

THE SUCCESS STORY OF A CUT FLOWER GROWER IN KAYAPA, NUEVA VIZCAYA: A QUALITATIVE REVIEW OF ITS CONTRIBUTORY FACTORS

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ABSTRACT

This study examined the success story of a cut flower grower in Kayapa, Nueva Vizcaya, Philippines. The researchers aim to understand the factors contributing to the grower's success by focusing on their operational, marketing, and financial practices. Using a qualitative case study approach, the researchers conducted an in-depth interview with the experienced grower. Findings reveal that the grower's success is built on a blend of traditional farming techniques and modern efficiencies. In their operations, the grower categorizes flowers based on their needs and blends mechanization with manual labor, demonstrating innovative problem-solving and sustainable practices for marketing. The grower targets specific markets, emphasizes quality to command higher prices, and cultivates strong customer relationships to overcome logistical challenges. This customer-centric approach has helped the grower sustain sales and expand their reach. Financially, the grower avoids debt, keeps expenses simple, and invests strategically, showcasing resilience and adaptability in the face of market fluctuations and natural disasters. The grower highlights the importance of adaptability, customer focus, and disciplined financial management as key drivers of success in the cut flower industry. This research provides valuable insights for farmers, businesses, and researchers to enhance productivity, profitability, and competitiveness in the cut flower sector, ultimately benefiting local communities.

Keywords: adaptability, financial practices, marketing, operational, traditional farming techniques

INTRODUCTION

Cut flowers have become an export income in the global floriculture market. Each type of cut flower has a different vase life, and the longevity of their freshness is linked to preharvest, harvest, and postharvest tools and conditions. As such, the cut flower industry can benefit significantly from optimizing available solutions and implementing effective techniques so that growers can increase the market value of flowers.

Unlike large-scale commercial operations in other countries, the Philippine cut flower industry is primarily made up of small-scale growers. Different types of flowers are grown in various parts of the country like Benguet, Batangas and Ilo-ilo. The province of Nueva Vizcaya Nueva, fortunate to have rich soil that is ideal for high agricultural production and a semi-temperate climate, has also joined the market. Data provided by the Department of Agriculture in 2019 shows that different varieties of cut flowers can be found in the province mainly in Kayapa.

Several factors affect the growth of the business. One of these is the country's climate that allows the cultivation of various varieties like roses, lilies, chrysanthemums and orchids. Another is the demand in the local market. Market access has also significantly contributed. According to Macariñas (2021), Claveria, Misamis Oriental has long supplied cut flowers, especially roses, which are bound to Cagayan de Oro, Iligan and Butuan cities because of the national highway that snakes through the town toward Gingoog City. Hence, from a farm of about 50 hectares, some 80 hectares produces about 400 dozen per hectare now.

Another is product quality which Gordon (2022) described as the extent to which a product or service successfully solves a problem or meets a need. For a product to have real value, it needs to demonstrate a certain level of quality, with a preference for high quality. This means that the product should not only exist but should also perform its intended function well, thereby providing value to the consumer.

In the cut flower industry, the quality of cut flowers immediately after transport is vital for the market value and customer satisfaction. Research indicates that factors such as transport duration, temperature, and storage conditions significantly affect flower quality. For example, chrysanthemums transported at lower temperatures retain better quality and longer vase life than those transported at higher temperatures. Extended transport times can lead to wilting and reduced shelf life, while poor storage conditions, like high humidity and ethylene exposure, can accelerate decay. Therefore, effective management of transport and storage conditions is essential for preserving the quality of cut flowers and ensuring customer satisfaction (Roh et al., 2019).

Cut flower growers employ various storage techniques to maintain the quality and prolong the vase life of their products. One of the most critical factors in cut flower storage is temperature control. Cold storage, in particular, is considered an effective approach for improving vase life and preserving the quality of cut flowers (Mohammadi et al., 2021). By storing cut flowers at low temperatures, growers can slow down the senescence process and reduce the occurrence of chilling injury during storage (Mohammadi et al., 2021).

In addition to temperature control, water relations play a crucial role in the vase life response of cut flowers during storage. A study on chrysanthemum flowers found that prolonged storage can affect the transpiration response to water deficit and the rehydration ability following dehydration events (Fanourakis et al., 2022). Understanding these water-related dynamics can help growers optimize storage conditions and ensure the longevity of their cut flowers.

Pricing also has a significant effect on the buying behaviour of consumers because the higher a product is priced, the fewer units are sold. By contrast, products selling at prices lower than the market rate are assumed to sell at a higher volume (Sadiq et al., 2020). The selling price of a product or service is determined by the seller based on factors such as quantity, measure, or weight (Wood, 2022). It is also determined by the seller based on factors such as quantity, measure, or weight (Wood, 2022).

The cut flower industry in the Philippines has the potential to grow and enter export markets by utilizing locally developed packaging technology that can significantly extend the flower's freshness and vase life (Tañafranca 2020). Evolving from being dominated by hobbyists and enthusiasts, the cut flower business has become a mature sub-sector of the ornamental flower market. It also has a potential local market as observed in mass local flower markets in Baguio and Dangwa in Metro Manila and upper-class shops in malls where there is a bustling domestic market for fresh buds used for corsages, bouquets, wreaths, and other arrangements. Moreover, the market shows no signs of slowing down, as local growers continue to expand their markets and profit.

In this context, this study was conducted to understand the factors that influence cut flower grower success, the result of which can potentially create positive impacts on the local economy, environment, and agricultural practices in the province of Nueva Vizcaya. This study can also provide valuable insights to farmers, businesses, policymakers and future researchers to make informed decisions that can enhance productivity, profitability, and competitiveness. This, in turn, can lead to increased income and job opportunities for local communities.

Generally, this study, conducted during the second semester of the school year, 2023-2024, intended to determine the contributory factors in the success story of the cut flower grower in Kayapa, Nueva Vizcaya. Specifically, the researchers sought to answer the following questions:

1. What are the propagation practices employed by the cut flower grower in terms of:
 - 1.1 Operational Aspects;
 - 1.2 Marketing Aspects; and
 - 1.3 Financial Aspects?
2. What are the problems encountered in each of the following variables?
 - 2.1 Operational aspects
 - 2.2 Marketing aspects
 - 2.3 Financial aspects
3. What are the contributory factors leading to the success story of the cut flower grower, specifically in the area of:
 - 3.1 Operational Aspects;
 - 3.2 Marketing Aspects; and
 - 3.3 Financial Aspects?

METHODOLOGY

This study employed qualitative research, particularly a case study. Case studies allow researchers to gather comprehensive and detailed data. By focusing on a single respondent, the researcher can delve deeply into the individual's experiences, perspectives, and challenges, and in the context of this study, within the cut flower industry and its contributory factors. Data was collected through interviews and observations to determine the factors affecting the success story of the cut flower industry in the province of Nueva Vizcaya. The locale of the study is Nueva Vizcaya, particularly the municipality of Kayapa, due to its significance as the main distributor of cut flowers in the area. The respondent of this study was chosen using a purposive sampling technique. The participant was selected from the list provided by the Department of Trade and Industry of flower farms that have been in operation for more than 10 years. The research participant is a cut flower grower from Kayapa, Nueva Vizcaya, operating since 2000 with over 20 years of experience. The cut flower grower specializes in Malaysians chrysanthemums and anthuriums, with a history of growing Radust and Fiji types. The grower manages four greenhouses on a hectare of land, demonstrating efficient space use and a commitment to resource management and productivity. The researchers used a qualitative method employing a guided interview to gather the necessary data. The study utilized qualitative approach especially narrative analysis to provide insight into the experiences and perspectives of the storytellers.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Section 1. Propagation Practices Employed by the Cut Flower Grower

1.1 Operational Aspect

A. Classification and Categorization of Cut Flowers Used by the Grower

The classification and categorization of cut flowers are essential practices in floriculture that involve grouping flowers based on specific criteria and standards. These practices allow growers to optimize their resources, enhance the quality of their produce, and ensure that the

unique needs of each flower type are met. Cut flowers are classified based on various factors such as species, color, size, growth requirements, and vase life. Some of the common types of cut flowers include Chrysanthemums, Radus, Roses, Fiji, Anthurium, assorted Malaysian flowers, and Carnations each with distinct needs in terms of light, temperature, humidity, and soil conditions. By understanding and implementing these classifications, growers can create an environment that maximizes the health and aesthetic appeal of the flowers.

During the interview, the cut flower grower from Kayapa was asked how she classifies or categorizes the different types of cut flowers and what specific criteria or standards she uses for classification. She replied in her native Ilocano language:

Okey laeng no ikabil amin dagitoy iti greenhouse, ngem kas pagarigan, kasapulan a kaluban ti Chrysanthemum iti nangisit a cellophane tapno saan a masilawan, ta inton masilawan, nataytayag dayta ta mabalin laeng a dumakkel no awan ti lawag. Ti Radus ken Fiji nga sabong ket adda nagduduma a kasapulan da iti lawag ken nutrisyon, isunga kasapulan nga maaramid dagiti naingat a pagbalbaliwan iti greenhouse tapno maragpat ti nasayaat a pagpatakderan para kadakuada. Dagiti Anthurium ket kasapulan da iti nadagsen a pandi nga danum ken adda ti tuloy-tuloy a pannaknawan ngem saan a dakdakkel a lawag. Masapul nga ikabil da iti nasilaw a paset iti greenhouse nga addaan ti pinuplas nga pandi tapno metten ti kinainpis ken nasisigud a pannaknawan. Dagiti Assorted Malaysian flowers ken Carnation ket makasurvive da iti kasarsaruno a lawag ken kasapulan da iti naurnos a drainage iti daga, isunga kadawyan nga isagana dagitoy a sabong iti maysa nga grupo iti greenhouse, ta agkarkaradwa ti kasapulan da [It's okay to put all of these in the greenhouse, but for example, the Chrysanthemum needs to be covered with black cellophane so it won't be exposed to light, because when exposed to light, it grows taller, and it can only grow well in the absence of light. The Radus and Fiji flowers have different light and nutrient needs, so careful adjustments need to be made in the greenhouse to provide the best environment for them. The Anthurium needs high humidity and consistent moisture but less direct sunlight. They need to be placed in a shaded part of the greenhouse with high humidity to maintain their compact and healthy growth. The Assorted Malaysian flowers and Carnations can thrive in moderate sunlight and require well-drained soil, so these flowers are often grouped together in the greenhouse since they share similar needs] (Cut Flower Grower).

This response illustrates the grower's thoughtful approach to managing her cut flowers. It shows that the grower has an understanding that each flower type requires specific care to ensure optimal growth and quality. In sum, understanding the distinct needs of flowers such as Chrysanthemums, Radus white and yellow flowers, Fiji, Anthurium, Assorted Malaysian flowers, and Carnations allows the grower to make informed decisions about resource allocation and environmental controls (light control, temperature management, humidity control, and soil condition). This, in turn, results in a more efficient growing process, with flowers that meet high aesthetic and market standards.

B. Farm and Equipment

This includes both machines and manual tools that are used to handle different tasks in flower production. By using the right equipment and setup, growers can better meet the specific needs of their flowers, making the whole process smoother and more efficient. During the interview, the grower shared her journey of evolving from a purely manual approach to a hybrid model that blends traditional practices with modern equipment. As the business expanded, so did the demands and complexities of flower production. Recognizing the limitations of manual labor for large-scale operations, the grower began investing in modern farm equipment. This shift included acquiring tractors for larger tasks like soil preparation and advanced irrigation

systems (fertigation system is the practice of combining fertilizer application with irrigation/sprinkling, allowing nutrients to be delivered directly to plants) that mix fertilizers with water. These tools significantly improved efficiency and allowed for better management of the business's growing demands.

But despite these advancements, the grower remains committed to manual methods for certain tasks. She explained, "Ngem no dadduma agtrabaho kami a manual a saan nga agus-usar iti dayta nga alikamen" [Sometimes, we work manually, not using that equipment] (Cut Flower Grower). This reflects a hybrid approach, combining the efficiency of modern machinery with the precision and care of manual labor. Delicate tasks such as planting, pruning, and handling young plants still require a human touch to ensure quality and attention to detail. Moreover, each flower type, from Chrysanthemums to Radus and Anthuriums, requires personalized care at different growth stages to ensure optimal health and productivity.

C. Cost Efficiency and Seed Quality

Seed propagation plays an important role in flower farming because it directly impacts both the costs involved and the quality of the flowers produced. Growers face a crucial decision: whether to grow their own seeds or to purchase them from suppliers. This choice involves weighing the financial benefits of self-propagation against the desire to produce high-quality flowers that can attract customers.

She noted that self-propagation has clear financial advantages, stating, "Mas makatipid kami no sikami ti agmula iti bin-i mi, ta 80 centavos laeng ti tunggal maysa. Dakkel ti tulong daytoy tapno mapagtalinaed mi ti gastos ken agtultuloy a maipangato ti kalidad dagiti sabong" [We save more when we grow our own seeds, since it's only 80 centavos per piece. This helps a lot in controlling costs and continually improving the quality of the flowers] (Cut Flower Grower).

The grower's experience underscores the importance of balancing cost savings with the need for high-quality flowers. She explained that a successful flower farm requires not only effective financial management but also a commitment to maintaining quality. This balance is essential in today's competitive floriculture industry, where both profitability and customer satisfaction are crucial for long-term success.

D. Post Harvesting

Post-harvest management is an important step in handling cut flowers. It connects the growing phase in the field to getting the flowers ready for sale. This stage includes essential practices that help keep flowers fresh, high-quality, and long-lasting after they are harvested. Good post-harvest techniques not only make flowers look better but also help them stay vibrant, which is important for customers.

In the conversation with the respondent, she shared useful tips for keeping cut flowers fresh after harvest. She said, "No la ket ta ikabil mi iti nalamiis a lugar sa baluten mi iti diario, ken ibalkot iti karton. Saan mi nga igan a naimbag ti karton ket kalpagan na ikabil mi ijay storage mi ijay ngatu ta nalamiis" [As long as we put it in a cool place and wrap it in newspaper, and pack it in cardboard. We don't tie the cardboard tightly and then put it in the storage room up there because it's cold] (Cut Flower Grower). This shows that she understands how important it is to keep the flowers in a controlled environment. She also mentioned that it is important that the flowers are preserved well. This highlights her commitment to quality because it affects customer satisfaction. Furthermore, the grower pointed out the need for air circulation in the packaging, saying that the cardboard they use for packaging should not be tied

too tightly so that air can circulate; otherwise, moisture builds up and destroys the flower.

E. Waste Management

In floriculture, where organic materials like cut flowers are common, good waste management can turn leftovers into valuable resources such as compost or bioenergy. The grower's journey into sustainable waste management begins with a strong commitment to reducing waste and maximizing utility. She recalls instances when flowers that did not sell were nearing their expiration. Instead of throwing them away, she chose to turn these flowers into compost. This approach to waste management goes beyond just being practical; it also embraces sustainability. By repurposing flowers that would otherwise be wasted, she closes the loop in her farming practices. This method reduces environmental impact while making the best use of resources. She further said that turning leftover flowers into compost helps maintain the quality of the soil. This mindset aligns with current agricultural research, which encourages holistic waste management to improve soil health and resilience.

By adopting sustainable waste management practices, the grower represents a broader narrative of care and innovation in the cut flower industry. Her actions highlight the potential for small-scale efforts to lead to significant environmental changes. She asserted, "Naisangangayan ti panangibaga a kasla daytoy a praktis, mabalin nga agbalin a modelo kadagiti sabali a mangmangged" [I believe that this practice can serve as a model for other farmers] (Cut Flower Grower). Through her commitment to sustainability, she inspires others to think creatively about how they manage waste.

1.2 Marketing Aspects

A. Primary Markets

The respondent carefully selects where to sell her flowers based on price, quality, and what the market wanted. When asked about their primary markets, she explained that they choose to sell our flowers mainly in Bayombong, Bambang, Solano, Aritao, and parts of Isabela, mostly in Santiago and some in Quirino. They have also built a customer base in these places. The owner further shared that the demand in these areas has grown so much that they no longer need to promote their products. However, they also work with middlemen who buy in bulk and sell their flowers to different locations. She also acknowledged the competition she faces in the business particularly against small-scale growers. But she said that the strong reputation they have built for their high-quality flowers keeps their competitive advantage.

This strong connection to local markets has allowed her to continue growing her flower business without needing to worry about advertising or aggressive marketing strategies. With middlemen supporting their distribution and a loyal customer base that seeks out her farm's high-quality flowers, the business continues to flourish year after year. Despite the presence of competitors, she remains competitive due to the superior quality of her flowers.

B. Adjusting to Market Changes

The owner's approach to navigating challenges in the cut flower industry influenced by seasonal demands and unexpected global events highlights the importance of flexibility and resilience in maintaining a strong and sustainable operation. In the interview, she said that she typically sets a farm gate price of 280 pesos per dozen for her cut flowers during regular seasons, a pricing strategy that reflects her confidence in the quality of her flowers. This consistency ensures stability, even when the market fluctuates.

This fluctuation in pricing underscores the volatile nature of the floral market amidst global uncertainties. Despite these challenges, she has remained resilient by adapting her pricing strategy to fit market realities.

1.3 Financial Aspects

A. Financial Practices

The respondents said that her careful financial management has been key to her achievements in the flower business. When asked how she handles her finances, she proudly shared that she never incurred a loan in her 20 years in the business reflecting her strong commitment to remaining financially independent. The grower generates her income based on the per crop/harvest cycle model. She explained that different flower varieties have different growing times ranging from 3 to 6 months. With each successful harvest, she can earn an estimated ₱300,000 to ₱500,000 per crop cycle. This potential income allows her to reinvest in her business and continue growing her operations. She added that she needs a capital ₱50,000 for one greenhouse that can stand for 3 to 4 years. This initial investment is essential for allowing her to have multiple harvests throughout the year. For ongoing costs, she spends around ₱30,000 per month on things like flower seeds and pesticides.

When asked about tracking her finances, she explained her straightforward method which involves the absence of formal financial statements. She simply makes a list of her expenses and earnings to understand where the money is going and how it is flowing.

By generating income per crop cycle and maintaining financial discipline without loans, the respondent has successfully built and grown her flower farm. Her commitment to careful financial management and investment has allowed her to thrive in the competitive cut flower market.

Section 2. Problems Encountered by the Cut Flower Grower

2.1 Operational Problems

During the COVID-19 pandemic, the grower faced operational challenges. She said that while her flowers were doing good, she could not sell them because markets were closed. This affected her income and her ability to pay workers. It shows a common problem for many farmers having a good product but not enough customers. Despite these difficulties, she did not let the challenges stop her. Even after facing huge losses, she continued to plant more flowers, refusing to give up. She kept working on her farm, tending to the plants and ensuring that the flowers kept growing. It was a risky choice, but she believed that her customers would eventually return. Her determination paid off. After some time, her loyal customers began placing orders again. Though the demand was not as high as before, she started supplying flowers to funeral homes and flower shops in nearby towns like Aritao and Bambang, and even to Santiago in Isabela.

Aside from market disruption, she also deals with pests and diseases affecting her cut flower plants. She recalled a time when her Fiji plants experienced a strange problem: the leaves began to dry up, even though the flowers stayed healthy. This caused a lot of stress for her as she could not figure out what was wrong. While multiple technicians visited the farm, each proposing various treatments to address these symptoms, the proposed solutions often involved costly sprays, which the grower was reluctant to adopt due to financial constraints. Rather than spending a lot of money on sprays, the owner came up with a simple solution. By covering her plants at night, she was able to balance the soil's acidity levels, which solved the problem

without adding extra costs. This showed her creativity and ability to adapt to the challenges she faced.

2.2 Marketing Problems

She shared her experiences of having to strategically adjust prices to sustain customer interest and loyalty during these slow periods. “Adda panawen a nagbannayat ti panaglakomi, isu nga in-adjustmi dagiti presiomi para kadagiti kustomer” [There was a time when our sales slowed down, so we adjusted our prices for our customers], she shared. This strategic price adjustment was not just about lowering prices; it involved offering promotional deals to attract new customers and incentivize repeat purchases. The grower’s adaptive strategies underscore the importance of flexibility in pricing to navigate market fluctuations and sustain business.

Another problem is location. The farm’s remote location made marketing even harder. The poor signal in the area caused major issues with communication between the grower and potential buyers. The grower explained that they built relationships with their customers and delivered them quality flowers, to encourage them to buy again and make recommendations to others. This shows how strong customer relationships can help overcome logistical challenges.

The grower also faced increasing competition from markets, which made it harder to decide on prices. She shared, “Ti kumparak ket ad-adu, isu a masapul a kanayon a maawatan ken suroten ti kasasaad ti merkado tapno saantayo a mabati” [The competition is high, so we need to always understand and follow the market situation to avoid being left behind](Cut Flower Grower). This pressure forced her to come up with new marketing ideas and constantly check market trends and what customers want to stay ahead. The grower also explained that they need to listen and understand how the current flower market works and what people want, so this can help them adjust prices and not lose their advantage.

The growing competition in markets challenges the grower to take a more active role in her business. By paying attention to market conditions and customer preferences, she can handle the competition better. This alertness not only helps in setting prices but also allows her to try new marketing strategies. “No agsardengak a tumaray iti kaaduan a makikinnabakeg, kayat ko nga ipakitak dagiti produkto ko babaen ti nasayaat a panagmarket” [If I stop trying in this competitive space, I need to show my products through good marketing], she said. This careful approach is important to staying competitive and growing her business in the long run.

2.3 Financial Problems

During the pandemic, she faced financial challenges that affected her flower business. When she thought about harvesting her flowers, she realized how much it would cost. She said that she could not afford the costs for harvesting and transportation because no one was buying. With the markets closed, she had to decide what to do. The flowers had bloomed beautifully, but without customers, harvesting them would only add to her expenses. She realized that spending more money without selling anything would just make things worse.

She had to make the difficult decision to let the flowers go to waste. Instead of harvesting them, she and her family chopped them up to use as fertilizer. Although it was a tough choice, it was the only way to avoid incurring more expenses and survive the financial strain of the pandemic. The situation left her feeling defeated, but she knew that conserving her resources was important for the future of her farm. Her experience illustrates how fragile agricultural businesses can be during unexpected disasters.

Another significant event was when strong winds severely damaged her greenhouse.

This incident forced her to apply for financial aid but was denied. This experience showed a lack of support for flower growers, leaving them to rely on their own money to keep their farms running. The respondent's reliance on personal funds highlights the necessity of financial self-sufficiency within the cut flower industry. Understanding and developing financial sustainability strategies are essential for fostering resilience among flower growers, ensuring they can weather future challenges without solely depending on external assistance.

In addition to these challenges, she also shared how the costs of important supplies like fertilizers, pesticides, and quality seeds kept rising. To manage these costs, she carefully planned her budget, often choosing cheaper options that still maintained the quality of her flowers. This careful financial management was key to keeping her business viability despite rising costs.

Market price changes also posed significant financial risks. The grower explained that when there was too much supply, flower prices dropped, affecting her earnings. To address this problem, she planted different types of flowers and spread out her planting schedule to prevent having too many flowers at once.

Despite these many challenges, the grower showed great resilience and commitment to her business. She often worked late into the night to fulfill orders, demonstrating her dedication to customer service. She shared, "When someone places an order for flowers at nine in the evening, even though it's late, I make sure to take care of it. This often means I'm still working until 11 o'clock at night. There are even times when I need to harvest flowers as late as two in the morning." These sacrifices show her commitment to keeping her customers happy and her business running smoothly.

Section 3. Contributory Factors that Contributed Most to the Success of the Cut Flower Grower

Definition of Success

While people see things differently, including how success is defined and differentiated, the respondents described her success as follows:

Dakkel a tulong dagiti sabong mi iti pannakatungpal dagiti kasapulan mi. Idi agad-adal pay laeng dagiti annak mi, nagbalin a goal mi ket panangpadakkel iti negosio. Napaadal dagiti tallo nga annak mi iti maysa a pribado nga institusion ijay Baguio. Dakami... pulos a di nagutang iti tawen, uray idi narigat ket saan kami a nagpannurray iti utang tapno dumakkel ti negosio. Nangnangruna no awan ti utang, ket napateg para iti napaut a kinatalged (Our flowers have been a great help in fulfilling the needs of life. When our children were still studying, growing the business became our goal. This is important because the business allowed us to send our three children to a private institution in Baguio. We never took loans throughout the years, even when it was difficult. We did not rely on debt to grow the business. Carefully built success, especially without debt, is important for long-term stability).

For her, success is defined by profitability, growth, expansion, and long-term sustainability, all achieved without incurring debt. Her flower business, which has helped her provide a private education for her three children, stands as a testament to the resilience, adaptability, and strategic thinking necessary for success in the floriculture industry. Her story highlights how operational efficiency, market awareness, and prudent financial management have all contributed to the thriving.

3.1 Operational Aspects

A. Sustainable Farming: Lessons from the Cut Flower Grower

The respondent shared how important it is to mix modern farming tools with careful manual work. At first, she did everything by hand planting, watering, and taking care of the flowers took a lot of effort. As her business grew, she began using machines like sprayers and cutters to work faster while still giving each flower good care. She remarked, “Nasken a balansien dagiti moderno ken tradisional a pamay-an, ta makatulong dagitoy iti nasaysayaat a panagtalon” [It is essential to balance modern and traditional methods, as they help in better farming] (Cut Flower Grower).

She also talked about a time when she faced a big challenge. After planting and harvesting, the leaves of her Fiji plants started to wilt, but the flowers looked healthy. She was unsure what was wrong, so she asked several experts, but they suggested expensive sprays. Being careful about her costs, she decided not to follow their advice and looked for another solution. This situation tested her creativity and determination. Instead of using costly sprays, she came up with her own solution: covering the plants at night to keep the soil's acidity stable. This simple idea not only fixed the problem but also showed her ability to handle challenges in farming.

Using plant covers helped her in many ways. She found that this method also protected her plants from temperature changes that could harm the flowers. As a result, her flowers became brighter and more valuable, allowing her to sell them at higher prices. This success helped her earn more money, so she could expand her farm from one greenhouse to four, covering a total area of one hectare. With this growth, she became less dependent on outside help, making her farm more sustainable.

Her ability to bounce back from setbacks like the issue with the Fiji plants also shows a key quality of her success: adaptability. By watching her plants closely and responding to the specific needs of her farm, she demonstrated her talent for innovation. Additionally, her commitment to sustainable practices, like avoiding expensive chemical solutions, has helped her stay financially stable while caring for the environment.

3.2 Marketing Aspects

A. Commitment to Customer Service

The grower's story showcases her strong dedication to customer service and how it has played a significant role in her success. By placing customer satisfaction at the forefront, she skillfully navigates the challenges of operating a cut flower business in a competitive market. Her journey illustrates the delicate balance between personal sacrifice and professional growth, with long hours and late-night commitments becoming the norm to meet the needs of her clients. She said that even if the workers go home, they still need to give good service to the customers. Most of the time, they also retire at 11 PM and wake up at 4AM to harvest. Her willingness to go above and beyond for her customers is an important factor in her success. By providing quick and attentive service, she builds trust and loyalty, which helps her retain existing clients and attract new ones. This dedication creates a solid foundation for her business, demonstrating that excellent customer service is essential for thriving in the competitive cut flower industry.

Reflecting on her dedication, she shared that her customers' needs are her priority *even if it* means sacrificing time and patience. Serving them gives her great joy and for her, this is

essential for achieving success and continuing her business. This highlights her willingness to prioritize customer needs above all else, showcasing the deep passion she has for her work.

B. Marketing Adaptation in Response to Fluctuations

The grower emphasized how she navigates the challenges of slow sales periods by making quick and flexible marketing decisions. She shared that during challenging times, the grower employs strategic price adjustments and promotional offers to stimulate customer interest and foster loyalty. The grower relies heavily on her experience when running seasonal promotions, especially during holidays like Valentine's Day or All Saints' Day. By offering promotions during holidays, she takes advantage of higher demand, giving her more chances to increase sales.

This illustrates how she uses strategic marketing tactics to respond to periods of lower demand, effectively adapting to market fluctuations. By offering discounts or value-added deals, she ensures that her flowers continue to attract buyers, even when customer spending is down. This approach highlights her flexibility in responding to changes in customer behavior and market conditions, ensuring her business remains competitive and resilient in both high and low-demand periods.

3.3 Financial Aspects

A. Efficient Farming: How the Owner Balances Financial Growth and Sustainability

The grower's financial practices are simple and disciplined. For more than 20 years, she has run her business without taking loans or borrowing money. All her investments in things like greenhouses and pesticides come from her own earnings. She carefully tracks her finances by writing down her expenses and earnings in a notebook. Even though she does not use formal financial statements, her simple method helps her keep a steady cash flow and run her business smoothly. She invests around ₱50,000 per greenhouse, which has a lifespan of about 3-4 years, and spends approximately ₱30,000 monthly on flower seeds and pesticides. According to her, each crop cycle can yield between ₱300,000 and ₱500,000 depending on quality and market demand. This careful balance between spending and earning has allowed her to scale her business sustainably over the years. She also emphasized that keeping track of her expenses ensures that she can invest properly in what her flowers need to thrive.

The success of the grower's cut flower farming business is a product of operational efficiency, strategic marketing, and financial discipline. She has adapted modern farming methods while maintaining personalized care, establishing a reputation that draws customers to her, and managing her finances in a way that ensures long-term growth without debt. In addition, she said, "Napatag ti panangpanunot a nasaksakbay maipapan iti masanguanan a kita ken ti pannakabael a mangdiversify kadagiti produkto" [Thinking ahead about future income and being able to diversify products is crucial] (Cut Flower Grower). Through her journey, the respondent has not only created a thriving business but has also built a foundation for future growth in a competitive market.

CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Conclusions

1. The grower's approach to growing cut flowers shows a well-rounded strategy. She carefully manages different flower types, uses both modern and traditional techniques, and practices good financial management. By focusing on quality and building a strong

reputation in key markets, she has created a loyal customer base, reducing the need for heavy marketing. Her partnerships with middlemen help distribute her flowers during busy seasons, and her ability to handle market changes shows her adaptability. By avoiding debt and keeping detailed financial records, she ensures steady growth.

2. The grower's experiences show the tough challenges cut flower growers face in Kayapa, Nueva Vizcaya. She dealt with operational issues during the pandemic, such as closed markets and pest problems, showing the need for resilience and adaptability. Fluctuating market demand and competition require her to adjust prices and build strong relationships with customers. Financial pressures from rising costs and unpredictable prices also push her to find creative solutions to keep her business running.
3. The grower's success as a cut flower grower is rooted in key factors such as sustainable growth, resilience, and effective money management, all achieved without debt. She skillfully combines traditional and modern farming methods to produce high-quality flowers, while her focus on excellent customer service fosters strong client relationships. Her creative marketing strategies and adaptability during slow sales periods enhance customer loyalty and boost profits. By diligently tracking her income and expenses, she maintains a sustainable and efficient business.

Recommendations

For the Farmers of Cut Flowers. The success story of the owner of a cut flower business from Kayapa, Nueva Vizcaya should serve as inspiration for fellow flower producers. Growers can learn from her innovative approaches, such as adjusting soil acidity without costly sprays, which highlight resourcefulness and sustainable practices. Moreover, her commitment to quality and customer satisfaction, along with her adaptability to market conditions, showcases the importance of building long-term relationships with customers. By following her lead and practicing patience, persistence, and a focus on quality, others can achieve similar success in the competitive cut flower market.

For the Policy Makers. To local government units (LGUs) and agricultural agencies, they can assist small-scale flower producers by offering access to training in advanced propagation technologies and sustainable agricultural methods. Furthermore, LGUs can facilitate partnerships between growers and local florists or event planners to boost sales and market visibility. Providing access to grants or low-interest loans would also enable growers to invest in greenhouse technologies and mechanization, ensuring they remain competitive and sustainable. Promoting successful growers like her also highlights the agricultural potential of Nueva Vizcaya, encouraging tourism and economic growth in the region.

For the School of Accountancy and Business. This research can serve as a case study to illustrate key topics in management accounting, such as cost control, financial planning, and decision-making. It can help educators demonstrate how theoretical concepts are applied in practice, making the subject more engaging and relevant for students.

For Future Researchers. This study provides a foundation for further exploration into the success factors of medium-scale agricultural businesses. Future researchers can expand upon this work by collecting quantitative data on financial performance, customer satisfaction, or operational efficiencies to triangulate the factors that contribute to long-term business success. Additionally, further research could explore the potential impact of technology adoption, government assistance, and market expansion on the growth and sustainability of cut flower enterprises.

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