

Resilience and Innovation in Food SMES: Strategies for Navigating Seasonal Fluctuations

Saloni Mhatre

Pursuing Master of Arts in Economics

S. K. Somaiya Vidyavihar University, Mumbai

Abstract: Seasonal variations impact customer demand, raw material costs, and operational efficiency, posing ongoing problems for small and medium-sized food-based businesses (SMEs). This study investigates how food businesses—from bakeries and food trucks to cafes and restaurants—adjust to periodic shifts in resource availability and demand. Primary data was gathered through surveys of nearby businesses using a mixed-methods technique, and secondary data from academic research and market reports provide a more comprehensive background.

According to the analysis, seasonal and holiday changes have a big impact on consumer traffic and income sources, and the volatility of raw material prices stands out as a major obstacle. Risk-reduction tactics like menu variety, focused promotions, supplier negotiations, and flexible personnel were found to be essential. Additionally, regression research showed that although promotions have an impact on sales, it is less pronounced than that of more general seasonal and market characteristics.

In order to maintain long-term growth in the food industry, this study highlights the significance of adaptive tactics by emphasizing resilience and innovation. In light of India's developing digital economy and policy frameworks like the National Education Policy (NEP) 2020, which promotes entrepreneurship, skill development, and interdisciplinary cooperation, the findings have wider ramifications for the growth of SMEs.

This study adds to the conference topic by tying creative problem-solving to real-world business difficulties. It also provides insights into how SMEs may improve their operational resilience, promote inclusive economic growth, and adjust to shifting environmental and consumer dynamics. This study can be expanded in the future by adding longitudinal data, regional comparisons, and digital transformation strategies to create more thorough models for SME sustainability..

Keywords: Seasonal fluctuations, SMEs, food businesses, resilience, innovation, sustainable growth, digital economy

