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Editorial

We are pleased to present this issue of JABEM, which features three exciting articles from three emerging markets in Asia and Africa: India, the Philippines, and South Africa. These three articles were carefully selected to represent diversity in topic, region, and methodology.

In the lead article, Khare, Kautish and Khare examine consumer-retailer emotional attachment and interpersonal likeability towards word-of-mouth and, consequently, post-pandemic local store loyalty. They also examined the mediating influence of word-of-mouth and information sharing on emotional attachment, interpersonal likeability, and local store loyalty. They collected data from customers purchasing products from local stores in North-Western India via an online structured questionnaire. A covariance-based structural equation modelling (CB-SEM) for confirmatory factor analysis, mediation, and moderation analysis was used for data analysis. The authors find interesting results. Word-of-mouth was found to act as a partial mediator between interpersonal likeability, consumer-retailer emotional attachment, and local store loyalty. Information sharing was a significant moderator between word-of-mouth and local store loyalty relationships. The authors contribute significantly to knowledge by highlighting the significance of these constructs in the Indian market post-pandemic in the local or small unorganized retail store loyalty context.

In the second article, Bondoc attempts to understand the factors influencing professionals' commitment to suppliers when acquiring pesticide products in urban pest management in the Philippines. He assesses how price, quality, trade credit, and supplier relationships impact commitment to purchasing pesticides. Employing partial least squares structural equation modelling, his findings indicate that when urban pest management professionals decide on pesticide purchases, their decisions are notably influenced by product price, the availability of trade credit, and product quality. Surprisingly, a positive relationship with suppliers does not influence their commitment to purchasing pesticides. These are interesting findings as they may run counterintuitively; however, they may be correct in pest control management. This explains how behavior in emerging markets can vary. Bondoc discusses the variations and offers implications for managers in the Philippines.

In the final article, Longweni and Mdaka examine how operating in an increasingly changing business environment presents modern managers with complex problems that require creative solutions. Their study delves into applying the 16 Habits of Mind (HoM) as a framework to enhance creative problem-solving (CPS) competencies among managers. By conducting an exploratory qualitative research study through semi-structured interviews with 21 managers from different functional areas within the agricultural industry in South Africa, they examine the relevance of these habits when solving business problems. Their findings uncover a nuanced prioritization of these habits, with persisting, learning continuously, and listening with understanding and empathy emerging as top-ranked in management sciences. The authors contribute to the theoretical discourse on managerial skills and effective problem-solving techniques, and provide practical implications for managers' training and development in this context and other emerging markets. They emphasize the necessity of nurturing a diverse range of thinking skills among managers to foster resilience, flexibility, and creativity by innovating in contemporary business.


In the book review section, Singhania reviews the book by Magliacani & Toscano entitled *Accounting for Cultural Heritage Management: Resilience, Sustainability, and Accountability*.

Trust this issue will be worth reading. Please do share your comments.

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Post-pandemic retail in India: an analysis

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The current study examines consumer-retailer emotional attachment and interpersonal likeability towards word-of-mouth and consequently post-pandemic local store loyalty. Further, the mediating influence of word-of-mouth and information sharing was examined on emotional attachment, interpersonal likeability, and local store loyalty. Data was collected from customers purchasing products from local stores in north-western India via an online structured questionnaire. A covariance-based structural equation modelling (CB-SEM) for confirmatory factor analysis, mediation, and moderation analysis was used for data analysis. Word-of-mouth was found to act as a partial mediator between interpersonal likeability, consumer-retailer emotional attachment, and local store loyalty. Information sharing was a significant moderator between word-of-mouth and local store loyalty relationships. The current study attempts to understand the significance of these constructs in the Indian market post-pandemic in the local or small unorganized retail store loyalty context.

Keywords: consumer retailer emotional attachment, interpersonal likeability, store loyalty, word-of-mouth

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Introduction

The Indian retail sector has attracted investments from multinational retailers and private equity funds of about US\$970b, and foreign direct investment worth US\$2b in the last few years (IBEF 2021). Although e-commerce continues to grow (Mansouri et al. 2022), the small or local retail sector captures 75 percent market share (Aithal et al. 2023, IBEF 2021). At the same time, organized (big) retailers are collaborating with unorganized (small) retailers (ie. *Kirana* stores) to improve their availability in cities, and major FMCG players are exploring the possibility of collaborative e-commerce opportunities with small or local retail outlets. Interestingly, big organized retailers like Jiomart, Big Bazaar and Big Basket have collaborated with local producers to offer fresh groceries (Halan & Singh 2023). COVID-19 has accentuated this consumer-retailer dynamics as a means of sales and delivery (Pathak & Kandathil 2020, Sheth 2020). Given such

shifts in the business proposition, it is worth investigating the phenomenon of small retailers' driven attachment and likeability.

Indian retailing is characterized by dispersed retail formats comprising street hawkers and stalls with one room (Adhikary et al. 2021). The unorganized sector constitutes privately owned retail outlets and stalls that sell unbranded and branded products in small quantities. They offer credit and have low operating costs, primarily managed by close groups such as family members or acquaintances. The growth of malls, supermarkets, and hypermarkets intensified competition, but the significance of small retailers remains undisputed. In India, consumers prefer to purchase from small retailers because of convenience, sharing information, familiarity, and easy accessibility. Several technological advancements have transformed the logistics operations of organized and big retailers (Pantano et al. 2019, Zhang et al. 2022) and compelled small retailers also to change their business strategies (Cho & Taskin 2021, Lorente-Martínez et al. 2020). Though there are studies about small local retailers' loyalty aspects, limited research efforts have been made to understand in light of the post-COVID-19 scenario.

COVID-19 changed shopping behavior, fueling concerns about health, physical distancing, misinformation, and avoiding crowded spaces (Aithal et al. 2023). Consumers prefer to buy online and pick up at physical stores (Szász et al. 2022). There is growth in sales in the small retailing sector, with nearly 56 percent of consumers prefer buying from local stores and locally manufactured products. This habit-induced behavior is unlikely to change post-pandemic, and consumers would continue buying from neighborhood stores (Camacho et al. 2022a, Sheth 2020). The pandemic has led to increased use of e-commerce, Omni channel options, home delivery, social media for shopping, and pick-up from nearby retail stores where consumers feel safe and believe fellow shoppers follow social distancing measures (Li et al. 2020, Meyer 2020). With most consumers restricting their shopping to neighborhood stores and to better integrate digital and social media platforms and information-sharing paradigms, small retailers are realigning their marketing strategies (Kaur & Thakur 2021). The current study looks at consumer retailers' emotional attachment and interpersonal likeability in the backdrop of post-COVID-19 leading to word-of-mouth and local store loyalty. It seeks to answer the following three research questions. (1) What is the post-COVID-19 status of consumer-retailers' emotional attachment and interpersonal likeability?; (2) How consumer-retailer emotional attachment and interpersonal likeability lead to word-of-mouth and local store loyalty?; and (3) What is the relevance of information sharing within small retailers' business? Therefore, the research examines the relevance of interpersonal relationships, emotional attachment, information sharing using digital platforms, and word-of-mouth in predicting consumer loyalty towards local *Kirana* stores in an emerging market context.

The study starts with a literature review, which elaborates on the characteristics of small retailers, consumer shopping behavior post-COVID-19 pandemic, consumer-retailer emotional attachment, interpersonal likeability in light of local store loyalty, and word-of-mouth. Further, it discusses the methodology adopted, followed by the quantitative analysis and discussion of various theoretical and managerial factors. The last segment contains the conclusions, directions for future research, and certain limitations of the study.

Literature Review and Hypotheses Development

Characteristics of Local Stores

Unorganized retailing constitutes mom-and-pop (small) stores, temporary structures, stalls, shacks, hawkers, and vendors selling wares in different localities (Rosenbaum et al. 2021). These stores, called *Kirana* (small), require little investment and are managed by family members. They are economically viable as they are located in densely populated areas and offer low prices, customized products in small packs, fresh locally grown vegetables, and household products to the residents. Customers prefer local retail stores for convenience, information, easy return, product exchange, refunds, and fresh and customizable offerings and services (Pathak & Kandathil 2020). Low-income groups preferred to shop

from these stores as they offered credit facilities and customized products (Zielke *et al.* 2023). The locational convenience, paucity of time, availability of fresh eatables, and accessibility of these stores attracted poor consumers and higher income groups (Ruiz-Molina *et al.* 2021).

Research on small retailers shows the importance of social networks and personal relationships on consumer preference to shop from local stores (Grewal *et al.* 2021). Dugar and Chamola (2021) operationalized the social capital theory to understand consumers' preference for unorganized local stores. Retailers and consumers were part of the same community, which led to embeddedness and reciprocity. Embeddedness implied that consumers and retailers shared emotional attachment, and consumers trusted the retailers. The relationships were integral to a social community (Grewal *et al.* 2021). Earlier studies on social community suggested that it fostered community involvement, desire to contribute and work together with other members to develop the community goals (Dugar & Chamola 2021). The embeddedness within the community leads to interchange and information exchange, in which the members try to contribute to others' well-being (Pathak & Kandathil 2020). Thus, retailers and consumers of the same local community share an intricate reciprocal information-driven relationship that heightens trust and builds loyalty. Pantano *et al.* (2018) contend that local retailers actively contribute to the community's economic and social activities by ensuring long-term relationships. The small retailers' monetary contributions resulted from their attachment, information sharing, embeddedness, and desire to maintain good relations (Aithal *et al.* 2023). Independent retailers' social networking activities in building consumer relationships were important (Choudhary *et al.* 2023). Thus, retailers needed to design strategies to enhance cognitive and emotional experiences to foster 'store-self-connection' (Choudhary *et al.* 2023, p. 375). Consumer and small retailer relationships improved satisfaction (Aithal *et al.* 2023) and positive word-of-mouth in the community. Drawing from earlier studies on community attachment, interpersonal relationships, and the embeddedness of consumer and small retailer relationships, the current research attempts to re-examine local store attachment and loyalty post-pandemic period. We present the following two hypotheses:

H1. Consumer-retailer-emotional attachment has a significant influence on word-of-mouth.

H2. Interpersonal likability has a significant influence on word-of-mouth.

Shopping Behavior Post-COVID-19

Several changes in consumer behavior and retail have been witnessed since the outbreak of COVID-19, and retailers have been making changes in line (Pantano *et al.* 2020, Untaru & Han 2021). Laguna *et al.* (2020) found that most shopping behavior revolved around uncertainty, and there was a reduction in the number of trips taken to the store due to COVID-19 (Sheth 2020). Consumers were buying products focusing on health, longer shelf life, and avoiding unhealthy products. Consumer purchase behaviour was primarily driven by the fear of stock-outs, unavailability of essential items, and anxiety about getting infected by the virus (Laato *et al.* 2020, Mason *et al.* 2020). The uncertainty resulted in panic buying (Barnes *et al.* 2021, Doughty & Rambocas 2022), stockpiling, and hoarding (Camacho *et al.* 2022b, Laato *et al.* 2020, Nowak *et al.* 2020). To dispel consumer fears, many retailers changed their service delivery model. They implemented various measures such as social distancing, contactless payment, store pick-up, mandatory use of sanitizers and facemasks, and arranging contactless home delivery (Li *et al.* 2020, Untaru & Han 2021). Pantano *et al.* (2020) state that grocery retailers tried to foster trust through communication and service strategies that assured consumers that safety standards were being followed to prevent the spread of the virus. They offered online services, informing consumers about product availability, and used virtual queues (Pantano *et al.* 2020). These measures were devised to develop an emotional attachment with the retailers that had served the consumers during the crisis and given priority to safety combined with fulfilling their needs (Pathak & Kandathil 2020). Our next two hypotheses are as follows:

H3. Word-of-mouth has a significant influence on local store loyalty.

H4. Interpersonal likability has a significant influence on local store loyalty.

Consumer-Retailer Relationship and Emotional Attachment

Shankar et al. (2021) suggest that developing, maintaining, and enhancing customer relationships is important in creating loyalty. The customer relationship is based on attributes that create satisfaction, long-term associations, and improve profitability. The relational concept focuses on collaborative relationships, personal and social interactions, and customized strategies (Halan & Singh 2023). It entails a cooperative and collaborative approach that helps develop seller-consumer bonds and positive word of mouth (Mukerjee 2020). Store ambience and merchandise were important in nurturing trust and loyalty. Understanding the consumer helped create positive emotions and feelings towards the store and improved trust, loyalty, and willingness to pay more.

In the context of small retailers, research proposed that understanding the local market and consumers can be viewed as their competitive strength. The intricate knowledge about the consumers, their buying patterns, and preferences enabled the retailers to establish enduring relationships with the consumers. Babin et al. (2021) asserted that personal connection was as meaningful as location, convenience, product availability, and store attributes. Elderly and poor consumers preferred these stores due to social and emotional bonds with the retailer. Aithal et al. (2023) stated that small retailers used social relationships and interactions with their consumers to improve value and satisfaction. Local stores were an integral part of the community and recognized as places of social interaction, so it was easy for retailers to understand consumers' behaviour. Rita et al. (2023), in their study on small retailers in the UK and Spain, find that personalized customer advice, word-of-mouth marketing, informal and personal relationships and local community embeddedness were essential aspects of local retailers' marketing strategies. These studies have emphasized the importance of the interpersonal relationships between consumers and retailers in enhancing trust and emotional attachment. Our fourth and fifth hypotheses are:

H5. Consumer-retailer emotional attachment has a significant influence on local store loyalty.

H6. Word-of-mouth is a significant mediator between consumer-retailer emotional attachment and local store loyalty.

Giovanis et al. (2019) posit that the retailer-consumer relationship was directed toward maintaining close relationships with consumers, personalized selling, and understanding their needs to serve them efficiently. Relationship with consumers is an ongoing process that deepens with continued interaction (Risberg & Jafari 2022). Similarly, Rita et al.'s (2023) research on food retail consumers found that salespersons' behavior impacted consumer satisfaction and led to cognitive and affective trust. Retailer empathy and personal relationships led to emotional attachment and positive word-of-mouth. Zhang et al. (2022) suggested that face-to-face interactions at retail stores could reduce consumer loneliness and satisfy their social needs. Retail stores offered opportunities to interact with retail staff and other consumers. Social interaction helped build enduring relationships and communicate with the consumer. Zhang et al. (2022) discussed the importance of information sharing with the consumer. It enabled retailers to engage consumers and build trust and attachment. The attachment with the retailer led to positive word-of-mouth. Trust could help develop loyalty and strengthen emotional bonds.

It was necessary to establish collaborative communication that facilitated informal relationships, a high degree of interaction, and an easy flow of information fostering trust. Kaur and Thakur (2021) emphasized the role of social networks to build a relationship with consumers. CRM technology at the store helped understand consumers, build relationships and share information. In a recent study on IT adoption by small retailers, Cho and Taskin (2021) argue that adopting technology to interact with

consumers improved competence, e-service efficiency, and the ability to adapt to market needs quickly. It enabled retailers to understand consumers, improve service and product delivery, and build relationships.

In examining the research on retailer communication and relationship strategies post-pandemic, it was apparent that information sharing during lockdown became critical for assuring consumers and building trust. Islam et al. (2021) posited that social media became a strategic tool for sharing product availability information and helped build consumer relationships. The uncertainty and fear due to COVID-19 affected purchase behavior, and many retailers started using social media to connect with their consumers. However, Naeem (2021) argued that misinformation on social media platforms led to panic and fear of the unavailability of food items. This fueled stockpiling and panic buying. We hypothesize the relationships as follows:

H7. Word-of-mouth significantly mediates interpersonal likability and local store loyalty relationship.

H8. Information sharing has a significant moderating influence on word-of-mouth and local store loyalty relationship.

Methodology

Data collection and sample

The data collection was executed in two stages. In the first stage, a pilot test was conducted for finalizing the questionnaire items. An online self-administered questionnaire was used for data collection from different cities across India. Local storeowners were contacted and requested to provide a list of their customers so they could be contacted through social media platforms. A total of 850 online invitations were sent during two months, of which 624 respondents responded, but only 572 could be used for the analysis. The majority of the respondents were male (62%), married (67%), aged between 25 to 40 (64%), graduates (39%), postgraduates (48%) and they belonged to tier I and tier II cities (66%). The details of the measurement scale are shown in Table 1. A 7-point Likert scale with seven (7) denoting strongly agree to one (1) denoting strongly disagree was used.

Table 1: Constructs, Scale Items and Descriptive Statistics

Constructs and scale items	Mean	SD	Loading
<i>Consumer-Retailer Emotional Attachment ($\alpha=.83$, $CR=.79$, $AVE=.67$, $MSV=3.13$, $ASV=.22$) (adapted from Kaur & Thakur 2021)</i>			
Purchasing from (local retailer name) makes me feel good.	3.32	1.13	.72
Shopping from (local retailer) makes me very happy.	3.40	1.24	.71
I love shopping from (local retailer name).	3.13	1.18	.69
Purchasing from (local retailer name) is a pure delight.	3.25	1.09	.71
I am passionate about shopping from (local retailer name).	3.14	1.04	.74
Shopping from (local retailer name) reminds me social distancing and I love the beautiful experience.	3.28	1.15	.73
If I were describing myself, (local retailer name) would likely be something I would mention.	3.61	1.40	.78
If someone ridiculed shopping without social distancing (local retailer name), I felt irritated.	2.93	1.17	.70
If someone praised shopping from (local retailer name), I would feel somewhat praised myself.	3.19	1.08	.73
Probably people who know me might sometimes think of me shopping from (local retailer name) when they think of me.	3.14	1.11	.69
I would feel sorry if (local retailer name) stopped its operations.	2.89	1.23	.67
<i>Interpersonal Likeability ($\alpha=.85$, $CR=.78$, $AVE=.618$, $MSV=3.14$, $ASV=.23$) (adapted from Laato et al. 2020)</i>			
I really like being around shopping from (grocery retailer name) with social	3.12	1.07	.72

Constructs and scale items	Mean	SD	Loading
distancing.			
Even without shopping at (local retailer name), I would choose to be around service employees working at (local retailer name) with social distancing.	2.97	1.12	.77
The employees at local store (local retailer name) are kind and helpful.	3.63	1.30	.80
I enjoyed talking to store staff (local retailer name) with social distancing.	3.27	1.19	.76
I really like being around local retail store (local retailer name) with social distancing.	3.19	1.05	.75
I was able to see my acquaintances at the store (local retailer name) because it was quite safe.	3.60	1.16	.72
I can safely discuss about my experience (local retailer name) with other consumers.	2.99	1.13	.74
Overall, the store (local retailer name) atmosphere was friendly.	3.15	1.31	.78
<i>Word-of-Mouth ($\alpha=.84$, $CR=.79$, $AVE=.63$, $MSV=3.24$, $ASV=.22$) (adapted from Mukerjee 2020)</i>			
I have recommended (local retailer name) to lots of people because it was safe.	2.47	1.14	.77
I "talk up" (local retailer name) to my friends because it was following social distancing norms.	3.62	1.20	.72
I try to convince friends to do their shopping at (local retailer name) because it was safe.	3.61	1.18	.68
I praise the safety and other services of the local retailer (local retailer name).	2.95	1.16	.72
I share information about availability of products at the local store because it was safe at (local retailer name) with my friends.	3.52	1.04	.75
<i>Information Sharing ($\alpha=.86$, $CR=.81$, $AVE=.61$, $MSV=3.15$, $ASV=.21$) (adapted from Li et al. 2020)</i>			
The store (local retailer name) communicates about various discounts on a regular basis via WhatsApp and text messages.	3.41	1.12	.78
I continuously get information about promotions (local retailer name) through mobile text messages.	3.30	1.23	.73
My local store (local retailer name) has created a WhatsApp group where information about products was shared.	2.84	1.15	.71
The local store (local retailer name) shares information about seasonal discounts through WhatsApp and text messages.	3.37	1.08	.67
The store (local retailer name) provides information on promotional campaigns run by companies through text messages or WhatsApp.	3.39	1.11	.70
Price related discounts are frequently communicated using WhatsApp and text messages.	2.96	1.14	.72
The store (local retailer name) employees communicate about various prices related discounts through WhatsApp and text messages.	3.17	1.37	.74
Company related product offers and discounts are communicated frequently through WhatsApp and text messages.	3.19	1.16	.78
The local store (local retailer name) provides me information related to availability of products at the store when product is back in stock.	3.26	1.09	.70
The local store (local retailer name) provides me personalized information about its promotional offers through WhatsApp and text messages.	3.81	1.12	.72
The local store (local retailer name) shares pictures of products on WhatsApp.	3.16	1.19	.69
<i>Local Store Loyalty ($\alpha=.85$, $CR=.79$, $AVE=.67$, $MSV=3.14$, $ASV=.23$) (adapted from Rita et al. 2023)</i>			
I was ready to pay slightly more for products if I can buy them locally with safety measures in place.	3.30	1.14	.75
I prefer shopping outside my retail area before looking at what they offer locally.	3.43	1.22	.74

Constructs and scale items	Mean	SD	Loading
I shopped at local stores because it was important to help local people in need.	3.17	1.15	.78
I shopped locally because it was convenient.	3.26	1.04	.72
I shop locally to support local retailers.	3.15	1.10	.73
Shopping at local stores was an enjoyable experience with social distancing.	3.27	1.13	.66
I will increase my interest in local stores when more products are available through them.	3.63	1.30	.72
Because I was more familiar with local stores, I preferred shopping locally.	2.94	1.18	.74
I shopped at local stores even when product variety was poor.	3.18	1.27	.79
I was loyal to my local shopping area for safety reasons.	3.51	1.19	.78

Common Method Bias (CMB)

Before data analysis, the Mahalanobis distance criterion was considered (*Mahalanobis's D* (31)>44.85, $p<.00$) and five outliers were eliminated (Hair et al. 2021). Harman's single-factor technique was employed. The first factor explained only 30 percent of the total variance, much below the 50 percent threshold level, so CMB is acceptable for the present research.

Reliability and Validity

The measurement model was evaluated. The $\chi^2/df=3.71$ is within limit; the RMSEA=.05, CFI=.93, NFI=.95, GFI=.96 and AGFI=.92 meet the recommended criteria. The structural model fit indices were also found to be within the acceptable range ($\chi^2/df=3.47$, CFI=.92; NFI=.95, GFI=.96 and AGFI=.94) (see Table 2 and 3).

Table 2. Correlations and Discriminant Validity

Construct/ Variable	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	6	7	8	9	10
1 Gender	1														
2 Marital Status	-.00	1													
3 Age	-.03	.06	1												
4 Education	-.02	.08	.10	1											
5 Type of City	.04	.07	.12*	.05	1										
6 Consumer-Retailer Emotional Attachment	.03	.10	.07	.10	.05	.81									
7 Interpersonal Likeability	.08	-.02	.06	.13*	.11	.64**	.78				.49				
8 Word-of-Mouth Information Sharing	.07	.12*	.04	.11	.12	.59**	.62**	.79			.43	.36			
9 Local Store Loyalty	.05	.08	-.02	.12	.09	.54**	.56**	.65**	.78		.52	.45	.24		
10	.00	.09	.05	.11	.07	.47**	.45**	.58**	.55**	.81	.37	.58	.39	.42	

**Correlation significant at .01 level; Discriminant validity (square root of AVE) values given diagonally (in bold).

Table 3 reports that the composite reliability ranged from .79 to .84, the Cronbach alpha value ranged from .83 to .86, the average variance extracted (AVE) value was more than .60, and all the factor loading values were more than .60. As the square roots of AVE values are more than the correlation values (Hair et al. 2021) and average shared squared variance (ASV) and maximum shared squared variance (MSV) are less than AVE values, so discriminant validity was established. In addition (see Table 3), the Heterotrait-Monotrait ratio criterion (threshold below .85) is employed to confirm discriminant validity (Henseler et al. 2015).

Table 3. Effects (direct, indirect, total) and Hypotheses Testing

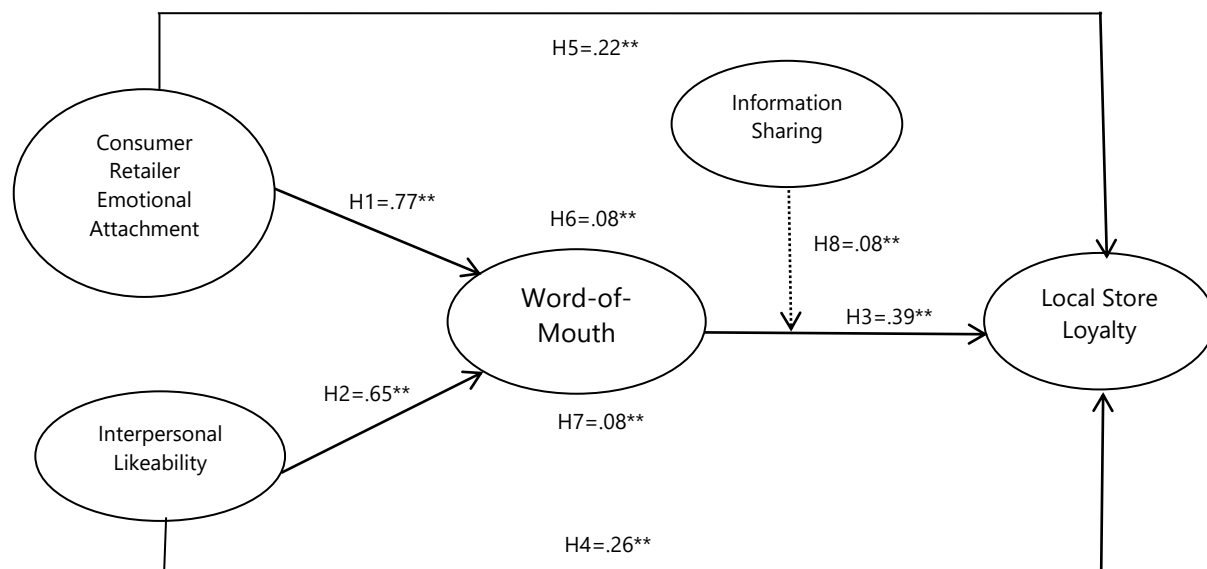
Hypotheses	Structural relationship	Std. coefficient (t-test)	Direct	Indirect	Total	Results
H1	Consumer-Retailer Emotional Attachment → Word-of-Mouth	.77 (9.58)	.77**	-	.77**	Supported
H2	Interpersonal Likeability → Word-of-Mouth	.65 (9.61)	.65**	-	.66**	Supported
H3	Word-of-Mouth → Local Store Loyalty	.39 (6.02)	.39**	.08*	.47**	Supported
H4	Interpersonal Likeability → Local Store Loyalty	.26 (11.81)	.18**	.04*	.22**	Supported
H5	Consumer-Retailer Emotional Attachment → Local Store Loyalty	.22 (11.79)	.18**	.08*	.26**	Supported
H6	Consumer-Retailer Emotional Attachment → Word-of-Mouth → Local Store Loyalty	Indirect effects (.08)	LLCI (.06)	ULCI (.12)	$p < .01$	Partial Mediation
H7	Interpersonal Likeability → Word-of-Mouth → Local Store Loyalty	Indirect effects (.07)	LLCI (.06)	ULCI (.10)	$p < .01$	Partial Mediation

Regression			
Independent variable	Dependent variable		
Variables and steps	β	Adj- R^2	ΔR^2
Step 1: Main effects of predictor variable Word-of-Mouth	.28*	.16	.17
Step 2: Moderating variable Information Sharing	.49*	.38	.24
Step 3: Interaction Word-of-Mouth*Information Sharing	.41*	.45	.08

** $p < .05$, * $p < .01$ LLCI=Lower Level Control Interval, ULCI=Upper Level Control Interval

Hypotheses Testing

Hypothesized relationships are shown in Figure 1.

**Figure 1. Structural Model**

The findings reveal that consumer-retailer emotional attachment ($\beta = .77$, $p < .01$) and interpersonal likability ($\beta = .65$, $p < .01$) had a significant impact on word-of-mouth, hence supporting $H1$ and $H2$. The findings suggest a positive influence of word-of-mouth on local store loyalty ($\beta = .39$, $p < .01$; $H3$ is accepted), a

positive influence of interpersonal likability on local store loyalty ($\beta=.26, p<.01$; $H4$ is accepted) and a positive impact of consumer-retailer emotional attachment on local store loyalty ($\beta=.22, p<.01$; $H5$ is accepted).

Mediation and Moderation

According to Hayes's (2018) recommendations, the bootstrapping method was used to evaluate the mediation effect of word-of-mouth. At the 95 percent confidence level and bootstrap, iteration was set to 5000 resample. The p -values of the mediating variables confirm that word-of-mouth partially mediates the association between the predictor and a criterion variable (Hair et al. 2021). The reasoning behind partial mediation was that both the paths (direct and indirect) were significant (Hayes 2018). The findings confirm that word-of-mouth mediated the relationship between consumer-retailer emotional attachment and local store loyalty ($H6$) and between interpersonal likability and local store loyalty ($H7$).

The results of the interaction between word-of-mouth and information sharing on local store loyalty were found to be significant ($\beta=.39, p<.01$), which shows that seven percent of the variation in local store loyalty was due to word-of-mouth and information sharing ($H8$ was accepted) suggesting that information sharing acts as a moderator.

Discussion

The earlier studies on small retailers focused on convenience, accessibility, customized assortment, community engagement, and location as essential factors in predicting loyalty (Aithal et al. 2023, Grewal et al. 2021). The current study adds to small retailer research by examining the importance of interpersonal likability, customer-retailer relationships, and information sharing regarding product availability, promotions, and retailer services during COVID-19. It examined the influence of consumer-retailer emotional attachment and interpersonal likability (encompassing consumers' attachment to the retailer, staff, and other shoppers because they are part of the local community) on word-of-mouth. The small retailer-customer relationships were revisited in the context of post-COVID-19. The findings reveal that customer-retailer emotional attachment and relationships were critical in generating positive word-of-mouth. It was further strengthened by information sharing by retailers during COVID-19 and led to improved store loyalty. Information was shared through mobile phones, WhatsApp, and text messages to communicate with customers. An important aspect of attachment was familiarity with local retailers and the easy availability of necessities at these nearby stores. The uncertainty and concern for safety have made shoppers avoid crowded malls and shopping centers. As the lockdown affected the timely delivery of products ordered from online shopping websites, shoppers depended on local stores for household replenishments.

The interpersonal relationships with the local retail stores, employees, and other shoppers created an emotional bond during uncertain times and continued post-COVID. The familiarity with the local retailer facilitated personalized communication and interaction, which has remained in place. The critical role of information post-COVID-19 times enhances customers' reliance on the retailer to meet their requirements. The local stores have information about the residents, their shopping habits, and product preferences, and post-pandemic, this information has become even more critical in serving customers. The local retailer's proximity to the customers enables them to offer contactless home delivery, credit facility, customized services, and other help to the customers. These factors are important as customers still avoid crowded stores, preferring home delivery.

The long-term relationships and familiarity with local store personnel and other shoppers frequenting the store created commitment and trust. This was strengthened by the retailer's efforts to share information about product availability during lockdown periods and disrupted the supply of products. Earlier research argued the importance of community embeddedness, social relationships, reciprocity, and commitment towards the development of the local community (Giovanis et al. 2019). The present research

findings add to the existing body of knowledge by suggesting that interpersonal likability, social interaction, and emotional attachment led to word-of-mouth, and loyalty became all the more critical during the pandemic. The uncertainty, anxiety, and safety concerns during COVID-19 led customers to rely on the services of local stores as they transmitted familiarity. This continues post-COVID-19. The stores are aware of the preferences of the community members, stock relevant products and share information through mobile networks as they did during COVID-19.

During the pandemic, lockdown restricted customers' out-shopping behavior, and they had to depend on a limited assortment mix of local stores or e-commerce. The disruption in transport and logistics services affected online delivery as products were stuck in the supply chain. The daily grocery and diary replenishments were readily available from local stores. These stores had access to local dairy suppliers, fresh fruits, and vegetables, enabling them to serve their customers during the pandemic. Information technology played a vital role in this endeavor by allowing retailers and customers to communicate. The findings support Cho and Taskin's (2021) and Islam et al.'s (2021) studies, emphasizing the importance of technology in improving retailer services. This research adds to these studies by suggesting that small retailer-customer communication was critical during the pandemic and continues to be so post-COVID-19. Customers' reliance on local stores post-COVID-19 to meet their daily grocery needs fostered trust and enhanced their relationships.

The customer's reliance on small retail stores with their limited assortment mix and understanding of the local community were critical factors for developing store loyalty. The retailers' proximity to the customers was the competitive strength in providing personalized services and interacting with them. Thus, even though as rudimentary as WhatsApp and text messages, technology has become a strategic tool for sharing information about product availability, prices, and stock-outs. Though these stores lacked good ambiance, assortment mix, and facilities, their strength lies in their knowledge of their customers. Customers' interaction with other local shoppers, salespersons, and retailers allows shoppers to socialize and seek reassurance.

Theoretical and Managerial Implications

Small Retailers and E-Commerce Collaborations

Amazon, Big Basket, and Flipkart have increased their reach in India's interiors, especially smaller cities, by leveraging the locational advantage of *Kirana* stores. During COVID-19, this initiative further gained momentum. Amazon started the endeavor a few years back to support small local retailers in selling their products online and thus reach a more significant customer segment. During the pandemic, Amazon exported \$3b in Indian products, created 300,000 jobs in a year, integrated several small local retailers, and enabled them to sell their products using Amazon's platform. Amazon has expanded its reach to smaller cities and villages by enabling small retailers to use its digital platform to manage their inventories and serve customers efficiently. As customers avoid organized retail with its multi-faceted facilities, broad assortment mix, and appealing store ambiance because of safety priorities, the unorganized neighborhood stores become essential in catering to the needs of local customers. Their competitive advantage lies in their understanding of the local consumers, product preferences, demographics, and ability to offer credit and customized services (Aithal et al. 2023). Local retail stores stock products according to the regional and local preferences of the community. The customized assortment mix reflects the market they serve. Retailers' knowledge about their preferences and buying behavior helps them use technology to share relevant information with customers. Product availability information and home delivery have become critical pillars during and after the pandemic.

E-commerce companies collaborate with local *Kirana* stores to offer fresh and varied product offerings. Although customers are increasingly using the online shopping websites of big retailers, product delivery gets delayed due to lockdowns and logistical problems. In this scenario, customers rely on local stores for product availability. Local stores have access to local suppliers who can purchase

products from nearby vendors, farmers, and household suppliers. This helps them in serving their customers with locally available products. For example, Swiggy, a food delivery company, has used its delivery agents to pick up groceries and medicines from local stores and deliver them to their customers in nearby residential areas. The company saw a drastic decline in food orders during the pandemic and decided to use its delivery agents or 'genies' to serve customers by picking orders from nearby stores. These new arrangements show that local *Kirana* stores will play a significant role in the future. With the pandemic slowly abating, customers are likely to prefer to order from local retailers with whom they share a long-term relationship and emotional attachment. As most small retailers are moving to a digital platform due to collaboration with online retailers, the consumers are likely to benefit in terms of service and product variety.

Small Retail Revisited

Kahn *et al.* (2018) argued that the retailing industry is transforming with the dominance of e-commerce firms, the growth of omnichannel, the use of technology to capture customer data, internet-savvy customers, and vertical integration to serve customers efficiently. The advent of the pandemic altered several strategies and presented challenges in developed and developing economies. Developed countries with strong Internet penetration evolved their retail structures to address customer concerns of security through options like buying online and picking up from local stores, home delivery from supermarkets, curb-side pick-up of groceries (Kazancoglu & Demir 2021, Verhoef *et al.* 2023). However, in developing countries, the challenges were different. As the reliance on online shopping increased, technical glitches restricted accessibility in several regions. Growing concern for safety led customers to shop from neighborhood stores as these were conveniently located and stocked necessities.

The dominance of small retailers in India interests researchers and practitioners as socio-economic factors drive it. Retail evolution is customer-centric and primarily driven by retailers' motive to enhance the shopping experience. Research suggests small retailers lack resources and marketing expertise (Cho & Taskin 2021, Kannan 2020) and their competitiveness lies in emotional bonding and the long-term relationship with customers. The existence of *Kirana* stores challenges the notion of technology-driven modern retail formats by arguing that the development of retail structures is situation and customer-oriented. The pandemic has unleashed forces that will have a far-reaching impact on buying behavior. It has led to changes where shoppers prefer to buy from neighborhood stores, which provides assurance and comfort in uncertainty. The utility of *Kirana* stores rests on Kahn's (2018) premise that customers prefer to buy from stores they trust and offer superior value.

The changes in buying behavior post-pandemic have several implications for small stores as it allows them to integrate technology to communicate with customers. The Wheel of Retailing (Babin *et al.* 2021) suggests that retail institutions innovate and evolve. Retail institutions undergo stages of growth, maturity, and decline. New challenges offer opportunities for retailers to adapt and introduce services to remain relevant. During and post-pandemic, small retailers made changes to compete with organized retail by integrating and collaborating with e-commerce firms. Further, cooperative moves between logistic providers, retailers, and service providers may be the new retail trends. In India, the changes may herald a new era where organized retailers leverage the strengths of *Kirana* stores. Today's customers place value on safety and health. Due to economic uncertainty, the focus has shifted to buying essentials and household products rather than luxury items. Local stores festooned amidst congested residential areas provide access to daily necessities without travelling outside the residential areas.

It offers several alterations to the existing *Kirana* stores and sets the wheel for renovation in current strategies. A decade ago, e-commerce and organized retail were seen as forces that would swallow local *Kirana* stores, but post-pandemic times present a different picture. With their knowledge of local customers, small retailers offer customized products, along with trust and assurance. The concern for health, safety, and physical distancing has led them to use technology to communicate and interact. It has

triggered a retail revolution where e-commerce firms and small retailers leverage their competencies to serve customers. It offers local tradespeople and farmers opportunities to sell their wares in the local market by leveraging their in-depth understanding of local markets. Local stores with access to locally produced groceries, fruits, vegetables, and dairy products are a stable option.

Conclusions and Future Research Directions

The current study suggests that *Kirana* stores leverage their relational competencies to adapt to the current situation. The findings revealed the importance of emotional attachment, likability, and interpersonal relationships between customers and small retailers as antecedents to trust and positive word of mouth. The pandemic created stressful situations and brought several changes in shopper behavior. It suggests that customer-retailer relationships, trust, personalized services and safety concerns will continue to be the driving forces post-pandemic. It may be interesting to understand the role of social networks in improving retail communication, services, home delivery, and trust post-pandemic. The relevance of collaborations between *Kirana* stores and e-commerce companies in serving customers through a convenience store format may provide valuable insights. Research may be directed to understand changes in the service delivery model due to collaboration between *Kirana* stores and e-commerce firms.

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Factors influencing urban pest management professionals' pesticide purchase commitment: price, quality trace credit, and supplier relationship


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Understanding the factors influencing professionals' commitment to suppliers when acquiring pesticide products is crucial in urban pest management. The study assesses how price, quality, trade credit, and supplier relationships impact commitment to purchasing pesticides. Employing partial least squares structural equation modelling, the study's findings indicate that when urban pest management professionals decide on pesticide purchases, their decisions are notably influenced by product price, the availability of trade credit, and product quality. Surprisingly, a positive relationship with suppliers does not influence their commitment to purchasing pesticides. This study discusses the variations and offers implications for managers in the Philippines.

Keywords: price, purchase commitment, quality, supplier relationship, trade credit, Philippines

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Introduction

The urban pest management sector is key to public health and environmental sustainability. Amidst the challenges professionals face in this field, dealing with various pesticide products and suppliers has become a constant endeavor. Despite its significance, a notable gap exists in the literature concerning the factors influencing professionals' commitment to specific pesticide products and suppliers. The prevailing literature mainly investigates the technical aspects of pest management, leaving the aspect of commitment in procurement decisions largely unexplored. Professionals operate in a complex marketplace where economic conditions fluctuate, regulations evolve, and consumer preferences shift. Comprehending the perceived factors influencing professionals' pesticide purchase commitment—such as price, quality, trade credit, and supplier relationship—becomes essential for aligning their business approaches. This is pertinent in the present marketing environment, as Chen et al. (2016) emphasized, where the traditional marketing mix model, often called the 4Ps, is not universally effective for all businesses. The modified modern marketing 4Ps were introduced to embody the holistic marketing

concept and provide a more comprehensive context that includes the current realities of marketing, including people, processes, programs, and performance (Chemo et al. 2023).

A thorough examination of existing literature revealed research gaps that demanded particular attention. A primary concern surfaced in the contextual limitations prevalent in the scrutinized literature. While the constructs discussed in these studies were undoubtedly relevant, they mainly originated from research conducted in different industries. This contextual gap highlighted the need for dedicated investigations into the factors specifically shaping pesticide procurement in the Philippines. The geographical constraint raised concerns about its applicability in the Philippines, underscoring the need for local studies to accurately represent the unique setting of the Philippine pest management industry. The sample size issue further compounded the identified research gaps. This issue impeded the statistical reliability assessment, compromising the research's external validity. This highlights the need for an increased inclusion of parametric studies in future investigations, ensuring a more comprehensive understanding of the research landscape.

The researcher argues that trade credit is the strongest factor in urban pest management professionals' pesticide purchase commitment. Bhutta et al. (2020) emphasize trade credit as a crucial element in optimizing firm performance, staying permanently in business operations with lower opportunity costs and collateral-free access. Karakoc (2023) highlights the reliance on trade credit by SMEs facing financing constraints, particularly during crises like the 2008 financial downturn. The study indicates that firms, especially SMEs, lean towards trade credit rather than bank loans to finance capital expenditures in economic distress. With all the information and experiences of the purchasers, they find happiness essential for the patronage of a specific product (Kim & Yoon 2023).

Therefore, the study assesses how price, quality, trade credit, and supplier relationships impact commitment to purchasing pesticides using partial least squares structural equation modeling and pest management professionals as a unit of analysis. The following section presents a literature review, conceptual framework, hypotheses, and methodology, followed by results and discussion.

Literature Review

One contributing factor to the success of an urban pest management business is evidently influenced by the decisions of professionals managing pesticide acquisition. Numerous factors played a significant role in determining this operational landscape. This comprehensive analysis of factors influencing urban pest management professionals' pesticide purchase commitment systematically explicitly examined the effects of price, quality, trade credit, and supplier relationships. Exploring the insights provided by Tingbani et al. (2022) and Khoirunnisa et al. (2022), this review served as a compass for urban pest management professionals and suppliers seeking to refine their approaches to business. The following factors—price, quality, trade credit and supplier relationship—appear to influence the purchasing commitments of pest management professionals toward suppliers.

In pesticide product acquisition, the primary considerations consistently revolve around are the pricing aspects of these resources. Olajide et al. (2016) succinctly articulated the fundamental inquiries of "What was the cost?" and "What value did it hold for us?" These questions underscore the central role that price plays in influencing the decisions of urban pest management professionals. A study by Hakim and Merkert (2016) highlights that price positively and significantly affects purchasing decisions. As such, strategic pricing evaluation remains essential in urban pesticide acquisition, emphasizing the lasting impact of cost considerations on decision-making processes. Many emerging markets grapple with low-income challenges, posing barriers to accessing critical products (Anderson & Markides 2007, Ernst et al. 2015). Affordability is a significant concern for these consumers, making "good enough" innovation, prioritizing low-cost and reliability, an effective strategy. To capture these market segments, innovation must simultaneously focus on cost reduction and value creation in the same citation (Dubiel & Ernst 2013,

Nakagawa et al. 2021). This approach addresses the primary issue of price sensitivity and ensures successful adaptation to the evolving needs of these markets.

Research in this area consistently emphasized the significant role of product quality in influencing consumers' purchase decisions. Ongoing efforts to improve product quality are essential for enhancing performance and meeting changing customer needs (Tariq et al. 2013). This highlights the importance of a continuous commitment to quality improvement. Tsiotsou (2005) investigated the effects of different quality levels on consumer involvement, overall satisfaction, and purchase intentions, providing a more detailed view of this relationship, including the relationship between product quality and consumer behaviour. Tariq et al. (2013) further expounded that continuous improvement in product quality had significant benefits for both businesses and consumers. It builds brand loyalty and positive associations for businesses by consistently meeting and exceeding customer expectations. For consumers, a focus on quality ensured satisfaction and increased the likelihood of repeat purchases.

Trade credit is an important financial instrument for corporations experiencing financial challenges. The role of trade credit as a viable alternative to traditional bank finance offers valuable insights (e.g. alternative financing source) into its significance for financially constrained corporations (Tingbani et al. 2022). This was particularly relevant for corporations facing financial distress, where trade credit served as a lifeline, providing a feasible means to secure necessary funds. The scarcity of external finance options makes reliance on suppliers' credit integral for enhancing growth. It is an alternative to bank finance but has become indispensable for corporations striving for growth under financial constraints. Thus, it is a financial tool that offers flexibility and support when traditional sources are limited.

Khoirunnisa et al. (2022) shed a significant relationship between communication and buying decisions. The positive direction of this relationship signifies that a higher level of communication correlates with elevated buying decisions, underscoring the importance of effective communication in fostering positive interactions between buyers and suppliers and ultimately influencing the decision-making process. Building on this understanding, a strong and communicative relationship could have far-reaching business implications. Effective communication contributes to trust, transparency, and collaboration, which are essential to cultivating a positive relationship. This could impact various aspects of the procurement process, including commitment to specific suppliers, reliability, and overall satisfaction.

Therefore, investigating the factors influencing urban pest management professionals' pesticide purchase commitment provides helpful insights that shape decision-making in this field.

Theory and Conceptual Framework

Xiao and Porto (2019) view that the resource dependence theory explains the organizational decisions and actions being influenced by securing resources, resource considerations, and establishing control on the enhanced resources supply. The theory highlights the importance of external financing for firms to operate smoothly and build mutual relationships with the firm and the suppliers. The firms may need help to source the resources. The effects are imbalanced and different in power, authority, and access to such resources. The firms then act to manage and control the price, quality, finances, and stable supply of essential resources through political interventions, growing scale, networking with suppliers, and diversification.

The theory further highlights the importance of external financing for firms to operate smoothly. Bhutta et al. (2020) emphasize trade credit as a crucial element in optimizing firm performance, staying permanently in business operations with lower opportunity costs and collateral-free access. The study underlines that aligning trade credit offerings with industry averages promotes fair business practices and enhances business performance. Further, Karakoc (2023) highlights the reliance on trade credit by SMEs facing financing constraints, particularly during crises like the 2008 financial downturn. The study indicates

that firms, especially SMEs, lean towards trade credit rather than bank loans to finance capital expenditures in financial distress.

Figure 1 shows the conceptual framework lining price, quality, trade credit, and supplier relationship factors that affect purchase commitment. The framework incorporates inputs from elements that shape pesticide purchase commitment within the pest management industry, incorporating the emerging marketing mix elements. Chemo et al. (2023), proposed the modern marketing 4Ps that reflect the holistic marketing concept and constitute a more representative set encompassing contemporary marketing realities such as people, processes, programs, and performance. Although not all elements of this new marketing mix are incorporated in this study, this inclusive approach recognizes the evolving landscape of marketing elements. It acknowledges the broader factors influencing businesses in the modern context.

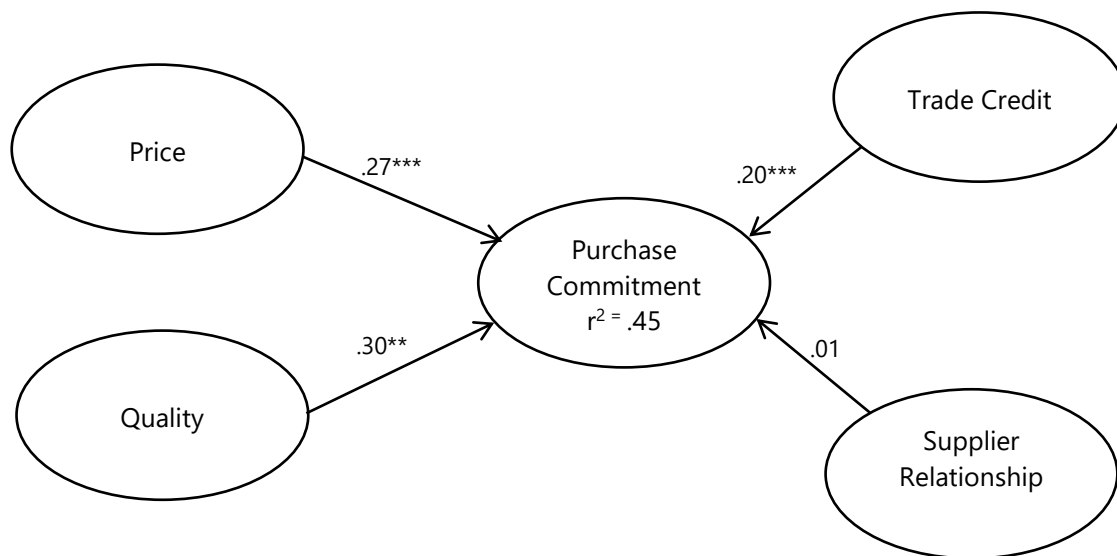


Figure 1. Conceptual Framework and Operational Framework

** $p < .05$; *** $p < .01$

Source: the author

Hypothesis Development

Qalati et al. (2019) emphasize the crucial role of price in the decision-making process for high-value items, asserting that it positively influences consumer-purchasing behavior. Albari et al. (2020) confirm the positive impact of both price and brand image on consumers' decisions, emphasizing the need for informed pricing strategies and a positive brand image to encourage consumer choices. Mahmood and Jaafar (2022) further support the positive influence of fixed and fair prices on purchasing decisions. In urban pest management, financial investment is linked to pesticide products' prices and influences professionals' dedication to procurement decisions. This proposition is rooted in the anticipation that professionals, perceiving favorable value and affordability in pesticide products, will demonstrate increased commitment to consistently acquiring these products for pest management. Moreover, price emerges as a key factor in purchasing decisions, especially for products with frequent acquisition. This, in turn, influences choices related to the selection of stores, products, and brands (Albari & Safiltri 2020). So the first hypothesis to be tested is:

H1. Price positively affects Purchase Commitment.

Quality is defined as the standard and effectiveness of pesticide products in addressing pest management needs and is hypothesized to influence professionals' commitment to purchase positively. Product quality significantly influences purchasing decisions (Pahmi et al. 2023). It was emphasized that products are the main factor influencing consumer purchasing decisions, so the better the product, the better the purchasing decision (Pramesty et al. 2022). Multiple studies reinforce that product quality is a key determinant of consumer satisfaction and purchase commitment. Bhowmick and Seetharaman (2023) define product quality as the capacity of a product or service to meet customer requirements and adhere to essential benchmarks, emphasizing its vital role in achieving repeat purchases. They stress that a harmonious balance between product quality and price encourages customers to purchase repeatedly. Pasco and Lao (2021) confirmed that quality products and services lead to quality customer experience and repeat purchases. Ellitan and Suhartatik (2023) establish a direct relationship between product quality and customer satisfaction. The researcher also argues that prices influence the purchasing decisions of pest management professionals after establishing comparable product specifications and baseline quality. The second proposed hypothesis is:

H2. Quality positively affects Purchase Commitment.

Trade credit is a tool for retaining customers in a competitive business environment. Improvement in sales may also be taken by a supply of trade credit (Bhutta et al. 2020). Favourable trade credit terms, including payment periods and credit limits, positively impact professionals' commitment to pesticide purchases. As professionals experience advantageous financial arrangements, their commitment to specific pesticide products and suppliers is anticipated to strengthen. Astvansh and Jindal (2021) assert that supplier trade credit enhances a firm's profitability by mitigating financing and opportunity costs. The researchers argue that increased provision of trade credit allows firms to defer payments, providing extended access to cash reserves for profitable ventures. Mahmud et al. (2022) reveal an inverted U-shaped relationship between trade credit and firm profitability in India, suggesting the importance of aiming for an optimal level of trade credit to maximize profitability. The researcher considers that credit terms and lines are important for pest management professionals to support the firm's cash flow, the sufficient inventory of pesticide chemicals, and the time required for payment processing. The third proposed hypothesis is:

H3. Trade Credit positively affects Purchase Commitment.

The notion of internal marketing and the recognition of the crucial role of individuals in marketing are well accepted. The purpose of establishing relationships with persons and organizations that directly or indirectly influence a company's marketing endeavors is increasingly gaining significance in marketing (Adnan et al. 2018). Relationship marketing is an approach that prioritizes establishing lasting and mutually advantageous alliances with significant stakeholders, aiming to acquire and retain their patronage (Doney & Cannon 1997). The commitment of pest management professionals to pesticide purchases is affected by positive and collaborative relationships with suppliers (Khan et al. 2022). The researcher argues that customers are more open to suppliers who are perceived as friends rather than foes. The suppliers who listen to their customers win their attention. The connections between leaders of the functional departments of the supplier and the customers in pest management are important for building relationships and establishing solutions to each functional concern. The researcher hypothesizes that, as relationships are established and nurtured, the dedication of professionals to acquiring specific pesticide products from suppliers will experience a positive influence. The researcher proposes to test the fourth hypothesis.

H4. Supplier Relationship positively affects Purchase Commitment.

Methodology

The methodological approach in this study is grounded in a non-parametric research design, selected for its appropriateness when handling ordinal or non-normally distributed data and when the assumptions of parametric tests are not met. This ensures the reliability of the analysis concerning the relationships among the variables of interest—price, quality, trade credit, supplier relationship, and pesticide purchase commitment. The study in the Philippines involved 84 pest management professionals affiliated with duly registered companies. Data collection was executed through structured surveys and tailored to the specific context of the Philippine pest management industry. The researcher distributed the questionnaire to over 150 Pest Management Professionals (PMPs), primarily based in Metro Manila, Philippines, with records in the Philippine Association of Professional Fumigators Inc. and the Philippine Federation of Pest Management Operators (PFPMOA). However, only 84 professionals responded. The selected PMPs must have a minimum of five years of experience in the industry and demonstrate engagement in this field. We employed PLS-SEM and non-parametric methods to ensure a systematic approach to test the influence of price, quality, trade credit, and supplier relationship on pesticide purchase commitment.

Analyses

Examining descriptive statistics provides insights into central tendencies and variability within each construct. Price has a mean of 6.68 and a standard deviation of .42, indicating a high average rating and moderate variability. Quality exhibits a high mean of 6.46 with slightly higher variability. Trade credit shows a moderate mean of 6.06 with higher variability. Supplier relationship and purchase commitment demonstrate moderate averages and variability. These statistics suggest response distribution and agreement in urban pest management. $R^2=.45$ and Adjusted $R^2=.42$ values for purchase commitment indicate substantial explanatory power.

In assessing construct validity, key metrics—Cronbach's alpha, composite reliability (ρ_a and ρ_c), and average variance extracted (AVE)—were used for each variable in the research model. Trade credit demonstrates high internal consistency (Cronbach's $\alpha=.88$), reliability ($\rho_a=.92$, $\rho_c=.91$), and effective variance capture ($AVE=.67$). Price, purchase commitment, and quality also exhibit commendable internal consistency, reliability, and effective variance capture. Supplier relationship's high Cronbach's α (.85), along with reliable reliability metrics ($\rho_a=.89$, $\rho_c=.91$) and substantial AVE (.77), affirm its construct validity. These findings provide evidence for the reliability and discriminant validity of the variables. Table 1 reports the Model fit indices essential for evaluating how well the proposed structural equation model aligns with the observed data. The Standard Root Mean Square Residual (SRMR) value of .10 indicates the average standardized difference between observed and predicted correlations.

Table 1. Model Fit

<i>Saturated Model</i>	
Standard Root Mean Square Residual (SRMR)	.10
d_ULS	1.52
d_G	1.38
Chi-square	532.01
NFI	.57

The Standard Root Mean Square Residual (SRMR) value of .10 indicates the average standardized difference between observed and predicted correlations. A lower SRMR is desirable, and in this case, the value suggests a relatively acceptable fit, indicating that the model adequately reproduces the observed covariances among the variables. The discrepancy-based fit indices, d_ULS (1.52) and d_G (1.38) measure the difference between the observed and reproduced covariance matrices. While these values indicate

some discrepancy, it is essential to interpret them in the context of the overall model complexity and the number of estimated parameters. Higher values suggest potential areas for improvement in model fit. The Chi-square statistic (532.01) assesses the difference between the observed and expected covariance matrices. Chi-square tends to be significant in larger samples due to its sensitivity to sample size. Despite its significance, it is crucial to consider additional fit indices for a more comprehensive evaluation. The Normed Fit Index (NFI) has a value of .57, indicating the proportion of improvement in model fit relative to a null model. While a value below one suggests an improvement over a null model, the NFI value suggests room for enhancement in capturing the underlying relationships among the variables. In summary, the model fit indices present a mixed picture. While SRMR indicates a relatively acceptable fit, d_{ULS} , d_G , and NFI suggest potential areas for refinement. Considering the overall model complexity and theoretical context, it is essential to interpret these indices collectively. Further adjustments and refinement may enhance the model's fit and improve its explanatory power.

Results and Discussion

Table 2 reports the PLS path coefficients and hypotheses test results about the factors influencing purchase commitment within the urban pest management industry. Price, quality, and trade credit significantly impact professionals' commitment to pesticide purchases, while supplier relationship is not statistically significant. These findings can guide practitioners in understanding critical decision-making drivers related to pesticide procurement, enabling the optimization of strategies for effective pest management and sustainable business.

Table 2. PLS Path Coefficients and Hypothesis Test Results and Interpretation

Constructs	Coefficients	t-value	p-value	Interpretation
H1: Price → Purchase Commitment	.27	2.99	.00	Supported
H2: Quality → Purchase Commitment	.30	2.03	.04	Supported
H3: Trade Credit → Purchase Commitment	.20	2.72	.00	Supported
H4: Relationship → Purchase Commitment	.17	1.16	.24	Unsupported

H1 that price positively affects purchase commitment is supported ($\beta=.27$, $p<.05$), i.e. as the pricing of pesticides increases, there is a corresponding rise in the responsibility of urban pest management professionals to procure these pesticides. Zhao et al. (2021) highlight the impact of pricing on buying behaviour, noting that higher-priced products correlate with lower sales volume, while products priced below market rates are expected to experience increased sales. Chen et al. (2016) emphasize that the repercussions of elevated prices may be the potential permanent loss of customers. Akdogan's (2021) research underscores the positive and negative influences prices can exert on consumer purchasing likelihood in the context of promotional products. The alignment of our study's findings with past studies plays a role in shaping consumer decisions and purchase commitments. The results are aligned with the confirmation of Albari and Safitri (2020) on the positive impact of both price and brand image on consumers' decisions but contradict the findings of Mahmood and Jaafar (2022) on the positive influence of fixed and fair prices on purchasing decisions. Zhao et al. (2021) also have opposite results that highlight the impact of pricing on buying behavior, noting that higher-priced products correlate with lower sales volume, while products priced below market rates are expected to experience increased sales. The results also contrast with the findings of Chen et al. (2016) related to the repercussions of elevated prices, which may be the potential permanent loss of customers. The collective evidence underscores the complexity of the relationship between price and purchase commitment in pest control in the pesticide industry. Urban

pest management professionals became more conscious of rising prices and wanted to secure their inventory before increasing prices.

H2 that quality positively affects purchase commitment is supported ($\beta=.30, p<.05$). Their findings suggest that higher-quality products, particularly those offering a diverse range of options, contribute to increased customer satisfaction, fostering a desire among consumers to revisit and repurchase existing products. Our findings are consistent with past studies that state that product quality leads to higher commitment (Irawan & Sitio 2021). The results corroborate the findings of Pasco and Lao (2021) and Ellitan and Suhartatik (2023) regarding the relationships between product quality, customer satisfaction, quality customer experience, and repeat purchases. This interplay between quality, reputation, and purchasing decisions underscores the integral role of quality in shaping consumer perceptions and urban pest management professionals' commitment to procuring pesticides. The researcher argues that urban pest management professionals are accountable for the performance of the pesticides and the eradication of intended pests. Their reputation and results are at stake in valuing product quality and realizing advantages and differentiation.

H3 that trade credit positively affects purchase commitment is supported ($\beta=.20, p<.05$). Financial perspectives from various studies shed light on the multifaceted role of trade credit in shaping firm behaviour and profitability. Managers aiming for wealth maximization should consider financing physical investments through trade credit to limit funds' use for private benefits, thereby reducing agency costs (Karakoc & Arcagök 2022, Karakoc 2023). The synthesis of these findings reinforces the understanding that trade credit significantly influences the commitment of urban pest management professionals to pesticide purchases. Trade credit is not the strongest factor in purchase commitment in this research, as argued by the author. However, sufficient time is also necessary to manage enough inventory, cash flow, payment, and accounting processes.

H4 that supplier relationship positively affects purchase commitment is unsupported ($\beta=.17, p>.05$). This unexpected finding challenges established perspectives within the literature. Still, it is essential to contextualize this result with insights from other studies. Contrary to the hypothesis, Kimario et al. (2022) research argues that communication is vital for establishing trust and commitment in buyer-supplier relationships to ensure procurement performance. However, the study did not find conclusive evidence to support this assertion within the urban pest management industry. Moreover, Sheth and Sharma (1997) (1998) emphasize the importance of relationships in effective marketing strategies. While the study recognizes the significance of various factors, supplier relationship did not emerge as a statistically significant factor influencing purchase commitment. Additionally, Doney and Cannon (1997) found that trust in the supplier firm and the salesperson indirectly influences future business engagements, highlighting the nature of buyer-supplier relationships. In our context, these factors did not directly impact purchase commitment, emphasizing the industry-specific details of the study. Furthermore, Khan et al. (2022) discuss the effects of uncertainty, supplier involvement, supplier performance, and partnership quality on buyer-supplier relationships. While the study did not find a significant link between supplier relationships and purchase commitment, their insights contribute to the broader understanding of factors influencing buyer-supplier dynamics.

Conclusion and Recommendation

The study examined the impact of price, quality, trade credit, and supplier relationships on purchase commitment in the pest management industry. Our findings indicate a positive relationship between all the factors and purchase commitment except the supplier relationship. Notably, price and quality emerge as significant drivers, with trade credit also playing a substantial role in influencing commitment. Recognizing the impactful roles of price, quality, and trade credit on commitment, coupled with the relatively smaller impact of supplier relationships, provides valuable strategic guidance. Urban pest

management managers are encouraged to allocate resources strategically based on these insights. A strategic focus on pricing is recommended, leveraging the substantial impact of price on purchase commitment. Industry stakeholders should evaluate and optimize pricing strategies to offer competitive and transparent structures, thereby enhancing commitment among professionals. Simultaneously, a strong emphasis on product quality is crucial, with continuous efforts to improve efficacy, safety, and overall performance contributing to heightened commitment. Optimizing trade credit terms is another strategic avenue, acknowledging the notable impact of trade credit on commitment. Suppliers should consider flexible payment periods, credit limits, and tailored financial arrangements to meet the specific needs of urban pest management professionals. While the supplier relationship exhibits a comparatively smaller impact, fostering positive associations remains essential. Prioritizing effective communication, reliability, and collaboration with customers can contribute to maintaining a healthy and supportive supplier-customer relationship. Further research could explore additional variables and their interplay within the urban pest management industry. This might involve investigating regional variations, industry trends, or the influence of emerging technologies. By implementing these recommendations and embracing a comprehensive understanding of the factors shaping commitment, stakeholders in the urban pest management sector can foster sustainable, committed relationships, contributing to growth and success in the industry. In subsequent studies, researchers should replicate the study for improved evaluation and generalization. Conducting localized research to grasp the details of the Philippine pest management industry and incorporating parametric methods for a more profound understanding are also recommended.

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The mindful manager: exploring habits of mind during creative problem-solving in agricultural businesses

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Operating in an increasingly changing business environment presents modern managers with complex problems that require creative solutions. This study delves into applying the 16 Habits of Mind (HoM) as a framework to enhance creative problem-solving competencies among managers. By conducting an exploratory qualitative research study through semi-structured interviews with 21 managers from different functional areas within the agricultural industry in South Africa, we examine the relevance of these habits when solving business problems. Our findings uncover a nuanced prioritization of these habits, with persisting, learning continuously, and listening with understanding and empathy emerging as top-ranked in management sciences. This research contributes to the theoretical discourse on managerial skills and effective problem-solving techniques. It provides practical implications for managers' training and development in this context and other emerging markets. These findings emphasize the necessity of nurturing a diverse range of thinking skills among managers to foster resilience, flexibility, and creativity by innovating in contemporary business.

Keywords: 16 Habits of Mind; Thinking skills; Creative problem-solving; Managerial competencies; Agricultural businesses

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Introduction

The landscape of business management is ever-evolving, shaped by constant challenges and opportunities. Managers in agricultural businesses play a crucial role in this dynamic setting, coordinating resources and strategies to navigate complexities and achieve organizational success (Lazarova et al. 2023). Central to this managerial role is the competency of problem-solving, a critical facet that determines the survival and the thriving of enterprises in the competitive agricultural industry (Yu et al. 2023). Scholars have focused on creative, critical, divergent, convergent, analytical and strategical thinking (among other thinking skills) concerning managers' effective problem-solving competencies (Kumar et al. 2021). Although these modes of thinking are valuable, the complex nature of business management,

particularly in emerging markets, calls for further exploration of skills that promote effective problem-solving (Sinkus 2020). To uncover the appropriateness of an unexplored thinking model for managers, we investigate the 16 Habits of Mind (HoM) during the problem-solving process in agricultural cooperatives.

The concept of HoM, introduced by Costa and Kallick (2000), has traditionally been associated with the education domain, helping to shape students' thinking patterns (Yustinah et al. 2023). However, these habits are potentially relevant to business settings, influencing their decision-making processes. This study has a contextual contribution, as it is situated in the context of South African agricultural businesses and seeks to bridge this conceptual gap. This study is important for advancing theoretical knowledge of managerial skills and offering practical insights that can enhance training programs and managerial techniques (Tița et al. 2023). Thus, this paper's impact is twofold, serving the interest of future researchers and practitioners. Therefore, this paper aims to expand the current understanding of managers' creative problem-solving competency by exploring how the 16 HoM are applied in businesses.

The following section is a literature review that delves into relevant concepts of this paper based on prior publications that lead to two research questions. The study was underpinned by systems theory and utility theory, in that it was grounded by satisfying the need for effective managerial task execution in businesses and considering tradeoffs present during the decision-making processes while operating in complex and interlinked environments (Farhan Fauzi & Marsasi 2023). The literature review is followed by a discussion of the methods used to conduct the study and a presentation of our findings. In the penultimate section of this paper, we present some managerial and scholarly implications, and our conclusion section ends the paper with closing remarks.

Literature Review and Research Questions

This literature review provides context and structure to the paper's development and findings. It commences with a discussion of managers' role in businesses, followed by how their level of managerial experience influences their task execution. Thereafter, we discuss managers' competencies, leading to an overview of the problem-solving competency and how it depends on thinking skills, which included the 16 HoM. This was done to elucidate the concept of HoM and orientate the reader to the discussion of our findings presented later in this article (Paul & Criado 2020). Managers: Management experience leads to better problem-solving. Experienced managers excel in communication, adaptability, and collaboration. These skills are crucial in dynamic emerging markets. Using new strategies, building team dynamics, and reflecting are important for navigating complex markets (Negrão 2020). Managerial Experience: More experienced individuals communicate honestly, are flexible, and work in collaborative spaces. Less experienced managers are open to new techniques and focus on team building and self-reflection (Kraus 2018). Highly experienced managers excel in problem-solving and emotional intelligence. Experienced individuals are less susceptible to personal stumbling blocks and tend to demonstrate enhanced managerial competence (Lockwood et al. 2021). Managerial Competencies: Managerial competence pertains to a wide range of abilities, expertise, mindsets, and conduct that managers employ to achieve efficacy in different business environments and positions of leadership (Bondarenko et al. 2021). Some of the most important managerial competencies are required for communication, awareness and self-management (Freitas & Odellius 2018), whereas effective problem-solving is probably one of the most crucial for business success and survival (Fischer & Funke 2014). Problem-solving: Problem-solving can be viewed as a process of cognitive actions aimed at achieving a preset objective, where managers assess alternatives and obtain answers to unanticipated questions. Managers with exceptional problem-solving skills can differentiate between algorithmic problems (problems with known answers or solutions) and heuristic problems (complex and complicated new problems) and recognize what mode of thinking skill is necessitated by the problem at hand (Heerkens & van Winden 2021). Thinking Skills: Thinking is contemplating a matter, while skill is task proficiency. Thinking skills involve cognitive processes resulting

in innovative concepts tied to intellectual capacity. Proficient managers use various modes of thinking in task execution. Researchers have studied managers' use of different types of thinking during problem-solving (Kumar et al. 2021). The current study explores 16 HoM for problem-solving, a novel concept in management sciences.

Habits of Mind

The 16 HoM find their roots in education. Gauging managers' thinking skills regarding these habits might enhance the translation of findings into training and learning directives. Using these HoM effectively necessitates various skills, predispositions, and previous encounters. This allows individuals to discern patterns, acknowledge alterations in their surroundings, and carry out suitable actions in response to the specific demands of each situation (Costa & Kallick 2000). The following section describes each habit of mind, states its relevance to the current study and alludes to relevant empirical studies.

(1) *Persisting*: Specific issues take time to solve, and sometimes all solutions fail. Many people lack the mental strength to persist in solving complex problems. Only effective individuals keep trying different solutions and strategies for uncertain problems. Negative stimuli like ambiguity and failure can improve cognitive persistence (Baas et al. 2013). (2) *Managing Impulsivity*: Individuals sometimes rush to judge without fully understanding the consequences of their actions. Some people quickly dismiss certain ideas while praising others excessively. Skilled problem solvers approach challenges intentionally by considering all options and consequences beforehand (Vazquez 2020). Managers should know the difference between impulsivity and spontaneity. Spontaneity can lead to creative thinking, triggering a creative state of mind (Kipper et al. 2010). (3) *Listening to Others – with Understanding and Empathy*: Some individuals focus too much on crafting their responses, neglecting genuine attentiveness. Commitment to others' thoughts decreases, leading to interjection, derision, and undermining. In contrast, active listeners are fully engaged, aiming for a positive outcome. They pay close attention to others' ideas and non-verbal cues (Costa & Kallick 2000). In addition, effective listening boosts creativity by shaping thought processes and aiding decision-making. Skilled listeners are open to learning by letting go of control and acknowledging they have more to learn (Castro et al. 2018). (4) *Thinking Flexibly*: People often struggle with considering different perspectives and handling unfamiliar situations. They find it hard to understand others' problem-solving methods and preferences. Influential thinkers learn from mistakes and are open to various approaches. They value both broad and narrow thinking and know when to use each. Flexible managers with diverse problem-solving methods can devise many solutions and anticipate different results (Costa & Kallick 2000). Baas et al. (2013) posit that personality traits such as receptiveness to experience, extraversion, constructive affectivity, and power motivation are innately linked to cognitive flexibility, which enhances creative thinking.

(5) *Metacognition*: Self-awareness and the ability to reflect are crucial for metacognition. Not everyone can effectively create and evaluate strategies when facing challenges. Intelligent individuals excel at planning and assessing their thinking and actions. Problem-solvers must intentionally plan, monitor, and reflect on their cognitive processes. (6) *Striving for Accuracy and Precision*: Many people rush to solve immediate issues instead of investigating the root cause. Effective managers aim for accuracy by analyzing past performances and making improvements for future success (Vazquez 2020). (7) *Questioning and Posing Problems*: Some individuals may lack inquisitiveness and the capacity to pose appropriate inquiries, which, once addressed, will serve as a bridge between the knowledge they possess and the knowledge necessary to solve the challenges they confront (Costa & Kallick 2000). Skilled problem-solvers naturally inquire and improve their approaches. They easily recognize gaps in their knowledge and work on filling them. This helps them form questions and strategies for desired outcomes. Regular questioning boosts creative and critical thinking in unique problem scenarios (Baas et al. 2013). (8) *Applying Past Knowledge to New Situations*: Incompetent people struggle to see similarities between new situations and past experiences, often due to anxiety from previous failures. Recognizing connections between current tasks

and past successes boosts cognitive effectiveness, leading to better problem-solving methods and solutions. Hagtvedt et al. (2019) coin the term, idea of linking, where past solutions are transformed into new ideas for effective problem-solving.

(9) *Thinking and Communicating with Clarity and Precision*: People sometimes use ambiguous language. This can lead to unproductive thinking. Effective managers use clear language to express precise thoughts (Vazquez 2020). Managers who excel in communication make informed decisions and spark creativity in subordinates (Kupritz & Cowell 2011). (10) *Gathering Data Through All Senses*: Some people struggle to engage with challenges fully. They may lack problem-solving skills and prefer listening over actively participating in team problem-solving. Savvy managers utilize all their senses to be aware of their environment and gather important information from it. (11) *Creating, Imagining, and Innovating*: Creativity is often considered innate, with some believing certain individuals are born creative while others see themselves as not creative. However, everyone can cultivate new and innovative ideas, solutions, and products (Proctor 2019). Studies have shown that people can be trained and encouraged to enhance their creativity. Creative managers envision different scenarios, starting from the end goal and working backwards to plan actions and achieve objectives (Costa & Kallick 2000). (12) *Responding with Wonderment and Awe*: Some people dislike using thinking skills in complex tasks. They avoid problems needing extra learning. Managers should embrace challenging situations for innovative ideas. Managers who react with child-like enthusiasm are more cable problem-solvers.

(13) *Taking Responsible Risks*: Outstanding managers trust their judgment and view risk-taking as an integral part of business. Despite unpredictable outcomes, they rely on experiences and intuition to manage risks. Research suggests that the ability to take informed risks is specific to certain fields, and creativity is associated with taking social risks (Tyagi et al. 2017). (14) *Finding Humor*: Managers with a creative mindset, they thrive by appreciating the absurd and the humorous, including irony and satire, and can laugh at situations and themselves (Vazquez 2020). Earlier research has shown a strong correlation between a person's sense of humor and creativity (Ziv 1976). (15) *Thinking Interdependently*: Effective managers are open to others' ideas and support practical solutions. They recognize their limitations and the importance of teamwork and can defend their ideas while considering others' viewpoints (Lowndes & Squires 2012). (16) *Learning Continuously*: Effective managers excel in considering others' ideas and advocating for their own practicality. They are aware of their limitations and recognize the necessity of collaboration. Additionally, they are skilled in defending their concepts and approaches while assessing others' ideas (Hagtvedt et al. 2019).

The 16 HoM is a viable thinking model for effective problem-solving in businesses. However, the 16 HoM were initially developed for the educational domain. The sources above demonstrate their usefulness in various settings. Some sources individually vindicate the use of certain HoM in business management. However, a research gap exists in the comprehensive assessment of Costa and Kallick's thinking model in management spheres. Bridging this gap requires an exploration of the HoM with managers who are likely to use it during the creative problem-solving (CPS) process. Thus, we formulate the following research questions to explore their relevance in management sciences empirically: (1) Are the 16 habits of mind relevant as thinking skills to managers? (2) Which habits of mind are the most important during problem-solving?

Methodology

We followed an exploratory, qualitative research design to conduct this study and collect data. The study followed a descriptive qualitative approach (Sandelowski 2000) with overtones of phenomenology (Merriam & Tisdell 2016) to collect data through semi-structured interviews. We believe that the managers who participated in this study are the eminent authority on the subject matter. We sought to amplify their voices in their lived experience of the Dunning-Kruger Effect (DKE) phenomenon (an illusory superiority cognitive bias) and utilization of the 16 HoM. Our study population is South African managers

in the agricultural industry. The sample frame consisted of selected middle managers in five major agricultural businesses. These businesses were selected based on the number of employees (ranging between 200 and 4 500) and revenue (ranging between R1.48b and R11.88b) during the empirical portion of this study. We used non-probability, convenience and judgement sampling to select middle managers as they are more likely to be in contact with colleagues (other middle managers), subordinates (lower-level managers), and superiors (top managers) (Engle et al. 2017).

We identified 21 interviewees and took notes during interviews for analysis. Reflective notes were made after each interview to compare responses. We realized saturation after 18 interviews and conducted two more for confirmation (Daniel & Harland 2018). The participants were thanked for their contribution. The 21st sent a written response. Generic qualitative analysis steps were used. Table 1 exhibits the sample characteristics.

Table 1. Sample Characteristics

Participant	Gender	Province	Mgmt. Exp. (Yr)	Functional area
1	Male	North-West	5	Financial department
2	Male	Gauteng	2	Operations department
3	Female	North-West	10	Financial department
4	Male	W. Cape	2	Financial department
5	Female	North-West	2	Human resources department
6	Male	North-West	18	Marketing department
7	Male	North-West	18	Executive – Managing director
8	Male	North-West	6	Operations department
9	Male	North-West	26	Operations department
10	Female	W. Cape	15	Human resources department
11	Male	W. Cape	16	Executive – Regional manager
12	Male	Gauteng	25	Operations department
13	Male	Free State	25	Operations department
14	Male	North-West	18	Financial department
15	Female	Gauteng	18	Executive – General manager
16	Male	North-West	15	IT Dept. & Executive – MD
17	Male	Free State	18	Human resources department
18	Male	Free State	12	Operations department
19	Female	Free State	14	Marketing department
20	Female	Free State	8	Human resources department
21	Male	North-West	19	Executive - HOD - Finance

Source: the authors

The majority (71%) of our interviewees were males within the operations department (six managers), with mostly between 16 and 20 years of managerial experience (six participants) and residing in the North West Province (48%) of South Africa. The findings presented in this article gain additional credence by emphasizing the perceptions of highly experienced managers. Moreover, although not exhaustive, the participating managers cover a significant geographical representation of South Africa. Non-response bias was minimized by deliberately including a diverse range of demographic factors within the sample (Si et al. 2023), encompassing variables such as gender, age, location, and managerial experience.

Managers' perception of the phenomena was captured using nine open-ended questions. Before the interview, participants were given the questions, a concise explanation of the DKE, and abbreviated descriptions of the 16 HoM. The interview guide consisted of four sections, starting with an introduction section that expressed our gratitude for the participant's willingness to participate in our study and

reminded them of its objectives. The following section gathered managers' perceptions of the DKE, while the final section collected their views on thinking skills regarding the 16 HoM. The guide concluded by thanking the participants once again and providing them with an opportunity for closing remarks or questions.

Analysis

We used a reputable service provider that signed a non-disclosure agreement before transcribing interviews to increase the study's rigor. Transcripts were checked for accuracy; we then applied initial coding, peer-assessed by academics familiar with the topic. ATLAS.ti 23 was used for the final content analysis, which was also peer-assessed. We used it initially to quantify qualitative data (Nosenko 2022). The resulting Table 2 shows the most frequently mentioned habit of mind while accounting for specific indicators of the habits managers deem the most crucial for CPS in their businesses. This was done to mitigate potential shortcomings of interview-based research projects (Nunkoosing 2005). We elected to use ATLAS.ti instead of alternatives because it allows for streamlined coding, organizing, and analyzing complex qualitative data with its robust tools for identifying patterns and themes. Its user-friendly interface and flexible coding options enabled us to manage and analyze various data sources. Despite some drawbacks like a steep learning curve and potential over-coding risks, the benefits of ATLAS.ti in managing complex datasets and supporting rigorous analysis techniques outweighed these concerns (Paulus & Lester 2016). Interactions between categories were summarized in ATLAS.ti 23 for a conceptual framework, presented later. Table 2 reports the ranking of the items in Habits of Mind. This paper presents the top five HoMs by providing the six (nine due to deadlocks) highest-ranked HoMs. To determine the rankings presented in Table 2 below, we considered the frequency of the particular HoM being mentioned in managers' list of the top five HoM that lead to CPS (F). We also highlighted the specific HoM which the participating managers emphasized as the most important habit in relation to CPS, by multiplying each mention by 2.

Table 2. Top Habits of Mind for Problem-solving

Habit of Mind	Description	F	Rating CPS ^a	Score ^b	Rank
Persisting (#1)	The ability to stick to a task until it is done	9	7*2=14	23	1 st
Learning (#16)	New learning can improve the business	10	3*2=6	16	2 nd
Listening (#3)	Ability to listen ideas and understand views	14	1*2=2	16	2 nd
Knowledge (#8)	The ability to use past knowledge and apply	9	3*2=6	15	3 rd
Thinking (#15)	Able to think interdependently	6	3*2=6	12	4 th
Questioning (#7)	Asking relevant questions to bridge gaps	10	1*2=2	12	4 th
Flexibility (#4)	Generating options and perspectives	12	0*2=0	12	4 th
Impulsivity (#2)	Able to manage impulses to understand	9	1*2=2	11	5 th
Accuracy (#6)	Striving for accuracy in actions and solutions	5	2*2=4	9	6 th

F Frequency of mentions in rankings

^a Rating of the HoM in relation to CPS

^b $F + \text{Rating CPS} = \text{Score}$

Source: the authors

Measures were taken for credibility, reliability, and trustworthiness (Lincoln & Guba 1985). Interviews took place where the phenomenon was studied. Extensive field notes showed prolonged engagement. Member checking involved 21 managers reviewing study findings. The study's transferability was enhanced by reaching saturation and involving different demographic groups. Dependability was ensured through two stages of peer examination. Noteworthy documentation and correspondence were kept for confirmability (Daniel & Harland 2018).

Results and Discussion

Our findings suggest that the 16 HoM is crucial in facilitating effective problem-solving in agricultural industries, particularly in developing markets where managers encounter distinct challenges and opportunities. An in-depth analysis of the managers' rankings provides insights into which habits are essential for problem-solving and their implications for managerial success.

Figure 1 summarizes our study's findings. The CPS competency is depicted in the center of the conceptual framework. Outside of the center are the most influential HoM. The most important HoM are depicted nearest to CPS. As the most critical HoM, persistence is considered an anchoring HoM for the other four important HoM. The other HoM that have some impact on CPS are shown in the outer square of the figure.

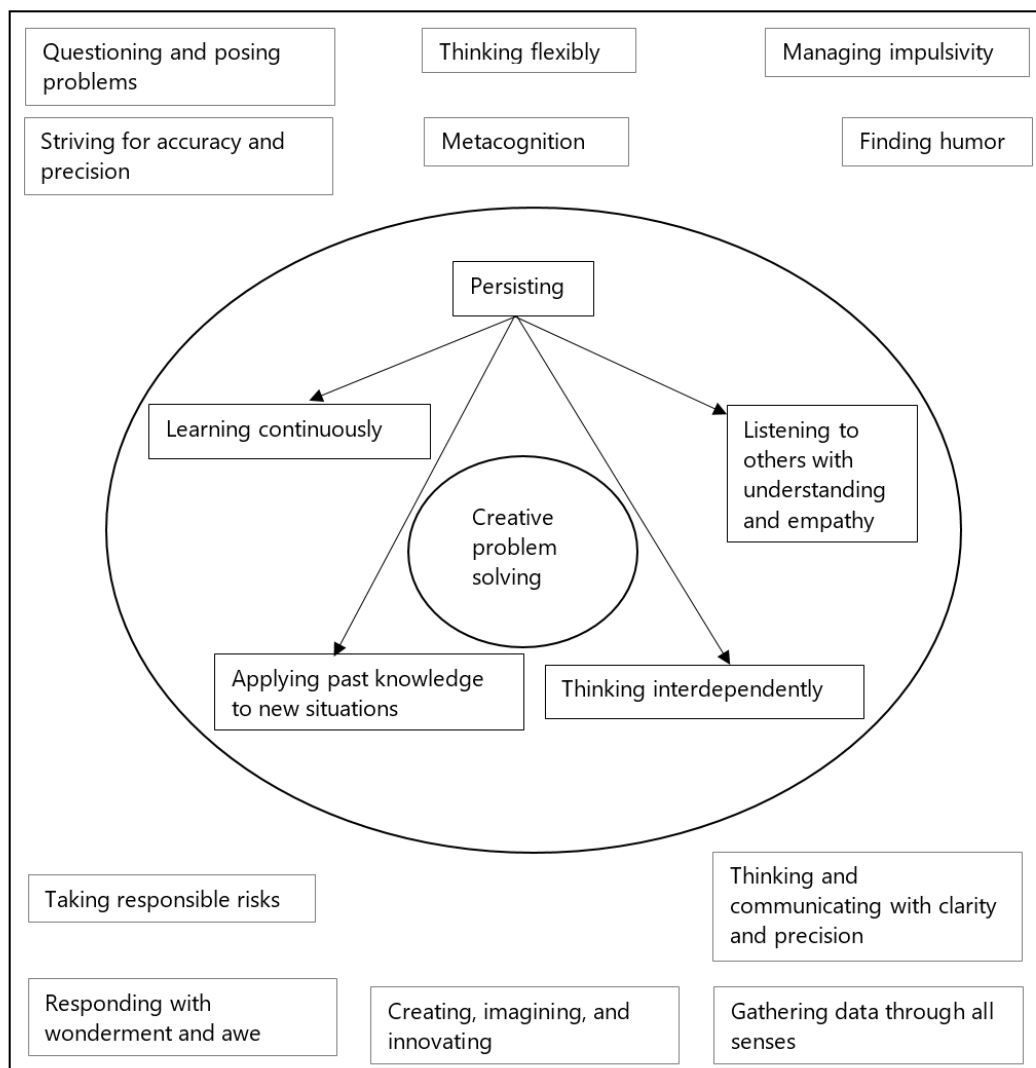


Figure 1. Summary of Crucial HoM During CPS

Source: the authors

Persistence, the Most Crucial HoM: We found that even though persevering through challenging tasks until their completion might not have made as many appearances on managers' ranking lists as learning

continuously did, it outranks #16 due to it being selected as the most critical habit of mind for problem-solving more frequently. Managers appreciate persistence as it embodies the grit and resilience required to tackle elaborate and uncertain business issues (Costa & Kallick 2000). This highlights the significance of determination and perseverance in a rapidly evolving business landscape where managers must navigate unpredictable circumstances. The capability to endure in the face of hardship assists in problem-solving and corresponds with the wider principle of resilience and dedication to personal and professional progress. Persistent managers focus on long-term objectives despite setbacks and challenges (Bass et al. 2013). The capability to endure in the face of hardship assists in problem-solving and corresponds with the wider principle of resilience and dedication to personal and professional progress. Managers who exhibit persistence typically focus on long-term objectives, even in the presence of setbacks or challenges.

Significance of Learning Continuously: Similar to the previous HoM, learning continuously had fewer mentions on overall ranking lists, yet it was more frequently considered crucial for problem-solvers than #3 (Listening to others with understanding and empathy). This habit is closely linked to personal growth and professional development, which are imperative for business success in emerging markets. This habit underscores the necessity of ongoing learning and adaptability in a dynamic business environment. Managers who accept continuous learning are more likely to stay informed of industry trends, technological advancements, and innovative practices (Hagtvedt et al. 2019). Continuous learning is also related to a growth mindset, empowering managers to address problem-solving openly and be willing to explore new concepts. It promotes adaptability, allowing managers to modify their strategies and approaches as circumstances evolve (Costa & Kallick 2000). This habit is desirable in agricultural enterprises, where external factors such as weather conditions, market fluctuations, and regulatory changes can significantly impact operations. The emphasis on habits such as persisting and learning continuously suggests an underlying recognition of challenges in emerging markets' long-term and evolving nature. This underscores the importance of resilience and a commitment to personal and professional growth as key drivers of business success in these contexts (Aithal & Pradhan 2022).

The Crucial Role of Empathic Listening, Cooperation and Flexible Approaches to Thought: Listening to others with understanding and empathy is highly regarded since it is ubiquitous in managers' ranking lists. The role of listening in business can be perplexing. Although some studies continue to highlight the importance of managers' ability to listen with comprehension, in a quantitative assessment, it has also been found to be the skill managers struggle with the most (Longweni & Kroon 2018). The frequent appearance of this habit in ranking lists underscores the importance of empathy in business contexts. Managers who actively listen and empathize with their colleagues and subordinates are better positioned to cultivate collaborative relationships and inclusive decision-making processes.

Applying past knowledge to new situations and thinking interdependently are also highly regarded within the problem-solving process, as gaining diverse points of view is valuable when managers face heuristic problems (Stojanov 2022). Demonstrating and fostering interdependent thinking is essential to facilitate a collaborative resolution strategy. Managers who embrace this can harness their teams' strengths and stimulate innovative solutions by integrating diverse ideas and perspectives (Lowndes & Squires 2012). The significance of listening with empathy and thinking interdependently reflects a broader trend toward collaborative and inclusive management styles. This trend is particularly relevant in emerging markets, where diverse perspectives and collective efforts are crucial for overcoming unique challenges and leveraging these markets' opportunities (Longweni & Mdaka 2023).

Questioning and posing problems, thinking flexibly, and managing impulsivity are also notable HoM. These skills are essential for identifying, positioning and determining the cause of the most relevant issues (Mobbs et al. 2010). Managers who exhibit this habit can adjust to evolving circumstances, explore different approaches, and evaluate various solutions. By managing impulsivity, managers ensure a deliberate and thoughtful decision-making process, thus averting hasty judgments that may lead to unfavorable outcomes (Baas et al. 2013). Having a desire for correctness is in the sixth position of our

rankings based on managers' perceptions. Further, through content analysis, we found that all 16 HoM are relevant to problem-solving in a business context, with 14 HoM getting at least two mentions in managers' ranking of the most important HoM. Notably, gathering data through all senses and responding with wonderment and awe were the only HoMs to receive only one mention in each participant's rankings. The findings presented in this study gain additional credence by including the perceptions of highly experienced managers (an average of 13 years). Moreover, although not exhaustive, the participating managers cover a significant geographical portion of South Africa.

Regarding our first research question, are the 16 habits of mind relevant to managers' thinking skills? We find an affirmative answer. Among the 21 participating managers, all 16 HoM were mentioned at least once during our interviews. We considered this to mean that none of the 16 habits of mind can be viewed as irrelevant, which means that all 16 HoM contribute to CPS in business settings. The second research question is about which habits of mind are the most important during problem-solving. We find that the five most important HoMs for effective business problem-solving were persisting, learning continuously, listening to others with understanding and empathy, applying past knowledge to new situations, and thinking interdependently.

Implications of the Study

Our findings suggest managers should broaden their thinking skills, applying the 16 HoM to improve problem-solving and innovation. They must also constantly update their knowledge and skills to adapt to changing industry trends and technologies. Organizations that seek to aid this endeavor must invest in developing these habits among managers through targeted training. Businesses should also promote a persistent listening and empathy culture, which may lead to collaborative and inclusive problem-solving. Persistence in the research for knowledge is also likely to enhance managers' ability to apply their skills in various roles and circumstances. Because our findings are qualitative, future scholars are advised to conduct further research on the topic of the 16 HoM by following a quantitative design. A structural equation model may provide further insight into the HoM and other factors that enhance and hinder CPS in business. The current study explores 16 HoM for problem-solving, a novel concept in management sciences.

Conclusion

We found that persisting, learning continuously, listening to others with understanding and empathy, applying past knowledge to new situations, and thinking interdependently are the essential HoM for CPS in businesses. We conclude that the essence of persistence lies in its capacity to foster resilience, enabling managers to maintain their efforts and focus under challenging conditions, which in turn enhances the other most crucial HoM. Persistence enhances the habit of continuous learning by encouraging managers to remain committed to their developmental journeys, even when progress seems slow or learning becomes challenging. This commitment ensures that learning is not abandoned when immediate results are not evident, fostering a deeper, more comprehensive understanding over time. As managers persist in their tasks, they encounter diverse problems that necessitate new skills and knowledge, thus reinforcing the need for continuous learning. Similarly, the insights gained through ongoing learning can provide strategies and knowledge that managers can draw, enhancing their ability to persist through new and heuristic challenges. Further, persistence in listening, especially in complex and unfamiliar situations, can lead to greater understanding and more effective communications. It encourages managers to remain engaged in communication processes, even when disengaging might be easier, thereby deepening relationships and fostering a supportive team environment. Persistent efforts to understand others' viewpoints can break down barriers and lead to more empathetic interactions. This can be particularly important in high-stress environments where initial attempts at understanding may fail.

Persistence also encourages managers to continually apply their accumulated knowledge to new challenges, refining their ability to leverage past experiences effectively. This application often requires sustained effort, as the relevance of past experiences to new situations may not be immediately apparent. As managers persist in applying what they have learned, they also develop a sharper acumen for identifying which past lessons are most applicable to current problems, enhancing their problem-solving efficiency and effectiveness. Collaborative problem-solving requires persistence, particularly in maintaining open lines of communication and mutual respect among team members over time. Persistent efforts in fostering teamwork and collaboration can lead to more innovative and effective solutions. By continuously striving to engage and incorporate diverse perspectives, skilled managers can cultivate a more inclusive and dynamic approach to problem-solving. Persistence ensures these collaborative efforts are maintained, even when immediate consensus or solutions are elusive.

Our study's findings contribute to an understanding of managerial cognition and its impact on problem-solving within the agricultural industry of emerging markets. The prioritization of certain HoM over others points to a nuanced repertoire of thinking skills that successful managers draw upon to navigate the uncertainties and opportunities characteristic of these environments. This highlights the need for targeted development programs that enhance these cognitive strategies, thereby equipping managers with the tools necessary for innovation and adaptability. The most significant HoM formed a promising framework for improving decision-making and creativity in a complex environment. The 16 HoM are relatively comprehensive. However, a 17th skill, inspired by metacognition and intended to deal with stumbling blocks and cognitive bias, could be a desirable addition.

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BOOK REVIEW

Book

Accounting for cultural heritage management: resilience, sustainability, and accountability

Magliacani M & Toscano V

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This book represents a seminal contribution to the interdisciplinary discourse surrounding the preservation and management of cultural heritage. It is meticulously crafted and navigates the complex intersection of accounting principles and cultural heritage stewardship, offering insights into strategies to foster resilience, sustainability, and accountability within cultural organizations. This book is a theoretical exploration and an excellent resource that empowers individuals, research scholars, cultural heritage managers, accounting practitioners, and policymakers with comprehensive and well-articulated insights and practical guidance in Cultural Heritage Management. The authors have meticulously ensured that the content remains current and pertinent to recent developments, making it an exceptional resource for the readers.

This scholarly work is organized into six comprehensive chapters, each dedicated to unravelling distinct facets of cultural heritage management through an accounting lens. By blending theoretical insights with empirical evidence and real-world case studies, they deliver a cogent narrative that elucidates the multifaceted challenges and opportunities inherent in safeguarding and promoting cultural heritage in contemporary society. The book's prelude extends heartfelt acknowledgments to the myriad contributors and stakeholders who have contributed to its inception, underscoring the collaborative ethos that underpins its creation. From reviewers to curators and administrative personnel within cultural institutions, the authors express gratitude to all those who have lent their expertise and support to this endeavour, reflecting the inclusive spirit of the cultural heritage community and making the audience feel a part of this collaborative effort.

The book's first part lays the groundwork for the ensuing discussions by articulating the overarching objectives and methodological framework that inform the research. Through a blend of qualitative and quantitative approaches, the authors explore cultural heritage management's managerial and accounting dimensions, framing their analysis within the broader context of resilience, sustainability, and accountability. The second part is a foundational exposition of the managerial features inherent in cultural organizations. From delineating the community of people and organizational structures to unpacking the value co-creation processes within cultural ecosystems, this section offers a nuanced understanding of the complexities of managing cultural assets. Real-world case studies, such as the Civic Museums of Pavia in Lombardy, Italy, provide concrete illustrations of accounting principles applied in cultural contexts.

Building upon this foundation, part three delves into the strategic dimensions of cultural heritage management. Through sections dedicated to strategic thinking, planning, budgeting, and accounting for control, the authors illuminate the pivotal role of accounting techniques in aligning organizational objectives with strategic imperatives. This section equips cultural managers with practical tools for effective decision-making and performance evaluation by elucidating concepts such as the balanced scorecard and cost accounting.

Part four represents a thematic pivot towards exploring the intersections between cultural heritage preservation and sustainable development agendas. Drawing upon European and Italian guidelines, as well as UNESCO's Culture 2030 indicators, the authors advocate for a holistic approach to cultural sustainability that integrates environmental, social, and economic considerations. Case studies examining the impact of cultural initiatives on European capital cities underscore the transformative potential of cultural heritage in fostering sustainable urban development, inspiring the audience with the possibilities of cultural heritage. In the next part, the authors grapple with the concept of resilience and its relevance to cultural heritage stewardship. Through an exploration of digital technologies, lessons from the COVID-19 pandemic and case studies from Italian universities' museums and corporate archives, they elucidate strategies for building resilience in the face of external shocks and disruptions. This part underscores the adaptive capacity of cultural organizations and the role of accounting practices in facilitating their resilience-building efforts.

The book's culminating part synthesizes the findings into a cohesive conceptual model. By articulating the interplay between resilience, sustainability, and accountability within the cultural heritage management paradigm, they offer a roadmap for future research and practice. This concluding section encapsulates the book's overarching thesis: that accounting principles can catalyze fostering resilience, sustainability, and accountability within cultural organizations.

The book is a seminal work bridging the gap between accounting theory and cultural heritage practice. Through its rigorous analysis, empirical insights, and interdisciplinary approach, the book offers a holistic understanding of the challenges and opportunities facing cultural heritage managers in the 21st century. As cultural heritage continues to evolve in response to global trends and societal shifts, this timely volume is an invaluable resource for scholars, practitioners, and policymakers, charting a course toward a more resilient, sustainable, and accountable future for cultural heritage management.

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