



## Assessment of the Different Challenges and Success Factors in Setting Up an Online Business of Student-Entrepreneurs: Insights for a Proposed Solution

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### Abstract

Various online businesses arose during the pandemic for people (unemployed, employed, student) needing extra income. However, some businesses didn't thrive during the same time period. This study aimed to have an in-depth understanding of the different challenges and success factors in setting up an online business for student entrepreneurs to be able to present proposed solutions. The researchers used a qualitative method and conducted a focused group discussion (FGD) of 11 selected respondents through purposive sampling. A registered psychometrician administered FGD to ensure data integrity. Thematic analysis was used to analyze the data obtained from the FGD. The mentioned challenges are divided into four (4) categories: social, technological, economic, and legal. Nevertheless, the study revealed that the most mentioned challenges experienced by the selected online business owners are capital constraints, inflation, difficulty using social media sites, and brand name issues. On the other hand, the success factors stated are effective marketing, affordable pricing, sales promotions, and brand loyalty of customers.

**Keywords** *Online Business Challenges and Success Factors; E-Commerce; Online Business; Student-Entrepreneurs*

### INTRODUCTION

Advanced technologies have become superior, and the digital era is the trend. Nowadays, everything and everyone is on the internet. Communicating, watching, listening, and even shopping is now on the internet. With the appearance of the internet, individuals can discuss quickly, which has prompted the development of globalization. With globalization, business associations should find the most recent patterns in publicizing their items. Thus, new advertising procedures have been planned by specialists to augment the capability of the internet to increase the benefit and efficiency of organizations. According to Vasic et al. (2019), the simplicity and speed of internet commerce appeal to today's customers. Eventually, another business technique arose, which is called online business. Online business is the most up-to-date business methodology in the 21st century, as it also became a thing when the usage of social media sites increased. No matter what platform it's distributed on, Schumpeter (2011) describes business performance as the main source of a brand new and unique product by conducting an innovative approach. It is for this reason that many internet entrepreneurs have composed unique business plans and an efficient organizational structure to operate their firms. The ordinary technique for delivering, disseminating, and selling labor and products has colossally changed lately because of the progression of innovation. However, everything has its fair share of struggles and success— and creating an online business is not an exemption.

Some business owners would say that starting their online business became the savior of their lives, yet some would say it's just a waste of their time and effort. We can say that having an online

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business nowadays is a smart move, yet we still can't ignore the challenges of owners in order to start one. Furthermore, Aziz and Maliha (2020) stated that the online business challenges in South Asia are logistics, security concerns, tax compliance, legal issues, technological problems, consumer behavior and personality, trust issues, cultural diversity, and such. But as time goes by, everything and everyone should be able to adapt to the new normal.

The study intends to help existing and future online business owners on how to improve their businesses and what to avoid in order to have a successful business. Hence, the authors presented their proposed solutions.

## **LITERATURE REVIEW**

### **Online Business**

When the COVID-19 pandemic broke out, it expedited the growth of e-commerce in the global markets – as it also strengthened online shopping dimensions that are appropriate for customers. With the ease of access, the customers have to buy the product that they want or the service they want to avail; this also creates trust and loyalty between the business itself and its customers. Mofokeng (2021) stated that customer satisfaction and information quality determine customers' loyalty to web stores.

According to Zaitun & Juliyanto (2022), the spread of COVID-19 was a disaster that shook the economy of almost every country. Malls and other shopping centers were forcibly closed due to restrictions in accordance with the pandemic. As a result, most people lost their jobs and didn't have a source of income because they were stuck in their homes. People were fond of social media sites; thus, business owners and some people opted for online selling to support their daily needs. This new normal was an opportunity for business-minded people to start their businesses. Thus, it also affected the buying behavior of the customers.

### **Challenges in Setting Up an Online Business**

As soon as the breakout of COVID-19, some people went to their hometown, which is mostly in rural areas and provinces. However, there were not enough opportunities in these areas, thus the rise of online business. According to Mei et al. (2022), there were various challenges in starting up an online business in rural areas. One is the inefficient internet connection. Townsend et al. (2013) stated that the root of this is the inadequate broadband infrastructure- therefore, it affects the effectiveness of internet connection. Another problem is the logistic services or delivery, as the speed of it depends on the size, scale, and location of the seller to the buyer. This problem is time-consuming and costly for online businesses in rural areas. Ursu & Dzyabura (2019) acknowledged that today's businesses typically sell products in a variety of categories. Business locations, which affect how simple or challenging it is for customers to access broad varieties, are one crucial variable taken into consideration by such businesses. However, online business is literally a business transaction through the internet. (What is an Online Business: Guide - Definition, n.d.). It is an online transaction or purchase with the use of technology and social media sites. Therefore, people have trust issues in buying online as they are used to having direct contact with the product before purchasing. As online selling may be a good thing in the new normal, trust issues regarding fraud and being scammed arose. Other barriers are security, legal issues, linguistics, and affordability and accessibility.

As businesses are switching online, they are most likely to face e-marketing that is crucial yet beneficial. Online business is always associated with cyber security. As stated before, cyber security is a way of protecting a program, system, data, servers, etc. from digital attacks. Kumar et al. (2022) noted that if not planned or given attention, the business may be a target of cyber-attacks. This may affect not only the business but also the customers and potential customers. The study also stated

that having safe and secure digital marketing will be an advantage as cybersecurity is a significant element for the success of a business.

Big and small businesses faced challenges in different scenarios. Depending on whether you sell product/s or service/s, there will come a point that your business will face different challenges as you continue. Aziz and Maliha (2020) stated that these challenges include logistics, tax issues, legal issues, technological problems, consumer personality and behavior, trust issues, cultural diversity, and such in South Asia. While the problems of e-commerce in the European Union are mostly regarding the different currencies, trust issues, having various payment methods, language barriers, tax issues, different marketing strategies and contents, the high number of competitions, etc.

New digital information technologies create a huge impact on copyright and related rights, as well as on copyright companies such as music, movies, and software in the world. The rise of sharing new information on the internet creates a massive question on how this information must be kept to your name whenever somebody reuses it. The copyrights in the field of access and exchange of content via the Internet and, at the same time, relatively high rate of unauthorized copying, in fact meaning breach of the copyrights. In practice, it means that copyrights, which for the online society are ownership rights for the industrial society, have no serious authority. (Czetwertyński, 2017).

### **Factors Affecting Online Business Success**

Having a great and creative way of marketing your business really helps boost your business. Exploring different strategies by small retail business leaders can really be used to implement online marketing to increase sales. This statement is supported by Lacarcel & Huete (2023), stating that traditional methods of reaching a target audience must change to also include the use of innovative digital marketing strategies and social media platforms environment management. Lockett (2018) noted that small retail business leaders use online marketing to connect with consumers and the community. It is important for business owners to know how they will market their products or services to the people.

Some online businesses target Gen Z and Millennials as they are most fond of social media sites. Ernestivita & Suhendra (2022) stated that Psychological Marketing is the key to attract these consumers. They were able to conduct an interview with two (2) e-commerce owners and four (4) Gen Z and Millennials regarding shopping behavior and effective marketing strategy. The results revealed that the most effective ways are bundling, special promo, and time-limit discounts as Gen Z and Millennials tend not to want to miss opportunities like these. Thus, they stated that the said generations may not have the same way of thinking, but they have the same behavior- shopping. Moreover, business owners are using direct marketing, which is sending promotional messages to specific customers more frequently as a result of recent advancements in consumer connectivity. The majority of current techniques to determine the best budgets for such advertising campaigns take into consideration the consumers in solitude and ignore word-of-mouth marketing. (Zubcsek & Sarvary (2011).

For the fast expansion of online economic operations, electronic commerce is becoming increasingly vital (Chen et al., 2002). The most popular online items are books because of their ability to fit into a variety of different categories, their low unit cost, and the ease with which they may be delivered. As a result, online booksellers are a good place to look for clues about what makes an online company effective. The Analytic Hierarchy Process (AHP) was used to determine the relative weight of each element, and the 14 factors with the greatest weights were chosen as the most important for Internet company success. Filling Place with Entrepreneurs and growing with them, the ability to manage a company's change, customer relationship management, price responsiveness, knowledge management systems, excellent customer service, building a

distribution center for unbeatable logistics, and the ability to manage costs were the 14 most important factors, according to the findings.

When your business has a great e-service quality and gets positive customer satisfaction, it really separates you from others. It not only results in repurchase intention, more page views, or site revisit, but it also builds the trust your customers have towards your business. Rita et al. (2019) stated that owners/managers should carefully consider the attributes of e-service quality to develop their online stores. To provide superior service quality, companies should provide an excellent website design that consists of sufficient information, visually appealing content, easy-to-make payments, easy-to-read text, offer discounts and/or promotions, and quick loading capacity. Beyond that, companies must ensure the timeliness of delivery and ensure the customers' data security and privacy.

## **RESEARCH METHOD**

### **Research Design**

The design of this study is qualitative in approach. It is Historical Research as it was designed to study and understand past events or experiences (Historical Research Methods, n.d.). Thus, it is used to have a better understanding of the experiences of participants when they establish their online businesses. The researchers conducted a focus group discussion (FGD) that served as a primary source of data.

### **Research Instrument**

An interview guide questionnaire was created for the study. Focus group discussion among the selected participants was completed to obtain the data. The focus group discussion was facilitated by a registered psychometrician to ensure the validity of the responses of the respondents and data integrity.

### **Data Gathering Procedures**

The initial survey was conducted online to identify the students who put up online businesses during the pandemic. The study was conducted within the Lyceum of the Philippines University, Manila in Intramuros, Metro Manila, Philippines. An email request was sent to the identified participants and asked them of their willingness to participate in the study. A total of 11 participants gave consent and took part in the conducted FGD. The focus group discussion was done via Zoom due to restrictions of the COVID-19 pandemic. The registered psychometrician was the one who facilitated the FGD. All the participants provided their consent willingly and were very engaged in giving their insights. It was a round table discussion wherein each respondent was given a chance to share their thoughts or ideas based on the question given to them. The data were transcribed accordingly after the focus group discussion and were processed using thematic analysis.

### **Conceptual Framework**

The conceptual framework involved the challenges and the success factors considered by the student entrepreneurs as the subject of the study conducted. After processing the responses using thematic analysis, a proposed solution was created and strengthened the direction of the study.



Figure 1. Conceptual Framework

**Statistical Treatment Data and Analysis**

The study was qualitative in nature; hence, there was no statistical treatment employed. However, the data gathered based on the result of the focus group discussion were encoded and processed using thematic analysis. The thematic analysis aided the study to establish the different challenges and success factors experienced by the student entrepreneurs in the Lyceum of the Philippines – Manila. The study used thematic analysis to assess the verbal responses of the respondents. This type of method helped the researchers to be flexible in analyzing data. (Delve, 2020). Data were summarized, and the coding was divided into four (4): (1) Sub-categories, (2) Categories, (3) Sub-themes (4) Main theme.

**FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION**

**Social Challenges in Setting Up An Online Business**

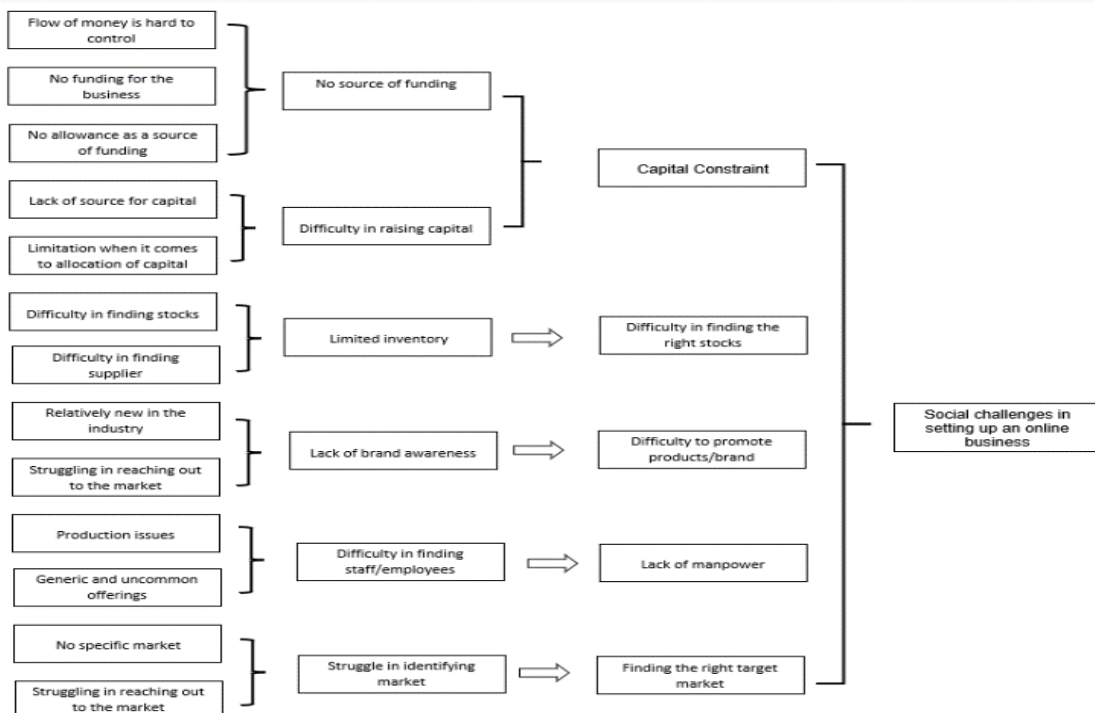


Figure 2. Thematic analysis of the identified challenges in setting up online business

Based on the result of the FGD, there were four main identified challenges by the

respondents in setting up an online business. Capital constraints, supply of the product, promoting the product or the brand, lack of manpower, and finding the right market. The result of the thematic analysis is supported by the study conducted by Tripalupi and Anggahegari (2022), stating that the core issues in setting up a business are poor human resources (HR), limited access to financial resources, constraints in market access, short-term and stagnant business orientation, limited access to technologies, and restricted access to partnerships and collaboration systems.

Capital constraint involves one major factor, which is funding – finding the source of the capital and how to raise it. Habas (2020) stated that money is crucial to get the business up and running. Funding plays a huge role in any business, for it is the primary element in operations. Based on the responses of the respondents, the biggest challenge that they encountered was the source of capital. One respondent mentioned that they don't have enough money to keep up with the demands of the customers.

*"Uh... The biggest problem for the business is funding. Uh, how did it become a problem? Because the demand is too high in our area. And my capital can't keep up, that's why. That's it, funding was the problem." - Respondent A*

Another one mentioned since they are students, they put up the business but had difficulty when it comes to the capital since they don't have an allowance that they can use to fund the business since classes were purely online.

*"Mine would be the funding. When we started, we didn't have much funds because we were just students who didn't have an allowance from the pandemic." - Respondent E*

Another challenge was the supply of the product. Since it was still a pandemic, the flow of goods and raw materials was very limited; thus, replenishing the stocks of the business was very challenging, according to the respondents. There was an increase in the demand, yet the supply was very low, resulting in very few suppliers that catered to the needs of the business. This finding was supported by the article published online by Santacreu, Young, and de Soyres (2022). According to the article, the pandemic gave rise to unprecedented economic conditions due to the different restrictions imposed by the government that hampered mobility, which impacted both supply and demand.

The difficulty of the student entrepreneurs to promote the product of the brand was another challenge that they encountered. Since the business was just set up in the middle of the pandemic, the biggest challenge in promoting the product was in reaching out to their market since they are a relatively new business. Hermiyenti & Wardi (2018) made a good point when they mentioned that promotion is a way companies can compete in marketing and help consumers choose the products they use. If the product used has a good brand image, consumers will be interested in using the product. If consumers are interested in using the promoted product, purchasing decisions are made by consumers. The lack of brand awareness and support from the people around them made it more difficult for their online business to be successful.

*"Uhm, in my case, the main problem we had when we were starting the business was that we had a hard time promoting the product because we were relatively new to the online business. Uh, we had a hard time reaching out to other people to promote our product, that's it." - Respondent H*

Lack of manpower was another challenge experienced by the respondents. Manpower is

essential for a business operation, for it cannot operate properly if it lack in this department. Just like Engetou (2017) stated in his study, insufficient personnel in a business brings about an increase in workload and less supervision. According to the respondents, labor was very intensive considering that they were just relying on their relatives and with them being personally hands-on in managing the online business. One of the respondents mentioned that the business requires intensive labor that requires enough manpower when it comes to production. It resulted in delays in the delivery of the product, specifically when there was high demand.

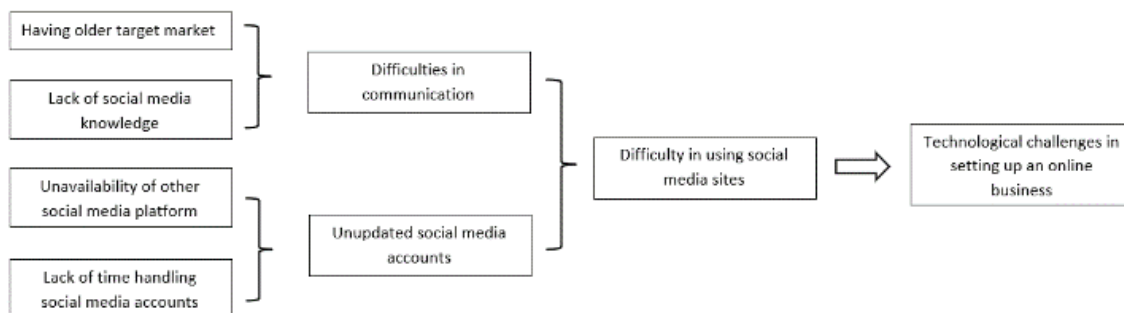
*"Uhm, I have encountered challenges in manpower because our business is very labor intensive. Then, we had a little difficulty in the production of our uh... Product." - Respondent D*

*"Uhm, maybe the problem at that time was because we didn't know that our business would boom during the pandemic, so we needed manpower like packing products and delivering, that's it." - Respondent J*

The last social challenge is finding the right target market. Considering that the business was put up amidst the pandemic, respondent had difficulty in offering their products with no specific market. Knowing who your target market is allows your business to continue to operate, for you need to know what demands you are going to solve. According to an article by PennState Extension (2018), knowing who you will market and sell your product(s) to is vital to developing an effective marketing strategy for your farm business. One of the respondents mentioned that it was a huge challenge for her as the product offering is not something that everyone is using or familiar with; hence, it was really difficult for her to introduce it in the market.

*"For me, it's more on target market since the product is... Very generic and no specific target market to be catered to. And then, besides, my product is not common, like... It still needs to be introduced to the market." - Respondent G*

### Technological challenges in setting up an online business



**Figure 3.** Thematic analysis of the technological challenges in setting up an online business

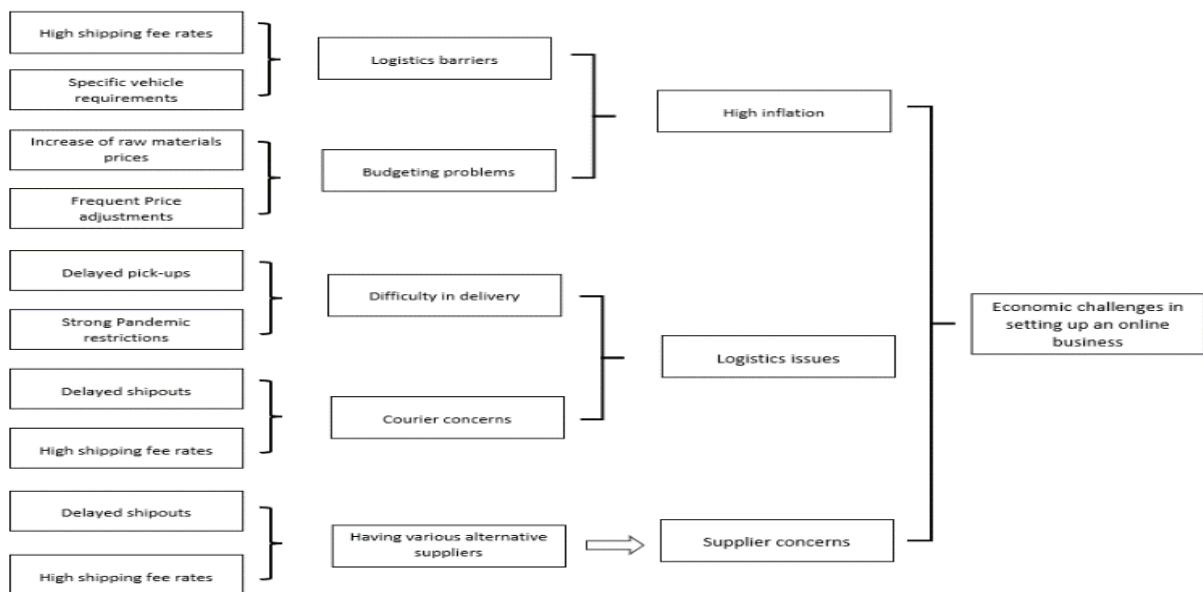
Technological challenges revolved around using social media sites. Since the business was purely online, student entrepreneurs found themselves not equipped with the right knowledge to utilize social media to foster their business. The biggest opportunity was with the customers, specifically if your target customers are not familiar with using social media and they still prefer to see the actual product.

*"Maybe because now that we have face-to-face classes, my business's social media accounts are*

*no longer updated; that is the biggest difficulty right now for my social media accounts." - Respondent C*

**Economic Challenges in Setting Up an Online Business**

Economic challenges include high inflation, logistics, and suppliers' concerns. According to the published article by The World Bank during the interview with David Malpass, President of the Center for Strategic and International Studies Washington, D.C., United States, last Dec 2020, stated that the COVID-19 pandemic disrupted the global economy rapidly, including the daily life of the people around the world. Global inequality and poverty rates have been exacerbated, resulting in economic recession in some countries.



**Figure 4.** Thematic analysis of the economic challenges in setting up an online business

Most of the respondents are complaining about the high shipping fee rates of couriers. One respondent said that some of her customers are pulling out orders because the shipping fee is higher than the price of the actual item. According to Hernandez et al. (n.d.), the shipping fee has a significant impact on customer satisfaction with regard to their online purchases and how sincere their motivations are. Moreover, most of the respondents experienced an increase in raw materials' prices. This inflation affects online businesses as they are forced to increase their prices or budget their expenses to be able to maintain profit margins.

*"So, if there are orders that are far away from my location, the cost of the shipment is even more expensive than the actual product that they bought." - Respondent I*

*"The main problem of our business is inflation because uh... One of the main ingredients of our product is sugar, and its price has been raised too high so... At the same time, we also want to maintain the product's low price, so we had a bit of a hard time on how to balance so that we don't lose money." - Respondent D*

When it comes to the logistic issue, the biggest challenge was the delivery of the product. Restrictions imposed during the pandemic hampered the on-time delivery of the products to the

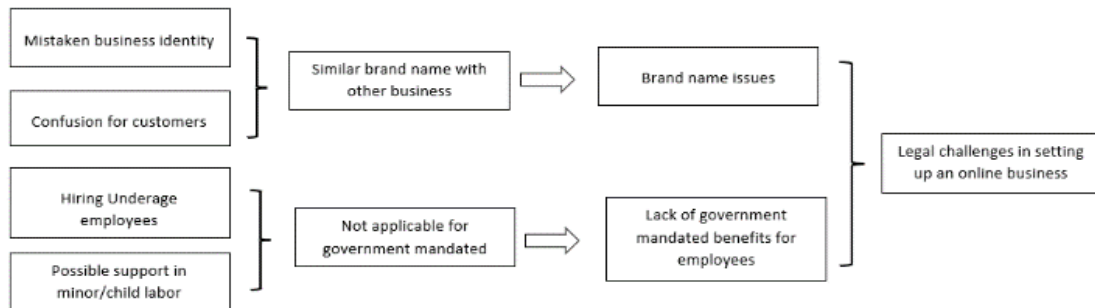


customers. There were also delays when it came to the pick-up of the items from the identified delivery partners. Business owners had difficulty in booking riders using a delivery app.

*"Our main problem is delivery because the number of people who can go out is quite limited, so we had a hard time finding someone to deliver." - Respondent E*

Because of the high inflation, the increase in the cost of the raw materials from the supplier was also one of the biggest concerns; if there's a high inflation rate, there is a possibility of having a supplier concern because it can change the cost, quality, and the time of delivery of the product you buy from the suppliers. One respondent said that she tried looking for alternative suppliers that have lower prices. The same respondent also shared that her main supplier is always out of stock of products, so her solution was to look for other suppliers that have the same offerings with more affordable prices.

**Legal challenges in setting up an online business**



**Figure 5.** Thematic analysis of the legal challenges in setting up an online business

When it comes to legal challenges, there was only one respondent who experienced it. That includes the brand name issue and the lack of government-mandated benefits for the employees. Starting a business requires various permits, licenses, registrations, etc. According to this respondent, she had the same business name as the others as she failed to register and check if there were similar business names because it was set up in the middle of the pandemic. As a result, some of her customers mistaken her business as a franchise.

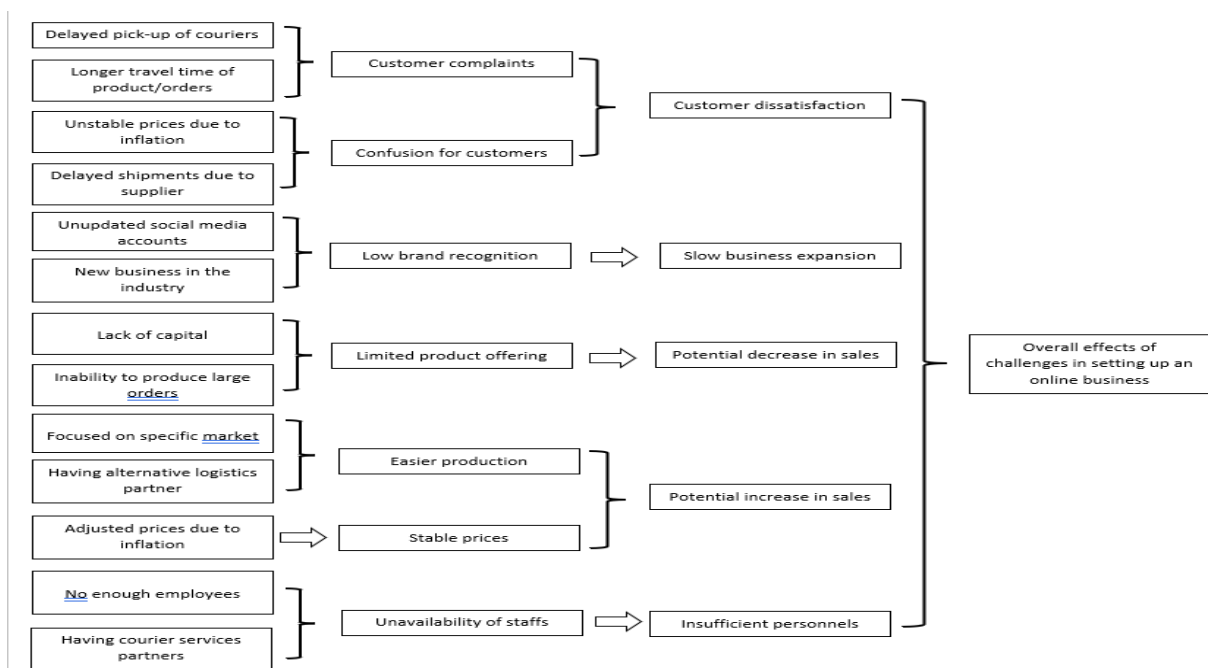
*"Because my brand name has a similar name in the business.. Some customers thought that was a branch, but it's not. It's my own name." - Respondent C*

One respondent had both the online and physical store. For the operation to continue in the physical store, manpower was needed. To save expense, family members were hired to help the business run. In this case, government-mandated benefits are needed for the employees in compliance with the Department of Labor and Employment in the country. Respondent C hired minors, and she was under the impression that it was a family business and wouldn't cause any problems. On the contrary, hiring minors may be illegal, but with a Working Child Permit, it may be possible. (Department of Labor and Employment - News, 2015).

*"It's my nephew who works or looks after our business store. So, they're not... at the right age to get government-mandated benefits like SSS, PhilHealth, and PAGIBIG, so that's it..." - Respondent C*

### Overall Effects of Challenges In Setting Up An Online Business

Overall, the challenges encountered by the respondents impacted the overall online business. That includes customer satisfaction; due to the restrictions of the Covid-19 pandemic, delays in delivery of the products resulted in dissatisfied customers. Thus, customers were furious, and some ended up canceling the orders. A study conducted by Rao, Saleem, Saeed & Ul Haq (2021) stated that there is a difference when it comes to customer satisfaction when customers are shopping between direct and indirect e-stores; customer satisfaction in direct e-stores is higher than in indirect e-stores during the pandemic. Customers' perception showed that indirect e-stores make false promises that eventually lead to dissatisfaction. Quality goods and services in the 20th century are important for customer satisfaction and business security (Rebekah & Sharyn 2004). Below are some of the insights from the respondents during the interview.



**Figure 6.** Thematic analysis of the overall impact of the challenges to the online business

*"Ah... It's because of inflation. Uhm... Now... Still... We changed the price list several times, our old customers are a bit confused and... Surprised because the price has been increased." - Respondent D*

*"Ah, right. As said earlier... Ah... My problem is also logistics and delivery. So, there was a time when there was a delay, or it didn't come to me right away... What happened was that I didn't ship out the customers' orders right away. Which really affected their satisfaction towards my business." - Respondent F*

Slow business expansion due to low brand recognition as some of the target markets are not across social media. Moreover, business owners have limited knowledge of how to utilize the power of online marketing using social media applications, which results in low customer engagement. As per Favela (2021), the lack of brand recognition makes it more challenging for a business to gain the trust of its customers.

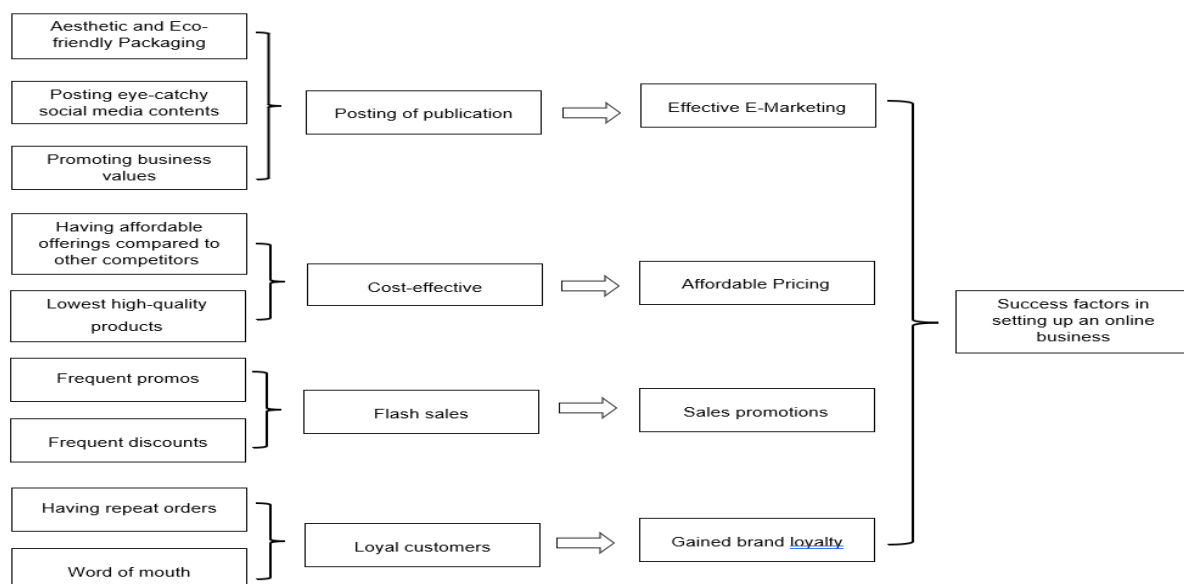
"Since we're new to the online business and our product isn't that well known yet... so, it seems like that's what hindered the growth of our business." - Respondent H

Due to the pandemic, the direct impact will be on the potential sales that led to the decrease instead of increasing sales potential. For this specific factor, their lack of capital affected their production. This resulted in the inability of the student entrepreneurs to increase their income due to capital constraints. Having limited product offerings or being unable to meet the demands of your customers is a lost opportunity for sales increase.

"Ah, our challenge is funding. So, at the start, we couldn't accept large orders because our... Capital couldn't handle it yet." - Respondent E

Since all of the businesses of the respondents were put up in the middle of the pandemic, personnel were one of the biggest impacts. While some utilize their family members to help out with their venture, it poses legal threats. In addition, manpower to support the delivery of the product was also limited, even if they partnered or took advantage of the delivery app.

**Success factors in setting up an online business**



**Figure 7.** Thematic analysis of the success factors in setting up an online business.

The result of the FGD showed four main factors that the respondents considered in making their online business successful. That includes effective e-marketing, pricing, promotions, and brand loyalty.

Most of the respondents stated that having eye-catching social media content helped them have a successful online business. We can align it with a study by Lockett (2018) that says a digital marketing strategy helps a company better identify and address customer needs. Based on the responses, the common digital marketing used is the posting of publication materials such as posters, videos, memes, etc. In connection, a journal by Lovette et al. (2019) suggests that online posts might react to advertisements more quickly and must exceed traditional marketing campaigns for effective marketing.

"For me, uhm. Marketing and packaging since when I started to set up a business, I'm really

*active making pub mats on my pages and also, I think another factor is the values that I promote, which is to be eco-friendly." - Respondent F*

If a product has a good brand image and is in accordance with its benefits and quality, consumers may decide to buy the product at an appropriate price. This allows customers to continue to buy your product not just for an affordable price but also for the quality it has. One (1) respondent said that his prices were much more affordable than his competitors in their area, and as a result, customers opted to buy his product.

*"Ah, I feel that the reason why our business has been successful is... Ah.. Because of.. Pricing and packaging because our pricing is compared to... Uh, our competitors here in the area... We have the lowest price but quality products." - Respondent D*

Using different promotions allows your business and your products to reach customers, which can result in higher profits, according to Runge et. Al (2022), promotional sales might result in profitable conversion temporarily, but they may also be harmful in the long term if consumers mistakenly associate purchases with instances when low prices are offered or perceive them as indicators of poor product quality. The purpose of promotion is to reach the targeted consumers and persuade them to buy. Most of the respondents shared that they offer sales promotions such as buy 1 take 1, holiday discounts, coupons, etc. This greatly affects their business, for customers were encouraged to purchase from them.

*"And the promo, I'm more on bundle and discounted price plus one item when you have these items. And my shipping that time is when the customer is only around Tondo, Manila, I offer free shipping." - Respondent K*

Earning your customers' trust and loyalty is essential for every business, for these can allow your business to grow even more. Ishak and Hasmini (2017) stated that brand loyalty is a consumer's preference to buy a particular brand in a product category. It occurs when consumers perceive that the brand offers the right product features, images, or level of quality at the right price. This perception may translate into repeat purchases, resulting in loyalty. Five (5) of the respondents shared that word-of-mouth helped their business to acquire new customers. Thus, these customers are also the ones who tend to have repeat orders for their businesses.

*"What has helped our business is our loyal buyers or customers who order from us again and again." - Respondent H*

**Proposed solutions for the above-mentioned challenges**

Based on the result of the FGD with the respondents, challenges were identified, and below are the proposed solutions. The table below was created as a guide to the students who are aiming to put up their own business in the future.

**Table 1.** Proposed solution to the identified problems

Challenges		Proposed Solution(s)
Social	Capital constraint	Borrow from relatives
		Save allowance

		Bank financing
		Government loan programs
		Post contents or publication materials
	Difficulty to promote products/brands	Have aesthetically pleasing packaging
	Lack of manpower	Ask help from relatives
		Hire people, if necessary
<b>Technological</b>	Difficulty in using social media sites	Have appropriate social media sites according to your market.
		Consistently update your social media accounts.
<b>Economic</b>	Inflation	Implement price adjustments accordingly
	Logistics issues	Find a suitable logistics partner to guarantee on-time delivery of products
		Consider having in-house delivery, if needed
<b>Legal</b>	Supplier concerns	Find a suitable supplier for your business so that you can produce high-quality products
	Brand name issues	Comply with business regulations and guidelines to avoid conflicts with your business operations.
		Avoid hiring minors

Source: Authors' analysis based on mentioned challenges

These are some of the proposed solutions or recommendations of the authors to the existing and future online business owners. Such solutions may help the readers of the study to avoid the mentioned challenges.

## CONCLUSIONS

Owning a business is challenging– may it be online or physical store. It is a demanding job that requires a lot of patience, diligence, and sacrifice. Therefore, it is more challenging for student-entrepreneurs. As stated by the President and CEO of RFM Corporation, quoted in an article by Allison (2016), encouraging entrepreneurship and providing Filipinos with the necessary information and resources to launch their own businesses is a feasible solution to today's issues. Similar to Domingo's (2022) study, this paper also found that the common challenges of student entrepreneurs are lack of manpower, capital constraints, and finding suitable suppliers. Business owners need a lot of sacrifices, not only financially but also physically, socially, and emotionally. Starting a business is not just about money because, for a business to last, the owner must be appreciative and passionate about what he/she is doing.

On the positive side, businesses open various opportunities for owners. Opportunities create connections and boost growth for owners, especially for student entrepreneurs, for they are capable

of adapting to changes in the business environment. They get to meet new people and gain insights and experiences that they can apply as they continue their businesses. Thus, they have developed positive working connections with their customers and with multiple people and groups for potential future transactions or collaborations. This may lead to having confidence in themselves as they strive through the difficulties and be able to be responsible and make decisions by themselves. (Domingo, 2022). Proper handling of a business gives owners profit in the long run.

In general, having a business requires you not just to sell but to plan, to market; to finance; to lead; and to solve problems. Time management is also one of the key things to have when it comes to setting up and managing a business. It's how you exert time and effort in producing and delivering your product to your customers. Thorough planning of a business will lead to bigger growth– profit-wise or expansion-wise.

This paper supports business owners to have more profitable and effective businesses. According to Aljohani (2015), entrepreneurship promotes economic development and innovation, maximizing opportunities and empowering human initiative at the same time. With that being said, the authors encourage the government or NGOs to have more accessible seminars, programs, or projects that can be of help to existing and future online business owners. Thus, universities also may include deepened programs or curricula in terms of entrepreneurship or business courses.

### **LIMITATION & FURTHER RESEARCH**

Referencing this study may help readers and future researchers comprehend the paper better. However, the study was conducted only in a one (1) university in the Philippines, Lyceum of the Philippines University- Manila. Thus, the researchers focused on student-entrepreneurs who have food products such as pastry, rice meals, milk tea, etc. In relation, the participants of the study are all sole proprietors, which has a big impact on the results because every type of business experience may differ from one another. Moreover, the focused group discussion was conducted virtually; hence, there was a lack of observation and connection of authors with participants.

To improve results, the authors recommend having more options when selecting respondents- future researchers may consider other universities, specific business locations, other generations, other type of businesses, and industries that were not covered by the study. They should also additionally consider other factors and not just limited to social, economic, technological, and legal challenges. Since the authors conducted qualitative research, they suggest to readers or future researchers that conducting quantitative research related to the topic would propose a deeper assessment.

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