

The Experiences of the Established Furniture Shops Owners in Zamboanga Del Sur

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Abstract: This study explores the experiences, motivations, challenges, and strategies of established furniture shop owners in Zamboanga del Sur. Despite limited resources, these owners have demonstrated resilience and adaptability by overcoming rising material costs, competition, and natural disasters through strong work ethics and faith. Their motivations include continuing a family legacy, applying carpentry skills, and seeking financial stability. To remain competitive, they focus on quality craftsmanship, fair pricing, good customer and supplier relationships, and use of social media platforms like Facebook. Challenges include cheaper imports, online competition, raw material costs, dishonest buyers, and pests. Owners cope through faith, persistence, and strategic flexibility. While some plan to expand their businesses, others aim to preserve them for future generations. The study highlights the importance of resilience, innovation, and community support in sustaining local furniture businesses.

Keywords: Furniture Business, Business Challenges, Competitive Strategies, Business Resilience, Small Enterprise Sustainability.

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I. INTRODUCTION

Furniture shop businesses are usually involved in designing products using lumber or other types of woods, manufacturing machines, and distributing them to final customers or their clients. A comprehensive analysis of the challenges and possibilities in the furniture sector emphasizes the importance of focused measures to promote growth and sustainability in this essential industry (Ulay, 2020). Complete overview of the challenges and opportunities confronting the furniture sector in light of more considerable economic changes and market dynamics (Kallay, 2024). Essential insights into the Indian furniture manufacturing business, notably personalization, sustainability, and competitive strategies. This information can guide future entrepreneurs seeking to enter this market (Amin & Kuma, 2022).

The multifaceted nature of business success among furniture businessmen in Pasuruan, emphasizing the interplay between personal background, education, and experiential learning (Mochamad, 2015). The intricacies of inter-organizational interactions in the setting of small enterprises and claims that, while relational perspectives

provide useful insights, they may not adequately portray the realities encountered by entrepreneurs in these agglomerations (Deboca & Martins 2015). Small Medium Enterprises(SME) must reconsider their approach to supply chain connections, shifting toward more collaborative and strategic approaches in order to improve competitiveness and integration (Deboca & Martins 2015).

The significance of resolving inefficiencies and putting supportive measures in place to revive furniture craft business will ultimately benefit the surrounding communities (Afifah, 2023). The complex nature of entrepreneurship in the furniture sector, where factors such as education, familial influence, early start-up, ongoing assessment, and collaborative connections are significant predictors of success (Indarti, 2018). Technology and omni-channel retailing can change the furniture purchasing experience for the good of both customers and merchants (Uddenfeldt, 2014).

The furniture industry has greatly impacted the local economy, which is deeply ingrained in the community's historical background and creates jobs and development (Azmi et al., 2023). The relationship between teamwork,

knowledge transformation, and technology adoption in improving business competency in the furniture sector is essential for directing industry participants' operational and strategic planning (Silviana & Pudjiarti, 2024). Effective management methods, sufficient financial resources, and good client relationships are critical to the economic success of furniture SMEs in Jepara (Ismanto & Prahastia, 2022).

The relationship between traditional and modern shops emphasizes the importance of supportive policies and joint efforts to guarantee traditional retail's long-term viability in the face of modern competition (Ali & Nurani, 2024). A thorough awareness of client preferences and the efficacy of management strategies in improving organizational performance in the furniture industry (Kubeš & Rančák, 2018). The strategies used by Malaysian furniture makers and their consequences for long-term competitive advantage focus on resource allocation and strategic planning (Bakr et al., 2016).

An integrated view has been developed around the environmental effect of the furniture supply chain and customer pressure to reduce it. Stakeholders expect furniture merchants to increase efficiency and profitability while meeting market demand for environmental sustainability. Retailers may seek a competitive edge by efficiently implementing and communicating ecological management. The voluntary adoption of systems, international standards, and creative practices that conserve natural resources is one of the keys to success (Brain et al., 2016).

A potential research gap for the study could focus on the underlying strategies and practices that contribute to the long-term sustainability of furniture shops, particularly those that have lasted for more than a decade. While there are studies on business sustainability in general, limited research specifically targets the unique factors that enable furniture shop owners to sustain their businesses for extended periods. This includes understanding the role of business management, marketing approaches, customer loyalty, adaptation to market changes, innovation, and financial practices that contribute to longevity. The gap exists in exploring how owners of long-standing furniture shops, especially those in smaller or family-run enterprises, navigate challenges and maintain profitability over the years. This study could further examine whether different furniture shops share common success factors and how these practices are implemented in various contexts.

The motivation for this study stems from the growing interest in understanding the key factors that contribute to the longevity and success of small and medium-sized businesses, particularly in the furniture industry. While many companies struggle to survive in an increasingly competitive market, some furniture shops in Zamboanga del Sur have thrived for over a decade, often overcoming significant challenges. This study aims to uncover the strategies and practices that enable these businesses to sustain operations and maintain relevance in an ever-evolving market. By exploring the experiences of established furniture shop owners, this research will provide

valuable insights into the critical aspects of business management, customer engagement, and market adaptation that lead to long-term success. Furthermore, understanding the factors that contribute to business sustainability can serve as a guide for new entrepreneurs and existing business owners looking to strengthen their operations. This knowledge is crucial for the local furniture industry and broader business development in the region, as it highlights best practices that could be applied across various sectors to promote sustainable business growth.

II. METHODOLOGY

➤ *Research Design*

This research took a qualitative approach, aiming to understand the real-life experiences of established furniture shop owners in Zamboanga del Sur. Instead of relying on numbers and statistics, qualitative research focused on people—their stories, perspectives, and lived realities. In this study, in-depth interviews were used to explore what it was really like to run a furniture business in this part of the 1st district of Zamboanga del Sur. Open-ended questions guided the conversations, covering topics like what motivated them to start their shops, the challenges they faced along the way, how they adapted to changing markets, and the moments that stood out most in their journey. With the participants' permission, interviews were recorded to ensure that no details were missed, and field notes were taken to capture emotional cues and important observations. The data were examined through categorical analysis, helping to identify common patterns and meaningful insights from their shared experiences.

To better understand these experiences in depth, the study used a case study design, a method often used in qualitative research to explore a particular group or situation within its real-world setting. A case study allowed researchers to look closely at how people behaved, made decisions, and navigated challenges in their specific context. As explained by Merriam and other qualitative scholars, case studies were especially useful when the goal was to learn from a group whose stories were often overlooked. By gathering data through interviews, observations, and artifacts, researchers built a fuller picture of what was happening on the ground. In this case, the design was ideal for highlighting the realities of furniture shop owners, giving voice to their business journeys and strategies.

The focus of this case was on furniture shop owners in Zamboanga del Sur who had been in business for at least five years. These were people who weathered the ups and downs of the local market and learned how to keep their businesses going, whether they were running small family-owned workshops or larger stores. The participants were selected through referrals, social media outreach, local business networks, and personal store visits. These owners weren't just business operators—they were also marketers, managers, and decision-makers. Their stories offered rich insights into what it took to stay competitive, build customer trust, and grow a business in a local setting. Through this case study, the research hoped to shine a light on the

resourcefulness, resilience, and dedication of these entrepreneurs and what their experiences could teach others entering the same field.

➤ *Research Environment*

The study took place in the 1st District of Zamboanga del Sur. This lively urban area featured a mix of traditional and modern businesses, including various furniture shops. Its essential role as a regional transportation and commercial hub made it an excellent setting for exploring local business practices, particularly in the furniture industry. The furniture industry in Zamboanga del Sur included many types of businesses. Small, family-owned shops often focused on handcrafted furniture made from local materials, while larger stores sold mass-produced and branded items. This diversity provided a rich opportunity to examine the different experiences of established shop owners.

Researchers gained insights into their successes and challenges by looking at how these owners marketed their products, whether through word-of-mouth, local advertising, or online strategies. Understanding their experiences also involved considering the local culture, customer preferences, and economic conditions that shaped their businesses. Through this research, the researchers aimed to highlight the unique stories of established furniture shop owners in Zamboanga del Sur. Their insights shed light on their individual experiences and contributed to a broader understanding of small business dynamics in a culturally diverse environment. This study sought to capture how these owners navigated their business landscapes, adapted to changes, and built relationships within their communities.

➤ *Research Participants*

The research included 9 to 15 established furniture shop owners. They had been in business for at least 5 years to guarantee they had enough experience to share. Participants were chosen from various furniture shops, including: (1) small family-run businesses and more prominent, more established enterprises; (2) participants directly engaged in the sustainability and management of furniture shops in Zamboanga del Sur; (3) owners who served as store managers and were primarily responsible for managing business decisions. Their perspectives provided insights into their choices, overall vision and rationale, how they aligned with business goals, and their responses to how they sustained their businesses.

These participants were selected based on specific criteria to ensure valuable insights. To maintain a local focus, all participants owned a furniture shop in Zamboanga del Sur. Participants were recruited through store visits, local business associations, social media posts, and referrals from other shop owners. This approach helped gather rich experiences that reflected the realities of running a furniture shop in Pagadian City.

➤ *Research Instrument*

The primary instrument of this research was the researchers themselves, guided by a semi-structured interview guide that facilitated in-depth discussions with the

participants. The interview guide was designed to cover various aspects of marketing strategies while allowing participants to share their experiences and insights. The researchers formulated questions with the guidance and validation of expert individuals. One of the benefits of using an interview guide was that it helped provide organized answers and allowed for a comprehensive understanding of the topic.

The researchers were also guided by observation in collecting more data necessary for the study. To support their claims and answers, the researchers observed the participants' workplace, employees, and behaviors toward customers. Data mining was also used in the study, which assisted the researchers in collecting, evaluating, and analyzing the data. The data mined included documents, providing valuable insights through systematic extraction and processing.

The participants used their preferred language as long as the researchers understood it. A video or voice recording was used during the interview with the consent of the participants to capture the entire conversation. The researchers looked for corroborating documents and artifacts that supported the participants' answers. Field notes were also taken during the interview to capture additional observations and contextual details that complemented the recorded data. These methods allowed the researchers to thoroughly understand the marketing practices employed by the furniture shops.

➤ *Data Gathering Techniques*

The data-gathering procedure began with the generation of the interview guide questions. These questions were carefully developed by the researchers, focusing on the objectives of the study and designed to capture the experiences of the furniture shop owners. The semi-structured questions provided flexibility while ensuring that key topics were covered. Once drafted, the research adviser and panelists validated the interview guide. Their feedback was incorporated to ensure that the questions were clear, relevant, and aligned with the study's aims.

After the interview guide was validated, the researchers sought formal permission to conduct the study by submitting a request to the institution's dean. This letter explained the study's purpose, scope, and methods. Following the dean's approval, the request was forwarded to the institution's president for final approval, ensuring that the study complied with ethical standards and institutional policies.

Upon receiving all necessary approvals, the researchers proceeded with scheduling and conducting interviews with selected furniture shop owners in Zamboanga del Sur. The semi-structured interview was the primary tool for data collection, allowing the shop owners to share their experiences in detail. In addition to interviews, the researchers employed other data collection instruments, including an observation checklist, to record insights into the shop operations and the business environment. Relevant

artifacts, such as documents or receipts, were also gathered to support the interview data. Furthermore, data mining was used to collect and analyze information from documents related to the shops.

Once the interviews were conducted, the audio recordings were transcribed verbatim to capture all relevant information accurately. The researchers then analyzed the transcriptions using a categorical analysis approach, identifying and organizing the shop owners' experiences into meaningful categories. Data from observations and artifacts, and supplementary data mined from documents, were also incorporated into the analysis to provide a comprehensive understanding of the furniture shop owners' experiences in Zamboanga del Sur.

III. RESULT AND DISCUSSION

This chapter explores the experiences of furniture shop owners from Zamboanga del Sur who have owned and managed local furniture businesses for at least five years. The researchers conducted in-depth interviews with nine (9) participants using a validated interview guide. The interviews were conducted through in-person meetings. The participants were asked to respond to the interview questions based on their experiences as owners of furniture shops in Zamboanga del Sur.

The study employs a qualitative research design using Sharan B. Merriam's single case study approach. The researchers believe this approach is the most suitable method to achieve the study's objectives, which include understanding the experiences, strategies, and challenges furniture shop owners face in a specific local context. A single case study was deemed appropriate because it allows for a focused examination of a particular group of individuals within a particular setting, offering rich insights into their business operations and survival strategies.

To ensure confidentiality and protect the participants' identities, each interviewee was assigned a code: P1, P2, P3, P4, P5, P6, P7, P8, and P9. This coding scheme aligns with the data-gathering procedure. It adheres to Republic Act 10173, also known as the Data Privacy Act of 2012, ensuring the protection and welfare of all respondents involved in the study.

The significant categories from this study pertain to Motivation for Starting a Furniture Shop, Business Positioning Strategy, Operational Challenges and Resource Management, Coping Strategies and Adaptation to Challenges and Future Plans for Business Growth.

➤ *Motivations for Starting a Furniture Shop*

Furniture shop owners drew inspiration from various sources, including personal passions, familial influences, and a deep connection to craftsmanship, which formed the foundation of their entrepreneurial journey. Their intrinsic motivation and understanding of local market segments were crucial in navigating operational challenges and

sustaining their businesses. These business owners aligned their products.

With their community's practical and aesthetic desires, they customized their offerings to match customer behavior, preferences, and specific requirements. This approach fostered customer satisfaction and loyalty, highlighting the importance of combining personal dedication with market research and adaptive strategies to thrive in the competitive furniture industry. This category explored the motivations and market awareness that led owners to enter the furniture business. The researchers arrived at the following sub-categories: Influence by Family and Providing Quality Products to the Community.

Influence by Family. Many owners entered the furniture business driven by family legacy and personal passion for craftsmanship. This deep-rooted connection often provided the initial motivation and expertise that established and grew their enterprises.

"Ganahan ko magpadayon ug magtukod og kaugalingong negosyo kay mao sad akong nakita sa akong pamilya." [I want to continue and build my own business because that's also what I've seen in my family.] -P3

"Tungod kay naa koy negosyo nga mura pod ug ka linya rasad sa furniture, nga akong na suon sa akong mga ig-agaw, mao to gipa dayon lang nako." [Since I have a business that's somewhat related to furniture, which I also got inspired from my cousins, I just decided to continue it.] -P6

"Nagdako ko nga magtan-aw sa akong mga ginikanan nga maghimo ug mga butang gamit ang mga kahoy mao nag sugod sad ko mag panday panday." [I grew up watching my parents work with wood, so I decided to follow the same path.] -P9

Many of the owners' influence by their family for entering the furniture business were significant drivers. Several participants mentioned that they were inspired by family traditions, with many coming from families involved in farming and carpentry. This connection to craftsmanship provided the initial motivation and the necessary skills to establish and grow their businesses.

The data analysis shows that the owners' personal and familial connections played a key role in their decision to enter the furniture industry. Their family's involvement in carpentry or farming gave them practical skills and a passion for craftsmanship. This familial heritage created a strong foundation for business establishment, as the owners are already equipped with the knowledge and techniques required for producing quality furniture. The motivation to continue their family's legacy in woodworking became a personal mission for many, influencing their long-term commitment to the business.

From a broader perspective, the deep-rooted familial connection facilitated the technical aspects of establishing a

business and fostered a strong sense of purpose and perseverance among the owners. Their passion for craftsmanship, inherited from their family's trade, drove their business's growth. This emotional and personal investment in the business ensured long-term sustainability, as owners are committed to preserving their family traditions and maintaining high-quality standards in their products.

Family businesses represent the oldest type of commercial organization and are now the key driver of wealth creation in both emerging and developed economies (Ramadani et al., 2020). Family businesses are at least 50% owned by a single family, a definition we adopt to define a family business. They are commercial organizations in which various generations of the same family may influence the decision-making processes to achieve objectives defined by the family leadership (Jain et al., 2022). In addition, according to König et al. (2013), family businesses are organizations characterized by individuals interrelated by their family bonds that deploy their influence in their businesses, whether through their direct participation or a family member holding executive roles.

Providing Quality Products to the Community. An in-depth understanding of local consumer behavior and preferences allows business owners to develop offerings that address specific market needs. This includes customization options and designs that cater to local tastes and functional requirements.

"Ang uban kay naa gud silay ipa customize kung unsa ka dako pero ang uban sad kay ready-made ilang paliton na." [Some customers request custom-made items, while others prefer ready-made products because they are quicker and more affordable.] -P5

"Mga sofa ang ganahan sa akong mga costumers, like mga new design kay dili nami mag focus sa isa ra ka design. Gusto namo nga taga bulan mag upgrade mi kay kana man gud need sa akong mga reseller." ["Our customers like sofas, especially new designs, so we don't want to focus on just one design anymore. We want to upgrade every month because that's what our resellers need."] -P7

"Kasagaran sa mga customs diri ganahan ug durable, functional, ug maayo kaayo ang pagbuhat nga mo fit sa ilang kailangan. Ganahan usab ang uban sa multifunctional furniture like foldable tables ug pull-outs bed kay practical kaayo para sa gamay nga space." [Most customers prefer durable, functional, and well-crafted furniture. Others also like multifunctional pieces, which are practical for small spaces.] -P9

The ability of furniture shop owners in Pagadian City to provide quality products to their community stems from their deep understanding of local consumer preferences and behaviors. This responsiveness to community needs has allowed them to offer a range of products that balance durability, functionality, affordability, and design variety, ensuring that their furniture serves purposes.

The furniture shop owners understood local consumer behavior, which directly influenced their business strategies. Owners adapted their offerings to meet the specific needs of the local market, which included providing both custom-made and ready-made furniture options. Customization appealed to those with specific design preferences, while ready-made furniture attracted customers looking for more affordable, quick solutions. One owner noted the challenge of balancing customer demands for modern and classic designs but emphasized the importance of adapting to these needs. Additionally, the growing demand for multifunctional and space-saving furniture, such as foldable tables and pull-out beds, highlighted the practicality that local consumers value. This trend was significant in urban areas with limited space, further underscoring the market's evolving preferences.

The preservation of the environment and ecology is becoming more important (Grabara, 2019). The accelerating environmental changes, more vigorous competition for extraordinary resources, and the increasing need and strength of different groups and individuals have strongly emphasized strategic management (Pham et al., 2018). Based on the study of Khalil (n.d.), his paper discusses financial literacy, how it relates to individual citizens, and how it correlates with social, political, and business spheres. According to current financial capability models, individuals' financial well-being can be boosted by developing their financial knowledge and competency, improving their motivation and confidence. Societal constructs significantly create financial socialization, which increases our accessibility and engagements with institutions, businesses, political systems, and society as a whole. Being educated about the details required for financial literacy is every human being's right.

The findings indicate that the furniture shop owners' market intelligence is a key driver of their success. Their ability to understand and respond to local customer needs allowed them to remain competitive. They effectively catered to diverse customers by offering customization and ready-made products. The increasing demand for multifunctional furniture suggests that the owners know urban consumers' changing lifestyles and preferences, especially those facing space constraints. This adaptability to market trends, combined with the ability to produce high-quality, functional furniture, allowed the business owners to differentiate themselves from competitors and meet the specific needs of their target customers.

From a theoretical perspective, the findings align with the Resource-Based View (RBV) theory, which emphasizes leveraging unique and hard-to-imitate internal resources to achieve competitive advantage. The furniture shop owners possess valuable internal resources, such as craftsmanship skills, family legacy, and deep market knowledge. These resources are not easily replicable by competitors, particularly newer entrants into the market. The legacy of carpentry passed down through generations provides a sustainable competitive advantage, as it combines traditional skills with modern market demands. By effectively utilizing

these internal resources, the owners have maintained high standards of quality and adapted their business models to meet local consumer needs, securing long-term success.

The findings highlight the importance of personal motivation, family legacy, and craftsmanship in establishing a successful business. New entrepreneurs can draw inspiration from family traditions and work to develop their woodworking skills to set themselves apart in the competitive market. Moreover, understanding the local market's demand for custom and ready-made products and functional furniture options will be important in accepting their business strategies. By aligning their offerings with customer preferences and emphasizing craftsmanship, new business owners can build a loyal customer base and create a sustainable business.

For those already established in the market, the findings underscore the need for continuous innovation and responsiveness to customer preferences. A mix of custom-made and ready-made products will help businesses cater to diverse consumer needs and preferences. Moreover, keeping pace with market trends, such as the growing demand for multifunctional furniture, will allow owners to stay competitive. Understanding the local market segments and using market knowledge to refine their marketing strategies and customer relationships will further strengthen their position. Established owners can maintain a competitive edge in the marketplace by leveraging their unique resources, including craftsmanship skills and familial legacy.

➤ *Business Positioning Strategy*

This category presents the strategies used by furniture shop owners to establish and maintain their place in a competitive market. Many owners focus on offering personalized furniture solutions, such as multifunctional pieces designed for small spaces to specific household needs—features that mass-market producers often do not provide. These custom solutions reflect superior craftsmanship, helping build strong customer relationships and long-term loyalty.

Shop owners also seek customer feedback to improve their products and services continually. They ensure their offerings stay relevant and valuable by responding to inquiries and adjusting designs based on customer input. These strategies help them meet customer expectations and attract new clients who appreciate personalized service. After collecting and analyzing the data on the strategies of the shop owners, the researchers identified the following two sub-categories: Business Strategies for Staying Competitive and Digital Engagement Strategies.

Business Strategies for Staying Competitive. One of the key strategies for establishing a competitive advantage is focusing on product differentiation through high-quality offerings and customized solutions. By offering bespoke furniture that meets specific customer needs, shop owners add unique value that mass-produced.

"Ang importante sa akong negosyo mao ang craftsmanship. Every piece should not only be beautiful but also long-lasting." [The key to my business is craftsmanship. Every piece should not only be beautiful but also durable."] -P2

"Ang mga materyales namo kay mga lig-on siya dayon nindot pagkabuhat kay para ma satisfied gud sila ba." [Our materials are durable and well-made to ensure customer satisfaction.] -P4

"Nag focus gud mi nga offering high-quality product. Nag-offer sad mi og personalized furniture nga mo fit sa balay sa mga customers."

[We focus on offering high-quality products and personalized furniture that fits the customer's home.] -P9

The data reveals that one of the primary strategies for achieving competitive advantage is focusing on differentiation through high-quality and customizable products. Participants emphasized craftsmanship, material durability, and customer satisfaction as key components in their offerings. This focus on quality and the ability to provide personalized products that align with customer preferences distinguishes these businesses from mass-produced alternatives. Participant P2 stresses craftsmanship and durability as essential qualities of the products, ensuring long-lasting and aesthetically pleasing furniture. Participant P4 highlights the use of strong materials and attention to craft to ensure customer satisfaction. Participant P9 notes that the business focuses on offering high-quality, personalized products that meet customers' specific needs and preferences.

These findings indicate that furniture shop owners differentiate their offerings by emphasizing the uniqueness and durability of their products and the customization aspect, which caters directly to customer demands. The emphasis on product quality and customization suggests that furniture shop owners are utilizing differentiation to distinguish themselves from competitors in the market. By offering products that are not only high in quality but also adopt to customers' individual needs, these owners are creating added value that larger mass-market furniture stores cannot replicate. This allows them to carve out a niche for their businesses in a highly competitive market, ultimately improving customer loyalty and satisfaction.

Each business within an industry desire to be superior to its competitors. That is why each company develops its capability to make its activity unique and different from others (Bogers et al., 2019). On the other hand, other studies add the idea that in more specific aspects, literature is a way to focus on the organizational environment's processes, practices, and decision-making activities to support critical persons to act entrepreneurially (Wales et al., 2020).

Digital Engagement Strategies. In today's competitive market, digital marketing and customer trust are vital tools in sustaining business success. Furniture shop owners in

Pagadian City strategically utilize digital platforms, particularly Facebook, to promote their products, gain visibility, and build customer trust through transparency and consistent engagement.

"Sa social media, dako kaayo ang impact sa pag promote sa negosyo. Ang mga pictures sa actual products amoang ginapost para makita nila ang kalidad." [On social media, it has a significant impact on promoting the business. We post pictures of the actual products so they can see the quality.] -P5

"Akong strategy kay kanang mag sige lang ko ug upload sa Facebook kung unsay mga actual photo ug actual delivery namo..." [My strategy is to constantly upload actual photos and deliveries on Facebook to build trust and show our work.] -P8

"Gina prioritize nako ang customer feedback ug pirme ko nagapangita og ways nga ma-improve ang among serbisyo ug produkto pina-agi sa online." [Prioritize customer feedback and am always looking for ways to improve our service and products through online platform.] -P9

Furniture shop owners in Pagadian City have adopted digital engagement to promote their products and build customer trust. Participant P5 highlighted the significant impact of social media in promoting their business by posting pictures of actual products to showcase quality. Similarly, Participant P8 mentioned their strategy of consistently uploading photos of actual deliveries on Facebook to maintain transparency and strengthen customer trust. Meanwhile, Participant P9 emphasized the importance of customer feedback in their operations, stating that they continuously look for ways to improve their service and products based on the insights they gather from clients. These responses show that using digital platforms like Facebook is a marketing tool and a space for building credibility and maintaining strong relationships with customers.

The data suggests that digital engagement, particularly through social media, has become a strategic necessity for furniture businesses to remain competitive in a local market. By showing actual product photos and delivery outputs, shop owners create a sense of authenticity and reliability, which customers appreciate. Furthermore, the inclusion of customer feedback in business operations reflects a customer-centric approach, allowing owners to adapt quickly to preferences and expectations. This digital presence enhances brand visibility and fosters loyalty through open communication and personalized service. The analysis indicates that digital engagement is more than visibility. It is a meaningful way to establish trust and sustain long-term customer relationships.

The study found that market orientation, entrepreneurial orientation, and innovation contributed to leveraging the competitiveness of small furniture producers. With this model, market orientation is found to have a

positive and significant effect on innovation and competitiveness, both with a small and medium effect. Interestingly, the relationship between entrepreneurial orientation and innovativeness shows a positive, significant, and dominant structural causal relationship in the model, with a small effect (Jusni et al., 2023). It also agreed that even small businesses must focus on the process that could create value or behaviors with a fast response to any opportunity (Chavez et al., 2020).

The findings of this study strongly align with the Resource-Based View (RBV) theory, which emphasizes the importance of leveraging unique internal resources to achieve a sustainable competitive advantage. The data reveals that furniture shop owners utilize their craftsmanship, product customization, and strategic use of social media as valuable resources to stand out in a competitive market. For example, emphasizing durable materials and bespoke furniture aligns with the RBV principle of using unique capabilities to create superior value. Similarly, leveraging digital marketing and customer relationship management systems demonstrates how intangible resources, like customer trust and brand reputation, contribute to long-term success. These strategies exemplify the RBV's premise that small businesses can compete effectively by focusing on their distinct resources rather than engaging in direct price competition with more prominent manufacturers or imported products.

Small furniture businesses can address challenges by forming long-term partnerships with reliable suppliers and exploring alternative sourcing methods to mitigate cost fluctuations and ensure a steady material supply. Differentiating through value communication, such as educating customers on their products' durability, quality, and customization, is essential to compete against large manufacturers and imported goods. Leveraging digital platforms to showcase craftsmanship and gather customer testimonials can enhance market visibility and trust. Additionally, adopting value-based pricing and flexible payment options can make premium products more accessible to a broader audience, fostering customer loyalty and ensuring business sustainability.

➤ *Challenges of the Furniture Shop Owners*

Price competition from large-scale manufacturers and rising raw material costs create significant challenges for business owners. Sourcing affordable materials like wood, paint, and hardware becomes difficult due to market shifts, often leading to price adjustments that impact product costs. To stay competitive, owners must strategically manage expenses while highlighting the value of their products, emphasizing quality, uniqueness, and longevity to attract and retain customers.

Shop owners also face significant operational challenges that affect their ability to maintain quality and competitiveness. Rising raw materials costs and the presence of mass-produced alternatives require them to adopt effective strategies to manage production without sacrificing product standards. By balancing material

sourcing, production costs, and value delivery, they continue meeting customer expectations while preserving profitability. After collecting and analyzing the data, the researchers identified two sub-categories: High-Priced, Raw Materials and Quality Matter to Customers.

High-Priced, Raw Materials. One of the critical operational challenges is the high-quality raw materials. Effective supply chain management is crucial to maintaining production timelines, controlling costs, and delivering quality products without compromising profitability.

"Usahay mag lisod kami sa pagkuha og affordable raw materials kay nagdepende mi sa mga suppliers' nga taas ang presyo." [Sometimes we struggle with getting affordable raw materials because we depend on suppliers with high prices.] -P3

"Ang mga pintal ug uban raw material kay permi mo taas ang presyo. Usahay lisod ma maintain ang affordable pricing samtang mag produce ug [nindot] nga produkto." [The prices of paint and other raw materials always increase. It's sometimes hard to maintain affordable pricing while producing high-quality products.] -P7

"Dili mi maka siguro sa supply ug sa presyo sa mga materyales... mag depende ra gihapon sa supplier." [We can't always secure the supply and pricing of materials... it still depends on the supplier.] -P6

"Labi na ang mga kahoy ug kahintang sa merkado sa mga materiales. Minsan mo taas ang presyo sa kahoy, pero nagapangita gihapon ko ug pamaagi para mapugngan ang pagtaas sa presyo." [Especially with wood and market conditions of materials. Sometimes the price of wood increases, but I keep looking for ways to prevent price hikes.] -P8

Participants emphasize that sourcing high-quality raw materials and managing price fluctuations are recurring challenges. Dependency on suppliers with high pricing and volatile market conditions affects the ability to maintain consistent production schedules and affordable pricing. Participant P3 mentions struggles in sourcing affordable materials due to dependency on high-priced suppliers. Participant P7 points out that increasing prices of essential materials like paint affects their ability to keep prices affordable while maintaining product quality. Participant P6 highlights the unpredictability of material supply and pricing, which depends mainly on the supplier's availability and terms. Participant P8 elaborates on the fluctuating cost of wood and their continuous efforts to find alternative solutions to control rising expenses.

This situation demonstrates that supply chain inefficiencies and external market factors can directly impact production capacity and long-term profitability. The lack of control over raw material costs creates financial strain and operational bottlenecks, necessitating innovative strategies to mitigate these challenges.

The findings reflect the vulnerability of small businesses to external market dynamics. Shop owners' heavy reliance on suppliers leaves them with limited options to absorb cost increases, which directly impacts pricing and customer satisfaction. Moreover, fluctuating raw material costs could compromise production timelines, resulting in potential delays and reduced customer trust. Addressing these issues requires building adaptive supply chains and exploring alternatives to traditional sourcing methods, which could enhance operational resilience and business stability.

Quality Matter to Customers. Shop owners face stiff competition from large-scale manufacturers and imported furniture. They focus on delivering high-quality products that meet local preferences to stand out. By offering items built to last, they gain customer trust and loyalty. They take a strategic approach to pricing the value and uniqueness of their craftsmanship to justify their offerings in a competitive market.

"Kanang mga online nga naga baligya ug [furniture], daghan naman gud kaayo na karon... Naa say mo ingon sa amoa nga mas maayo nalang gud daw magpa himo or sa kanang [furniture shop] mo palit kay [dali] ra daw sa online maguba." [There are so many online sellers now... Some customers say it's better to have custom pieces made or buy from a local shop, because online items tend to break faster.] -P4

"Ang mga furniture gikan sa dako nga manufacturers ug imported products pareho sa sa Korean store... Usahay mas mahal siya, pero kinahanglan nako ipasabot sa mga customers ang value sa quality nga ila madawat." [The furniture comes from large manufacturers and imported products, similar to those in Korean stores... Sometimes it's more expensive, but I need to explain to the customers the value of the quality they will receive.] -P9

Participants shared that quality are key customer concerns when choosing where to buy furniture. P4 noted that despite the abundance of online sellers, customers often prefer local furniture shops or custom-made options because online purchases are perceived as less durable and more prone to damage. This highlights consumer trust shifting towards products they can personally inspect and assess. P9 echoed this sentiment by emphasizing how they explain to customers the value behind higher-priced items, especially those that are imported or made by large manufacturers. The participant believes that communicating the long-term benefits of quality materials can justify a higher price point and help retain customers.

The responses suggest that customers prioritize value for money, with a focus on durability and product reliability. This places pressure on furniture shop owners to offer quality products and effectively communicate their worth, especially when competing with cheaper online or imported alternatives. By building trust through transparency and educating buyers on product value, shop owners can set themselves apart and foster long-term customer loyalty. This strategy reflects an important business approach where

quality is used as a competitive advantage in a price-sensitive market.

The findings of this study strongly align with the Resource-Based View (RBV) theory, which emphasizes the importance of leveraging unique internal resources to achieve a sustainable competitive advantage. The data reveals that furniture shop owners utilize their craftsmanship, product customization, and strategic use of social media as valuable resources to stand out in a competitive market. For example, emphasizing durable materials and bespoke furniture aligns with the RBV principle of using unique capabilities to create superior value. Similarly, leveraging digital marketing and customer relationship management systems demonstrates how intangible resources, like customer trust and brand reputation, contribute to long-term success. These strategies exemplify the RBV's premise that small businesses can compete effectively by focusing on their distinct resources rather than engaging in direct price competition with more prominent manufacturers or imported products.

Small furniture businesses can address challenges by forming long-term partnerships with reliable suppliers and exploring alternative sourcing methods to mitigate cost fluctuations and ensure a steady material supply. Differentiating through value communication, such as educating customers on their products' durability, quality, and customization, is essential to compete against large manufacturers and imported goods. Leveraging digital platforms to showcase craftsmanship and gather customer testimonials can enhance market visibility and trust. Adopting value-based pricing and flexible payment options can make premium products more accessible to a broader audience, fostering customer loyalty and ensuring business sustainability.

➤ *Coping Strategies and Adaptation to Challenges*

Owners strengthen their businesses by building strong relationships with suppliers and customers, ensuring steady cash flow through negotiated payment terms and flexible options. Many take on multiple roles to reduce labor costs and keep operations running smoothly during financial challenges. They embrace innovation by staying informed about industry trends, integrating modern technology, and using sustainable materials to align with customer preferences. This adaptability helps them maintain a competitive edge while meeting evolving market demands.

This category explores furniture shop owners' coping strategies to address operational and competitive challenges. It focuses on how they adapt to external difficulties and find ways to continue operations effectively. After collecting and analyzing data about the coping strategies encountered, the researchers arrived at the following sub-categories: Sustaining Business Finances and Product Improvement.

Sustaining Business Finances. Many owners face financial constraints, mainly when unexpected challenges like fires or raw material shortages occur. They have learned

to manage resources effectively and prioritize expenses to keep their businesses afloat during difficult times.

“Sa akong gina-ingon wa juy mga kausaban sa mga presyo nako bisan pag naay mga huhulga sa ako nga maabot. Nagpadayon jud ko sa presyo aron ang customer nako permanenting mo duol nako ug dili mawala. Ug saktong lang ang pag tagad sa mga customer. Maka ingon jud nga bisan unsa pa siya nga klase sa tawo parihason jud na nimo tanan, mao na nga ang imong customer permanente gud na mo duol sa imoha”. [As I've mentioned, there have been no changes in my prices even though there are threats that it might increase. I have continued with the same price so that my customers will always come back to me and won't leave. I also make sure to give proper attention to all my customers. I can truly say that no matter what type of person they are, you should treat them all the same, and that's how your customers will always stay loyal to you.] – P5

“Naabot ang panahon nga nasunog ang among shop. Nabalaka kayo ko tungod sa kwarta na akong na invest. Tungod ato naningkamot pag sugod ug balik. Nag take risk ko ug mo invest ug balik para mabalik ang among negosyo. Gigamit nako akong gamay nga savings” [There came a time when our shop was burned down. I was really worried because of the money I had invested. Because of that, I made an effort to start over. I took the risk and reinvested to bring our business back. I used my small savings to do it.] - P8

The data shows furniture shop owners face financial constraints, especially when unexpected challenges like fires or raw material shortages arise. Many owners have developed a high level of resourcefulness, such as adjusting their sales strategies, repurposing orders, and even praying for products to be resold. This demonstrates the owners' ability to prioritize capital recovery in difficult times. For instance, one participant shared that they resold products if orders were not taken to recoup their investment. Similarly, despite a fire that devastated one participant's shop, they managed to rebuild and recover their business despite lacking initial capital, demonstrating resilience and financial adaptability. The ability to find creative ways to overcome financial setbacks reflects their competence in managing limited resources to keep the business operational.

The findings suggest that sustaining business finances goes beyond simple budgeting; it involves a combination of adaptability and resourcefulness in the face of adversity. Furniture shop owners have learned to move through the unforeseen challenges with strategic decision-making, including reselling products and rebuilding after significant losses, such as the fire incident. These coping mechanisms demonstrate how the owners' ability to quickly assess their financial situation and make adjustments plays a vital role in sustaining business operations. The resourcefulness displayed in these situations may reflect the owners' deep understanding of their market and financial conditions, enabling them to keep their businesses running during challenging periods.

Organizations may struggle to integrate new technologies, data sources, and business models into their infrastructure, leading to inertia and resistance to change (Odulaja et al., 2023). To succeed in the furniture industry, you need an efficient marketing strategy to drive customers and make them loyal (Luong, 2022). It is also justified that having this strategy may improve business, including furniture. According to Olarewaju, O., & Msomi, T. (2021), operational challenges affecting SMEs, such as poor financial awareness, inadequate budgeting and accounting skills, and limited access to finance, are prevalent among various sectors, including furniture businesses. Many furniture business owners face difficulties in managing finances, which leads to poor budgeting, inaccurate financial planning, and an inability to secure necessary funding. These issues are not unique to the furniture industry but are shared across small businesses, impacting their growth and long-term sustainability.

Product Improvement. Successful owners demonstrated flexibility in their business operations, adapting to market changes, offering innovative designs, and adjusting to customer demands. The ability to innovate is important for competing with cheaper alternatives and sustaining customer interest.

“Gusto namo nga taga bulan mag upgrade mi kay kana man gud diha sa [page] akong reseller ga dala ang mga new design namo.” [We want to upgrade every month because that’s where our reseller brings our new designs.] -P7

“Ginapaningkamotan nako nga maka establish og nindot nga relationships sa mga supplier’s para makakuha og nindot nga quality materials nga barato ra ang prices.” [I’m trying hard to establish good relationships with suppliers so I can get high-quality materials at affordable prices.] -P9

Improving products is an important aspect of successful business management in the furniture industry. Several owners have shown they can stay competitive by continuously adapting their business practices, offering innovative designs, and adjusting to customer demands. For example, one participant highlighted the importance of updating designs monthly through their reseller to keep up with market trends. Another owner spoke about fostering good relationships with suppliers to secure high-quality materials at affordable prices, allowing them to maintain a competitive edge.

The data suggests that flexibility and innovation are indispensable for furniture shop owners aiming to sustain customer interest and remain competitive in a challenging market. By consistently updating their product offerings and maintaining strong supplier relationships, these owners can provide fresh, high-quality furniture that meets evolving customer preferences. This helps them differentiate themselves from more prominent manufacturers or imported goods and keeps their business operations fluid and responsive to changes in demand. This flexibility and

innovation ensure that the business remains relevant and adaptable in an increasingly competitive environment.

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The findings suggest that effective financial management goes beyond simple budgeting; it involves a combination of adaptability and resourcefulness in the face of adversity. Furniture shop owners have learned to face unforeseen challenges with strategic decision-making, including reselling products and rebuilding after significant losses, such as the fire incident. These coping mechanisms demonstrate how the owners' ability to quickly assess their financial situation and make adjustments plays a vital role in sustaining business operations. The resourcefulness displayed in these situations may reflect the owners' deep understanding of their market and financial conditions, enabling them to keep their businesses running during challenging periods.

Organizations must continuously innovate their business models to differentiate themselves, capture market share, and defend against emerging threats to remain competitive. Regulatory changes and industry disruptions often necessitate business model innovation to comply with new regulations, address emerging market trends, and capitalize on regulatory-driven opportunities (O’Leary et al., 2021). It also explores other strategies that may align with improving their furniture. Knowing Strategies for Digital Transformation Implementing digital transformation initiatives requires careful planning, strategic alignment, and strong leadership commitment (Ajayi-Nifise et al., 2024). Manifesting the best strategies to cope with the existing problems is essential.

The findings of this study are consistent with the Resource-Based View (RBV) theory, which posits that businesses gain a competitive advantage by utilizing unique internal resources and capabilities. The financial management strategies, such as adapting to market conditions and resourcefully handling financial challenges, can be viewed as vital internal capabilities that help these small furniture shops survive and thrive. Furthermore, the emphasis on flexibility and innovation aligns with the RBV theory, which suggests that businesses should leverage their creative abilities and resources to maintain a competitive edge. The ability of these shop owners to innovate, adapt,

and utilize their unique resources (such as supplier relationships and product designs) reflects their capacity to use their internal resources effectively to achieve long-term success.

The study's findings offer actionable recommendations for furniture shop owners and stakeholders in the industry. First, small furniture shop owners should continue developing strong relationships with suppliers and invest in innovative designs to differentiate their products. Regularly updating product offerings will help attract and retain customers, ensuring businesses remain competitive. Additionally, owners should implement strategies for financial management that prioritize flexibility and resilience, especially in times of crisis, such as contingency plans and alternative sources of capital. For policymakers and industry stakeholders, supporting small businesses by offering resources or guidance on accessing affordable raw materials and securing financing is important. Lastly, creating a platform for collaboration between small furniture shops and suppliers could enhance market stability, reduce costs, and promote innovation across the industry.

➤ *Future Plans for Business Growth*

The future plans of furniture shop owners provide insight into their ambitions for growth, product development, and market adaptation. These plans are essential for understanding how the owners intend to sustain their success and competitive advantage in the ever-changing furniture industry. The shop owners' goals show a strong focus on expanding their businesses, improving their product offerings, and embracing technological advancements to stay competitive.

Based on the responses, their plans are driven by their commitment to maintaining high product quality and adapting to market trends. These plans include exploring new markets, developing new products, and upgrading production processes. Owners recognize the importance of innovation, customer feedback, and continuous improvement to stay ahead in the industry and attract a more extensive customer base. The following are the significant subcategories: Business Expansion Strategies, Design Innovation, Product Variety and Adopting Digital Marketing.

Business Expansion Strategies. A key theme in the future plans of several participants is the intention to expand their businesses into new locations or reach new customer segments. Many of the shop owners are focused on growing their businesses through geographical expansion or by opening new branches. These steps are seen as essential to tapping into new markets and increasing sales. For example, one participant plans to expand into Zamboanga, while another owner aims to open additional branches within Pagadian City. Expansion will allow them to cater to more customers and enhance their market presence.

“Nagplano ko nga magbukas pa ug lain nga branch sa mga kasikbit nga lungsod aron makaserbisyo sa daghang customers. Nagkadako ang panginahanglan sa furniture,

gusto ko nga apil ko anang pagdako.” [I am thinking of opening another branch in nearby cities to serve more customers. The demand for furniture is growing, and I want to be part of that growth.] –P1

“Gipa-consider pa namo nga magbukas ug branch sa mga kasikbit nga probinsya. Naghunahuna ko nga ang pag-expand maghatag ug daghang visibility ug makahatag ug oportunidad sa pagbaligya sa bag-ong merkado.” [We’ve been considering branching out to nearby provinces. I believe expanding will give us more visibility and open up opportunities to sell to new markets.”] –P4

“Plano mi mag-expand sa Zamboanga kay dako ang merkado, ug naa mi’y partner didto nga motabang mag-set up.” [We are planning to expand our business to Zamboanga because the market is large, and we have a local partner who will help us set up.] –P6

The data highlights a recurring theme of expansion as a key strategic goal among furniture shop owners. Several participants emphasized plans to open branches in neighboring cities and provinces, with the intention of tapping into untapped markets, catering to increased customer demand, and boosting business visibility. For example, P1 focuses on serving more customers in nearby towns, recognizing the rising demand for furniture. P4 aims to expand to adjacent provinces to access new markets, while P6 targets Zamboanga, citing its large market potential and support from a local partner. These planned expansions are grounded in the belief that growth in geographical presence will lead to greater sales and brand visibility.

The participants’ focus on expansion reflects an entrepreneurial mindset and a proactive approach to capitalizing on market opportunities. This strategy also aligns with the increasing demand for locally manufactured furniture, which motivates owners to extend their reach beyond their immediate locales. Expanding to new areas enables businesses to diversify their customer base, reduce dependency on a single location, and remain competitive in the face of growing competition from imported goods and large manufacturers. Furthermore, the inclusion of local partnerships, such as P6’s plan for Zamboanga, shows the importance of collaborative efforts to mitigate risks and ensure a smoother transition into new markets.

The entrepreneurial aspirations of furniture shop owners to expand their businesses into neighboring cities and provinces align with the literature emphasizing growth and sustainability. For example, Kompella (2024) suggests that incremental, interactive, and spiral expansion strategies contribute to economic growth and sustainability. This aligns with P1’s and P6’s plans to establish branches in nearby cities like Zamboanga to cater to rising demand and enhance visibility. Similarly, Drieschner et al. (2025) highlight the importance of developing entrepreneurial skills to manage business growth stages, such as survival, growth, and expansion. These stages resonate with the participants’

proactive efforts to tap into new markets and ensure long-term viability.

Moreover, the concept of leveraging local partnerships, as seen in P6's collaboration with a Zamboanga partner, reflects the orchestration strategy recommended by Kompella (2024), which emphasizes building value-driven business models through partnerships. Additionally, the growing demand for sustainable and locally produced goods, as noted by Drieschner et al. (2025), provides an avenue for these businesses to capitalize on expanding markets while staying competitive.

By aligning their business plans with these principles, furniture shop owners not only aim to diversify their customer base but also mitigate risks associated with operating in a single location. This strategy demonstrates an awareness of market dynamics and a readiness to adapt to broader economic trends, as emphasized in the reviewed literature Design Innovation, Product Variety. Another significant aspect of their future plans is product diversification. Furniture shop owners want to offer a wider variety of products to meet the growing demands of their customers. This includes introducing new furniture designs, offering custom-made pieces, and incorporating more multifunctional furniture. By expanding their product range, these owners aim to provide more options and cater to different customer needs. One participant expressed plans to introduce eco-friendly furniture options, while another is interested in making furniture suited for smaller living spaces.

"Plano mi nga mag-diversify ngadto sa office furniture kay dako na ang demand sa corporate sector. Nagtuo ko nga makahatag ni ug bag-ong mga kliyente." [We plan to diversify into office furniture as there's an increasing demand in the corporate sector. We believe this could attract new clients.] -P2

"Gusto mi maghimo ug custom designs para sa mga customer, ilabi na sa mga espesyal nga hangyo. Ang paghatag ug unique nga estilo maghatag ug competitive edge." [We want to create more custom designs for customers, especially for those with unique requests. Adding unique styles will give us a competitive edge.] -P3

"Plano mi nga magdugang ug outdoor furniture ug office furniture aron masatisfy ang mga customer nga nanginahanglan ug lain-laing klase sa produkto." [We plan to add outdoor furniture and office furniture to meet the needs of customers who are looking for different types of products.] -P9

The data highlights that product diversification is a key component of the future plans of furniture shop owners. Participants aim to meet the increasing and varied demands of their customers by offering a wider array of products. P2 is focused on diversifying into office furniture to tap into the growing corporate sector demand. P3 plans to create more custom designs, especially for customers with unique requests, believing that unique styles can provide a

competitive edge. P9 has expressed interest in adding outdoor and office furniture to broaden their product offerings and cater to diverse customer preferences.

The emphasis on product diversification demonstrates the shop owners' proactive approach to adapting to changing market demands. By introducing new furniture designs, custom-made pieces, and specialized items like office and outdoor furniture, they aim to attract a broader customer base and enhance customer satisfaction. This strategy not only caters to the functional and aesthetic preferences of different customers but also positions the businesses as versatile and innovative players in the furniture market. Offering unique styles and multifunctional designs allows these businesses to stand out in a competitive landscape while addressing specific market segments such as eco-conscious customers and those with limited living spaces.

The findings emphasize the importance of product diversification among furniture shop owners to meet customers' growing and varied demands. Shop owners plan to introduce new furniture designs, custom-made pieces, and multifunctional furniture to cater to specific market segments, such as eco-conscious customers and those with limited living spaces. Additionally, participants aim to diversify into office furniture, outdoor furniture, and specialized designs to provide a competitive edge and broaden their customer base.

Barua and Lockee (2024) highlighted the growing necessity of flexibility and diversification in design, emphasizing its relevance in adapting to changing demands. Their study demonstrated that incorporating adaptability and diversification in design, such as adjustments to content, pace, and offerings, enhances engagement and meets the needs of an evolving and diverse demographic. Similarly, furniture shop owners' focus on customizable and multifunctional designs mirrors the need for flexibility and innovation in product offerings, addressing customer-specific preferences.

Bagli and Serifoglu (2022) discussed integrating intervention-based design processes in education, which aligns with the idea of enhancing, changing, and adding functionality to existing products. This approach parallels the strategies of furniture shop owners who aim to create custom designs and multifunctional furniture to meet unique customer demands. Their plans to expand into specialized products, such as eco-friendly furniture or designs suited for smaller living spaces, resonate with the principles of sustainability and open-source innovation explored in the study.

Carberry et al. (2024) explored the role of design thinking and user feedback in product development, which emphasizes leveraging customer insights to refine and improve designs. This principle aligns with the plans of furniture shop owners to adapt their offerings based on customers' preferences and demands, such as incorporating

unique styles or addressing the specific needs of corporate and residential spaces.

The alignment of these studies with the findings highlights that the proactive approach of diversifying product offerings and introducing innovative designs is not only a growth strategy but also a response to an increasingly diverse and demanding market.

Adopting Digital Marketing. Several participants also highlighted the importance of adapting to new technologies and industry trends. The integration of technology in production processes, marketing strategies, and customer engagement is becoming increasingly necessary to maintain competitiveness. For instance, some shop owners are focusing on improving their online presence to reach more customers. Others are planning to invest in modern production equipment to streamline operations and ensure product quality. Technology allows these businesses to stay relevant and respond quickly to changing consumer demands."Nagsugod na kami sa paggamit sa Facebook ug Instagram aron ipromote ang among furniture. Sa umaabot, gusto mi nga maghimo ug website para sa diretsong order aron mapadali ang proseso sa customer." [We've started using Facebook and Instagram to market our furniture. In the future, we want to develop a website for direct orders to make it easier for customers.] -P5

"Ang strategy namo mao ang mag-invest sa mas maayo nga equipment sa produksyon ug gamiton ang digital marketing aron mapataas ang sales ug customer engagement." [Our strategy is to invest in better production equipment and use digital marketing to increase sales and customer engagement.] -P7

"Nagplano kami nga gamiton ang digital tools sa design process aron makapadayon sa customer expectations. Sa pagtaas sa online shopping, plano usab mi nga mag-invest sa e-commerce." [We aim to incorporate digital tools into our design process to keep up with customer expectations. With the rise of online shopping, we also plan to invest in e-commerce.] -P8

The data underscores the growing emphasis on integrating technology and aligning with market trends among furniture shop owners. Participants recognize the necessity of adopting digital tools, modern equipment, and online platforms to remain competitive. P5 has started promoting its furniture on social media and envisions creating a website for direct customer orders, streamlining the purchasing process. P7 plans to invest in advanced production equipment and utilize digital marketing to boost sales and engagement. Similarly, P8 intends to incorporate digital tools into its design process and invest in e-commerce to capitalize on the increasing trend of online shopping.

Adopting digital marketing reflects the shop owners' commitment to innovation and efficiency. Leveraging social media platforms like Facebook and Instagram allows them to expand their reach and engage with a broader audience.

Developing websites and adopting e-commerce systems will streamline operations and improve the customer experience by offering convenient and accessible purchasing options. Investments in modern production equipment enhance operational efficiency, ensuring high-quality products and meeting evolving consumer expectations. Furthermore, the use of digital tools in design processes demonstrates a forward-thinking approach to catering to customers' specific needs in an increasingly digitalized market landscape.

Adopting digital marketing, as observed among the furniture shop owners in the study, reflects the broader global emphasis on leveraging digital tools to enhance competitiveness and respond to changing demands. Participants in the study noted the integration of digital marketing, e-commerce platforms, and modern equipment to streamline operations and improve customer engagement. For instance, P5 highlighted using social media platforms like Facebook and Instagram to promote furniture and expressed plans to develop a website for direct orders. Similarly, P7 and P8 emphasized investing in production equipment and e-commerce systems to meet consumer expectations and capitalize on online shopping trends.

This finding aligns with Tan, Lin, and Zhuang's (2024) research, which underscores the importance of adapting to digital advancements to meet the demands of a digitalized environment. Their study on Digital Learning Competence (DLC) among vocational school students highlights the necessity of integrating technology into various aspects of education and skill-building to prepare individuals for a technology-driven market. Similarly, transitioning to a digitalized system in vocational settings is crucial for aligning with global market trends and workforce demands.

Further, Stringer, Lee, Sturm, and Giacaman (2024) emphasize the global shift towards preparing individuals for the labor market by adopting digital technology curricula. Integrating technology into professional and educational practices is essential for Business Expansion, Growth Strategies and enhancing digital competence, which is reflected in the strategies of shop owners who adopt digital marketing and modern equipment to remain competitive in the furniture industry.

Additionally, Pearce, Chadwick, and Francis (2024) highlight the importance of adapting technological advances to practical applications. Their study demonstrates how experiential learning activities incorporating low-cost environmental sensors enhance geographical skills and align with the field's digital needs. Similarly, the furniture shop owners' adoption of digital tools in design processes and production parallels the importance of applying technology to improve their respective industries' skills, processes, and outcomes.

These studies support the need to adapt to technological trends and invest in digital tools to ensure competitiveness, efficiency, and alignment with modern educational and industry demands. The Resource-Based View (RBV) theory provides a helpful framework for

understanding how furniture shop owners' strategies for business growth, product diversification, and technological adaptation contribute to their sustained competitive advantage. RBV emphasizes leveraging internal resources—such as skills, knowledge, and innovative capabilities—to achieve and maintain market leadership. For example, the shop owners' focus on expanding to new markets, investing in modern equipment, and integrating digital tools aligns with the RBV principle of utilizing unique, valuable, and inimitable resources to respond to changing industry demands. By capitalizing on their ability to innovate and adapt, these businesses position themselves as resilient and competitive players in the furniture market.

Embracing RBV underscores the importance of identifying and enhancing core competencies that differentiate furniture shops from competitors. For practitioners, this means prioritizing investments in technology, staff training, and market analysis to ensure long-term relevance and success. For policymakers and business support agencies, fostering environments that encourage innovation and resource optimization—such as providing access to digital tools or financial support for equipment upgrades—can drive local businesses' growth and contribute to the broader economic development of the furniture industry. Moreover, supporting businesses adopting advanced production methods and e-commerce platforms can improve operational efficiency and customer reach. Encouraging collaboration among local businesses, such as sharing resources or forming partnerships, can also enhance their collective ability to compete in larger markets. Ultimately, these initiatives not only sustain individual business growth but also strengthen the overall competitiveness of the local furniture sector.

IV. CONCLUSION

The success and sustainability of furniture shop owners in Zamboanga del Sur stemmed from their resilience and adaptability. Many started with limited resources, learning through experience and perseverance. They navigated challenges such as rising material costs, competition, and natural disasters by relying on faith and a strong work ethic. Over time, their ability to overcome these obstacles and their commitment to supporting local economies and skilled carpenters contributed to their enduring success.

Key strategies included focusing on quality craftsmanship, offering durable products, and customizing based on customer preferences. Strong relationships with customers, built on honesty, consistent pricing, and loyalty, led to repeat business. Competitive pricing, effective use of social media, and treating employees like family were also crucial. Moving forward, some owners planned to expand their product offerings or open new outlets, while others focused on sustaining their businesses for future generations.

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