



Spill the Tea: Current Conditions and External Factors Affecting EnTEApreneurs in Lagawe, Ifugao, Philippines

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Abstract

Entrepreneurship is crucial to rural development. Utilizing community resources, boosting local economies, and enhancing company capacities are all necessary for rural development. As a result, this study presents the current conditions and external factors affecting enTEApreneurs in Lagawe, Ifugao as a basis for a thorough recommendation towards a sustainable herb tea industry in the locality. Specifically, this study explored current conditions of the herb tea enTEApreneurs based on One Town One Product Criteria. Moreover, this study determined the access to finance, technology, market, social infrastructures, and environmental factors among herb tea enTEApreneurs. To achieve the stated study aims, both qualitative and quantitative methods were employed. A researcher-made questionnaire with eight (8) enTEApreneurs as well as key informant interviews with five (5) local government unit officials and government agency representatives were used to gather information and shed light on stated objectives. Based on the One Town One Product (OTOP) in the Philippines using weighted means and inductive analysis, findings revealed that local tea herb products are in good condition as reflected in their product quality, product design, packaging and labeling, marketing strategies, branding, production, delivery, and financial capability, innovations, good customer experience and integration of cultural value to their product and processes. Additionally, enTEApreneurs have access to a range of governmental infrastructure supports in terms of the commercial, social, and technical spheres. However, it can be noted that enTEApreneurs do not have access to finance provided by identified government agencies. Thus, enTEApreneurs started to develop their products to meet the needs and standards of consumers and other agencies towards reaching a larger market, making herb tea products to have the potential to be widely distributed and recognized. With this, thorough recommendations in areas of current condition and external factors affecting the business were forwarded to identified government agencies and to enTEApreneurs to strengthen the tea industry in the locality for sustainable rural development.

Keywords: Access to Finance, Cultural Value, Entrepreneurship, Herb Tea EnTEApreneurs, One Town One Product, Product Potentials

Introduction

COVID-19 tested the worldwide network and it is still fighting and recovering for its survival. It affects how people communicate, work, produce, exchange, consume, and live worldwide (Yap, 2020).

Similar problems brought about by the pandemic are also being suffered by the so-called “less favored” areas, primarily the interior and mountainous, requiring creative solutions (Fink et al., 2017). To cope with environmental turbulence of this magnitude, organizations must manage their capabilities by sensing, seizing, and transforming their resources and processes (Hamsal & Ichsan, 2020).

Based on the bottom-up development theory, one viable response to the economic crises in developing countries is to stimulate and sustain development in rural regions (Claymone & Jaiborisudhi, 2011). Entrepreneurship efforts that could positively influence rural regions are part of a larger rural development strategy (López et al., 2019).

In the case of rural folks, they become grassroots innovators to solve their community’s challenges by devising sustainable development solutions through entrepreneurship (Paul & Sharma, 2013), especially in times of crises and uncertainties. Entrepreneurship is seen as an essential component of society’s progress, including developing sustainable rural areas (Pato, 2020).



A perfect example of rural entrepreneurship promoting rural development is Japan's One Village One Product (OVOP) (Miagina et al., 2021). After the successful implementation in neighboring nations, the Philippines has been pushed to embrace One Village One Product (OVOP) in 2017, named One Town One Product (OTOP) then became OTOPI Next Gen subsequently. This enables localities and communities to determine, develop, support, and promote culturally-rooted products or services where they can be the best at or best renowned for to become sustainable (National Economic and Development Authority, 2022; OTOPI Program Management Office, Department of Trade and Industry, n.d.).

In the Philippines, one of the rural areas that aim for sustainable economic development is Lagawe, Ifugao. Lagawe, Ifugao capitalizes on local products, services, and resources to improve the local community's welfare. Community members' creativity and productivity in using local resources, such as human resources, raw materials, commodities, technology, and local culture, are critical in their business operations (Malinao, 2021; Malinao, 2022). The municipality is fortunate to have fertile soil that is suited for farming, giving the area a competitive edge in high-value commercial items including coffee, citrus, tomatoes, subtropical vegetables, passion fruit, and indigenous herbs, among others. The economy is blessed with healthy biodiversity and flora whose many species have been shown to have therapeutic properties (Cities and Municipalities Competitive Index, Department of Trade and Industry, 2022).

Patients with limited access to conventional medications and those looking for holistic techniques for health and well-being typically turn to indigenous herbs as their primary form of therapy. With the expanding involvement of science and technology in the ethical and scientific development of herbal products, usage is rising on a worldwide scale. The necessity to strategically plan the production, use, and regulation of herbal goods like tea products in the nation is brought on by the rising market demand for herbal treatments, both domestically and abroad (Zarsuelo et al., 2018). A developing niche market has been reached by popular beverages made from plant materials, such as next-generation tea and tea, coffee, and chocolate (Chandrasekara & Shahidi, 2018).

Due to its extensive use, tea is a substantial source of polyphenols for human consumption. Tea is one of the least expensive drinks available and is consumed by people of all ages and social classes (Chen et al., 2020; Nurmilah & Utama, 2022). With a vast variety of tea products accessible, tea production is an industry that faces intense competition on a global scale. As consumer demand rises, product and process development must advance and provide more options to satisfy the needs and desires of the market. The tea business must step up its game in response to these difficulties by offering additional options to satisfy customer demand. The Philippines has a potential market for the manufacture of herbal tea. Filipinos have a long-standing tradition of drinking herbal teas because they think it would enhance their health. Ginger, lemongrass, guyabano, banaba, malunggay, ampalaya, pito-pito, and many more herbal teas are popular among Filipinos and are now sold on the market. Utilization of locally available resources for the production of food and drink is on the rise because there are thousands of different herbs in the country (Mamaril et al., 2016).

Despite their enormous nutritional potential, native herb tea preparations are generally severely underutilized. Therefore, it is also crucial to investigate the potential of locally produced herbal teas because they represent a vast source of biologically active substances with a variety of chemical structures and potential health benefits (phytochemicals) (Sazon, 2022).

According to Malinao (2022), both internal and external factors may have an impact on how well an enterprise performs. The traits of the business owner or entrepreneur, the way the firm runs, and the product itself are all



internal components. One outside force that an entrepreneur cannot control is the support from numerous public and private entities. These elements are essential for a company to become sustainable.

The relevant agencies need to collaborate, be well coordinated and supportive, as well as to give high priority to facilitating the needs and prerequisites of the players in the tea industry to support the development and growth momentum of an endogenously driven industry of local treasures. Thus this study explored current conditions and access to external factors affecting enTEApreneurs in Lagawe, Ifugao, Philippines. Specifically, this study explored current conditions of the herb tea enTEApreneurs based on One Town One Product Criteria. Moreover, this study determined the different governmental support such as access to finance, technology, market, social infrastructures, and environmental factors among herb tea enTEApreneurs as an impetus for thorough recommendations in areas of current condition and external factors affecting the business to strengthen the tea industry in the locality for sustainable rural development.

Methods and Materials

This study employed qualitative and quantitative research techniques. In particular, the qualitative method was used to examine the current conditions of enTEApreneurs in terms of product quality, product design, packaging and labeling, marketability, branding, production and delivery capacity, financing, innovation capability, cultural value, and customer experience through participant interviews with business owners. The descriptive quantitative research design, on the other hand, was perfect for gaining a thorough understanding of the extent of external factors support from the various government agencies, including access to finance, technology, market, social infrastructure, and environmental factors affecting enTEApreneurs.

Lagawe, the capital of Ifugao, serves as the region's economic and financial hub. Even yet, the town's main industry is agriculture, which produces rice, sweet potatoes, herbal remedies, and vegetables. The area is rich in culture, native raw resources, and enterprising individuals who have the skills and abilities necessary to create unique goods suitable for both local and international markets, such as culinary products, handicrafts, and wooden furniture. Lagawe is the perfect location for the study because of these qualities.

The DTI provided a list of registered companies doing business in Lagawe, Ifugao. There's a total of 256 registered entrepreneurs in the locality. This study used purposive sampling, wherein criteria sampling was used to identify the research group. Based on the evaluation criteria, the main research participants were the eight (8) registered proprietors of locally produced herb tea goods in Lagawe, Ifugao, Philippines. The One Village One Product initiative of Japan served as inspiration for the selection criteria utilized to choose the research participants. To back up assertions about the current conditions for locally created tea products in the several barangays in Lagawe, Ifugao, a thorough description of the products was obtained. Additionally, as to the support given to enTEApreneurs in terms of external variables highlighted in the study, five (5) representatives became part of the study. Representatives for DTI through LGU-Lagawe, DTI, DA, DOLE, and DOST joined the study.

A redesigned questionnaire based on publicly available research was utilized to ascertain how external affect the enTEApreneurs in each barangay in Lagawe, Ifugao. The 4-point Likert scale was used to design the questionnaire on the degree to which various external conditions influence enTEApreneurs. The validation method (facial and content validity), which included expert pooling, refining, field testing, and reliability tests, was applied to redesigned questionnaires. The reliability test was determined through Cronbach's alpha. The minimum acceptable value for Cronbach's alpha is .70. Below this value, the internal consistency of the standard range is low. Meanwhile, the



maximum expected value is 0.95; above this value is perceived as redundancy or duplication. Several products precisely measure the same construct element; redundant components must be removed (Taber, 2018).

Table 1 presents the sources and tests of Reliability of the Research Questionnaire.

Table 1 Sources and Test of Reliability of Research Questionnaire

Indicators	Sources	Items	Cronbach's Alpha	Remarks
Whole Questionnaire	-	66	.942	Excellent
Access to Finance	Manzoor et al. (2021)	11	.924	Excellent
Access to Technology	Chen et al. (2020)	17	.832	Good
Market Access	Francisco & Canare (2019)	11	.907	Excellent
Social Infrastructure	Akinyele et al. (2016)	15	.770	Acceptable
Environmental Factors	Rogerson (2013)	11	.707	Acceptable

Since Cronbach alpha > 0.700 of the whole instrument, the set of 66 measures of the instrument is adequate for group measurement using SPSS. The Cronbach's alpha for each variable is presented in Table 1. As demonstrated in the table, the reliability test results for each of the five scales were at least 0.7, indicating acceptable reliability or internal consistency. The tool as a whole and by sections are valid and reliable.

In the qualitative stage, the semi-structured interview form was utilized for the various government entities supporting tea enTEApreneurs to validate conclusions from the quantitative data collected on access to external variables by tea enTEApreneurs.

Open coding was initially done under the conditions of enTEApreneurs utilizing the One Town One Product Framework, and subsequently, product descriptions were documented. The amount to which enTEApreneurs are impacted by outside influences was processed using SPSS, where descriptive analyses were carried out using weighted means. Findings from the study's quantitative portion were validated and corroborated by qualitative features. To gauge the degree to which various external factors influence enTEApreneurs, mean scores were employed.

Results

Current Conditions of Herb Tea EnTEApreneurs

1. Product Quality

The term "product quality" relates to the product's core functions, the likelihood that they will continue to be performed well over time, and the product's dependability or shelf life, including any quality control methods. According to Zarsuelo et al. (2018), production guidelines for herb tea products are particularly important as prescribed by the country's Food and Drug Administration (FDA).

The herbal tea goods made by local businesspeople in Lagawe, Ifugao, are of high quality. Herbal tea products are often drunk to improve consumers' overall health and well-being. Antioxidants are present in herbal tea products. Products made with herbs have stable quality (taste) throughout time. Herbal tea products typically have a shelf life of six months to a year. The majority of business owners make sure that their completed goods are of high quality by using clean, consistent manufacturing processes and good-quality raw materials. Pure turmeric tea, ginger tea, turmeric with ginger and lemon grass tea, hopal tea, pure banaba tea, and ginger and lemongrass tea underwent phytochemical analysis to ensure the safety of consumers. However, all products are not FDA-approved.

All products provide satisfactory performance at an acceptable price at a reasonable cost.



2. Product Design

Product design focuses on the visual aesthetics of the product packaging, labeling, and branding as well as design aspects including shape, color, form, and texture.

Generally, the product designs of all herb tea products are appealing and attractive. Product designs for each product are unique and consistent. It can be noted that Ginger and turmeric tea powder uses an exact clear image to indicate the main ingredient used in the development, such as turmeric, and ginger. Moreover, product designs for both products are legibly printed on the panel's top display. It can also be observed that the colors used for each product design are also based on the color of the main ingredient—the combination of blue and orange for turmeric tea and yellow–white for ginger tea. Font sizes for labels are proportionate to the size of the packaging material.

On the other hand, Pure turmeric tea, ginger tea, turmeric with ginger and lemon grass, hopal tea, pure banaba tea, and ginger and lemongrass tea products use yellow and green for most of their products, while the black–orange background is used for hopal tea. Pure turmeric tea, ginger tea, turmeric with ginger and lemon grass, hopal tea, pure banaba tea, and ginger and lemongrass tea bear images to enhance product design, such as turmeric, hopal, banaba, lemongrass, and ginger, to indicate the primary material used. More so, Pure turmeric tea, ginger tea, turmeric with ginger and lemon grass, hopal tea, pure banaba tea, and ginger and lemongrass tea have a noticeable brand logo.

3. Packaging and Labeling

Packaging and labeling refer to the sufficiency and correctness of the information or product identification according to the One Town One Product framework. The term “product packaging” refers to the substance used to enclose or safeguard items for usage, sale, distribution, and storage. While the term “product labeling” refers to the observance of legal labeling requirements including being sufficient, accurate, readable, and conspicuous so they stand out from the backdrop.

3.1 Packaging

All herb tea products have their packaging. Ginger and turmeric powder teas use plastic jars.

Both herb tea products are also properly sealed. Sealants are barriers or means of protection that excludes dust, dirt, moisture, and chemicals from penetrating the product and thus, are an important factor for safe and secured packaging. Meanwhile, pure turmeric tea, ginger tea, turmeric with ginger and lemon grass, hopal tea, pure banaba tea, and ginger and lemongrass tea use primary and secondary packaging. Primary packaging used is the tea envelopes and pouches, covered with sealed plastics, while the secondary packaging used is boxes. Other herbal products use doypacks as secondary packaging.

Tea bags' characteristics, whether herbal or not, increase their relevance and importance. Its accessibility also contributes to its importance (Yildirim et al., 2017). Customers' perceptions of the effectiveness and acceptability of tea bags can be influenced by the type of paper used, its pore size, shape, loading capacity, holding duration, and temperature (Bassi et al., 2020).

3.2 Labeling

On the other hand, all products offered and produced in the different barangays in Lagawe, Ifugao, have visible and prominent labels. Brand names are clear and readable. Net weights or content are also specified. However, only Pure turmeric tea, ginger tea, turmeric with ginger and lemon grass, hopal tea, pure banaba tea, and ginger and lemongrass tea contain ingredients used, directions for use and storage, nutritional contents, and contact numbers of manufacturers for food recall in cases there are problems or defects for their product.



All products from the enterprises, though, do not contain the warnings and advisory statements and declaration, and the date markings for their manufacturing date and the expiry date, which is an essential component of food product labels.

4. Marketability

Marketability evaluation is the market penetration strategy, four 4s of marketing, product differentiation, positioning strategy, and availability of marketing/business plan.

4.1 Market Penetration Strategy

Herbal teas from Lagawe, Ifugao, come in various delicious flavors and are naturally made. Many herbal teas also offer health-promoting effects. Incidentally, modern science has begun to validate some of its traditional uses. Being so, the target markets for herbal teas are health-conscious consumers 35 years old and above.

4.2 Product

In terms of materials, the raw ones make good product quality, thus serving as a strategy to attract customers. In connection, all herb tea products claim that their products are all-natural, thus making them different from their competitors.

4.3 Price

All herb product enTEApreneurs use production cost per unit to price their products. According to the participants, products are a bit pricey because of the raw materials such as turmeric, ginger, lemon grass, hopal, banaba, etc.

4.4 Place/ Distribution

To make it easier for their clients, all herb product enTEApreneurs make sure that their items are offered by their partner retail outlets and at the OTOP Hub-Lagawe. To distribute the goods on consignment, on credit, or in cash, both employ direct and indirect methods. Their actual store for product sales is their production facility.

4.5 Promotion

Additionally, Facebook is the most popular social media site used by manufacturers of herbal remedies to advertise their goods. Additionally, they think that positive word-of-mouth is the most effective means of promoting a positive view of the company.

The Pre-Christmas Selling Fair in Lagawe Town Plaza in November 2021 is one of the several trade shows that the Department of Trade and Industry and the local government unit of Lagawe, Ifugao actively sponsor.

4.6 Product Differentiation/ Positioning

Herb tea business owners think that by using a consistent manufacturing method and creating high-quality goods, they can differentiate themselves from the competition. Nevertheless, not every business selling herbal products has a marketing plan or positioning strategy.

5. Branding

Branding refers to the trademark registration of the goods as well as the availability of the brand name and logo. Each herb tea product has a distinctive brand identity, which is evident in its brand name. Additionally, business owners utilized the main component of each product that was named after it. To be distinctive, differentiate itself from competitors, and prevent misunderstanding among its target customers, every company utilizes a powerful brand name. All are significant because they convey the core of the brand, and all are understandable since they are simple to speak, pronounce, and spell. This might be a result of frequent training programs like the capacitation on business branding offered to local business owners by the Department of Trade and Industry-



Ifugao. The main goal of the training was to empower business owners to develop strong brand names. Additionally, pure turmeric tea, ginger tea, turmeric with ginger and lemon grass, hopal tea, pure banaba tea, and ginger and lemongrass tea are exclusively registered in DTI. In contrast, ginger and turmeric tea powder is registered in DTI and LGU.

6. Production and Delivery Capacity

Production and delivery capacity refers to the maximum output that can be achieved in producing manufactured goods, consistency of supply to consumers, availability of logistics (storage and transportation), and network (Fu et al., 2012).

Depending on the distribution method employed by the business, herb tea producers in the several barangays of Lagawe, Ifugao, have a range of production or volume capacities. A total of 500–550 jars per month is being produced for Ginger and turmeric tea powder as they supply varied OTOP hubs in the Philippines through the help of DTI–Ifugao. In comparison, Pure turmeric tea, ginger tea, turmeric with ginger and lemon grass, hopal tea, pure banaba tea, and ginger and lemongrass tea produce 100–150 boxes per month as they supply nearby partner retail stores. Ginger and turmeric tea powder products are available in different OTOP hubs in the Philippines like Baguio, Santiago, Kalinga, and Bontoc. In comparison, Pure turmeric tea, ginger tea, turmeric with ginger and lemon grass, hopal tea, pure banaba tea, and ginger and lemongrass tea products are available in Lagawe Trading, OTOP hub Lagawe, Kay–and Hill, and BJ’s Souvenirs. According to all enTEApreneurs, they stopped their production and supply of products during the lockdown. They only continued operation in January 2021 but catered to made–for orders only, depending on the customers’ demands.

All enterprises offer delivery for bulk orders only with additional fees within and outside the province. Products are sent through public utility buses, jeeps, or any vehicle.

Accordingly, all enTEApreneurs have a storage area for their finished products. They use their production centers as their storage area.

7. Financial Capabilities

The evaluation of financial competence focuses on keeping track of revenue and expenses, being able to create and evaluate financial statements, having access to budget plans, and conducting inventories.

It can be noted that all enterprises monitor their income and expenditures and track the money coming in and out of business through proper and regular bookkeeping. The Department of Trade and Industry– Ifugao helps Ginger and turmeric tea powder prepare income tax returns. In contrast, Pure turmeric tea, ginger tea, turmeric with ginger and lemon grass, hopal tea, pure banaba tea, and ginger and lemongrass tea products prepare the basic financial statements like income and cash flows. According to Ginger and turmeric tea powder, there is no formal budget plan for the business, but it has plans to improve the packaging of its products. On the other hand, Pure turmeric tea, ginger tea, turmeric with ginger and lemon grass, hopal tea, pure banaba tea, and ginger and lemongrass tea prepare a simple budget plan for every production, usually every month. There is no proper budget allocation for product improvements but may allocate if there are chances for product development. Ginger and turmeric tea powder availed private loans for the continuation of the production of the business. Payment for the borrowed money is being deducted from their income. Inventories are being conducted by the owner and helper of the company, usually every six months for Ginger and turmeric tea powder enterprises, while every week for pure turmeric tea, ginger tea, turmeric with ginger and lemon grass, hopal tea, pure banaba tea, and ginger and lemongrass tea products respectively.



8. Innovation

Aspects of the company’s capacity to innovate include the considerable advancements in product offerings, technologies utilized, components and materials, and integrated software.

To date, no product developments have been made to the quality of the products for all enterprises. Significant improvements, though, were made in the packaging and labeling of different products through the initiative and guidance of the Department of Trade and Industry– Ifugao. Various machines were used to improve the business’s production and operation, such as an electric grater, sealers, squeezers, and weighing scales. Some are from the aid of the government. To ensure that these machines are used properly, the owners of all enterprises are the persons in charge that overseeing the operation. The Department of Trade and Industry capacitates them.

9. Cultural Value

Having local pride in the product is seen to have a significant role in preserving a company’s long-term viability. Cultural Value refers to the integration of the indigenous process of producing actual products or the inclusion of raw materials abundant in the locality. The makers of herbal teas contend that the product is culturally relevant since it uses only natural, indigenous raw ingredients.

10. Customer Experience

Assessment of the customer service experience includes the mechanisms for customer feedback, service recovery, and post-sale service. The participants claim that there is no uniform method for obtaining client feedback. EnTEApreneurs who produce herbal tea rely on client feedback verbally. Additionally, all businesses have the option to provide replacements or refunds to address any issues or client concerns. Finally, buyers are not given any post-sale services.

Access to External Factors Affecting Herb Tea EnTEApreneurs

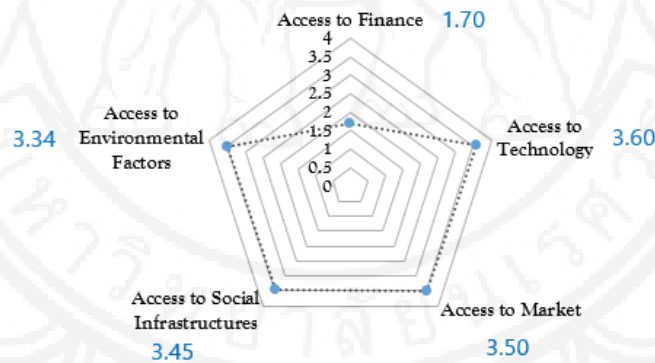


Figure 1 Mean on the External Factors Affecting Herb Tea EnTEApreneurs.

Legend: 1.0–1.75 = No Effect (NE); 1.76–2.50 = Slight Effect (SE); 2.51–3.25 = Great Effect (GE); 3.26–4.00 = Very Great Effect (VGE)

The quantitative findings on the influence of access to outside influences on herb tea business owners are shown in Figure 1.

With an overall mean of 1.70 and a qualitative description of no effect on a four-point Likert scale, the study’s quantitative results generally indicate that participants claimed they never received any financial assistance from the government to support their business operations; as a result, it does not affect enTEApreneurs. The representatives of the Department of Labor and Employment (DOLE) through the Local Government Unit – PESO (LGU-PESO) Office and the Department of Science and Technology (DOST) – Ifugao do not provide cash assistance to the enTEApreneurs for start-up capital or to maintain business operations in an interview with



the various government agencies regarding access to external factors affecting enTEApreneurs. The help comes in the shape of instruction, supplies, and tools.

However, access to technology, with a mean score of 3.60 showed that for participants, using their mobile data or internet connection had a significant impact on company operations. Participants in the survey also assert that access to raw material manufacturing and food processing technologies from various government agencies had a significant positive impact on or advantaged the operation of the firm, particularly in terms of enhancing the production process.

Quantitative findings also showed that registered herb tea business owners had market access, with a mean score of 3.50 overall. Quantitative data, in particular, shows how greatly enterprises have been impacted by support for cross-border and domestic sales, online product promotion, and coaching and mentoring of enTEApreneurs during the product creation process. This implies that government agencies involved in the province guarantee that Lagawe, Ifugao products are available and visible in several towns, raising brand recognition and reaching a wider market. Plus, it guarantees the reliability of the products and the viability of the companies. Likewise, Go Lokal Philippines and OTOP Hub Philippines of OTOP.PH, another initiative run by the DTI, benefits all study participants.

With a mean of 3.45, participants often have excellent access to the physical components of complex networks that have a substantial impact on how business is conducted. Consumers can purchase goods and services from businesses, allowing them to considerably sustain and enhance their offers. In particular, the company has been significantly impacted by access to social infrastructures including healthcare facilities, transportation networks like roads, access to electrical utilities, and access to sanitation utilities.

Access to utilities for waste management and water has also had a significant impact on the industry. Notably, utilizing the internet has had a significant impact on how business is conducted, whereas using a phone or a mobile device for business has had far less impact. Nevertheless, participants consider word-of-mouth to be the most effective strategy for raising product awareness. The ability to use conventional communication channels including mail, telegraph, TV, radio, and print media has no impact on how the firm operates.

With an overall mean of 3.34 on a four-point Likert scale, the identified environmental variables, including the availability of raw materials, logistics, competition, government rules, and people, significantly impacted the continuity of company operations. To assure the manufacturing of final goods to a very large extent, all research participants have collaborated with various suppliers for raw materials as well as for processing aids and machinery. Additionally, every company has a partnership with logistics for both inward and outgoing traffic. Participants overwhelmingly concur that competition harms profitability, customers, and the sustainability of the supply of raw resources. Last but not least, all firms now have appropriate personnel to continually meet client needs since operations resumed following the severe lockdown. Participants in an interview stated that having a long-term relationship with suppliers helps companies to obtain high-quality raw materials, which is crucial for creating high-quality end products. Partnerships with outward logistics, meanwhile, guarantee that the goods go to customers, both actual and potential.

Discussion

EnTEApreneurs of herb tea products ensure the production of goods and consistent quality products for consumers by having good quality raw materials. Products also complied with some prescribed standards,



particularly on phytochemical analysis. According to Bobková et al. (2015), tea storage requires dry, cool, dark, and inert spaces to maintain its quality. Tea stored in high humidity can promote the growth of microscopic filamentous fungi. In the study conducted by Stević et al. (2012); and Ravikumar (2014), raw plant materials are prone to microbial contamination due to faulty cultivation and storage procedures, improper collection and treatment, inadequate transportation, long-term drying and storage, poor hygiene at the production site, and natural climate conditions. Microorganisms frequently destroy materials before harvesting, handling, and long-term storage. Sensory and microbiological indicators are the central focus of manufacturing firms' quality criteria for herbal tea production. Color, fragrance, taste, sugar content, clarity, precipitation amount, and apparent foreign particles are sensory variables. Some of the microbiological indications include aerobic bacterial count, coliform content, myocyte content, and saccharomycetes content. In herbal tea, pathogenic bacteria are not permitted.

Product designs are equally attractive and appealing. Products are secured as most products are enclosed with primary and secondary packaging; all properly sealed. Product labels are also present, prominent, and evident. Products have a clear brand identity, as evident through their brand name displayed on the front of the product.

According to Prayusi and Andriani (2022), the product's label serves as its identification. Consumers could distinguish one product from another. Labels acted as advertising and product branding tools in addition to providing information. Consumers were able to choose the items they required because of excellent labeling. Thus, the importance of food labeling is clear. Additionally, labels served to inform the public and increase the worth of the product. Similarly, labeling might be a tempting marketing tactic to raise product competition. The visual aspect of items was their packaging labels. Glamorous packaging may catch the attention of people and eventually entice them to purchase the goods. More so, the nature of tea bags, whether herbal or non-herbal, adds to their significance and importance. Their relevance is also due to their accessibility (Yildirim et al., 2017). The type of paper used, its pore size, shape, loading capacity, holding period, and temperature are all factors that can affect the efficacy and acceptability of tea bags by customers (Kumar & Raj, 2019).

Herb tea product enTEApreneurs have identified clear target markets to tailor the product, price, distribution, and promotional strategies. By offering all-natural healthy herb tea products, the tea enTEApreneurs differentiate their offerings from their direct and indirect competitors. According to Raihan and Famiola's (2021) and Nasution et al. (2019), herbal tea enTEApreneurs may use integrated marketing communications. Businesses may use offline, online, and both platforms in their marketing communication strategy. Online channels begin with advertisements, websites, and social media to disseminate product information, benefits, and campaign information. Businesses can also hold seminars, workshops, run campaigns, and engage with communities. The benchmarked tactics can be applied to general floral and herbal tea businesses, especially if sustainability is a part of their marketing strategy.

Moreover, products are consistently available to consumers through continuous production and made convenient to them through deliveries and with partner retail stores within and outside the municipality. The production center also serves as the storage area for the manufactured products. To monitor the business's financial status, financial statements are being prepared and analyzed regularly. The Department of Trade and Industry-Ifugao holds bookkeeping workshops regularly to assist local enTEApreneurs in managing the financial aspects of their businesses. The exercise aims to teach participants how to handle and use their money correctly. Some of the significant subjects being reviewed are a preview of bookkeeping, the importance of bookkeeping, the objectives



of bookkeeping, the elements of accounting, the rules of debit and credit, the recording of business transactions, the cash book, and cash flow, and financial statements.

The owners of the business are also conducting regular inventories. Product packaging and labeling were improved with the help of the Department of Trade and Industry. They use personal and government-funded production tools, operated by the owner and trained by the Department of Trade and Industry. Mucas et al. (2019) identified the Programmable Dehydrator Machine for Herbal Tea Materials (PDMHTM) as a drying technology to optimize the drying process of herbal teas while also addressing a start-up industry's post-harvest processing operations production challenge, which can be possibly used by other enTEApreneurs. This increases the market competitiveness of processed items, improves processing procedures, and assures customers of product quality by improving the drying process.

This indicates that all tea items in Lagawe are manufactured of dried herbs and are free of added preservatives and caffeine. Unlike most other forms of tea, herbal teas are caffeine-free. They are also tasty and simple to drink. Most herbal teas have one or more vital herbal elements used to achieve a specific aim, such as relaxation, rejuvenation, or relief from a particular condition. A plant's origins and cultivation have a profound impact on its nature. Organic plants or plants growing organically in the wild are used to ensure sustainable growth practices, healthier soil and habitats, and the avoidance of synthetic chemicals, pollutants, and pesticides (Ravikumar, 2014).

Lastly, herb enTEApreneurs have identified service recovery strategies in cases of product problems. Customer feedback, recovery, and post-sales service are vital components of customer experience. Feedback can reveal whether business performance is proper, accurate, or adequate (Nikolić et al., 2020).

Though are potentials identified, areas for improvement were noted. Herb products of enTEApreneurs are not FDA-approved or registered. Product labels are incomplete and thus, do not comply with what is prescribed on product labeling. Promotional strategies are limited, with weak penetration, differentiation, and positioning strategies. Brand names are not registered to the appropriate agency. Existing established networks within and outside the province are limited. According to the participants, there are no budget plans prepared for the business, no improvements in product quality, and no standardized mechanisms for feedback and post-sales service. Cultural connections between the product and process are limited.

On the other hand, as to access to external factors affecting herb enTEApreneurs, private access to finance, government-aided processing technologies, and market-supported initiatives by the government and social infrastructures have been accessed by the business owners to aid production and operation. The businesses also have a sustainable supply of raw and processing materials, inbound and outbound logistics, and adequate manpower to operate.

Accordingly, all other participants availed of private loans from lending institutions such as microfinance and credit cooperatives. This can be attributed to the fact that it is easier to borrow from non-bank as they are everywhere. This implies that enTEApreneurs in the locality prefer informal lending institutions because of convenience or less difficulty because of the receptiveness and willingness of the lender. In addition, according to Nguyen and Canh (2021), small, non-listed firms are less likely to have optimal access to bank loans due to the informational asymmetries associated with their smallness and newness, which are well-known to be small firm-specific financial constraints. It is not only formal debt finance that is largely inaccessible to these firms; equity markets such as Initial Public Offerings (IPO) and venture capital are also options that are not open to many small companies. However, informal finance remains to be positively associated with firm growth and performance in



several developing countries (González et al., 2017; Angeles, 2022). Before the COVID-19 pandemic, all participants availed of loans to support the production of products for the continuous operation of their business. Loans benefited enabled them to operate and purchase materials for their operation continuously. Further, the new credits helped the participants to restart their businesses and to cope with the smooth reopening of the economy. Participants who availed of loans from microfinance stated that microfinance has simple procedures and systems and requires no collateral, unlike banks.

In the Philippines, there are programs available to support enTEAPreneurs. In an interview with the different government agencies, the representatives of the Department of Labor and Employment (DOLE) through the Local Government Unit – PESO (LGU-PESO) Office mentioned that there is no cash assistance, all in forms of Equipment which is dole-out. Similarly, the Department of Science and Technology (DOST) –Ifugao does not offer cash assistance to the enTEAPreneurs for start-up capital or to sustain business operations. The assistance is in the form of training, materials, and equipment.

Conversely, the Department of Trade and Industry offers The Pondo sa Pagbabago at Pag-aseño (P3) program. It is a financing initiative of the government to assist micro-enTEAPreneurs throughout the country by providing affordable and cost-efficient microloans with 2.5% monthly interest. The P3 Program is a funding program that will provide an alternative source of financing for micro-enTEAPreneurs that is easy and quick to access. More so, the Provincial Agriculture, Environment, and Natural Resources Office (PAENRO) offers Kapital Access for Young Agripreneurs (KAYA) Program and Agri-Negosyo Loan Program (ANYO). The KAYA Program provides loans to finance working capital for agri-based projects of young enTEAPreneurs. Meanwhile, the ANYO program offers loans to finance the capital requirements of agri-fishery-based micro and small enterprises.

The raw materials are from the Department of Trade and Industry, Department of Science and Technology (DOST) – Ifugao, Provincial Agriculture, Environment and Natural Resources Office (PAENRO), and the Provincial Local Government Unit and were used for improving the production processes to improve quality of the product, thus, helping in sustaining production of high-quality products, affecting income to a great extent. The Department of Trade and Industry also has the Shared Service Facility (SSF) – Shared Success for Filipino MSMEs. Another government agency that supports local enTEAPreneurs is the DOST-Ifugao. The SETUP of DOST is intended for funding equipment of beneficiaries of the program. They provide the equipment for them to improve the processes of making the products. More so, the KAYA Program of PAENRO- Ifugao can be used to finance fixed asset acquisition requirements of start-ups or existing agri-based projects of young enTEAPreneurs.

And lastly, the DOLE, through the LGU- PESO Office, offers DOLE Integrated Livelihood Program (DILP). This provides entTEAPreneurs access to grant assistance for capacity building on livelihood ventures for individual or group undertakings. This enables existing livelihood undertaking to a higher standard through technological improvements in equipment and machinery.

Micro, small, and medium food processing enterprises (MSMEs) depend on adopting technological innovation by acquiring upgraded equipment and diffusion of new technologies to increase productivity, competitiveness, and efficiency (Radu, 2015; Barroga et al., 2019).

All study participants are beneficiaries of Go Lokal Philippines and OTOP Hub Philippines of OTOP.PH which is also a program under the Department of Trade and Industry. Go Lokal Philippines offers merchandise development assistance to produce commercially viable products for the market and market access to stores or spaces provided by retail partners such as malls and retail operators. Meanwhile, the OTOP Hub Philippines of



OTOP.PH is a retail store or space where products from One Town, One Product Next-Gen offerings can be found. DOST-Ifugao provides designs of product packaging and labeling materials for MSMEs in the region. Packaging and labeling services are also coordinated with the Packaging Technology Division (PTD) of the Industrial Technology Division Institute (ITDI). DOST-Ifugao also established OneStore Hub to widen the target market scope by consolidating locally produced products. Meanwhile, DOLE, through PESO Office, offers capacity building to enTEApreneurs upon request. Access to markets for small businesses can offer a host of business opportunities, such as larger and new niche markets; possibilities to exploit scale and technological advantages; upgrading of technical capability; ways of spreading risks, lowering and sharing costs, including R&D costs; and in many cases, affording improved access to finance. Gaining access to markets can help realize their potential for prospective high-growth firms and is often an important strategic move for SMEs with significant investments in intellectual property. Hence, substantial investments need to be recouped from as large a market as quickly as possible (Francisco & Canare, 2019).

Generally, participants have access to the physical elements of interconnected systems allowing enTEApreneurs to provide commodities and services to consumers, enabling them to maintain and improve offerings significantly. This can be attributed to the fact that these social infrastructures, such as roads, power, and sanitation utilities, are vital to the day-to-day operation of the business. Access to healthcare clinics also ensures that the workforce is ready to perform their job. According to the study by Mugo et al. (2019); and Bennett (2019), the availability of road networks and telecommunication services has helped them to grow their businesses. Thus, while infrastructure for entrepreneurial activity exists outside the focal firm, it supports the opportunity itself with people seizing and enacting an opportunity in a conducive environment. In sum, infrastructure components, such as roads, energy, and health systems, are necessary for most economic activity, while other elements are essential for enTEApreneurship.

Lastly, as to access to environmental factors, according to the PAENRO, they have the Philippine Rural Development Project (PRDP). It is a six-year national project under the Department of Agriculture (DA) that aims to establish a modern, value chain-oriented, and climate-resilient agriculture and fisheries sector. In partnership with Local Government Units (LGUs) and the private sector, the project provides key infrastructure, facilities, technology, and information to raise incomes, productivity, and competitiveness in targeted areas.

The importance of raw materials to the efficient operation of a manufacturing organization cannot be over-emphasized; in that the availability of the raw material in the right quality and quantity will determine to a reasonable extent; the availability, quality, and quantity of the resultant output (Akindipe, 2014; Nusraningrum & Nhan, 2019).

Conclusion and Suggestions

In summary, based on the analysis of the current conditions of enTEApreneurs using the One Town One Product framework of DTI, it could be inferred that herb tea products produced by participants in the locality are in a good state. Specifically, product quality is maintained through the good quality of raw materials. Product designs are attractive and appealing. There is an existing product packaging that is safe and secured with existing product labels. They have identified target markets, with existing products, prices, places, and promotional strategies that attract potential and existing markets. They have also established networks within and outside the municipality. They have mechanisms to monitor income and expenses. Production is continuous and products are



widely available. Logistics are present too. EnTEApreneurs have improved product packaging and labeling. They also have plans to improve the quality and explore other forms of herb tea to become marketable and reach other market segments. The usage of indigenous raw materials makes the product culturally connected. Facebook is used for collecting feedback from customers. There are areas for improvement, but all are doable. Areas for improvements identified are product registration to FDA, completeness of product labels, uniqueness of product designs, marketing mix strategies, mechanism for delivery, and post-sales service strategies. Nonetheless, the capabilities of herb tea products outweigh the challenges identified.

Generally, there are existing programs from different government agencies supporting enTEApreneurs in the locality. Access to finance includes the P3 program from the DTI and the ANYO of DA. However, to date, enTEApreneurus lack the knowledge of these programs provided for them. Access to technology is provided by the DTI through the SSF, DOST through SETUP, DOLE through the DILP, and CSF, and DA through the KAYA. On the other hand, market access is provided to enTEApreneurs through the DTI One Town One Product Next Gen, Kapatid Mentor ME Program, Go Lokal Philippines and OTOP HUB.Ph. Access to social infrastructures is provided by the local government unit of Lagawe through the usage of health care clinics, transportation networks, power, and water utilities, including waste management. All of the enTEApreneurs have access to the market, social infrastructures, and environmental factors identified.

In general, local herb enTEApreneurs in Lagawe Ifugao can make goods that are competitive both locally and outside. A set of detailed recommendations were made to help local herb tea business owners understand the factors that are required to create a product that is sustainable for the sector, sell to a larger market and spur rural development.

Considering the findings and conclusions, the researcher forwards the following recommendations:

To the EnTEApreneurs:

1. **Product Quality.** Product enTEApreneurs should consider following the rules of different agencies like the Food and Drug Administration to ensure the quality of their products. Trials, testing, and official research may be carried out to extend the shelf life of products and permit their sale outside of the province for a longer period. A quality control system must be in place for the business to operate smoothly and effectively. As a result, there will be a greater emphasis on quality, more effective resource management, cost cutting, enhanced production processes and techniques, and more customer satisfaction.

2. **Product Designs.** Consumer tastes and desires, as well as market trends, must be taken into account while designing products. The symmetry of the package elements and the product arrangement, which includes product labeling, should be taken into account. The Ifugao identity must also be included in product designs to give the product a distinctive appearance.

3. **Packaging and Labeling.** Product packaging should be durable and of the highest quality, cost-effective and practical, secure and safe, and environmentally friendly, to name a few requirements set out by numerous governing rules and regulations on its use. Locally obtainable commodities should follow the existing product labeling guidelines. Products' packaging and labeling must adhere to all national standards when they are meant for export.

4. **Marketability.** Companies should refine their marketing mix strategies. Consistently raising the quality of your products may help you get a greater market share. A positioning plan and differentiation approach may be quite beneficial for getting clients to remember you. The cost of manufacturing the product, together with supply and demand, may influence pricing tactics. They may also consider the pricing strategies used by direct and indirect



competitors. The owners of businesses could also consider allowing a range of payment options, such as cash, cards, mobile payments, and electronic bank transfers. Business owners may use aggressive and unorthodox product distribution strategies to guarantee availability and convenience for clients. They can combine the use of delivery, drop-off, and pick-up methods to distribute goods. For delivery modalities, there should be clear and well-established policies in place. Promotions and partnerships with retail businesses may lead to a rise in existing market share and expansion into new regions.

Additionally, traditional and digital marketing techniques may be used to promote products both online and offline to boost brand awareness. Sales promotions and personal selling are still appropriate, beneficial, and effective. A thorough strategy that represents the organization's aims and objectives should be in place. A marketing strategy could be included in a comprehensive business plan.

5. Branding. A brand's positioning and differentiation strategy may be impacted by its branding initiatives. As a result, businesses may consider developing distinctive, singular, and memorable brand names and logos. Product identification should be registered with the relevant government agencies, such as the Intellectual Property of the Philippines, to protect the intellectual property of company owners.

6. Production and Delivery Capacity. EnTEApreneurs may employ techniques like total quality control, manufacturing and operations scheduling, and efficient inventory management. Additionally, they must regularly evaluate the efficiency with which operations are being carried out. Business networks should be enhanced by establishing connections both inside and beyond the province.

7. Financial Capability. EnTEApreneurs should be responsible for producing a variety of financial reports to analyze and grasp the company's current financial status. This is one method enTEApreneurs may design and implement interventions to enhance business growth. The correct allocation must be made. Budgeting for product certifications, production process technologies, and product quality improvements is crucial.

8. Innovations. EnTEApreneurs could focus their efforts on creating the company's signature item. The availability of raw resources nearby might be taken into consideration. The company should always strive to enhance all of its procedures, goods, and services.

9. Cultural Integration. Business owners may strengthen the cultural connections of their products by including cultural allusions in the product design and production process. It may be possible to enhance the Ifugao way of product processing, which is best kept secret, to ensure product production within generations.

10. Customer Experience. The company's practices must incorporate avenues for feedback. Using brief surveys to get customer input might be quite beneficial for improving product performance. Customer reviews are significant since they record their interactions with the items. A great method to advertise a business and create a favorable impression of it is to collect consumer feedback. On the other side, a service recovery policy has to be in place to turn unsatisfied clients into advocates. Last but not least, providing excellent after-sales care may be a profitable company strategy since it frequently increases client happiness, brand loyalty, and even word-of-mouth advertising. EnTEApreneurs could think about providing customer support, instruction, and repairs for non-consumable goods.

11. EnTEApreneurs should also take advantage of the opportunity to actively engage in the seminars, training, workshops, mentorship, and coaching activities of various private-government bodies to maximize the potential of locally produced goods.



To the Different Private and Government Agencies

1. The private and public sectors could improve their cooperation to ensure guaranteed access to funds for small and midsize local enTEApreneurs by providing government subsidies and support through the development of a credit guarantee system, the resolution of collateral issues, and the provision of processing and bureaucracy for small businesses. Expanding the financial choices available and accessible to enTEApreneurs is crucial to supporting their development and maintaining the most active enterprises in a credit-constrained environment. It's crucial to educate individuals about available financing possibilities.

2. The private sector and other government agencies should step up their collaboration and coordination efforts to minimize duplication of the programs, initiatives, and endeavors of local businesses. To help businesses obtain inexpensive finance, local and provincial governments may develop government subsidy schemes and work with commercial lending institutions. They could also create detailed rules on how to access social infrastructure and environmental factors, such as raw material supply, partner logistics inside and beyond the province, labor supply, and local market competition management. The primary objective of the DICT should be to strengthen relationships inside the municipality. Additionally, DICT has to maintain instructing company owners in the usage of different useful digital technologies. Academic institutions, DOST, and TESDA can be able to help with the technological advancements needed for the running of the firm. From product conception and development to commercialization, the DTI and academic institutions may focus on supporting enTEApreneurs, including building networks that span national and international borders. This would serve as an extension program for academic institutions as one of the prerequisites for higher education institutions. The DA may concentrate on supporting local farmers to ensure a consistent supply of raw materials.

3. To ensure the success and long-term viability of the programs, initiatives, and activities of both private and governmental entities—which will assist rural development—they must be continuously reviewed and assessed.

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