

# Online Selling of Baked Goods: Understanding the Lived Experiences of Online Sellers in Dasmariñas City, Cavite

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**Abstract:** This study aimed to uncover the lived experiences of online sellers in starting and running their online business of baked goods specifically cakes and breads in Dasmariñas City, Cavite, Philippines. Basic interpretive method was followed in the conduct of the study. Using purposeful sampling, the participants of the study were chosen based on the criteria provided by the researchers. The researchers conducted one-on-one interview to gather data from the five participants. The data were treated using qualitative data analysis to determine the strategies used by these online sellers in selling baked goods specifically cakes and breads based on their actual experiences. Interview transcripts were analyzed by following these three stages: open coding, axial coding, and selective coding. The findings of the study revealed that sources of inspiration, starting-up online business, and positive experiences were themes that constituted starting up and running an online business. Whereas, starting-up challenges and struggles encountered comprised the challenges that online sellers experienced. Additionally, life lessons, insights gained, and values of business men emerged as themes relative to their insights in doing online business. Lastly, marketing platform, sustaining online business, and medium and long-term plans contributed to their success. Indeed, online sellers face challenges, struggles, and difficulties in starting, running, and maintaining their businesses like physical store sellers. It is recommended that the present study be replicated but with a wider locale and more participants.

**Keywords:** Baked goods, basic interpretive method, online selling, online business.

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## I. INTRODUCTION

### Background of the Study

Digital marketing, often known as online marketing, is advertising of business with the use of internet and other modes of online engagement to engage with prospective consumers. It includes text and multimedia messaging as a marketing platform in addition to email, social media, and web-based advertising, (Mailchimp.com). Today, online marketing is the fastest growing segment of online commerce. People nowadays find it more convenient to buy things at their own comfort rather than going out to buy the things they want (Habel & Linsenmayer, 2021; He, Gupta, & Mirchandani, 2021).

According to the Department of Trade and Industry (DTI), between March 2020 and January 2021, over 500,000 entrepreneurs in the Philippines established new business names. Retailers through the internet or online sellers came first with 87,223, followed by retailers in sari-sari stores with 68,241 (dti.gov.ph). As online shopping has grown and still growing, the number of online sellers is also increasing. Now, it is easy to establish an online business because of the use of social media and other platforms as a marketing tool (Luckman & Andrew, 2018; Smith, 2016).

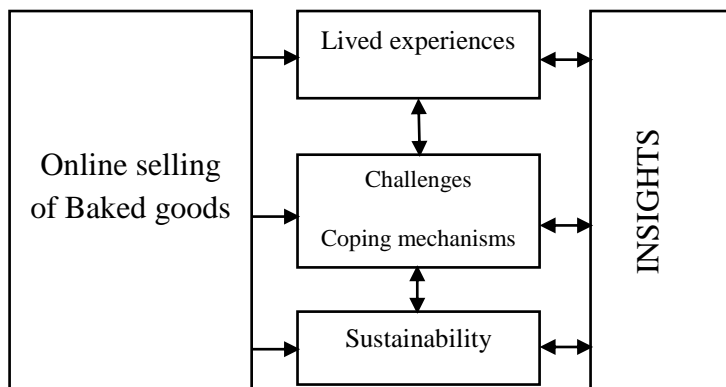
Most studies on online selling of foods focused on selling of different food products (Limon, 2021; Ramos, 2018; Kim & Hwang, 2021; and See-Kwong, G., Soo-Ryue, N., Shiun-Yi, W., & Lily, C, 2017). A related study about online selling of baked goods focused on Paris Baguette (Kim & Hwang, 2020). This present study focused on online selling of baked

goods specifically cakes and breads. Baked good is a food (such as a bread, cake, or cookie) made from a dough or batter that is baked, (Merriam-webster.com). Regardless of the political, economic, and social changes that affect our society on a daily basis, one thing stays constant: people adore bread and baked products.

Daemi (2018) stated that “future researchers could explore effective internet marketing strategies to increase profit levels in other industries and other lines of business”. The purpose of this paper was to uncover the lived experiences of online sellers in starting and running online business of baked goods specifically cakes and breads. Related studies on online selling of food products focus on selling of different food products, (Limon, 2021; Ramos, 2018; Kim & Hwang, 2021; and See-Kwong, G., Soo-Ryue, N., Shiun-Yi, W., & Lily, C, 2017). In addition, related studies on online selling of baked goods focused on Paris Baguette and are based on other countries. None of the reviewed literature focused on online selling of cakes and breads; there has been no study on this in the Philippines; hence the present study. The five participants of the study were from the sixteen (16) online sellers of cakes and breads that are based in Dasmariñas City, Cavite. This study highlighted the experiences of online sellers of baked goods specifically cakes and breads; it includes the challenges that they encountered in their online business, the coping mechanism they employed, and their insights.

**Conceptual Framework**

The present study highlighted the following variables: online selling of baked goods, lived experiences of online sellers, challenges encountered by them and coping mechanism they employ, sustainability of their business and the insights of online sellers. These variables are reflected in Figure 1.



**Fig. 1: Conceptual Framework**

The first variable was the online selling of baked goods specifically cakes and breads. As seen on the figure there were three one-headed arrows on from the first variable pointing to the lived, experiences, challenges and coping mechanisms, and sustainability. These arrows means that the said three variables depend on the first, which was online selling of baked goods. The second variable focused on the lived experiences of those engaged in online selling of baked goods. The two-headed arrow pointing to challenges and coping mechanism and insights showed that the lived experiences of the online sellers primarily relate to the challenges they encountered and the coping mechanisms they employed, and their insight, and vice versa. In the same way, the two-headed arrow from the third variable pointing to sustainability and insights revealed a symbiotic relationship, that was, one relates to the other and vice versa.

The lived experiences highlighted what these online sellers experienced when they started their business, how they started their business, and strategies they employed specially in these times of pandemic. The fourth variable dealt with the challenges they encountered in their online business and how they coped with these challenges. Sustainability of their business constituted the fifth variable, basically relates to the challenges and coping mechanisms and vice versa at the two-headed arrow suggests. Finally, as shown be another two-headed arrow, the second, third, and fourth variables pointing to the fifth variable means that they were the sources of the insights gained by the online sellers and the insights they derived relate back to the sustainability of their business, how they coped with challenges, and to their lived experiences in general. Reflecting on their insights enabled them to be wiser in handling their online business.

Qualitative data was generated from the different interviews to be conducted by the researchers with the participants of the study.

### **Statement of the Problem**

The purpose of this paper was to uncover the experiences of online sellers in starting and running their online business of baked goods specifically cakes and breads in Dasmariñas City, Cavite, Philippines. It highlighted their strategies in dealing with the challenges that they encountered in their online business and how they sustained it. Specifically, the researchers sought to answer the following questions:

1. What are the experiences of online sellers in starting and running their online business?
2. How do they deal with challenges they encounter in online selling?
3. What are their insights on maintaining a successful business?
4. What are the strategies of online sellers in selling baked goods?

## **II. LITERATURE REVIEW**

### **Online selling**

According to Luckman and Andrew (2018), the convenience of creating a professional business profile and the opportunity to engage via social media as a marketing tool give young craft entrepreneurs a sense of legitimate, sustained, and meaningful job, supporting their existence. On the other hand, online entrepreneurs could choose from the many online platforms and apps for them to be able to connect more easily with their prospective customers. These platforms also enable users to make money in a variety of ways, such as by sharing their belongings with others or by selling their used products or creative crafts, (Smith, 2016). Owners of small retail businesses utilize online marketing to engage with customers and the community, (Lockett, 2018). This has also been explored in a very recent study by Habel and Linsenmayer (2021), they contended that customers should be informed about e-commerce channels as another option for purchasing. Additionally, a recent study by Van (2021), concluded that today's trend in merchandising goods is to sell items online.

A study by Lockett (2018), concluded that the importance of sharing information about the products and goods of the business on social media sites were highlighted by the participants. A series of recent studies (Smith, 2016; Lockett, 2018; Habel & Linsenmayer, 2021; and Andrew, 2018) has indicated that it is easy to establish a business because of the use of social media and other platforms as a marketing tool. Social media is rapidly connecting the world, and customers expect businesses to operate through such platforms. It is recognized that it is an excellent technique to communicate with prospective customers, (Duermyer, 2017). Social media is the fastest way to promote products and goods. The use of social media would be the fastest way for an online shop to be known because there are more people who have accounts on social media.

### **Online selling of food products**

Most studies on online selling of foods focused on different food products (Limon, 2021; Ramos, 2018; Kim & Hwang, 2021; and See-Kwong, G., Soo-Ryue, N., Shiun-Yi, W., & Lily, C, 2017). A previous research by Kim and Hwang (2020), showed that using a localization strategy, Paris Baguette was able to achieve a successful settlement during the rapid growth of the bakery industry. In the study of Limon (2021), Personal hygiene, cross contamination prevention and sanitation, food preparation and delivery, as well as the self-reported food safety procedures of food handlers at home participating in online companies regarding national and international food safety requirements, were highlighted. On the other hand, Ramos (2018), concluded that one of the strategies for the development of the turo-turo and online markets is to provide excellent products that are supported by product features that provide stability without losing the product's healthy ingredients. In the study of See-Kwong, Soo-Ryue, Shiun-Yi, & Lily (2017), the findings suggested if entrepreneurs want to compete effectively in the food industry, they must understand and make adjustments to evolving customer's preferences. Lastly, the study of Hong, Li, & Wang (2016), showed that ingredients are the most serious issue, as they have a direct impact on food quality and safety, endangering consumer health and safety.

### **Lived Experience**

A lived experience refers to that which has lasting effect on the person who experience something; the person considers it to be meaningful in his life studies on lived experiences focus on the unchanging aspects of the experiences across all the participants (Frechette, Bitzas, Aubry, Kilpatrick, & Lavoie-Tremblay, 2020). In addition, exploring lived experiences involves individual cases or experiences of the participants leading to more general statements about the experience (Paley, 2018; Shamsaei, Yaghmaei, & Haghghi, 2020). Previous research showed that the insights and explanations of

human experience can be beneficial to other people's knowledge and experiences (Farrell, 2020). It isn't only something that happens to the person. A narrative of lived experience is just descriptive; it includes an interpretation of meaning for the person.

### **Challenges**

Most business owners confront difficulties when it comes to online marketing, according to Leong et al. (2017). Estimating the impact on the business, aligning with other promotional techniques, a lack of assets, a lack of administrative support, social competence, and message regulation. On the other hand, due to a lack of involvement or appropriate tools, entrepreneurs encounter problems in engaging on an online marketing platform, (Keegan & Rowley, 2017). Lastly, the study of Chong et al. (2015), showed that entrepreneurs encounter five challenges: effect, endorsement, acknowledgment, affiliation, and brand consistency.

### **Sustainability**

A study has shown effective internet marketing strategies help businesses last longer, earn more money, and may even help communities become stronger and safer, (Daemi, 2018). On the other hand, the online marketing strategy has an impact on the whole marketing strategy, (Hasan, n.d.). Results of related study about online marketing strategy indicated that some entrepreneurs employ strategies to conduct online marketing and boost derived sales, (Lockett, 2018). Previous studies showed that online marketing strategies positively affects online business. It could lead to successful business and sustainability. Increased sales and marketing are the results of a well-defined marketing strategy. This has a direct influence on revenue since the more customers are engaged, the more they reach out to the business.

The foregoing literature on online selling, lived experience, and sustainability have greatly helped the researchers in the conceptualization of the present study.

## **III. METHODOLOGY**

### **Research Design**

The researchers used qualitative research design in this study. According to Crossman (2021), "Qualitative research is a type of social science research that collects and works with non-numerical data and that seeks to interpret meaning from these data that help understand social life through the study of targeted populations or places". Since this study focused on the strategies of online sellers of baked goods, qualitative research was the most appropriate method as it provides the most accurate description of the phenomenon under investigation.

The basic interpretive method of research was utilized in this study. The primary goal of interpretive research is to disclose analytically those significant behaviors while also illustrating how those behaviors combine to generate observable conclusions., (Institute of Public & International Affairs, n.d.). The aim of the interpretive constructionist researcher is to determine shared knowledge while recognizing that each people will define the experience in their own distinctive manner based on previous experiences in life and socio-cultural factors.

### **Research Locale**

The study was conducted in the locality of Dasmariñas City, Cavite, Philippines, which is considered as "a first-class component city in the province of Cavite" ([psa.gov.ph](http://psa.gov.ph)). Based on the 2020 census, Dasmariñas City has a total population of 703,141. The researchers utilized the entirety of Dasmariñas City in order to widen the range of their study. Participants were online sellers of baked goods specifically cakes and breads who are based in Dasmariñas City, Cavite. Currently, there were a total of sixteen (16) online cake and bread sellers that were based in Dasmariñas City, Cavite.

### **Population and Sampling Method**

A population is comprised of all the objects or events of a particular subset about which researchers seek relevant information, (Allen, 2017). In this study, the target population were 16 online sellers who have been selling cakes and breads in Dasmariñas City, Cavite.

Given the target population above, the researchers employed purposive sampling, which was commonly used in qualitative research to determine the participants of the study who could provide rich information about the phenomenon being studied. Specifically, the researchers criterion purposive sampling strategy as they used predetermined criteria for selecting the participants of the study (Ames, Glenton & Lewin, 2019). The researchers also used snowball or chain purposive sampling strategy by referring people who have similar a specific trait of study interest with the target population, (Frey, 2018).

### **Participants of the Study**

The participants of the study were chosen based on the following criteria: (1) they should be online sellers of baked goods such as cakes and breads, (2) they must be registered online sellers of baked goods specifically cakes and breads in Dasmariñas City, Cavite, (3) their business must be one year in operation, (4) they be the producers (bakers) of their own products and not merely resellers, and (5) they have legitimate business permits.

Sample size for the study should meet the criteria outlined for qualitative analyses, and between two and twenty participants (Vasileiou, Barnett, Thorpe & Young, 2018) may be chosen. The researchers had five participants or 31.25% of the sixteen (16) online sellers of cakes and breads in Dasmariñas City for their research.

### **Data Collection Technique**

The researchers used crowdsourcing as a data collection technique. Crowdsourcing is the process of gathering work, information, or opinions from a significant number of individuals who provide their information via the Internet, social media, and smartphone apps, (Hargrave, 2021). Researchers collected and analyzed data on a much wider scale through crowdsourcing, resulting in efficiency advantages in terms of reliability, capacity, and cost. The researchers used Facebook, Twitter, and Instagram in disseminating information about the need of the participants for the study.

After the researchers completed their participants, they have conducted an interview. Research interviews are the most effective method for qualitative research because they contribute to explaining, better understanding, and analyzing participants' thoughts, behavior, experiences, phenomena, and so on, (University Libraries, 2018). When the topic of inquiry involves complicated questioning and thorough exploration, research interviews are effective.

Given the current situation, the researchers conducted online interviews. An interview that is done virtually on an online conversation, video, or audio platform is called online interviews, (Heaslip, 2021). Thus, interviews are most suitable when little is known about the phenomenon or when participants must provide significant insights. The researchers used one-on-one interview to collect and gather data from the participants. Social media platform such as Messenger and Zoom were used on one-on-one online interview with the participants. It was done by asking each one of the participants, series of questions about their lived experiences in online selling of baked goods specifically cakes and breads. The researchers interviewed the participants three times until data saturation.

Prior to the interview the consent of the participants was sought especially regarding the recording of the interview sessions. All interviews were transcribed and the resulting transcription constituted the qualitative data that was subject to analysis.

### **Data Analysis**

Interview transcripts were analyzed by following these three stages: open coding, axial coding, and selective coding (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). The first phase of data analysis is open coding. In qualitative data analysis, open coding is an analytic procedure by which concepts (i.e., codes) are described, identified, and categorized, (Aghayi & Christison, 2021). The researchers broke data into separate parts and examine each part closely to identify concepts, properties, and dimensions of emergent phenomena during open coding. Significant statements and initial categories shall be obtained in the open coding phase. The second phase is axial coding. Axial coding generates a coding framework or template for synthesizing and organizing data into more meaningful, hierarchically organized categories and subcategories that give complexity and dimension to emergent concepts and their prospective relationships to other framework aspects. Axial coding, on the other hand, includes rearranging vast quantities of open coded data into more complex conceptual categories, (Scott & Medaugh, 2017). A master list of categories will result from the axial coding. These categories are concepts that capture the lived experiences across the participants, the challenges they encountered, their coping mechanisms, how they sustain their business and the insights they derived from their experiences.

Lastly, the selective coding. Selective coding means to cease open and axial coding in order to produce the final themes which are the results of the present study, the answers to the specific research questions. The third stage of grounded theory analysis is selective coding. During this phase, the researcher selects and focuses on one important component of the data as a core category or final category, (Chetty, 2020). The last phase of the data analysis consists in the finalization of the categories or themes which make up the findings of the present study. The number of themes were finalized based on Ballena and Liwag's (2019), CERES criteria such as conceptual congruence; exhaustiveness, responsiveness to the research objectives, exclusivity of themes, and sensitivity to the qualitative data.

#### IV. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

##### Results

In the conduct of analysis of this study, different themes for each research question emerged. The themes, which constituted the findings of the study, had their corresponding significant statements, and were presented in tables. Moreover, each of the themes and significant statements were discussed in this section to give further details and illustrate the ideas with the excerpts from the participants as support.

##### SRQ1: Experiences of Online Sellers in Starting and Running their Online Business

After conducting a thorough analysis of the interview transcripts containing the participants' interpretation of their experiences in starting and running their online business, three themes emerged from the participants' responses to the specific research question number 1. These themes were sources of inspiration, starting-up online business, and positive experiences. The corresponding significant statements were also presented in Table 1.

Table 1: Starting and Running their Online Business

Themes	Significant Statements
Sources of inspiration	Mother-in-law, parents, pastor, love for sweets and desserts, and love for baking inspired online sellers in starting their online business.
Starting-up online business	The online sellers started their business by free tasting of the products, posting on social media, operating a physical restaurant with online presence, and selling small products as a start-up.
Positive experiences	The positive experiences of online sellers in having an online business are earning money, convenience, work from home set up, quick transactions, customers that genuinely patronize the products and referring to others, promoting products easily, limited face-to-face interactions with the customers, and less expenses.

##### Theme 1: Sources of Inspiration

The theme, Sources of Inspiration, emerged from the analysis. This is supported by the first significant statement, "Mother-in-law, parents, pastor, love for sweets and desserts, and love for baking inspired online sellers in starting their online business". Close relatives such as mother-in-law and parents were seen to be a source of inspiration when starting and running their online business. Participant 1 said that "My mother-in-law..." and Participant 2 stated that "My parents...". Participant 5 said that "Our father inspired us to start and maintain the business". Pastors are another source of inspiration. Participant 2 shared that "...our Pastor inspired me to start my business". Another source of inspiration is the love for baking. Participant 4 stated that "I love baking. And since I can bake, I decided to start my own online business". Last source of inspiration is the love for sweets and desserts. Participant 1 shared that "and my love for sweets and desserts".

##### Theme 2: Starting-up Online Business

The theme, Starting-up Online Business, was the second theme that emerged from the analysis. This is supported by the second significant statement, "The online sellers started their business by free tasting of the products, posting on social media, enrolling in TESDA's bread and pastry course, operating a physical restaurant with online presence, and selling small products as a start-up". These helped the online sellers in putting and starting-up their online business. Free tasting of products was utilized in starting-up online business. Participant 1 stated that "*nagdadala ng mga bake goodies and cake hanggang sa yung mga nakatikim na bisita nag oorder na*". Posting on social media was also seen to be as starting-up online business. Participant 2 also that "I started it just by posting my pre-made baked goods with my personal social media accounts". Participant 4 shared that "I started my online business by creating my page and posting my pre-made baked goods". Moreover, operating a physical restaurant with online presence was another way in starting-up online business. Participant 5 said that "Our shop was originally a bricks and clicks type where the physical restaurant operated with online presence". Lastly, selling small products was utilized in starting-up an online business. Participant 4 shared that "...and by selling small products as my start-up macaroons to be specific".

**Theme 3: Positive Experiences**

Positive Experiences was the third theme that emerged from the analysis. This is supported by third significant statement, “The positive experiences of online sellers in having an online business are earning money, convenience, work from home set up, quick transactions, customers that genuinely patronize the products and referring to others, promoting products easily, limited face-to-face interactions with the customers, and less expenses”. Earning money was seen to be the positive experience of online sellers. Participant 1 stated that “*yung positive experiences ko sa pagkakaroon ng online is una kumikita ka*”. Another positive experience that was seen was convenience. Participant 1 said that “Hassle free *dahil* online, convenient *para sa kagaya kung isang ina kasi naaalagaan ko pamilya ko...*”. Participant 3 stated that “Online transactions are way more convenient than other transactions”. Work from home was seen to be the positive experience. Participant 3 shared that “You have a flexible time frame since it is a work from home setup”. Participant 4 said that “I can still relax because I’m only working at home”. Customers that genuinely patronize the products and refer to others were also seen to be a positive experience. Participant 2 stated that “When some of my customers genuinely patronize and help me spread the sales of my goods”. Additionally, promoting products easily was another positive experience. Participant 3 shared that “In online business you can easily promote your product by just posting it online”. Ironically, limited face-to-face interactions was seen to be a positive experience. Participant 5 stated that “We get to serve and deliver without much face-to-face interactions”. Lastly, less expenses were seen to be a positive experience in online business. Participant 4 said that “Starting an online business is very inexpensive, because I don’t have to rent for a place or print a lot of fliers and etc.”.

**SRQ2: Challenges Encountered by the Online Sellers**

After conducting a thorough analysis of the interview transcripts containing the participants’ interpretation of the challenges that they encountered in online selling, six themes emerged from the participants’ responses to the specific research question number 2. These themes were starting-up challenges, struggles encountered, coping strategies, striving strategies, overcoming techniques, and handling complaints. The corresponding significant statements were also presented in Table 2.

**Table 2: Challenges Encountered by the Online Sellers**

Themes	Significant Statements
Starting-up challenges	Doubt of family and closest friends, proper costing, bogus buyers, lack of time management, health management, product advertisement, and the need of assistance are the challenges encountered by the online sellers in starting their online business.
Struggles encountered	Jampacked orders, sudden exhaustion of ingredients, competition, gaining people’s trust, and changing alert levels are the conflicts or struggles encountered by the online sellers in starting online business.
Coping strategies	The online sellers dealt with these conflicts by planning ahead of time, purchasing ingredients ahead of time, finding the right market, maintaining the quality of products, and creating a policy about reservations
Striving strategies	Passion, customer’s good feedback, profit, pandemic, giving financial support to parents, and goals are the things that pushed the online sellers to strive more despite the struggles they faced.
Overcoming techniques	Quality over quantity, reviewing business and products, knowing strengths and weaknesses, and communication are the techniques that the online sellers did to overcome their business’ problems.
Strategies in handling complaints	Online sellers deal with complaints by apologizing sincerely, accepting feedbacks professionally, and giving refunds.

### Theme 1: Starting-up Challenges

The first theme that emerged from the analysis was Starting-up Challenge. This is supported by the first significant statement, "Doubt of family and closest friends, proper costing, bogus buyers, lack of time management, health management, product advertisement, and the need of assistance are the challenges encountered by the online sellers in starting their online business". First, doubt of family and closest friends was seen to be a starting-up challenge as shown in the response of Participant 1, "At first *maraming nagda doubt sa kakayahan mo* including closest friend and family *mo*". Second, proper costing was seen to be a starting-up challenge, which was attested by Participant 2 "I think the proper costing is the most challenging part for me since delivery fees must be included". Third, bogus buyers were seen to be a starting-up challenge. Participant 3 stated that "The challenges I encountered in starting my online business are those who we consider as bogus buyer". Fourth, lack of time management was seen to be a starting-up challenge. Participant 4 said that "The challenge that I encountered was the hardship of balancing my time, especially when there are many orders and sometimes 24 hours is still not enough to prepare". Fifth, health management was seen to be a starting-up challenge. Participant 4 shared that "It is also hard to maintain good health when I am baking. Sometimes I always forgot to eat and take medicines". Additionally, product advertisement was seen to be a starting-up challenge. Participant 5 stated that "The challenge was on how to get the product information out there". Lastly, the need of assistant was seen to be a starting-up challenge. Participant 4 said that "I don't have an assistant to help me".

### Theme 2: Struggles Encountered

Struggles Encountered was the second theme emerged from the analysis. This is supported by the second significant statement, "Jampacked orders, sudden exhaustion of ingredients, competition, gaining people's trust, and changing alert levels are the conflicts or struggles encountered by the online sellers in starting online business". Jampacked orders was seen to be a struggle encountered by online sellers. Participant 1 said that "*Yung struggle ko is pag mag sabay sabay yung mga order*". Sudden exhaustion of ingredients as well was seen to be a struggle encountered by online sellers. Participant 2 shared that "Problems are inevitable but I hated the sudden exhaustion of my ingredients the most". Besides, competition was seen to be a struggle encountered by online sellers. Participant 3 stated that "The struggle in managing my business is the competition". In addition, gaining people's trust was seen to be a struggle encountered by online sellers. Participant 4 shared that "Mostly, it's hard to gain other people's trust". Also, changing alert levels was seen to be a struggle encountered by online sellers. Participant 5 said that "The changing of alert levels is challenging in terms of raw material procurement to delivery of the products".

### Theme 3: Coping Strategies

The theme, Coping Strategies, emerged from the analysis. This is supported by the third significant statement, "The online sellers dealt with these conflicts by planning ahead of time, purchasing ingredients ahead of time, finding the right market, maintaining the quality of products, and creating a policy about reservations". First, planning ahead of time was seen to be a coping strategy. Participant 1 said that "*Ang ginagawa ko is pinaplano ko na lahat ng gagawin ko sa mga araw at oras na yun*". Additionally, purchasing ingredients ahead of time was seen to be a coping strategy. Participant 2 shared that "I deal with it by purchasing ahead and more than usual because buying within near stores are more expensive". Furthermore, finding the right market was seen to be a coping strategy. Participant 3 stated that "I deal with this struggle by finding my right market". Moreover, maintaining the quality of products was also seen to be a coping strategy. Participant 3 said that "...and by keeping the quality of my products the same all throughout". Creating a policy about reservations was seen to be the last coping strategy. Participant 5 shared that "We made a policy to observe at least two weeks of reservation or earlier".

### Theme 4: Striving Strategies

Striving Strategies was the fourth theme emerged from the analysis. This is supported by the fourth significant statement, "Passion, customer's good feedback, profit, pandemic, giving financial support to parents, and goals are the things that pushed the online sellers to strive more despite the struggles they faced". Passion was seen to be a striving strategy. Participant 1 said that "*Siguro yung nagtulak sa akin para ipursigi ang business na ito is yung passion*". Customer's good feedback was also seen to be a striving strategy. Participant 2 shared that "When my customers chat me how my goods taste so well". In addition, profit was seen to be a striving strategy. Participant 2 stated that "Likewise, the profit made me strive as well". Pandemic as well was seen to be a striving strategy. Participant 3 said that "The current pandemic puts us in a financial crisis state". Participant 5 also shared that "We have to survive as our team's families depend on the shop to survive especially during these trying times". Moreover, giving financial support to parents was seen to be a striving



strategy. Participant 3 shared that “In this online business, I am not earning everyday there are times where I don’t have any income but still, I am striving for my mom to survive”. Lastly, goals were seen to be a striving strategy. Participant 4 stated that “My determination and my goals”.

**Theme 5: Overcoming Techniques**

The fifth theme emerged from the analysis was Overcoming Techniques. This is supported by the fifth significant statement, “Quality over quantity, reviewing business and products, knowing strengths and weaknesses, and communication are the techniques that the online sellers did to overcome their business’ problems”.

First, quality over quantity was seen to be an overcoming technique. Participant 1 said that “I choose quality over quantity *para satisfied sila sa binabayaran nila*”. Second, reviewing business and products was seen to be an overcoming technique. Participant 4 shared that “I’m always reviewing my business, products or ingredients”. Third, knowing strengths and weaknesses was seen to be an overcoming technique. Participant 3 stated that “I see to it that I know my strengths and weaknesses so I can manage my business properly”. Lastly, communication was seen to be an overcoming technique. Participant 5 said that “Communication is always the key”.

**Theme 6: Strategy in Handling Complaints**

The theme, Strategy in Handling Complaints, was the last theme emerged from the analysis. This is supported by the fifth significant statement, “Online sellers deal with complaints by apologizing sincerely, accepting feedbacks professionally, and giving refunds. Apologizing sincerely was seen to be a strategy in handling complaints. Participant 2 said that “I just sincerely apologize”. Accepting feedbacks professionally was also seen to be a strategy in handling complaints. Participant 3 shared that “I will handle it by accepting the feedbacks professionally”. As well as giving refunds was seen to be a strategy in handling complaints. Participant 1 stated that “*Kung may complaints man sila if valid ang reason nila I refund po*”.

**SRQ3: Insights on Maintaining a Successful Business**

After conducting a thorough analysis of the interview transcripts containing the participants’ interpretation of their insights on maintaining a successful business, three themes emerged from the participants’ responses to the specific research question number 3. These themes were life lessons, insights gained, and values of businessmen. The corresponding significant statements were also presented in Table 3.

**Table 3: Insights on Maintaining a Successful Business**

Themes	Significant Statements
Life lessons	Hard work, perseverance, patience, and determination are the life lessons that the online sellers learned in putting up a business.
Insights gained	Enjoying business, earning profit, good and cheap packaging, and determination in growing business are the insights that the online sellers gained from their experiences in putting up business and challenges encountered.
Values of businessmen	Healthy competition, integrity, positive mindset, healthy mindset, and socially responsible are the values that every businessman should have.

**Theme 1: Life Lessons**

The theme, Life Lessons, emerged from the analysis. This is supported by the first significant statement, “Hard work, perseverance, patience, and determination are the life lessons that the online sellers learned in putting up a business”. Hard work was seen to be a life lesson. Participant 3 said that “Hard work is the key”. Perseverance was also seen to be a life lesson. Participant 3 shared that “Perseverance is the key”. Additionally, patience was seen to be a life lesson. Participant 2 stated that “One thing I learned from online business is that there may not be a successful selling day but as long as I patiently and consistently post my goods, customers would come and come again if I just won’t stop”. Participant 4 also said that “I’ve learned that not all businesses will grow fast as I could ever imagine”. Lastly,

determination was seen to be a life lesson. Participant 5 shared that “You can start and continue something even without anything as long as you have the heart for it”.

### Theme 2: Insights Gained

Insights Gained was the second theme emerged from the analysis. This is supported by the second significant statement, “Enjoying business, earning profit, good and cheap packaging, and determination in growing business are the insights that the online sellers gained from their experiences in putting up business and challenges encountered”. Enjoying business was seen to be an insight gained. Participant 1 said that “*Nag eenjoy ako sa negosyo ko*”. Earning profit was also seen to be an insight gained. Participant 1 shared that “...at the same time *kumikita rin kahit papano*”. As well as good and cheap packaging was seen to be an insight gained. Participant 2 stated that “Customers really dig good and cute packaging”. In addition, Participant 4 shared that “...find the right packaging to satisfy myself”. Lastly, determination in growing business was seen to be an insight gained. Participant 3 said that “...being determined and goal-oriented will help your business grow and it will help you grow as a businesswoman”.

### Theme 3: Values of Businessmen

The last theme, Values of Businessmen, emerged from the analysis. This is supported by the third significant statement, “Healthy competition, integrity, positive mindset, healthy mindset, and socially responsible are the values that every businessman should have.”. Healthy competition was seen to be a value of businessmen. Participant 1 said that “*Siguro to have a healthy competition, wag manira ng kapwa negosyante*”. Identically, integrity was seen to be a value of businessmen. Participant 3 shared that “Integrity. It helps enhance one business’ reputation which is helpful in retaining and attracting customers”. Additionally, positive mindset was seen to be a value of businessmen. Participant 3 stated that “think, businessman must...have a positive mindset”. As well as healthy mindset was seen to be a value of businessmen. Participant 2 shared that “A businessman must have the principle or mindset of a person who regularly exercise to maintain his or her body fit”. Moreover, socially responsible was seen to be a value of businessmen. Participant 5 said that “The business should value social responsibility above all because this covers all”.

### SRQ4: Strategies of Online Sellers in Selling Baked Goods

After conducting a thorough analysis of the interview transcripts containing the participants’ interpretation of their strategies in selling baked goods, three themes emerged from the participants’ responses to the specific research question number 4. These themes were marketing platform, sustaining online business, and sustainable plans. The corresponding significant statements were also presented in Table 4.

**Table 4: Strategies in Selling Baked Goods**

Themes	Significant Statements
Marketing platform	Social media such as Facebook, Instagram, Twitter, Tiktok, and YouTube were used by the online sellers in promoting their products
Sustaining online business	The online sellers sustain their business by maintaining the quality of products, spending capital wisely, formulating price guide, surviving the pandemic, offering freebies, introducing products that others don’t have, and relying on online platforms, actual product photos, and client recommendation.
Medium and long-term plans	The medium and long-term plan of online seller is to build brand recognition

### Theme 1: Marketing Platform

Marketing Platform was the first theme emerged from the analysis. This is supported by the first significant statement, “Social media such as Facebook, Instagram, Twitter, Tiktok, and YouTube were used by the online sellers in promoting their products”. First, Facebook was seen to be a marketing platform used by online sellers. Participant 1 said that “*Pinopost ko lang ang aking mga gawa sa FB page ko*”. Participant 2 shared that “I have a friend who have a clothing page in Facebook, she helped me in promoting my goods using her page”. Participant 3 stated that “The platform that I consider most effective is Facebook, this is an all-in-one platform”. Participant 4 said that “I used social media

specifically Facebook”. Participant 5 shared that “We made use of Facebook pages”. Second, Instagram was seen to be a marketing platform used by online sellers. Participant 5 stated that “We made use of Facebook pages, now known as Facebook business suite, and Instagram”. Third, Twitter was also seen to be a marketing platform used by online sellers. Participant 5 shared that “We also maintained a separate website that doubled as our cake portfolio and blog together with a Twitter account”. As well as Tiktok was seen to be a marketing platform used by online sellers. Participant 5 said that “recently our chef has started a Tiktok account”. Lastly, YouTube channel was also seen to be a marketing platform used by online sellers. Participant 5 shared that “...featuring our cakes and her YouTube channel for baking support groups”.

### Theme 2: Sustaining Online Business

The second theme, Sustaining Online Business, emerged from the analysis. This is supported by the second significant statement, “The online sellers sustain their business by maintaining the quality of products, spending capital wisely, formulating price guide, surviving the pandemic, offering freebies, introducing products that others don’t have, and relying on online platforms, actual product photos, and client recommendation”. Maintaining the quality of products was seen to be sustaining online business. Participant 1 said that “...*pagsisigurado sa mga customer ko na worthy ang perang ibinayad nila sa mga products ko*”. Participant 3 also shared that “I sustain my business by making my online business known to others through the quality of my products”. Spending capital wisely was also seen to be sustaining online business. Participant 2 stated that “I just make sure I spare my capital wisely”. Additionally, formulating price guide was seen to be sustaining online business. Participant 5 said that “We have put a carefully formulated pricing guide and sales plan every month”. Furthermore, surviving the pandemic was seen to be sustaining online business. Participant 5 shared that “Immediate goal is to survive the pandemic as a lot of businesses have closed”. Moreover, offering freebies was seen to be sustaining online business. Participant 1 stated that “*Sa panahon ngayon na marami kang kakompetensya need mong mag offer ng promo like freebies*”. As well as introducing products that others don’t offer was seen to be sustaining online business. Participant shared that “*Mag introduce ng product na di pa naoffer sa iba*”. Lastly, relying on online platforms, actual product photos, and client recommendation was seen to be sustaining online business. Participant 5 said that “We rely on online platforms and our actual product photos as well as client recommendations”.

### Theme 3: Medium and Long-term plans

Medium and Long-term plans was the last theme emerged from the analysis. This is supported by the third significant statement, “The medium and long-term plan of online seller is to build brand recognition”. Building brand recognition was seen to be medium and long-term plan. Participant 3 stated “My long-term plans to sustain my business is by building brand recognition”.

## V. DISCUSSION

This aim of this study was to uncover the experiences of online sellers in their online business of baked goods specifically cakes and bread. The results of the study present the lived experiences of online sellers of baked goods specifically cakes and bread which highlighted the experiences of online sellers in starting and running their online business, the challenges they encountered and how they coped with these, their insights in maintaining successful business, their strategies for online selling of baked goods, and how they sustained their business. Several themes were generated under each of the different focuses of the study.

One of the major themes in starting-up and running online business was Positive Experiences. Online selling was more convenient for the online sellers. As a matter of fact, it is easy to establish a business because of the use of social media and other platforms as a marketing tool, (Smith, 2016; Lockett, 2018; Habel & Linsenmayer, 2021; and Andrew, 2018). Likewise, the convenience of creating a professional business profile and the opportunity to engage via social media as a marketing tool give young craft entrepreneurs a sense of legitimate, sustained, and meaningful job, supporting their existence, (Luckman & Andrew, 2018).

Struggles Encountered was one of the major themes in challenges encountered by the online sellers. Online sellers encountered struggles in running their online business. One of the struggles encountered was hard in gaining people’s trust. In the same way, estimating the impact on the business, aligning with other promotional techniques, a lack of assets, a lack of administrative support, social competence, and message regulation were the difficulties of most business owners when it comes to online marketing, (Leong et al., 2017).

In terms of strategies for selling baked goods, one of the major themes was Marketing Platform. All of the online sellers of baked goods specifically cakes and breads used social media in marketing their products. Most of the commonly used

social media was Facebook. Instagram, Twitter, Tiktok, and YouTube were also used by the online sellers as a marketing platform. In fact, social media is rapidly connecting the world, and customers expect businesses to operate through such platforms, (Duermyer, 2017). Furthermore, online entrepreneurs could choose from the many online platforms and apps for them to be able to connect more easily with their prospective customers. These platforms also enable users to make money in a variety of ways, such as by sharing their belongings with others or by selling their used products or creative crafts (Smith, 2016). Moreover, Van (2021) concluded that today's trend in merchandising goods is to sell items online.

Sustaining Online Business is very important. There are different ways that were used by online sellers in sustaining their online business. Indeed, effective internet marketing strategies help businesses last longer, earn more money, and may even help communities become stronger and safer (Daemi, 2018). In addition, online marketing strategy indicated that some entrepreneurs employ strategies to conduct online marketing and boost derived sales (Lockett, 2018).

Finally, Life Lessons was one of the major themes that reflected their insights on maintaining a successful business and a new finding in the study. None of the reviewed literature focused on life lessons of online sellers of baked goods specifically cakes and breads; hence the contribution of the present study.

## **VI. CONCLUSION**

Based on the results of the study, just like the sellers who have their physical stores, online sellers experience challenges, struggles, and difficulties in starting, running, and maintaining their business. Online selling may not be for every businessman but it is for those who are determined in pursuing online business. These experiences are not hindrances in continuing their business. Second, online sellers have different strategies in running their online business. These strategies help them in promoting and selling their products and boosts sales. Lastly, from the experiences of online sellers they have gained insights. Online selling is not just about earning profit but it teaches life lessons and values to the online sellers that maintains their online business successful.

## **VII. RECOMMENDATION**

Following the results of the study, the researchers recommend that the online sellers of baked goods specifically cakes and breads in Dasmariñas City, Cavite continue to use social media platforms in advertising and selling their products. As of the fourth quarter of 2021, Facebook has 2.91 billion monthly active users (Statista Research Department, 2022). The researchers further recommend that Facebook be used more since it is the most utilized social media network worldwide and it can help the online sellers in engaging more customers in the community. Moreover, the researchers also recommend online sellers continue to use their strategies in running and maintaining their business to become successful. The strategies they employ could increase sales and eventually can lead to sustainability.

Future researchers could replicate this present study but expand the research since it focused only on the online sellers of baked goods specifically cakes and breads in Dasmariñas City, Cavite, Philippines. Future researchers could focus on online selling of other baked goods not just cakes and breads. In addition, future researchers may focus not only on strategies but on other aspects. Lastly, it is suggested that the researchers to expand the number of possible participants in conducting a study.

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