

Sustainability Strategies of Food Merchants in the SOMO Market Bazaar

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Abstract: The study was conducted to determine the sustainability strategies of Food Merchants in SOMO Market Bazaar. It wanted to describe the demographic profile of these merchants in terms of age, gender, civil status, and their length of business in SOMO Market Bazaar. It also wanted to know how these strategies affect the sustainability of these merchants: Value of money, originality, imitability, marketing, food quality, and sanitary. Further, the study also wanted to know if there exists a significant difference in the sustainability strategies employed by these food merchants when they are grouped according to their length in business. From these, recommendations are made for these merchants to sustain their businesses.

Descriptive method of research was used in the study where in the approach was quantitative. The study was held in SOMO Market Bazaar. The respondents are the food merchants in the said bazaar purposively selected. From the 60 food merchants based in the said bazaar, 53 were selected. The Instrument used was the survey questionnaire which focused mainly on the evaluation of sustainability strategies used by these food merchants.

The study found out that most of the food merchants in SOMO Bazaar are female, young, and have been in the business for only 1-3 months. Among the sustainability strategies used by these merchants, very high effects were seen coming from value of money, originality, quality, and sanitary. On the other hand, high effects were seen to come from imitability and marketing. It was also found out in the study that sustainability strategies used by these food merchants in SOMO Market Bazaar do not depend on their length of years in the business.

Keywords: Sustainability Strategies; Food merchants.

I. INTRODUCTION

One of the major keys to a successful business is for business owners to know how to sustain a business. Sustainability strategies differ depending on the business and how a lot of factors to consider in every strategy of a business. Today's economies face tremendous difficulties across sustainability's social, economic, and environmental elements, such as climate change, natural disasters, biodiversity loss, hunger and malnutrition, economic inequality, social unrest, and others. Business sustainability is the process of running a business while considering three major factors, namely. Environmental, social, and economic. Additionally, it is known as the triple bottom line strategy. It is important to underline that company sustainability is based on a long-term rather than a short-term viewpoint. As a result, any data used to illustrate the connection between sustainability and financial performance might not offer any novel insights. Understanding the importance of social or environmental consciousness is simply one aspect of this; managers' thinking must also undergo a paradigm shift. The following are three keys areas where the potential of business sustainability can be investigated: a) resource optimization through "recycle, re-use, and reduce" strategies in business processes and supply chains; b) protecting brand value through stakeholder engagement and support, including meeting regulatory requirements; and c) marketing to a niche market of green consumers willing to pay a premium for goods and services. (Mahajan R. and Bose M., 2018)

The economic pillar is given as the most important from an economic perspective Scientists, However, underline the need to protect the environment as the most significant factor. This is supported by scientific evidence showing that human activity causes the environment to gradually deteriorate to the point where unavoidable consequences endanger human survival. According to (Iten N., 2020) The two different perspectives are known as “weak sustainability” and “strong sustainability.”. Based on Iten, even if the business did not address the issue of strong and weak sustainability, they can still be categorized between the two perspectives. However, addressing this perspective and accepting the outcome can be a big help to a business and correct its weakness and sustain the strengths that were identified.

Corporate sustainability literature has shifted its emphasis in recent years from minimizing negative effects to a more strategic view of how businesses may benefit the environment and societies. (Lüdeke-Freund F., 2020). One example of a beneficial impact of a business on society is providing for consumers’ needs and food supply is one of the most important things in a person’s everyday life. Improving and addressing the problems of a business can benefit both business owners and consumers. According to (Adoukonou V. 2019) More consumers are becoming socially and environmentally sensitive. Business owners who are unable to adapt to changes in consumer behavior and trends risk failing to keep their companies afloat. Consumers want and need changes over time, so a business needs to be able to keep up with the trends to sustain its business and retain its consumers. The necessity for transformation toward greater business sustainability is supported by evidence. However, to fully comprehend the context, it is necessary to define sustainability, a complex phrase with several definitions. (Erander M. and Hetemäki N., 2014)

Based on (Blankson C., Cowan K., and Darley W., 2017) Rural micro and small enterprises engage in social networks, forge relationships with clients and employees, and incorporate morality and religion into their economic endeavors to thrive in a cutthroat subsistence market. Nowadays most people are engaging with their social media accounts and social media promotions are one of the most effective ways in marketing strategies that will surely reach a lot of people to introduce a business. Aside from social media promotions according to the authors, being hospitable and having a good relationship with clients and employees can also attract consumers due to how light and how peaceful it can bring in an environment.

Since SMEs in the Philippines account for over 35% of the GDP, these companies must be competitive in the national and international markets. This means that entrepreneurs should create environmentally and operationally sound companies that can quickly adapt to change. (Featuresdesk (ICG), 2020).

We researchers want to conduct this study for us to know and let our readers learn how the Food Merchants in the SOMO Market Bazaar sustain their business. There are a lot of strategies for sustaining a business and by doing this study we are going to learn what are the different marketing strategies of a food business in a bazaar and how they market their foods to sustain their business and their consumers as well. We want to conduct this study in SOMO Market Bazaar since it is the largest outdoor market in the South and there are a lot of food merchants in this bazaar where we can get information on their sustainability strategies.

CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

In this study, the researchers will use the Resource-based theory to generate a competitive advantage for a food merchant to determine if their strategies support the business’s sustainability. Barney (1991) explained that resources refer to assets, business processes, capabilities, the firm’s attributes, knowledge, information, etc. controlled by a company to comprehend and implement strategies aiming to enhance efficiency and effectiveness. This framework will help to determine important what are the important resources for achieving sustained competitive advantage which in turn will support the sustainability of the business (Utami, 2022).

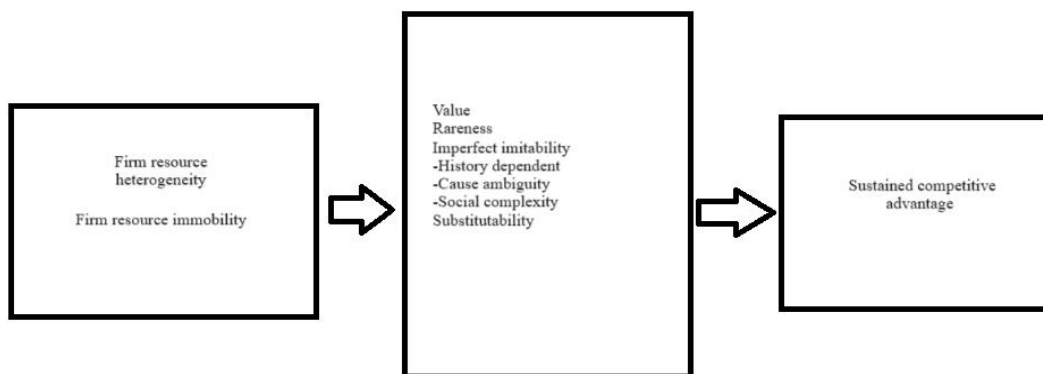


Figure 1: The framework of Resource-based Theory to generate a sustainable competitive advantage

There are four (4) parameters for resource-based theory to achieve competitive advantage namely (1) Value, which may uncover opportunities/threats, (2) being rare or unique among a company, (3) Immobility, which relates to capabilities hard to adapt or be obtained by other firms and (4) sustainability referring to overall criteria in terms of value, rareness and not easily copied (Barney 1991)

STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

With the reopening of economic activities especially after the pandemic, exceeding customer satisfaction will fuel the sustainability of the business and will provide strong support for the recovery of businesses, especially in the food industry. For this reason, the researchers will focus on determining the sustainability strategies of food merchants in SOMO Market Bazaar, specifically, this study aims to answer the following questions:

1. What is the demographic profile of the respondents in terms of:
 - 1.1. Age
 - 1.2. Gender
 - 1.3. Civil Status
 - 1.4. Length of business in SOMO Market (Months, Years, etc)
2. How do the following strategies listed below affect the sustainability of the food merchants
 - 2.1. Value of money
 - 2.2. Originality
 - 2.3. Imitability
 - 2.4. Marketing
 - 2.5. Food Quality
 - 2.6. Sanitary
3. Is there a significant difference in the sustainability strategies of the food merchants in SOMO Market Bazaar when grouped according to their length in business?
4. What are the recommendations for merchants to support the sustainability of the SOMO Market Bazaar?

STATEMENT OF HYPOTHESIS

There is no significant relationship between the length of business and the number of competitive advantages of a merchant in the SOMO Market Bazaar.

II. LITERATURE REVIEW

Food Park and Food Bazaar. A typical food park consists of different food stalls and semi-structured restaurants with vast arrays of food from heavy meals, high nutrition, dessert option, and food services (Asibal, 2012). They cater unique and affordable meals for a wide market range and ages. It is an alley of food establishments and continuously becomes a destination to visit offering concepts and strategies where family or friends can enjoy the food based on their liking. The introduction of food parks in Manila and other areas started in 2015 and since then, the fundamental goal of food parks revolves around a very important cultural practice among Filipino which is Family time (Asibal, 2012).

Convenience, variety, speed, and thrill of culinary browsing are some of the reasons diners continuously support food park and food truck services (Strong, 2018). "When consumers have wearied of giant chains but still demand novel, inexpensive, fast food, food trucks are the new incubators of culinary innovation," wrote Jonathan Gold in the Smithsonian in 2012.

The Different Typologies of Business Sustainability (Dyllick and Muff, 2016)

Business Sustainability 1.0 is described as "Refined Shareholder Value Management" (Dyllick and Muff 2016, p.156) shareholder management is the responsibility of the Chief Marketing Officer (CMO) of a business. To motivate CMO they are granted quality, which they can handle the duty and these duties are in the best interests of the business. (Ming Chung et al. 2016) Business Sustainability 1.0 focuses on the shareholders' interest in returns on investments with no focus on social and environmental sustainability.

Business Sustainability 2.0 refers to "Managing the Triple Bottom Line" (Dyllick and Muff 2016, p.156) According to (Elkington, 2004), one of the originators of the triple bottom line, the concept was formed due to an awareness that social and economic sustainability and need to be focused on unity with environmental sustainability.

Dyllick and Muff's (2016) Business Sustainability 3.0 understanding of how to build up a meaningful positive impact in areas that are very useful to society and the environment. The sustainability challenges it faces in its environment into business opportunities. Business Sustainability 3.0 creates value for the common good in its environment. Compared to the other levels of Business Sustainability. Perspective, and meaning that focuses on the business. Focusing on society and its sustainability challenges "truly sustainable" (Dyllick and Muff, 2016)

Characteristics of Strategic Sustainability Marketing

Sustainability marketing maintains long-term relationships with customers and the social and natural environment (Belz, 2008; Belz and Peattie 2009) By Mediation social and sustainability marketing work hard to deliver and increase customer value. Same as modern Sustainability marketing has a marketing concept that reviews customer needs and wants and develops stable solutions that provide higher value customers, and prices, give away and they are promoting their effectiveness to selected target groups of people. The Segmentation of the market, the selection of certain target groups, and the positioning of their products are strategic decisions of the sustainability marketing-aside from the social and ecological product qualities

Corporate social responsibility (CSR) can be defined, according to (Enquist et al., 2006) as "idea and techniques used by businesses to voluntarily Corporate social responsibility (CSR), as defined by Enquist et al. (2006) as 'ideas and techniques used by businesses to voluntarily combine optional links between society and the environment. Stakeholder theory dates to the 1980s.

Support for corporate social responsibility is significant, particularly with the growth of Corporate social responsibility, in which businesses and stakeholders enter into agreements: with the owners, the workers, clients, suppliers, and the nearby communities. In contrast, however, three characteristics of sustainability are also part of corporate social responsibility (CSR): The Economic, Social, and environmental (Elkington, 1999) Corporate social responsibility is a way to be successful in business by respecting ethical values, people, communities, and the natural environment and how they handle it and manage. (Bhattacharya and Sen, 2004; Parguel et al., 2011)

Demographics. Juras, Hsu, and Hu (2022) studied the relationship between the dietary patterns of Filipino adults and their association with sociodemographic and lifestyle factors that affect customers' choice of food. The study found different factors, specifically sex, age, educational attainment, marital status, employment status, household size, wealth quintile, smoking status, alcohol consumption, and physical activity. Findings showed distinct dietary patterns among Filipino adults that were influenced by various sociodemographic and lifestyle parameters. Men were likelier to adhere to the rice pattern, fish pattern, vegetables, corn pattern, and meat and beverage pattern. This result agrees with the national dietary survey results wherein Filipino adult men had a higher mean consumption of rice and rice products, meat, fish, and beverages than women.

Factors Affecting Consumer's Choices of a Food Establishment

Location. Mixed-use spaces, lower startup costs, shared expenses, and a community of vendors ensuring steady food traffic make food bazaars enticing to business owners. Trends show that variety, affordability, and a competitive real estate market make it a wise investment than a full-service restaurant or single-concept space. (Strong, 2018). A study about creative marketing strategies of food park businesses in Batangas, Philippines identified that customer experience is significant in terms of location. Location greatly affects how customers initially discover the business and how frequently existing customers visit the store. Stores near malls and other establishments have a high volume of foot traffic, convenience, and a safe and secure place for them to feel comfortable in the store (Magboo et al., 2020).

Quality of Food and Food Variety. Customers tend to incline towards satisfaction on the attributes of food, service, and ambiance quality. He noted that the quality of food and raw materials used in the creation of the food is the most important reason a customer patronizes a restaurant (Soriano, 2002). Greisler and Rucks (2011) identified that food quality is a primary predictor of whether visitors would recommend eating at the theme park or food bazaar and would be a critical factor in-park food's success.

Quality of Service. The value of customers is one of the most important drivers in a food business. The ability to constantly contact existing and potential customers and increase their customer satisfaction creates more customers daily and consistently meeting their expectations in-store will likely make loyal customers (Magboo et al., 2020).

Value for Money. In an exploratory paper conducted by Andersson (1991), customers were asked for their willingness to pay for a meal for the five aspects of the dining experience mainly, food and beverage, service, fine cooking, ambiance, and good company. He used the value to measure in monetary units which could be compared to cost figures to determine

whether the items are highly valued by a customer or whether there is a mismatch between restaurant cost and value. Among the significant factors in the sustainability of StrEat: Maginhawa Food Park in Manila Philippines, the value of money has the most impact, and increasing or decreasing these factors would affect the probability that a customer will patronize food parks (Pascual, 2018).

III. METHODOLOGY

Research Design

The researchers will use a quantitative research design to conduct this study to find out the Food Merchant's strategies using statistical, logical, and mathematical techniques that are in quantitative research.

Research Sampling Method

The researchers will use purposive sampling to target respondents which are the food merchants in SOMO Market Bazaar. This will ensure that the data being collected is useful and relevant for the analysis of the sustainability strategies in the bazaar.

Research Locale

The study will be conducted in Bacoor, Cavite where SOMO Market Bazaar is located. Being the first and the ultimate weekend outdoor shopping destination in the South, this place offers a wide variety of cuisines to give customers a delightful dining experience.

Participants of the Study

This study's participants are the food merchants in the SOMO Market bazaar. The researcher will have a survey questionnaire to determine the demographics and frequency of food merchants in SOMO Market. The researcher will use Raosoft to estimate the number of food merchants in the SOMO Market Bazaar. Estimated 60 merchants are in the bazaar. Thus, the total sample size that the researcher needs to survey is 53.

Instrumentation

The Researcher will have a face-to-face survey and the type of questionnaire will mainly focus on the evaluation of sustainability strategies of food merchants in the bazaar.

Data Gathering

For Data Gathering, the researchers created a survey questionnaire that will provide data and information about the food merchants' sustainability strategies. The link to the questionnaire is given below:

file:///C:/Users/russ/Downloads/ARIZABAL-ARCIAGA-GALLARDO-Survey-Questionnaire-1%20(2).pdf

Data Treatment and Analysis

Descriptive statistics will be used to analyze the data that was gathered from the respondents. Mean will be used to determine ANOVA will be used to evaluate the hypothesis and the hypothesis will be tested at the level of significance at 0.05. (p-value- 0.05)

INTERPRETATION OF THE RESPONSE VARIABLES

IV. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The Chapter presents the results of the study conducted. This includes the analysis of the data gathered from the survey as well as their interpretation.

Table 1: Participants' Profile by Age

Age	Frequency(N=60)	Percentage (P)
18-25	22	36.67
26-40	23	38.33
41-50	12	20.00
51-60	3	5.00
Total	60	100.00

The participants in the study are mostly in the age range of 26-40 years old at 38.33%. This is followed by those belonging to the age group of 18-25 years old. Those who are aged between 41-50 years old is at 20%. Only 5% constitutes the age bracket 51-60 years old.

This shows that the food merchants considered in the study are relatively young as they are mostly within the age group of 18-40 years old only.

Table 2: Participants` Profile by Gender

Gender	Frequency	Percentage
Female	38	63.33
Male	22	36.67
Total	60	100.00

In terms of gender, majority of the participants are female at 63.33%. Only a third of the 60 participants considered in the study are male

This implies that women are more engaged in the food merchandising business as compared to men.

Table 3: Participants` Profile by Civil Status

Civil Status	Frequency	Percentage
Married	20	33.33
Single	40	66.67
Total	60	100.00

With regards to civil status, more than half of the participants are still single at 66.67%. Married participants comprise 33.33% of the total number of participants considered for the study.

This manifests that most food merchants are single considering the demand of work in the food merchandising business.

Table 4: Participants` Profile in Length of Business

Length of business	Frequency	Percentage
1 month	10	16.67
2 months	12	20.00
3 months	25	41.67
4 months	4	6.67
5 months	2	3.33
6 months	3	5.00
More than 6 months	4	6.67
Total	60	100.00

On the aspects of length in business in months, most participants have been in the business for 3 months as given by 41.67%. This is followed by 2 months with 20% and those with only 1 month at 16.67%. Those in the business for more than 3-6 months is at 15% while those with more than 6 months is at 6.67%

This implies that the food merchandising business in the locale considered for the study is just new and is at its infancy stage.

Table 5: Strategies Affecting Sustainability

Factors	Mean	SD	Interpretation	Rank
A.) Value for Money				
1	1.42	0.720	Strongly Agree	1
2	1.55	0.723	SA	3
3	1.47	0.791	SA	2
Mean	1.48	0.745	Very High	
B.) Originality				
1	1.55	0.70	SA	2
2	1.37	0.64	SA	1
3	1.70	0.87	SA	3

Mean	1.54	0.74	Very High	
C.) Imitability				
1	2.02	1.03	Agree	2.5
2	1.75	0.90	SA	1
3	2.02	0.87	A	2.5
Mean				
D.) Marketing				
1	1.70	0.83	SA	1
2	2.07	1.02	A	3
3	1.83	0.91	A	2
Mean	1.87	0.92	HIGH	
E.) Food Quality				
1	1.35	0.73	SA	1
2	1.47	0.81	SA	3
3	1.43	0.79	SA	2
Mean	1.42	0.78	Very High	
F.) Sanitary				
1	1.37	0.69	SA	1
2	1.40	0.67	SA	2
3	1.43	0.72	SA	3
Mean	1.40	0.69	Very High	

Legend:

Mean Range	Interpretation
1.00 - 1.75	Strong Agree/Very High
1.76 - 2.50	Agree/High
2.51 - 3.25	Disagree/Low
3.26 - 4.00	Strongly Disagree/Very Low

The Table shows the different strategies employed by Food Merchants to achieve sustainability of their business.

Value for Money

For the participants, value for money as a strategy has a very high effect on the sustainability of food merchandising business in SOMO Market as exhibited in the mean of 1.48. The participants considered indicator 1 as the premier factor that affects sustainability-this is the food is worth the money in terms of quality and quantity (mean= 1.42). This is followed by providing good customers service at 1.47. The lowest mean of 1.55 is seen in the reasonability and affordability of the price of their food products.

Originality

Originality of products offered as a strategy has a high effect on the sustainability of the food business as shown in the mean of 1.54. The highest mean is on the uniqueness of the way employees serve food as compared to other competitors where the participants showed strong agreement with a mean of 1.37. In the second rank is the uniqueness of foods offered which are all self-made with a mean of 1.55. The lowest mean is the fact that the foods they offer cannot be found in other restaurants. (1.70)

Imitability

Imitability, as a strategy, has a high effect on the sustainability of food merchandising business with a mean of 1.93. Participants showed strong agreement on the authenticity of their foods and their difficulty to be imitated with a mean of 1.75. They agreed their menus are like other food stalls and most people are not familiar with their menu offerings. (2.02)

Marketing

Marketing also has a high effect on the capability of the food business to be sustained with a mean of 1.87. They strongly agree social media helps in marketing their products and in facilitating sales. They agree their products are effectively

advertised through promos and vouchers (1.83) and through distribution of flyers inside and outside the SOMO market Bazaar.

Food Quality

The quality of food is one important strategy to achieve sustainability of a food business as shown here with a mean of 1.42. The highest mean of strong agreement is seen in the adherence to good manufacturing practices in the preparation of food to ensure the good quality of the products (1.35). Strong agreement is also seen in the proper storage of raw materials to maintain high-quality finished products (1.43) and in the use of fresh and cleaned ingredients in the preparation of food (1.47).

Sanitary

The sanitary aspects of the food stalls are also an important strategy with very high effect to sustain the business with a mean of 1.40. The highest mean of strong agreement (1.37) is seen in having well-trained staff that follow food safety guidelines in food preparation and food handling to ensure the safety of the customers. Strong agreement is also manifested in the staff having proper hygiene and in maintaining the cleanliness of the area. Likewise, participants also strongly agree the staff are well-informed in properly taking care of their equipment before and after preparing their dishes.

Table 6: Difference in Sustainability Strategies when Grouped according to Length of Business

Leng of business	Mean	Std. Deviation	f-comp	p-value	decision	interpretation
1 month	1.539	0.379	0.961	0.461	H0 Accepted	No significant difference
2 months	1.630	0.453				
3 months	1.618	0.621				
4 months	1.486	0.274				
5 months	2.056	0.079				
6 months	1.130	0.225				
More than 6 months	1.861	0.303				

Legend:

If $p > .05$, accept the null hypothesis. If $p < .05$, reject the null hypothesis.

Analysis of Variance or ANOVA is used to test whether there exists a significant difference in the sustainability strategies of the food merchants in SOMO Bazaar when they are grouped according to their length in business. This test is used to determine whether there is a significant difference between the means of 3 or more variables. The test is set at .05 level of significance. The computed p-value is 0.46, which is more than the .05 level of significance. Hence, the null hypothesis is accepted. This means that there is no significant difference in the sustainability strategies of the food merchants even when they are grouped according to their length in business. This means that regardless of the length in business of the food merchants considered in this study, the effect of strategies they used to attain sustainability is equal and the same.

Summary

The study was conducted to determine the sustainability strategies of the food merchants in the SOMO Market Bazaar. Specifically, the study sought to describe the demographic characteristics of these food merchants in terms of age, gender, civil status, and length in business. The study also wanted to know how the following strategies employed by these food merchants in terms of value for money, originality, imitability, marketing, food quality, and sanitary affect the sustainability of their food business. Moreover, the study wanted to know if these sustainability strategies significantly differ when these food merchants are grouped according to their length in business. Lastly, the study wanted to propose recommendations to support the sustainability of the SOMO Market Bazaar.

Descriptive research was used in this study since this wanted to describe a situation at the time the study was conducted. The approach was quantitative because this encompassed a variety of methods, usually numerical and statistical data to explain the relationship of the variables considered in the study and test the validity of the measurements made. The study was conducted in SOMO Market Bazaar in Bacoor, Cavite and the participants were the food merchants there. Purposive sampling was used here, and the participants considered 60 food merchants. The instrument used in gathering the data was the survey questionnaire on evaluation of sustainability strategies. The survey was conducted personally.

The study found out that most of the food merchants in SOMO Market Bazaar were young, ranging between the age of 18-40 years old. Most of them were female and most were still single. Food merchandising in the said bazaar is relatively new with business from 1-3 months only.

The study also found out that of the strategies employed by the food merchants in sustaining their business, the effects coming from value of money, originality, food quality, and sanitary are very high. These are very important factors in the sustainability of the business. This indicates that food merchants must see to it that the value of money given by their customers in exchange for the products must be worth both in quantity and quality. Likewise, food merchants must see to it that they maintain hygiene in their products and places. On the other hand, imitability and marketing have high effects only in the sustainability of the food merchandising business.

It was also determined in the study that sustainability strategies used by the food merchants do not depend on the length of business. This is manifested in the test made which resulted that there is no significant difference in the sustainability strategies of the food merchants when they are grouped according to their demographic profile

V. CONCLUSIONS

The Food merchants in SOMO Market Bazaar are relatively young. Most of them are female and most are also single. This may be attributed to the fact food merchandising is a demanding business that requires hands-on management.

All the strategies employed by the food merchants in sustaining their business are effective. Value of money, originality, food quality, and sanitary have very high effects in the sustainability of food merchandising business. Imitability and marketing affect also sustainability but not in the same degree as the four mentioned above.

Length in business of the food merchants does not affect the strategies they used in sustaining their business. Regardless of the time of operation of the business, the strategies employed in sustaining the business are the same.

VI. RECOMMENDATIONS

- Food merchants must level up on the aspect of making their products inimitable, meaning product secrets must be well-kept. Food merchants must also further heighten their marketing strategies. This can be done not only through social media. They may offer freebies and discounts in exchange for patronization of their products. These must be simultaneously with continuing to employ the other strategies that have profound high effect in the sustainability of the business.
- Other sustainability strategies must be explored and considered. Among these are:
 - Development of sustainable workplace policy like reduction of waste and energy-saving;
 - Tracking and measuring sustainability data such as the number of sustainable purchases and vendors used.
 - Training For employees;
 - Source of materials from sustainable suppliers;
 - Partnering with local vendors to reduce supply chain length.
- Studies must be conducted in the future to determine the problems encountered by food merchants which may disrupt the sustainability of their business and thus, formulate measures to address such issues.

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