

Online Marketing Strategies of Selected Food Retailers in Tarlac City

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ABSTRACT

The study described the Online Marketing Strategies employed by the Selected Food Retailers in Tarlac City. Specifically, it focuses on the following describing the business profile of the participants to Nature of Ownership, Products Offered, Asset Size, Average Estimated Income for the last three (3) years, and Number of Employees. It also described the online marketing strategies on Product, Price, Promotion, and Place of Distribution.

The study used a descriptive correlational research design because the nature of the study demanded the description of the Online Marketing Strategies of Selected Food Retailers in Tarlac City. Furthermore, the problems encountered by the online food retailers in Tarlac City related to Online Marketing Strategies were also determined.

The analysis of food retailers in Tarlac City shows a varied background with corporations and cooperatives playing important roles alongside partnerships and single proprietorships. Sanitary preparation and packaging took precedence, although varied portions and price modifications were less frequent. Ownership type did not affect marketing techniques, but it did have an impact on the quantity of products sold, asset size, and workforce size. Challenges or problems including hesitancy to test products, competition, and technological problems during online marketing emphasize the necessity of creative approaches and building client trust.

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Nica Marie A. Nicolas

DEDICATION

This work of life and love is wholeheartedly dedicated to
our God Almighty,
my parents: Mr. and Mrs. Narciso A. Nicolas
especially my sister Ms. Nica Anne N. Roldan
my friends and relatives
who have always believed, prayed and supported me
both morally and financially.

Nica Marie A. Nicolas

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CHAPTER ONE

THE PROBLEM AND ITS BACKGROUND

A. Background of the Study

The Internet has revolutionized the way individuals and businesses operate, significantly influencing decision-making processes, interpersonal interactions, and business management practices. The Internet has a big impact on human behavior. It influences people the way they make decisions, the way they interact with one another, and the way they manage their businesses (Sharma, 2021, p. 202). Customers make progress using online, consequently, sellers do a similar thing to reach the consumers.

Many changes in purchasing and buying preferences of people have emerged due to the advent of technology. Online shopping has become a trend because of easy access to products and price lists while other shops offer free delivery services. Many people generally choose online shopping because they do not need to go out to shop so they can avoid crowded shops. Furthermore, it allows them to make price comparisons and get the best and most reasonable prices for the items or products they like.

According to Kotler & Armstrong (2020), online marketing involves any effort to sell a product or service and foster consumer relationships through the Internet. In today's digital age, nearly every business maintains an online presence and controls it in substantial ways. Online marketing has rapidly become one of the fastest-growing marketing techniques, with the internet's massive potential offering numerous benefits. Creative use of modern technologies not only provides firms with a competitive edge but also benefits society at large (Kurtz, 2012).

In the retail sector, food retailing has experienced significant transformations over the years. Initially viewed as mere intermediaries, food retailers have evolved into influential players within the food supply chain. This evolution has led to changes in self-concept and business conduct, with retailers exercising greater control over demanding actors. Market competition has driven retailers to initiate customer-centric strategies, particularly in response to aggressive competition in consumer markets. According to Chaffey and Ellis-Chadwick (2019), online marketing encompasses various strategies, including search engine optimization (SEO), content marketing, social media marketing, email marketing, and online advertising. Building brand awareness, drawing clients, and increasing revenue are all significantly impacted by each method.

Online marketing in the retail industry is purchasing products from manufacturers, distributors, or wholesalers and reselling them to final consumers. Over the past few decades, the food retailing industry in industrialized countries has undergone tremendous upheaval. Food manufacturers used food retail companies as essential middlemen in the 1970s. They are now acknowledged as the most powerful players in the whole food supply chain.

The advent of online marketing has brought about considerable changes in the food retailing industry. Food retailers, who were once thought of as middlemen between food producers and customers, are now important participants in the food supply chain. The changes were caused by the rising importance or significance of online or digital management and the necessity to adapt to various changes in consumer behaviors (Reardon & Timmer, 2014).

Retailers have increasingly practiced monopolistic control over the food supply conducting various chain strategies such as listing fees and independent demands for price stability. Market control has expanded to a point where what used to be intermediaries primarily in the retail trade have become involved participators in the trading process. It has also shifted power within the food supply chain and altered the way that the providers of food start to define themselves as well as conduct business with customers and each other; known as self-concept.

Euromonitor International (2020) has observed that consumers are turning increasingly towards technology solutions, and this has impacted online food and has created substantial growth.

The use of the Internet has impacted the consumption process by changing consumer's decision-making processes, relations, and even consumption management. Thus, with the notion that more and more people turn to the Internet in search of a suitable product and/or service, certain measures must be taken to maintain the competitiveness of the companies. Internet methods are vital in this process and facilitate the adaptation needs that help firms expand the market coverage, improve communication with customers, and provide customers with convenient shopping experiences. Mass consumer preference for shopping using the Internet is due to factors such as convenience, fast access to what they want, and ease in the process as highlighted by PwC (2018).

It was outlined by E Jerome McCarthy, invented in the 1960s, and what became known as the 4P's model. It starts with product (the ideal one), then comes price, place (the appropriate one), and promotion (the ideal one again). The 4P's model is a template: if everyone offering a product is doing business the same way, they'll all be positioned to meet the demands of the same consumers, in the same places, at the same price. Enthusiastic readers might be saying to themselves: 'With all this planning and strategizing, the last thing I need to think about is the idea of a presidential election being a marketing campaign. That's nuts.' I agree. Then again, so is much of marketing. The benefit of the thinking behind the 4P's model is that it points entrepreneurs – literal and

figurative – in the right direction. It gets them thinking that, if they want to be successful, they must know who their customers are, what kind of relationship they want to have with them, how they should get their attention, and what content they need to sell.

In recent years, the food retailing industry has undergone a significant digital transformation. The adoption of online marketing strategies has become essential for businesses seeking to stay competitive and meet the evolving needs of consumers. The targeted use of digital platforms helps the food retailers provide a unified purchasing experience and influence the customers' engagement and sales. As mentioned by Hwang and Kim (2020), when firms respond to customer issues faster and regularly interact with customers digitally, their brands' image and customers' loyalty are more favorable.

It has been observed that the retailing business needs to cone toward its consumer end by adopting modern technology for its interface. Utilization of the technology results in a coherent purchasing experience across the various channels thus becoming a source of competitive advantage for organizations that seize that opportunity. Consumers have shown increased interest in how brands respond and act during times of crisis. Rapidly adapting to consumer concerns, listening, and responding effectively is crucial to maintaining brand sentiment and reputation.

Digitally managing consumer relationships with sensitivity, understanding, and awareness through forums, social media, conversations, and in-product tools can help maintain brand reputation during challenging times. As one of the well-known retailers globally, the online marketing strategy of 7-Eleven exemplifies the use of the 4P's model (product, price, place, promotion) to maintain market presence and achieve business objectives.

In the Philippines, the growing presence and use of social media and the internet by Filipinos have spurred the practice of online commerce. Small e-commerce businesses, including online food retailers, have grown, offering more employment opportunities, particularly for delivery riders, and enabling consumers to purchase food without face-to-face contact. This shift towards digital platforms has accelerated the adoption of online marketing strategies among businesses, particularly in the retail sector. According to the Digital 2021 report by We Are Social and Hootsuite (2021), the Philippines has one of the highest rates of social media usage in the world. As the use of technology platform increases this has led to the expansion of e-commerce especially in the Food Retailing business.

Thus, the Philippine market can be considered both quite demanding and filled with potential for food retailers. The dynamic nature of the economy together with altering consumer behavior patterns makes marketing a dynamic process of winning and maintaining customers. New media marketing can therefore be described as a flexible and efficient tool in responding to these challenges and increasing the reach of business in the targeted market. New small-scale e-commerce operations have entrance into the market, thus creating more employment for the people, especially in the delivery of food via online/mobile selling, where no direct physical contact is made. New forms of social distribution have caused organizations to lean more on digital marketing since it can help expand their clientele base as well as transform in response to new conditions (KPMG, 2020).

The inspiration behind this research originates from the fact that besides being a master's in business administration student and instructor of courses in business and marketing, the researcher believes that this kind of experience has allowed her to observe how paramount it is to have proper marketing strategies in today's fast-growing world and meeting the needs of the constantly-evolving economy. The researcher personally got very interested in the development of business processes in the area of knowledge management, which is why the researcher decided to pursue the innovative and constantly developing topic of online marketing, particularly focusing on the field of food retailing.

Online marketing, as defined by Kotler & Armstrong (2020), is any attempt to sell a product or service and build consumer relationships through the Internet. Today, nearly every business maintains an online presence and uses it in substantial ways. The internet provides a means of reaching a vast audience, and when utilized effectively, it can deliver numerous benefits. The creative use of modern technologies not only gives firms a positive competitive advantage but also offers societal benefits (Kurtz, 2012).

In Tarlac City, the food retail industry has served the Tarlaqueños for over a decade, especially those located along F. Tanedo St., a core commercial area accessible to consumers. The strategic location of these food retailers has played a crucial role in their success, allowing them to cater to a diverse customer base. However, the competitive nature of the market requires continuous innovation and adaptation to maintain relevance and drive growth.

This study aims to explore how the remaining food retailers in Tarlac City have successfully employed online marketing strategies by examining their product, price, promotion, and place of distribution strategies. By analyzing these aspects, the research provides insights into the effective practices that have enabled these retailers to thrive in a competitive market. The continued existence and success of these food retailers serve as a testament to their resilience, adaptability, and strategic insight.

B. Statement of the Problem

The main focus of the study is to describe the Online Marketing Strategies employed by the Selected Food Retailers in Tarlac City. Specifically, it focused on the following questions:

➤ *How are the Selected Food Retailers in Tarlac City Described as to their:*

- Nature of ownership;
- Products offered;
- Asset size;
- Average estimated Income for the last three (3) years; and;
- Number of employees?

➤ *How are the Online Marketing Strategies of the Selected Food Retailers in Tarlac City Described in Terms of:*

- Product;
- Price;
- Promotion;
- Place of Distribution?

➤ *What are the Problems Encountered by the Online Food Retailers in Tarlac City Related to Online Marketing Strategies?*

C. Significance of the Study

The result of the study will be beneficial to the following:

To the **Department of Trade and Industry**, the result of this study could serve as input into the formulation of better policies wherein they can use in actively promoting awareness and providing support and training to the current and potential food retailers. This support will improve their awareness and endow them with the essential background for performing well.

To **online entrepreneurs and small-scale businesses**, this study brings out key factors that need to be considered in online marketing to increase the chances of success. Thus, by applying different and innovative techniques in using the internet to market their products, young entrepreneurs and retailers can increase their probability of attaining successful businesses. It can identify the effectiveness of their strategies; modify the plans they have developed and therefore work towards improving the effectiveness of their small businesses and online presence.

To **business students**, experience based on real-life cases makes the study highly relevant to the phenomenon of online marketing; the ability to apply practical and theoretical knowledge in the management of an organization is an undoubted advantage for students.

To **business educators**, the results may be useful to educators in recognizing the approaches and practices that facilitate the improvement of students' competence in the sphere of effective online advertising for those who intend to create their enterprise.

To **future researchers**, this study will also provide future researchers and scholars with adequate information that enables them to replicate the study in other settings, particularly the online marketing field.

D. Scope and Delimitation of the Study

This study focuses on analyzing 250 selected food retailers in Tarlac City by were considered from the year 2020 to 2023 examining several key aspects of their operations. Specifically, it addresses the nature of ownership, types of products offered, asset size, average estimated income over the last three years, and the number of employees. This comprehensive evaluation provides a clear picture of the businesses involved in the study, offering insights into their operational scale and economic impact within the local market.

Additionally, the study explores the online marketing strategies employed by these food retailers, assessing them in terms of product offerings, pricing strategies, promotional activities, and distribution methods. It also investigates the specific challenges these retailers face in their online marketing efforts. This scope ensures a detailed understanding of how food retailers in Tarlac City approach digital marketing and identifies any obstacles that hinder their effectiveness.

E. Literature Review and Related Studies

The unpredictable spreading speed of the COVID-19 virus has affected various companies, and they need to be flexible by embracing agility in marketing strategy. An organization's future determines how it acquires and adapts to today's crisis. Constant adjusting and adapting to current and different environments has become necessary for marketers during these times.

➤ *Online Marketing Strategies*

The E-commerce market is rising at a fast pace worldwide. According to Kwok et al., (2020) rise in e-commerce has led to a change in the approach business was ended, this century is digitalization. Nobody has ever thought earlier of making payments online. Yet, this electronic world is constantly changing, and developing and it is a generation of creation and innovations that is converting the world towards an advanced place and a society that can face adversities at ease. As everyone knows, we are currently experiencing this COVID-19 pandemic, and the value of online services has strengthened because going out to buy something is not suitable as per the present situation. Given social distancing, people need to refrain from going physically out of the house to buy something; rather they can utilize online services at hand.

The rise of utilizing online services as everyone is sticking and working from home for the sake of their health. According to Katsikeas et al. (2019), SME enterprises have this chance to engage with large businesses on the Internet, as they can produce online services for their customers and create their products available to various potential customers and expand their consumer base as they have equal opportunities as available to the large businesses. Currently, MSMEs have a broad scale of influence to the consumers, they do not require to keep and sustain physical retail shops as consumers can order online; this has lessened their cost of moving and storing. In accordance to Ding and Li (2021), believe that uncontrollable situations -- such as COVID-19 Pandemic can have a positive effect on marketing strategies. Particularly in countries with extreme conditions such as lockdowns; companies must adjust and possibly innovate their marketing strategies to exist and remain competitive. Also, the marketing strategies will be concerned with digital programs. The advantages of online marketing in contrast to traditional strategies – involve lower cost, fewer risks, flexibility, and obtaining information about the practices and interests of consumers.

Nonetheless, the marketing innovation will be the growth of new marketing methods as well as an important development in the marketing mix. In line with Kotler and Armstrong (2012), the purpose of a marketing mix is to establish a mutually beneficial exchange with the target market. Also, it is about allocating the right product in the right place, at the right time and the right price. Furthermore, many foreign markets can be entered, and consumers targeted.

➤ *Product*

Retailers, who must conform to the changing environmental state, have begun to perform marketing activities across their websites in order to fill the requests and demands of their consumers in the lockdown that was enforced with the pandemic era. According to Lui and Tan (2017), the core influential factor for customer's online buying behaviour is product quality. It creates a first impression on customers to buy online. Good quality of the product can be described as a deform and fault-free product that can be recognized by eight key dimensions, such as product performance, product features, product durability, serviceability, aesthetics, and quality perception.

Most of the customers acquire products by recognizing product quality, product features, product performance, and price of the product. Product quality can be able to establish a retailer's reputation that influences the customers' buying decisions. According to Mashao and Sukdeo (2018), they discover that product quality has a serious influence on consumer buying decisions and satisfaction. They also added that mostly of customers come to online stores and purchase a product because of the product and service quality these stores produce. Also, the product has an impact on customers purchasing behavior. Riding the waves of new product trends can be very useful and if a retailer becomes one of the sellers to offer a particular trend, they don't need to utilize the marketing feature within the mobile software to appear on top of the searches. Philippines (2021) stated that this is also a chance to develop a consumer base; and if a shopper wants to come and try a definite trend, their privacy will be sought for someone who already sells the product that they are searching for.

➤ *Price*

Price defines as cash that is levied for products or services or the total value that has to pay by customers for obtaining, buying or utilizing products and services. According to Kotler and Armstrong (2012), they stated that all components of the marketing mix are accountable for expenses, but price only collects revenue for the company. For example, firms give a competitive price and make a special discount for their products and services to fascinate customers. It also discovers that pricing techniques has a remarkable effect on consumer intention and purchasing decisions. Customers pay profound curiosity and careful thought on price when they decide to buy the product. By considering the price majority of the customers would buy. Andrei and Kumar (2013) added that mostly of the customers visits an online store and make a purchase due to the price of the stores render to the customers and it has a significant influence on the consumers.

The price is an aspect that can affect customers buying decisions for a product. In relation to Dawood (2016), various customers purchase a product at an expensive price, yet these products are of good quality and are safe for customer health. Price has a massive impact on customer buying decisions by keeping standard prices in relation to its quality; producing several types of discounts that fascinates customer attention to purchase a product. In addition, Kumar et al. (2013) added that, the higher the price offered to customers, the lesser customers are prepared to utilize the product or service, nevertheless if lower prices are rendering the greater the customers consider in utilizing a product or service. Further, customers are not only look at the quantity of money paid but also examine the quality of the product offered.

➤ *Place*

The period of COVID-19 is showing to be a complicated moment for customers. It is unexpected for global retailers and Biron (2020), stated that over 90 stores across the globe decide to shut their doors for an uncertain time to stop the transmission of the deadly coronavirus. For instance, the Walmart took measures to lessen the working hours in their physical store. The transmission of the virus has urged a lockdown and quarantine period around the globe. In the stage of quarantine to restrain the transmission of the coronavirus, shops that sells daily needs such as foods, medicine, household goods and sanitary goods are continuing to sell out their inventories, but shops that sells general merchandise, apparel, footwear, home and other non-essentials are experiencing the full effect of the pandemic. Shoulberg and Halliday (2020) stated that, considering that stores has been close all over the world, customers find it important to utilize buying online.

It upholds that the coronavirus has impel the customers to buy online as they have changed from a digital-often situation, to a great digital-most society in less than a month across their daily activities during the COVID-19 pandemic. According to Lee (2020), it is the outcome of the stay-at-home ordinance that statute by the leaders of several countries. It supports the study of Karter (2020), states that the pandemic setback has quicken the change to online shopping, specifically for mobile in general, brick and mortar stores sales have decreased at a rate of -1.2 % compared to online sales presents a rate of 1.0 % increase. Furthermore, the overall increment in online sales of 25% during the COVID-19 setback portrays the huge change from physical retailing to online retailing.

➤ *Promotion*

The word “promotion” has on customers looks to fade in the time of coronavirus. According to Thomas (2020), states that few businesses are offering reasonable online deals and various retailers that didn’t give free shipping are now offering it and even lengthen the period customers can make returns during the coronavirus pandemic. And besides, as organizations send to their customers email a 25 % or 30 % coupon, customers are not responding to these coupons due to the wariness encompassing the pandemic, it has caused the customers to tighten their wallets. According to Sohani (2020), businesses can discount in a demand-weak environment, yet it does not matter in this period of pandemic. It also added that various reports that email marketing is functional versus organizations and brands who are utilizing them through this period of pandemic; because it is not yielding any outcome since customers are on the search for data associated to the pandemic.

And so marketing specialist agrees that utilizing the mass attention on COVID-19 or the coronavirus, as a marketing hook is at best and unseemly. According to Handley (2020), stated that customers took to twitter to show their irritation at being sent marketing emails from businesses they have not overheard from in years and majority of advertising agency executives concur that attempting to advertise through unusual times is a tough to balance. During the pandemic, there is a change in the process of promotion where advertisement is done without real-life TV or shots rather, firms are changing to the utilization of animation, illustration, CGI (computer generated images), VFX visual effects, motion graphics, compositing stock footage, and more.

➤ *Related Studies*

• *Foreign*

In the last 2 decades, a rapid increase in global online competition has led the e-commerce companies to modify their business and marketing techniques at the international scale. Regardless of the current global economic situation, the e-commerce still plays a fundamental function in business worldwide. During certain period when the spread rate of the pandemic is high, a lockdown was imposed. Through this time, the retailers with brick and mortal stores fulfil the needs of consumers, promptly adapted the methods and transform their online stores to conform to shopping.

According to Fortuna, Risso and Musso (2021), they conclude that the epidemic has modified the customer’s practices, forcing the retailers to adjust to the new normal, identify by digitalization and flexibility. With the redefinition of the role of brick and mortal stores and affiliated spaces, a depleting of store networks has developed. The method – which was already in progress before the epidemic – has now heavily accelerated. Omni-channel approach also needs an improvement of supply chains which can be hard and expensive to impose. Businesses must manage larger and deeper change to fulfil developing customers’ expectations in terms of customer experience, personalization and speed of delivery while keeping delivery cost in check.

According to Ramli et al. (2021), in his study that the electronic or online marketing is believed to be more convenient than the traditional method and can assist businesses to target wider customers. The marketing in social media can significantly improve word-of-mouth referrals; hence increase recommendation to utilize the service of others. It is certainly believed that students who are millennial consist of the majority of those who are more likely to buy foods online. They go for online ordering because it is more attracting than a traditional marketing strategy and the promotion or advertisement has more fascinating visual style. It indicates that even consumers who are loyal to brick-and-mortar store strategy will fascinate to buy online as the visual blueprint is appealing and eye-catching by nature. The visual media can get consumers to stop, look and watch. Also, social media platforms like Instagram, Pinterest and Snapchat are on the rise particularly through students and millennial. Thus, the purpose to utilize the online ordering will elevate as they feel that online marketing and advertisement applied are more appealing and engaging.

Additionally, Talpau (2014) concluded in his study that the internet has an important influence on the communication between the sellers and customers. In the last few years, several modern communication devices such as banners, blogs, email, interstices (pop-ups), interactive television, online communities, search engines, web conferencing and others are most likely to use. The advantages obtain when encouraging companies through the online environment were introduced to emphasize the value of this means; cost effective, speed, flexibility, high significance given to the customer who eventually has control in the online environment, improve interactivity and rich quantity of data provided by this environment, conquering geographical boundaries and other possible drawbacks and lifelong access as this environment is accessible 24 hours a day and 7 days a week.

Thus, Avakiat and Roopsuwankun (2021) concluded that, marketing mix components are influencing buying decisions via online application. The most significant element is Place. In order to fascinate more customers to buy online is through applications. The operators should prioritize and enhance the ordering channel via online applications, to be more useful for ordering and be able to check the order status better than ordering through channels. Concentrating on the 4Ps, the place is the one aspect that is being entirely digitalized, as customers replace their visits to brick-and-mortar stores with the online shopping. Throughout the traditional shopping, the customer has the product right after payment, so minimizing delivery times will be the one of the business important priorities.

In the study of Ganesha and Aithal (2021), their study indicates that customer satisfaction with their products is affected by the 4Ps of the marketing mix Product, Price, Place, and Promotion. Additionally, the price has a constructive and important influence on customer satisfaction with the products. Therefore, the product has the powerful effect on consumer satisfaction, while the place has the lack influence on customer satisfaction. The product and the quality of the product itself have a powerful effect on consumer satisfaction. However, it does not mean that the other factors are not significant; all factors in 4Ps marketing mix should be assessed carefully to be able to fulfill the customer satisfaction in the market segment of a product. It is not about how much profit is produced by a business; it is all about how the profit was produced with the aid of 4Ps of Marketing Mix as well as to sales personnel's standard of communication with customers every time a business is striving to make a profit. What is easier is to keep existing customers and position all the 4Ps in addition to sales employees to prioritize on measures that improve the repeat visit percentage of customers.

Herlandy (2021) added that the right marketing mix technique from the Price which sets the idea of one price and low price as a market penetration that is considered very profitable in the middle of expansion of other companies, from the promotion factor by concentrating on a single social media that is suitable on target by market segmentation and targeting. The retail sector makes growing transactions even better with a mixture of combination strategies. Specifically in the product feature, the advertising and anti-mainstream product style make the profit of the product differentiation more noticeable. And the Place feature can be able to lessen the order lead time by 75% by executing the latest online sales strategies along marketplaces. Therefore, it concludes that social media has an important part in improving the sales and trademark awareness in the millennial age.

Furthermore, Suh (2021) concluded in his study that, marketing mix and marketing techniques ensure profit inclusion to affiliates on the supply chain. The fundamental objective of the marketing technique is to attain aggressive advantage throughout consumer satisfaction; thus, the whole procedure in the supply chain must observe the end consumer by appropriate communication of consumer taste and wants.

Consequently, according to Istiasih and Fiantika (2021) it concludes that the epidemic as the state indicator promptly influence online trust, business state and behaviour of online purchase of women clothes. Such state is a powerful determinant for online purchase goal of women clothes. Individual standard concludes and obliquely intervene the buying online objective of products. Thus, it will assist the online sellers, retailers and marketers to consistently enhance the quality of their online application as an online purchasing standard while repeatedly enhance satisfying services for consumers. Additionally, it is the conditional component of the Covid-19 pandemic and influence of online trust, business conditions, behaviour and subjective norms on the buying online objective of products.

- *Local*

The Covid-19 epidemic is a huge challenge in the Philippines. According to Prasetyo and Del Fuente (2020), with the growth of online shopping during the pandemic it is necessary to recognize the purchasing decision among Filipinos. The study identified that the aspect is influencing the consumer satisfaction in online purchasing. It is concluded that the products, services, pricing, customer, and high technology were important effect to the customer purchasing decision which also influence consumer satisfaction. Additionally, it could be useful to e-commerce programs and businesses which can be provide to a better perception of the factors that influence purchasing decisions and customer satisfaction.

In the study of Dones and Young (2020), it concluded that the demand for courier services has increase since the start of the pandemic in the Philippines, as the consumers transfer to online purchasing because of the community lockdowns. Millennial's, Gen Z and younger generations are frequently to utilize courier services than the older generation. Due to the restriction of going outside, consumers are willing on utilizing courier services to transport their necessities, especially food and groceries, and due to a considerable number of individuals are working from home and having online classes; documents and electronics have a powerful

instance to be carry out by a courier service. The central aspect that customers frequently evaluate is the speed of the delivery and the same-day delivery is the favoured alternative of the consumers. Additionally, one of the admired courier services in the Philippines is the Lalamove; it renders both of this preference. Therefore, the demand for courier services will increase even more important still after this epidemic since the customers became used in the information technology of purchasing and online selling.

According to Serrano and Sabina (2021), concluded in their study that the level of operation of online transaction services were greatly acquired by consumers in terms of simplicity to use, safety, customer assistance, systematic transaction, reliability of service, and consumer awareness. The viewpoint of consumer in online business services as a value production particularly in terms of consumer satisfaction, systematic, compatible and adaptability. While the level of marketability of online business services acquired by consumers particularly such as the product, place, price, and promotion. As well as the degree of operation of online business services have a correlated influence on the degree of marketability. Thus, the online business service must implement a developmental strategy by examining the customer practices, identifying the value creation and applying firm analysis of marketability of the process itself for continuous development.

In the study of De Jesus, Buenaventura and Dela Cruz (2021), it concludes that the utilization of online advertising is a logical instrument for advertising during this Covid-19 pandemic. The email and display marketing are the leading advertising technique that are helpful for this pandemic because of its characteristic that assist businesses to achieve their market position. Thus, endorsement and utilization of other online shops are influenced to strengthen the quantity of individuals who are attracted in the advertising and recognize the utilization of other social media means to encourage market development. Reinforcing and improving the utilize of online advertisement which will lead in the new formulation and technological changes of marketing strategy which may produce to the improvement of financial status. Additionally, the utilize of various interventions are appropriate in solving problems, help them in identifying efficiency interest and cost efficient that can experience of retailers and contribute to their profitability and durability of transactions.

While according to Somocor (2017), it reveals that marketing mix such as price, place, promotion, product, and service quality feature such as physical; reliability and certainty are factors that have important connection on customer satisfaction that urge that modifies these measures might influence customer satisfaction. The best determinants of consumer satisfaction are the criterion of marketing mix as well as the criterion of service quality. Omar et al. (2015) added that people who are satisfied with the quality of products and services they acquire, probably suggest the products or service to their relatives, workmates, and friends because of the word-of-mouth indication.

Mobo, Rahmat, and Pagal (2020) conclude that utilizing online transactions and online programs might improve our economy back and create jobs for those in need. Moving to online will have an advantage to the seller and the end consumer. Lots of small businesses are shutting down permanently because of the pandemic that continues for several months. It may also help by utilizing the store programs and online applications to purchase and sell products directly from the manufacturers. Top businesses can influence internet and information technology and blend intranet, social media, online communication, and technological means in day-to-day business practices.

Alvarez (2020) concludes in his study that a business must concentrate on product specialization which desires to create a competitive advantage and produce a market position by providing the needs of customers. These components affect the customer purchasing practices. The food service shops must acquire sustainable and various pricing frameworks and processes in response to consumer demands. It must keep the price consistent and develop a longevity superior market position. Its marketing technique should attempt to attain the utmost effectiveness at an affordable cost. Also, the place is an essential component of the marketing mix that guarantees the product accessibility to the right target market, at the accurate amount, at the right price, and the right time. Moreover, to attain market penetration and market acceptance, it must be a sound marketing mix that incorporates product, price, place, and promotion that can be used to render better customer service that can assess the marketability of a business.

F. Conceptual Framework

The conceptual framework for this study includes the business profile of the selected food retailers in Tarlac City as to the nature of ownership, products offered, asset size and average estimated income for the last three (3) years; and number of employees. The two main independent variables of the study are online marketing strategies and problems in applying these strategies by selected food retailers in Tarlac City during the pandemic. Various digital tactics that make up online marketing strategies include social media marketing, digital advertising, and promotions among others aiming at increasing retailer's presence on the Internet as well as improving their sales. The problems or difficulties faced by retailers when implementing online marketing strategies on the other hand involve technical constraints, competition, and changes in consumption patterns. Moreover, the framework examines aspects such as whether a business is owned individually or by multiple owners or if it engages in retailing of non-food items only; its total asset volume; average income within three years before the current one; and number of employees.

These variables collectively reflect the food retailers' business profile, product offerings, financial performance, and operational capacity, all of which determine factors in their adoption, practice, and effectiveness of online marketing strategies.

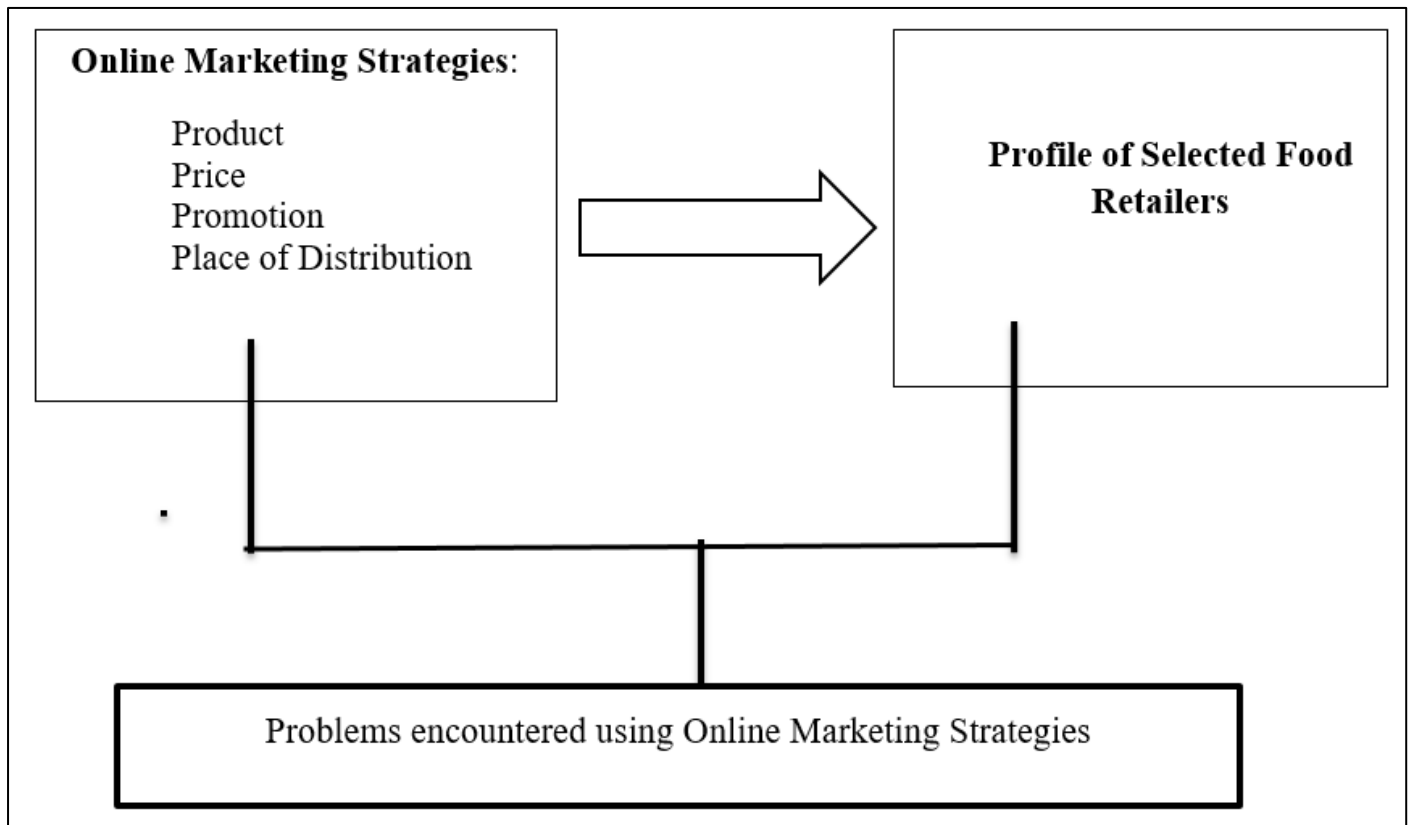


Fig 1: Paradigm of the Study

CHAPTER TWO

METHODS OF STUDY AND SOURCES OF DATA

This chapter concisely discussed the research design, locale of the study, participants, development of the research instruments, data gathering procedure, data analysis, and potential ethical issues.

The study used a descriptive correlational research design because the nature of the study demanded the description of the Online Marketing Strategies of Selected Food Retailers in Tarlac City. It is correlational where a significant relationship between business profiles and online marketing strategies was determined.

Descriptive research, by contrast, sets out to capture the status quo of some phenomenon; as Zulueta and Costales (2019) put it, it “describes conditions or relationships that exist, practices that are prevalent, beliefs or attitudes that are held, processes that are taking place, effects that are being experienced, or trends that are occurring”. Descriptive research aims to accurately represent characteristics of people, situations, or groups, and to quantify the frequency with which phenomena occur (Heidenthal, 2018).

A. Locale of the Study

It was only in 1874 that Tarlac was established as an organized province having been formed from the provinces of Pampanga and Pangasinan. Today, Tarlac City has been one of the most booming economies in the region providing attractive incentives to various companies. Its proposed location to other major centers of Central Luzon and the presence of the national highway and the Subic-Clark-Tarlac expressway also called SCTEx and the new Tarlac-Pangasinan-La Union expressway also known as TPLex make it suitable to almost all forms of investment. Some of these are in the social facilities such as housing and commercial buildings, entertainment units such as hotels, resorts, and entertainment joints, farming exemplification ventures such as demonstration farms among others, and some in the technical enterprises such as call centers. The city is also best suited for agribusiness-related manufacturing such as food processing manufactures, farm implements and machinery, feed, and fertilizers manufacture as well as manufacturing plants that are export-inclined.

Therefore, Tarlac City which is one of the melting pot of Central Luzon is fit to be used as a case study to determine the effect of online marketing on the food retailing business. The findings of this study may be useful for extending the knowledge about the application of online marketing for the sustenance and development of food retailers in big and diverse markets in similar environments as the purchasing network considered in the present research was affected by the crisis.

The food retailers at Tarlac City were highly affected by the world crisis during the pandemic which led to more utilization of the following online marketing strategies. The purpose of this research is to present an overview of the business profiles and backgrounds of food retailers in Tarlac City and to describe a way that these online marketing strategies were utilized.

This narrative research aims at targeting 250 food retailers in Tarlac City who are actively participating from the year 2020 to the year 2023. In this case, these respondents meeting the criterion of having served in the retail industry for more than three years were chosen based on the following screening criteria in the research. Even though there were more than 500 categorized food retailers in the city; the study only sampled 250. Their list of these food retailers was obtained from the Business Permit Licensing Division in Tarlac City.

B. Participants of the Study

The industry structure of food retail in Tarlac City has been facing challenges in recent years due to the world crisis on health brought about by COVID-19 pandemic. This research intended to document the chosen food retailers with their establishment background in Tarlac City, Tarlac, and the basic online marketing that has propelled them. To achieve the objectives of the study, 250 food retailer businesses based in Tarlac City were considered from the year 2020 to 2023. These respondents have been working in the retail industry for a period greater than the industry average of 3 years.

The research site, Tarlac City, as a convergence area of Central Luzon offers an appropriate setting for investigating the efficiency of various online marketing techniques. Due to this, the city is strategically located near other cities and is easily accessible through the National Highway and the Subic-Clark-Tarlac Expressway (SCTEx), the city has hosted different kinds of industry.

There are more than 500 food retailers in Tarlac City but due to these blended circumstances of changes in the marketplace and imperfect information, this study selected 250 food retailers who continued their business operations and effectively employed suitable marketing strategies throughout the study period. These food retailers were identified with the help of data from the Business Permit Licensing Division in Tarlac City, Tarlac.

C. Research Instrument

A structured questionnaire and scheduled interviews were used to obtain the information required to achieve the research objectives of the study. The survey was created with great care, and with the support of the three business administration experts, to target food retailing companies, measure their online marketing activities, and determine the corresponding issues. The references used significantly influenced the development of the instrumentation for the study on online marketing strategies of selected food retailers in the following ways:

Chaffey and Ellis-Chadwick (2016): Their comprehensive overview of digital marketing strategies offered a solid theoretical foundation for the development of the study's instruments. By detailing various digital marketing practices and their implementation, this source helped shape the questions and metrics used to evaluate online marketing strategies. It provided a framework for assessing how food retailers deploy digital marketing and measure its effectiveness.

Verhoef, Kannan, and Inman (2017): This source's exploration of the shift from multi-channel to omni-channel retailing provided crucial insights into the evolving landscape of retailing. It guided the inclusion of questions related to the integration of multiple channels and the challenges faced by food retailers in adopting omni-channel strategies. This reference ensured that the instrumentation addressed relevant trends and practices in the food retail sector.

Kim and Kim (2020): Their analysis of digital marketing trends specific to food retailing informed the development of questions aimed at capturing emerging trends and their impacts on food retailers. This reference contributed to tailoring the instrumentation to reflect current practices and challenges within the food retail industry, ensuring that the study's instruments were up-to-date and relevant.

Together, these references provided a robust basis for creating comprehensive and contextually relevant instruments, ensuring that the study effectively captured the nuances of online marketing strategies in the food retail sector. Conducting the complementary scheduled interviews allowed for elaboration of the answers and cross-checking, which ensured capturing all the pertinent data.

One of the components of the study was a pilot test carried out on 167 participants. This pilot test was useful in determining the reliability of the tool in the form of Cronbach's Alpha, which is an Internal consistency. For analysis, any Cronbach's Alpha of above 0.60 is considered acceptable. The pilot test yielded Cronbach's Alpha values for the variables as follows: the results were as follows: Product = 0.927, Price = 0.875, Promotion = 0.925, Place of Distribution = 0.933. These values are way beyond the minimum acceptable criterion which highlights the reliability of the study in the measurement of each of the construct.

The data gathered from the pilot test were then checked for credibility, documented in tables, and then analyzed by using the technique of frequency counts, percentages, and ranking. This stringent method ensured the achievement of credible and viable results to aid the research objectives.

D. Data-Gathering Procedure

Permission for the study was first sought by the researcher submitting a formal letter of request to the respondents and heads of the agency. When getting in touch with the selected food retailers, it is necessary for the researcher to personally explain the purpose of the study, the need to participate in the study, handing over a letter and the questionnaire. To begin with, the researcher described the core goals of the study, and then clearly explained what the participants should do to fill in the questionnaire through a proper direction and instruction page in Google form or in the online questionnaire sent through various social media platforms. This was followed by the completion of the questionnaires by the respondents and submitting all details needed for the study to the researcher online by agreeing on the data privacy rule.

Data collection was conducted through Google Forms. This digital method of survey enabled the respondents to fill in and submit the answers online, which made the work easier. The researcher frequently checked the end of the survey through Google Forms in a bid to confirm that all data were well captured.

Whenever the researcher received the questionnaires and the responses from Google Forms, the researcher scanned through the submission to confirm that a section did not contain missing answers. The research procedure included the administration of questionnaires on selected food retailers and the filled questionnaires were collected and compiled to facilitate tabulation, analysis, and interpretations. Consequently, conclusions were made based on the analyzed information, and recommendations were developed and provided.

E. Data Analysis

The data gathered were presented in table forms using simple frequency count and percentage distribution. Weighted mean was also computed and ranking of responses was done. The statistical tool was used to treat the data gathered for the problems posed in the study.

- **Frequency.** According to Pagoso and Montana (1997), this tool facilitates the tallying and counting of frequencies falling under each category. In this study, frequency was used to measure the participants' business profiles.
- **Weighted Mean.** Triola (1997), asserted that a mean is computed with the different scores assigned different tests.

This formula was used for the scale type of questions, to tell the various online marketing strategies of the participants as to Product, Price, Promotion, and Place of Distribution as well as the problems encountered by the online food retailers in their business.

In establishing levels or Limits of Indices, the principle of Rounding Up numbers to the nearest hundredth digit, the following system was followed.

Table 1: System of Establishing Limits of Index

Limits of index	Verbal Description
4.50-5.00	Extremely Serious Problem
3.50-4.49	Slightly Serious Problem
2.50-3.49	Considered a Problem
1.50-2.49	Slightly a Problem
1.00-1.49	Not a Problem at All

Limits of index	Verbal Description
4.50-5.00	Always Practiced
3.50-4.49	Often Practiced
2.50-3.49	Sometimes Practiced
1.50-2.49	Hardly Ever Practiced
1.00-1.49	Never Practiced

F. Ethical Issues

In this study, ethical considerations are quite significant and taken care of well by the researcher. Ethical issues formed the base to ensure the protection of the respondents in terms of their privacy. Before the actual participation of the respondents, both the respondents and heads of the businesses or companies were given formal letters affirming their consent to participate in the study. This initial step was important to ensure transparency on the objectives and procedures of the study.

In terms of data collection, the researcher used both physical questionnaires and an online form which was the Google Form. Concerning the participants' privacy, respondents were expected to agree to the participation disclaimer on the online permission form before they filled in the online questionnaire. In this consent form, the objectives of the study, their willingness to participate in the study, and the clarity given to them that their answers shall be used for academic purposes only were stipulated. The researcher assured the respondents of the participants of the study that the data would not be used for any personal business purposes and would not be provided to third parties not involved in the study.

Policies regarding the protection of the identity of the respondents as well as the security of the gathered data were paramount in the entire research process. The researcher made sure that all questionnaires either physical or online through Google Forms, were well protected by maintaining their anonymity. To maintain the anonymity of the respondents' sensitive information or details were either erased or deleted. To protect the information from external access different measures were taken Data of this nature were kept in secured and password-protected computer systems.

Thus, to promote the respect of participants' density and privacy, and to maintain the scientific reliability of the study results, the present study was designed in adherence to these ethical standards.

CHAPTER THREE

PRESENTATION, ANALYSIS, AND INTERPRETATION OF DATA

This chapter contains the presentation, analysis, and interpretation of data gathered from the participants of the study to answer the problems of this paper.

A. Description of Food Retailers in Tarlac City

This section presents the business profile of selected food retailers in Tarlac City including their nature of ownership, products offered, asset size, average estimated income for the last three years, and the number of employees.

Table 2: Nature of Ownership

Nature of Ownership	Frequency	Percentage
Partnership	119	47.6
Sole Proprietorship	113	45.2
Corporation	10	4
Cooperative	8	3.2
Total	250	100

Table 1 shows the data on the nature of ownership among food retailers, indicating a varied distribution. The majority of food retailers that were surveyed operate as either partnerships or sole proprietorships. Partnerships made up 47.6% of the total respondents while sole proprietorships comprised 45.2%. This shows that the food retail sector in Tarlac City amidst the pandemic mainly consists of small businesses often engaged in partnership or individual enterprise.

Partnerships refer to agreements between people who are willing to share duties, and also make collective decisions for their common good, whereas sole proprietorships are set up by an individual entrepreneur who runs his/her own business. It is implied in the results above that in food retailing within Tarlac City a high number of local entrepreneurs and small business owners are engaged in partnerships and sole proprietorship.

Among the surveyed establishments, corporations and cooperatives accounted for 4% and 3.2%, respectively. Essentially what this means is that there are some large corporate and cooperative investments in the food retail industry but they are not so widespread as compared to partnerships or sole proprietorships.

Partnerships comprise a majority, with 119 respondents or 47.6% of the total sample. Sole proprietorship comprising of 45.2% of the respondents (113). Corporations and cooperatives exhibit lower figures, made up of 4% (10) and 3.2% (8) of the sample, respectively. The table above reveals that there is reliance on cooperative ownership structures and this becomes of more interest when looking at whether there is a possible shift to a shared responsibility and resource kind of industry. It can also be hypothesized that the lower usage of corporations and cooperatives is worth investigating further to find out what factors have led to their relatively low usage.

The information given can be used to draw meaningful conclusions about ownership structures that currently exist and act as a quantitative basis for further analysis of online promotional strategies for ownership categories.

Although partnerships and sole proprietorship prevail as to the nature of business of the food retailers, the presence of corporations and cooperatives highlights diversity within the ownership landscape. These entities may bring distinct advantages such as greater access to resources, specialized expertise, or community-focused initiatives, in spite of being less common.

Table 3: Products Offered

Products Offered	Frequency	Percentage
Coffee	76	30.4
Bread and/or Pastries	37	14.8
Milk Tea	26	10.4
Rice meals/Bento rice meals	17	6.8
Fries, Burgers, and Nachos	13	5.2
Fruit shakes/ juice	12	4.8
Pizzas	9	3.6
Noodles/Ramen Shop/Goto	9	3.6
Siomai and dumplings	9	3.6
Frozen food items	8	3.2
Ice Cream	6	2.4
Street Food (Fish balls, Kikiam, Kwek-Kwek, Mani & pastillas)	6	2.4

Chicken	4	1.6
Cakes/Dessert	4	1.6
Sari-Sari Store	4	1.6
Seafoods	2	0.8
Preserved spices & Bread Spreads	2	0.8
Mushroom	2	0.8
Total	250	100

It can be gleaned in the table of the data on products offered by the selected food retailers giving valuable information on the diversity of the industry. Coffee is the leading product, accounting for 30.4% of the supply, indicating strong consumer demand for coffee products. Next to coffee products is bread and/or pastries representing 14.8% of the offerings, showcasing the importance of bakery goods in the local market.

Furthermore, different available products is observable, having milk tea products with 10.4%, rice meals/bento rice meals representing 6.8%, and fries, burgers, and nachos having 5.2% of offerings. This diversity shows the varied tastes and preferences of consumers in Tarlac City, highlighting the need for food retailers to cater to a broad range of culinary desires.

While certain products, such as fruit shakes/juice, pizzas, noodles/ramen shop/goto, and siomai and dumplings, have lower frequencies ranging from 3.6% to 4.8%, their presence signifies niche markets within the sector. Additionally, less common offerings like frozen food items, ice cream, street food, chicken, cakes/desserts, sari-sari store items, seafood, preserved spices & bread spreads, and mushrooms collectively contribute to fulfilling specific consumer needs or preferences, each representing frequencies ranging from 0.8% to 2.4%.

In partnership ownership, coffee emerges as a dominant product, with 40 respondents emphasizing its popularity. Rice meals/bento rice meals (13) and bread and/or pastries (16) also play significant roles, showcasing a balance between staple foods and bakery items. The inclusion of diverse offerings like milk tea (14), fruit shakes/juice (5), and street food (2) suggests a strategic approach to cater to varied consumer preferences. Sole proprietorship exhibits versatility, with a focus on coffee (38) and an expanded range including bread and/or pastries (21), fruit shakes/juice (7), and even chicken (4) and preserved spices & bread spreads (2). Corporations maintain a more streamlined product selection, particularly in coffee (2), milk tea (2), mushrooms (2), and seafood (2). Cooperative ownership, though limited, distinguishes itself with an emphasis on pizzas (3) and frozen food items (3). This analysis underscores the nuanced product strategies employed by different ownership structures. It provides a foundation for further research into the factors influencing these choices and their impact on online marketing strategies in the dynamic food retail sector.

Table 4: Assets Size

Asset Size	Frequency	Percentage
P3,000,000 and below	145	58
P3,000,0001 to P15,000,000	77	30.8
P15,000,001 to P100,000,000	23	9.2
P100,000,000 and above	5	2
Total	250	100

It can be gleaned on the table 3 that most of the food retailers surveyed had asset sizes of P3,000,000 and below, comprising 58% of the total respondents. This indicates that a significant portion of the food retail industry in Tarlac City during the pandemic consists of micro-scale businesses.

Additionally, businesses with asset sizes ranging from P3,000,0001 to P15,000,000 represented 30.8% of the respondents, suggesting a substantial presence of medium-sized food retailers in the market.

However, larger-scale enterprises, with asset sizes between P15,000,001 to P100,000,000 and P100,000,000 and above, comprised smaller proportions of the surveyed businesses, accounting for 9.2% and 2% of respondents, respectively.

Majority of partnerships (63) fall within the P3,000,000 and below asset size, indicating a prevalence of smaller businesses or startups in this ownership category. However, there is a notable distribution across various asset size categories, with 42 entities having an asset size between P3,000,001 and P15,000,000, 12 in the P15,000,001 to P100,000,000 range, and 2 with an asset size of P100,000,000 and above. This suggests a diverse range of financial capacities among partnerships, highlighting the flexibility of this ownership model.

Sole proprietorships also exhibit diversity in asset size, with the majority (71) falling within the P3,000,000 and below range. Similar to partnerships, there is a spread across different asset size categories, showcasing 30 entities in the P3,000,001 to P15,000,000 range, 9 in the P15,000,001 to P100,000,000 range, and 3 with P100,000,000 and above. It can be implied that sole proprietorships, similar to partnerships operate in a range of financial scales.

Corporations earn less than P3,000,000 with 6 more having an income within the range P3,000,000 and P15,000,000 2 while 2 have an income ranging from P15,000,001 to P100,000,000. For instance, it is important to bring out the fact that there are no corporations recorded in the current stock in the amount of P100,000,000 and above. This implies that the corporations in the food retail sector are confined to certain values of assets indicating that they could have a standardized financial structure.

Cooperatives majorly belong to the small asset base of P3,000,000 and below (5 entities). The assessment of the cooperatives' asset size also revealed that fewer cooperatives are transacting within the higher ranges of asset size; one of the cooperatives is transacting at P3,000,001 to P15,000,000, while none is transacting at P15,000,001 to P50,009,999 and P50,010,000 and above. From this angle, it can be inferred that cooperatives in the food retail sector major in the smaller establishments.

In conclusion, it can be tracked that the specifics of financial characteristics depend on the ownership structures of the food retailers according to the statistical data. The second characteristic of business structures is that the partnerships and sole proprietorships appear to be located across a wider range of asset sizes than the corporations as well as the cooperatives. The findings presented in the present research can be considered as the guidelines for further investigation of the impact of the asset size on the organization of online marketing activities in the broad spectrum of food retailing.

Table 5: Average Estimated Income for the Last Three (3) Years

Average Estimated Income for the Last Three (3) Years	Frequency	Percentage
P250,000 and below	24	9.6
P400,001 to P800,000	55	22
P800,001 to P2,000,000	90	36
P2,000,001 to P8,000,000	57	22.8
P8,000,001 and above	24	9.6
Total	250	100

Table 4 presents the description of food retailers in terms of Average Estimated Income for the last three (3) Years wherein the average estimated income profile and trends differ according to the ownership structure of the food retailers. The greatest response was recorded in the average estimated incomes, which cumulatively attracted 36 percent of the surveyed food retailers which estimated incomes varying from P800,001 to P2,000,000. This means that during the pandemic, a reasonable percentage of food retailers in Tarlac City had mid to somewhat high-income levels in the preceding three years.

Furthermore, the average estimated income of P400,001 and P800,000 as well as P2, 000, 001 to P8, 000, 000 consisted of significant proportions of the total retailers interviewed in the study; contributing 22%, and 22%, respectively. 8% of respondents, respectively. This implies that the income level of food retailers in the city can be low, medium, and high level depending on the outlet.

At the lower half of the income scale, businessmen with average estimated gross incomes of P250,000 and below were also 9 percent and those with estimated gross incomes of P8,000,001 and upward, recorded 9 percent. 6% of the respondents. This means that the food retailers' income had some less inferior level as well as had some superior level but in inferior proportions.

As for partnerships, the greatest number of the partnerships represents the income that ranges from P2 001 to 8000 000 (38), which also points to the majority of the partnerships fall within the mid-range income level. On the other hand, 45% of the findings amount to P800,001 to P2,000,000, thus stressing income variation. What this implies is that, partnerships exist in a continuum of financial capabilities, while at the same time exhibiting a fairly good patronage in the upper middle income group.

However, in corporations, the distribution is quite low, and most of them ranged at P400,001 to P800,000 (5) and P800,001 to P2,000,000 (3). This means that many corporations are grouped under the lower to middle income bracket and that could be due to the more structured financial status in this ownership type.

Cooperatives are also sparingly found from the higher income bracket; the P800,001 – P2,000,000 (3) and P2,000,001 – P8,000,000 (2) formations. This implies that the cooperatives present in the food retail industry are in relatively lower to mid-price range income categories.

The distribution of sole proprietorships is more disperses; however, there are a good number of it that are operated with the capital base ranging from P800,001 to P2,000,000 (39) and P2,000,001 to P8,000, (17)000. This suggests that there is a rather rich income mix in own account enterprises and a fairly strong representation in the upper middle to higher income groups.

In conclusion, the statistical method of interpretation of the results shows the differences in income of food retailers depending on their ownership. Partnerships and sole proprietorships operate across a spectrum of income levels, with notable representation in the upper middle to higher income categories. Corporations, while present, exhibit a concentration in the lower to mid-range, and cooperatives predominantly operate in smaller to mid-range income brackets.

Table 6: Number of Employees

Number of Employees	Frequency	Percentage
Less than 10 employees	195	78
10-99 employees	49	19.6
100-199 employees	1	0.4
200 or more employees	3	1.2
Total	250	100

It is shown in Table 5 that the majority of food retailers surveyed operate with fewer than 10 employees, comprising a substantial 78% of the total respondents. This indicates a prevalence of small-scale operations within the food retail sector in Tarlac City during the pandemic, with a significant portion of businesses operating with limited manpower. While small-scale operations dominate, there is also a notable presence of medium-sized enterprises. Food retailers employing between 10 and 99 employees represent 19.6% of respondents, indicating the existence of businesses with relatively larger workforces compared to smaller establishments.

The data above also shows minimal representation of larger enterprises in terms of employee count. Businesses with 100-199 employees and those with 200 or more employees each constitute only a small fraction of the surveyed retailers, with frequencies of 0.4% and 1.2%, respectively. This suggests that larger-scale food retail operations are relatively rare in Tarlac City during the pandemic.

In addition, most food retailers in partnership ownership (94) have a smaller-scale operation with less than 10 employees. This dominance of smaller teams in partnerships suggests a trend toward leaner organizational structures, possibly indicative of agility and cost-effectiveness in response to dynamic market conditions. A substantial number (25) fall within the 10-99 employee range, reflecting a diversity of workforce sizes among partnership-owned food retailers.

Sole proprietorships predominantly feature smaller teams, with 95 having less than 10 employees. This aligns with the entrepreneurial nature of sole proprietorships, often characterized by more personalized and hands-on operations. Additionally, 14 sole proprietorships fall within the 10-99 employee range, demonstrating a mix of small and moderately sized workforce structures. Notably, a few have larger teams, with 1 having 100-199 employees and 3 having 200 or more employees. This suggests that while many sole proprietorships are small-scale, some have achieved a significant scale of operations.

In corporations, the data indicates a mixed employee distribution. Four corporations have less than 10 employees, possibly representing smaller-scale subsidiaries or specialized branches. Another four fall within the 10-99 employee range, reflecting a mid-sized workforce. Interestingly, two corporations have 200 or more employees, indicating a larger-scale operation within the corporate ownership model. This diversity in employee numbers highlights the adaptability of corporations to different scales of operation.

In cooperatives, there is a concentration of entities with fewer than 10 employees (2). However, a noteworthy number (6) fall within the 10-99 employee range. This mix suggests that cooperatives, while often associated with a community-driven ethos, can also encompass a range of workforce sizes.

The distribution of the number of employees across different ownership structures underscores the diversity within the food retail sector. Partnership and sole proprietorship models exhibit a prevalence of smaller teams, potentially aligning with the agility and adaptability required in the industry. Corporations display a more varied distribution, accommodating both smaller and larger-scale operations. Cooperatives, while often associated with smaller community-driven initiatives, also demonstrate variability in workforce size.

B. Online Marketing Strategies of the Selected Food Retailers

In this new generation of food retailing the next sociological changes include the roles of digital marketing strategies as key indicators of success. This research study takes avid attempt at analyzing the complexity of Online Marketing Strategies as undertaken by some of the food retailers established in Tarlac City in view of the continuous menace of the global pandemic. The study meticulously dissects the strategies employed across four essential dimensions: Let the four elements under consideration be: Product, Price, Promotion, and Place of Distribution. In view of the severe disruption caused by covid19 pandemic, it is crucial to understand how companies operate in this environment hence the usefulness of this investigation in developing an appreciation of the survival and operation strategies of food retailing businesses. Globalization and the advancement in technologies and changes in the customer needs have put pressure on managers to redesign the strategies for performing business operations in today's world.

This study looks at the relevant strategies used by food retailers in Tarlac City in managing the challenges of online marketing. Hence, the focus of this work is to critically examine one of the most significant segments of marketing, namely contemporary food retailing, in an attempt to identify key aspects, which the existing literature regards as influential, including product, promotion, place, and price factors.

Table 7: Online Marketing Strategies for Product

Statement	Mean	Description
Highlight the hygienic preparation and packaging of the product	4.7	Always Practice
Improved the quality of food products with a focus on health benefits and healthy ingredients	4.6	Always Practiced
Making the products or food items more aesthetically pleasing or artistic in online pages and social media accounts.	4.6	Always Practiced
Highlight the special features (specific examples like extra cheese etc.) of products through online promotion	4.5	Always Practiced
Features the products' originality and uniqueness offered	4.5	Often Practiced
Investing in research and development in the products to improve the offered products	4.4	Often Practiced
Modification of the food product whenever possible to suit a specific target market.	4.4	Often Practiced
Offers a variety of choices through online promotion	4.4	Often Practiced
Adding options and choices to the menu on a regular basis like monthly flavors etc.	4.3	Often Practiced
Offers a variety of servings through online marketing	4.3	Often Practiced
Composite Mean	4.06	Often Practiced

Table 6 indicates that several strategies used by food retailers in Tarlac City during the pandemic have very high mean scores. In particular, measures like focusing on the promotional space on unique characteristics, enhancing the quality of the food products with an emphasis on the health aspect, and making everything from attractive and more artistic in the online pages and social media received a mean score of 4.6 and 4.58, respectively. Further, the operation that accrued the highest mean of 4.7 was the most effective strategy was stressing on hygienic preparation and packaging techniques. The following strategies are considered valuable and according to the survey, they describe the chosen strategies as "always practiced." Indeed, during the COVID-19 pandemic, it is critical to focus on quality, health orientation, and the aesthetic appeal of promoted products displayed online.

While featuring product originality and uniqueness received a respectable mean score of 4.46, it falls slightly below the "always practiced" threshold. This suggests that while uniqueness is valued, there may be room for enhancing the consistency of showcasing product originality. Similarly, strategies related to variety, such as adding options to the menu regularly, offering a variety of servings, and providing a range of choices, all received mean scores around 4.3, indicating that while important, there might be areas for improvement or more consistent implementation. Investment in research and development, modification of food products to suit specific target markets, and offering variety through online promotion all received mean scores around 4.4, indicating that there is recognition of the importance of balancing innovation with tradition and catering to diverse consumer preferences.

The grand mean score of 4.06, with a verbal description of "often practiced," reflects an overall positive assessment of the implementation of online marketing strategies related to products in the food retail sector. This suggests that, on average, food retailers actively engage in online promotion strategies for their products during the COVID-19 pandemic.

The findings highlight the importance of consistently implementing strategies emphasizing quality, health, and visual appeal. Additionally, due to lock down and limited physical activities during the COVID-19 pandemic, despite the challenges brought by the pandemic, there were also opportunities for food retailers to enhance the consistency of showcasing product originality and to explore innovative ways to add variety and choices to their offerings through online marketing.

Table 8: Online Marketing Strategies as to Price

Statement	Mean	Description
Reasonable price and high-quality products when compared to competitors' prices	4.50	Always Practiced
Price adjustment tactics and techniques for changing prices include geographic location-based pricing, promotions, price discrimination, and new product pricing	4.4	Often Practiced
Lowering price to increase sales	4.3	Often Practiced
Prior notice online through website and social media account on variation in prices to anticipate inflation cost	4.3	Often Practiced
Discount for specific number and/or amount of orders for bulk orders	4.2	Often Practiced
Free delivery for a specific or set number of bulk orders placed through the online ordering application	4.05	Often Practiced
Price changes based on current market rates	4.0	Often Practiced
Composite Mean	4.3	Often Practiced

Table 7 presents the statistical data on online marketing strategies related to pricing in the food retail sector provides valuable insights into the frequency of implementation of various pricing strategies. The statement that highlighted the aspect of reasonable charges for the products and better quality of the products when compared to competitors' charges had the highest mean score of 4.50, for which the verbal description is 'always practiced.' This shows the importance of the organization maintaining its competitive advantage in terms of price and quality.

Downward distortion in price to boost sales and prior notice on-line for variations in prices to prepare for inflation expenses both techniques was rated mean of 4.3 as they rank them according to their significance in concerning the rapid changes in the market. Although these strategies are not indicated as 'always practiced' they seem to be well-regarded; an implication of relevance in future transformations of economic paradigms.

On the price adjustment strategies and methods of practice, which are geographic location-based pricing, more frequently promotions, price discrimination, and new product pricing, the mean score was 4.4. This implies that food retailers are applying diverse strategies in dealing with pricing so as to fit with other concerns such as positional strategies, promotional strategies, and creation of new products and services.

Awareness on the free delivery if the ordered quantity is a specific or more quantity through the online ordering application was rated as 4 on the mean scale. 05 mean score of 5 and the payment options got a mean score of 4 for a specific number of orders and for the bulk orders respectively. 2. These strategies focus on such measures as the use of preferred prices to established large and frequent purchase matters, which are useful under pandemic. The mean score for price changes according to the current market rates was 4.0. Still, it is not the highest scoring strategy; however, it is important that there is an acknowledgment of price sensitivity during difficult economic conditions.

The high mean scores throughout different pricing strategies indicate that food retailers are using a combined strategy of price skimming as well as the going rate in the marketplace. This is an excellent case of how the aims of a business can be achieved through the strategic use of prices particularly the aspect of introducing vertical costs, the focus on competitive prices about market forces, and the use of incentives in encouraging bulk quantities.

Therefore, the level of pricing in the food retail subsector can be characterized as sufficiently solid and, at the same time, possessing clear strategic potential; focusing on the main priorities that include such factors as the effective competitive positioning of products and the ability to adjust to a given trading environment, as well as the utilization of incentives. In terms of grand mean score, the result obtained is 4.25, with a verbal qualifier of 'often practiced,' which suggests that the central area of the overall adoption of online pricing strategies is reasonably effective and frequent in the industry.

Therefore, the study confirms that food retailers in Tarlac City engage a strategic and dynamic practice in the pricing of food products in the online environment. As Willens continues to do business on the dynamic environment in the digital commerce space, the findings of the analysis can be used to fine-tune the strategies towards meeting the market needs better.

Thus, staying attentive to the competitors' actions and sensitive to price strategies, these retailers will be able to maintain the competition level and achieve more success in the online environment. In addition, to appropriately address customers' climate adapting demands and needs in the future, food retailers in Tarlac City should establish awareness to the current developments and changes to the online world. This involves not only changing price mechanisms but also creating new solutions in various aspects like a portfolio of goods and services and delivery channels and communication with the clients. Evaluating the omni-channel strategies that link online and offline interfaces are potentially beneficial for customers and would strengthen the retailers' position in the market. If Tarlac City's food retailers are strategic and respond to the changes that are happening at the consumer level, they will be able to be the leaders of the industry and achieve sustainable growth in a constantly expanding digital market.

Table 9: Online Marketing Strategies as to Promotion

Statement	Mean	Description
Monitoring customer feedback	4.6	Always Practiced
Highlighting on safe and sanitary preparation of food products that addresses concerns during COVID 19 pandemic	4.6	Always Practiced
Online promotional strategies through business websites, Facebook page, twitter, Instagram, and other social media accounts	4.5	Always Practiced
Keeping online engagement high	4.4	Often Practiced
Various promos for delivery and specific number and/or amount of orders for bulk orders.	4.4	Often Practiced
Using Catchphrase/motto online for easy buyer's recall.	4.4	Often Practiced
Sponsorship of online events	4.4	Often Practiced
Uploading and posting mouth-watering photos online of new, limited-time menu items	4.4	Often Practiced
Put contact details and promotional flyers on delivered orders	4.4	Often Practiced
Blogging and vlogging to promote food products	4.2	Often Practiced

Use promotional interactive videos that can make food products go viral and direct social media traffic to the shop or the business	4.2	Often Practiced
Organizing online special events	3.9	Often Practiced
Invite Social media influencers to promote food products	3.4	Sometimes Practiced
Composite Mean	4.3	Often Practiced

Meanwhile as to Online promotional strategies through business websites, Facebook, Twitter, and Instagram, monitoring customer feedback and other social media accounts, and highlighting safe and sanitary preparation of food products during COVID-19 all received high mean scores, with a verbal description of "always practiced." These core strategies reflect a commitment to maintaining a strong online presence, customer engagement, and addressing safety concerns.

Various promos for delivery, specific number and/or amount of orders for bulk orders, using catchphrases or mottos for easy buyer recall, putting contact details and promotional flyers on delivered orders, uploading mouth-watering photos of new menu items, and sponsorship of online events all received mean scores around 4.4. This suggests versatility in promotional approaches, incorporating discounts, branding, visual appeal, and event sponsorship.

Keeping online engagement high, using promotional interactive videos, and blogging/vlogging to promote food products all received mean scores around 4.4. These strategies indicate a focus on creating interactive and engaging content to captivate the online audience, investing visual and interactive elements to enhance promotional efforts.

Inviting social media influencers to promote food products only got a mean score of 3.4, described verbally as 'sometimes practiced'; This means that influencer marketing is not as assertively used as other strategies, which makes it possible to collaborate with influencers only sometimes, which may imply caution in working with influential personalities. The grand mean score came out as 4.30 with the label of 'often practiced' indicating a robust and efficient online promotional strategies inclination in the food retail sector. This implies that there is an average percentage of food retailers participating in different promotional methods to increase their exposure and clients on the Internet.

The fact that mean scores are significantly high for core promotional strategies underlines a firm's commitment to basic online promotion. The variety of the used promotional methods, interactions in the advertisement, and the moderate usage of influencer advertising point to the flexibly applied advertising strategy. Subsequent studies could investigate the extent to which these promotional techniques influence customers' loyalty, brand attitude, and organizational outcomes. Moreover, doing some research on the benefits of each content type, which are, for example, videos, photos, and even interactive stuff could help to determine which of the promotion types is more effective in the digital world. Consequently, the statistical data analysis reveals a highly developed and differentiated method of web advertisement in the framework of the food retail industry. The necessities of focusing on the core strategies, flexibility, interaction, and moderate usage of influencer marketing all together create the simple and rather effective principle of online promotion, as it is seen in the average mean score equals 4.30. Findings from the analysis of the collected data regarding the online marketing strategies involved in promoting the food retail sector offers a helpful insight concerning perceived effectiveness and the frequency at which the various promotional strategies are used. The means of the scores, as well as the classification of the teaching strategies as 'always,' 'often,' or 'sometimes' utilized, demonstrated the level of importance and frequency for each of the strategies.

Table 10: Online Marketing Strategies as to Place of Distribution

Statement	Mean	Description
Updating shop/store location regularly on online pages to avoid confusion in the current location or area of the shop/store	4.5	Always Practiced
Guarantee that products can be very convenient for busy people who do not have time and means to go out during the pandemic	4.5	Always Practiced
Providing complete addresses and maps on websites and other online promotion pages	4.5	Always Practiced
Posting updates on delivery availability and schedule on certain locations through online pages	4.4	Often Practiced
Minimize customer waiting time in places of distribution	4.3	Often Practiced
Making the business websites and social media pages more visible in search engines	4.3	Often Practiced
Offer easy and fastest way of food product delivery through online pages	4.3	Often Practiced
Innovative equipment and facility design of the shop/store based on the safety and health protocol needs such as an open area instead of indoor dining	4.3	Often Practiced
Ensuring to increase delivery capacity based on the location and purchase request of the customer.	4.3	Often Practiced
Featuring the transportation accessibility of the store through online marketing	4.3	Often Practiced
Composite Mean	4.4	Often Practiced

Ensuring that products are extremely convenient for the ‘time-starved audiences amid the’ pandemic, availing complete addresses and maps in websites and updating shop/store location which received high mean scores of 4. 5 with the verbal description of ‘always practiced’, gives a firm promise in ensuring that customers are presented with convenient options and is also supportive of being transparent in the locations of the stores.

Increasing the accessibility of business websites and social media pages in web search tools, providing an opportunity to purchase easy and fast-food products through web pages, reducing customer’s waiting time in places of distribution, highlighting the easy transportation accessibility of physical store, ensuring high delivery capabilities depending on geographical locations, and sharing information on the current delivery options and time received nearly 4 mean scores Of 5. 3-4. 4. These strategies suggest that there is more emphasis on the aspect of visibility in the distribution process, as well as accessibility and efficiency.

New era equipment and facility planning requirements related to safety and health protocols, for instance, open spaces instead of confined halls like dining had a mean score of 4. 3. This reveals concern towards making physical changes to ensure that everyone follows the necessary health and safety measures.

Mean values for the convenience strategy indicate that it has received a consistently high rating throughout the study, followed by a strategy that deals with transparency, visibility, and accessibility of the distribution process which also have comfortable ratings showing that customer-centric has been incorporated in this process. Those features are also known to recognize certain changes and new developments in health and safety issues like that of, open-area designs.

In conclusion, the statistical analysis also confirms and provides a strong customer orientation for utilizing online marketing strategies about the place of distribution within the food retail sector. All summed up, the emphasis put on convenience, transparency, visibility, and use of innovative safety measures in the supply chain indicates the overall and satisfactory mean scores and highly consistent common practices based on the efficient distribution strategy.

This indicates the grand mean score of 4. 37, given an even more detailed verbal label of ‘often practiced,’ the results suggest that there is a significantly high level of compliance and frequency with which different online marketing strategies relevant to the place of distribution among food retailers are employed. Given this general evaluation about their uses, it can be deduced that such tactics feature a great and steady involvement in the business activities of food retailers.

The green highlighted figure shows a grand mean score of 5.965 and the verbal label ‘often practiced’ also suggests that online marketing strategies concerning the place of distribution in the food retail sector is strategically significant for future operations. They all share a common aim of improving the quality of, and ultimately the customer satisfaction and overall competitiveness of food retailers in the digital environment.

C. Problems Encountered by the Selected Food Retailers Applying Online Marketing Strategies

In the evolving environment of the food retailing industry of Tarlac City, the integration of online marketing approaches during COVID-19 has opened up numerous complexities for such businesses in this area. This knowledge becomes crucial as the marketplace continuously evolves within the scope of different selected food retail chains. If and only if the student comprehends the peculiarities of the chosen business sphere, she or he attempts to identify the issues faced by certain food retailers. This brief academic endeavor is designed to look at these issues in more detail, to attempt to understand them more fully and to provide a more targeted perspective on the specific threat posed to online marketing initiatives by the COVID-19 pandemic.

The ongoing health crisis has created new consumer behaviors and a logistical landscape in an increasingly competitive organization’s virtual economy. This question focuses on the area of study by considering the specific challenges that food retailers experience in Tarlac City during the COVID-19 crisis to investigate the intricacies. The subsequent data presentation provides the knowledge base that is beneficial in addressing the rock-bottom understanding of IMC amidst unprecedented times ailing the local food retail industry.

Table 11: Problems Encountered by the Selected Food Retailers in Tarlac City Applying Online Marketing Strategies

Statement	Mean	Description
Lack of opportunity to test the product which drives consumer hesitancy to purchase online	4.2	Slightly Serious Problem
Products easily copied by competitors	3.8	Slightly Serious Problem
Marketing Strategy easily copied by competitors	3.8	Slightly Serious Problem
Unstable internet connection.	3.7	Slightly Serious Problem
Too much competition in online marketing	3.7	Slightly Serious Problem
Lack of human connection with customers	3.6	Slightly Serious Problem
Poor consumer confidence due to the online stigma that other sellers deceive and provide low-quality products	3.54	Slightly Serious Problem
Not properly getting the target consumers	3.5	Slightly Serious Problem

Poor consumer confidence with the use of online payment	3.3	Considered a Problem
Too much reliance on the internet and electricity	3.3	Considered a Problem
Crashing or slow loading of websites and applications	3.3	Considered a Problem
Limited descriptions and photos of the products online	3.1	Considered a Problem
Target consumers do not have internet access	3.1	Considered a Problem
Frequent product updates to keep up with online competition	3.0	Considered a Problem
Customers prefer purchasing in physical stores rather than seeing the products online	2.9	Considered a Problem
Customers prefer face-to-face marketing of products rather than online	2.8	Considered a Problem
Updating online marketing content is time-consuming	2.7	Considered a Problem
Selecting a suitable social media platform for the product	2.7	Considered a Problem
Composite Mean	3.3	Considered a Problem

Table 10 displays the nature of the problems faced by food retailers in the application of online marketing during the COVID-19 pandemic period, and as such is rather useful in supporting the proposed objective of the research. The mean scores assessed from the respondents' responses ranged from 2.7 to 4.2, in addition to the terms describing the category as "A Slightly Serious Problem" and "Considered a Problem" Indicates the increase in the degree of seriousness and importance of each provided challenge.

A prime example of such inconveniences is the "Lack of opportunity to test the product" which makes consumers reluctant to buy online products and it received a mean of 4.2. This means a significant threat, stressing the importance of non-conventional approaches to encourage the consumer test, which cannot be conducted due to product tangibility. Eighty, the challenges of products lacking uniqueness so that competitors can imitate the same easily and the same applies to marketing strategies, where both have a mean score of 3. To write about 8, emphasize the fact that today's markets are saturated and provide an example related to competitiveness as well as the need for people and organizations to differentiate themselves and their products.

Lesser forms of threat considered are "Unstable internet connection" and "Too much competition in online marketing" which scored an average of 3.7. It shows the importance the presence of a good and stable connection on the net and the necessity of differentiation amidst an immense competition. The "Lack of human connection with customers" (mean score: 3.6) points that, while using an online platform, it is crucial to stress on the preservation of a feeling of interpersonal reference to the client whereas 4.

Within the category of the issue considered a problem, meanings which include; "Poor consumer confidence with the use of online payments", "Excessive dependability on the internet as well as electricity", and "Web sites and applications crash or slow to load", that all registered a mean of 3.3, emphasize the need to solve the technical elements of the system and to increase trust in the Internet sales. Further, moderate level difficulties such as 'Product pictures and descriptions on the website are limited' and 'The Target consumers are not connected to the internet' with equal means of 3. It is equally important to also notice the continued relevance of number 1, thus the significance of elaborated and enriched approaches to online marketing.

Notably, challenges with lower mean scores, such as "Customers prefer purchasing in physical stores" (mean score: The items identified as problematic are "Amount of money spent on marketing by customer= 2.9" and "Customers prefer face-to-face marketing of products" where the mean score = 2.80. Such difficulties imply the need for the addition of some function related to personalization and interaction with consumers where outlets for the sale of foods can improve the online grocery shopping.

➤ *Implications of the Study*

The experiences of food retailers in Tarlac City during the COVID-19 pandemic are informative in understanding the transitions affecting the stakeholder segment of the local food retail scenario. The consequences of the pandemic are vast, as these findings reveal, and the new normal in which online marketing is critical is evident.

Among these problems, the primary one is a problem of product testing, which is nearly impossible before the consumer decides to buy something on the Internet. This points to the need to come up with newer ideas on how to create confidence in consumers in products they buy especially since they cannot manufacture products and then sample them. Some solutions might include: Provision of improved depictions of the firm's products through virtual product demonstrations; exhaustive descriptions of products in general; and free use of augmented reality (AR) devices.

The fact that tangible product offerings and even many service offerings, as well as marketing strategies, can easily be imitated by competitors is another reason why it becomes crucial to work towards differentiating products and services, as well as bringing out the marketing strategies. From the new normal perspective, corporate identity as well as leveraging on brand recognition together with patent protection should be the key aspects to retain competitive advantage.

The fundamental issues of lower bandwidth, occasional connectivity issues, reliance on the internet, and electricity underscore how critical reliable infrastructure is in delivering lessons. Therefore, it is expedient for business people to ensure the availability of favorable technology to support online platforms to effectively counter the inconveniences and resulting dissatisfaction.

The absence of human touch and poor consumer confidence in the use of payment gateways suggest a unique and safe terminal consumer interface. The selected company will need to embrace personalized marketing approaches, introduce flexible customer service, and process secure payment options as a way of creating value in the digital market environment.

Product dimensions: Having very little product description is another indication that extensive web content is considerably valuable, as is explicit imagery. Increased use of images, descriptions, and information from consumers on the food product should be employed by the food retailers to make the product stand out.

Finally, the desire for physical retail locations and face-to-face advertising implies that while web-based marketing is vital, adding the component of personalization and interaction can fill the gap between virtual and actual shopping experiences. Multichannel marketing solutions that allow using the benefit of the internet coupled with the personal touch for contactless interactions could be useful in the new normal scenario for customers with varying needs.

Overall, several implications for online marketing strategies in Tarlac City. Retailers that effectively showcase unique product offerings online can create a competitive edge and attract niche markets, as seen with the emphasis on locally sourced ingredients. Dynamic pricing strategies enable retailers to remain competitive and responsive to market changes, which can lead to increased sales and customer retention. However, challenges such as maintaining effective promotional strategies amidst intense competition and ensuring smooth distribution processes need to be addressed. Retailers should continually evaluate and adapt their marketing strategies to keep pace with evolving consumer preferences and technological advancements. For instance, integrating advanced analytics into pricing models and enhancing delivery efficiency could further optimize marketing effectiveness and customer satisfaction.

CHAPTER FOUR

SUMMARY, CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

This chapter contains a summary of the findings, conclusion and recommendation based on the result of the study.

A. Summary of Findings

The following summary of findings has been extracted from the result of the data after a thorough analysis and interpretation.

- Among the retailers' partnerships and sole proprietorships dominate food retail ownership, with partnerships at 47.6% and sole proprietorships at 45.2%. These businesses primarily focus on the coffee sector, with sole proprietorships also expanding into other food categories. Corporations and cooperatives hold smaller ownership shares, focusing on specific niches like milk tea, mushrooms, and pizzas. In terms of asset size, most partnerships and sole proprietorships are smaller businesses with assets of P3,000,000 or below, while corporations have a more concentrated asset distribution. The majority of these businesses, especially partnerships and sole proprietorships, operate with fewer than ten employees.
- The analysis of online marketing strategies by food retailers in Tarlac City during the pandemic found that hygienic preparation and packaging were consistently prioritized, scoring 4.7 as "Always Practiced," while providing a variety of servings was less emphasized, scoring 4.3 as "Often Practiced." Price strategies were generally strong, with maintaining reasonable prices and delivering high-quality products scoring highest at 4.50, while adjusting prices based on market rates scored lowest at 4.0. Promotion and distribution strategies showed a focus on customer feedback and online presence, with the overall grand means for these strategies ranging from 4.25 to 4.37.
- Food retailers faced several challenges in implementing online marketing strategies during the COVID-19 pandemic, with the most significant being the lack of opportunity to test products, scoring 4.2 and indicating a need for innovative approaches to building consumer confidence. Other challenges, such as product copying and replicable marketing strategies (mean score: 3.8), highlight the competitive environment and the importance of differentiation. Issues like poor consumer confidence in online payments and website reliability, which had lower mean scores (around 3.3), suggest areas for improvement, while challenges related to customer preference for physical stores and face-to-face marketing (mean scores below 3.0) offer opportunities to enhance the online experience.

B. Conclusions

➤ *From the result of the study, the following conclusions were drawn:*

- The study reveals a diverse landscape of food retailers in Tarlac City, with partnerships and sole proprietorships dominating, focusing on various categories, while corporations and cooperatives have more specialized offerings, all predominantly operating as smaller businesses with smaller teams.
- The study reveals that among selected food retailers in Tarlac City during the pandemic, hygienic preparation and packaging emerge as the most consistently practiced product strategy, while providing a variety of servings is less prioritized. Price strategies prioritize maintaining reasonable prices and delivering high-quality products, with adjusting prices based on market rates being less common. Promotion monitoring strategies prioritize soliciting customer feedback over involving social media influencers. Place of distribution strategies emphasize regularly updating online shop/store locations while showcasing transportation accessibility trails. Overall, there's a prevalent tendency of "Often Practiced" strategies across all dimensions, offering valuable insights for industry stakeholders to refine their online marketing approaches.
- Food retailers majority adopt innovative strategies to build consumer confidence and differentiate their offerings while addressing challenges like product testing limitations, competitive pressures, and the need to enhance online payment systems and website reliability.

C. Recommendations

➤ *Based on the Findings and Conclusions Made in the Study, the Following Recommendations are Hereby Presented:*

- A detailed study of partnerships, product diversity, financial structures, and market dynamics, along with regulatory and business trends, would provide valuable insights to boost competitiveness, sustainability, and efficiency in the local food retail industry.
- Online retailers may consider the factors influencing hygiene and packaging strategies, address challenges in online service provision, analyze pricing dynamics, explore the impact of social media influencers, and assess the importance of retail modernization to enhance food retailers' online commerce strategies during crises
- Online retailers may develop marketing strategies according to their profile characteristics. Companies with a wide range of products should consider adjusting their pricing and promotional strategies to suit their expansion.
- Food retailers may innovative strategies that build consumer trust without requiring product testing and to create unique products and markets to stand out against competitors.
- Online sellers may invest in improving online platforms and marketing efforts to better engage customers and build brand trust.

- Use customer feedback and testimonials to build credibility and confidence in your products, compensating for the lack of physical testing

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