

Supply Chain Challenges In Local Bakeris And Cafes

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Abstract: *This qualitative study investigates the supply chain procedures used by neighborhood bakeries and cafés in Olongapo City that make their own breads and pastries. Finding the typical problems these companies encounter, the methods they take to deal with supply chain problems, and the advice they give prospective business owners are the main objectives of the study. Key concerns including inventory control, transportation delays, and supplier dependability were identified as significant barriers using theme analysis and in-depth survey responses. As a result, companies put into practice sensible fixes like utilizing inventory management software, cultivating solid supplier connections, and obtaining ingredients locally. The results give a solid grasp of how small-scale food businesses handle intricate supply chain dynamics and give prospective bakery or café entrepreneurs practical advice on how to create robust and effective businesses.*

Keywords: supply chain, ingredients, suppliers, quality, production, deliveries, bakeries

1. INTRODUCTION

The growth of local bakeries and cafés has been very beneficial to the food service sector in the Philippines in recent years. In addition to offering unique, handcrafted products, these small to medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) are vital to regional economies and cultural identities. However, the availability, consistency, and quality of their production are directly impacted by the complex supply chain that supports the appeal of artisanal baked products and confections. Supply chain management, or SCM, has become a key element of these businesses' operational performance. Unlike large food chains with standardized shipping processes, local bakeries may have limited resources and rely on smaller-scale suppliers. As a result, their supply networks are more vulnerable to disruptions and require flexible, creative solutions.

Numerous supply chain issues might impair the operational effectiveness and customer happiness of nearby bakeries and cafés. The competitive environment, which is controlled by bigger food systems, makes these difficulties worse. They are caused by logistical difficulties, vendor dependability, and outside disturbances. Bengaluru's restaurant industry, highlighting issues like labor shortages, transportation delays, seasonal demand fluctuations, and vendor reliability issues, which probably also affect nearby bakeries and cafes dealing with similar supply chain disruptions and operational inefficiencies (Shravya, 2024).

Concentrates on regional and organic food producers, paying special attention to the logistical expenses and distribution challenges that programs like Willem & Drees encounter in the traditional food system (Dvortsin, 2013). Due to their small scale, decentralization, and integration issues with bigger supply chains, local food producers—such as bakeries and cafes—face logistical obstacles that result in inefficient distribution and higher transportation costs per unit of product (Nordmark, 2015). On the other hand, a few neighborhood

bakeries and cafés have shown resilient in the face of hardship by utilizing creative supply chain techniques and community connections to effectively negotiate these difficulties. Even with their importance, not many studies have specifically looked at the supply chain dynamics of local bakeries and cafés, especially in rural cities like Olongapo City.

2. METHODOLOGY

Semi-structured interviews, which are thought to provide participants more freedom to respond to questions on their own terms than standardized interviews, were used in this qualitative study (May, 1997). The experience, expertise, and dedication of the interviewer affect the caliber of the data produced (Kumar, 2005). Purposive sampling was used in the selection of the study's thirty (30) participants. The information was gathered in April 2025. Google Forms was utilized to record the interview. A letter requesting an interview was distributed to each of the thirty (30) participants. A tangible copy of the letter of request was distributed to each participant. The interview took place in the area around the café during their lean period. A tangible copy of the letter of request was distributed to each participant. The interview took place in the area around the café during their lean period. A well-structured questionnaire process and schedule were established to ensure the interview was conducted accurately and efficiently. An identical set of questions on their individual perspectives on the variables influencing dessert yields, sales, and tactics in the café sector were presented to each participant. Following transcription, the data was coded, reviewed, assessed, and validated. By listening to and reading the transcribed interviews again, the researcher may develop a greater grasp of the topic through the transcribing process. Once all of the data had been thoroughly transcribed, coding got underway. Content is categorized and organized using keyword codes, which are regarded as a crucial component of qualitative research

(Sarantakos, 1998). The data was analyzed, classified, and arranged into themes and additional sub-themes after the coding process. A unique code was assigned to each of the developing patients. The next step was to interpret the data, which included pointing out any patterns that appeared repeatedly as well as any parallels and contrasts. The next step was data verification, which involved reviewing the codes and transcripts once more to ensure that the comprehension was good. The researcher can confirm or alter earlier notions using this strategy (Sarantakos, 1998). Throughout the investigation, the research complied with ethical guidelines. Before the interviews, participants were briefed on the goal of the study and their informed consent was acquired. Pseudonyms were assigned and data was stored securely to ensure anonymity and confidentiality. Participants received guarantees that their answers would only be utilized for scholarly research and that they could leave the study at any time without facing any repercussions. According to the institutional ethical norms for qualitative research, the study was carried out.

3. RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

THEME 1: INGREDIENT SOURCING

Local cafés and bakeries often operate in environments where the availability and cost of key ingredients can change rapidly. This theme captures the daily reality of managing these uncertainties and the creative ways owners respond. Several business owners reported that planning was challenging due to shifting consumer demand, particularly around holidays or special occasions. These erratic fluctuations frequently resulted in the misallocation of resources. Seasonal fluctuations in demand can strain supply chains, leading to ingredient shortages and price volatility (Shravya, 2024). Delays in transportation, particularly from far-off suppliers, were a major worry as well. Respondents highlighted how these logistical challenges impacted their capacity to preserve the uniformity and freshness of their products. Local food producers often encounter high logistical costs due to limited economies of scale, making it difficult to compete with larger suppliers (Dvortsin, 2013). The intricate distribution networks required for fresh products can lead to inefficiencies, particularly for small-scale operations (Shravya, 2024).

“Balancing cost control and quality is a constant juggling act. We carefully source ingredients, comparing prices and quality from different suppliers to find the best value. We look for ways to optimize our processes to minimize waste and improve efficiency without sacrificing quality. We also regularly review our recipes, looking for ways to make small adjustments that reduce costs without noticeably impacting the final product. It's about finding the sweet spot where we can offer high-quality products at prices that are both competitive and profitable.” Participant 13

“When we faced delays in milk deliveries, we quickly sourced from the nearest store in our shop. This ensured we maintained product quality and met customer expectations, leading to increased satisfaction and higher sales.” Participant 1.

“When a supplier fails to deliver on time, we contact them right away and try to find another source or adjust our sales until the products arrive.” Participant 9.

“During the pandemic, we had a hard time sourcing things like eggs and cream. We realized how risky it was to rely on just one big supplier. So, we started reaching out to smaller farms and even connected with a local dairy cooperative. Now we try to balance both: a primary source and a backup, just in case. We've also tightened our ordering schedule to avoid overstocking items that spoil quickly.” Participant 7.

“I carefully source ingredients, balancing quality with price. Sometimes I must make small adjustments to recipes to save money without compromising taste.” Participant 14.

“Yes, a few typical errors are: Dependency on a single source Not routinely checking the stock Putting in too many or too few orders Selecting inexpensive ingredients that compromise the quality of the final product Not getting ready for busy times (holidays, for example).” Participant 17.

Subtheme 1.1 Coping with Ingredient Shortages

Owners frequently encounter situations where essential ingredients—like flour, eggs, or butter—are suddenly unavailable. This forces them to adapt quickly, sometimes by changing their menu or finding temporary substitutes. the importance of logistics, planning, and cooperation with suppliers, which can indirectly help manage ingredient availability and reduce food losses in the baking industry (Goryńska-Goldmann et al., 2021). Companies in the food industry are moving away from reactive approaches and adopting proactive planning strategies that emphasize strong supplier relationship management. This shift helps maintain consistent food production and prioritizes the quality assurance of ingredients, even during challenging times (Direct, n.d.).

Subtheme 1.2 Managing Price Volatility

Price fluctuations are another major challenge. Ingredients can become significantly more expensive due to market conditions, seasonal demand, or supply chain disruptions. As one owner put it, managing these costs requires careful budgeting and, at times, passing some of the increases onto customers or finding alternative suppliers. Adjusting recipes involves more than just substituting one ingredient for

another—it requires careful consideration of cost, compliance, quality, and operational efficiency. Without proper processes in place, these changes can lead to significant disruptions and increased expenses (DynamicsFoodERP, 2025). A finished product is never truly fixed. To stay competitive and respond to fluctuating raw material prices, companies must be flexible. When the cost of a specific ingredient rises, its proportion in the final product may need to be reduced or replaced with a more affordable alternative. For example, substituting some meat proteins with less expensive vegetable proteins can be a viable solution. (Andrieu, 2019). Fluctuating raw material prices are inevitable. By staying informed, being adaptable, and building resilient operations, businesses can respond effectively and maintain long-term profitability (admin, 2025).

Subtheme 1.3 Overcoming Delivery and Logistics Setbacks

Even when ingredients are available and affordable, getting them delivered on time can be a struggle. Transportation delays—caused by weather, traffic, or logistical issues—can disrupt production schedules. The study examines data from companies using modern logistics solutions—like AI optimization, renewable energy, and circular supply chains—supported by expert interviews for practical insights. (Anisha & Chandrasekar, 2024). The findings highlight the crucial role of streamlining distribution hubs and expanding transport routes to effectively manage ripple effects (Aziz et al., 2024). By optimizing the ingredient supply chain, businesses can reduce long lead times with contract manufacturers. Proactive management boosts efficiency, ensures timely production, enhances customer satisfaction, and helps maintain a competitive edge (Jeeva, n.d.).

THEME 2: SUPPLIER RELATIONSHIPS

Strong relationships with suppliers are the backbone of a stable supply chain. This theme explores how café and bakery owners cultivate these connections to ensure consistent quality and timely deliveries. The supply of essential raw goods, especially perishables like dairy and baking ingredients, was frequently delayed or inconsistent, according to several respondents. Their everyday operations were adversely affected by these discrepancies, which led to production halts and decreased customer satisfaction. This is consistent with other studies emphasizing the value of prompt procurement in the food service sector (Smith & Chang, 2020). Bakeries and cafes may struggle with vendor reliability, impacting their ability to maintain consistent product offerings (Shravya, 2024).

“I would’ve built backup supplier relationships sooner. In the beginning, we were completely dependent on one source and when they had issues, so did we. I also wish I’d tracked waste better early on. Understanding where you’re losing money can

really change how you manage your orders.” Participant 6.

“Yes, we’ve actively pursued relationships with local Zambales suppliers for several ingredients. For example, we now source our mangoes from a local orchard for our mango sticky rice, and our eggs come from a nearby farm. This has improved the freshness of our ingredients, reduced transportation costs and lead times, and supported local businesses. While we still rely on some national suppliers for certain specialized ingredients, our increased focus on local sourcing has proven beneficial.” Participant 13.

“We’ve maintained consistency by building strong supplier relationships, investing in inventory management software, and optimizing production processes.” Participant 22.

“Focus on building strong relationships with reliable suppliers and stay flexible. Diversify your sources to reduce risks and always have a buffer stock for key ingredients.” Participant 15.

“To deal with supply problems, we keep extra ingredients as backup and talk often with our suppliers to avoid surprises. We also try to buy from different sources, so we’re not stuck if one supplier has issues.” Participant 16

“Key suppliers include local farms for dairy and eggs, regional mills for organic flours, and specialty importers for ingredients. Maintaining strong supplier relationships involves open communication, payment terms, and regular feedback. A collaborative mindset helps navigate challenges and ensure a steady flow of quality ingredients.” Participant 19.

Subtheme 2.1 Prioritizing Local Suppliers

Many businesses prefer working with local suppliers because they are more accessible and can respond quickly to urgent needs. A respondent explained. This approach not only strengthens the supply chain but also fosters community ties. choosing between local and international sourcing is a critical business decision. Evaluating the advantages and disadvantages, along with aligning the choice to specific goals, helps ensure a sourcing strategy that supports both growth and sustainability (D, 2024). Local sourcing is more than a cost or convenience decision—it’s a sustainable investment in supply chain resilience,

community support, and operational flexibility. Proximity to suppliers enables shorter lead times, better visibility, and quicker response during disruptions (*Local Sourcing: Why Businesses Are Making the Switch*, n.d.). Local sourcing is an impactful strategy for sustainable development, allowing businesses to reduce their carbon footprint, support local economies, and strengthen community ties. It aligns with environmental stewardship and the concept of 'glocalization'—balancing global reach with local responsibility. Its sustainability benefits span reduced transportation emissions, ecological preservation, and minimized waste (*Local Sourcing: From Global to Local: How Local Sourcing Is Redefining Glocalization - FasterCapital*, n.d.).

Subtheme 2.2 Communication and Trust

Open, honest communication is key to maintaining good supplier relationships. Owners who regularly check in with their suppliers and address issues promptly are more likely to receive reliable service. Trust and mutual respect are essential for long-term partnerships. Recommendations include improving supplier relationships, adopting accurate forecasting techniques, and expanding production facilities to better manage inventory and meet customer demand (Nansubuga et al., 2024). Trust is essential for fostering collaborative exchanges and mitigating risks in supplier relationships (Cooper, 2024). Key factors influencing trust include effective communication, ethical conduct, and relationship history. Trust can significantly improve supplier performance and innovation capabilities, leading to sustainable growth (Cooper, 2024). Effective communication strategies, such as proactive engagement and transparent feedback, enhance information exchange and mutual understanding (Grant, 2024).

Subtheme 2.3 Flexibility and Mutual Support

Sometimes, suppliers face their own challenges. Owners who are understanding and flexible—perhaps by adjusting orders or timelines—often find that suppliers reciprocate when the business needs help. This give-and-take dynamic helps both parties weather disruptions and maintain a

steady flow of goods. In supply chain contexts, flexibility is vital for adapting to changing demands. The concept of autonomous cooperation, exemplified by intelligent containers, enhances flexibility by allowing real-time monitoring and communication, thus supporting the dynamic needs of food chains (Brenner et al., 2014). Companies that prioritize supply chain management and embrace sustainable sourcing are better equipped to thrive in the evolving café industry. By remaining proactive and adaptable to market changes, café operators can consistently deliver quality products and experiences to customers globally (Team, 2025).

THEME 3: EMBRACING AGILITY AND INNOVATION

Adaptation and innovation are crucial for small businesses facing constant change. This theme highlights how owners use creativity, technology, and continuous learning to stay ahead. This mindset helps businesses adapt to new challenges and improve over time. Economic Order Quantity (EOQ): Implementing EOQ models can optimize inventory control, minimizing costs associated with stock shortages. For instance, one study demonstrated a reduction in stock shortage costs by nearly 100% through systematic inventory management (Dania et al., 2019) (Larasati et al., n.d.).

“Whether you prioritize local suppliers or technology early on depends on your bakery's specific needs. Local suppliers offer quick delivery and strong relationships, which can be great when starting out. However, they might have limited capacity or higher prices. Basic inventory management software can prevent costly mistakes from the beginning, even if more advanced systems aren't needed yet. For a very small bakery, focusing on reliable local suppliers might be best initially, then gradually adding technology as you grow. The key is to address your biggest challenges first.”
Participant 13.

“Utilizing inventory management software, implementing just-in-time ordering systems, and adopting demand forecasting tools can enhance supply chain operations. Regular training for staff and staying informed about industry trends also contribute to effective supply chain management.”
Participant 28.

“POS systems that include inventory tracking. Spreadsheets and dashboards for manual tracking if you're starting small. Cloud-based tools like Google Sheets for easy sharing and updates. Regular review meetings with your team to catch issues early.”

Supplier scorecards to track performance (on-time delivery, quality, etc.)” Participant 25.

“Yes, we attended a DTI-sponsored seminar on supply chain management for SMEs. It helped us understand cost control, sourcing alternatives, and risk management.” Participant 30.

“Our team has attended local business development workshops and seminars provided by DTI and other local organizations focused on improving logistics, inventory control, and sourcing strategies.” Participant 18

“Eventually, when you grow, tools that integrate with your POS system can help forecast and automate orders. Joining local food co-ops or small business forums is also a great way to find resources and support.” Participant 6.

“Yes. Local vendors result in simpler communication and quicker deliveries. Technology makes tracking simpler and reduces mistakes. In the long run, even modest investments in both can save you time and money.” Participant 17.

“Yes, the main office provides periodic training on inventory management, cost control, and operations planning. We’ve also participated in local seminars organized by business groups in Olongapo that focus on small business resilience and supply chain optimization. These resources have helped our team handle disruptions more proactively.” Participant 22.

“At our cafe, we’ve adopted several strategies to navigate supply chain issues like Buffer inventory: We keep extra stock of high-demand or slow-to-deliver items. Menu flexibility: We’ve created backup recipes or alternative menu versions if certain ingredients are unavailable. Improved forecasting: We track sales trends weekly to adjust procurement plans. Supplier diversification: We’ve added backup suppliers for key ingredients to prevent total dependence on one source.” Participant 25

Subtheme 3.1 Menu Flexibility and Product Innovation

When faced with shortages or changing customer preferences, owners often innovate by creating new products or adjusting their menus. This not only solves supply issues but can also attract new customers. to partially replace traditional flours. This approach can help cope with ingredient shortages while enhancing nutritional value, though it may increase

production costs and affect dough properties (Bojňanská et al., 2023). In the dynamic food industry, staying competitive demands a strong commitment to continuous menu innovation. Businesses that embrace this are better positioned to attract new markets and retain loyal customers, making adaptability key to long-term success ((The Enterprise World, 2025).

Subtheme 3.2 Leveraging Technology and Simple Tools

Even basic tools—like spreadsheets or checklists—can make a big difference in managing inventory and forecasting demand. Embracing technology, even at a small scale, helps prevent shortages and reduces waste. Café businesses and similar SMEs should implement an integrated inventory management model that is adaptive, technology-driven, and supplier-inclusive. Utilizing advanced measurement and analytical tools, such as PLS-SEM (Putra, 2022), is crucial for continuous improvement. Strengthening collaboration across supply chain, HR, marketing, and digital teams (Andriani & Putra, 2019; Rinaldi & Putra, 2022) can further boost operational resilience. Future research should examine how digital transformation impacts inventory management, the role of cross-functional collaboration, and the alignment of inventory strategies with branding and stakeholder engagement (Fahmi, Novel, & Putra, 2022; Kasmoo & Sukardiman, 2018).

Subtheme 3.3 Continuous Learning and External Support

Successful owners are always learning—whether by attending seminars, seeking advice. Training and development contribute to a company's expansion. To be competitive, the business requires employees that are driven, self-assured, and skilled. The study sheds insight on how well the training and development programs run by Café Coffee Day are working (Bhavani, 2019). The intricate relationship between employee development and training is a dynamic element that significantly affects both worker performance and a company's overall success (Arulsamy, 2023). Training and development enhance organizational

performance by equipping staff with essential skills for today's complex business environment. Leveraging effective strategies and technologies ensures long-term success and a sustainable competitive advantage (Kumar & Raman, 2024).

4. CONCLUSION

The findings indicate that while local bakers and cafés face a number of supply chain challenges, many have developed effective coping strategies. These strategies must include proactive inventory control, strong supplier relationships, and adaptability. These practices encourage long-term customer satisfaction and business growth in addition to increasing operational effectiveness. The study's findings might be helpful to aspiring entrepreneurs who want to enter the food and beverage industry with a strong and efficient supply chain architecture.

5. RECOMMENDATIONS

For quicker delivery, closer community links, and improved brand recognition, new firms are urged to purchase locally in order to create a robust and effective supply chain. Investing early in basic management tools may enhance decision-making, cut waste, and simplify processes. Maintaining product quality and being adaptable amid shortages encourages consumer loyalty and creativity, while building trust and open communication with suppliers helps avoid or promptly fix delivery concerns. Last but not least, proactive planning and ongoing education—via peer guidance, mentorship, and training—can assist business owners in avoiding expensive errors and improving operational efficiency.

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