaction in restaurant operations, Ghosh & Shah (2015) stressed the significance of managing perishable inventory. This approach can help alleviate the pressure associated with managing the rapid spoilage of seafood supplies that can also lead to loss of sales and profit.

4. Monitoring Traceability on the Existing and Past Seafood Supply

This theme explores the experiences of seafood and grill restaurant operators in ensuring the quality and safety of their products by tracking the sources and handling of seafood. Participants emphasized the importance of knowing where and how their seafood was sourced, stored, and delivered, allowing them to assess freshness, manage supplier reliability, and respond quickly to customer concerns or supply issues. These implemented practices help ensure consistent quality control and foster customer trust, particularly in a market where freshness is essential to the overall dining experience.

Most participants emphasized that proper storage, such as using separate freezers for pre-production and newly purchased stocks, supports easier tracking and maintains quality. The consistent application of the First-In, First-Out (FIFO) method emerged as a key practice to ensure freshness and stock rotation. I also observed that part of the seafood and grill restaurant operators, owners and managers routine were regular inventory checks—both daily and nightly—to assess usage and replenish only as needed. Some operators also designated knowledgeable staff to inspect the quality of seafood supplies upon delivery, ensuring that substandard products could be returned and replaced. These actions reflect a strong sense of responsibility and vigilance among the seafood and grill restaurant operators, owners and managers. Their experiences suggest a mix of pressure and routine diligence, underscoring the importance of systems that maintain quality while preventing spoilage and loss. There is also an evident feeling of cautiousness and control, as they aim to align inventory with actual daily sales to minimize waste and manage supply efficiently.

According to Ghosh & Shah (2015), proper inventory management, especially of perishable goods, is crucial in maintaining quality and minimizing operational costs in restaurants. Liu & Gao (2017) further emphasize that traceability systems in food supply chains enhance accountability and consumer trust. The use of FIFO (First In, First Out) is a widely accepted method for managing food freshness and is linked to quality assurance systems in food service operations (Kittipanya-Ngam & Tan, 2020). In furtherance, I believe that this theme illustrates how the participants develop operational wisdom through adaptive practices, structured processes, and internal resource management to address the challenges of seafood traceability and freshness.

5. Handling Impact of Customer Demand on Seafood Supply

This theme explores how seafood and grill restaurant operators manage fluctuating and often unpredictable customer demand. It highlights their strategies to adjust supply volumes based on seasonal trends, special events, and daily variations, as well as the challenges they face from external factors like natural disasters. The theme also emphasizes the use of social media and customer engagement as tools to better forecast demand and maintain efficient inventory levels.

Seafood and grill restaurant operators, owners and managers shared that seafood supply needs fluctuate with customer demand, which is difficult to predict precisely and often varies based on seasons, special occasions, or specific days like weekends when demand typically surges. It was observed that increased customer orders directly lead to higher supply requirements, but forecasting exact volumes remains challenging due to the unpredictable nature of customer behavior. It was also seen firsthand how social media activity was regarded as a useful instrument for gauging consumer turnout and adjusting supply accordingly. Nevertheless, outside variables like typhoons and other natural disasters interfere with supply chains, leading to shortages and difficulties satisfying consumer demands. Tang (2006) claims that seasonal and event-driven spikes make demand forecasting in the hospitality industry difficult and necessitate adaptable inventory strategies. Findings by Kumar & Mukherjee (2020), who emphasize the value of digital engagement in enhancing demand visibility and customer relationship management, are consistent with the use of social media as a predictive tool. Some participants manage demand by maintaining

just enough inventory aligned with their usual customer flow, balancing supply with consistent but moderate demand. This align with supply chain management literature emphasizing demand variability and uncertainty in food service operations (Christopher & Holweg, 2017).

The narratives reveal a mixture of stress and adaptability among operators, reflecting the pressure to meet fluctuating demand without overstocking perishables. There is a sense of uncertainty and vulnerability, especially

when external disruptions like storms affect supply availability. Meanwhile, operators express resilience and cautious optimism by leveraging tools such as social media to better predict demand and improve inventory control. Some also convey a practical acceptance of their business scale, focusing on maintaining manageable stock levels.

6. Handling Impact of Customer Demand on Seafood Supply

This theme explores the adaptive strategies employed by seafood and grill restaurant operators to ensure a steady and sustainable seafood supply, even amidst challenges such as delivery delays, perishability, and supplier inconsistency.

A common approach among participants was using frozen seafood from online suppliers as a reliable backup, especially for items certain seafood items, like Pompano, tuna belly, and tuna panga, which were consistently available. It was also emphasized by various seafood and grill restaurant operators, owners and managers that the value of having multiple suppliers from different regions (e.g., Negros, Bohol, Leyte) as a way to stabilize supply and access better pricing due to stronger bargaining power from high-volume purchasing. There were also participants that saw ownership or affiliation with a seafood farm as a major advantage, offering direct access to fresh stock and greater control over availability.

It can also be noted that the importance of internal systems, such as assigning staff to monitor quality and handle inventory, or entering pre-arrangements with suppliers for returns and replacements of substandard products. These practices support sustainability by minimizing waste and ensuring that poor-quality supplies don't compromise operations. These were also aligned to Mentzer et al. (2001) belief that emphasizing the importance of relationship management in supply chains, echoing participants' value in maintaining consistent partnerships and arrangements.

These actions aligns to the Resource-Based Entrepreneurship Theory (Alvarez & Busenitz, 2001) that implies that The actions of the restaurant owners exemplify how entrepreneurs utilize unique, inimitable internal resources, such as private seafood farms, loyal suppliers, and experienced personnel, to create competitive advantages. Entrepreneurs do not merely respond to environmental changes but instead construct opportunities through strategic use of their resources. or instance, company-owned supply sources and reliable inventory staff serve as valuable and rare assets that others may not easily replicate, supporting sustainability and business resilience. The appointment of knowledgeable personnel for inventory control also supports Operational Reliability Theory, which posits that organizational resilience is enhanced through redundancy and staff expertise (Hollnagel, 2011). It was also noticed that diversifying supplier networks aligns with the idea that entrepreneurs perceive and manage uncertainty differently. Those with better resource access (e.g., logistics contacts, multiple outlets) can navigate volatility in the seafood supply more effectively, thereby shaping their market positioning rather than reacting passively.

The participants' narratives reflect a mix of resourcefulness, proactiveness, and a desire for control over their supply chains. Many expressed a sense of security and relief from being able to rely on frozen alternatives or loyal supplier networks. There's also a tone of pragmatism in their approach, understanding that not all circumstances are within their control, yet having systems in place allows them to cope effectively. Others showed pride in having direct or company-owned sources, which not only ensured freshness but also reduced reliance on external providers. The commitment to quality assurance and consistency, even without alternatives, demonstrates their professional discipline and confidence in long-term supplier relationships.

As to the aspirations of the participants to improve their operations, I created three (3) themes, namely: Staying Passionate and Driven in Operating the Seafood Restaurant, Optimizing Restaurant Operations to Align with Business Goals, and Commitment to Launching the Seafood Restaurant Despite Facing Major Difficulties.

1. Staying Passionate and Driven in Operating the Seafood Restaurant

This theme explores the diverse motivations that drive seafood and grill operators, owners and managers in their pursuit and sustenance of their businesses. The participants' motivations stem from personal, familial, cultural, financial, and socio-political sources, illustrating a rich and multifaceted foundation for their entrepreneurial journeys.

Participants shared that their motivation stemmed from a legacy passed down by their parents who were engaged in cooking and food selling. This familial transmission of passion not only formed the participants' early

exposure to the business but also created a deep-rooted emotional connection to their work. It was also noted that business became a source of joy and mental stimulation after retirement, seizing an opportunity to remain active and entertained in later years. This reflects motivation from personal enrichment and purpose. There was a participant that viewed the business as a means to survive independently without relying on her children, especially after the death of her husband. Her motivation is anchored in self-sufficiency, dignity, and gender-role adaptation, having taken on roles traditionally managed by men. These illustrate what Dewey (1933) emphasized that reasoning in action stems from experience, values, and contextual interpretation, rather than abstract logic. The participants' decisions, whether to start a business post-retirement, push through after a spouse's death, or introduce seafood to meet tourist demand, are all examples of practical, experience-driven decisions rooted in their lived realities.

The findings of Morris et al. (2012), who contend that entrepreneurship is frequently driven by personal meaning and life context rather than just economic motivations, lend further credence to this. Estrin et al. (2016) also discovered that, under the influence of local support networks and familial roles, motivations in emerging economies frequently combine opportunity and necessity. The emotional and psychological aspects of entrepreneurial motivation are also highlighted by Carsrud & Brännback (2011), who show how identity formation and personal fulfillment are important factors in the establishment and continuation of businesses.

There were some that shared that their motivation comes from ensuring quality seafood offerings in their locality, highlighting standards in food quality, cleanliness, and consistency. They take pride in customer satisfaction and community service, which strengthens their emotional investment. It was also described that there is a clear market-based motivation, explaining how the restaurant thrives by serving seafood, something lacking in the area despite high tourist demand. This exhibits opportunity exploitation through niche identification. Expression of introducing Filipino culture to foreign customers through the ambiance and dishes of their seafood restaurant was also exhibited, revealing cultural entrepreneurship, where food becomes a medium of storytelling and national pride. These seafood and grill restaurant operators, owners and managers did not operate in a vacuum but responded to social conditions, personal histories, and emergent opportunities. Their choices were guided by values such as family continuity, independence, service, and cultural pride, showing how moral and practical reasoning co-exist in entrepreneurship.

These align perfectly to Alavarez & Busenits (2001) RBE Theory, which argues that entrepreneurial opportunities emerge through access to and strategic use of unique, valuable, and inimitable resources. Participants drew on: familial human capital (inherited knowledge and passion), relational capital (government and political ties), personal experiences and competencies (retirement freedom, gender role adaptation), and cultural capital (identity and heritage representation in food design and service).

Based on these, it can be inferred that the participants' entrepreneurial motivations were associated with a variety of complex emotions. Many expressed a strong sense of appreciation and sentimental attachment to the morals and abilities they inherited from their families, particularly those who were raised in homes where food preparation and sales were commonplace. Others' accounts showed a great sense of pride and empowerment after becoming self-sufficient through their businesses, especially those who had to overcome obstacles like widowhood or a lack of formal education. Those who found satisfaction in helping others, advancing Filipino culture, and staying active both socially and intellectually, especially after retirement, also demonstrated a strong sense of purpose. Moreover, I firmly believe that participants demonstrated notable resilience and optimism, especially in recognizing and taking advantage of socio-political and market opportunities that supported their business growth. Collectively, these emotional experiences suggest that entrepreneurial motivation is not fixed, but rather dynamic, evolving across different stages of life and shaped by personal, social, and environmental contexts.

2. Optimizing Restaurant Operations to Align with Business Goals

This describes how owners of seafood and grill restaurants strategically oversee day-to-day operations in order to accomplish long-term business goals. These operations include maintaining staff communication, improving customer service, ensuring food quality, and getting feedback from patrons. This theme emphasizes how business choices are purposefully made in line with the entrepreneurs' overarching objectives, which include growth, brand building, and customer satisfaction. It illustrates the dynamic interplay between standard management procedures and creative entrepreneurial ideas.

As analyzed the responses made by the participants, it's evident that they are giving importance in ensuring that customers receive service and products that are worth their price, highlighting both emotional satisfaction and a customer-first mindset. This reflects what Kim et al. (2021) identified in their study on foodservice quality management, where customer feedback and service consistency are vital to business sustainability.

It was also observed that seafood and grill restaurant operators expressed their ambition and a desire for growth. Some of them shared their plans to branch out and open new restaurant locations, which showcases an entrepreneurial drive to innovate and expand. These experiences align with the presented supporting theory, Innovation Theory of J.A. Schumpeter (1942), which posits that entrepreneurs act as agents of change by introducing new combinations in business practice and creating economic development. Their aspirations to grow are coupled with realistic assessments of current operations and reflections on what can still be improved.

It can also be obviously perceived that the value of staff collaboration and communication was emphasized. I noticed that some of the managers, owners, and operators of seafood and grill restaurants talked about the value of open communication and employee support, recognizing that creating a productive workplace requires teamwork. This is in line with the research by Barros et al. (2011), who discovered that internal communication and employee involvement significantly affect operational efficiency in the hospitality sector.

Additionally, there was a reflection that emphasized the spiritual and cultural values embedded in their daily routines, such as starting each day with a prayer for guidance and gratitude. This practice of grounding business operations in faith reveals a deeply rooted moral reasoning, consistent with one of the supporting theory presented in this study, Theory of Practical Reasoning by Dewey (1933), which holds that decisions are influenced by an individual's beliefs, habits, and reflective judgment shaped by their lived experiences and cultural context.

It can also be drawn from the participants' responses that managing people also becomes a major emotional challenge, which emphasizes the need for leadership that strikes a balance between authority and empathy. Its highlights the emotional toll of what being an entrepreneur takes, particularly when dealing with interpersonal conflicts within the company. This experience is consistent with the research of Kantabutra & Avery (2010), which discovered that small business leaders frequently have to balance upholding organizational values with preserving emotional resilience.

In general, the participants' experiences had a deep interplay of empowerment, emotional labor, gratitude, resiliency, and optimism. These patterns of emotions and actions indicate that operating a restaurant extends beyond the management of logistics; it encompasses dealing with people, staying true to oneself, responsiveness, and vision articulation. These conclusions align neatly with Resource Based Entrepreneurship Theory by Alvarez & Busenitz (2001) which articulates how personal and social intangibles like values, loyalty, and trust amongst team members can strategically be harnessed as assets to strengthen and defend market position in small businesses.

3. Commitment to Launching the Seafood Restaurant Despite Facing Major Difficulties

This theme illustrates the unwavering determination of most participants to continue or replicate their seafood restaurant ventures, despite experiencing significant challenges in the process.

Most participants expressed a clear willingness to establish the same type of business again, motivated by a combination of market demand, access to resources, personal passion, and successful problem-solving from past experiences. Seafood and grill operators, owners and managers expressed strong confidence in the market appeal of seafood dishes. They justified their willingness to stay in the same business by highlighting the consistent customer demand and uniqueness of seafood offerings, aligning with consumer behavior studies that show the impact of perceived demand and niche specialization on entrepreneurial resilience (Nieman & Nieuwenhuizen, 2014). Others were driven by their access to essential resources (e.g., a seafood farm), an advantage that connects to the Resource-Based View (RBV) theory, which positively influences the adoption of sustainable practices and velocity, positively impacting supply chain performance (Sharma et al., 2022).

Emotional investment and self-efficacy were clear too. For example, there was mention of a strong desire to cook (the motivation/driver) that sustained enthusiasm for a restaurant business, which underscores the contribution

of intrinsic motivation to entrepreneurial persistence. Self-Determination Theory acknowledges that intrinsic motivation, or a pursuit from personal or enjoyment of the activity, serves to enhance commitment despite external pressures and disruptions (Ryan & Deci, 2000). Another participant provided an example of perseverance and self-reflection, which also drew upon John Dewey's Theory of Practical Reasoning (1933), which emphasizes reflective action for subsequent experiences based on stories or past experiences.

Some narratives also revealed entrepreneurial journeys shaped by serendipity and familial influence. There was an admission to being uncertain about continuing the business, having only taken over due to a cousin's encouragement. This illustrates how entrepreneurship can sometimes emerge from social capital and unplanned opportunities rather than clear, intentional planning, a pattern also reflected in Effectuation Theory (Sarasvathy, 2001), where entrepreneurs make decisions based on available means and evolving goals.

The participants' stories collectively reflect a mix of courage, passion, market intuition, and faith-based resilience. Despite the risks and uncertainties, their willingness to re-engage in the same business venture suggests a strong emotional attachment and belief in their adaptive capacities, feelings often associated with entrepreneurial resilience (Bullough & Renko, 2013), which allows individuals to rebound from adversity through optimism, resourcefulness, and strategic learning.

CONCLUSION

The findings of this study reveal that the operations of seafood and grill restaurants are shaped by a combination of entrepreneurial motivation, strategic resource management, and adaptive business practices. The participants demonstrated that success in the seafood restaurant industry depends not only on financial and operational capabilities but also on their ability to manage seafood supply, maintain product quality, respond to changing customer demand, and establish sustainable supplier relationships. Their experiences reflect resilience, innovation, and practical decision-making, supported by strong family values, entrepreneurial resourcefulness, and commitment to customer satisfaction.

Moreover, the aspirations of the participants highlight that passion, continuous operational improvement, and perseverance remain central to sustaining and expanding their businesses. Despite the challenges associated with perishability, supply uncertainties, and market fluctuations, the participants remained committed to achieving long-term business success through strategic planning, quality service, effective leadership, and continuous adaptation. Overall, the study concludes that sustainable seafood and grill restaurant operations are driven by the effective integration of entrepreneurial competencies, operational excellence, and resilient management practices, enabling operators to remain competitive in an increasingly dynamic foodservice industry.

RECOMMENDATION

Based on the findings of this study, it must be recommended that seafood and grill restaurant operators adopt practices that prioritize operational efficiency, customer satisfaction, and staff management. Restaurant operators should be encouraged to invest in continuous staff training and clear communication systems to strengthen team performance and improve service delivery. It is also advised that they develop consistent food quality standards and implement basic business systems, such as inventory monitoring and feedback collection tools, to enhance their day-to-day operations.

Academic institutions for hospitality and entrepreneurship are encouraged to develop localized, skills-based training programs for micro and small food businesses. The adaptation of these programs must be based on the specific needs and contexts of local entrepreneurs regarding cost control, seafood safety, sanitation practices, financial management, and menu planning. It is recommended to execute these modules within community settings or under flexible, accessible modality such as short-term courses or workshops using local dialect.

For aspiring and existing individual seafood and grill restaurant operators, the results of this study suggest the importance of embracing challenges and learning from real-life experiences. It is recommended that individuals venturing into the seafood and grill industry pursue mentorship opportunities, engage in locally offered training programs, and take part in networking activities to acquire hands-on knowledge and broaden their understanding of business operations. They should also be encouraged to take advantage of their existing resources, such as family support, personal cooking skills, and supply chain access, to build a solid foundation for their ventures.

To further promote the seafood and grill restaurant sector, it is also recommended that LGUs and tourism boards initiate food tourism programs such as seafood-themed events, culinary tours, or cook-off competitions that showcase local dishes and homegrown entrepreneurs. This can enhance community pride, increase restaurant visibility, and contribute to the local economy.

These implications highlight the need for collaborative efforts among restaurant operators, educators, local authorities, and aspiring entrepreneurs to build stronger, more sustainable seafood and grill establishments. By implementing these recommendations, stakeholders can ensure that the passion and perseverance shown by the study participants are matched with the proper tools, knowledge, and support systems for long-term success.

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