

Revealing the impact of covid-19 on MSMEs in the culinary sector

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Abstract

Purpose: The study aims to investigate the impact of COVID-19 on culinary entrepreneurs within Micro, Small, and Medium Enterprises (MSMEs) in the Rawamangun district and their business continuity strategies during the pandemic.

Methods: This qualitative study uses a case study approach, collecting data through observation, interviews, and documentation validated via triangulation. The analysis follows the Miles & Huberman model, encompassing data reduction, presentation, and verification.

Findings: The study finds that COVID-19 has caused revenue declines for culinary MSMEs in Rawamangun. Entrepreneurs utilized online platforms (Grab Food, Go Food, Shopee Food) and social media marketing to survive. Emphasizing consumer trust, they ensured products were hygienic and safe while adhering to health protocols like social distancing and cleanliness.

Practical Implications: his research highlights the importance of culinary MSMEs adapting to COVID-19 by using online delivery platforms to maintain sales. Ensuring food hygiene and quality helps rebuild consumer trust and sustain business in a changing market.

Keywords: Covid-19, culinary MSMEs, and business strategy

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Abstrak

Tujuan: Penelitian ini bertujuan untuk menyelidiki dampak COVID-19 terhadap pengusaha kuliner dalam Usaha Mikro Kecil Menengah (UMKM) di distrik Rawamangun, serta strategi keberlangsungan bisnis yang diterapkan selama pandemi.

Metode: Studi kualitatif ini menggunakan pendekatan studi kasus dengan pengumpulan data melalui observasi, wawancara, dan dokumentasi, yang divalidasi melalui metode triangulasi. Analisis mengikuti model Miles & Huberman, mencakup reduksi data, penyajian, dan verifikasi.

Temuan: Hasil penelitian menunjukkan bahwa COVID-19 telah menyebabkan penurunan pendapatan bagi UMKM kuliner di Rawamangun. Untuk bertahan, pengusaha memanfaatkan platform online (Grab Food, Go Food, Shopee Food) serta pemasaran melalui media sosial. Dalam membangun kepercayaan konsumen, mereka memastikan produk yang ditawarkan higienis dan aman, sambil mematuhi protokol kesehatan seperti menjaga jarak dan kebersihan.

Implikasi Praktis: Penelitian ini menekankan pentingnya UMKM kuliner beradaptasi dengan COVID-19 melalui platform pengiriman online untuk menjaga penjualan. Menjaga kebersihan dan kualitas makanan membantu membangun kembali kepercayaan konsumen dan keberlanjutan bisnis.

Kata Kunci: Covid-19, UMKM kuliner, dan strategi bisnis

1. Introduction

Micro, Small, and Medium Enterprises (MSMEs) are small-scale businesses carried out by individuals or business entities with a certain amount of net worth and sales proceeds by the criteria stated in Law No. 20 of 2018. MSMEs have a significant role and impact on the Indonesian economy's development. Starting from the crisis in Indonesia in 1997-1998, the dollar exchange rate crisis occurred, which resulted in an economic recession in Indonesia.

The development of MSMEs when this crisis occurred did not impact MSMEs because small businesses do not require significant capital or use foreign currency. MSMEs play an essential role in supporting the Indonesian economy when large companies close their businesses, but MSMEs can survive amid the crisis; even micro-business actors experienced an increase after the crisis that occurred in 1997-1998 (Holy, 2017).

This COVID-19 pandemic situation can be a challenge and even an opportunity for the government to maintain the pace of economic growth in Indonesia. This situation dramatically affects the income of MSME actors in Indonesia. Therefore, the role of government policies is vital in supporting MSME actors in surviving the pandemic. During the COVID-19 situation in April 2020, the government received reports from 37,000 MSME players whose businesses were affected by COVID-19. About 56% reported sales declines, 22% funding problems, 15% goods distribution, and 4% raw material problems (Rahman, 2020).

COVID-19 has made many companies adjust government regulations, such as implementing health protocols known as social distancing, reducing employees, and

changing operating hours. This also influences MSME actors who rely on labor as an intensive means of production. The COVID-19 pandemic has brought about market changes, encouraging MSME players to apply digital technology to their sales systems. This can help to minimize losses caused by social distancing regulations, reduced workforce, and limited operating hours. For example, in public places or offices and places to eat, currently implementing social distancing and implementing mandatory hand washing before entering the place (Paunescu & Matyus, 2020).

Many previous researchers have researched SMEs. However, being associated with the impact of the occurrence of COVID-19 is still very rare. Therefore, it is interesting to re-examine this research. The difference with previous research is that this study uses a qualitative interview method. The second difference is the object of research conducted in the culinary sector.

2. Case Description

Micro small and Medium Enterprises

The definition of Micro, Small, and Medium Enterprises (MSMEs) has been established by various institutions and agencies, including legal frameworks. The most recent legislation regarding MSMEs in Indonesia is Law No. 20 of 2008. According to Article 1 of this law, micro-enterprises are productive businesses owned by individuals and/or business entities that meet specific criteria. Small businesses are characterized as independent, productive economic activities carried out by individuals or entities that are not subsidiaries or branches of companies owned, controlled, or affiliated directly or indirectly with medium or large businesses that meet the defined criteria for small businesses. Meanwhile, medium enterprises are independent, productive economic activities conducted by individuals or entities that similarly are not subsidiaries or branches of companies owned, controlled, or affiliated with small or large businesses, and they must adhere to the stipulated criteria regarding total net assets or annual sales.

Culinary SMEs

A culinary business is a food and beverage trading activity carried out by individuals or groups with an organized plan to profit by producing and selling goods or services to meet the community's needs. Starting a business in the culinary sector does not require high costs or capital. Therefore, this culinary business is an opportunity for many SMEs. The culinary business continues to develop because there are always the latest ideas and innovations in the culinary business. These ideas and innovations in culinary endeavors are usually considered culinary trends. The existence of this culinary trend can be an attraction for many people at large to try menus with new recipes and innovations (Hidayatullah et al., 2018)

COVID-19

COVID-19 is a disease caused by Severe Acute Respiratory Syndrome (SARS-CoV2). World Health Organization (WHO) or the World Health Organization officially declared the coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic on March 9, 2020. COVID-19 can cause mild or moderate symptoms followed by symptoms of fever and cough, which can then recover within a few weeks. However, this virus can bring severe symptoms in the elderly or those who have a history of chronic diseases, such as high blood pressure, heart disease, or diabetes. (WHO, 2020).

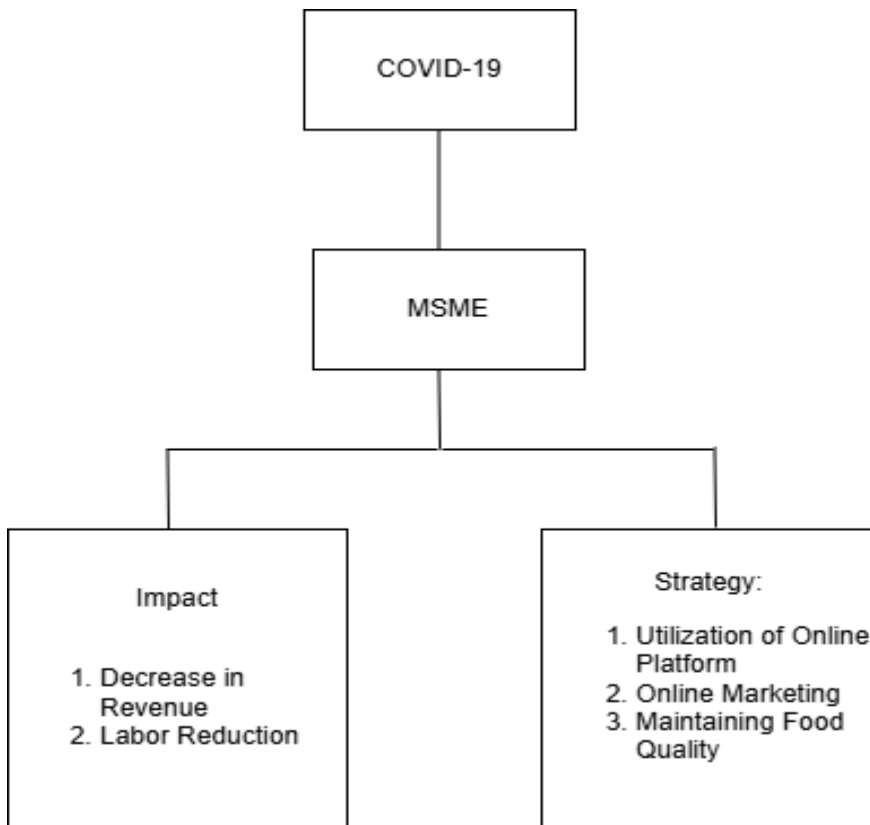


Figure 2. 1. Research Conceptual Framework

3. Methods

3.1. Data Collection Method

In this study, the data is divided into two categories: primary data and secondary data. In this study, the samples consist of five MSME actors in the culinary sector whom Covid-19 has impacted. The selected samples are as follows:

1. Taufikul Ahdi - Owner of the Seger Bor beverage business.
2. Siti Khotima - Owner of the Tea Poci Berkah Franchise.
3. Wati - Owner of Warung Makan Bagus.
4. Diyon Saputra - Owner of the Nasi Uduk Rabbah business.
5. Ayu Tantry - Owner of the Uleg Rawamangun Fazza Chili Chicken Noodle business.

These individuals were chosen to provide insights into the challenges and strategies faced by MSMEs in the culinary sector during the pandemic. The researchers employed appropriate data collection techniques, including observation, interviews, and documentation, to obtain valid data in this study.

3.2. Research Stages

This research comprises several stages, including the pre-field, field process, data analysis, and reporting stages. In the pre-field stage, researchers prepare for data collection by formulating questions for informants and scheduling interviews. The field

process stage involves gathering data directly from the field, where researchers utilize interviews and document observations through field notes and photographs with informants. In the data analysis stage, researchers analyze the collected data by transcribing interviews and organizing the information systematically for clarity and coherence. Finally, in the reporting stage, researchers compile their findings into a narrative text, culminating in a thesis that presents the conclusions drawn from the fieldwork.

3.3. Data Analysis Method

This study employed qualitative research methods. In this context, data analysis involves examining the collected information to derive insights and conclusions. To achieve this, the Miles and Huberman model is utilized, which comprises three activities: data reduction, presentation, and verification. First, data reduction is employed to filter key and relevant information. Subsequently, data presentation organizes this information to enhance clarity and understanding. Finally, conclusions are drawn from the verified data, although tentative. This study focuses on SMEs in the culinary sector of Rawamangun and aims to understand the impact of COVID-19 through detailed recording and presentation of findings.

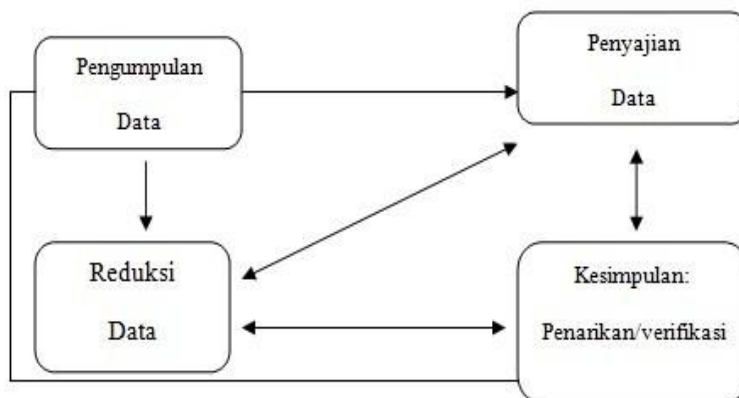


Figure 2. Miles & Huberman Model Analysis

4. Results and Discussion

Strategy for the Sustainability of Culinary MSMEs in the Pandemic Period

MSMEs effectively survived the 1997-1998 crisis and have continued to grow annually (Holy, 2017). Interviews with five informants revealed that business income drastically decreased during the pandemic. However, despite the decline in sales, MSME owners managed to sustain their businesses for approximately 18 months during the pandemic. Strategies identified from these interviews for maintaining business continuity during this challenging period include various adaptive measures.

Utilization of online platform

MSMEs in the culinary sector in the Rawamangun area are among the busiest culinary destinations. Before the COVID-19 pandemic, this area was always crowded with people hunting for culinary delights, especially in the late afternoon and evening. Many business

owners kept their businesses open until midnight. However, after the COVID-19 outbreak, the situation changed drastically. With the implementation of PSBB (Large-Scale Social Restrictions), business owners had to close their operations earlier, at 9 PM. This situation forced MSMEs to adapt and find ways to survive.

One of the strategies implemented was utilizing online platforms. An interview with Mr. Taufikul Ahdi, the Fresh Bor beverage business owner, revealed how online platforms played a crucial role in sustaining his business: "I personally feel that my business has been greatly helped during the pandemic by joining Grab Food and Go Food. I have been a member since I started my business in May 2019. In my opinion, during the pandemic, 80% of my sales came from online sales. In addition to utilizing online sales, I introduced new flavor variants to my drinks so customers would not get bored. Then, to keep my business running, I offered a promotion – buy two special glasses and get one free every Friday. Thank God my business has been able to survive during this pandemic."

This statement indicates that Mr. Taufikul successfully maintained his business over a year during the pandemic by leveraging online platforms. This study aligns with the research by Ezizwita Sukma (2021), which suggests that product diversification strategies are essential for culinary MSMEs to survive the pandemic. Product diversification is the effort to introduce new variations tailored to consumer preferences. In this case, Mr. Taufikul added new flavors to his drinks to retain customers.

Furthermore, online platforms played a vital role in business sustainability during the pandemic. Platforms like Grab Food, Go Food, and Shopee Food allow business owners to reach a broader customer base without relying on walk-in customers. These services enable MSMEs to continue operating even when public mobility is restricted due to social distancing policies.

Mr. Diyon Saputra, the owner of the Nasi Uduk Rabbah business, adopted the same strategy. In an interview, he shared how he managed to sustain his business during the pandemic. Mr. Diyon Saputra stated, "My business survived this pandemic because I registered my business as a Go Food business partner. During this pandemic, 80% of sales came from online sales. My sales continued to increase when I joined as a Shopee Food merchant. In addition to using Go Food and Shopee Food to maintain my business, I also do online marketing through Instagram and social media. So I promoted through an Instagram account with many followers."

Mr. Diyon Saputra has seen a notable increase in sales since joining Shopee Food, launched by Shopee in January 2021. As a key player in the food delivery service sector, Shopee Food intensifies competition against platforms like Go Food and Grab Food, driving consumer interest through attractive promotions.

Promotional offers include free delivery (up to Rp. 12,000) and a 50% discount (up to Rp. 20,000) on orders over Rp. Forty thousand boost Diyon's sales by encouraging larger orders. For example, his chicken and rice package costs Rp. 15,000 directly but is priced at Rp. 18,000 on Shopee Food. Customers who order three packages (usually Rp. 54,000) benefit from discounts resulting in just Rp. 24,000 total, compared to Rp. 45,000 if bought directly. These discounts provide savings for customers and significantly increase sales for merchants like Diyon on Shopee Food.

During the pandemic, business owners experienced varying impacts from

online sales platforms. Mrs. Ayu Tantry emphasized the importance of prayer and good deeds in maintaining her business. She stated, "If I want to maintain my business during this pandemic, the main thing is to pray and do good deeds. I also take advantage of online sales such as Go Food and Grab Food and recently joined Shopee Food. Online sales during this pandemic have greatly increased because people now have to keep their distance, so more online transactions exist. Then I also do paid online promotions through Instagram social media." This indicates that online platforms have benefited some culinary SMEs during the pandemic, enabling easy transactions and outreach to a broader audience.

Conversely, Mrs. Siti Khotima, owner of the Teh Poci Berkah franchise, shared a contrasting experience. She remarked, "When it comes to online sales, it's even quieter during this pandemic. I used to use the Grab Food application to sell. But since the pandemic, I haven't used it anymore because it's very quiet for online sales. Maybe it's because I only sell tea drinks this time." Her experience highlights that online platforms do not universally aid all culinary MSME actors. Moreover, profit-sharing agreements can deter small businesses, mainly when the product's low price points make online sales less appealing.

In contrast, Mrs. Wati, the owner of Warung Bagus, did not engage with online sales, stating, "I don't use online sales because I don't understand, and it seems difficult to register and use the application." While research indicates that e-commerce can positively influence small businesses, a lack of knowledge often hinders these enterprises from leveraging online platforms effectively. Thus, business owners must adapt to the digital landscape to foster growth during challenging times.

Online marketing

In addition to using online platforms, businesses also rely on online marketing to survive during the pandemic. Mrs. Ayu Tantry, owner of Chili Chicken Noodle Uleg Rawamangun Fazza, shared her strategy: "I use Instagram for online marketing, specifically paid promotions on @inforawamangun, which has many local followers. I usually choose a Rp. 50,000 package for two posts, and the results are quite effective since the audience is from the Rawamangun area."

The researcher supports Mrs. Ayu Tantry's choice of online marketing to sustain her business during the pandemic. Strauss and Frost (2001) define online marketing as using data and applications for effective distribution, pricing, and promotion to create value for buyers and sellers. In the digital age, it offers customers a fast and broad reach. With technology's advancements, marketing can now disseminate information rapidly.

Instagram is a popular platform among users, making it a go-to for business promotion. Mr. Diyon Saputra, owner of Nasi Uduk Rabbah, also utilizes Instagram for advertising, participating in paid promotions like @inforawamangun and Instagram's own affordably priced advertising features. He notes that even if immediate sales aren't guaranteed, his business's visibility increases significantly.

Mr. Diyon and Mrs. Ayu use paid promotions, paying prominent accounts to boost their visibility. Instagram's advertising capabilities can reach thousands of users daily, and increased budgets extend this reach. The promotional strategies employed

by Mr. Diyon and Mrs. Ayu can serve as a model for other business owners looking to survive during the pandemic. Interviews with them illustrate that online marketing is crucial for MSMEs during these challenging times.



Figure 1. Instagram Online Marketing Example

Maintaining food quality

During this pandemic, cleanliness is the most essential thing to maintain. The virus spreads quickly and is invisible, so people must be vigilant while maintaining cleanliness and health. In the culinary business, cleanliness and food quality are the main things culinary business actors must do. In an interview with Mr. Diyon Saputra regarding the strategies carried out during the pandemic to maintain his business, Mr. Diyon also mentioned maintaining food quality. The following is Mr. Diyon's statement: "In addition to using online sales and online marketing, during a pandemic like this, of course, the most important thing is to maintain the image of the taste of the food we sell. Every day, I ensure the food I sell is fresh and delicious. With good food, the customer will buy again. And what is no less important and related to the taste of the food is to keep your place of business clean."

The researcher agrees with Mr. Diyon's statement that during this pandemic, it is essential to maintain the quality of food by keeping the image of the taste of the cuisine and maintaining the cleanliness of the place of business. According to Kotler (2010) and Suhartanto & Hidayat (2018), food quality is an ability to express work results that match or exceed customer expectations. Furthermore, Knight and Kotschhevar (2000) and Suhartanto & Hidayat (2018) revealed that food quality can be achieved by setting standards and then paying attention to the points that must be considered to see the quality achieved. These points include correct recipes and

measurements, food preparation, utensils, food conditions during preparation, food hygiene, portions, and other factors.

The same thing was done by Mrs. Wati, the owner of the Warung Bagus business, to maintain her company during the pandemic. Mrs. Wati's statement follows: "Yes, I can only take care of the taste of the food. That's all I can rely on during a pandemic like this. Moreover, the side dishes I sell are not just one kind. Of course, we have fresh side dishes every day, so cooked buyers still want to buy them here. That's why the stock of side dishes has now been reduced. If not, then I love to throw it away. It's because you can't sell it again tomorrow, Mba."

The researcher agrees with Mrs. Wati's steps to reduce the availability of the food she sells, which shows his concern for the quality of the food he sells. The results of the research above align with Mahmuddin's research (2020), which states that this pandemic created a PSBB policy that impacted a decline in sales. Due to declining sales, sellers reduce food availability to avoid significant losses. Just like the two informants above, Ayu Tantry also did the same regarding maintaining food quality.

Mrs. Ayu Tantry's statement follows: "When there is a pandemic like this, we are also required to maintain cleanliness, Mba. So people are not afraid to buy food outside. In addition, maintaining the taste of food is very important. Because people are worried about looking for clean food, they should be able to get good food, too. If it's a matter of taste, let the customer rate Mba. Thank God our sales conditions can return to normal because we pay attention to the taste of the food we sell."

Mrs. Ayu Tantry's rapid business recovery cannot be separated from the delicious taste of the food. Mie ayam itself is a favorite food for Indonesian people. With processing expertise and secret ingredients that became the branding of his business, his business recovered so quickly. The good taste of business products owned by Mrs. Ayu Tantry can be seen from the ratings on online platforms and Google. If a business is registered on Google, the chance to survive is quite large. This is because everyone looks for information through a device called Google. By typing the business's name in the Google search field, it will appear, along with its ratings and reviews.

The rating that appears on Google will help customers choose food. Based on the rating, the customer will judge whether the food is worth trying or not. Ratings also give customers an idea of the taste of the dishes being sold. At the first location on Jalan Jati, Mie Ayam Cabe Uleg Rawamangun Fazza has a rating of 4.7 out of 5, while at the branch on Jalan Tawes, Mie Ayam Cabe Uleg Rawamangun Fazza has a rating of 4.3 out of 5.

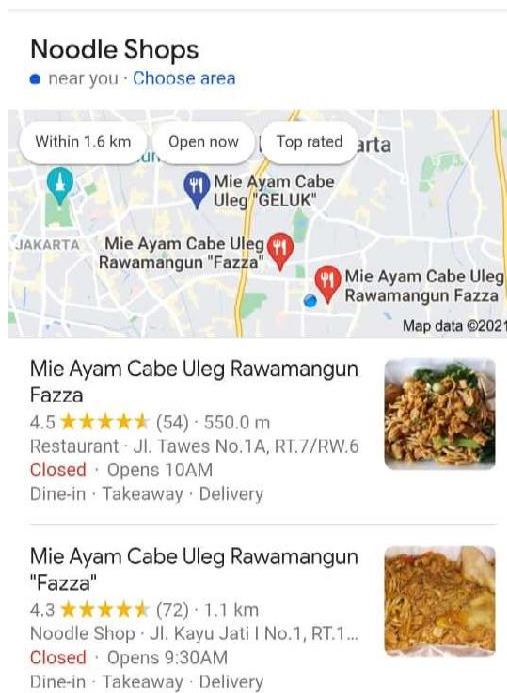


Figure 4 2 Rating Display of Uleg Chili Chicken Noodles Rawamangun Fazza

Source: Google

High food quality is crucial for boosting customer repurchase interest. The increasing number of culinary businesses intensifies competition, necessitating a strong focus on customer satisfaction, especially during the pandemic. Culinary businesses must meet customer expectations by providing high-quality, healthy, and varied Food at competitive prices and excellent service. This approach helps reassure customers and encourages them to feel confident buying Food outside during these challenging times.

Like what Mrs. Siti Khotima did to maintain the quality of the drinks she sells, in the interview, Ibu Siti Khotima told how to maintain the quality of the drinks she sells. Mrs. Siti Khotima's statement: "Since this pandemic, all I can do to stay afloat is to maintain the quality of the drinks I sell, Mba. In the past, I ordered from an ice cube maker for the ice cubes. Now I'm better off making my ice cubes from gallon aqua water. Let's keep the ice clean, Mba. I'm afraid that if you still buy ice cubes in conditions like this, many buyers will get stomachaches because the cleanliness of the ice cubes is not maintained."

The researcher supports Mrs. Siti Khotima's approach to maintaining the quality of her drinks during the pandemic. This aligns with Ezizwita & Sukma (2021), who noted that while the pandemic offers MSMEs opportunities to explore new markets, it has also led to a significant decline in sales. However, it can strengthen MSMEs by encouraging better hygiene in processing and packaging. Thus, food quality and hygiene have become critical priorities during this pandemic, and maintaining these standards is a key strategy for businesses to sustain their operations.

5. Conclusion

This research sheds light on the significant impact of COVID-19 on in the culinary sector in the Rawamangun area. The findings indicate that the pandemic resulted in a drastic 50% decline in sales and income among MSME actors and reduced job opportunities. MSMEs have adopted various survival strategies to navigate these challenges, predominantly leveraging online platforms such as Grab Food, Go Food, and Shopee Food. These platforms, alongside effective social media marketing via Instagram, have allowed MSME actors to reach a broader customer base and sustain their businesses. Maintaining food quality and hygiene remains crucial for attracting and retaining customers during this period.

In light of these findings, it is advisable for culinary SMEs that have yet to explore online business avenues to seek guidance and training on utilizing online platforms. This step is essential for enhancing their resilience during the ongoing pandemic. Furthermore, for future researchers in this domain, it is emphasized that understanding the specific environment and challenges faced by MSMEs is vital. By fostering better communication with informants and digging deeper into relevant questions, future studies can yield richer insights and contribute more effectively to the discourse on MSME resilience in the culinary sector during such unprecedented times.

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