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Causal Factors Affecting Small Convenience Store and their Marketing Strategies for Coping with the Pandemic and Post-Pandemic Era: A Sequential Exploratory Study in Noveleta, Cavite

¹ Cardenas Angelika Ellise, ² Lazaro Bryan Louis G, ³ Alabas Joshua, ⁴ Baluyot Nea Ruth, ⁵ Paraiso Kyle Raine
^{1, 2, 3, 4, 5} Noveleta Senior High School, Noveleta, Cavite, Philippines

Corresponding Author: **Cardenas Angelika Ellise**

Abstract

This sequential exploratory research entitled Causal Factors Affecting Small Convenience Store and its Marketing Strategies for Coping with the Pandemic and Post-Pandemic Era: A Sequential Exploratory Study in Noveleta, Cavite and aims to explore factors that affect small convenience stores during the pandemic in the town of Noveleta, Cavite, and I intend to investigate the alternative marketing strategies implemented by business owners. It focuses on qualitative findings through interviews involving ten (10) respondents, supported by quantitative results involving fifty (50) respondents via surveys. Transcribing and encoding methods are used in qualitative data analysis, while for quantitative data analysis, descriptive statistics are conducted.

Findings show that ten factors can affect a small convenience store business (Community lockdown, Quarantine pass, lack of money, Relief goods from the

Government, Lack/limited supply, Police checkpoints, Social distancing, Curfew, Inflation of goods, Unsold products). Ten alternative marketing strategies help sari-sari store owners during the time of pandemic (Early opening, Making the Price Affordable, Continuing business, Prioritizing the Needs of Customers, Looking for More Reliable Suppliers, Offering Free Delivery, Promoting through Social Media, Lending Goods, Giving Freebies, Adding Essential Products).

In addition, the effective marketing strategy that helped many small convenience stores during the pandemic was adding essential products (M= 4.92), followed by early opening (M= 4.90). The researchers crafted a project titled 'Project ESOCOSS.' The Project Enhancement Seminar On Creating Online Selling Sites (ESOCOSS) aims to hold a seminar where the participants can learn about gadgets and business matters.

Keywords: ESOCOSS, Entrepreneurs, Coronavirus, Digital Marketing

Introduction

When the World Health Organization (WHO) declared the pandemic in the country, there was a change in what people are used to, from communication to information seeking and how a person purchases goods and services. It also started to affect businesses, no matter how small or big. According to Fairlie (2020), from February to April 2022, the number of business owners dropped rapidly from 15 million to 11.7 million due to the Covid-19 pandemic and the changing issue of economic demand. Due to the outbreak of Covid-19, 70.6% of small size and midsize enterprises that are micro-companies were forced to close temporarily (Shinozaki & Rao, 2021) ^[10]. 86% of young entrepreneurs said the coronavirus had negatively affected their businesses. There is one report out of every three businesses that had a significant slowdown, and out of every four businesses, one has stopped and closed permanently. A decrease in demand was experienced by 88% of businesses. In comparison, disrupted businesses in the supply chain accounted for 34%, 26% of businesses that have yet to develop within the government, and 25% that need help distributing items (Youth, 2020).

These changes are the reason why businesses create alternative marketing strategies. It is a long-term plan that will help every business, even small or big, to reach its goal. It is also a process to know what the customers need so that a business will know what they will do to have an advantage and remain competitive. It covers everything, from knowing the target customers and the techniques to reach them.

Digital marketing has been one of the changes since the pandemic (Junusi, 2020) ^[7]. The covid 19 pandemic has also caused significant changes regarding the promotion of services and products using technology (De' *et al.*, 2020) ^[2]. Due to the pandemic and the proliferation of digital marketing channels, business owners have had the opportunity to facilitate effective communication with their customers. According to Dr. Prasanth (2021) ^[9], there are ten marketing strategies during the

pandemic; those strategies are identifying your customers, monetary management, a good relationship with contracted people, building up your team, assessing the marketing/supply chain, the mechanical transformation of business, assess your competitors, get ready for the recovery strategy, determining expected purposes of disappointment, and considering different dangers. While some companies struggle during the pandemic, others use alternative strategies like Innocent, Nike, and Airbnb. Even in the middle of economic contraction and downturn, some companies can gain an advantage; 14% of large companies increased their sales growth rate and operating income margin (Jacobides & Reeves, 2020) [6].

Marketing strategies during a pandemic differ from those during a new normal. According to Inquirer.net (2021) [1], hyper-personalization, more chatbots and AI, a focus on messaging, transparency, the shift to conversational commerce, and moving toward a new normal are the marketing strategies that are used today since all businesses entered the "New Normal Era".

Several factors affect businesses. These factors mainly affect small businesses. According to the research conducted by Suguna *et al.* (2022) [11], seven factors affect the operation of every small business owner during a pandemic. Those factors are derived from demand, availability of resources, logistics, price elasticity, financial crisis, occupational health and safety, and government regulations and rules. According to Giunipero *et al.* (2022) [8], due to the financial fragility of small business owners, based on the customer and some key employees, they experienced more challenging and critical situations. Employment decreased by 40%, and 43% of businesses temporarily closed due to the financial weakness of businesses (Engidaw, 2020) [3].

Alternative marketing strategies during the pandemic and the new normal are different. Similar to the factors during the pandemic and the new normal, they affect business differently. A business resumption during and after the pandemic is full of challenges and opportunities. Considering the strategies and factors will significantly help maintain competitiveness in a business even during and after the pandemic.

This research study aims to investigate the factors that affect convenience stores in Noveleta, Cavite, and seeks to determine the different marketing strategies of the sari-sari store business during a pandemic and new normal. The researchers will conduct a seminar and create a booklet that will input information regarding the factors that affect businesses during the pandemic, new standards, and the most effective marketing strategy that every business owner can use. The research project aims to help those businesses who closed their business to know how they can start and manage their businesses again regarding the situation.

Objectives of the Study

This research study aims to (1) identify the factors that affect owners of small convenience stores; (2) investigate the different marketing strategies of the small convenience store business during the pandemic and the new normal; (3) reveal the significant difference between the perceived business performance of the small convenience store before and after the pandemic restrictions in Noveleta, Cavite.

Method and Materials

The present study followed the mixed method approach

because the study needs both quantitative and qualitative data and analysis for this research study since more than quantitative or qualitative data alone will be needed to answer the research questions adequately. The mixed method research design unites the elements of qualitative and quantitative research to answer the questions in this research study for general purposes and depth of understanding. The experimental sequential design will be followed in this study as one of the most common designs used in mixed methodology research (George, 2022) [5]. The sequence of this design will collect and analyze qualitative data by interviewing the participants of small convenience stores in Noveleta, Cavite, to determine the factors that affect their businesses as well as their alternative marketing strategies used to explore, understand, and develop sets of hypotheses before gathering quantitative data by surveying to analyze the responses of the given participants comprehensively and test the hypothesis.

Table 1: Demographic Profile of the Respondents

Description	Frequency	Percentage %
Age Group		
18-25	5	10%
26-33	14	28%
34-41	7	14%
42-49	11	22%
50-57	5	10%
58-65	3	6%
Unknown	5	10%
Total	50	
Sex		
Female	25	50%
Male	16	32%
Unknown	9	18%
Total	50	

Fifty (50) different small convenience store owners were used in this study. The researchers surveyed fifty (50) and interviewed ten (10) individuals from Noveleta, Cavite. The researchers considered the availability of each respondent.

A mixed analysis approach will be used to analyze the collected data. In the case of this study, qualitative data will be gathered first, and then quantitative data will be followed. Since both data have been gathered, they will be coded and summarized by tabulation. To analyze the actual data collected via the interviews, the first step this study took was to transcribe the data. Data transcription is a method by which recorded audio is transferred into text. It must be encoded to understand the qualitative data (Cambridge Dictionary).

In terms of quantitative data, the data analysis tools we will use are descriptive analysis. It involves collecting, interpreting, analyzing, and summarizing data to present them in the form of charts, graphs, and tables. Rather than concluding, it makes the complex data easy to read and understand. The researchers will use data analysis tools: mean and standard deviation.

Results and Discussion

This section discusses the gathered data thoroughly. This part will be divided into two parts, the qualitative and quantitative data. Qualitative data was gathered through interviews with small convenience store owners, and quantitative data was gathered through surveys. Qualitative data were analyzed using thematic analysis, while

quantitative data was computed using IBM SPSS.

Table 2: Factors Affecting Small Convenience Stores in Noveleta, Cavite

Factors	Mean	Rank	Interpretation
Lack of Money	4.84	3	Strongly Agree
Quarantine Pass	4.86	2	Strongly Agree
Community Lockdown	4.90	1	Strongly Agree
Relief Goods from the Government	2.04	10	Disagree
Limited/ Lack of Supply	2.20	9	Disagree
Police Checkpoint	4.54	8	Strongly Agree
Social Distancing	4.70	7	Strongly Agree
Curfew	4.82	5	Strongly Agree
Inflation of Goods	4.84	4	Strongly Agree
Unsold Products	4.76	6	Strongly Agree
Total Mean	4.25		Agree

The researchers surveyed 50 persons that have a sari-sari store business. Table 2 shows the different factors the business owners give that affect their business. These factors include lack of money, quarantine pass, community lockdown, relief goods from the Government, Limited/ lack of supply, police checkpoint, social distancing, curfew, inflation of goods, and unsold products. The researchers' continuous study found that community lockdown is the number 1 reason affecting the sari-sari store business. Most people strongly agree that it gets the highest mean (M=4.90). On the other hand, the table shows that relief goods from the government and limited/lack of supplies from the supplier do not affect the sari-sari store business. These two factors get the lowest mean (M=2.20) and (M=2.04)

The Researchers conclude that other factors do not affect some of the sari-sari store owners. The result of the survey clearly shows that not everyone experiences the same thing during a pandemic.

When the pandemic hit the Philippines, it affected everyone's life, especially the business sector. Due to the changes and restrictions implemented by the government, other businesses decided to stop because of losses. A study by Asian Development Bank (ADB) financial sector specialist Shinozaki and Rao (2021)^[10] shows that 70.6% of micro, small, and medium enterprises in the Philippines temporarily closed due to the COVID-19 outbreak. According to Youth (2020), 86% of entrepreneurs announced that the coronavirus has negatively affected their businesses. During a pandemic, 1 in 3 report a significant slowdown, and 1 in 4 have stopped entirely. 88% have experienced a decrease in customer demand, 34% have

Table 4: Perceived Business Performance of Small Convenience Store Owner in Noveleta, Cavite

	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean	lower	upper	t	df	Sig. (2-tailed)
Pre- Pandemic	4.304	0.2695						
Post- Pandemic	4.654	0.3278						
Pre- Pandemic – Post- Pandemic	-.35000	.30987	.0438	-.4381	-.2619	-7.987	49	.000

This study aims to determine if there is a significant difference between the perceived business performance of small convenience stores during the pre-pandemic and post-pandemic era. To test the hypothesis, an independent sample t-test was conducted.

Table 4 reveals that the average business performance of small convenience stores during pre-pandemic (M= 4.304, SD= 0.2695) is significantly higher than the average

experienced supply chain interruptions, 26% cannot progress government business, and 25% have experienced distribution interruptions.

Table 3: Marketing Strategies Used by Business Owners in Noveleta, Cavite

Alternative Marketing Strategies	Mean	Rank	Interpretation
Early Opening	4.90	2	Strongly Agree
Making the Price Affordable	4.80	5	Strongly Agree
Continuing Business	4.88	3	Strongly Agree
Prioritizing the Needs of Customers	4.72	6	Strongly Agree
Looking for more Reliable Suppliers	3.80	9	Agree
Offering Free Delivery	4.64	7	Strongly Agree
Promoting through social media	4.62	8	Strongly Agree
Lending Goods	4.82	4	Strongly Agree
Giving Freebies	3.34	10	Neutral
Adding Essential Products	4.92	1	Strongly Agree
Total Mean	4.54		Strongly Agree

Table 3 shows the different marketing strategies that help sari-sari store owners to cope during a pandemic. The different strategies are gathered through a survey. These marketing strategies include early opening, making the price affordable, continuing business, prioritizing the needs of customers, looking for more reliable suppliers, offering free delivery, promoting through social media, lending goods, giving freebies, and adding essential products. In conclusion, the given marketing strategies of every business owner help their struggling business. The result clearly shows that almost everyone agrees with other business owners.

Due to different factors affecting the sari-sari store business, every store owner thinks of different marketing strategies for coping during the pandemic. According to Dr. Prasanth (2021)^[9], there are ten marketing strategies during a pandemic; those strategies are identifying your customers, monetary management, a good relationship with contracted people, building up your team, assessing the marketing/supply chain, a mechanical transformation of the business, assessing your competitors, get ready for the recovery strategy, determining expected purposes of disappointment, considering different dangers. In some studies, one of the used marketing strategies is online platforms. Hyper-personalization, more chatbots and AI, a focus on messaging, transparency, the shift to conversational commerce, and moving toward a new normal are the marketing strategies used today since business entered the "New Normal" (Constandache, 2021)^[1].

business performance during post-pandemic (M= 4.654, SD=0.3278), (t(49)=-7.987, p<0.001). These findings suggest that the respondents perceive business performance during the post-pandemic is higher than during the pre-pandemic era.

Conclusion

Convenience stores are one of the most known businesses in

every community. Just like any other business, there are also times when it faces different problems, just like when the pandemic came. Their businesses are affected by many different factors, but sometimes a particular factor that can affect other businesses may not affect the rest. Due to the problems encountered by the business owner, they also think of a way to operate their business continuously, but it also does not help others. Additionally, there is a significant difference between the perceived business performance of small convenience stores during the pre-pandemic and post-pandemic era. Both have good indicators of business performance however; the post-pandemic went better than the pre-pandemic one as the businessmen began to innovate their strategies. In conclusion, the researchers suggest that business owners find a unique alternative marketing strategy to help their way out of the situation.

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