



# **INSIGHTS FROM EMERGING MARKETS**

MSMEs and Digital Tool Use  
amidst the COVID-19 Pandemic

THE PHILIPPINES COUNTRY BRIEF

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Shaping a more livable world.

November 2021

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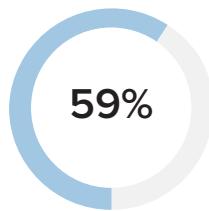
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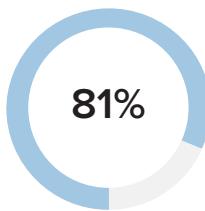
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# EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

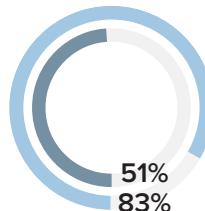
## KEY FINDINGS



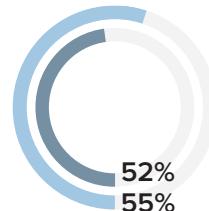
A majority (59 percent) of surveyed micro, small, and medium enterprises (MSMEs) reported using digital tools for business purposes in the past year during COVID-19.



Online respondents looked favorably on digital tool use during the pandemic: a large majority (81 percent) of surveyed online MSMEs reported that digital tools were important or essential to keeping their business running during COVID-19.



Enterprises recognized the importance of new digital tools during COVID-19: surveyed online MSMEs cited that Facebook apps<sup>i</sup> (83 percent) and mobile banking (51 percent) helped them adapt to the COVID-19 environment.



Social media tools played a role across the spectrum of business functions, with Facebook apps being the most commonly reported digital tools used: more than half of online MSMEs reported recently using Facebook apps for customer-facing business activities, specifically marketing to and communicating with customers (55 percent and 52 percent respectively).

The Philippines is the third largest economy<sup>1</sup> in Southeast Asia, with a large micro, small, and medium enterprise (MSME)<sup>ii</sup> sector underpinning its consistent growth until the COVID-19-induced economic slowdown in 2020. By allowing some MSMEs to quickly pivot online and maintain their core business functions<sup>2</sup>, digital tools (defined here as internet-based technologies) have become increasingly prominent in the Philippines during the pandemic. A new survey conducted by DAI and Ipsos between June and July 2021<sup>iii</sup> found that a majority (59 percent) of surveyed

MSMEs were online, meaning that they had reported using digital tools for business purposes over the past year during COVID-19. Additionally, a large majority (81 percent) of surveyed online MSMEs reported that digital tools were important or essential to keeping their business running during COVID-19.

Enterprises recognized the importance of embracing new digital tools during COVID-19. Eighty-three percent of surveyed online MSMEs cited that Facebook apps helped them adapt to the COVID-19 environment and

<sup>i</sup> The term “Facebook apps” refers to Facebook, WhatsApp, and Instagram.

<sup>ii</sup> This report uses the term “micro, small, and medium enterprises” (MSMEs) to refer to the businesses surveyed for this research, in line with terminology used by multilateral institutions such as the International Finance Corporation and the United Nations. Although many countries have different official definitions of MSMEs (including the Philippines, where the government of The Philippines officially classifies MSMEs by their total assets) DAI applied a standardized definition for consistency across all survey countries, based on the number of full-time, part-time, or seasonal employees or workers (including the respondent): micro (1 employee), small (2–9 employees), and medium (10–249 employees).

<sup>iii</sup> This survey collected evidence directly from 1,000 MSME owners and top-level managers in the Philippines to understand how MSMEs have used digital tools to carry out business activities, how their digital tool use changed during the COVID-19 pandemic, and the challenges both offline and online MSMEs face in using digital tools.

51 percent reported the same about mobile banking.<sup>iv</sup> Online MSMEs reported using Facebook apps across the spectrum of business activities, such as: marketing to customers (55 percent), communicating with customers (52 percent), and conducting customer research (44 percent).

Survey results show that connectivity is a key barrier affecting MSME digital tool use. For online and offline MSMEs alike, poor or no internet connectivity was the most frequently reported difficulty that they faced in using digital tools (61 percent and 19 percent respectively). However, additional difficulties were also reported amongst offline MSMEs - the perceived lack of relevance for digital tools (16 percent) and the high costs of digital tools (14 percent). Additionally, both online and offline MSMEs were interested in learning more about digital tools to enhance their customer-facing work. Seventy-six percent of online MSMEs and 47 percent of offline MSMEs reported that they were interested in learning more about using digital tools to find new customers; 71 percent of online MSMEs and 42 percent of offline MSMEs reported the same about

communicating with customers, as did 70 percent of online MSMEs and 45 percent of offline MSMEs about marketing their business. This finding reinforces the importance of working directly with MSMEs to build their digital skills on topics that they are most interested in and that - by extension - have the most relevance to their work.

With concentrated efforts by policymakers and other stakeholders to address internet connectivity and support targeted interventions to upskill MSMEs in using digital tools, the Philippines' MSME sector will be well positioned to integrate and harness the power of digital tools to improve business outcomes and build resiliency for future economic shocks. These important efforts will ensure that entrepreneurs and business owners across the MSME sector can equitably access and use digital tools to support key business functions and enable the Philippines to accelerate its inclusive economic growth outcomes aligned to the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), a collection of 17 interlinked global development goals agreed to by United Nations Member States in 2015.

## METHODOLOGY OVERVIEW

This research was conducted as part of a broader cross-national study of MSME digital tool usage across emerging markets in South America, South Asia, and Southeast Asia. This brief provides an overview of findings from face-to-face surveys that Ipsos conducted with 1,000 MSMEs in the Philippines via computer-assisted personal interviewing (CAPI) from June 3 - July 23, 2021. Eligibility for the survey was restricted to owners or top-level managers of businesses with 249 or fewer employees operating from a storefront, booth, or with signage. As such, home-based businesses and other businesses without obvious storefronts, booths, and/or signage were not captured in the sample. Official statistics from the Philippine Bureau of Domestic Trade Promotion and the Philippine Statistics Authority List of Establishments (2019), as well as the Sourcing Directory from Tradeline Philippines (supplier and buyer databases), Go Lokal Directory of Suppliers (lists of micro, small and medium-sized businesses), and the List of Establishments were used to set targets for the number of completed surveys by categories of business size, as defined by the number of employees: micro (one employee), small (2-9 employees), and medium (10-249 employees) businesses.<sup>v</sup> A random walk method was implemented to conduct interviews in urban, suburban, and rural areas in the Philippines' three island groups, capturing businesses across key segments including subnational geography, owner gender, and business sector. Due to the limited geographic scope of the survey, findings and results reported here are not nationally representative of the Philippines MSME sector. The final survey results presented in this brief were weighted based on strata and differences in response rates by urban-rural geography and gender of respondent within each strata. A complete explanation of the sample design and research methodology is found in [Appendix I](#).

<sup>iv</sup> Mobile banking as used in this report refers to both mobile banking and digital payments

<sup>v</sup> Across all business size groupings, employees include the respondent (an owner or top-level manager of the MSME), any full-time employees or workers, and any part-time or seasonal employees or workers

# INTRODUCTION AND BACKGROUND

The Philippines is the third largest economy<sup>3</sup> in Southeast Asia, with a large micro, small, and medium enterprise (MSME)<sup>vi</sup> sector underpinning its consistent growth until the COVID-19-induced economic slowdown in 2020.<sup>4</sup> By allowing some MSMEs to quickly pivot online and maintain their core business functions<sup>5</sup>, digital tools (defined here as internet-based technologies) have become increasingly important to the Philippine's MSME community during the pandemic.

A new survey conducted by DAI and Ipsos between June and July 2021 collected evidence directly from 1,000 MSME owners and top-level managers in the Philippines to understand how MSMEs have used digital tools to carry out business activities, how their digital tool use changed during the COVID-19 pandemic, and the challenges both offline and online MSMEs face in using digital tools. Research findings also delve into differences in digital tool use across key business segments within the Philippines, such as women-owned MSMEs, rural MSMEs, and MSMEs in specific business sectors.

When entrepreneurs across the MSME sector can equitably access and use digital tools in support of key business functions, the Philippines will accelerate its inclusive economic growth outcomes aligned to the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), a collection of 17 interlinked global development goals agreed to by United Nations Member States in 2015.



## How This Research Aligns with the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs)

In 2015, United Nations Member States adopted 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) as a cornerstone of their 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, articulating a shared vision of urgent global priorities for the planet and its people. Recognizing the importance of their urgent call to action, this survey framework and findings tie back to multiple SDGs to inform policy and programs targeting these global goals. After assessing how online and offline MSMEs conduct basic business functions, the survey identified challenges that such MSMEs face in regard to their digital tool usage, or lack thereof. These insights tie to SDG 9: Industry, Innovation, and Infrastructure, which calls for a significant increase in access to information and communications technology and for universal and affordable internet access. The survey also looked at how online MSMEs use digital tools for business purposes; specifically, it explored how their digital tool usage changed during the COVID-19 pandemic. By examining how MSMEs developed their economic resilience through the use of digital tools during the pandemic, this line of inquiry links to SDG 1: No Poverty and SDG 8: Decent Work and Economic Growth. Reporting on the women-owned MSME segment also sheds light on SDG 5: Gender Equality, with women-led enterprises using digital tools to enter the marketplace and contribute to the global economy. Similarly, reporting on the manufacturing and industry sector provides insights on SDG 9: Industry, Innovation, and Infrastructure, and reporting on the agriculture and food production sector aligns to SDG 2: Zero Hunger and SDG 12: Sustainable Production and Consumption. By concluding with suggested interventions for public, private, and development sector actors to address MSME challenges in using digital tools, the spirit of the survey embodies SDG 17: Partnerships for the Goals.

<sup>vi</sup> This report uses the term “micro, small, and medium enterprises” (MSMEs) to refer to the businesses surveyed for this research, in line with terminology used by multilateral institutions such as the International Finance Corporation and the United Nations. Although many countries have different official definitions of MSMEs (including the Philippines, where the government of The Philippines officially classifies MSMEs by their total assets) DAI applied a standardized definition for consistency across all survey countries, based on the number of full-time, part-time, or seasonal employees or workers (including the respondent): micro (1 employee), small (2–9 employees), and medium (10–249 employees).

## COVID-19 AND MSMEs IN THE PHILIPPINES

MSMEs form the economic backbone of the Philippines' economy and were a critical driver of the Philippines' 6.4 percent average growth rate between 2010 and 2019.<sup>6</sup> They make up the vast majority (99.5 percent) of all enterprises, employ 63 percent of the country's labor force, and contribute 40 percent to the Philippines' gross domestic product (GDP).<sup>7</sup>

The Philippines' economy was hit hard by the COVID-19 pandemic, experiencing a 9.6 percent decline in GDP in 2020.<sup>8</sup> As a result, Philippine MSMEs are confronting decreased consumer demand, logistics issues, and employee layoffs, according to a 2020 United Nations Development Programme survey.<sup>9</sup> However, digital tools have played an important role in pandemic recovery. For example, mobile banking<sup>vii</sup> has allowed MSMEs to pivot and continue offering goods and services when in-person shopping was unavailable.<sup>10</sup> Accordingly, two of the largest digital payment services in the Philippines (InstaPay and PESONet) recorded a 276 percent increase in volume and 127 percent increase in value in April 2021 as compared to April 2020, per the Bangko Sentral ng Pilipinas (BSP).<sup>11</sup> The increase in high-frequency, low-value digital payments was driven primarily by transactions between consumers and small merchants.<sup>12</sup>

The pandemic's economic effects are changing consumers' behavior as well, leading to more digital tool usage in their everyday lives. For example, according to Deloitte's July 2020 Digital Tools in Crisis and Recovery online survey, 51 percent of surveyed Filipino consumers reported that their online spending had increased since the COVID-19 outbreak, and 76 percent of consumers surveyed reported that social media helped them to discover new businesses.<sup>13</sup> Furthermore, in Deloitte's March 2021 Dynamic Markets survey, 69 percent of surveyed SMBs in the Philippines that use Facebook apps reported that they were important to remaining operational during the pandemic.<sup>14</sup> Lastly, the Philippine government has leveraged digital tools throughout the pandemic to provide citizens with efficient access to social services. For example, the Department of Social Welfare and Development (DSWD) and Department of Labor and Employment (DLE)<sup>15</sup> began to deliver emergency financial assistance through the digital payment platforms PayMaya and GCash in 2020.<sup>16</sup>

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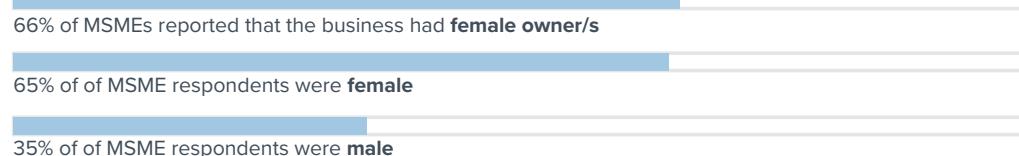
<sup>vii</sup> Mobile banking as used in this brief refers to both mobile banking and digital payments.

## SAMPLE OVERVIEW

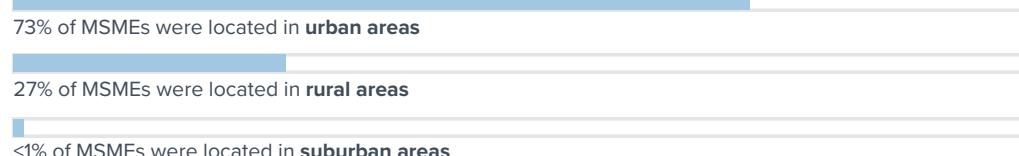
This survey had 1,000 MSME respondents comprised of business owners and top-level managers; the below percentages provide detail on the sample.



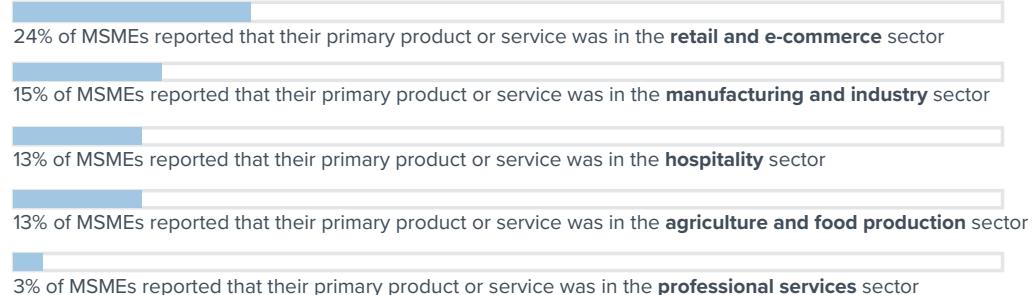
### Gender:



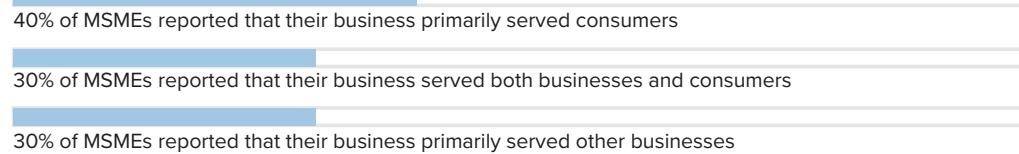
### Urbanicity:



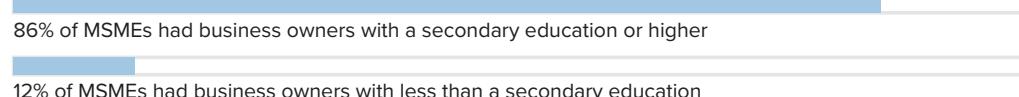
### Primary product or business sector:



### Customer base:



### Business owner education:



### Age of business owners:



### Bank account access:



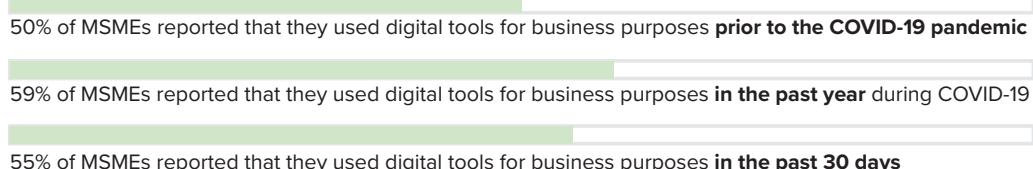
# MSMEs AND DIGITAL TOOL USE: SNAPSHOTS IN TIME

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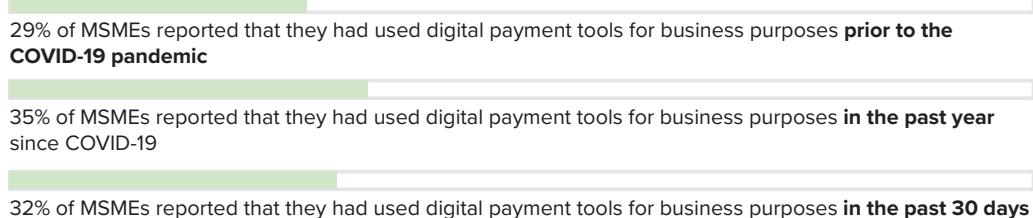
Surveyed MSMEs in the Philippines are increasingly adopting digital tools in their business practices: the reported use of digital tools for business purposes rose in the past year during COVID-19. Both Facebook apps and digital payments were frequently used by surveyed MSMEs, with a mobile-centric approach in which a large majority of MSMEs primarily used their mobile phones to connect to the internet.



**Use of digital tools for business purposes rose in the past year during COVID-19. Usage has declined slightly in the past 30 days but remains higher than pre-COVID-19:**<sup>viiiix</sup>



**Digital payment tools were frequently used by MSMEs during all time periods, with a noticeable increase during COVID-19:**<sup>x</sup>



<sup>viii</sup> Difference between digital tool use in the past 30 days and digital tool use prior to COVID-19 is statistically significant per Chi-squared goodness of fit test, adjusted p < 0.05.

<sup>ix</sup> Not all MSMEs who reported ever using digital tools for business purposes were considered “online” for the purposes of this survey. Surveyed MSMEs that did not report using digital tools in the past year were considered “offline,” regardless of their use of digital tools over a year ago and/or prior to the COVID-19 pandemic. Because this subset of MSMEs no longer actively uses digital tools, they are not considered online MSMEs.

<sup>x</sup> Difference between digital payment use in the past year and digital payment use prior to COVID-19 is statistically significant per Chi-squared goodness of fit test, adjusted p < 0.05.

**Over three-quarters of online MSMEs used mobile phones to connect to the internet:**

83% of online MSMEs reported that they **primarily used a mobile phone to connect to the internet**

14% of online MSMEs reported that they **primarily used a laptop or PC to connect to the internet.**

## KEY INSIGHTS FOR POLICYMAKERS

Survey findings demonstrate that MSMEs in the Philippines are adopting digital tools as a key part of their business practices. A larger percentage of MSMEs reported using digital tools in the past year (59 percent) as compared to prior to the COVID-19 pandemic (50 percent). Digital tools such as Facebook apps and mobile banking have seen the largest increases over time among surveyed MSMEs. In terms of mobile banking, 29 percent of MSMEs reported that they had used digital payment tools for business purposes prior to the COVID-19 pandemic, which increased to 35 percent in the past year during the pandemic, then dipped back down to 32 percent in the past 30 days. This evidence shows that surveyed MSMEs are willing to use digital tools (even if inconsistently), which provides an important opportunity and opening for public, private, and development sector stakeholders to facilitate the full-fledged digital transformation of the Philippines' MSME sector.



Throughout emerging markets, mobile phones are a key way that individuals access the internet.<sup>17</sup> According to the survey results, online MSMEs in the Philippines were no exception. A large majority of online MSMEs (83 percent) reported that they primarily used mobile phones to connect to the internet. With individual mobile phones providing access to the internet, almost all online MSMEs reported managing the way their business used digital tools internally. Given the near ubiquity of mobile phones in the Philippines,<sup>18</sup> public, private, and development sector stakeholders could look for opportunities to enhance MSME use of mobile internet as an accessible 'on ramp' for expanding digital tool use amongst offline MSMEs.

# HOW MSMEs MANAGE KEY BUSINESS ACTIVITIES

Surveyed MSMEs reported using a variety of both online and offline tools to manage business activities. However, offline methods had a strong foothold in MSMEs' operations, suggesting that digital tools augmented and amplified, rather than replaced, more traditional offline methods.

An interview with the owner of MSME Aguilar Healthy Mushroom illustrates how one small business in the Philippines is using digital tools to conduct key business functions, like marketing and communicating with customers. Jerwin noted that Facebook apps have helped him understand market trends and customer preferences, which allows his company to reach more customers. See [page 16](#) for full case study.



**Facebook was a useful tool across multiple business activities for online MSMEs, with the exception of hiring or finding new employees:**

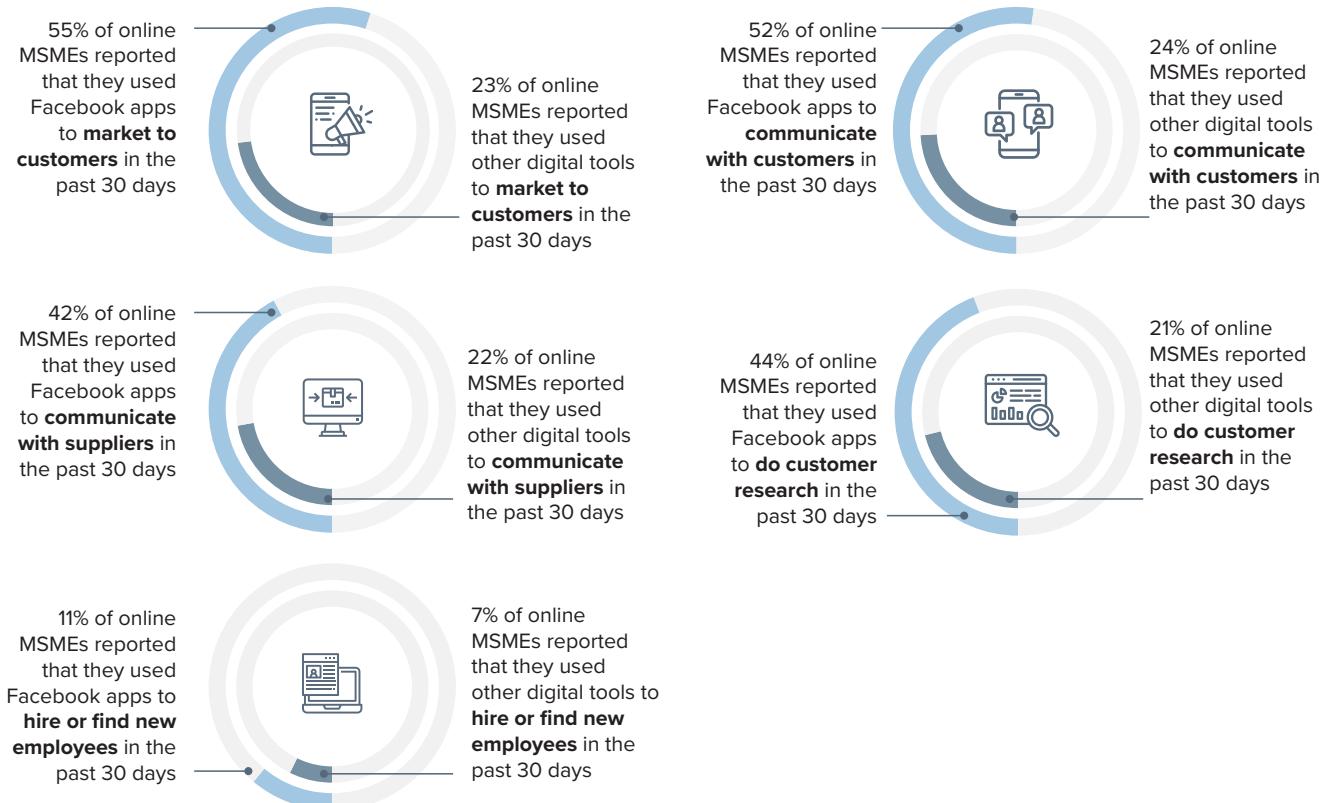




Surveyed MSMEs across all business sectors<sup>xi</sup> increased their usage of digital tools during the COVID-19 pandemic - but each sector adapted using different tools

Across all business sectors, surveyed MSMEs increased their usage of digital tools for business purposes during the pandemic, but - like seen elsewhere in the brief - they have slightly reduced their digital tool use in the past 30 days. This holds true even for the agriculture and food production sector, which is less likely than other sectors to use digital tools.<sup>xii</sup> For example, 36 percent of MSMEs in the agriculture and food production sector reported that they used digital tools for business purposes in the prior to COVID-19, increasing to 46 percent during the pandemic.<sup>xiii</sup> A higher percentage of surveyed MSMEs in all sectors - except manufacturing and industry - reported using digital tools in the past 30 days than prior to the COVID-19 pandemic.<sup>xiii</sup> This finding likely indicates that MSME use of digital tools will remain higher than before the pandemic, though this may not be universally true for all sectors.

#### A higher percentage of online MSMEs reported using Facebook apps than other digital tools to conduct each business activity...

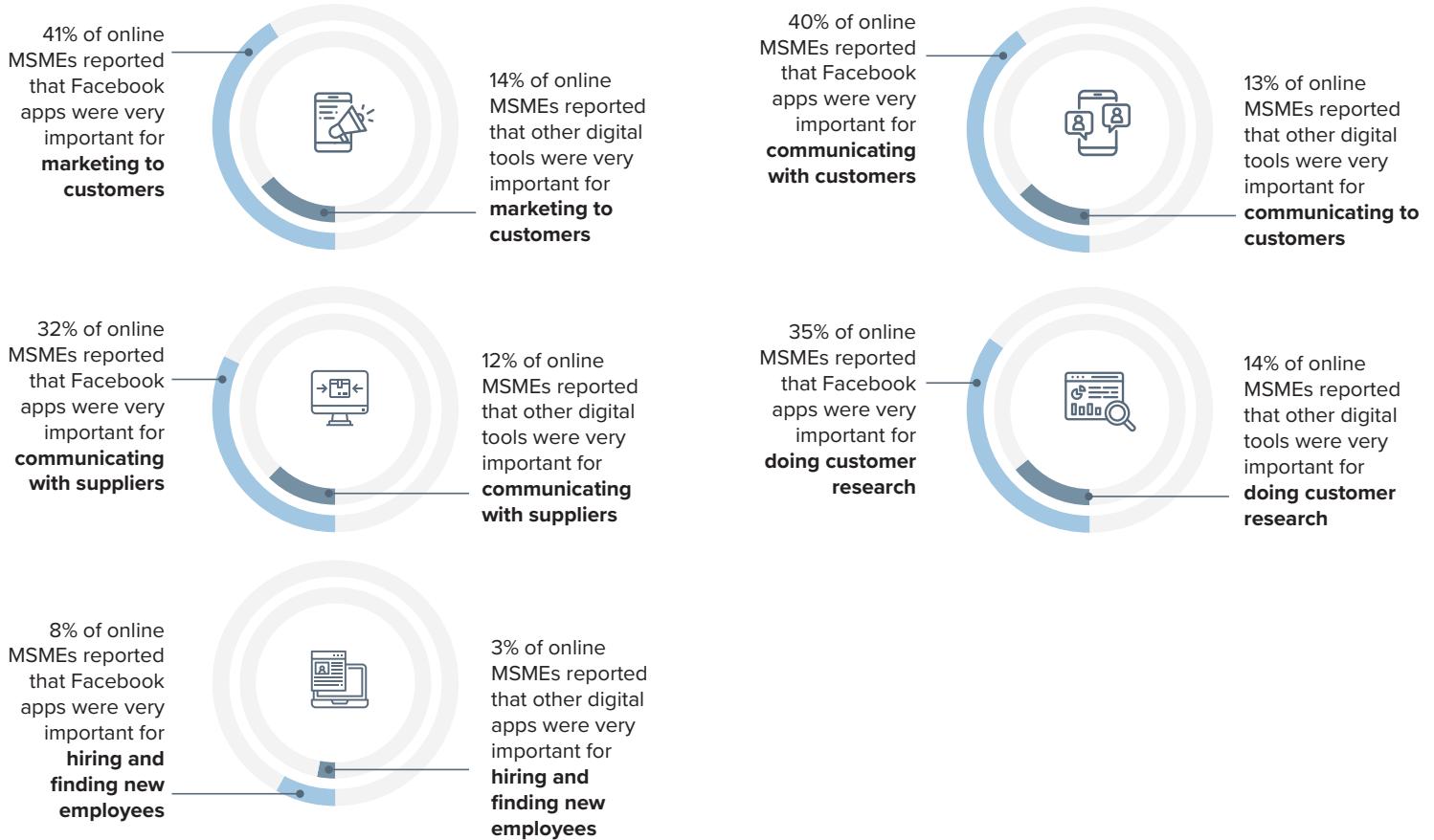


<sup>xi</sup> Surveyed business sectors included agriculture and food production, manufacturing and industry, professional services, hospitality, and retail and e-commerce. Statistics about the hospitality sector are not included here due to sample size limitations.

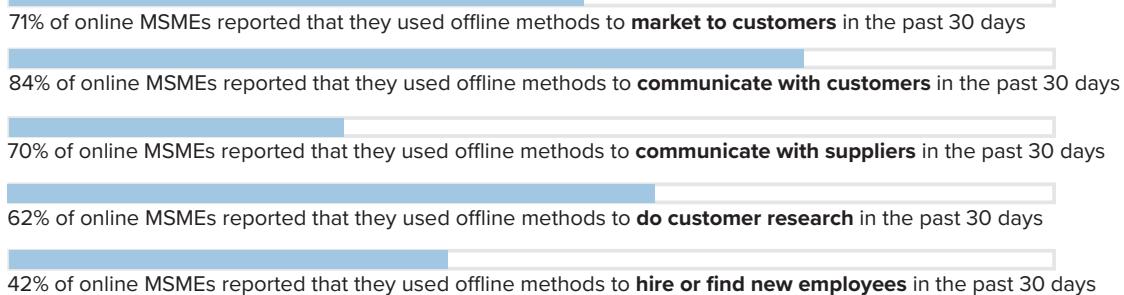
<sup>xii</sup> Among MSMEs in the Agriculture & Food production sector, the difference between digital tool use in the past year and digital payment use prior to COVID-19 is statistically significant per Chi-squared goodness of fit test, adjusted  $p < 0.05$ .

<sup>xiii</sup> Statistically significant per Chi squared test of independence, adjusted  $p < 0.05$ .

**...And a higher percentage of online MSMEs stated that Facebook apps were very important for each business activity than other digital tools...**



**...but offline methods<sup>xiv</sup> were the most popular method for online MSMEs to conduct each business activity:**



<sup>xiv</sup> The term “offline methods” includes face-to-face interaction; paper-based methods such as letters, fliers or billboards; and through a telephone call, SMS, or text message (does not include WhatsApp).

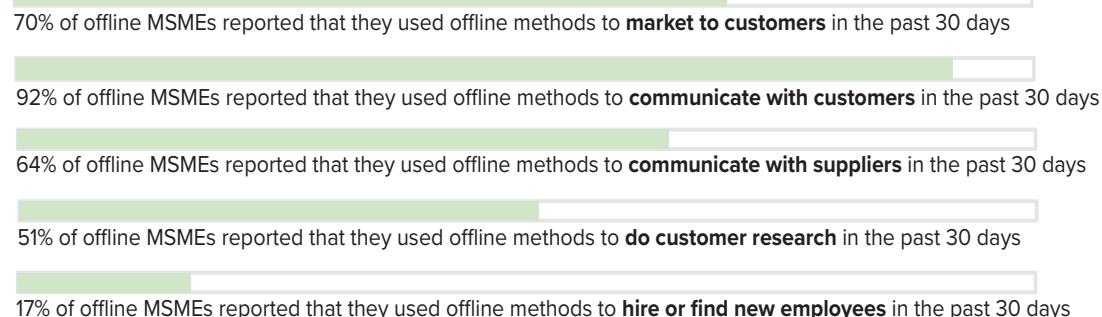


## MSME digital tool use to sell goods and services increased during COVID-19

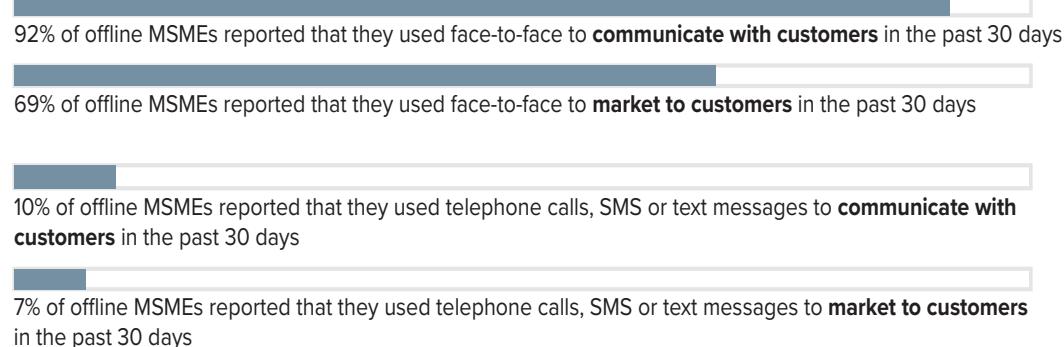
Selling goods and services is a key business activity for all MSMEs. In the survey, 52 percent of MSMEs reported that they have ever used digital tools to sell goods and services. However, survey results showed a considerable increase in the use of digital tools to sell goods and services during the COVID-19 pandemic. More specifically, 37 percent of MSMEs reported that they used digital tools to sell goods and services prior to COVID-19, which then increased to 48 percent during COVID-19.<sup>xv</sup> In terms of specific digital tools used to sell goods and services, 35 percent of MSMEs reported that they used social media prior to COVID-19. This percentage increased to 47 percent during the pandemic.<sup>xvi</sup> However, survey results also showed a recent decrease in digital tool use for selling goods and services. Forty-five percent of online MSMEs reported that they used digital tools to sell goods and services in the past 30 days (including 45 percent who reported using social media for this purpose).<sup>xvii</sup> This recent decrease in digital tool use for selling goods and services may indicate that surveyed MSMEs only temporarily increased their digital tool usage for sales.



### Offline MSMEs reported using offline methods to conduct customer-facing business activities more frequently than for non-customer-facing business activities:



### Offline MSMEs reported using face-to-face interactions to conduct key business activities at a higher rate than other offline interactions, like telephone calls/SMS or paper-based methods:



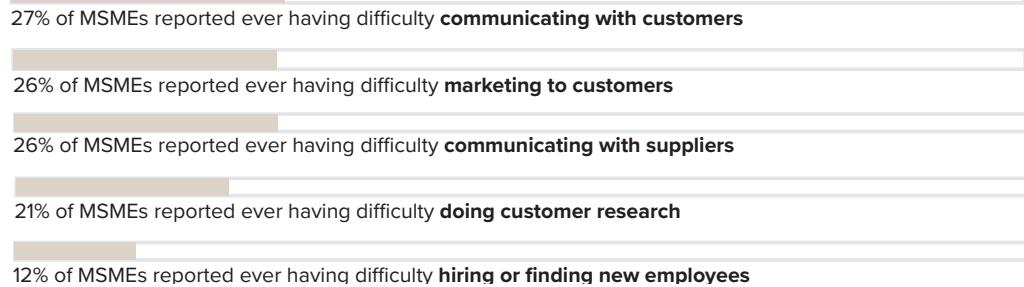
<sup>xv</sup> Difference between use of digital tools to sell goods and services prior to COVID-19 and during COVID-19 is statistically significant per Chi-squared goodness of fit test, adjusted p < 0.05.

<sup>xvi</sup> Difference between use of social media to sell goods and services prior to COVID-19 and during COVID-19 is statistically significant per Chi-squared goodness of fit test, adjusted p < 0.05.

<sup>xvii</sup> Difference between use of digital tools to sell goods and services during COVID-19 and in the past 30 days is not statistically significant per Chi-squared goodness of fit test, adjusted p > 0.05.



**Surveyed MSMEs reported ever having difficulty with customer-facing business activities and other external communications at a higher rate than other back-end business functions:**



## KEY INSIGHTS FOR POLICYMAKERS

According to survey results, Facebook apps were the most frequently reported digital tools that online MSMEs reported using to conduct each business activity. For example, 55 percent of online MSMEs reported that they used Facebook to market to customers in the past 30 days, compared to 23 percent for other digital tools. Accordingly, online MSMEs also reported that Facebook apps were very important for each business activity at a higher rate than for other digital tools. To this end, 41 percent of online MSMEs reported that Facebook apps were very important for marketing to customers, compared to 14 percent of online MSMEs who said the same about other digital tools. These survey findings indicate that Facebook apps were a key digital tool for surveyed MSMEs to run multiple aspects of their businesses. It also points to the importance of public, private, and development sector stakeholders continuing to promote the use of simple and intuitive digital tools among the Philippines' MSME community.



However, survey findings also indicated that surveyed online MSMEs in the Philippines augmented, rather than wholly replaced, their use of offline techniques with digital tools to conduct business. More specifically, a higher percentage of online MSMEs in the Philippines reported using offline methods, especially face-to-face techniques, in the past 30 days than digital tools for each business activity. (This finding also echoed the high reported usage of face-to-face among surveyed offline MSMEs across all business activities, with 92 percent of offline MSMEs reporting that they used face-to-face to communicate with customers in the past 30 days.) For example, while 52 percent of online MSMEs reported that they used Facebook apps to communicate with customers in the past 30 days, 84 percent reported using offline methods for the same purpose over the same time period. Supporting MSMEs to survive and thrive during and after the COVID-19 pandemic requires looking across the full spectrum of business methods, given the complementary usage of both digital tools and offline methods across business activities.

## CASE STUDY

# AGUILAR HEALTHY MUSHROOM



[www.facebook.com/  
aguilarhealthymushroom/](https://www.facebook.com/aguilarhealthymushroom/)



[www.instagram.com/  
aguilarhealthymushroom/](https://www.instagram.com/aguilarhealthymushroom/)



AGRICULTURE  
& FOOD  
PRODUCTION



SMALL  
ENTERPRISE



RURAL



SDG 9: RESPONSIBLE  
CONSUMPTION AND  
PRODUCTION

In late 2019, Jerwin transformed his family's oyster mushroom farm into a community-wide livelihood endeavor in rural Luzon. "...even if it's just a small livelihood, [it provides] something for people to do and benefits the company, but also the people around them." Employing local farmers and community members, Aguilar Healthy Mushroom contributes to SDG 8: Decent Work and Economic Growth by supporting job creation in rural areas and SDG 9: Responsible Production and Consumption by utilizing farm waste to encourage sustainable food production with minimal environmental impact.

Jerwin credits digital tools for successfully managing his business's shift to a direct-to-consumer model and growing his sales across the country. Launching his business at the same time that the COVID-19 pandemic arrived in the Philippines, he shifted his planned sales strategy from local resellers to 100 percent online sales across the country. Jerwin uses Facebook apps to market Aguilar's goods to the growing Philippine consumer segment interested in a healthy lifestyle. With Facebook Business and his use of Facebook groups, Jerwin better understands market trends and customer preferences. Through Instagram Stories and ads, Jerwin regularly posts curated content using hashtags like #healthy or #vegan to connect with customers



eager to explore eco-friendly health food products. Leveraging WhatsApp, Facebook Messenger, and Instagram's messaging and chat features, Jerwin connects to customers directly, responds to inquiries, and closes sales on his products.

To increase Aguilar's competitiveness and grow his business in the long run, Jerwin seeks to expand into international markets and to integrate more analytics and artificial intelligence tools into his business practices. By providing income-producing opportunities to local community members, Jerwin's business enhances the economic resilience of his own community in rural Luzon.

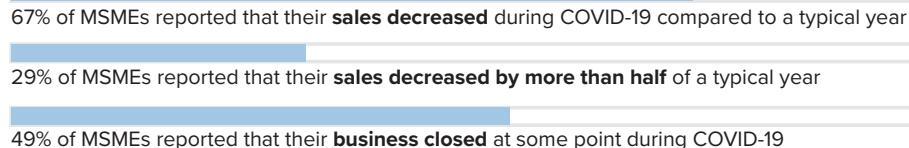
**"Social media really helps my business a lot, especially to reach customers. I'm in a rural area, but I can reach anywhere in the Philippines. I'm grateful to have those features."**

# MSMEs DURING THE COVID-19 PANDEMIC

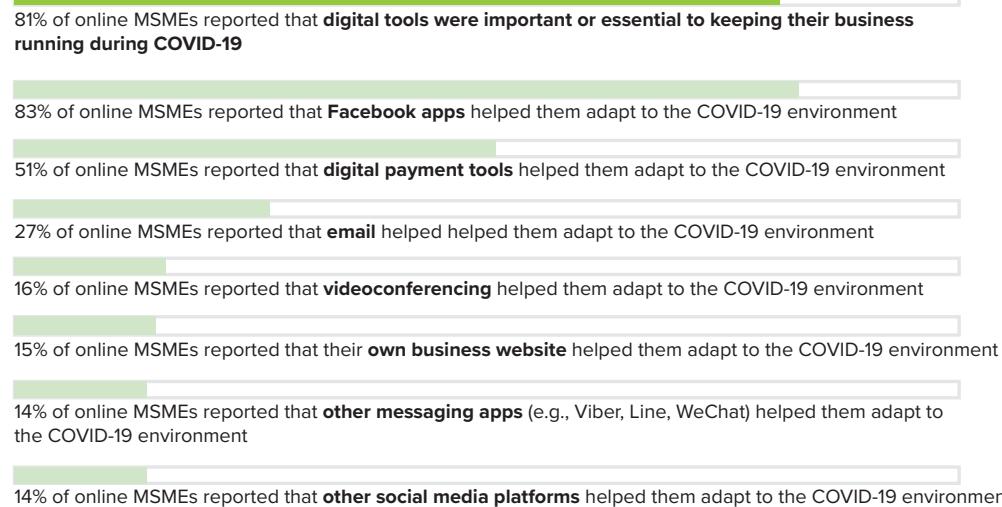
The COVID-19 pandemic was a major crisis for surveyed MSMEs in the Philippines. Businesses, struggling with challenging economic conditions in which their sales decreased substantially, embraced digital tools in their adaptation to the new economic environment. Online MSMEs largely found digital tools to be crucial to keeping their business running during the pandemic.



## MSMEs sales decreased substantially during the COVID-19 pandemic



## Digital tools helped online MSMEs adapt to the new COVID-19 environment



## KEY INSIGHTS FOR POLICY MAKERS

Survey results show the economic slowdown stemming from the COVID-19 pandemic negatively impacted the majority of surveyed MSMEs' sales throughout the Philippines. Two-thirds of MSMEs (67 percent) reported that their sales decreased during COVID-19 compared to a typical year. These findings align with a May 2020 Asian Development Bank survey conducted in the Philippines, which reported that 77 percent of enterprises surveyed<sup>xviii</sup> experienced sharp declines in sales between March and April 2020, while only 22 percent had their sales stay the same.<sup>20</sup>

Despite reported decreases in sales among surveyed MSMEs, many online MSMEs reported that digital tools helped them adapt to the new economic landscape. For example, a large majority (81 percent) of online MSMEs reported that digital tools were important or essential to keeping their business running during COVID-19. Among digital tools, the highest percentage of surveyed online MSMEs reported that Facebook



apps (83 percent) helped them adapt to the COVID-19 environment, followed by digital payment tools (51 percent) and email (27 percent). Aligned with the well-documented phenomenon of technological leapfrogging, by which entrepreneurs in emerging markets bypass the use of established technologies in favor of newer ones,<sup>21</sup> MSMEs in the Philippines appeared to favor newer digital tools, such as social media and digital payments. The widespread use of digital payment tools among surveyed online MSMEs may offer an opening for public, private, and development sector stakeholders to increase digital tool use among Philippine MSMEs. With survey evidence suggesting that many MSMEs are already using digital payment platforms, as well as the Philippine government's use of digital payment platforms PayMaya and GCash to deliver emergency financial assistance in 2020,<sup>22</sup> there is an opportunity for stakeholders to introduce more complex digital tools through these channels.

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<sup>xviii</sup> Survey respondents consisted of 52% microenterprises, 27% small firms, 13% medium-sized firms, and 8% large firms.



## A higher percentage of women-owned MSMEs reported using digital tools for business purposes than men-owned MSMEs

According to survey results, a higher percentage of women-owned MSMEs reported using digital tools for business purposes than men-owned MSMEs before the pandemic, in the past year, and in the past 30 days.<sup>xix</sup> More specifically, 52 percent of women-owned MSMEs reported that they used digital tools prior to COVID-19, which increased to 61 percent in the past year since COVID-19, but dipped slightly to 57 percent in the past 30 days. Men-owned MSMEs followed a similar pattern, but with lower digital tool usage rates: 47 percent of men-owned MSMEs reported using digital tools for business purposes prior to the COVID-19 pandemic, which increased to 54 percent in the past year since COVID-19, then decreased to 51 percent in the past 30 days. These survey findings align with a Social Weather Stations survey in the Philippines from March 2019, which found that a higher proportion of women (50 percent) were internet users, compared to 41 percent of men.<sup>23</sup>

Internet connectivity was a key challenge facing women-owned and men-owned MSMEs alike. Though poor or no internet connectivity was the most frequently reported difficulty among both groups, a greater percentage of women-owned MSMEs (65 percent of online women-owned MSMEs and 21 percent of offline women-owned MSMEs) reported that poor or no internet connectivity was a difficulty their business faced in using digital tools than men-owned MSMEs (51 percent of online men-owned MSMEs and 14 percent of offline men-owned MSMEs). This survey finding indicates that internet access challenges inhibited MSME digital tool use more so among women-owned MSMEs than men-owned MSMEs.

Survey results also showed disparities in how offline women-owned and men-owned MSMEs viewed their lack of knowledge about digital tools. For example, 20 percent of offline women-owned MSMEs reported that lack of knowledge was a difficulty their business faced in using digital tools, compared to 14 percent of offline men-owned MSMEs (the second most frequently reported difficulty for offline women-owned MSMEs, but tied for third among offline men-owned MSMEs). Similarly, nine percent of women-owned offline MSMEs reported that needing more knowledge was the most challenging difficulty their business faced in using digital tools, compared to 3 percent for offline men-owned MSMEs (the most cited answer option for most challenging difficulty among offline women-owned MSMEs, but tied for third among offline men-owned MSMEs).

<sup>xix</sup> Digital tool use during COVID-19 is statistically significant per Chi squared test of independence, adjusted  $p < 0.05$ . Digital tool use prior to COVID-19 and in the past 30 days is not statistically significant per Chi squared test of independence, adjusted  $p > 0.05$ .

# BARRIERS TO THE ADOPTION AND USE OF DIGITAL TOOLS AMONG MSMEs

Internet connectivity was a major barrier faced by both online and offline businesses in using digital tools. Offline businesses additionally struggled with knowledge gaps in how to use digital tools and low confidence in using digital tools. Both surveyed online and offline MSMEs were eager to learn more about using digital tools in their customer-facing work.

An interview with the owner of HUNI Ukuleles illustrates how one small business in the Philippines is using digital tools and social media to find new customers and market his growing business. In particular, Brian noted a steep learning curve as his biggest challenge in using more digital tools, but he also expressed a strong desire to learn more about digital tools to help his business mature and grow. See [page 25](#) for full case study.



**Poor or no internet connectivity was the most frequently reported difficulty that online and offline MSMEs reported facing in using digital tools:**

61% of online MSMEs reported that **poor or no internet connectivity** was a difficulty their business faced in using digital tools

19% of offline MSMEs reported that **poor or no internet connectivity** was a difficulty their business faced in using digital tools



**Other commonly cited difficulties among online and offline MSMEs included a lack of knowledge, access to devices, and a perceived lack of relevance to their businesses:**

13% of online MSMEs reported that **lack of knowledge** was a difficulty their business faced in using digital tools

18% of offline MSMEs reported that **lack of knowledge** was a difficulty their business faced in using digital tools

12% of online MSMEs reported that **access to a mobile phone, tablet or computer** was a difficulty their business faced in using digital tools

16% of offline MSMEs reported that **lack of relevance to their business** was a difficulty they faced in using digital tools



**While the largest percentage of online MSMEs reported that poor or no internet connectivity was the most challenging difficulty their business faced in using digital tools, offline MSMEs reported the same about needing more knowledge and a perceived lack of relevance:**

18% of online MSMEs reported that **poor or no internet connectivity** was the most challenging difficulty their business faced in using digital tools

7% of offline MSMEs reported that **needing more knowledge** was the most challenging difficulty their business faced in using digital tools

7% of offline MSMEs reported that **lack of relevance to their business** was the most challenging difficulty they faced in using digital tools



**Online and offline MSMEs were interested in learning more about digital tools to enhance their customer-facing work:**

76% of online MSMEs reported that they were interested in learning more about using digital tools to **find new customers**

47% of offline MSMEs reported that they were interested in learning more about using digital tools to **find new customers**

71% of online MSMEs reported that they were interested in learning more about using digital tools to **communicate with existing customers**

42% of offline MSMEs reported that they were interested in learning more about using digital tools to **communicate with existing customers**

70% of online MSMEs reported that they were interested in learning more about using digital tools to **market their business**

45% of offline MSMEs reported that they were interested in learning more about using digital tools to **market their business**

45% of offline MSMEs reported that **training on how to use digital tools** to find new customers would benefit their business

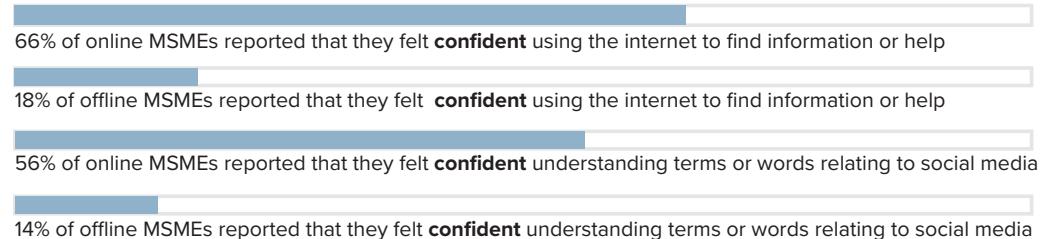
22% of offline MSMEs reported that **more education and training** would make them more likely to use digital tools

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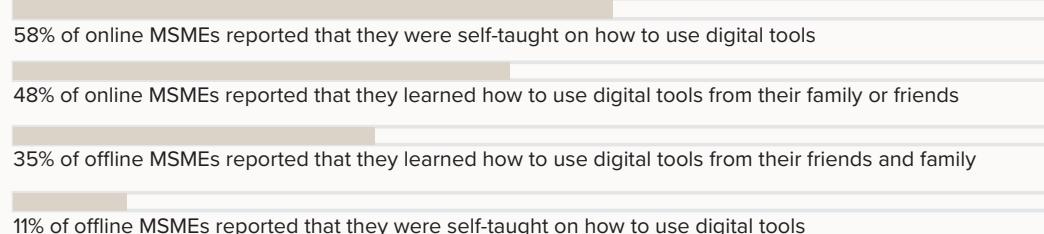
xx When asked what was their most challenging difficulty using digital, responses were coded to fit 18 options. The options displayed in this figure correspond to those displayed in the prior graph where most common difficulties are displayed. Options: need more knowledge or know-how; poor or no internet connectivity; it is too expensive or the costs are too high; difficult to access a mobile phone, tablet, or computer; do not have consistent access to electricity; customers do not use them; suppliers do not use them; they are not relevant to this business or do not see a need for them; do not trust digital transactions, fear of information being stolen; hard to comply with legal requirements such as digital security and consumer protection standards; not enough relevant posts, articles, pictures or videos in my local language; fear of accessing inappropriate or offensive posts, articles, pictures or videos; digital tools were not effective or did not work; nothing prevents this business from using the internet, social media, or digital tools; other; don't know; refused.



**A higher percentage of online MSMEs reported feeling very confident in using various aspects of digital tools than offline MSMEs:**



**A much higher percentage of online MSMEs than offline MSMEs are self-taught on how to use digital tools<sup>xxi</sup>**



<sup>xxi</sup> Statistically significant per Chi squared test of independence, adjusted p < 0.05

## KEY INSIGHTS FOR POLICYMAKERS

Survey results show that connectivity is a key barrier affecting MSME digital tool use. For online and offline MSMEs alike, poor or no internet connectivity was the most frequently reported difficulty that they faced in using digital tools (61 percent and 19 percent respectively). It was also the most cited answer option among online MSMEs when asked about their most challenging difficulty when using digital tools (18 percent). These findings suggest that if public, private, and development sector stakeholders collaborated to tackle this key connectivity barrier, there could well be an increase in both the number of MSMEs overall who use digital tools, and the amount of digital tool use among online MSMEs. However, it is also important for key stakeholders to develop and implement tailored programming and policy solutions that address difficulties reported more frequently among offline MSMEs - the perceived lack of relevance for digital tools (16 percent) and the high costs of digital tools (14 percent) - so that they feel empowered, justified, and well-resourced enough to come online.



Echoing the findings reported in previous sections, which showed that a majority of online MSMEs had recently used Facebook apps to conduct customer-facing business activities,<sup>xxii</sup> online and offline MSMEs were interested in learning more about digital tools to enhance their customer-facing work. Seventy-six percent of online MSMEs and 47 percent of offline MSMEs reported that they were interested in learning more about using digital tools to find new customers; 71 percent of online MSMEs and 42 percent of offline MSMEs reported the same about communicating with customers, as did 70 percent of online MSMEs and 45 percent of offline MSMEs about marketing their business. As noted in the box above, a higher proportion of offline MSMEs learned how to use digital tools from friends or family, possibly because their lack of knowledge about digital tools discourages them from self-teaching, while online MSMEs were more comfortable with these tools and learning them on an individual basis. This finding reinforces the importance of working directly with MSMEs to build their digital skills on topics that they are most interested in and that - by extension - have the most relevance to their work.

<sup>xxii</sup> 55 percent of online MSMEs reported that they used Facebook apps to market to customers in the past 30 days, and 52 percent of online MSMEs reported that they used Facebook apps to communicate with customers in the past 30 days.



## A higher percentage of urban MSMEs reported using digital tools than rural MSMEs for multiple business activities

Survey results showed that online MSMEs in urban areas reported recently using digital tools for multiple business activities at a higher rate than online MSMEs in rural locations. For example, 56 percent of online urban MSMEs reported that they used Facebook apps to market to customers in the past 30 days, compared to 50 percent of online rural MSMEs.<sup>xxiii</sup> Accordingly, a higher percentage of online urban MSMEs (43 percent) reported that Facebook apps were very important for marketing to customers compared to rural MSMEs (35 percent).<sup>xxiv</sup> This trend held for all surveyed business activities including communicating with customers and with suppliers, conducting customer research, and hiring or finding new employees. These findings align with other external literature: for example, a March 2019 survey by *Social Weather Stations*, the foremost public-opinion polling body in the Philippines, found that 62 percent of Filipinos in urban areas were internet users, compared to 37 percent in rural locations.<sup>24</sup>

Despite the well-known challenges related to digital tool and internet use in rural areas,<sup>25</sup> surveyed MSMEs in urban and rural areas reported experiencing similar challenges related to their digital tool use. For online MSMEs in urban and rural areas alike, poor or no internet connectivity was the most frequently selected difficulty that their business faced in using digital tools (63 percent and 52 percent respectively) - exactly 60 percentage points higher than any other difficulty among online urban MSMEs and 49 percentage points higher than any other difficulty for online rural MSMEs. These findings indicate that it is important for public, private, and development sector stakeholders to continue improving internet access throughout the country and making it more accessible for MSMEs.

<sup>xxiii</sup> Not statistically significant per Chi squared test of independence, adjusted p > 0.05

<sup>xxiv</sup> Not statistically significant per Chi squared test of independence, adjusted p > 0.05

## CASE STUDY

# HUNI UKULELES



[www.facebook.com/  
huniukuleles/](https://www.facebook.com/huniukuleles/)



[www.instagram.com/  
huniukuleles/](https://www.instagram.com/huniukuleles/)



MANUFACTURING  
& INDUSTRY



SMALL  
ENTERPRISE



URBAN



SDG 12: SUSTAINABLE  
PRODUCTION &  
CONSUMPTION

What started out as a hobby to showcase homemade ukuleles has evolved into an international manufacturing business, thanks to the global reach of digital tools. After Brian and his wife shared videos of their homemade ukuleles in a Facebook group, potential customers in the Philippines and Australia contacted them to purchase their instruments. This widespread interest prompted Brian to found HUNI Ukuleles in 2019. He then opened up a small factory in Cebu to create bespoke ukuleles for international customers after receiving a large order bound for the U.S. In alignment with SDG 12: Sustainable Production and Consumption, HUNI's ukuleles are 100 percent hand-crafted out of bamboo and sourced from local smallholder farmers in Mindanao. This piece of Brian's supply chain supports sustainability in domestic production in an environmentally and socially responsible way.

Brian uses digital tools - specifically Facebook and Instagram - to build his brand and tap into the growing customer base for ukuleles. He posts photos and videos of his latest ukulele models on both platforms to build brand awareness among his customer base. With over 80 percent of HUNI's total sales coming through Facebook, Brian uses Facebook Messenger and his profile page to communicate to his customers and suppliers. He also sees conversion rates of over 80 percent on Instagram, with many international customers finding out about HUNI through the platform and then direct messaging him to arrange purchases.

Brian's business is still recovering from the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic, which



has impacted the way he uses Facebook and Instagram. Despite high interest from potential customers and a large volume of orders, the COVID-19 pandemic reduced HUNI Ukuleles' production capacity during lockdowns. Fewer ukuleles in production means that Brian has less content to post on Facebook and Instagram, though he is slowly rebuilding his online presence. He has also decided to launch a Facebook Shop as part of HUNI's comeback.

Brian's biggest challenge in using digital tools is the steep learning curve and the lack of a dedicated staff member for social media. Even though he is a fast learner, a successful social media presence requires a solid strategy, the right kind of knowledge and know-how, and enough time to implement and see results. Despite Brian's challenges in using social media, HUNI Ukuleles' international growth and popularity shows that MSMEs grounded in sustainable business practices and ethical supply chains can contribute to macro-level economic growth outcomes through their use of digital tools.

**"This business I have would not be where it is without Facebook. Started from thin air as an idea and Facebook made it happen. I'm thankful because Facebook helped us be appreciated elsewhere – U.S. and UK – and then helped gain popularity here in the Philippines."**

# CLOSING REMARKS

With continued improvements in internet connectivity and targeted interventions to upskill MSME owners in digital literacy, the Philippines' MSME sector will be well-positioned to harness the power of digital tools to improve business outcomes and become more resilient to future economic shocks. As evidenced by the survey findings presented in this research study, a majority of surveyed MSMEs in the Philippines used digital tools to conduct basic business functions. In addition, online MSMEs reported that digital tools such as Facebook apps were essential to their ability to maintain business operations during the COVID-19 pandemic. However, barriers such as internet connectivity proved a challenge to MSMEs seeking to fully leverage digital tools in their business practices: our findings reported that surveyed MSMEs, both online and offline, were constrained by a lack of poor or no internet connectivity, limiting their ability to adopt more digital tools. Nevertheless, MSMEs still reported a strong desire to learn more about digital tools for business purposes, such as using them to find new customers on social media. This evidence shows that targeted solutions are required to maintain forward

momentum and continue growing MSME digital tool usage equitably across all MSME segments.

Looking ahead, the economic uncertainties stemming from the COVID-19 pandemic will undoubtedly cause continued challenges and increased opportunities for MSMEs to harness the power of digital tools. Commonly used digital payment tools such as online banking can serve as an entry point for MSMEs who are transitioning from offline to online and provide an introduction that will help MSMEs begin to develop long-term digital skills. Promoting equitable digital tool usage within the Philippines' MSME sector will help build a Philippine economy resilient to the COVID-19 pandemic and future shocks. MSMEs poised to grow and scale as the pandemic recedes will accelerate economic growth outcomes and support the Philippines in achieving its SDG commitments. Ensuring that the MSME sector can participate in and benefit from digital transformation is crucial to fostering the inclusive and resilient growth of the Philippines' economy.

# APPENDIX I: METHODOLOGY

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## OVERVIEW OF THE SURVEY DESIGN

Between June 3 and July 23, 2021, Ipsos conducted 1,000 in-person interviews of enterprises via computer-assisted personal interviewing (CAPI) to better understand their use of digital tools as well as their challenges and barriers to digitization.<sup>xxv</sup> The sectors of focus for the research included agriculture, food and beverage, retail/wholesale, and processing manufacturing.

The sample for the study was defined to include and be limited to the micro (one employee), small (2 to 9 employees) and medium (10 to 249 employees) business populations based in the Philippines (henceforth the categories are referred to as “business size”).<sup>xxvi</sup> Official statistics from the Philippine Bureau of Domestic Trade Promotion and the Philippine Statistics Authority List of Establishments (2019), as well as the Sourcing Directory from Tradeline Philippines (supplier and buyer databases) and Go Lokal Directory of Suppliers (lists of micro, small and medium-sized businesses) and the List of Establishments were used to estimate the proportion of businesses within each

of the micro (1 employee), small (2 to 9 employees) and medium (10 to 249) business size categories. The proportions by business size as defined are considered estimates as the official statistics do not include informal businesses and are not sufficiently recent to account for the impact of COVID-19 on business operations.

Furthermore, a minimum target of 150 women-owned businesses was set for the sample. This means that if 150 interviews were not reached when the final sample size was achieved, then additional interviews would be conducted to ensure the sample included 150 interviews with women-owned businesses. In the Philippines, this minimum was achieved naturally and no oversample was required.

Based on these estimates, the sample targets were allocated as shown in the figure below, which also shows the actual counts achieved from fieldwork:

BUSINESS SIZE			GEOGRAPHIC COVERAGE			BUSINESS OWNER GENDER		
	Target	Actual		Target	Actual		Target	Actual
Micro	800	788	Urban	700	713	Women	Min 150	674
Small	100	114	Suburban	Incl in urban		Men	326	
Medium	100	98	Rural	300	287	N/A		

Sample proportions in the Philippines

<sup>xxv</sup> This is one in a series of 12 country reports about micro, small and medium-sized enterprises' (MSMEs) use of Digital Tools in South America and Asia. The forthcoming global report will contain a complete description of the research and survey methodology.

<sup>xxvi</sup> Across all business size groupings, employees include the respondent (an owner or top-level manager of the MSME), any full-time employees or workers, and any part-time or seasonal employees or workers.

## SAMPLE DESIGN

The sample design is a multistage stratified cluster sample followed by an enumeration process to develop a sample list for the study and then the selection of businesses from the sample list.

### *Multistage stratified cluster sample:*

A multistage stratified cluster design means that the country was divided into geographic blocks (a “cluster”) and then through stages, each time selecting a more limited geographic unit until the final sampling unit for enumeration was selected. Specifically, the two geographic units, the enumeration process and the selection of individual businesses (the sampling unit) defined at each stage were the following:

- **PSUs:** The first stage of the cluster sampling was the identification of primary sample units (PSU) defined as a City or Municipality<sup>[1]</sup>. Ipsos designated five PSUs dividing the Philippines’ three island groups based on commercial activity within the country. These PSUs cover 100% of the Philippines:
  - » National Capital Region – NCR (Metropolitan Manila)
  - » North Luzon
  - » South Luzon
  - » Visayas
  - » Mindanao
- **SSUs:** The second stage was the selection of secondary sampling units (SSUs) defined as a business district within the PSUs.<sup>xxvii</sup> In an urban setting, an SSU was a section of the city, and was the municipality or a barrio in a rural setting. A total of 39 SSUs were selected from a total eligible of 279 within the PSUs. As the PSUs represent 100% of the country, the total eligible SSU count represents the total across the Philippines.
- **Enumeration process:** Following the identification of the PSUs and SSUs, Ipsos conducted an enumeration process whereby many businesses in the selected SSUs were collated into a baseline list of eligible businesses for the study. See more details below.
- **Individual Businesses:** Individual businesses were selected from this collated list. See more details below.

<sup>xxvii</sup> Selected PSUs for areas of business concentration included areas with wet/dry markets, fish ports, farms, animal raising, service shops, small stores, and restaurants.

### ***Enumeration process:***

Once the PSUs and SSUs were selected, Ipsos conducted an enumeration process which included canvassing and listing businesses in an SSU (referenced as the “Ipsos list”). The “Ipsos List” included formal and informal micro, small, and medium businesses. For the purposes of this survey, Ipsos only enumerated businesses with a store front, booth or signage.

These randomly generated lists (“Ipsos lists”) were supplemented with registered business from the Directory from Tradeline Philippines and the Go Lokal Directory of Suppliers (referenced as the “Government list”). The Ipsos List and the Government List were collated and business names were deduplicated from the two sources. This means that no business appeared in the list more than once.

The “Ipsos list” overcame the lack of coverage in the Government lists in the Philippines which are not comprehensive, lack coverage of informal businesses,

and use a different definition of business size than the one used in the study.<sup>xxviii</sup> The enumeration process enabled Ipsos to create a list with business size definitions that were aligned to the targets for the survey (micro = 1 employee, small = 2 to 9 employees and medium = 10 to 249). Despite these weaknesses, the “Government Lists” are sufficiently reliable to provide counts to use as guidance for targets by geography; for example, using the counts from the Government list for micro and small, we were able to reasonably estimate the relative proportions of businesses in the PSUs.

Actual business size was measured in the survey and the response was used for the final categorization of the sample by business size (micro, small and medium as defined above).

The combined list of businesses eligible for the survey was the sample source for the study.

### ***Selection of businesses:***

Selection of businesses began with sorting the lists by PSUs and SSUs and randomly selecting businesses to contact from the sample source.

All interviews were conducted face to face with data recorded by enumerators on pre-programmed tablets.

Once a business was identified from the sample list, enumerators proceeded to gain consent for the interview. If the respondent agreed, the enumerator administered the screening questions and, if qualified, conducted the survey. If a business was not available, or the respondent requested that the interview be rescheduled, enumerators made three attempts to reach the business. If the enumerator was unable to reach the business after these three attempts, then that business was marked as a refusal (see figure to the right). Survey participation was completely optional, dependent on explicit respondent consent, and non-compensated.

CAPI	
Contacts	1846
Completes	1000
Refusals	413
Response rate	54%
Refusal rate (refusals / contacts)	22%

Response and refusal rates in the Philippines<sup>xxix</sup>

<sup>xxviii</sup> The Philippine government’s definition of business size category is micro (1-9 employees), small (10-99 employees), medium (100-199 employees) and large (200 or more).

<sup>xxix</sup> By showing only the response rate and refusal rate, this figure shows a limited set of the outcomes possible. The full set of dispositions includes outcomes such as ineligible respondent (e.g., not owner or top-manager), ineligible company or suspended interview. The response rate and refusal rate calculations are not inclusive of the complete set of outcomes and therefore do not add to 100%. Please see [AAPOR Response Rate 3 methodology](#) for more details.

The target allocation and actual completes by regions are detailed below:

REGION	Target	Actual
NCR	203	202
North Luzon	219	219
South Luzon	213	214
Visayas	163	163
Mindanao	202	202
<b>Total</b>	<b>1,000</b>	<b>1,000</b>

### *Sample Weighting*

Based on the fieldwork dispositions, the raw survey data was weighted to account for the variation in non-response by urban and rural designations and by gender. Specifically, Ipsos applied the following:

A weight by PSU (region) was applied to adjust the sample to be proportionate to the number of people within each province, as determined by the 2020 Census data<sup>26</sup>. The sample lists and enumeration process used to create benchmarks by business size was not used here due to the exclusion of informal businesses discussed above. Data on population counts, such as this Census data, is considered to more closely align with estimates of total (including informal) business counts.

- **Non-response weight:** Weights were applied by urbanicity (urban / rural) and gender of respondent within strata based on response rates. For example, if an enumerator approached a business in province X with a female respondent, and they were ultimately marked as a refusal, the enumerator would still keep track of the fact that a female respondent was approached. During weighting, province X would be weighed to reflect the number of female and male respondents who were approached. Without these weights, the survey results would be biased by propensity to respond based on respondent gender and urbanicity.

These two weights were combined to create one overall final weight applied to all data points. The design effect for the Philippines is 1.01.<sup>xxx</sup>

Ipsos carefully considered a broad spectrum of additional weights to be applied, but was limited by a lack of reliable data sources to weigh on. For example, weights were not applied by company size as there are no reliable population statistics that define the proportion of businesses throughout the Philippines by company size. Cross-national weights were also not applied. The purpose of a cross-national weight would be to make the data in this report comparable to data for other country reports in this series. Similarly, there was no reliable data source that could account for country sampling differences in fieldwork timing and survey modes.

Finally, a modal weight was not applied. Weighting by mode was rendered moot as there was only one mode used in the study for interviewing: namely, in-person CAPI interviewing.

Due to the limitations of the weighting strategy discussed here, the sample should not be considered to be wholly representative of formal and informal businesses in the Philippines.

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<sup>xxx</sup> The design effect is the ratio of an actual variance of an estimator that is based on a sample from some sampling design, to the variance of an alternative estimator that would be calculated (hypothetically) using a sample from a simple random sample (SRS) of the same number of elements. A design effect less than one indicates that the sample design has a smaller variance (is more efficient) than the hypothetical SRS design, whereas a design effect greater than one indicates that the sample design has a greater variance (is less efficient). Kish, Leslie (1965). “Survey Sampling”. New York: John Wiley & Sons, Inc. ISBN 0-471-10949-5.”

### **COVID-19 Protocols**

Extensive COVID-19 protocols were observed during CAPI interviews: only 2-3 people were allowed at each interview location, two meters apart. Enumerators wore masks and gloves during all interviews – which they removed, cleaned, and stored or disposed of after every six hours of wear – and sanitized their hands before and after every interview.

### ***Limitations to the Survey Design***

While every effort was made to ensure representativeness of the data, there are several limitations to the survey design. In terms of coverage limitations, the use of random-walk sampling methods in urban and non-urban areas could mean that MSMEs associated with certain characteristics could have a higher likelihood of agreeing to participate in the survey - for example, a grocery store owner would be more apt to agree to participate in a survey during slow business hours than an MSME owner engaged in physical labor. This may lead to overcoverage or undercoverage of certain business sector types. Another key coverage limitation relates to the exclusion of any household-based businesses without signage or storefronts and the geographic coverage; interviews were conducted with businesses with a storefront, stand or stall and/or signage. The random walk methodology may also limit the inclusion of multiple businesses at the same location. For multi-story buildings, enumerators were instructed to treat the building as part of the random walk and choose one (or multiple depending on the interval and building size) from the location for screening and consent; however, if multiple businesses are operating from one space or location in the building, only one would be eligible. This limitation would also apply to multiple businesses sharing a stand or booth as only one of the business owners or top-level managers would be screened for qualification and consent.

In terms of geographic coverage limitations, some portions of Mindanao, the Sulu Archipelago, and the Zamboanga Peninsula were assessed as high-crime areas and excluded due to safety concerns for the enumerators.

There were also limitations resulting from COVID-19 specific challenges. These included the impact of social distancing-related restrictions on response and completion rates and the impact of COVID-19 on respondent business outcomes and behavior. Although this study accounts for unit non-response weighting on characteristics such as [...], there is no way to weigh on unobservables such as individual propensity to participate in a survey during a pandemic.

An additional key limitation related to weighting was the lack of post-stratification weights by business size within PSU. Without complete data on the counts of formal and informal MSMEs for establishing population targets, it was not possible to implement post-survey adjustments to reflect the true composition of the Philippines' MSME structure by business size. Although the sampling process captured variation in the Philippines' MSME structure regarding size, industry, and individual characteristics of business owners, any national level figures were not adjusted or corrected to reflect business population characteristics.

Finally, the use of two-stage cluster sampling rather than a nationally representative sample represents a limitation on the precision of estimates. This may have led to larger standard errors for estimation at a detriment to the overall precision of results.

## NOTES ON ANALYSIS

The primary methods of analysis used in this report are ratio estimations and Rao & Scott's Chi-squared test of Independence to determine statistical significance. All questions required a response to be entered, enabling the interviewer to continue to the next question. All questions included a "don't know" option code and a "refused" option code. These were considered valid responses and were included in the base for a question. The percentage of respondents that refused to answer a question for which they were eligible ranged from 0-10%, depending on the question.

Reported survey results were calculated with a base of all respondents (the total sample), or on all surveyed online MSMEs or surveyed offline MSMEs. The base is specified for each data point. The sample size of online MSMEs and offline MSMEs are both smaller than the base of all surveyed MSMEs. Certain data points may also reflect the results for a subgroup of respondents, such as women-owned businesses or those within a region.

Footnotes are included throughout the report to make note of the analyses conducted, including the corresponding statistical tests and associated outputs. For all tests of statistical significance, the results should be interpreted as levels of association and not causality. Our main criteria for determining statistical significance is the 95% confidence level. For each disaggregate percentage estimation highlighted in the report, the p-value in relation to alpha (less than or equal to .05 or greater than .05) is reported as a footnote.

# APPENDIX 2: SUMMARY OF MSME AND RESPONDENT CHARACTERISTICS

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CATEGORICAL VARIABLES		UNWEIGHTED N	UNWEIGHTED %	WEIGHTED %	UNWEIGHTED STDERROR	WEIGHTED STDERROR
<b>Online Status</b>	Offline	417	41.7	41.4	1.56	1.56
	Online	583	58.3	58.6	1.56	1.56
<b>Gender Ownership</b>	Men-owned	325	32.5	34.2	1.48	1.54
	Women-owned	674	67.4	65.7	1.48	1.54
	Don't Know	1	0.1	0.1	0.1	0.12
<b>Urbanicity</b>	Rural	287	28.7	26.5	1.43	1.33
	Suburban	2	0.2	0.2	0.14	0.16
	Urban	711	71.1	73.3	1.43	1.33
<b>Business Size</b>	Micro	788	78.8	78.2	1.29	1.35
	Medium	98	9.8	10.4	0.94	1
	Small	114	11.4	11.5	1.01	1.04
<b>Business Vertical</b>	Agriculture and food production	132	13.2	13.1	1.07	1.08
	Hospitality	205	20.5	20.6	1.28	1.3
	Manufacturing and industry	146	14.6	14.9	1.12	1.15
	Professional services	28	2.8	3	0.52	0.56
	Retail & eCommerce	238	23.8	23.6	1.35	1.35
	Other	251	25.1	24.7	1.37	1.38
<b>Region</b>	Mindanao	202	20.2	20.2	1.27	0.28
	NCR	202	20.2	20.3	1.27	0.16
	North Luzon	219	21.9	21.9	1.31	0.16
	South Luzon	214	21.4	21.3	1.3	0.25
	Visayas	163	16.3	16.3	1.17	0.3
	No formal education or less than primary education	14	1.4	1.3	0.37	0.37
<b>Owner Education</b>	Primary education	113	11.4	11.2	1.01	1.01
	Secondary education	500	50.3	50.2	1.59	1.61
	University education or higher (degree)	239	24	24.1	1.36	1.37
	Vocational or technical education or training	117	11.8	11.9	1.02	1.04
	Don't Know	3	0.3	0.4	0.17	0.21
	Refused	9	0.9	0.9	0.3	0.31

CATEGORICAL VARIABLES		UNWEIGHTED N	UNWEIGHTED %	WEIGHTED %	UNWEIGHTED STDERROR	WEIGHTED STDERROR
Owner Age	18-24	65	6.5	6.5	0.78	0.8
	25-34	284	28.5	28.7	1.43	1.45
	35-44	286	28.7	28.8	1.44	1.45
	45-54	189	19	19	1.24	1.25
	55-64	126	12.7	12.5	1.05	1.06
	65 or older	42	4.2	4.3	0.64	0.66
	Don't Know	3	0.3	0.3	0.17	0.18
Respondent Education	No formal education or less than Primary education	14	1.4	1.3	0.37	0.37
	Primary education	113	11.3	11.2	1	1
	Secondary education	506	50.6	50.5	1.58	1.61
	University education or higher (degree)	238	23.8	23.9	1.35	1.36
	Vocational or technical education or training	119	11.9	12	1.02	1.04
Banking Status	Refused	10	1	1.1	0.31	0.33
	Banked	200	20	20	1.27	1.27
	Unbanked	763	76.3	76.2	1.35	1.35
	Don't Know	21	2.1	2.2	0.45	0.47
Respondent Role	Refused	16	1.6	1.7	0.4	0.41
	Mid-level manager	1	0.1	0.1	0.1	0.12
	Owner	937	93.7	93.3	0.77	0.82
	Top-level manager, not an owner	62	6.2	6.6	0.76	0.81
Client Type	Both businesses and individuals	298	29.8	29.7	1.45	1.46
	Primarily individuals such as consumers or customers	401	40.1	40.4	1.55	1.53
	Primarily businesses	301	30.1	29.9	1.45	1.44

NUMERICAL VARIABLES	UNWEIGHTED N	UNWEIGHTED MEAN	WEIGHTED MEAN	UNWEIGHTED STANDARD DEVIATION	WEIGHTED STANDARD DEVIATION
Respondent Age <sup>1</sup>	1000	40.1	40	11.8	11.8
Business Age <sup>2</sup>	1000	7.7	7.7	9.4	9.4
Number of Owners <sup>3</sup>	1000	1.8	1.8	7.5	7.4

<sup>1</sup> Other possible response options: Don't Know (0), Refused (0)<sup>2</sup> Businesses in operation less than one year (67) coded as 0. Other possible response options: Don't Know (0), Refused (0)<sup>3</sup> Other possible response options: Don't Know (0), Refused (0)

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