

# Unlocking SME Success: Successful Strategy in Gathering, Organizing, and Sharing Ideas in an Organization

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## ABSTRACT

This paper has highlighted effective strategies that SMEs in the Philippines can employ toward enhancing their success in terms of better management of gathering, organizing, and sharing ideas within an organization. The study aims to identify key areas for improvement regarding the digital strategies among SMEs in the Philippines that would enable them to address challenges they encounter in their digital transformation, highlight the real-life experiences of SMEs which can provide valuable lessons for others, and determine strategies and practices that work most efficiently related to the knowledge management suitable for their needs. Through a qualitative analysis of relevant data, the researcher highlights the key findings and recommendations which include: enhance the current digital competence of SMEs, optimize the use of government support measures especially to those SMEs' who have not yet registered and unaware of the government support programs, as well as the necessity of providing better management of ideas more efficiently. Thus, the enhancement of competitiveness and sustainability can be achieved by SMEs in the progressive Philippine market through the effective execution of these recommended strategies, which requires the initiatives not only from SMEs but also from the government.

**Keywords:** SME (Small and Medium Enterprises), digitalization, knowledge management practices, information-sharing, information management

## INTRODUCTION

Today, business enterprises in the Philippines face a competitive environment that grows at a fast pace and is saturated with opportunities and risks simultaneously. More precisely, within the context of the COVID-19 outbreak, it has a severe influence on the business environment in the country and significantly challenges enterprises at various stages of activity. Salonga (2020) states that from small start-ups to established micro, small, and medium enterprises (MSMEs), companies across various sectors are grappling with an economic fallout. This was also confirmed by Rivas (2020), as the data from NEDA (National Economic and Development Authority) anticipated that the economy would be hit hard due to COVID-19, and the 2020 GDP growth rate was marked down to -0.6%. He also stated that economist Alfredo Paloyo pointed out that support from the government is relevant, particularly for SMEs that are the majority among businesses that lack financial backing. Hence, they are most likely to be affected by rough economic times, unlike large companies. Paloyo concluded that the government must promote small businesses for economic recovery. SMEs are significant players in the creation of employment and global economic growth, and are present in most economies, particularly developing ones (World Bank, 2019). In the Philippines, there are 1,109,684 business enterprises registered in the 2022 List of Establishments (LE) in the Philippines as of the record of the Philippine Statistics Authority (DTI, 2022). It shows that 99.59% are from MSMEs of 1,105,143 and generate a country's total employment of 65.10%, making them regarded as economy's backbone (Hidalgo, 2023). As a result, MSMEs have the ability to fight poverty and make efforts to bounce back from the crisis that the pandemic has caused, as stated by Enrico Gaveglia from the UNDP (2020).

Nowadays, the competitive business environment comes with many problems that small businesses must overcome to succeed and grow. The World Economic Forum (WEF) states that the two most significant factors affecting SMEs today are survival and expansion (Desiderio, 2022). The main challenges reported by SMEs are organizational culture and company purpose and values (34%), technological advancement/innovation

(25%), financing/sourcing of funds (24%), and policy environment (22%). Desiderio also points out the ways for SMEs enterprises to be future-ready and successful in accordance with the WEF: improving long-term innovativeness, building adaptive capacity, and fostering a positive impact for the planet and people.

In addition to economic factors, such as digitalization and financing funds, individual determinants, such as the entrepreneur's skills and experience, along with firm characteristics, such as size and marketing strategies, play crucial roles in their success. External factors such as competition, market demand, and regulatory requirements further complicate their operations. Lupton and Beamish (2014) concluded that one of the main factors that might affect the success of a small enterprises is effective knowledge management. Thus, knowledge management is crucial for SMEs because they are likely to encounter certain challenges (Sima et al., 2022).

Managing knowledge is the operation of gathering, storing, disseminating, and utilizing collective organizational experiences and expertise to enhance problem-solving, creativity, and decision-making within an organization (Becerra-Fernandez and Leidner, 2008). It is the process of applying action plans to effectively manage people, technology, process, structure, and knowledge assets within a firm with the ultimate aim of realizing new value through reuse. This is attained by fostering the development and dissemination of knowledge and know-how, as well as by feeding in passing useful experiences and other forms of best practices to the corporate memory to enhance continued learning (Dalkir, 2011). According to a case study conducted by Navarathne (2023), knowledge management has a significant factor for SMEs' success as they become more information-intensive.

## LITERATURE REVIEW

### Digital Advancement of SMEs

In the post-pandemic era, technologies impede an importance in increasing the competitiveness and organization's agility to respond to the changing business landscape (AlphaBeta, 2021). According to Market Research Philippines (2022), increased e-commerce and internet usage called for innovations in business models for MSME, hence, sustained e-commerce requires the support for its digitalization. They also added that by implementing business innovations, MSMEs in the Philippines would be able to improve the efficiency of their operational procedures and respond better to shifting consumer preferences toward online shopping. In a research study conducted by Pascual (2023), she explored the strategies for transformation of technology for small businesses in the Philippines and that internet-based commerce, and innovation of products and services via digital are found essential utilized by these businesses. The following aspects were identified as critical to the success of implementing these strategies: the level of education on the part of the users, backing received from the suppliers of technologies, and availability of materials. Moreover, each digital transformation strategy affected most business performance categories. The author also claims that the digital transformation on business performance, thus providing evidence for the argument, supports that digitalization has the potential to foster the SMEs' performance.

However, despite the SMEs grows recently and there's indeed a necessity of the digital technology application in the SMEs, the WEF reported that the need of the strong investment in digital solutions was stated to be restrained by barriers: lack of capital, lack of skilled personnel, lack of appropriate structures among others (PNA, 2022).

### Government Implementation of Policies to Support SMEs

As estimated by the World Bank (2019), about a million new jobs are required by 2030, and developing SMEs has become a priority for the governments of countries worldwide. However, SMEs experience greater difficulty in securing bank loans compared to large firms; usually, they resort to internal financing, boot funds, or personal and friends' money to fund the establishment and early operation of their businesses (World Bank, 2019). Moreover, several issues are faced by SMEs, and these include: start-up enterprises receive insufficient assistance, SMEs are barely recognized, and the ineffective capability of the LGUs to aid and boost the development of the SME sector (Gamundoy et al., 2022). That's why Professor Rajah said in a report that in

order to fully realize their potential, SMEs require policymakers' support in recognizing their credentials and incentivizing sustainability initiatives (Desiderio, 2022). SMEs in the Philippines have the capabilities as well as the potential to nourish the Philippines economic growth in the near future, especially when it is supported by the financial institutions and the government with the possible output that can reach 60% of the country's GDP as per indications of Visa, a worldwide digital payments technology company (Ta-Asan, 2024)..

### **The Republic Act 9501 “Magna Carta”**

The Philippine government recognizes MSMEs through a promulgation called the Magna Carta for MSMEs, which proves how important they are in the Philippine economy, as they serve as the bloodline that supports the economy's health (Lu, 2023). The Philippines implemented the law Magna Carta, also known as the law for MSMEs, in 1991. The meaning of this law is that the government is obliged to promote the success of business ventures, particularly those that are classified as small and medium. It does this by giving them the opportunity to operate freely, invest, and acquire capital in a much easier manner. For instance, they can repay at low and flexible interest rates from other banks which is under the DTI. Furthermore, following banking law standards, it is obligatory to provide a minimum of 8% of the loan portfolio of such enterprises to meet their needs for bank financing. It also has some social relief tax and relief programs for the blind to start engagements in business. In any case, RA 9501 recognizes the employment and income-generating aptitude of MSMEs in generating exceptional economic progress and the important support they require for their operations.

### **The Republic Act No. 10644 “Go Negosyo Act”**

This program was made to facilitate the growth of entrepreneurship through offering various forms of support to MSMEs in the country where knowledge management comes into hand to ensure that the right information, skills, and resources are properly channeled into such businesses (DTI, 2021). As defined by the Asian Development Bank (2024), the fulfillment of the Act is the promotion of initiatives in the sphere of mentoring and coaching of potential entrepreneurs. This program allows business owners who have had some years of experience to pass on their ideas and experience to those who are beginning businesses. They can learn from the successes and pitfalls of others in similar business ventures, thereby avoiding basic mistakes. It also creates Negosyo Centers that offer comprehensive support for those intending to establish small businesses as well as those who already have business ventures. These centers have organizational structures with the necessary infrastructure that enables the practice of knowledge management, including skills development tools, business development tools, and database resources, enabling them to access the World Wide Web for research resources.

### **Knowledge Management Practices**

Knowledge management (KM) involves properly managing the knowledge of an organization. It is the act of developing, employing, disseminating, and maintaining knowledge to date. If used properly, this knowledge allows businesses to increase competitiveness, improve activities across the enterprise, and increase innovation and learning (Becerra-Fernandez and Leidner, 2008). They also pointed out that it aims to ensure that those who seek knowledge in an organization find those possessing it, which intends to build up the organizations' information management. Four knowledge management objectives assist in achieving this goal, which, in turn, may involve enhancing the knowledge acquisition process, optimizing the flow of organizational knowledge, enhancing the availability of organizational knowledge, and preserving knowledge as an organizational resource.

Durst et al. (2023) said that utilizing proper management of information can improve innovation performance in SMEs, especially in the period of transition to new technologies. They also noted that to avoid information loss and for SMEs to maintain continuity and business resilience, there is the need to adopt knowledge risk management as a facet of KM. Thus, using the concept of KM, small businesses can protect their intellectual resources, foster their development, and remain relevant in a highly competitive environment.

In a study conducted by Baporikar N. (2020), she outlines the importance of KM for SMEs in the global economy as they create about 80% of the world's employment and economic growth. She noted that knowledge has emerged as the major resource in today's business environment, which is more important than the conventional factors of production. SMEs should enhance their knowledge of KM to sustain and enhance their innovation capabilities. Therefore, the effective implementation of KM as a process is vital in the attainment and sustenance of organizational success particularly in view of the knowledge economy. Also, the author briefly examined various dimensions of KM for SMEs in the developing countries and pointed out the intervention plans that may enhance the KM programs in those contexts (Baporikar, 2020). Consequently, the author highlights that there is a need for proper encouragement of KM as a tool for attaining competitive advantage and organizational success, particularly within the ever-evolving global economy.

A study conducted by Mabeza (2022), the author highlights the importance of KM in improving the effectiveness and endurance of business practices within the retail sector. This study showed findings that the retail sector in Camarines Norte is aware of the various components of KM, such as people, processes, tools, and strategies. This underlines the role of expertise, operations, and instruments in the creation of valuable knowledge to be effectively disseminated, with the goal of encouraging innovation and performance when competition is acute. The research also aimed to establish the need to continually review and enhance the applicability of systems thinking in enhancing organizational performance and innovation. Furthermore, the study put forward a "Giant 10 Knowledge Management Framework" which would therefore act as an information repository, and an intra and inter organizational knowledge sharing mechanism which is expected to boost competitiveness and customer satisfaction in the retail sector.

Based on the analysis of prior studies on the performance of SMEs in the Philippines and the application of knowledge management techniques, it is clear that SMEs must prosper in uncertain times as their vulnerability in the growing and competitive business environment (Baporikar, 2020; Laxamana, 2023), it is crucial to identify current digital stances and practices among these businesses particularly during COVID-19 pandemic. Furthermore, this focuses on an empirical review of the actual experience and challenges that SMEs have encountered on the aspects of the benefits offered by the government's existing policies such as Go Negosyo and Magna Carta. This lack of research limits the formulation and implementation of intervention strategies and policies that may be useful in helping these businesses. There is also a critical need to close the identified knowledge management gaps by analyzing and comparing the best approaches and techniques available to SMEs to survive the shifting market environment.

Aligned with the study's identified research gap, this research aims to identify key areas for improvement regarding the digital strategies among SMEs in the Philippines that would enable them to address problems they encounter in their digital presence, operations and customer relations to enable them to compete effectively in a growing business environment. Additionally, highlighting successful strategies and practices adopted by some SMEs which can provide valuable lessons for others. This is to unveil the real-life experience of SMEs under the government's existing policy with a view of identifying the measures that can be put in place to enable SMEs to harness these benefits for their growth and development. Lastly, this aims to determine strategies and practices that work most efficiently related to the knowledge management (KM) gaps to explore and recommend efficient KM practices suitable for the SMEs' needs and specifics in terms of their abilities of collecting, sharing, and storing ideas within their organizations.

The successful gathering, organizing, and sharing of ideas within an organization are pivotal for the growth and sustainability of SMEs, suggesting that businesses must pay attention to organizing practices to improve their performance (Asuah-Duodu et al., 2019). With the emphasis on digital strategies, empirical experiences with the Magna Carta, and knowledge management practices, this research seeks to offer relevant findings and advice for SMEs in the Philippines to cope with the current business environment and seek to thrive in the new, upcoming world.

## Problem Statement

This research paper aims to investigate and identify different strategies that SMEs can employ in order to enhance their success through better management of idea generation, organization, and sharing within an organization. Hence, these are the given research questions that are expected to answer at the end of the study:

- 1.) What aspects of the current digital strategies employed by SMEs in the Philippines require the most improvement to ensure their continued competitiveness in the market?
- 2.) What are the successful strategies and practices adopted by some SMEs that can provide valuable lessons for others?
- 3.) How can organizations develop actionable recommendations to overcome the challenges in adopting effective knowledge management practices?

## METHODS

The researchers will conduct a qualitative research study consisting of documents analysis where available data and findings will be obtained from multiple perspectives relevant to the process of data collection, analysis of results and findings, and their discussion (Yilmaz, 2013). Grounded on the guidelines proposed by Delmo et. al (2023), the researchers will follow the same framework for data gathering and preparation (Fig. 1), wherein the data should be systematically analyzed through existing industry reports, peer-reviewed journals, and government publications and it must be published within 8 years. The inclusion criteria for the sources include online resources to delve into the different personal experiences regarding challenges and successful strategies that are relevant to the research problem. The keywords used were “SME (Small and medium enterprises),” “Go Negosyo,” “Magna Carta,” “digitalization,” and “knowledge management practices” that may help to acquire information from databases effectively (Corrin et al., 2022).

For the data analysis procedure, the researchers will use systematic coding of the data being collected or the visualized portion of the data: such as researcher generated journals, documents, video, or published academic literature in a word or short phrase, and from that coded data will enable the researchers to identify key themes and patterns (Lochmiller, 2021). To further explore these patterns and themes, the coded data will then be examined with the help of thematic analysis a method which allows them to categorize data effectively (Dawadi, 2020; Lochmiller, 2021), providing a comprehensive understanding of knowledge management practices in the success and SMEs competitiveness in the Philippine context.

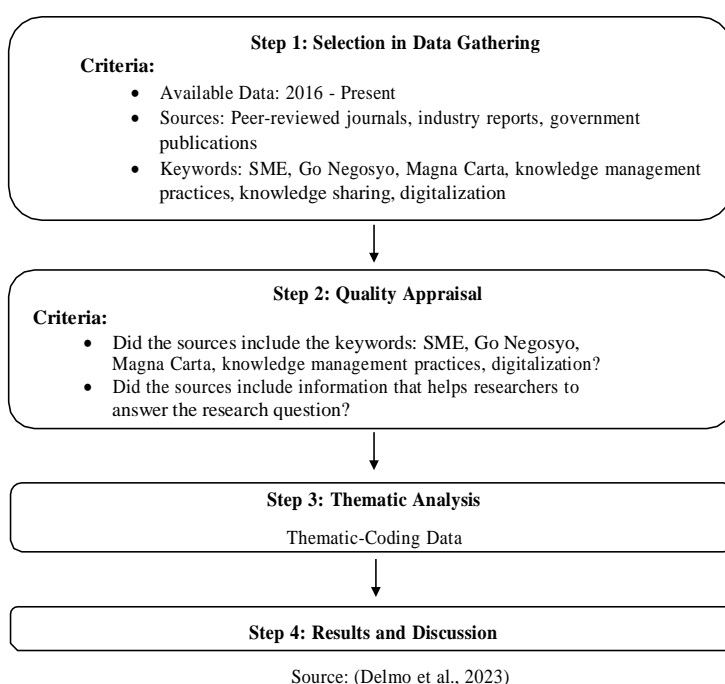


Fig. 1 Data Gathering Procedures

## RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

The information collected by the researchers was presented in a tabular form – an orderly arrangement of data in rows and columns because in this way, the results are much easier to read and understand than if information had been presented in text form as key features stand out (Burghate et al., 2022).

**Table I.** Aspects of the current digital strategies employed by SMEs in the Philippines which require the most improvement to ensure their continued competitiveness in the market

CURRENT DIGITAL STRATEGIES	THEMES AND DESCRIPTION
<p>According to research, SMEs face significant challenges in implementing digital marketing due to limited finances, a lack of digital skills, and infrastructure challenges. A business's online presence is crucial (Danzen, 2022).</p> <p>The importance of cybersecurity is becoming more and more acknowledged amongst (SMEs) as many are willing to increase their spending related to improving their defenses by 17% (Piad, 2023)</p>	<p><b>Financial Constraints</b></p> <p>Are the limitations caused by insufficient financial resources that hinder SMEs' ability to invest in digital marketing.</p>
<p>MSMEs need to keep track of these changes as digital marketing continues to advance rapidly so that they do not become irrelevant in future (Ching et.al., 2021).</p> <p>There is a growing belief among SMEs that they could use digital platforms to enlarge their markets and improve their operational capabilities. It is an indication of an attitude that has been taken up by many firms across different industries using online marketing as a way of surviving difficulties while gaining an advantage over others within the internet (Talavera, C. 2022).</p> <p>Some of the key factors were improved customer engagement, operational efficiency gains and readiness for new technologies which are essential considerations in planning how businesses can incorporate e-commerce into their strategies for developing a business model which responds to market requirements while taking advantage of advancements in technology (Quimba et al., 2019).</p>	<p><b>Digital Transformation</b></p> <p>It is the process by which SMEs integrate digital technologies and strategies such as online platforms, social media, mobile optimization, data analysis, and electronic payments to improve operational efficiency, enhance market presence, and achieve long-term growth.</p>
<p>Digital Marketing and shifting customer behaviors have caused significant changes in the business strategies of digital marketing with the sole objective of increasing customer participation and promoting growth. Research reveals that digital channels play a crucial role in shaping consumers' intention to buy as evidenced by studies conducted in some regions in the Philippines. Therefore, it becomes so clear that not only are these strategies important in reaching but also convincing their target audiences (Astoriano, et al., 2022).</p> <p>While internet access is available, many SMEs lack the necessary resources and skills to set up their own websites</p>	<p><b>Customer Engagement</b></p> <p>Is defined as the level of active involvement and interaction between customers and a business through digital channels, measured by participation, interaction frequency, quality of interaction, response to marketing efforts, and conversion outcomes.</p>

CURRENT DIGITAL STRATEGIES	THEMES AND DESCRIPTION
(Lirag, 2022).	
<p>Highlighting the need for responsible use of technology, Google is committed to enhance cybersecurity in the Philippines. This is intended to make the country better placed to respond to increased global cyber threats. (Gita-Carlos, 2024).</p> <p>Cyber security is the weak point of SMEs especially when it comes to their computer systems. The increasing level of skills in hacking activities further calls for proactive cybersecurity measures, which include regular audits and enhancements to protection infrastructures (Canivel, 2021).</p>	<p><b>Cyber Security</b></p> <p>This describes a broad range of specific measures and processes that involve the security of computers, computer networks and digital information from unauthorized access or cyber-attacks and others.</p>
<p>The challenges faced by halal agro-food SMEs in accessing trusted halal information through information networks and the high cost of installing IoT devices in business premises are significant. However, despite these obstacles, it is concluded that Malaysian halal agro-food SMEs can benefit from technological advancement with proper training and knowledge transfer programs on IoT (Tarmizi et al., 2019).</p>	<p>Cost-Saving - Based on these two data, Cost-savings refer to the reduction of expenses that result from the integration of IoT in SMEs. This can include lowering operational costs, optimizing the supply chain, and improving asset returns, thus providing a competitive edge and enhancing growth potential.</p>

Source: Processed by Authors

Presented in Table 1 is a breakdown of the current strategies used by the SMEs in terms of digital transformation that need further enhancement for continuous competitiveness in the market. This table reveals the issues that have limited SMEs from fully exploiting the advantages of business digitalization are; first, lack of enough funds. Small businesses face challenges in using digital marketing strategies due to financial constraints, lack of skills required for embracing technology, and having poor infrastructure which is also supported by Danzen (2022). In addition, this financial limitation means that they struggle at maintaining an effective online presence which is critical in reaching out to their target clients and creating engagement with them, which might also affect their whole operation. Furthermore, Ching et al. (2021) have proposed a number of ways on how local SMEs can compete favorably through e-commerce such as; through various online platforms, social media utilization, mobile optimization, data analytics and electronic payment systems.

From the table, it is visible that the perception of SMEs towards cybersecurity has improved over the time period, and this has made them more inclined to improve expenditure in this area (Piad, 2023). However, most SMEs still have poor computer systems as well as general security structures that they rely on. Although the DTI (2021) underscores the need for holistic approaches to cyber security, many SMEs still lack in resources or skills that are crucial to the implementation of effective strong cybersecurity measures. Therefore, the found themes are crucial for any small enterprise that does not want its private information being exposed to hackers who can cause significant disruptions to business activities, making clients lose trust in them. Thus, SMEs must ensure that adequate resources are devoted towards building a resilient cybersecurity framework capable of safeguarding their digital assets and improvement of protection infrastructures (Canivel, 2021).

Additionally, the SMEs' digital marketing strategies ought to be more intense and dynamic given shifting customer behaviors. Consequently, according to Astoriano et al. (2022), online channels influence how individuals buy; therefore, it is necessary for SMEs to not only attract but also convince their target markets through effective marketing. Observed change in example from the traditional website to the social networking sites in Camarines Sur, Philippines is pragmatic in nature to envisage the reduction in costs and to avoid technicality (Lirag, 2022). However, this move has raised the issue of increased digital literacy as well as

resource allocation for the development and retention of dedicated online platforms for businesses. Programs for training, policies that support and campaigns that increase awareness are deemed to help SMEs in leveraging on the use of e-commerce and internet promotion for better positioning and targeted investments in digital tools and platforms for market positioning and enterprise practices (Talavera, 2020). These findings reveal the need for SMEs to improve and develop new digital strategies effective to their business and align with the current trends for them to ensure their competitiveness in the growing market.

**Table II.** Successful strategies and practices adopted by some SMEs that can provide valuable lessons for others

STRATEGIES/PRACTICES	STATEMENT
<p><b>Embracing Social Media &amp; Digital Technologies</b></p> <p>Involves strategically integrating the internet, social media, and digital tools into the core of a business's operations, marketing, and brand-building efforts to drive success, reach a wider audience, and adapt to the evolving digital landscape.</p>	<p>“Each and every business plan must address the topic of the internet strategy. This is where the company's active use of the internet and other technologies can be its greatest asset and source of strength.” – Maria Ressa (Go Negosyo Ph, 2016.)</p> <p>“She took the advice of her apo and began selling her products on TikTok; she went viral after one of her videos garnered more than one million likes. She gained 75 thousand followers at the current date.” – Marilina Siega Belza 79, Nanay Liza Collection</p> <p>(Concepcion, 2023)</p> <p>“The reason content creation is so beneficial is that individuals who post content frequently attract more attention and persuade others to purchase the products.” – Jiane Ulrich</p> <p>Owner, Sweet Creatures and Content Creator</p> <p>(let's go negosyo, 2024)</p>
	<p>“She preferred to advertise, she suggested that business owners use a marketing strategy to choose the most effective form of advertising for their particular product.” – <b>Sandy Prieto-Romualdez</b> (Go Negosyo Ph, 2016.)</p> <p>“For someone to be capable of providing fresh products to customers, entrepreneurs must possess the perseverance, talent, and time necessary for continuous trial and error.” – <b>Ms. Agapita Mercado,</b></p>



STRATEGIES/PRACTICES	STATEMENT
<p><b>Adapting to Market Trends</b></p> <p>Involves closely monitoring and understanding the target market, continuously experimenting with new products and services, diversifying sales channels, and maintaining an agile and responsive approach to stay relevant and competitive in the evolving business landscape.</p>	<p>Owner, Aging's Food Delight (DTI)</p> <p>“Because Yhaell was pleased with the product, he decided to become a reseller of Kettle Korn. In addition, he now has online stores.” – <b>Yhaell Ricanor</b></p> <p>7, Kettle Korn reseller</p> <p>(Concepcion, 2023).</p>
<p><b>Building Customer Relationships</b></p> <p>Involves a combination of personalized engagement, confidence in product quality, continuous product innovation, and a willingness to overcome challenges to establish trust, loyalty, and long-term partnerships with customers.</p>	<p>“It was hard to convince friends, family, and even complete strangers to purchase items while standing outside in the intense sun with no shade, jumping to several towns, and displaying the Natasha catalog. It was difficult at first, but once you got past the challenges of gaining the clients' trust, it was all satisfying.” – <b>Dulce (Dolly) Galvez,</b></p> <p>53, Natasha Reseller</p> <p>(Toldo, 2018)</p> <p>“Bearing more confidence in the products and coming up with new products to present to the consumers is very essential.” – <b>Ms. Agapita Mercado,</b></p> <p>Owner, Aging's Food Delight (DTI)</p>
<p><b>Developing Entrepreneurial Mindset</b></p> <p>Involves cultivating mental, attitudes, behaviors, and skills that drive individuals to identify opportunities, take initiative, and innovate. It includes recognizing and capitalizing on opportunities, being proactive, resilient, and adaptable, and maintaining a positive mindset and a willingness to take</p>	<p>“This is all about resiliency and having a positive mindset.” – <b>Miriam Quiambao- Roberto</b></p> <p>Bestselling book author and celebrity entrepreneur</p> <p>(Go Negosyo Ph, 2016.)</p> <p>“As their partners, these incentives that Natasha is offering really resonate with us since they motivate us to keep striving.” – <b>Christopher Galvez, 32</b></p> <p>Natasha Reseller</p> <p>(Toldo, 2018)</p> <p>“Balancing between business content creators and</p>

STRATEGIES/PRACTICES	STATEMENT
<p>calculated risks.  (2023 National Arts and Crafts Fair, 2023)</p>	<p>as a student is quite a challenge. Which needs effective time management and multi-tasking skills.” – <b>Jiane Ulrich</b>  Owner, Sweet Creatures and Content Creator  (letsgonegosyo, 2024)</p>
<p><b>Leveraging Business Support Programs</b>  Involves actively participating in and utilizing the various resources, training, coaching, networking, and financial assistance offered by these programs to enhance business operations, improve compliance, foster innovation, and ultimately drive the growth and success of the enterprise.</p>	<p>“The KMWF We Go-Negosyo seminars, which addressed issues with product handling, good manufacturing practices, and such were of great value to our business.” – <b>Ms. Agapita Mercado</b>,  Owner, Aging's Food Delight (DTI, n.d.)  “Training programs encompass a variety of topics related to business operations, including fundamental taxation, accounting, budgeting, product knowledge, and financial management. Also, staff members for their service centers receive training here.” – <b>Christopher Galvez</b>, 32 Natasha Reseller (Toldo, 2018)</p>

Source: Processed by Authors

This table shows the successful strategies and practices adopted by some SMEs that can provide valuable lessons for others and develop some best practices. These are the practices and strategies gathered mostly from the SMEs that create a significant value for their success, which are: a) Embracing social media and digital technologies through e-commerce and content creations via social media platforms which are also evident in the study of Hernandez et al. (2022), as its key feature are sharing, presence and reputation which can contribute in running SMEs. b) Adapting to marketing trends, wherein the target customer base is closely observed and attention is paid to new forms of products and services, the development of various distribution channels, and maintaining high flexibility. c) Building customer relationships which involve earning customers’ loyalty, trust, and commitment by offering them the personalized engagement, assurance, product quality, product differentiation and problem-solving abilities. d) Developing entrepreneurial mindset such as identification of opportunities, initiative-taking, and innovation is critical to business owners. One must develop a tough, anticipatory, and flexible attitude while managing the time well and juggling various positions to succeed, and; e) Leveraging business support programs which increase functionality, effectiveness and efficiency of enterprises by participating in and using the resources, training, coaching, networking and financial assistance available and thus promote legal compliance and innovation.

These successful strategies and practices used by some SMEs give useful lessons to others with similar aspirations. According to DTI (n.d.), such seminars as product processing and good manufacturing practices had a positive impact on Ms Mercado’s business development in Aging’s Food Delight as shown in the table. Likewise, Christopher Galvez, a Natasha reseller, shared about extensive training programs related to business and product knowledge management, including the accounting and finance management that contributed to effective running of their companies (Toldo, 2018). Such ventures do not only encourage innovation and compliance but also enhance the overall growth and success of small businesses through equipping them with necessary skills to compete successfully in the marketplace.

These have underscored the strategic practices and strategies such as focusing on management and employee skills, financing, and innovation to adapt to the market conditions which are also consistent in the study of Tibon (2022) as such organizational practices help SMEs to cope with fluctuations in the environment and respond to consumers and the market effectively. In addition, the result also implies that SMEs are aware of the government programs and policy as most of these successful stories and implemented practices and strategies came from the SMEs beneficiaries of the government which helps them to cope up and improve their enterprises.

**Table III.** Actionable recommendations to overcome the challenges in adopting effective knowledge management practices

CHALLENGES	THEMES AND DESCRIPTION	RECOMMENDATIONS	THEMES AND DESCRIPTION
<p>-There is a necessity to implement a training on digitalizing business and digital transition (Hidalgo et al., 2021).</p> <p>-Some business establishments have closed down unexpectedly due to poor managerial and weak organizational performance (Burgos et al., 2022).</p> <p>There's a slow digital transition of the SMEs (OECD, 2021).</p> <p>Lack of awareness about Knowledge Management (KM) has been another issue observed in the organization. There is a need for more and better top management support (Afable et al., 2020)</p>	<p><b>Skills and Knowledge Deficiencies</b></p> <p>Refers to the gaps or inadequacies in the competencies and understanding required to effectively perform tasks, manage operations, or adapt to new technological and business environments.</p>	<p>- Knowledge management needs to be incorporated into the workplace activities in order to work towards its strategic positioning within the organization (Afable et al., 2020).</p> <p>-Owners and managers need to be aware of the knowledge management and innovation drivers that relate different forms of innovation to the performance of an organization (Delgado Jr., 2023).</p> <p>-Enhance conceptual development. They should engage in short courses, apart from seminars, or training sessions on managing a business and interact inside their line of business (Campos, 2021).</p>	<p><b>Invest in Skills Development and Knowledge Management Awareness</b></p> <p>To actively incorporate and prioritize learning and knowledge-sharing practices within the organization. The goal is to cultivate a workplace valuing knowledge sharing, constant development and evolution – empowering team members which adds to the organization's success through the application of their skills and expertise.</p>
<p>-In the area of organizational communication, due to the coming up of an unclear chain of communication, there is miscommunication among the employees which negatively impacts their morale, commitment that in turn is reflected in their work performance (Lubon,</p>	<p><b>Information and Communication Barriers</b></p> <p>Refer to barriers that would limit the flow of information and proper sharing of information and clear communication within an organization. These</p>	<p>-Understand the feasibility of a series of training on effective communication should be considered (Jimenez et al., 2021).</p> <p>-Promote a positive organizational climate and enhance fulfillment of responsibilities within the organization (Lubon,</p>	<p><b>Improve Information Sharing and Communication</b></p> <p>To develop and implement practices that enhance the flow of information and the quality of communication</p>

CHALLENGES	THEMES AND DESCRIPTION	RECOMMENDATIONS	THEMES AND DESCRIPTION
<p>2021).</p> <p>-When facing challenges in the workplace, there are times which employees engage in an attribution process, which features negative behaviors towards others. This response can lead to a cycle of failure and misfortune, and inevitably, it takes a toll on their well-being and work performance (Delgado Jr., 2023).</p>	<p>barriers can lead to misunderstandings, decreased morale, and poor performance.</p>	<p>2021).</p> <p>-There is a need to invest in the identification of well-developed structures. This could be translated into improved relations between employees and clients as well as between employees themselves, efficiency and effectiveness of systems and procedures (Asuah-Duodu, 2019).</p>	<p>within an organization. Implementing effective communication training, fostering a positive organizational climate, and developing well-structured systems and procedures to enhance information sharing, collaboration, and overall organizational performance.</p>
<p>-It is the owners' hesitancy and lack of their readiness to adopt digital technologies for their business are the recurring challenges particularly, due to cybersecurity concerns and that it's hard for them to adopt a cashless system as their customers preferred to pay in cash (Mia et al., 2024).</p> <p>-Revealed that they prefer traditional, paper-based methods of document storage. There's a minimal utilization of Google Docs, which is the tool adopted for digital collaboration purposes (Afable et al., 2020).</p>	<p><b>Technological and Digital Challenges</b></p> <p>Refer to the obstacle which organizations face in embracing digital technologies, driven by hesitancy due to security concerns, customer preferences for traditional payment methods, and internal resistance to digital tools. These challenges impede the effective adoption and utilization of digital systems and processes.</p>	<p>-Sharing of knowledge and the exchange of best practices among companies can help others on the adoption of the digital technologies which consists of creating awareness and offering training to entrepreneurs on the proper implementation of technology (Mia et al., 2024).</p> <p>-Adoption of digital processes enhances a firm's information management, for instance record management (Flaminiano &amp; Francisco, 2021).</p>	<p><b>Foster a Digital-Friendly Culture</b></p> <p>Developing organizational settings that supports the adoption and effective use of digital technologies.</p> <p>By fostering this type of digital-friendly culture, organizations can better position themselves to effectively adopt and leverage digital technologies to drive innovation, efficiency, and competitive advantage.</p>
<p>-Most of the small businesses overlooks to employ a good employee due to poor hiring practices and lack of human resource</p>	<p><b>Human Resource Issues</b></p> <p>Encompass the various challenges and</p>	<p>- SMEs should hire people with high levels of skills that are relevant to the SMEs field of specialization to develop</p>	<p><b>Strengthen Human Resource Capabilities</b></p> <p>Enhance the skills,</p>

CHALLENGES	THEMES AND DESCRIPTION	RECOMMENDATIONS	THEMES AND DESCRIPTION
<p>experts (Malaluan, 2019).</p> <p>-Having limited employees is another challenge that many small businesses face, they resort to employing families or relatives to help them manage the family business and some of these employees are under-aged (Pagtalunan et al., 2023).</p>	<p>problems they face in recruiting, managing, and retaining their workforce, often due to limited resources and lack of dedicated human resource expertise.</p>	<p>people-embedding advantages (Galli-Debicella, 2021).</p> <p>-SMEs should improve their Human Resource through easy implementation of adequate employment processes in recruiting, selecting, training and compensation policies of its employees (Capiña, 2021)</p>	<p>effectiveness, and overall potential of the organization's workforce through targeted hiring, development, and employment practices.</p> <p>By adopting these strategies, SMEs can build a stronger, more capable workforce that is aligned with their business goals and can drive improved performance and growth.</p>

Source: Processed by Authors

Presented in table 3 shows the several challenges that hinder SMEs, particularly, in adopting knowledge management practices, alongside the corresponding actionable recommendations to address those challenges. Based on the findings, in order to cope up with skills and knowledge deficiencies, investing in skills development and Knowledge Management (KM) awareness is necessary, consistent with the findings of Baporikar (2020) and Mabeza (2022). Knowledge, therefore, would be ineffective to organizations if people are not skilled enough to obtain the knowledge and utilize them appropriately (Malinao & Ebi, 2022). According to Abeysekera (2021), having human resources with certain skills, knowledge, and abilities, the knowledge base of an organization enables the conversion of raw data, explicit knowledge, handle applied and knowledge assets, applied knowledge, and generation of value into data that can define the uniqueness of an organization among others.

However, an organization sometimes struggles in communication as stated in the table. This is due to poor people-management practices which in returns create a negative outcome among firms: high rate of employee turnover, employees' unresolved issues and lack of trust, absence of a systematic approach, low efficiency, and unsatisfactory quality of work according to Bingham (2021). Utilizing an efficient business communication solution can highly enhance the activities of SMEs. Thus, the effective strategy of communication – having a clear structure, unification of the channels of communication, and the support of the option for remote work – helps SMEs to avoid the impact of the challenges defined above, get the most of the opportunities offered by the modern world, and get a competitive advantage in the market (Bingham, 2021).

Another theme found is the technological and digital challenges which SMEs struggles with the digital transformation in operating their business. One out of four major challenges of SMEs in Asia is the insufficient use of information technology (Yoshino and Taghizadeh-Hesary, 2016). This also made a huge impact during pandemic wherein inefficient IT expertise and skills hindered the SMEs from planning and executing digital transformation strategies and thus, hindered them from reaping on transformation benefits through technology (Mia et al., 2024). Fostering a digital-friendly culture is recommended through engaging more with technological advancements and promoting collaboration within the firms. Hence, the government must provide training programs relating to the use of technology, access to fast internet connection, and financial assistance to help those SMEs adopt digital services without incurring exorbitant costs (PWC, 2020; PNA, 2022).

Managing the human resource processes is also a challenge among SMEs. Mendoza (2020) and Capiña (2021) noted that most SMEs may not be able to invest sufficient time in managing their human resources and this may contribute to the firm's reluctance to implement latest trends in recruitment and selection. Thus, the recommendation proposed for SMEs is to strengthen human resource capabilities, critically examine its existing strategies regarding recruiting, and use a set standard correlated to the manpower required for the particular job in selection to achieve the highest probabilities of attracting qualified candidates.

This table shows that while SMEs can still survive, there is still no guarantee that they can sustain and prolong their business, especially if they lack knowledge management practices. In order to maintain and grow their competitiveness, the organizations should be able to incorporate the knowledge management within their organization which in turn can act as a strategic tool for their success.

## DISCUSSION

SMEs are vital in the Philippines' economy both for its gross domestic product and employment ratio and their potential sales reach Php 21 million as of March 14, 2024 in a report of DTI (2024). Apart from being the pillars in the nation's economic development, these enterprises is crucial in strengthening the resiliency and inclusivity of an economy. However, to unlock their full potential, they need to adapt to new changes within the business landscape.

The study reveals that although SMEs have great influence in the economy, several challenging situations are experienced by most SMEs with regard to the implementation of digital transformation strategies in their businesses (Sibiya, 2023). Due to financial constraints, many organizations fail to establish more efficient and competitive authorization and access control systems, which are key to immersing digital strategies. Furthermore, concerns over cybersecurity and ineffective customer relations strategies deter them from advancing in the digital market, consistent with the findings of Mia et al. (2024).

However, some of the successful SMEs have been able to overcome these challenges as shown in the findings which is through effective strategies of digital technology. The use of the online environment, including social networks and other types of digital platforms, has helped them expand their market share and increase brand recognition. Through these strategies, those enterprises retain relevance amid ever-shifting marketing practices that are prevalent in the marketplace. Further, increasing focus on customers' relationships ensures that clients will continue to stick with a business and go back for more services in the future – the backbone of business success. Adapting an entrepreneurial culture fosters the core values of innovation and market sensitivity, which improves growth within the organization. These findings have also presented the success story of these SMEs and the reason behind this, aside from their strategies, are the specific policies that have been implemented by the government such as Go Negosyo and Magna Carta which made these businesses thrive and even enhance their competitiveness. However, these programs of the government does not reach all SMEs in the Philippines because only registered SMEs are eligible to apply, thereby inferring that a number of unregistered SMEs are not aware of the importance or the existence of the programs (Villegas et al., (2020); Figueroa et al., (2024).

Knowledge management, on the other hand, is one of the functional areas which need to be properly addressed in organizations and which some of the SMEs still struggle with, in particular with creating, organizing, and sharing ideas. These knowledge management practices are vital for SMEs however, the implementation poses a challenge. The study revealed that creating, organizing, and sharing ideas within the organization is often hindered by skills and knowledge deficiencies, information and communication barriers, technological challenges and human resource issues. These issues hinder the ability of an organization to manage and leverage their internal knowledge and expertise, prevent an organization from effectively implementing and utilizing proper sharing of knowledge within an organization.

Therefore, it is advised that SMEs should consider the following strategic recommendations to cope up with these challenges. Investing in skills development and raising awareness about knowledge management tools that can enhance the capabilities of employees in utilizing them. Improving information sharing systems and fostering a culture of open communication to eradicate barriers and increase interaction between the teams. Embracing a digital-friendly culture, based on proactively having the requisite technological infrastructure

enhances the ease with which the knowledge management practices can be integrated in the operations. Another area is enhancing the human resource capabilities through the provision of training intervention and other human capacity building measures that provide employees with the needed skill and knowledge to operate effectively.

## CONCLUSIONS

This paper has highlighted effective strategies that SMEs in the Philippines can employ to enhance their success in terms of better management of gathering, organizing, and sharing ideas within an organization. As evidenced in various literature and studies, it has become an effective tool to implement effective strategies with regards to both technological and implementing effective training of employees and enhanced information-sharing systems within an organization in order to manage their enterprises effectively. Furthermore, the existing policies of the government in the Philippines have also found relevant and significant to the SMEs success, the Go Negosyo and Magna Carta in particular. However, the study also found that the government should include raising the awareness of such programs among the SMEs and especially the unregistered ones, simplified registration and compliance, implement trainings regarding the adoption of digital, knowledge sharing, and assess the outcomes regularly, so these policies would remain effective for developing and growing of all the SMEs in the Philippines.

In conclusion, by developing a culture of innovation, applying digital technologies, improving existing policies, and raising the awareness of organizations in information sharing, SMEs can create new opportunities for their growth (Durst & Henschel, 2024) and has a positive impact to the economy, improving its ability to withstand the challenges of the constantly changing environment in the global economy.

## RECOMMENDATIONS

Based on the findings of these research, it was advisable that SMEs in the Philippines must adopt a multifaceted strategy in enhancing their performance and competitiveness. One of the priorities is to integrate effective KM practices by means of which information is collected, organized and shared among the employees. In order for this to happen, SMEs have to invest in extensive training courses connected with digitization and digital transformation as these are challenges because there is a slow pace at which digital technologies are being adopted. The cultivation of digital skills through continuous learning programs will enable workers to contribute more effectively towards organizational goals. In addition, promoting digital culture among the SMEs by encouraging the use of new technologies and their efficient application can innovate, make it more effective or competitive. The development of human resource capabilities through selective hiring and training policies is essential in meeting SMEs' need for a skilled workforce aligned to their business objectives. Also, accessing government programs like Magna Carta for SMEs and Go Negosyo Act which offers financial or technical support would provide them with the necessary resources to implement KM practices that work and digital strategies (Figuroa et al., 2024). Furthermore, it is necessary that SMEs actively seek collaboration with educational institutions and industry experts to be aware of the most recent trends and best practices in knowledge management and digitalization. By doing so, they will have significantly improved their capability to withstand challenges that are likely to take place in the ever-changing business environment while also attaining sustainable growth and success.

In order to acquire a more depth and broader scope of the studies on SMEs, future researchers should broaden the coverage of research to include SMEs that operate in various industries and locations to get more refined data and focus on industry-specific issues of SMEs, such as retail or manufacturing industries, or service sectors to examine their major obstacles and useful practices used by these firms which can give more focused information concerning various industries and sectors of businesses.

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