

## Original Article

# Factors Affecting Business Sustainability of Public Market Vendors in Northern Mindanao, Philippines

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**Abstract.** Public market vendors are essential contributors to local economies in Northern Mindanao, yet their long-term business sustainability remains underexplored in empirical research. This study addresses that gap by examining how business permits, strategies, resources, and customer retention influence the sustainability of public market vendors in Cabanglasan, Bukidnon. A quantitative descriptive research design was employed, with survey data collected from 126 vendors via census sampling. Regression analysis was used to assess the relationship between business factors and sustainability outcomes. Findings indicate that compliance with business permit requirements is essential for maintaining legal operations and avoiding regulatory or financial risks. Resource availability—including financial capacity, equipment, and access to skills training—supports consistent business performance. Strategic initiatives, including marketing, innovation, and operational efficiency, enhance competitiveness. Customer retention also emerged as a critical determinant, emphasizing the role of engagement, feedback, and service quality in fostering loyalty. The analysis confirmed that business permits, resources, and strategies significantly affect sustainability, thereby rejecting the null hypothesis. These results underscore the importance of targeted policies and support mechanisms that promote regulatory compliance, improve access to resources, and strengthen strategic capabilities. Such interventions are vital to ensuring the long-term resilience of public market vendors in Northern Mindanao.

**Keywords:** *Business permit; Customer retention; Market competitiveness; Resources; Strategy.*

Business sustainability, especially for those operating in local public markets, is increasingly recognized as essential for long-term survival amid intensified competition, regulatory compliance, and resource constraints (Camilleri, 2020). For public market vendors, sustaining daily operations involves balancing regulatory demands, managing limited resources, and maintaining customer relationships. Businesses must comply with local requirements, such as securing the necessary permits, while also adopting strategies to remain competitive in a dynamic environment.

The COVID-19 pandemic further underscored the importance of regulatory compliance, reshaping business operations and heightening consumer expectations for safety, hygiene, and accountability. Donthu and Gustafsson (2020) noted that the pandemic accelerated shifts in both business practices and consumer behavior, increasing the urgency for adherence to updated health and safety protocols. In the Philippine context, recent studies highlight that micro-entrepreneurs faced intensified regulatory scrutiny during and after the pandemic,

with compliance closely tied to customer trust and business continuity (Labilles, 2024). Vendors who actively complied with health and permit regulations positioned themselves to sustain operations more effectively and maintain consumer confidence.

Regulatory authority over public markets in the Philippines is grounded in the Local Government Code of 1991 (Republic Act No. 7160), which empowers local legislative bodies to regulate vendors, enforce sanitation standards, and implement operational policies. Compliance with business permits remains a critical requirement, as noncompliance can result in penalties or business closure (Niño & Gentoral, 2024). However, Armas et al. (2024) found that micro-vendors often struggle to comply with regulations due to limited awareness and resource constraints, making compliance both a challenge and a key determinant of sustainability. Beyond regulatory obligations, public market vendors must navigate intense competition. Competitive pressure compels businesses to improve service quality, optimize resources, and innovate to retain customers (Song, 2022). Effective resource management, including access to capital, equipment, and skills training, enables vendors to maintain product quality and pricing, both of which are vital in a highly competitive environment. Strategic marketing, customer engagement, and product differentiation further support customer loyalty and strengthen market positioning.

Despite a growing body of literature on microenterprise sustainability, research has focused primarily on public market vendors. Most existing studies examine larger enterprises or general SMEs, leaving a gap in understanding the unique challenges faced by micro-vendors in local markets. Addressing this gap is crucial, as these vendors contribute significantly to regional economies yet often receive limited research attention and policy support. This study investigates the factors affecting the business sustainability of public market vendors in Cabanglasan, Bukidnon. It focuses on four core areas: business permits, strategic practices, resource management, and customer retention. By identifying which factors significantly affect sustainability outcomes, the research aims to provide evidence-based insights to inform policy development, vendor support programs, and capacity-building initiatives.

## **Methodology**

### **Research Design**

This study employed a quantitative descriptive research design using a survey questionnaire to identify factors affecting the business sustainability of public market vendors. As noted by Siedlecki (2020), descriptive quantitative research allows researchers to describe characteristics, conditions, and patterns within a population without manipulating variables. This study measured variables related to business permits, resources, strategy, and customer retention based on how they naturally occurred among the respondents. The research team conducted a simple linear regression analysis to examine how these factors influenced business sustainability.

### **Research Locale**

The researchers conducted research among public market vendors in Cabanglasan, Bukidnon. The participants were micro-enterprise owners renting stalls or spaces from the Local Government Unit (LGU). The researchers selected the location to gather insights that would support improvements in business practices and sustainability among local vendors.

### **Research Participants**

A census sampling technique was used, in which all micro-enterprise owners renting stalls in the public market were included as respondents. This approach ensured complete coverage of the target population. Vendors operating larger businesses and those outside the public market were excluded from the study.

### **Research Instrument**

The instrument used in this study was a survey questionnaire comprising sixteen closed-ended items designed to capture the key variables of the study. A five-point Likert scale was employed, enabling respondents to indicate their level of agreement with each statement, ranging from 1 (Strongly Disagree) to 5 (Strongly Agree). To ensure relevance and alignment with the study objectives, validated instruments from prior studies were adapted. The first section, adapted from Angeles (2021), assessed business permit-related factors, particularly the compliance and regulatory challenges faced by small businesses. The second section, based on Dzomonda (2022), measured environmental sustainability commitment, access to finance, financial performance, and corporate governance. The third section, adapted from Rane and Choudhary (2023), focused on strategies that enhance customer loyalty, including service quality, satisfaction, and engagement. Lastly, the fourth section, informed by Zhang, Zeng,

Liang, Xue, and Cao (2023), examined how organizational culture contributes to innovation performance and business sustainability. The overall Cronbach’s alpha of 0.907 indicated high internal consistency, consistent with Sugiharto (2024), which states that reliability coefficients of 0.70 and above reflect acceptable instrument reliability.

**Data Gathering Procedure**

Data were collected through a modified survey questionnaire administered to micro-enterprise owners renting LGU spaces in the public market. Before distribution, participants provided and signed informed consent forms. Permission to conduct the survey was obtained from the campus administration and the research locale. The purpose of the study and instructions for completing the questionnaire were clearly explained to the respondents. Printed questionnaires were distributed to participants who voluntarily agreed to take part and were knowledgeable about their business operations. After retrieval, the completed questionnaires were encoded, organized, and tabulated. Quantitative responses were analyzed using descriptive statistics and simple linear regression to address the research objectives. Adapted items from previously validated instruments were cited correctly in accordance with academic standards.

**Ethical Considerations**

The researchers adhered to the university's Ethics and Research protocols to ensure the study’s quality and integrity. Approval was obtained from the campus-in-charge and the local government unit before data collection. Consent forms were distributed to all participants, who were informed of the study's purpose, procedures, and their right to withdraw at any time. Respondents were assured that their answers would remain strictly confidential and would be used solely for academic purposes. All adapted instruments were properly cited to acknowledge original authorship. Data collected through the survey questionnaires were compiled, tabulated, and analyzed using appropriate statistical tools, ensuring accuracy and transparency in reporting. The researchers also emphasized respect for participants' rights and maintained ethical standards throughout the research process, including proper source acknowledgment and the avoidance of plagiarism.

**Results and Discussion**

**Assessment of Regulatory Compliance in Terms of Business Permit**

Table 1 presents respondents' assessments of regulatory compliance with respect to business permits. The overall mean score ( $M = 3.33$ ,  $SD = 0.52$ ) suggests that vendors generally perceive themselves as highly compliant with permit-related requirements. The highest-rated item, "I am aware of the local regulations that affect my business operations" ( $M = 3.52$ ,  $SD = 0.51$ ), reflects strong regulatory awareness. Respondents also reported proactive behaviors, such as actively seeking information to stay updated on regulatory changes ( $M = 3.27$ ,  $SD = 0.55$ ), ensuring timely submission of compliance reports ( $M = 3.26$ ,  $SD = 0.51$ ), and feeling adequately informed about permit requirements ( $M = 3.26$ ,  $SD = 0.52$ ). These findings indicate a consistent pattern of self-reported compliance and engagement with regulatory processes.

*Table 1. Assessment of the Respondents on Regulatory Compliance in Terms of Business Permit*

Statements	Mean	SD	Description
1. I am aware of the local regulations that affect my business operations.	3.52	0.51	Business Permit is Highly Compliant
2. I ensure the timely submission of all regulatory compliance reports to avoid legal issues and penalties.	3.26	0.51	Business Permit is Highly Compliant
3. I am well informed about the regulatory requirements for business permits.	3.26	0.52	Business Permit is Highly Compliant
4. I actively seek information to stay updated on regulatory changes because complying with regulations enhances my business's sustainability.	3.27	0.55	Business Permit is Highly Compliant
<b>Total</b>	<b>3.33</b>	<b>0.52</b>	<b>Business Permit is Highly Compliant</b>

Beyond fulfilling legal obligations, the findings suggest that vendors perceive regulatory compliance as a strategic component of their business operations. The consistently high mean scores across items indicate not only awareness but also deliberate efforts to stay informed and act in accordance with regulations. This proactive stance reflects a broader understanding that compliance contributes to business sustainability, risk mitigation, and operational continuity. Rather than viewing regulations as burdensome, respondents appear to regard them as tools to enhance their credibility and long-term viability in the marketplace.

These findings align with recent scholarship emphasizing the multifaceted value of regulatory compliance. Binsaeed (2023) highlights that adherence to regulations mitigates legal, financial, and reputational risks—an

insight reflected in respondents' emphasis on timely reporting and awareness. Building on this, Ameyaw (2024) underscores how compliance fosters transparency, accountability, and profitability, reinforcing the idea that vendors view regulatory engagement as a pathway to long-term business health. Similarly, Andriyani et al. (2022) argue that securing business permits enhances legitimacy and competitiveness, while lapses in compliance can lead to serious operational setbacks. These perspectives resonate with the proactive behaviors reported by respondents, suggesting that compliance is not merely reactive but a deliberate strategy for resilience and growth.

The data and supporting literature illustrate that regulatory compliance serves as both a protective mechanism and a strategic enabler for public market vendors. The respondents' awareness and proactive behaviors reflect a broader pattern in which compliance is integrated into business sustainability strategies. As Niño and Gentoral (2024) observe, streamlined permit processes can enhance vendor confidence and operational continuity, while Armas et al. (2024) caution that limited regulatory awareness can hinder micro-enterprise growth. In this context, compliance emerges not as an isolated administrative task but as a lever for legitimacy, competitiveness, and resilience. For vendors navigating dynamic market environments, aligning with regulatory frameworks is not only prudent—it is essential for long-term viability and for building trust with customers and local authorities.

### Assessments of Competition for Resources

Table 2 indicates that respondents generally strongly agree with items related to resource competition, as reflected in an overall mean score of 3.52 ( $SD = 0.57$ ). This suggests a positive evaluation of resource availability across financial, material, and developmental aspects. The highest mean score ( $M = 3.59$ ,  $SD = 0.58$ ) corresponds to the statement “I have sufficient financial resources to invest in my business.” This highlights respondents' confidence in their financial capacity, providing a stable foundation for investment and growth. Closely following is “Our company has a good and sustainable financial resource management system” ( $M = 3.54$ ,  $SD = 0.54$ ), underscoring recognition of effective financial management practices that support long-term success. Access to equipment and supplies also received strong agreement ( $M = 3.51$ ,  $SD = 0.57$ ), reflecting the availability of essential tools for smooth operations.

Meanwhile, “I have access to training programs that enhance my skills” obtained the lowest mean ( $M = 3.45$ ,  $SD = 0.58$ ), still positive but suggesting variability in opportunities for skill development. Building on the respondents' positive assessment of regulatory compliance, the analysis of resource availability further demonstrates how vendors sustain their operations through financial stability, access to equipment, and opportunities for skill development. The findings indicate that vendors perceive these resources as highly supportive of their competitiveness, reflecting an understanding that financial strength, effective management, and continuous learning are interconnected drivers of sustainability.

**Table 2.** *Assessments of the Respondents on Competition Regarding Resources*

Resources	Mean	SD	Description
1. I have sufficient financial resources to invest in my business.	3.59	0.58	Resources are Highly Available
2. Our company has a sound and sustainable financial resource management system.	3.54	0.54	Resources are Highly Available
3. I have access to training programs that enhance my skills.	3.45	0.58	Resources are Highly Available
4. I have access to the necessary equipment and supplies.	3.51	0.57	Resources are Highly Available
<b>Total</b>	<b>3.52</b>	<b>0.57</b>	<b>Resources are Highly Available</b>

Hasyim and Bakri (2024) emphasize that strategic planning and alternative financing options are crucial for micro businesses, findings that align with respondents' confidence in their financial capacity and management systems. This suggests that vendors not only value immediate financial resources but also recognize the importance of planning and diversification to withstand external pressures. Sehnem et al. (2020) highlight that sustainable resource management—integrating financial, technological, and supply chain assets—ensures long-term competitiveness, supporting the high ratings of financial management practices in this study. Likewise, Marolt (2024) underscores the role of digital tools in optimizing resource utilization and operational efficiency, reinforcing respondents' agreement on the importance of equipment and training programs. These findings affirm that resource availability is not merely a matter of possession but of strategic integration and use. Financial stability provides the foundation, equipment ensures operational continuity, and training fosters adaptability. When combined, these elements create a sustainable framework that enables micro businesses to remain competitive and resilient in dynamic market environments.

### Assessments of Competition Regarding Strategy

Table 3 presents respondents' assessments of competition with respect to strategic practices. The overall mean score of 3.46 ( $SD = 0.60$ ) suggests a moderately high level of strategic implementation among vendors. This indicates that respondents generally perceive their strategic efforts as well-developed and actively pursued. Among the strategic dimensions assessed, marketing ranked highest. The item "Our marketing strategy is effective in reaching target markets" received the highest mean score ( $M = 3.55$ ,  $SD = 0.60$ ), reflecting strong confidence in vendors' ability to connect with their intended audiences. Innovation was also prioritized, as seen in the item "Our company continuously develops innovative products and services to gain a competitive edge" ( $M = 3.46$ ,  $SD = 0.61$ ), underscoring the importance of differentiation in a competitive marketplace. Operational efficiency followed closely ( $M = 3.42$ ,  $SD = 0.52$ ), suggesting that vendors value streamlined processes to maintain competitiveness. Lastly, the statement "I think using a marketing strategy is the best competitive advantage" ( $M = 3.41$ ,  $SD = 0.68$ ) received strong agreement. However, the relatively high standard deviation indicates variability in respondents' perceptions of the primacy of marketing relative to other strategies. These findings highlight that strategic practices are most effective when pursued as an integrated system rather than as isolated initiatives. Marketing provides visibility and customer reach; innovation ensures responsiveness and differentiation; and operational efficiency secures cost-effectiveness and resilience. When combined, these elements create a reinforcing cycle: effective marketing attracts customers, innovation sustains their interest, and efficiency maintains profitability.

**Table 3.** *Assessments of the Respondents on Competition Regarding Strategy*

Strategy	Mean	SD	Description
1. Our company consistently seeks ways to improve operational efficiency to stay competitive.	3.42	0.52	Strategy is Highly Implemented
2. Our company continuously develops innovative products and services to gain a competitive edge.	3.46	0.61	Strategy is Highly Implemented
3. Our marketing strategy is effective in reaching target markets.	3.55	0.60	Strategy is Highly Implemented
4. Using a marketing strategy is the best competitive advantage.	3.41	0.68	Strategy is Highly Implemented
<b>Total</b>	<b>3.46</b>	<b>0.60</b>	<b>Strategy is Highly Implemented</b>

This integrated view is supported by recent literature. Ismail et al. (2022) emphasize that marketing strategies aligned with ESG principles not only enhance financial performance but also build trust and accountability, positioning marketing as a tool for sustainability rather than mere promotion. Cabaleiro-Cerviño and Mendi (2024) argue that innovation rooted in ESG practices boosts productivity and competitiveness, aligning with vendors' emphasis on continuous product and service development. Similarly, Astuty et al. (2024) highlight that resilience strategies that combine digitalization and innovation enable microenterprises to adapt to volatile market conditions, underscoring the value of integrating efficiency with innovation. To sum up, these perspectives reveal that sustainability in microenterprises – particularly among public market vendors – emerges from the synergy of marketing, innovation, and efficiency. Competitiveness is not achieved through a single dominant strategy but through the dynamic interaction of multiple practices. By embedding these strategies into daily operations, vendors can enhance their adaptability to regulatory and resource constraints, ensuring both immediate survival and long-term sustainability.

### The Extent to Which the Factors Affecting the Better Sustainability of the Public Market in Terms of Customer Retention

Table 4 presents respondents' assessment of customer retention. The overall mean score of 3.41 ( $SD = 0.61$ ) indicates that vendors generally perceive their customer retention practices as very high. The highest-rated items, "I engage with customers, build loyalty and a strong relationship" ( $M = 3.42$ ,  $SD = 0.64$ ) and "I welcome feedback from customers; it is crucial for retaining customers" ( $M = 3.42$ ,  $SD = 0.58$ ), highlight the importance respondents place on relationship-building and feedback. Similarly, "I provide awareness to customers of my business and its offerings" ( $M = 3.41$ ,  $SD = 0.59$ ) underscores the role of communication in sustaining loyalty. Lastly, "My business provides customer-friendly service" ( $M = 3.40$ ,  $SD = 0.62$ ) reflects strong agreement, though the slightly lower mean suggests variability in perceptions of service quality.

**Table 4.** *Presented the Extent to Which the Factors Affecting the Better Sustainability of the Public Market in Terms of Customer Retention*

Customer Retention	Mean	SD	Description
1. I engage with customers, build loyalty, and establish a strong relationship.	3.42	0.64	Customer Retention is Very High
2. I welcome feedback from customers, as it is crucial for retaining customers.	3.42	0.58	Customer Retention is Very High
3. My business provides customer-friendly service.	3.40	0.62	Customer Retention is Very High
4. I provide awareness to customers of my business and its offerings.	3.41	0.59	Customer Retention is Very High
<b>Total</b>	<b>3.41</b>	<b>0.61</b>	<b>Customer Retention is Very High</b>

Building on the strategic practices identified earlier, the findings highlight that customer-focused approaches are equally vital for sustaining competitiveness. Engagement, feedback, service quality, and awareness emerged as central to retention, underscoring that vendors recognize the importance of nurturing long-term relationships rather than relying solely on transactional exchanges. This perspective is consistent with prior scholarship. Rosário and Casaca (2023) emphasize that relationship marketing strengthens loyalty and satisfaction, directly supporting respondents' emphasis on customer engagement. Alkitbi et al. (2020) identify service quality, trust, and satisfaction as key drivers of retention, reinforcing the role of feedback and customer-friendly services in sustaining loyalty. Ali and Shabn (2024) further emphasize the importance of prioritizing Customer Lifetime Value (CLV) and raising awareness of offerings, consistent with vendors' recognition that awareness-building contributes to sustained growth. Taken together, these studies affirm that customer retention is not a single practice but a multidimensional strategy. Engagement fosters loyalty, feedback builds trust, service quality ensures satisfaction, and awareness sustains growth. For public market vendors, integrating these practices creates a cycle of customer-focused sustainability, ensuring competitiveness is grounded in strong, lasting relationships with their clientele.

#### Regression Analysis on the Factors Affecting the Business Sustainability of Public Market Vendors

Table 5 presents the regression analysis of the respondents' assessments of the factors affecting business sustainability. The overall regression model was significant,  $F(3, 122) = 6.68$ ,  $p < .001$ , with  $R = .38$  and  $R^2 = .14$ . This indicates that approximately 14% of the variance in sustainability was explained by business permits, resources, and strategy. Business permits were negatively associated with sustainability ( $B = -.23$ ,  $SE = .10$ ,  $t = -2.37$ ,  $p = .02$ ). This suggests that difficulties in obtaining or maintaining permits create significant obstacles to sustainability, underscoring the importance of regulatory compliance and streamlined processes. Strategy positively predicted sustainability ( $B = .18$ ,  $SE = .08$ ,  $t = 2.33$ ,  $p = .02$ ), highlighting the role of effective planning, marketing, and adaptability in fostering resilience and long-term success. Resources also positively predicted sustainability ( $B = .19$ ,  $SE = .08$ ,  $t = 2.25$ ,  $p = .03$ ), underscoring the importance of financial stability, equipment, and access to training in supporting vendor operations.

**Table 5.** *Presentation of Regression Analysis on the Factors Affecting the Business Sustainability of Public Market Vendors*

Regression Statistics					
Multiple R	0.37				
R Square	0.14				
Adjusted R Square	0.11				
Standard Error	0.31				
Observations	126				
ANOVA					
	Df	SS	MS	F	Significance F
Regression	3	1.94	0.64	6.67789	<0.001
Residual	122	11.82	0.09		
<b>Total</b>	<b>125</b>	<b>13.77</b>			
	Coefficients	Standard Error	t-stat	p-value	
Intercept	2.89	0.58	4.97	.00	
Permit	-0.23	0.09	-2.37	.02	
Resources	0.18	0.08	2.24	.03	
Strategy	0.17	0.07	2.32	.02	

These findings emphasize that regulatory compliance, resource management, and strategic planning significantly contribute to the sustainability of public market vendors. While permits present regulatory challenges, resources and strategies serve as positive drivers of growth and adaptability. The results align with existing research. Pérez



Estébanez and Sevillano Martín (2025) found that addressing regulatory compliance and optimizing resource management enhances sustainability practices and financial performance. Chua and Byun (2024) highlighted the importance of strategic planning and its alignment with environmental, social, and governance (ESG) principles for improving business outcomes. Similarly, Hamdouna and Khmelyarchuk (2025) emphasized the role of technological innovations in shaping sustainable competitiveness, noting that advancements strengthen resilience to challenges and contribute to long-term sustainability.

## Conclusion

This study emphasizes the vital role of business permits, resource allocation, strategic initiatives, and customer loyalty in sustaining public market vendors. Compliance with permit requirements was identified as a cornerstone of legal and operational stability, with respondents stressing the importance of timely submissions and updates to mitigate financial, reputational, and regulatory risks. The effective use of resources, particularly financial strength, access to equipment, and opportunities for skill development, was also highlighted as a driver of smooth operations and business growth. Strategic measures, including marketing effectiveness, product innovation, and process efficiency, significantly shape sustainability, enabling vendors to remain competitive and adaptable in evolving market conditions. Moreover, customer retention through active engagement, feedback mechanisms, and quality service emerged as a critical factor in long-term success, underscoring the value of relationship-building and loyalty cultivation. Collectively, these findings suggest that sustainability in public markets depends not only on compliance but also on foresight, investment in resources, and strong customer relationships.

In practice, business owners should prioritize compliance with permit requirements to ensure legal and financial stability, while adopting prudent resource utilization through financial planning, sustainable practices, and continuous skill development to strengthen operations and support growth. Strategic initiatives that combine marketing, innovation, and efficiency can bolster competitiveness, while fostering customer loyalty through engagement and service quality contribute to enduring success. Local government units play a crucial role in supporting vendors by simplifying regulatory procedures, upgrading market infrastructure, and offering training programs that build capacity in financial management, marketing, and customer relations. Consumers also contribute significantly to vendor sustainability by patronizing local businesses, thereby reinforcing community economies and food security, while constructive feedback helps vendors refine their services. For researchers, this study offers avenues to examine how digital technologies, cultural dynamics, and economic shifts influence vendor sustainability, particularly among small-scale enterprises that face unique challenges. Finally, future vendors can achieve resilience by adhering to permit requirements, cultivating financial stability, and adopting forward-looking strategies in marketing, innovation, and operational efficiency. Prioritizing customer satisfaction and learning from experienced vendors, alongside participation in training programs offered by agencies such as the Department of Trade and Industry (DTI), will further enhance their competitiveness and long-term viability.

## Contributions of Authors

All Authors contributed to the conceptualization of this study.

Authors 1, 2, and 3 led the research design, data collection, data analysis, and manuscript finalization.

Author 4 contributed to the data analysis and the finalization of the manuscript.

Authors 5 helped with the manuscript critique and finalization.

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## Conflict of Interests

The authors have no conflicts of interest to declare relevant to this article's content.

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