



SURVIVAL AND SUSTAINABILITY ASSESSMENT OF THE “RETAIL INDUSTRY” AMIDST THE PANDEMIC

(A Student Collaborative Research)

By

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Abstract

Measuring the survival and sustainability of the retail industry amidst the pandemic is very essential to ensure their profitability for business sustenance. Elements such as initial capital, monthly income on average, educational attainment, years in business operations, and location are some of the many considerations. The study showed that despite the pandemic crisis, it was found that business is going on provided that you are in good positioning since these create an atmosphere of attractiveness. These are the common observations of the retail industry players and they agree to sustain this especially since the environment is being destabilized by the unpredictable occurrence of events resulting in economic turmoil. This is in agreement with the study of (Mehra, Sajeesj, and Voleti, 2020), the using a competitive model addresses the gap and how firm product positioning and pricing strategies are done. This predicament feels by the retail industry suggests that they should build a partnership with the Department of Trade and Industry (DTI) together with some of the biggest companies-“Rebuilding the retail industry through Access to Resources and Trade Program of Micro- retail Sectors. Help to continue and stimulate the economic recovery of the micro-retail sector during the COVID-19 Pandemic. Retail industry owners allow access to legitimate sources of capital and do not have to resort to loan sharks to replenish their stocks, especially while recovering from the pandemic. Loan financial assistance for small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) to re-build the business. Since during the pandemic, some of the customers might be hesitant to go outside of their houses, so the retailers must have to be creative and innovative to meet their needs. Retailers start setting up their own Facebook pages where their customers can reach out to them and share their orders. To remain strategic, retailers can offer free delivery within their neighborhood or something within their reach. They can also prepare their order ahead so they can just pick up the products to their store to lessen the contact with people when they decide to go outside.

Keywords: *Survival and sustainability assessment of the “retail industry” amidst the pandemic*

Introduction

Online selling business is more than setting up a website and uploading product images that require passion, expertise, and marketing strategy to succeed. Amidst the pandemic with the absence of traditional shopping channels, customers have to go online shopping for purchases and transactions. Many stores and restaurants also transitioned online to serve their target market. As emphasized the latest data from McKinsey, shows that consumers are likely to keep the behaviors they've adopted amid stay-at-home orders, such as more online shopping and fewer mall visits. Retailers can't afford to be in a wait-and-see mode. First, they need to re-imagine their baseline requirements and then turn their attention to taking their customer experience to the next level. Online selling also allows online sellers to operate without necessarily needing a traditional shop front and provide customers more flexibility as the customer can buy products at any time of the day. Whereas customers and potential buyers can be

provided with a lot of information that makes the shopping experience quicker and easier as well as improved customer service. These will have the opportunity to purchase products and services 24/7 comfortably and conveniently.

Pandemic has led people to significantly limit physical interactions. As online shopping has been predominant in the pandemic, the retail industry has put much effort into building, improving, and promoting their online stores. Pandemic has made this marketplace a more obvious necessity. The fact that business continues to operate during the lockdown we're experiencing now is due to the use of online applications to run businesses and they are not constrained by the physical presence of staff and applications at a particular location. The rise of online selling also increases the competition not only for potential customers but also for the retail industry. Today, business internet marketing is the fastest growing online commerce. There is more electronic inactivity with the customers in the form of emails and frequently asked questions (FAQs). Through FAQs, consumers' questions on shipment, payment, product, policies, and other customer concerns can be addressed effectively. The difference between traditional and online selling is the extent of interaction between the customer and the seller. Retail is a process of selling goods and services to customers through multiple channels of distribution. Retail is a form of business as old civilization and is the most basic form of business. However, the pandemic has accelerated the growth of the places where into lockdown forcing many businesses to temporarily shut down. Even retail industries that are reopening have restrictions enforcing social distancing, the wearing of a mask, and limits on how many customers can enter a space. Traditional shopping turned difficult and more people are increasingly inclined to shop online. This research study is intended to determine the extent of survival and sustainability of the retail industry amidst the pandemic in Tagoloan, Misamis Oriental, and the growing craze in online selling. The survival amidst pandemic on sustainable business has been identified to be one of the emerging trends in research about the impact of disruptions on business sustainability. This has been recognized by other authors as well. This led the researchers to conduct this type of study. The researchers bridge the gap on The Impact of COVID-19 on Sustainable Business Models in Small and Medium-sized enterprises. The impact of challenges may also magnify during this pandemic. Customers' needs, buying habits, purchasing, decision-making, and routines have changed demand patterns as customers are now working more from home.

Method

The study utilized the descriptive method of research. It is a method that focuses on the present condition. The purpose is to find accurate data to test the hypothesis concerning the current status of the subject of the study. The researchers adapted and modified questions that have been used in other studies and then used these modified versions to fit the needs of a new population, location, language, or mode. According to Aquino, descriptive research is an investigation that describes and interprets. It is concerned with conditions or relationship that exists, factors that prevail and risks and consequences that are going on; an effect that is being felt, or trends that are developing. Descriptive research involves gathering data that describe events and then organizing, tabulating, depicting and describing the data collection. The researchers conducted this type of research for the reason that the descriptive study commences understanding of the effects of an environment that will fit to the present study. The investigation focused on the survival and sustainability of the retail industry amidst a pandemic within Tagoloan, Misamis Oriental. By recognizing and identifying a question or a problem to be studied, it needs to describe and execute procedures to collect information about the question and problem being studied, analyze the collected information, and state the results of implications based on the analysis of the information. The study was conducted during the school year 2020-2021 at Tagoloan Community College. The proponents have conducted 77 retail store owners as the respondents of the study. They adhere to a certain code of conduct when collecting the data from the respondents surveyed. The ethical consideration used by the proponents was in the form of consent for the participants to know the purpose and risks behind the study

before they agree or declined to join. The proponents keep the participant's information confidential so that it can't be linked to other data by anyone else. Approval and permission to conduct the study were sought by researchers from the managers of selected retail industries in Tagoloan, Misamis Oriental. In collecting the data, the researchers personally distributed the research questionnaire to the respondents. The respondents were tasked to choose which among the choices is appropriate using a 4-point Likert scale, where (4) indicates “*strongly agree*”, (3) “*agree*”, (2) “*disagree*”, and (1) “*strongly disagree*” as the research tool. After the respondents answered the questionnaire, the researchers immediately checked the questionnaire and carefully tallied, tabulated, and interpreted to ensure the veracity of the results.

Research Environment

The study was conducted in Tagoloan, Misamis Oriental. The stores were all located within Tagoloan, Misamis Oriental. Tagoloan is the first (1st) income-class municipality in the province of Misamis Oriental, Philippines. Tagoloan is located to the east of Cagayan de Oro City and is located southeast of Macalajar Bay. It is a residential and industrial municipality and has 5 high schools, 3 colleges, and 2 hospitals. According to PhilAtlas, Tagoloan, Misamis Oriental has a total land area of 7,938 hectares representing 2.24 percent of Misamis Oriental's total area of 354,770 hectares. Among the barangays, Sta. Ana is the largest, comprising 37 percent of the municipality's land area. The municipality of Tagoloan has a lot of establishments that help it to develop more. It also has markets where varieties of goods are being sold. The area of the market is clean, very spacious enough for the consumers, and the surroundings are well-organized. The land area of Tagoloan is suitable for six major uses, which include protection forest, plantation forest, rice, tree and vine, pasture, and cultivated crops. About 2,405 hectares or 30 percent of Tagoloan's total area are suitable for forest uses. Rice land is suitable for 2,199 hectares or about 28 percent, while the cultivation of annual crops is suited for 2,024 hectares or about 25 percent. The respondents of the study were the retail industries sari-sari stores that are all located within Tagoloan, Misamis Oriental.

Table 1 shows the respondent and their response rate.. it can be seen from the table that out of the total seventy-seven (77) total respondents, it was dominated by the female while twenty-four (24) were male. Although by nature, the retail industry is known to be operated by women in the present time where the environment faced the challenge of the test of time, men are getting involved in this kind of business to sustain and survive meeting daily requirements.

Table 1 presents the data on gender that plays in the retail industry

Gender	Frequency	Percentage
Male	24	0.31%
Female	53	0.69%
Total	77	100%

Scoring Procedure

After all the questionnaires were collected, the following scoring procedures were utilized in describing the data of the study. The scale, range of interval, and quantitative description used in this study were patterned after a 4-point Likert-type scale.

Table 2 shows the scoring procedures

Scale	Range	Description	Interpretation
4	3.26-4.0	Strongly agree	Very sustainable
3	2.51-3.25	Agree	Sustainable
2	1.76-2.50	Disagree	Less Sustainable
1	1.0-1.75	Strongly disagree	Unsustainable

Test and validity

Twenty people who were not participating in the study did a field test of the self-made survey questionnaire before its final implementation. Cronbach's Alpha was utilized to determine whether or not the survey questions were measuring the same item before the results were completed. This was done before the presentation of the data. The reliability coefficient was found to be 0.863. To put it another way, the survey results obtained by the researchers were very accurate and efficient.

Table 3 shows the *Cronbach Alpha* result on the test and reliability process.

Reliability Test Using Cranach’s Alpha	
Cranach’s Alpha	No of Items
.863	35

Table 4 shows the respondent's profile based on initial capital

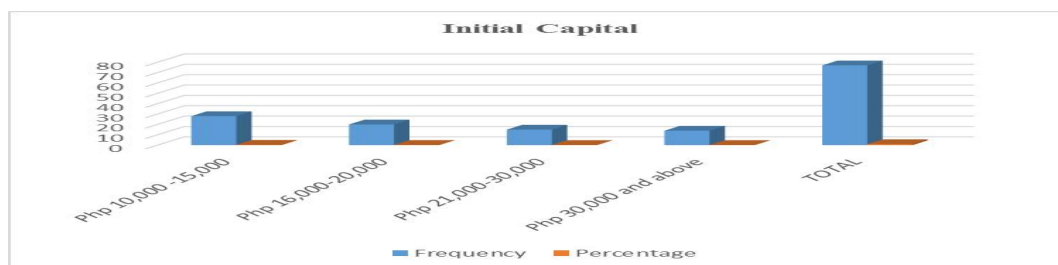


Table 5 shows the respondent's profile based on the monthly income range

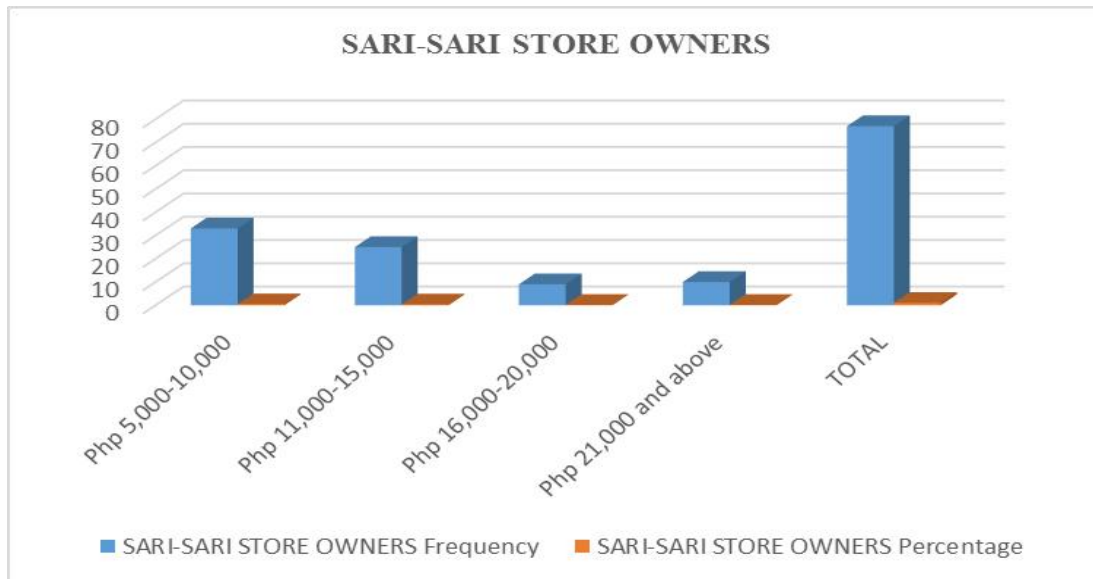


Table 6 shows respondents' profiles based on educational attainment

Educational Attainment	SARI-SARI STORE OWNERS	
	Frequency	Percentage
<i>Elementary Graduate</i>	3	3.90%
<i>High School Level</i>	10	13%
<i>High School Graduate</i>	22	28.60%
<i>College Level</i>	25	32.50%
<i>College Graduate</i>	17	22.10%
TOTAL	77	100%

As shown from the table, it can be adjudged that doing business during the time of the pandemic strike, most people are linked to doing business regardless of their educational attainment for the sake of surviving in these challenging times. However, the retail business is dominated by the college level and followed by the high school graduates. The college graduate comes out minimal in figure considering that this level is more inclined to do office work. The high school level and the elementary graduate found to be in the last category are the ones whose desire to do business is somewhat a trial for the sake of survival.

Table 7 shows the distribution of respondents based on years in business operation

Years in Business Operation	SARI-SARI STORE OWNERS	
	Frequency	Percentage
1-3 years	17	22.1%
4-6 years	31	40.3%
7 years and above	29	37.6%
TOTAL	77	100%

This table gives us the information that the dominant figure in terms of years of business operations are having seven years of experience while some have a little bit lower at four to six years in the filed, and one to three years respectively. It can be viewed from the table that this retail business gives them lives surviving and retailing helps the to prosper beyond the pandemic.

Table 8 shows the distribution of respondents based on zonal location

Zonal Location	STORE OWNERS	
	Frequency	Percentage
Zone 1-3	31	40.3%
Zone 4-6	20	26%
Zone 7-10	14	18.2%
Zone 11-14	12	15.5%
TOTAL	77	100%

This table presents the information about the zonal location of the retail industry. Zone one and three has the major participants in the retailing business, followed by zone 4 to six, and zone seven and ten respectively has the lower frequency. This table explains that since the retail industry requires a good location and a reasonable population, hence zone one and 3 has more potential in terms of location and population considering that it is situated in an area that has plenty of people which means more consumers than requires more retailers to cater to their needs.

Findings and Discussions

The extent of Sustainability of the Retail Industry in Tagoloan, Misamis Oriental in terms of Valued Customers. A study was conducted to assess the survival and sustainability of the retail industry amidst the pandemic of Tagoloan Misamis Oriental and the findings are shown in the table below.

Table 9 shows the extent of sustainability of the retail industry of Tagoloan Misamis Oriental.

No.	Indicators	Weighted Mean	Description	Interpretation
1.	<i>Paying attention to customers' inquiries.</i>	4.79	<i>Strongly Agree</i>	<i>Very Sustainable</i>
2.	<i>Be visible and available so customers know you are there to help them.</i>	4.71	<i>Strongly Agree</i>	<i>Very Sustainable</i>
3.	<i>Keep customers informed of what is new with the business.</i>	4.51	<i>Strongly Agree</i>	<i>Very Sustainable</i>
4.	<i>Assist customers with products and services as well as attitude, responsiveness, and care.</i>	4.65	<i>Strongly Agree</i>	<i>Very Sustainable</i>
5.	<i>Selling and giving a fair price and good quality of products to the customers.</i>	4.70	<i>Strongly Agree</i>	<i>Very Sustainable</i>
6.	<i>Genuinely thanked customers after they bought the products.</i>	4.73	<i>Strongly Agree</i>	<i>Very Sustainable</i>
7.	<i>Acknowledged the customers even in small ways.</i>	4.58	<i>Strongly Agree</i>	<i>Very Sustainable</i>
8.	<i>Knowing what the customers want before they buy.</i>	4.36	<i>Strongly Agree</i>	<i>Very Sustainable</i>
9.	<i>I always find out what my customers like/dislike by listening to their feedback.</i>	4.29	<i>Strongly Agree</i>	<i>Very Sustainable</i>
10.	<i>Nurturing customers walk through the store.</i>	4.21	<i>Strongly Agree</i>	<i>Very Sustainable</i>
<i>Overall Mean</i>		4.55	<i>Strongly Agree</i>	<i>Very Sustainable</i>

The above table shows the result of the study about the extent of sustainability of the retail industry in Tagoloan, Misamis Oriental in terms of valued customers. The respondents both strongly agree on paying attention to customer's inquiries is very important, being visible and available so customers know you are there to help them, keeping customers informed of what is new with the business, assisting customers with products and services as well as the attitude, responsiveness and care, selling and giving a fair price and good quality of products to the customers, genuinely thanked customers after they bought the products, acknowledged the customers even in small ways, knowing what the customers want before they buy, always find out what does the customers likes/dislikes by listening to their feedback, and nurturing customer's walks through the store.

The data above serves as the key element in the retail business since service is the most important that retail players keep in mind, second is the price. As revealed in the table, all the respondents manifest their satisfaction with the retailers playing their roles as they both feel very satisfied with how the retailers deal with them. Although the finding denotes favorable to retailers as assessed by the customer suggest that they need to sustain the attitude and extending care as the key factor that will contribute to their

success. The finding on valued customers helps retailers to survive and sustain their business is supported by the study of (Nik Herda Nik Abdullah Jamaliah Said Enni Savitri, 2019), that corporate value creation aids the retail industry plan and executing strategies successfully while securing sustainable competitive advantages. His paper explores the extent of top management's emphasis on the measures of value creation that are deemed important for business survival and sustainability.

Table 10 shows the extent of sustainability and survival of the retail business in terms of customer service. A study was conducted to assess the survival and sustainability of the retail industry amidst the pandemic in terms of customer service. The finding of the study was shown in the table below.

No	Indicators	Weighted Mean	Description	Interpretation
1.	<i>I am friendly and cheerful with my customers.</i>	4.57	<i>Strongly Agree</i>	<i>Very Sustainable</i>
2.	<i>I greeted them and offered to help them with what they needed.</i>	4.35	<i>Strongly Agree</i>	<i>Very Sustainable</i>
3.	<i>Being available promptly.</i>	4.35	<i>Strongly Agree</i>	<i>Very Sustainable</i>
4.	<i>Giving knowledge to them about what is my product all about.</i>	4.36	<i>Strongly Agree</i>	<i>Very Sustainable</i>
5.	<i>Being courteous to my customers.</i>	4.39	<i>Strongly Agree</i>	<i>Very Sustainable</i>
6.	<i>Giving freely compensation of spoiled products or the damaged products.</i>	3.90	<i>Strongly Agree</i>	<i>Very Sustainable</i>
7.	<i>Avoid being rude to the customers.</i>	4.51	<i>Strongly Agree</i>	<i>Very Sustainable</i>
8.	<i>Never say "I don't know".</i>	4.23	<i>Strongly Agree</i>	<i>Very Sustainable</i>
9.	<i>Encourage patience.</i>	4.62	<i>Strongly Agree</i>	<i>Very Sustainable</i>
10.	<i>I put myself in my customer's situation.</i>	4.25	<i>Strongly Agree</i>	<i>Very Sustainable</i>
TOTAL		4.35	Strongly Agree	Very Sustainable

The table above shows the findings on how customer service helps them in their survival and sustainability. The finding shows that customer finds that the retailers have continued to provide good service since it will contribute a positive impact if maintained. They viewed it as very necessary as the need of sustaining those services to them is essential and both of them feel that it is very sustainable in the following areas: being friendly and cheerful to customers, greeting them, and offering help with what they need, being available promptly, giving knowledge to them about what the product all about, being courteous to customers, giving freely compensation of spoiled products or the damaged products, avoid being rude to the customers. never say "I don't know", encourage patience, and put myself in my customer's situation. The finding from the customer seem unanimous in terms of their agreement and they

find it very important and they feel it is a very sustainable act needed for the retail industry in keeping customers. More so that the business environment nowadays is very demanding due to strong competition, and customer service is the primordial concern for every type of business to sustain. These findings are backed by the study of (Abdullah, N. H. N., Said, J., & Savitri, E. (2019). Accordingly, customer service delivery contributes to the important challenge of elevating customer service delivery by providing guidelines for when and how to select optimal measures of customer service measurement using a new decision framework. A process model and customer journey mapping framework can facilitate the selection and application of appropriate and relevant customer service experience.

Table 11 shows the extents of sustainability of the retail industry in Tagoloan, Misamis Oriental in terms of market positioning. A study was conducted to assess the extent of the sustainability and survival of market positioning as important factors to retail business. The finding can be viewed in the table below.

No	Indicators	Weighted Mean	Description	Interpretation
1.	<i>Understand the general situation of the stores and what kind of effect they currently have on the marketplace.</i>	4.48	<i>Strongly Agree</i>	<i>Very Sustainable</i>
2.	<i>Developing a unique impression of my businesses among other stores (other competitors).</i>	4.39	<i>Strongly Agree</i>	<i>Very Sustainable</i>
3.	<i>Know my target market and how to fulfill my customers' needs.</i>	4.49	<i>Strongly Agree</i>	<i>Very Sustainable</i>
4.	<i>Positioning my selling products better than other sari-sari stores.</i>	4.23	<i>Strongly Agree</i>	<i>Very Sustainable</i>
5.	<i>Relating my selling products with the specific use of my customers.</i>	4.36	<i>Strongly Agree</i>	<i>Very Sustainable</i>
6.	<i>Positioning my products as well high quality but "swak sa budget".</i>	4.47	<i>Strongly Agree</i>	<i>Very Sustainable</i>
7.	<i>Focusing on my store's strengths and how other stores can exploit these opportunities.</i>	4.27	<i>Strongly Agree</i>	<i>Very Sustainable</i>
8.	<i>Has unique features that make my product stand out from the crowd.</i>	4.47	<i>Strongly Agree</i>	<i>Very Sustainable</i>
9.	<i>Doing value by selling products in ways that resonate with my current customers, attracts new ones, and sets me apart and above my competitors.</i>	4.47	<i>Strongly Agree</i>	<i>Very Sustainable</i>
10.	<i>Serving a convenient product consistently.</i>	4.70	<i>Strongly Agree</i>	<i>Very Sustainable</i>
Overall mean		4.43	Strongly Agree	Very Sustainable

A study was conducted to assess the extent of survival and sustainability of the retail industry in terms of market positioning. In every business, the primary requirement before establishing one is to consider the place, and traffic volume to ensure potential buyers. When respondents were asked using the instrument provide for them to answer, it came out that their finding still has an applauding response in terms of their agreement and found to be very sustainable, which means, the retailer should keep abreast on it is such as: understanding the general situation of the stores and know what affects them currently on the market place, developing a unique impression of the business among other stores (other competitors), knowing the target market and how to fulfill customers' needs, positioning my products better than other sari-sari stores, relating my products with the specific use of my customers, positioning my products as good and high quality but “*swak sa budget*”, focusing on store's strengths and how other stores can exploit these opportunities, has unique features that make the product stand out from the crowd, doing value of selling products in ways that resonate with current customers, attracts new ones, and sets apart and above competitors, serving a convenient product consistently.

The above responses from the customer respondents reveal that they are inclined to agree that product positioning is very important since it creates an atmosphere of attractiveness. This is what the respondents observed that the product should be positioned in the proper ways. As the environment becomes complicated, customer preferences differ on different levels. Hence, product positioning is not only a matter of attracting customers but it is a requirement in business. This finding is supported by the study of (Mehra, A., Sajeesh, S., & Voleti, S. (2020), that using a competitive model addresses the gap and examines how firm product positioning and pricing strategies are done. Good product positioning contributes to the literature by uncovering the role of internal reference price effects on product positioning and profits.

Conclusion and Recommendations

Measuring the survival and sustainability of the retail industry amidst the pandemic is very essential to ensure their profitability for business sustenance. Elements such as initial capital, monthly income on average, educational attainment, years in business operations, and location are some of the many considerations. The study showed that despite the pandemic crisis, it was found that business is going on provided that you are in good positioning since these create an atmosphere of attractiveness. These are the common observations of the retail industry players and they agree to sustain this especially since the environment is being destabilized by the unpredictable occurrence of events resulting in economic turmoil. This is in agreement with the study of (Mehra, Sajeesh, and Voleti, 2020), the using a competitive model addresses the gap and how firm product positioning and pricing strategies are done. This predicament feels by the retail industry suggests that they should build a partnership with the Department of Trade and Industry (DTI) together with some of the biggest companies-“Rebuilding the retail industry through Access to Resources and Trade Program of Micro- retail Sectors. Help to continue and stimulate the economic recovery of the micro-retail sector during the COVID-19 Pandemic. Retail industry owners allow access to legitimate sources of capital and do not have to resort to loan sharks to replenish their stocks, especially while recovering from the pandemic. Loan financial assistance for small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) to re-build the business. Since during the pandemic, some of the customers might be hesitant to go outside of their houses, so the retailers must have to be creative and innovative to meet their needs. Retailers start setting up their own Facebook pages where their customers can reach out to them and share their orders. To remain strategic, retailers can offer free delivery within their neighborhood or something within their reach. They can also prepare their order ahead so they can just pick up the products to their store to lessen the contact with people when they decide to go outside.

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