

## Challenges encountered, marketing capability and coping strategies of rabbitry in Occidental Mindoro

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### ***Abstract***

Rabbit farming, also known as cuniculture, is a relatively new but growing industry in the Philippines which often done on a small scale, with backyard or home-based operations being the norm. Rabbits are kept for their fur, as pets and for their meat which considered a lean and healthy source of protein. With proper management, it can also contribute to the country's food security by providing a low-cost source of protein. This research study was conducted to assess the challenges encountered, marketing capability and coping strategy of rabbitry in Occidental Mindoro. Mixed method type of research was used in this study. The result reveal that there are five (5) major challenges that the rabbitry encountered namely: lack of proper awareness, price, adaption as business, lack of capital, and poor marketing channel and interpreted as moderate to high extent. It was revealed that they employ six (6) coping strategies that help them to overcome the challenges like: early introduction, adoption of new technology, use of association, partnership with government, product quality, and price adjustment which is interpreted as high to very high extent. In terms of the marketing capability, it was measured using the MAIR Model and revealed that they have a moderate to high interpretations. In addition, the results of the three tests of hypotheses, namely: the challenges encountered have inverse influence on the marketing capability and coping strategy of rabbitries in Occidental Mindoro, and the marketing capabilities have a positive influence on the coping strategies employed by the rabbitries.

**Keywords:** rabbitry, challenges encountered, marketing capability, coping strategies, mixed-method

## **Challenges encountered, marketing capability and coping strategies of rabbitry in Occidental Mindoro**

### **1. Introduction**

Rabbit farming is a relatively new industry in the Philippines, but it is steadily growing due to its high demand in the market (Dela Cruz, 2018). Rabbit farming is considered a viable source of income for small-scale farmers due to its low investment cost and high returns. Rabbit farming in the Philippines is a promising industry with huge potential for growth (Arceo-Dumlao, 2019), due to the fact that compared to other livestock; rabbit requires a smaller place to raise; has a readily available supply of feeds in the market; it is quiet and comparatively odor-free; has a large number of litters as high as ten (10); production cycle is very short; and it can also provide a nutritious meat and income to the family (Veneracion, 2021). The domestic rabbit, when compared with other livestock, is characterized by early sexual maturity, high prolificacy, relatively short gestation period, short generation interval, high productive potentials, rapid growth, good ability to utilize forages and fibrous plant materials and agricultural by-products, more efficient feed conversion, low cost per breeding female and by its profitability for small-scale system of production and in backyards (Abd-Allah & Abd-Elaziz 2018).

The most significant impediment to the success of small businesses is the challenges they face, which can lead to failure in the business world. The transition stages, according to Amankwah-Amoah et al. (2018), involved procedures for reflecting on and learning from business failure experiences, whereas the creation and legacy phases involved procedures for imprinting entrepreneurs' experiential knowledge on subsequent new start-up enterprises. In the Philippines, as stated in the article of Veneracion (2021) the president of Cordillera Rabbit Breeders Association mentioned some of the major problems of rabbitry in the country like specially for business that include lack of experts on rabbit raising, and expensive materials for cages, accessories and the cost of high-quality stocks.

In every business, focus should not be on one product and services, owners should have an alternative or coping strategies in times of uncertainties and other factors influencing the progress of the business. One of those affecting factors would be the customers and need to take care of the customers to become loyal. Another one is the techniques involved in conducting the business to have an edge against the competitors. Lastly and the most important, is how to distribute or market the products and services offered by the business. How good or expensive or cheap are products and services but good marketing channel or distribution matters in the business (Odinwa et al., 2016).

There are pet stores and keepers in Occidental Mindoro who sell rabbits as pets rather than as meat or chicken substitutes. It is difficult to market rabbit meat that is not exclusively for pet consumption for some small-scale farmers who have already started producing and consuming rabbit meat. These are the reasons for conducting research studies about rabbit farming. Consequently, there is a small number of published research conducted concerning rabbit farming in the Philippines. It is one of the reasons that support the need to conduct such a study and publish its results. In doing so, the researcher will be able to contribute relevant knowledge on the marketing opportunities, challenges encountered and coping strategies of rabbit farming.

#### *1.1 Statement of the Problem*

This study was conducted to determine the challenges encountered, marketing capability and coping strategies employed by rabbitry in Occidental Mindoro. This study has the following specific problem statement: (1) What are the identified challenges encountered by rabbitries in Occidental Mindoro? (2) What are the coping strategies employed by rabbits in Occidental Mindoro to overcome the challenges? (3) What is the profile of

rabbitry owners in Occidental Mindoro be described in terms of: address, age, educational attainment, length of time in rabbit farming and start-up capital? (4) What is the extent of the challenges encountered by rabbitries in Occidental Mindoro in terms of: lack of proper awareness, price, adaption as business, lack of capital; and poor marketing channels? (5) What is the extent of the marketing capability of rabbitries in Occidental Mindoro in terms of: motivation, ability, idea and resources? (6) What is the extent of the coping strategies employed by rabbitries in Occidental Mindoro in terms of: early introduction, adoption of new technology, use of association; partnership with government and product quality and price adjustment? (7) Do the challenges encountered influence the marketing capability of rabbitries in Occidental Mindoro? (8) Do the marketing capability influence the coping strategies employed by the rabbitries in Occidental Mindoro? (9) Which among the challenges encountered significantly influenced the coping strategies employed by the rabbitries in Occidental Mindoro?

### *1.2 Significance of the Study*

The study can help identify opportunities for economic growth, promote healthy eating habits, and support sustainable agriculture practices in the province of Occidental Mindoro. The result of the study will be beneficial to the following: First, it will provide knowledge concerning the challenges of establishing rabbit farms in Occidental Mindoro and coping strategies to overcome those challenges. The study will also provide ideas on the market opportunities of the industry, which contribute to boost their interest in engaging in other aspects of farming. It will provide them knowledge and techniques concerning rabbit raising and developing other sets of products. Second, the study will provide an idea for possible sources of income other than traditional farms. Rabbit farming will also contribute to the development of farming technology and techniques used by the local farmers. This industry will open opportunities for them to enhance the quality and wide range of products that farmers would produce. The study will provide knowledge on a low cost and handy farming industry that could contribute to improving the way of living. Third, it can be another way to contribute to the improvement of the economic status of the province and/or the country. The study will open a new door of opportunities for the government to help its people, especially for the aspiring entrepreneurs to engage in a modern farming practice. Its success will be a great help to determine the opportunities of the business industry in the country. This study will promote awareness of the people for the consumption of rabbit meat and other benefits that could be acquired for it.

Fourth, the study will help to increase awareness of the nutritional value of additional sources of meat for their family. Fifth, to the Divine World College of San Jose, the institution may use the information from the study to establish a rabbit farm that could be a tangle and income generating project for the college. This can also help to develop a business model that prioritizes sustainability, which is increasingly important for consumers and investors. The research study can help students identify opportunities for job creation, economic growth, and community development. Sixth, to the Occidental Mindoro State College, the study can encourage entrepreneurship among students by providing insights into a viable and potentially profitable business opportunity. Students may be inspired to start their own rabbit farming business or explore other innovative business ideas. It also provides valuable learning opportunities for business administration students in a laboratory setting. The study can help students develop essential research and data analysis skills while also promoting sustainable agriculture practices and building industry connections. Lastly, the findings of this study will also serve as relevant points of information for future research and further studies.

### *1.3 Scope and Delimitation of the Study*

The study focused on the 63 rabbit backyard raisers and/or breeders in the province of Occidental Mindoro between the year 2022 to 2023 to determine the challenges encountered, marketing capability, and coping strategies that they employed. The rabbit backyard raisers were those who raise and produce meat, regardless of the length of time they have been breeding and producing rabbits. The research was conducted from 2022 to 2023 and carried out in the Occidental Mindoro area including the towns of Magsaysay, San Jose, Rizal,

Calintaan, Sablayan, and Sta. Cruz, as well as Mamburao.

## 2. Methodology

**Research Design** - The study is mixed-method research. This type of research is a combination of qualitative and quantitative research designs. This study uses the exploratory sequential design of research where the quantitative phase of data collection and analysis follows the qualitative phase of data collection and analysis (Fetters et al., 2013). The qualitative design was used to determine the challenges encountered and coping strategies of rabbitry in Occidental Mindoro, thereafter the researcher used the themes as parameters of interest. The quantitative approach, the study used descriptive-predictive methodology. The descriptive method intends to provide information on the extent of the challenges encountered, marketing capability and coping strategies employed by the rabbitry in Occidental Mindoro. A predictive methodology was employed to predict the significant influence of the challenges encountered to the marketing capability, the influence of marketing capability to coping strategies and which among the challenges encountered influence the coping strategies employed by the rabbitry in Occidental Mindoro.

**Respondents of the Study** - The respondents of the study were the rabbit backyard raisers and/or breeders and farmers with the total population of 63 respondents who were also members of the Tamaraw Rabbit Cooperative who raise rabbit for meat production in the province of Occidental Mindoro. Complete enumeration method has been applied in gathering the data. There were ten (10) owners or proprietors of the business who participated in the interview answering the challenges encountered, coping strategies and marketing capability in the study. On the other hand, the total population were the rabbit raisers/farmers who served as the respondents for the survey conducted. The researcher utilized 100% of the total population. The participants of the interview were those involved in producing rabbits for at least one year. Complete enumeration method has been applied in gathering the data for the quantitative part.

For the profile of the respondents, the majority of the participants are located at San Jose, Calintaan and Sablayan, while the other remaining number of respondents are spread out across the municipality of Magsaysay, Rizal, Sta. Cruz, and Mamburao, Occidental Mindoro. The participants were arranged by age, with the youngest participants falling into the older age group (16 to 47 years old). The most of the farmers—14 of them—are between the ages of 28 and 31 (22%), followed by those between the ages of 40 and 43 (17%), nine (9) are between the ages of 36 and 39 (14%) and between the ages of 20 and 23 (12.7%) and 24 to 27 (11.1%), while six (6) are between the ages of 32 and 35 (9%) and four (4) are between the ages of 16 and 19 and 44 and 47 (6.3%), respectively. Furthermore, the finding shows that 42 participants, or 66.7%, are college graduates, while 12 participants or 19% are vocational graduates, six participants, or 9.5%, chose to be high school graduates, and three participants, or 4.8%, have master's degrees in their fields of specialization. It also shows that the majority of participants or 66.7% are new to the industry and have only been in business for two years or less. 12 participants or 9%, are currently in the third or fourth year of their business, while the remaining eight participants, or 12.7%, started their business five to six years ago, and one participant is at its 9 – 10 years of being a rabbit farmer. Nevertheless, majority participants start – up capital are ranging from 20,000 pesos or less. For some of the farmers who have a higher financial capacity they started their business from 20,001 to 160,000 pesos depending on the size of their respective farms.

The Department of Agriculture (DA) reported that due to their simplicity of reproduction, which only takes a very simple technicality in production, ability to be raised by anyone, regardless of age, and low production costs, many Filipino farmers have developed an interest in raising rabbits for meat. The domestic rabbit differs from other livestock in that it matures sexually earlier, reproduces more frequently, has a shorter gestation period, grows quickly, has good foraging skills, can use fibrous plant materials and agricultural byproducts, converts feed more effectively, costs less per breeding female, and is profitable in backyard and small-scale production systems (Abd-Allah & Abd-Elaziz. 2018).

**Research Instrument** - The researcher used a mixed-method approach in the study, which means that the research instruments used were the researcher-made survey questionnaires and interview guide. In assessing the challenges encountered and marketing capabilities a five (5)-item interview guide was used to explore the challenges faced and marketing capabilities of rabbitry in Occidental Mindoro. A personal interview survey, also called a face to face survey, is a survey method that is used when a specific target population is involved (Wang et al., 2021). In the interview, the interviewer used the exact same questions on specific topics for each interview, and those questions are carefully worded to avoid ambiguity or specific undesired connotations (Thibodeaux, 2018).

In the field of examining the inferential problems, researcher-made questionnaire was used for the rabbit raisers/farmers in Occidental Mindoro to determine the challenges encountered, marketing capabilities and coping strategies used by the raisers/farmers to face the challenges. The researcher conducted an online and face to face survey to gather the information in the descriptive and inferential part of the qualitative portion of the study. The five-point Likert scale for responses were used in the given statements such as: (5)- Strongly Agree, (4)- Agree, (3)- Moderate Agree, (2)- Disagree and (1)- Strongly Disagree.

**Table 1**

*Result of the Reliability Analysis*

Items	Reliability Coefficients	Interpretation
Challenges Encountered (25)	0.840	High Reliability
Coping Strategies (30)	0.921	Very High Reliability
Marketing Opportunities (20)	0.977	Very High Reliability

\*Spearman Brown Coefficients of Equal Length

In addition, the completed framework of the survey instrument was consulted to the experts in the field of the study to establish its face and validity. The researcher asked assistance from the professors and experts from Divine Word College of San Jose-Graduate School and Occidental Mindoro State College to assess the accuracy and relevance of the items that were being measured. To improve the instrument, all necessary suggestions were accepted and applied. There were 75 items that have been tested for the inter-item reliability of the instrument using the test-retest method. The reliability test was administered twice to fifteen respondents from Oriental Mindoro. A one-week interval has been allotted before the second administration of the questionnaire was done. Using the Cronbach's Alpha measure based on standardized items, the internal consistency has been established and the results are presented in table 1. A generally very high reliability of the items in the instrument has been established based on the reliability coefficients presented on the table which range from 0.840 to 0.977. The questionnaire can be administered to the final group of respondents in Occidental Mindoro.

**Data Gathering Procedure** - In gathering the data needed by the study, a letter containing the details of the research were sent to the respondents. Personal consent has been solicited if they can become participants in the study. Actual interview and visitation to the rabbit farms followed. Observation also included for the information not covered in the interview. Documentations pertaining to the business and industry have been utilized. However, survey questionnaires were used for the quantitative data, while interviews were utilized for gathering qualitative data. Before the survey, the researcher explained the questionnaire and answered the inquiries of the respondents. The respondents were encouraged by the researcher to provide honest answers to ensure gathering information-rich and reliable data for the study.

**Statistical Treatment of the Data** - Thematic analysis is a qualitative research method used to identify and analyze patterns or themes within data. It involves systematically categorizing and coding data into themes or patterns, which are then interpreted to provide insight into the research question or topic of interest (Braun and Clarke, 2019). Thematic analysis was done to describe the results of the qualitative problems. To give answers to the descriptive problems about the respondents' profile, frequencies, percentages were used. While in terms of the extent of challenges encountered by the rabbitries in Occidental Mindoro, marketing capability of rabbitries, and coping strategies are employed by them, weighted means were utilized. Computations were done using the Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) version 26. The MAIR model was utilized in the study by adapting

the four pillars including motivation, ability, idea, and resources as the indicator of marketing capability of the respondents. Statistical tests to give answers to the inferential problems involving the possible influence of challenges encountered on both marketing capability and coping strategies employed and the influence of marketing capability on coping strategies, the study used the Structural Equation Modeling (SEM). It is a multivariate statistical analysis technique that is used to analyze structural relationships between and among latent variables. The structural models and beta coefficients were processed using the statistical software, WARPPLS version 7.

### 3. Results and Discussions

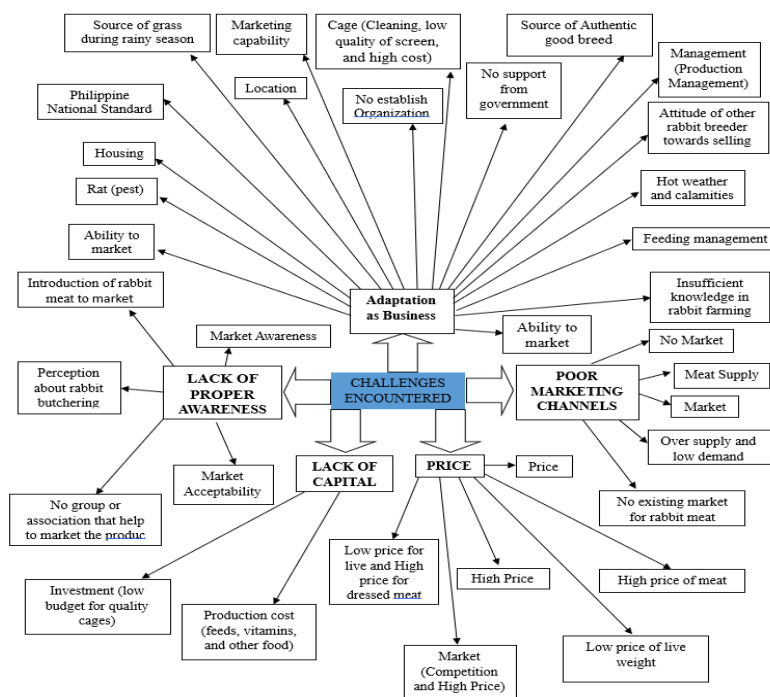
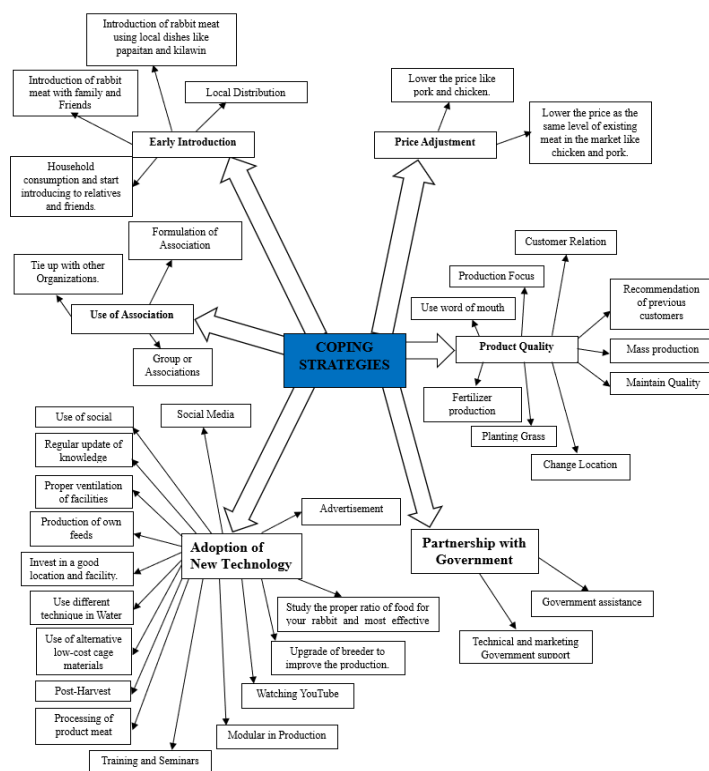


Figure 1. Thematic diagram of challenges encountered by rabbitries in Occidental Mindoro

The research revealed five (5) major difficulties that the rabbitry encountered while it was in operation, including: lack of proper awareness, price, adaptation as business, lack of capital, and poor marketing channel. All of these difficulties were the result of the rabbitry's restricted social and economic activity in Occidental Mindoro. The main difficulties in raising rabbits include lack of proper awareness, price, adaption as business, lack of capital and poor marketing channels (Odinwa et al., 2016). The President of the Cordillera Rabbit Breeders Association in the Philippines mentioned that some of the major issues with rabbitry in the nation, particularly for business, include a lack of experts in rabbit raising as well as expensive materials for cages, accessories, and the cost of high-quality stocks. This was stated in an article published by the Department of Agriculture in 2020. The price of rabbit meat is higher than that of other types of meat on the market as a result of low market acceptance of lapan (rabbit meat) by the general public; however, the livestock industry's sales and marketing are returning to normal, and the increase in sales and marketing associated with rabbit production is not long-lasting. Promoting the production of rabbit meat back then required a significant effort, and it was quite challenging to alter people's perspectives. According to the research by Karaca et al. (2018), one of the primary reasons for the low consumption of rabbit meat is a lack of familiarity with the product. In addition, there may be negative perceptions of rabbit meat as a food source due to cultural or religious beliefs.



**Figure 2.** Thematic diagram of coping strategies employed by rabbitries in Occidental Mindoro

The summarized interview identified six (6) coping strategies employed by the rabbitry that help them to overcome the challenges including: early introduction, adoption of new technology, use of association, partnership with government, product quality, price adjustment. The rabbitry used multiple coping strategies to overcome the challenges that they encountered.

**Table 2**

*Mean extent of the challenges encountered by rabbitries*

Challenges Encountered	Overall Mean	Interpretation
Lack of Proper Awareness	3.57	High Extent
Price	3.24	Moderate Extent
Adaption as business	2.27	Moderate Extent
Lack of capital	3.57	High Extent
Poor Marketing Channel	3.54	High Extent

Scale: 4.50-5.00- Very High Extent; 3.50-4.49-High Extent; 2.50-3.49- Moderate Extent; 1.50-2.49 -Low Extent; 1.00-1.49- Very Low Extent

Table 2 presents the descriptive analysis of the challenges encountered by rabbitries in Occidental Mindoro in terms of lack of proper awareness, price, adaptation as business, lack of capital and poor marketing channels. It was revealed that challenges in terms of lack of proper awareness were evaluated to a high extent with a means of 3.57, 3.24, 2.27, 3.57 and 3.54 respectively. It shows that rabbitries in Occidental Mindoro found problems with regards to marketing rabbit meat due to lack of proper awareness of the public. This perception is deeply ingrained in many cultures, and it can be difficult to change people's minds. Many people, especially in the Philippines, disagree with the idea of utilizing rabbits as an alternative meat source because they think they are primarily grown for use as pets (AgriMag, 2020). Even though rabbits have long been a popular household pet in many houses, the largest obstacle in the Philippines to widespread rabbit production is the ongoing hesitation and stigma associated with eating rabbit meat (Veneracion, 2017). Thus, a lack of familiarity with the product,

according to research by Karaca, et al. (2018), is one of the main causes of the poor consumption of rabbit meat. In addition, cultural or religious beliefs may contribute to unfavorable impressions of rabbit meat as a food source.

The assessment of the challenges in terms of price with a mean of 3.24 and interpreted as moderate shows that the cost of production and distribution of rabbit meat is relatively high compared to the price that consumers are willing to pay. This can create financial difficulties for rabbit farmers, who may struggle to cover their costs and maintain profitability. Prices have an impact on what people choose to purchase. Consumers typically compare prices of numerous brands before making a purchase. Fresh meat consumption is negatively impacted by price increases, and customers seek alternatives (Demirtas, 2018). Pricing adjustments consequently have an effect on demand, sales volume, and market share (Izarul et al., 2020). The cost of rabbit meat is also unnecessarily high compared to pig and chicken on the market, which is less of a concern to the owners of rabbitries, who have also made this point. On the other hand, many people mistakenly believe that expensive items are more important and beneficial than cheap ones (Zarifah et al., 2020).

Moreover, the major challenges highly reported by the respondents in terms of adoption as business were the fact that there is still no government support locally specifically in the financial, technical and promotion of rabbit meat with a mean of 3.43. Similarly, Benson (2014) claimed that technical expertise affected how commercial rabbit production changed. Due to their resistance to adopting the new technologies since they are still exposed to the conventional methods of rearing rabbits, the adoption of new farming technologies has led to low performance and profitability (Mustisya, 2014). Additionally, rabbit meat is not covered by the Philippine National Standard or the Implementing Rules and Regulation of the Philippines, which has a significant impact on how well-liked rabbit meat is among customers. The purpose of this Code is to ensure that environmental management practices and animal welfare standards are followed in meat production, all while ensuring that hygienic processes are followed from the raising of animals to the slaughter and distribution of meat.

To offset their rising costs, many businesses are compelled to increase their pricing. One of the major challenges facing rabbit farmers is the lack of capital. According to a report by the Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO), inadequate funding is a common constraint among smallholder rabbit farmers in developing countries (FAO, 2020). Lack of capital can limit the capacity of rabbit farmers to purchase quality breeds, inputs such as feeds and medicines, and equipment for efficient rabbit production. Furthermore, a study conducted by Oladele et al. (2021) on the challenges of rabbit production in Nigeria identified lack of capital as a significant barrier to the growth and sustainability of the rabbit farming industry. The study found that most rabbit farmers in Nigeria are unable to access loans or grants due to strict eligibility criteria, high interest rates, and lack of collateral. Lastly, poor marketing channel is one of the high extent challenges that rabbitry encountered in Occidental Mindoro with the overall mean of 3.54. Absence of a viable well-established market can cause a lot of burden for the industry that is newly introduced to the market. Without effective marketing channels, rabbit farmers may struggle to sell their products, which can result in reduced profits and even loss of business. This can lead to a situation where there is an oversupply of rabbit products in certain areas, while other areas may have a high demand but are not being reached by the farmers. As a result, farmers may be forced to sell their products at lower prices than they would like, or even be unable to sell their products at all. Low consumer demand for rabbit meat, insufficient advertising, inconsistent product availability, expensive expenses, and a lack of product variety all contributed to the poor marketing strategies that appeared in the Ogohi (2018) study. This low demand for rabbit meat reduces the profitability of rabbit farming, as farmers are unable to sell their products at competitive prices.

It can be seen in table 3 the result of analysis conducted on the marketing capability of rabbitry in Occidental Mindoro in terms of motivation, ability, idea and resources with corresponding weighted means of 3.71, 3.28, 3.38 and 3.54 respectively.



**Table 3***Mean Extent of the Marketing Capability of Rabbitries in terms of Motivation, Ability, Idea and Resources*

Marketing Capability	Overall Mean	Interpretation
Motivation	3.71	High Extent
Ability	3.23	Moderate Extent
Idea	3.38	Moderate Extent
Resources	3.54	High Extent

*Scale:* 4.50-5.00- Very High Extent; 3.50-4.49-High Extent; 2.50-3.49- Moderate Extent; 1.50-2.49 -Low Extent; 1.00-1.49- Very Low Extent

Determining the factors that motivate customers to buy and encourage others to use and consume rabbit products is important for the success of the rabbit farming industry. According to a study by Singh et al. (2018), understanding consumer motivations is critical for developing effective marketing strategies that target the right audience and communicate the value of rabbit products. The recent study by Zhou et al. (2021) found that health and environmental concerns are among the most important motivators for consumers to purchase rabbit products. The study found that consumers perceive rabbit products as healthier and more environmentally friendly than other meat products, which makes them a more attractive option for health-conscious and environmentally conscious consumers. Moreover, a study by Hossain et al. (2023) found that the taste and sensory attributes of rabbit meat are also important factors that motivate consumers to buy and encourage others to use and consume rabbit products.

In addition, the marketing capability in terms of ability got the overall mean of 3.23 which is interpreted as moderate. This implies that the rabbitry owners are not equipped enough with abilities to establish a well-established market for rabbit meat. The commonality of participants' evaluation in the area was perceived as its indicator that states that the rabbitry owners can utilize the modern technology to reach my customers, which has an interpretation of high extent. The ability to utilize modern technology in marketing is becoming increasingly important for rabbit farmers. By utilizing modern technology, such as social media, websites, and online marketplaces, rabbit farmers can reach a wider audience of potential customers. This can help to expand their market and increase their sales. Customer interactions have a big impact on whether a business succeeds or fails. Consumers who receive poor customer service may choose to do business with the company's competitors, but loyal customers and repeat business are fostered through solid relationships. Gaining clear marketing prospects for any organization requires the capacity for creativity and effective interaction with market participants. In addition, Ahmadi, et al. (2014) pointed out in their study that A new technical business used marketing communication to promote the benefits of its products. Possessing the ability to differentiate one's product offerings from those of competitors might generate value. Strong marketing communication skills enable companies to more effectively identify, interact with, and serve their markets, which boosts business performance (Hao & Song, 2016; Takahashi et al., 2016). Marketing communication skills may give businesses a competitive edge, especially for exporting businesses that can balance their national and international communication initiatives (Pham et al., 2017).

Furthermore, the ideal indicator of marketing capability of rabbitry owners in Occidental Mindoro was interpreted as moderate, and it indicates that the owners know how to utilize different promotional tool to market the rabbit meat. The descriptor that occupies the highest mean in this area is the ability of the respondents to promote the products using different ways like selling veggies or plants by using rabbit manure as fertilizer, which indicates that having a wide range of knowledge about the business may open opportunities to offer more options for the market. The same with the study of Saari (2015), ideas are crucial for organizations because they serve as the foundation for innovation, which in turn serves as an endless source of competitive advantage. Concepts can be targeted for academic research and later implemented in the routine operations of organizations with the right conceptualization. Organizations need ideas because innovation depends on them, and innovation is a constant source of competitive advantage. The proper articulation of concepts facilitates both the focus of academic study and their possible application to ongoing commercial activities. The design and marketing of new products, as well as the creation of effective marketing strategies and ad content, all depend on ideation

(Spyropoulos, 2019). Ideation is a necessary component of a marketing team's duties. It entails coming up with novel, imaginative ways to engage the audience and encourage growth. Because every innovative marketing program or campaign is built on ideas. Finding new content ideas, sales tools, or ways to get in touch with potential customers might be considered ideation on a more tactical level (Dorow et al., 2015).

Lastly, for the resources as marketing capability with a mean of 3.54, implies that there are a lot of marketing resources that the rabbitry owners can utilize to market the rabbit meat. Associations and groups can help rabbit farmers to stay up to date with the latest trends and best practices in the industry. They can provide training and education on topics like rabbit breeding, nutrition, and disease prevention, as well as offer resources like research papers and industry reports. This can help to build a sense of community and support, as well as provide opportunities for farmers to share ideas, resources, and experiences (Veneracion, 2018). Associations and other forms of groups can play an important role in helping the rabbit industry to grow in the market in a number of ways like providing education and resources, networking opportunities, advocacy and lobbying, market promotion, and research and development. Associations and other forms of groups can provide valuable support and resources to help rabbit farmers grow and thrive in the market (Marketing Channels in the Supply Chain, n.d.). Physical products regularly use direct selling, selling through intermediaries, dual distribution, and reverse marketing as a marketing channel for product distribution and promotion which become one of the benefits of groups and associations (Pelton et al., 2016).

**Table 4**

*Mean Extent of the Coping Strategies employed by Rabbitries*

Coping Strategies	Overall Mean	Interpretation
Early Introduction	3.91	High Extent
Adoption of new technology	3.72	High Extent
Use of Association	3.74	High Extent
Partnership with Government	3.83	High Extent
Product Quality	3.94	High Extent
Price Adjustment	3.86	High Extent

*Scale:* 4.50-5.00- Very High Extent; 3.50-4.49-High Extent; 2.50-3.49- Moderate Extent; 1.50-2.49 -Low Extent; 1.00-1.49- Very Low Extent

It can be seen in the Table 4 that the respondents agreed highly on the extent of coping strategies in terms of early introduction, adoption of new technology, use of association, partnership with government, product quality and price adjustment with the overall mean of 3.91, 3.72, 3.74, 3.83, 3.94 and 3.86 respectively which are all interpreted as high. The result indicates that the rabbitries are frequently relying on the early introduction to cope with the challenges encountered. Farmers of rabbits may participate in a variety of government programs, including trade exhibits and other occasions that will promote the product and inform the market about it. By distributing rabbit meat to their friends, family, neighbors, and those nearby, they may also start enlightening the public. Instead of the public hearing about it in the news or seeing it on social media, farmers may start selling rabbit meat in the market to inform them that there is already a product available. As stated in the article in the Economic Times (2022) new products are typically expected to earn little at first, thus in order to boost sales, a company needs to spend money on advertising to make the product appealing to customers. The rabbit business needs to improve its extension services in rural areas (Tembachako et al., 2017). In the investigation of Tan (2020), it was pointed out that the business should have focused on the health aspect and used this to determine his target market. Utilizing the positive effects that eating rabbit meat has on Filipino families' health is a particularly smart marketing strategy. To increase the popularity of rabbit meat among Filipinos, Sarmiento (2021) also noted in his study that Marketing strategies and efforts to create solid stocks must start at home with friends, family, and the neighborhood.

The overall mean of adoption of new technology is 3.72 and interpreted as high. It means that rabbit farmers are frequently turning to technological solutions to help them overcome difficulties or challenges they face in their work. In its manufacture, particularly while marketing its product(s), Rabbitry may take into account contemporary technology. A business can use social media to its advantage in a variety of ways, such as gaining

new customers, gathering customer feedback, fostering customer loyalty, expanding into international markets, conducting market research, lowering marketing costs, increasing sales through customer networks and advertising, building your brand, exchanging ideas to improve operations, and hiring qualified staff, for example through job networking sites like LinkedIn (Business.gov.ae, 2022). According to Dlamini et al. (2020), social media platforms such as Facebook and Twitter can be used to showcase the benefits of rabbit farming, share success stories, and connect with potential customers and partners.

Meanwhile, the data also revealed a high level of agreement in two descriptors, group and association can help to acquire knowledge and material to improve the production (increase productivity, upgrade of breeders and develop new sets of new products) and promote and develop a vibrant rabbit sector with a mean of 3.87. This means that the group and association of rabbit breeders and enthusiasts have a great impact on the improvement of the business and promoting healthy competition and harmonious relationships among members of the group. As advocated by ARaMP, Inc., one of the registered associations in the Philippines, utilizing associations can assist in lowering the excessively high costs of rabbit meat, promoting and developing a vibrant rabbit business, encouraging healthy competition among farmers, ensuring the long-term viability of the rabbit meat sector, and disseminating cutting-edge technology. The group also advocated for government involvement in all business-related initiatives for the growth and promotion of the sector (Veneracion, 2017).

The overall result of the assessment under product also shows a high result of evaluation with a mean of 3.94. The result implies that the rabbitries rely on the rabbit meat qualities to overcome the challenges that they encountered. Rabbit is a particularly nutrient-dense meat that can benefit the community and has a sufficient supply of farmers to support the market. Additionally, a reliable supply chain for rabbit supplies is important to ensure that the products meet high quality and safety standards. This requires that the rabbit farmers have access to reliable and high-quality inputs like feed, veterinary services, and equipment. A consistent supply of these inputs will help farmers maintain the quality and safety of their products. Product excellence is essential since it affects a company's success and helps to establish its reputation in target markets. The look and nutritional advantages of rabbit meat have been identified as characteristics that attract more purchasers in the Philippines, according to a study by Estioko et al. (2020). It also stated that customers are drawn to choosing rabbit meat because of its visually appealing texture and color. Rabbit meat is valued for its nutritional qualities since it is lean, rich in proteins with high biological value, low in cholesterol, high in linolenic acid, and other nutritional benefits which provide a great impact to its marketability (Nistor et al., 2013).

Lastly, the high result of the evaluation of the respondent in the price adjustment shows the overall mean of 3.86. It reveals that price adjustment is one of the most reliable coping strategies to overcome the challenges that the rabbitry encountered. Prices should adjust to reflect market developments and the level of competition (FrogDog Magazine, 2019). Price reduction may have a significant impact on Filipinos' attitudes and behaviors, encouraging them to give it a try, as mentioned in the study of Esguerra (2021). Price decrease may significantly affect Filipinos' attitudes and behaviors regarding trying it, according to Esguerra (2021) in his article. If rabbit meat was ever to be priced similarly to that of chicken and pork, more rabbit farmers would also be required. Also, although traditional cooking is revered in the country just as it is in Hungary, Szendr et al. (2020) found that the lower price of rabbit carcasses has a substantial influence on consumer behavior, encouraging many people to incorporate rabbit as one of their sources of meat at home.

An emerging model as presented in Figure 3 finalizes the direct link of the latent variables used in the study which came out as a result of structural equation analysis. The challenges encountered by the rabbit owners appear to influence inversely on both marketing capabilities and on coping strategies. Marketing capability reveals a positive influence on the coping strategies employed by the rabbit owners. A large percentage of variability ( $R^2=0.62$  or 62%) in the coping strategies employed can be attributed to the variability in the encountered challenges by the rabbit owners. Meanwhile, a very small percentage of variability ( $R^2=0.06$  or 6%) in the marketing capabilities of the rabbit owners can be accounted for by the different levels of challenges encountered in the business.

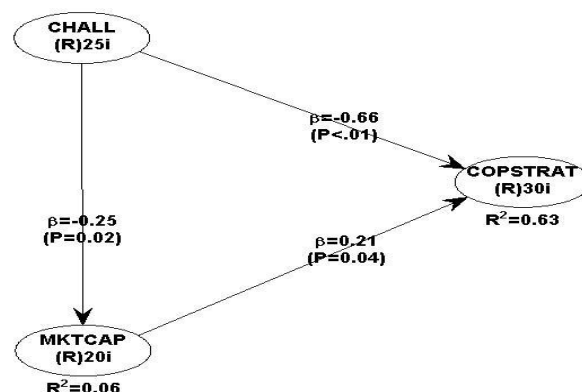


Figure 3. The Emerging Model

Table 5 discloses the results of the three tests of hypotheses, namely: the challenges encountered influence the marketing capability of rabbitries in Occidental Mindoro, the challenges encountered influence the coping strategies employed by the rabbitries, and the marketing capabilities influence the coping strategies employed by the rabbitries.

Table 5

Path Coefficients *p*-values and effect size

Path	Coefficients	<i>p</i> -values	Effect Size*	Interpretation
CHALL→MKTCAP	-0.251	0.017	0.063	Significant
CHALL→COPSTRAT	-0.664	<0.001	0.512	Significant
MKTCAP→COPSTRAT	0.212	0.038	0.115	Significant

\*\*Significant at  $p < 0.05$

\* Effect size coefficient: 0.02 – small, 0.15 – medium, 0.30 – large

The statistical tests suggest the rejection of the null hypotheses. Results reveal that the rabbitries' challenges encountered pose an inverse but significant effect on the marketing capabilities showing a beta coefficient of -0.251. When challenges encountered were correlated to coping strategies, it recorded a moderate coefficient of -0.664. It can be noted that the challenges encountered by the rabbit raisers have an inverse effect on the marketing capabilities and coping strategies. Rabbit raising, like any agricultural business, requires significant resources, knowledge, and expertise to be successful. However, rabbit raisers often face a variety of challenges that can limit their ability to develop and implement effective marketing strategies, including limited financial resources, lack of access to market information, and limited knowledge and skills (Adegbite et al., 2018).

These challenges can negatively impact rabbit raisers' marketing capabilities by limiting their ability to invest in marketing and promotional activities, which can reduce their reach and engagement with customers and result in lower sales and reduced demand for their products (Anoruo et al., 2019). Furthermore, the lack of marketing success can further reduce rabbit raisers' financial resources, which can limit their ability to invest in marketing and promotional activities in the future (Owens et al., 2020). In response to these challenges, some rabbit raisers may adopt coping strategies such as reducing their production or relying on informal and informal channels to sell their products (Smith et al., 2021). However, these strategies can also limit their marketing capabilities, as they may not reach as many customers or generate as much demand for their products as more formal marketing channels (Oladele et al., 2018).

Therefore, it is important for rabbit raisers to address the challenges they encounter and to invest in marketing and promotional activities in order to build their marketing capabilities. By developing effective marketing strategies, rabbit raisers can increase their reach and engagement with customers, generate more demand for their products, and ultimately build a more successful and sustainable business (Okonkwo et al.,

2023). Generally, a direct relationship is established between marketing capabilities and coping strategies with 0.212 coefficient. The p-values of 0.017, .01, and 0.038 denote significant relationships among the latent variables. Strong marketing skills help rabbit farmers better identify customer demand, connect with customers through various media, and create demand for their products (Anoruo et al., 2019). Therefore, it is important for rabbit farmers to invest in building their marketing capabilities in order to effectively cope with market challenges and build a successful and sustainable business. This may involve developing marketing strategies, investing in marketing and promotional activities, and acquiring the knowledge and skills necessary to effectively market their products (Okonkwo et al., 2023). These suggest the rejection of the hypotheses.

#### **4. Conclusions**

Based on the hypothesis and findings of the study, the following conclusions were drawn: Based on the interview, it can be concluded that the rabbitry faces several challenges that hinder its success as a business. To overcome these challenges, the rabbitry may need to focus on improving their marketing strategies, finding ways to reduce costs and increase efficiency, and exploring funding options to support their operations. Based on the interview, it can be concluded that the rabbitry has employed several coping strategies to overcome the challenges they face. These strategies have helped the rabbitry to improve their business operations, increase their customer base, and overcome some of the challenges they face. Continued focus on these strategies, along with ongoing innovation and adaptation, may help the rabbitry to achieve long-term success as a business.

Majority of the participants are located at San Jose, Calintaan and Sablayan, and new to the industry and have only been in business for two years or less. Most of them are 28 to 31 years old and are college graduates, with start – up capital ranging from 20,000 pesos or less. These findings suggest that there is potential for growth and development in the rabbit farming industry in Occidental Mindoro, particularly if efforts are made to support new entrants and address some of the key challenges facing the industry. Awareness, capital, and marketing channel of the rabbitries must be given priorities of the rabbitry association in Occidental Mindoro. As beginners in the rabbit industry success can be seen due to the highly motivated rabbit farmers with good resources. It is concluded that the challenges faced by rabbit farmers can negatively impact their marketing capabilities, resulting in reduced sales and profits. The null hypothesis has been rejected, indicating that these challenges cannot be ignored and need to be addressed in order to support rabbit farmers in effectively reaching new customers and competing in the market. Based on the results, it can be concluded that there is a positive significant relationship between marketing capability and coping strategies employed by rabbitry. It can be concluded that the major challenges encountered by rabbit farmers have a significant inverse effect on the coping strategies employed by them. This means that as the challenges increase, coping strategies tend to decrease. The null hypothesis has been rejected, indicating that these challenges cannot be ignored as they can negatively impact the ability of rabbit farmers to cope effectively.

##### *4.1 Recommendations*

The study was conducted with an objective of determining challenges encountered, marketing capability and coping strategy of rabbitry in Occidental Mindoro. Based on findings, the following are hereby recommended: The rabbitries should invest in strengthening the marketing and spread of awareness about rabbit consumption by means of all available marketing tools that they could utilize. Multi-pronged approach that includes partner with local restaurants and chefs, use social media platforms, attend food festivals, and trade shows. Rabbit meat should be offered gradually on the public market and select the best location for the physical store like Rizal Street or Labangan Poblacion, San Jose, Occidental Mindoro which are considered as most accessible and center of trade in the area. To control the price of rabbit meat in the Philippines it requires a comprehensive approach, the farmers should increase production efficiency, promote consumption, encourage price transparency, and with the government regulating importation. The rabbitries in the area should actively participate in different activities of government and strengthen the connection by securing business registration for easy access to grants and supports, continuously participate in agricultural fairs and exhibitions, and join different training and seminars

provided by the government. To overcome the lack of capital, rabbitries may consider applications for micro-financing programs. They can also consider forming a cooperative or diversifying their income streams by exploring alternative markets for their rabbits. Rabbitry owners may consider adopting new technology in the production of rabbit meat like feed production, feeding system and housing improvement to minimize the cost and increase productivity.

The farmers should continue strengthening the promotion of rabbit meat in the area using various promotional tools like tarpaulins, social media, offering rabbit meat gradually on the public market and selecting the best location for the physical store like rizal street or labangan población which considered as most accessible and center of trade in the area. They might also consider active participation in the San Jose night market to promote rabbit meat, where they could sell frozen meat goods like tocino, ready-to-eat sisig, siomai, longganisa, and patties, and at same time promote the advocacy of introducing rabbit meat in the area. Rabbitries may also sponsor market research to determine changes occurred and predict future uncertainties that they may encounter. Sablayan Penal Colony may embark on this sustainable program since it has a wide range of land area suitable for rabbit farming and at the same time it could be a good and sustainable livelihood for the persons deprived of liberty to earn a living for themselves. Future researchers should conduct different research like comparative study to evaluate the commonality of situations encountered by the rabbitries in other places.

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