

POST-COVID STRATEGIES OF MICRO ENTERPRISES: A BASIS FOR STRATEGIC ENHANCEMENT

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Abstract

Micro-enterprises in the Philippines have been severely impacted by the COVID-19 outbreak, which has severely disrupted their operations and revenue sources. Microbusinesses have thus had to adjust to the changing circumstances of the post-COVID world by putting new marketing strategies into place along the 7Ps: people, process, product, pricing, location, promotion, and tangible evidence. To be competitive in the post-COVID environment, microenterprises need to use these methods. This study aimed to determine the post-covid strategies of micro-enterprises in Lal-lo, Cagayan for the Year 2022 as a basis for strategic enhancement. A descriptive-correlational research approach was used utilizing a questionnaire as the research instrument in gathering the data needed from the micro-enterprises. The data gathered were treated using frequency, percentage, weighted mean through a Likert scale and Pearson r. Based on the findings of the study, it can be concluded that in response to the challenges posed by the pandemic, participants have actively embraced post-Covid strategies, with a strong consensus on implementing people mix, product mix, price mix, promotion mix, and physical evidence, while participants generally agree on the adoption of place mix and process mix. A similar study may be conducted to explore regional variations in the adoption and success of post-Covid strategies among micro-enterprises.

Keywords: Micro-Enterprise, Post-Covid, Product, Place, Price, Promotion, Process, Physical Evidence.

INTRODUCTION

The COVID-19 pandemic has had a profound impact on micro-enterprises in the Philippines, causing significant disruptions to their operations and revenue streams. In response, micro-enterprises have had to adapt to the new realities of the post-COVID world by implementing new strategies along the 7Ps of marketing: product, price, place, promotion, people, process, and physical evidence. These strategies are essential for micro-enterprises to remain competitive in the post-COVID landscape.

The exploration of post-Covid business continuity within micro- enterprises in dealing with crisis has not been fully explored. There have been many previous studies on the effects of coronavirus outbreaks such as MERS, SARS and Ebola on business continuity; however, the study has focused on large-scale businesses in developed areas (Fabeil et al., 2020).

Micro-enterprises undoubtedly play a significant part in the overall growth of any given economy. Microbusinesses, which make up a significant fraction of the business sector, contribute to lowering unemployment and poverty rates in a particular nation. Even though there is still a global crisis and dilemma surrounding the desire to increase the number of microenterprises, some researchers have noted that this goal can be achieved by making one's

business venture more approachable for the world of finance, making microfinancing to be equally important in the drive of owners to grow (Angeles et al., 2020). Evidently, in this 21st economic era, the existence of microenterprises worldwide still contributes significant parcel and role in feeding the nation-builders and small entrepreneurs. The eventual realization and actualization of one's business venture innates from being micro and as starter that normally uses relatively minute amount of capital. As the business grow, demands for increasing the capital arises and ultimately flourish small and microenterprises into recognizable economic pillars and internationally acclaimed companies and corporations (Manipol, 2022).

In the Philippines, the government's smallest political administrative subdivision is the barangay. In addition to the municipal and provincial (Porio & Roque-Sarmiento, 2019). The barrio is regarded as the primary building block of Philippine national government and these barangays are the home of thousands of small and thriving micro-enterprises like community-based stores primitively termed as Barangay Microbusiness Enterprises (Manipol, 2023).

During the MERS outbreak, the number of micro, small, and medium-sized enterprises (MSMEs) fell by 0.4% in the Philippines, with employment dropping by 3.3%. The numbers increased by 0.6% and 2.5%, respectively, after the outbreak settled down (Shinozaki & Rao, 2020). MSMEs are the backbone of the national economy but remain vulnerable to external shocks, such as financial crises, disasters, and forced changes in the business environment—like the COVID-19 pandemic response. In the Philippines, MSMEs drive the national economy.

They accounted for 99.5% of all enterprises and employed 63.2% of the labor force as of the end of 2019 (ADB, 2020). Their ability to access finance faces constraints even during non-crisis periods. The share of MSME loans in the total outstanding bank loans was 6.1% in 2019. Bank loans to MSMEs accounted for only 3.2% of the GDP during the same period. This suggests that a very small number of MSMEs have access to bank credit. A prolonged pandemic will make it more difficult for MSMEs to raise funds from formal financial institutions and to survive the crisis and its aftermath, which could contribute to more potential losses to the Philippine economy and risk the projected economic rebound in 2021.

The effects of the outbreak of coronavirus disease (COVID-19) are remarkable and felt worldwide. The current outbreak has had severe economic consequences across the globe, and it does not look like any country will be unaffected (Donthu&Gustafsson, 2020). Economic and social disruption, in addition to the threat to public health, threatens the long-term livelihoods and wellbeing of millions.

The pandemic, including global supply chains, is having a major impact on labor markets, economies, and businesses, leading to widespread business disruptions. One of the mentioned business disruptions in the supply chain. Supply chain management (SCM) is the active management of supply chain activities to maximize customer value and achieve a sustainable competitive advantage (Hanfield, 2020). It requires the aggressive reorganization of the supply-side operations of a company to optimize consumer satisfaction and achieve a strategic market

advantage. Supply Chain Management reflects an initiative by manufacturers to build and incorporate as efficient and economical supply chains as possible (De Jesus et.al., 2021)

Small and medium enterprises (SMEs) in the Philippines, including micro-enterprises, experienced a significant decline in sales and revenue due to the pandemic. It is also noted that many SMEs lacked the financial resources and digital infrastructure to adapt to the changing business environment (Aldaba & Yap, 2020). As a result, many SMEs, particularly those in the informal sector, were forced to close down or reduce their operations. Another study by de Guzman and Sy (2020) examined the impact of COVID-19 on micro, small, and medium enterprises (MSMEs) in the Philippines.

The study found that MSMEs faced significant challenges in accessing financial support, particularly from government programs. The study also noted that many MSMEs lacked the digital infrastructure and skills necessary to adapt to the changing business environment and take advantage of online opportunities. Furthermore, MSMEs in the Philippines faced significant supply chain disruptions and difficulties accessing finance and digital infrastructure and that MSMEs in the Philippines were less likely to adopt digital technologies compared to their counterparts in other Southeast Asian countries (World Bank, 2021).

The study also noted the importance of effective pricing strategies and promotions to attract customers in the highly competitive post-pandemic market. Moreover, Chintagunta and Murthi (2021) highlighted the critical role of people and processes in the post-pandemic marketing strategies of micro-enterprises. The study emphasized the need for micro-enterprises to prioritize customer satisfaction by offering personalized services and efficient processes to meet their needs.

Also, a study by Castelo and Durana (2021) explored the impact of place and physical evidence in the marketing strategies of micro-enterprises during the pandemic. The study found that micro-enterprises that adopted a multi-channel distribution strategy, including both online and offline channels, were more resilient to supply chain disruptions and changes in consumer behavior. The study also emphasized the importance of maintaining a strong physical presence and enhancing the overall customer experience, even in online channels.

The studies by Mohammad and Zahira (2023), Muelle et al. (2022), Bastasa et al. (2022), and Fabeil et al. (2020) collectively explore various aspects of business strategies in the context of crises and changing market dynamics. Both Mohammad and Zahira's examination of Starbucks and Fabeil et al.'s investigation into micro-enterprises emphasize the significant impact of crises, particularly the COVID-19 pandemic, on businesses.

They underscore the importance of digital tools and platforms, with Starbucks leveraging the 7Ps marketing mix framework and milk tea shops embracing online platforms and social media to adapt to the challenges posed by the pandemic. Customer satisfaction emerges as a common theme, with Mohammad and Zahira highlighting the role of the "People" component in the 7Ps framework and Bastasa et al. emphasizing the contribution of employees to building lasting customer relationships. However, the studies differ in terms of business size, industry focus, research methodology, temporal perspective, and geographic scope.

By integrating insights from these diverse studies, a comprehensive understanding of adaptable business strategies during crises emerges. This study not only reveals what works well in specific industries but also gives general principles that can be useful in many different areas. As businesses deal with uncertainties, these findings serve a valuable guide to create strong strategies that consider both inside and outside factors. This way, businesses can aim for long-term success in a changing business world.

Hence, the researchers conducted this study to determine the post-covid strategies of micro-enterprises in Lal-lo, Cagayan and aim to provide a basis for strategic enhancement among micro-enterprises.

Statement of the Problem

This study aimed to determine the post-covid strategies of micro-enterprises in Lal-lo, Cagayan for the Year 2022 as a basis for strategic enhancement. Specifically, it sought to answer the following questions:

1. What are the demographic factors of the participants in terms of:
 - 1.1 Age
 - 1.2 Gender
 - 1.3 Educational Background
2. What is the profile of the business in terms of:
 - 2.1 Length of operation
 - 2.2 Number of employees
 - 2.3 Capitalization
 - 2.4 Form of business
3. What are the post-Covid strategies of the micro-enterprises relative to:
 - 3.1 Product
 - 3.2 Price
 - 3.3 Place
 - 3.4 Promotion
 - 3.6 People
 - 3.6 Process
 - 3.7 Physical (evidence)
4. Is there a significant relationship between the post-Covid strategies of the micro-enterprises and their profile variables?
5. What are the problems and challenges encountered by the micro-enterprise owners?

Hypothesis

This study is grounded on the lone hypothesis:

1. There is no significant relationship between the post-covid strategies of the micro-enterprises and their profile variables.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

In determining the relationship between the post-covid strategies employed by microenterprises in Lal-lo Cagayan, and their business profiles, the researchers used a descriptive-correlational research approach. Descriptive design was used to provide insights on the demographic factors of the participants, business profile, and their post-covid strategies.

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The researchers utilized a questionnaire as their research instrument. The questionnaire was composed of four parts. Part 1 was about the profile of the participants, which include age, gender and educational background. Part 2 was about the profile of the business, which included length of operation, number of employees, capitalization, and form of business.

Part 3 was about the post-Covid strategies relative to 7p's that were used by the micro-enterprises. This part was modified from the questionnaire from the study of Akroush (2011) entitled, "The 7Ps classification of the service marketing mix revisited: an empirical assessment of their generalizability, applicability, and effect on performance evidence from Jordan's service organizations".

This section was answered on a 3-point Likert scale. Lastly, part 4 of the tool was an open-ended question on the problems and challenges encountered by microenterprise owners.

The data gathered was analyzed using descriptive and inferential statistics.

For the demographic factors of the participants, business profile, and business and problems encountered by micro-enterprises, frequency and percentage were used.

For the post-covid strategies used by the micro-enterprises relative to the product, price, place, promotion, people, process, and physical evidence, weighted mean was used using the following legend for interpretation:

Likert-Scale	Mean Range	Verbal Interpretation
3	2.34-3.00	Strongly Agree
2	1.67-2.33	Agree
1	1.00-1.66	Disagree

For determining if there was a significant relationship between the post-covid strategies of the micro-enterprises and their business profile variables, Pearson-R was used.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

Table 1a: Frequency and Percentage Distribution of the Profile of the Participants in terms of Age

Age of the Participants	Frequency (f)	Percentage (%)
30 years old and below	2	4
31-40 years old	9	18
41-50 years old	12	24
51 years old and above	27	54
Total	50	100

The table above shows that, there are 54 percent of the participants whose ages are in the range of 51 years old and above while the ages 41 to 50 years old and 31-40 years old are 12 or 24 percent and 9 or 18 percent respectively. This implies that a majority of the participants are older, with a smaller proportion in the younger and middle-aged brackets.

Table 1b: Frequency and Percentage Distribution of the Profile of the Participants in terms of Gender

Age of the Participants	Frequency (f)	Percentage (%)
Female	27	54
Male	23	46
Total	50	100

The table above shows that, there are more female participants than the male participants with 27 or 54 percent and 23 or 46 percent respectively. This implies that majority of the participants were female.

Table 1c: Frequency and Percentage Distribution of the Profile of the Participants in terms of Educational Background

Educational Background of the Participants	Frequency (f)	Percentage (%)
Elementary Level	0	0
Elementary Graduate	0	0
High School level	0	0
High School Graduate	3	6
College Level	21	42
College Graduate	26	52
Total	50	100

The table above shows that, majority of the participants with 26 frequencies are college graduate and 21 participants are some college also 3 participants are high school graduate. This Implies that majority of the participants have achieved a college education.

Table 2a: Frequency and Percentage Distribution of the Profile of the Business in terms of Length of Operation

Length of Operation	Frequency (f)	Percentage (%)
less than 2 years	2	4
2-4 years	6	12
More than 5 years	42	84
Total	50	100.00

The table shows the frequency and percentage distribution of the profile of the business in terms of length of operation, where majority or 84% of the businesses are operating for more than 5 years. This implied that the business participants are already established and are operating well as manifested in their consistent and stable years of existence in the industry.

Table 2b: Frequency and Percentage Distribution of the Profile of the Business in terms of Number of Employees

Number of Employees	Frequency (f)	Percentage (%)
1-3 employees	35	70
4-6 employees	13	26
more than 7 employees	2	4
Total	50	100.00

Table 2b showed the frequency and percentage distribution of the profile of the business in terms of number of employees. It can be gleaned that majority of the business have 1-3 employees. This implied that there are only few employees that the businesses have in maintaining their operations. Since they are micro-enterprises, their number of employees are only few.

Table 2c: Frequency and Percentage Distribution of the Profile of the Business in terms of Capitalization

Capitalization	Frequency (f)	Percentage (%)
Less than ₱10,000	0	0
₱10,001-₱20,000	0	0
₱20,001-₱30,000	0	0
More than ₱30,000	50	100
Total	50	100.00

It can be gleaned from table 2c the frequency and percentage distribution of the profile of the business in terms of capitalization where 100% of the business are capitalized with more than ₱30,000. This implied that the micro-enterprise had low but enough capitalization when starting the business.

Table 2d: Frequency and Percentage Distribution of the Profile of the Business in terms of Form of Business

Form of Business	Frequency (f)	Percentage (%)
Sole Proprietorship	45	90
Partnership	5	10
Corporation	0	0
Total	50	100.00

The table shows the frequency and percentage distribution of the profile of the business in terms of form of business, where majority or 90% of the businesses are formed as sole proprietorship while the rest are formed as partnership. This implied that most business-participants are owned by only one owner and few are owned by more than 2 owners. Since the business is a micro-enterprise, its structure is only simple and it is very easy to establish.

Table 3a: Post-Covid Strategies of the Micro-Enterprises Relative to Product

Statements	Mean	Qualitative Description
Product		
1. Our business builds brand reputation by providing a distinctive service/product quality.	2.88	Strongly Agree
2. Our business employees play a crucial role in building our brand reputation.	2.86	Strongly Agree
3. Our business introduces new services/products as a strategic tool for growth and continuation.	2.88	Strongly Agree
4. Our business has a well-established strategy for developing new services/products.	2.76	Strongly Agree
5. Our business uses customer service as a strategic element in service/product offering strategy.	2.84	Strongly Agree
6. Our business leverages customer services staff abilities, knowledge and quality to deliver customer services effectively.	2.86	Strongly Agree
Category Mean	2.85	Strongly Agree

Table 3a shows the post-COVID strategies of the microenterprises relative to product (service). It can be gleaned that, on average, participants “*strongly agree*” (category mean of 2.85) that they are implementing the strategies listed above under product mix. Moreover, the participants “strongly agree” that their business builds brand reputation by providing a distinctive service or product quality (mean 2.88). This implies that they underscore the significance of offering unique and high-quality products and services they offer to establish a distinct brand. Also, participants strongly agree that their business introduces new services and products as a strategic tool for growth and continuation (mean 2.88). This aspect reflects how microenterprises proactive stance in product and service innovation, showcasing growth and adaptability in the market. Moreover, the participants “strongly agree” that their business leverages customer service staff abilities, knowledge, and quality to deliver customer service effectively, and their business employees play a crucial role in building their brand reputation (mean 2.86). This highlights the paramount role of skilled personnel in the provision of quality service, emphasizing how the proficiency and expertise of the service team contribute significantly to customer satisfaction and loyalty.

The study by Jones & Lockwood (2022) aligns with the findings. They looked into how businesses can quickly adapt to what customers need and the changes in the market. They focused on being flexible in developing products, which is similar to our observations. Microenterprises, like the ones in our study, are showing a commitment to being innovative and adaptable, especially in dealing with the challenges brought by the COVID-19 pandemic.

Table 3b: Post-Covid Strategies of the Micro-Enterprises Relative to Price

Statements	Mean	Qualitative Description
Price		
1. Pricing our services/products based on a predetermined rate of return.	2.44	Strongly Agree
2. Pricing our services/products based on what customers are willing to pay.	2.92	Strongly Agree
3. Pricing our services/products based on the prices in the marketplace.	2.94	Strongly Agree
4. We have different price levels according to the market segments which we serve.	2.90	Strongly Agree
5. Selling two services/products in one service/product package for a special price.	2.70	Strongly Agree
Category Mean	2.78	Strongly Agree

It can be gleaned from the table above the post-covid strategies of the micro-enterprises relative to price, where participants, on average, “strongly agree” (category mean of 2.78) that they are implementing the strategies under the price mix. Moreover, the participants “strongly agree” that the pricing of their services and products is based on the prices in the marketplace (mean of 2.94) and on what customers are willing to pay (mean of 2.92). This implies that the strategic pricing decisions made by microenterprises indicate a responsiveness to market dynamics and customer preferences, which demonstrates an awareness of industry standards and competitive positioning. Furthermore, they ensure that prices are aligned with perceived value and customer affordability. Additionally, participants “strongly agree” that they have different price levels according to the market segments that they serve (mean 2.90). This highlights that microenterprises tailor their pricing models to cater to diverse market segments with varying needs and purchasing behaviors. The study's findings align with what Smith and Bolton (2022) found out about how pricing works in people's minds. Smith and Bolton studied how our thoughts about prices are influenced by things like how options are presented. So, when microenterprises strongly agree on their pricing strategies, it indicates that they understand how people think about prices and value.

Table 3c: Post-Covid Strategies of the Micro-Enterprises Relative to Place

Statements	Mean	Qualitative Description
Place/Distribution		
1. Uses direct sales force to sell our services/products.	2.86	Strongly Agree
2. Uses branches to distribute our services/products.	1.24	Disagree
3. Uses Intermediaries such as brokers and agents.	1.52	Disagree
4. Electronic distribution channels such as the Internet to deliver our services/products.	2.48	Strongly Agree
5. Using multi-distribution channels to deliver our services/products to different customer groups.	2.44	Strongly Agree
6. Understanding the service/product delivery activities required in each distribution channel we choose to deliver services/product properly.	2.96	Strongly Agree
7. Practicing market segmentation in order to assign the appropriate distribution channel to each market segment.	2.16	Strongly Agree
Category Mean	2.24	Agree

The table above shows the post-COVID strategies of the microenterprises relative to place and distribution. It can be seen from the table that generally, the participants “agree” (category mean of 2.24) that they are implementing the place or distribution mix as post-covid strategies. Additionally, the participants strongly agree that they understand the service and product delivery activities required in each distribution channel they choose to deliver services and products properly (mean of 2.96). This demonstrates a strategic understanding of distribution channel dynamics and the importance of aligning delivery activities with chosen channels for effective service and product dissemination. Participants also strongly agree that they use direct sales force to sell their services and products (mean of 2.86). This highlights significance of personal interaction and relationship-building in service and product delivery to their customers. However, contrasting with these findings, it's noticeable that the participants “disagree” that they use branches to distribute our services and products (mean of 1.24) and also that they “disagree” that they use intermediaries such as brokers and agents (mean of 1.52). These results indicate a divergence from utilizing branch-based or intermediary-based distribution methods.

The findings align with what Cho and Hsieh (2021) emphasize. These researchers highlight how it's crucial for businesses to align their efforts across different channels, making sure everything works together smoothly (Cho & Hsieh, 2021). The fact that microenterprises agree on understanding their chosen distribution channels shows a strategic approach. It means they are carefully aligning their delivery activities with the unique characteristics of each channel. This strategic move helps them optimize their reach and impact on customers

Table 3d: Post-Covid Strategies of the Micro-enterprises relative to Promotion

Statements	Mean	Qualitative Description
Promotion		
1. Advertising media such as television, newspapers, magazines.	2.4	Strongly Agree
2. Our personnel selling staff and customer personal contact points	2.56	Strongly Agree
3. Publicity and public relations to enhance our image.	2.88	Strongly Agree
4. Sales promotions such as gifts, discounts, competitions.	2.34	Strongly Agree
5. Direct marketing methods such as telemarketing, direct mail, the internet.	2.44	Strongly Agree
6. Our marketing communications tools focus on sending a unified message.	2.42	Strongly Agree
Category Mean	2.51	Strongly Agree

Table 3d shows the post-Covid strategies of the microenterprises relative to promotion. It can be seen from the table that generally, the participants “strongly agree” (category mean of 2.51) that they are implementing the promotion mix as post-Covid strategies. Furthermore, the participants “strongly agree” that publicity and public relations enhance their image (mean of 2.88) and that their personnel selling staff and customer personal contact points are implemented in the business (mean of 2.56). It showcases how micro-enterprises are leveraging various promotional tools and personal interactions to enhance brand image, build relationships, and drive engagement with their target audience.

This finding fit well with what Lee and Johnson (2022) found in their study. They looked into using brain science, called neuromarketing, to make promotional strategies more effective.

They focused on how understanding how the brain works in consumer decision-making can help create more powerful advertising (Lee & Johnson, 2022). So, when microenterprises strongly agree that publicity and public relations are essential, it shows they grasp the psychological factors influencing how customers see things and how it adds to making their brand look better.

Table 3e: Post-Covid Strategies of the Micro-enterprises relative to People

Statements	Mean	Qualitative Description
People		
1. Regularly collect information about customers' needs and requirements.	2.9	Strongly Agree
2. Activities of various departments are coordinated to ensure customer satisfaction.	2.78	Strongly Agree
3. Marketing chief executive participates in top management decisions.	2.58	Strongly Agree
4. Our business is more customer focused than our competitors.	2.96	Strongly Agree
5. Business objectives are driven primarily by customer satisfaction	2.98	Strongly Agree
6. Measures customer satisfaction systematically and frequently.	2.54	Strongly Agree
7. Is always looking at ways to create customer value in our services/products.	2.96	Strongly Agree
Category Mean	2.81	Strongly Agree

The table above shows the post-COVID strategies of the microenterprises relative to people. It can be noted from the table that, on average, the participants “*strongly agree*” (category mean of 2.81) that they are implementing the people mix as post-Covid strategies. It can be gleaned that participants “*strongly agree*” that their business objectives are driven primarily by customer satisfaction (mean 2.98), underscoring the paramount importance of their customer-centricity in shaping the overall business strategy.

Also, participants “strongly agree” that they are always looking at ways to create customer value in our services and products (2.96). This signifies a proactive approach to constantly improving and tailoring their offerings to meet and exceed customer expectation and they strongly agree that their business being more customer-focused than competitors (mean 2.96). This means that they emphasize the significance of placing customers at the core of business operations and strategies.

The findings from Table 3e resonate with the main ideas presented by Johnson and Smith (2023). They focused on how putting customers at the center of business operations is crucial for achieving success. According to Johnson and Smith, when a business prioritizes making customers happy, it not only strengthens customer loyalty but also ensures long-term success (Johnson & Smith, 2023). In simpler terms, the study's results support the idea that focusing on customer satisfaction is a key factor for businesses to thrive.

Table 3f: Post-Covid Strategies of the Micro-enterprises relative to Process

Statements	Mean	Qualitative Description
Process		
1. Using information technology in processing our work such as computerizing work processes.	2.36	Strongly Agree
2. Well qualified and trained people to interact with customers during service/product delivery process.	2.38	Strongly Agree
3. Customer satisfaction in the design of the service/product delivery process activities.	2.94	Strongly Agree
4. Preparing a “flowchart” or “diagram” which describes the steps and activities required to deliver our services/products to customers.	1.42	Disagree
5. Using standard procedures in our company and its branches for delivering services/products to customers.	1.03	Disagree
Category Mean	2.08	Agree

The table above shows the post- Covid strategies of the micro-enterprises relative to process. It can be noted from the table that generally, the participants “agree” (category mean of 2.08) that they are implementing the process mix as post-Covid strategies. Additionally, the participants “strongly agree” that they ensure customer satisfaction in the design of the service/product delivery process activities (mean 2.94). This means their commitment to aligning operational processes with customer satisfaction goals and underscores the significance of integrating customer-centricity into the core of their operational processes. Similarly, on the exploration of Patel and Nguyen (2023) talk about how companies make their services better by being organized and efficient. They point out that having clear ways of doing things is crucial — it helps get services to customers faster, reduces the time customers have to wait, and makes fewer mistakes. In simpler terms, they highlight that when businesses have smooth and effective ways of working, it not only makes customers happier but also saves time and makes fewer mistakes. This connects with what the participants strongly agree on (with a mean of 2.94) — that they are making sure their processes for delivering services and products focus on keeping customers satisfied. So, these businesses are changing how they work to make sure customers are happy with what they provide.

Table 3g: Post-Covid Strategies of the Micro-enterprises relative to Physical Evidence

Statements	Mean	Qualitative Description
Physical Evidence		
1. Customer satisfaction as our prime objective in designing our working atmosphere.	2.9	Strongly Agree
2. Comfortable physical environment, furnishing, colors for creating friendly atmosphere.	2.74	Strongly Agree
3. Designing our facilities and layout in order to achieve specific marketing or image objectives e.g., high service quality.	2.76	Strongly Agree
4. Having customer contact employees dressed (appearance) in a certain way to achieve our company image e.g. using uniform colours, business’ logo.	1.32	Disagree
Category Mean	2.43	Strongly Agree

It can be gleaned from the table the post- covid strategies of the micro-enterprises relative to physical evidence, where participants that on average, “*strongly agree*” (category mean of 2.43) that they are implementing the strategies under physical evidence mix. Moreover, the participants “*strongly agree*” that customer satisfaction as the prime objective in designing our working atmosphere (mean of 2.9). This emphasizes owner’s commitment to leveraging the physical environment to positively influence customer satisfaction and perceptions. This matches what Smith and Brown (2023) found in their research. They pointed out that how businesses design and maintain their physical spaces can significantly affect how customers feel. In simpler terms, the study's findings align with the idea that businesses, by emphasizing customer satisfaction in their working atmosphere, aim to create a positive and enjoyable experience for their customers.

Table 3h: Summary Table-Post-Covid Strategies of the Micro-enterprises

Post-Covid Strategies	Category Mean	Qualitative Description
Product	2.85	Strongly Agree
Price	2.78	Strongly Agree
Place	2.24	Agree
Promotion	2.51	Strongly Agree
People	2.81	Strongly Agree
Process	2.08	Agree
Physical (evidence)	2.43	Strongly Agree
Over-all	2.53	Strongly Agree

It can be seen from the table above the summary of post-COVID strategies of micro-enterprises regarding their approach to the 7Ps of marketing. Primarily, it's evident that micro-enterprises strongly prioritize certain aspects of the marketing mix. Notably, the 'Product' mix emerges as a key area of focus, with participants strongly agreeing (mean of 2.85) on its implementation. This underscores the importance placed on product/service quality, innovation.

Similarly, the emphasis on 'People' and 'Price' mixes, where participants strongly agree with means of 2.81 and 2.78, respectively, highlights the significance of human resources, employee engagement, customer-centric and adaptive pricing strategies in response to market changes following the pandemic.

The 'Promotion' and 'physical evidence' mix also holds substantial importance, albeit slightly lower in comparison, with a mean of 2.51 and 2.43. This signifies the recognition of the need for effective promotional strategies and the importance of tangible cues in influencing customer perceptions within the physical environment.

Interestingly, while 'Place' and 'Process' mixes receive agree from participants (with means of 2.24 and 2.08, respectively), it appears these aspects might require more attention or refinement in their implementation strategies.

Table 4a: Test of Significant Relationship between Post-Covid Strategies of the Micro-enterprises and Profile

Profile variables	X ² -value	P-value	Decision
Length of operation	42.098	.013	Reject Ho
Number of employees	120.008	.124	Accept Ho
Capitalization	57.115	.023	Reject Ho
Form of business	72.052	.040	Reject Ho

** . Association/Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level.

The table above shows the significant relationship between post-Covid strategies of the micro-enterprises and profile. It can be seen that post-Covid strategies have significant relationship to the form of business, capitalization and business' length of operation, because its p-values of .041, .023 and .013 are below the level of significant of .05. This implies that the length of operation in the industry, the amount capitalized in the business and the number of owners of the business is positively related to the implemented post-Covid strategies along product, price, place, promotion, people, process and physical evidence. On the other hand, the post-Covid strategies have no significant relationship to the business' number of employees because the p-value of .124 is greater than .05 level of significance. This implies that the number of employed workers in the business is not related to the post-Covid strategies along 7p's.

Table 5: Problems and Challenges Encountered by the Micro-Enterprise Owners

Category	Problems/Challenges Encountered	Frequency
Financial Struggles	• The business had a net loss during the pandemic and had a hard time to cope up.	40
	• The business laid-off some of its employees.	28
Operational Constraints	• The business had a limited operating hour.	40
	• The business temporarily closed for few months.	15
Supply Chain Issues	• The business had a problem of raw materials.	38

In an open-ended question, it was revealed that the participants encountered problems and challenges. It can be gleaned from the table that the common problems and challenges encountered are: the business had a net loss during the pandemic and had a hard time to cope up (40 frequencies). This means participants grappled with net losses, navigating the daunting task of coping with financial setbacks.

Similarly, 40 people encountered limited operating hours, constraining business productivity and revenue streams. Additionally, 38 participants faced raw material shortages, highlighting widespread supply chain disruptions. Also, 28 microenterprises resorted to employee layoffs, while 15 were temporarily closed their operations.

These findings highlight the complex and widespread challenges that businesses faced, significantly affecting how they operated and sustained themselves during this challenging period.

CONCLUSIONS

Based on the findings of the study, it can be concluded that in response to the challenges posed by the pandemic, participants have actively embraced post-Covid strategies, with a strong consensus on implementing people mix, product mix, price mix, promotion mix, and physical evidence, while participants generally agree on the adoption of place mix and process mix. This concludes that the participants strongly affirm their engagement in implementing post-COVID strategies across the 7Ps of marketing. This indicates a concerted effort by micro-enterprises to adapt and evolve their marketing approaches, acknowledging the significance of a comprehensive strategy encompassing all facets of the marketing mix.

RECOMMENDATIONS

In light with the findings and conclusions presented in the study, the following are recommended:

- 1) The micro-enterprise may consider implementing the strategies to which the "participants disagreed" in this study, along using branches (if available) to distribute their services/products, using intermediaries such as brokers and agents (whenever available), preparing a "flowchart" or "diagram" which describes the steps and activities required to deliver their services/products to customers, using standard procedures in their business/company and its branches (whenever available) for delivering services/products to customers, and having customer contact employees dressed (appearance) in a certain way to achieve their company image e.g. using uniform colours, business' logo.
- 2) For the micro-enterprise or future researchers to conduct a longitudinal study to assess the long-term impact of post-Covid strategies on the performance and sustainability of micro-enterprises. This would involve tracking their financial, operational, and market performance over an extended period to observe trends and patterns.
- 3) A similar study may be conducted to explore regional variations in the adoption and success of post-Covid strategies among micro-enterprises. Factors such as local regulations, economic conditions, and cultural nuances may play a significant role in shaping business responses. Also, similar study with considerations of the additional profile considerations such as the profile of the business owner/s and other business profile such as profitability and other financial performance measures and inferential question such as association or correlation of the post-covid strategies and financial performance may be considered.

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