



Prifysgol Cymru
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University of Wales
Trinity Saint David

ASSIGNMENT TITLE:

E-PORTFOLIO EVIDENCE OF LEARNING

MODULE:

IUBA5010 CHANGEMAKERS: APPLYING A RESEARCH MINDSET

LECTURER:

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Task 1: Outlining Problem

Mrs. Claire and her sister-in-law, Mrs. Catherine Yong, established the Catherine & Claire Cakery in Bintulu, Sarawak, in 2013. At first, they made cookies and cakes for their loved ones. They started selling homemade baked products to friends and neighbours since people liked them. They began selling their goods online as demand grew, and over time they branched out into pastries, gifts sets, local favourites, and event services.

Based on observations, the bakery has seen a surge in orders and client demand, particularly around holidays like Christmas and Hari Raya. The bakery is under increased demand during certain times as more people purchase cakes, cookies, and other baked goods. During these periods, more customers place orders for cakes, cookies and other baked products, which put additional pressure on the bakery. Sometimes employees have to work fast to finish orders on time, which could lead to errors in preparation, baking, decorating, and packaging. Additionally, food trends are constantly evolving, clients have varying needs and preferences. As a result, the bakery must be able to adapt and be capable of meeting shifting client needs.

Growing orders may put strain on the bakery's limited staff, equipment, time, and manufacturing capacity, which could become a problem. Errors like faulty design, inaccurate quantities, or variable product quality might happen when staff members are hurrying to finish a lot of orders. Customers want the bakery to deliver goods that are appealing, fresh and consistent with their orders, thus maintaining quality is crucial. The bakery may encounter delays, employee tension, and unsatisfied customers if it is unable to balance client demand with its available capacity. Simultaneously, the bakery must adjust to changing food trends and consumer preferences in order to maintain its competitiveness, draw in new clients, and foster ongoing economic expansion.



Picture 1: Limited workforce during festive seasons



Picture 2: Festive Gift Sets



Picture 3: Delivering customer's unique order

Task 2: AI Literation Exploration

I started by researching the larger body of scholarly literature on the expansion, survival, and sustainability of small and micro firms in order to deepen my comprehension of the issue raised in Task 1. I utilised Generative AI to locate pertinent terminology, concepts and findings before narrowing the literature towards small food and bakery businesses. OpenAI ChatGPT was the AI provider used.

Prompt 1:

I am interested in understanding why some small businesses are able to grow and remain sustainable over the long term. Explore recent academic literature on small business growth, business sustainability and long-term survival. Identify the main concepts, terminology, theories and findings that researchers use to explain successful growth and sustainability in small businesses. Prioritise peer-reviewed academic literature published within the last five years.

Selected AI output:

“Key concepts identified include entrepreneurial competencies, innovation, customer orientation, adaptability, operational capabilities, organisational learning and business resilience.”

Prompt 2:

Explore recent academic literature concerning the growth and sustainability of small food businesses, including bakeries and home-based food businesses. Identify the main challenges and success factors discussed by researchers, particularly in relation to entrepreneurial capabilities, innovation, customer expectations, employee capabilities, operational capacity and adaptation to market changes.

Selected AI output:

“The literature on micro and small businesses highlights several factors that can influence growth, survival and sustainability. These include entrepreneurial competencies, innovation, customer orientation, employee capabilities, operational management, resource management and adaptability. Entrepreneurial competencies can help business owners identify opportunities and make effective decisions, while innovation can allow small businesses to respond to changing customer needs and market conditions. Customer orientation is important for understanding customer expectations and maintaining relationships, whereas employee capabilities and operational management can influence the consistency and efficiency of business activities. Adaptability is also important because small businesses often operate with limited resources and may need to respond quickly to changes in customer preferences, competition and the wider business environment.”

Findings from the academic literature

Entrepreneurial competency is an idea that persistently comes up. Fazal et al. (2022) researched 403 micro-entrepreneurs in Malaysia and discovered that entrepreneurial competency was positively correlated with enterprise sustainability performance, whereas self-confidence, openness to change, and other motivating characteristics were linked to entrepreneurial competency. This implies that an entrepreneur's knowledge, abilities, and attitudes might affect a microbusiness's capacity to survive.

Next, resilience and adaptability also emerged as important concepts. Choong (2023) found that adaptability was associated with business resilience among Malaysian SMEs. Similarly, entrepreneurial approach, competencies, business procedures, and collaboration were shown to be significant themes linking sustainability and resilience in SMEs in a recent systematic review by Damiano and Valenza (2025).

Another important concept is innovation. According to Nasiri et al. (2022), digital orientation had an impact on small enterprises' sustainable innovation, proving that both internal and external factors can influence how small organisations innovate. However, since innovation's efficacy varies depending on the business environment, it shouldn't be taken for granted that it would result in sustainability. Additionally, customer orientation is important. Using data from 400 SMEs, Lee et al. (2021) discovered important connections between social sustainability outcomes involving consumer orientation.

Relevance to the Observed Business Problem

These concepts can be compared through observations of Catherine & Claire Cakery. Mrs. Claire's acquisition of business and baking abilities via workshops and self-study is related to entrepreneurial competency. The bakery's growth from cakes to cookies to pastries, gift sets, local favourites, and event services is an example of innovation. Adaptability and customer orientation are related to adapting to shifting market trends and various client preferences. Because growing orders may put pressure on manufacturers to maintain product quality, operational capabilities and personnel skills are particularly important.

The evidence nevertheless does also suggest that these variables might interact rather than function separately. For instance, launching new products could encourage expansion but also put more strain on operations. In a similar vein, taking more orders can boost revenue but complicate quality control. Consequently, more research is needed to identify the most important elements in particular the setting of Catherine & Claire Cakery.

Task 3: Research Questions

Prompt 1: Developing possible Research Questions

Based on the academic literature explored in, help me develop several possible research questions for a study about the growth and sustainability of a small home-based bakery business. The business is Catherine & Claire Cakery, a home-based bakery in Bintulu, Sarawak. The research should focus on realistic factors that can be investigated through a small-scale undergraduate research project. Do not make the research question too broad or require a large sample. Suggest 3–5 possible research questions and briefly explain the focus of each.

Selected AI output:

“Possible research questions include: (1) What factors contribute to the growth and sustainability of Catherine & Claire Cakery as a home-based bakery business? (2) How do entrepreneurial competencies, customer orientation and adaptability influence the growth and sustainability of a home-based bakery business? (3) What strategies does Catherine & Claire Cakery use to manage challenges associated with business growth and sustainability? (4) How does innovation contribute to the growth and sustainability of a home-based bakery business?”

I chose “What factors contribute to the growth and sustainability of Catherine & Claire Cakery as a home-based bakery business in Bintulu” from the suggested questions because it is sufficiently focused while still allowing the exploration of other elements mentioned.

I also considered whether the phrases were overly broad. It is more reasonable to focus on a single company rather than enquiring about all Malaysian home-based bakeries. It also enables me to delve deeper into the business owner’s tactics and experiences. A qualitative case study method is suitable for investigating an actual company inside its particular setting.

Prompt 2: Choosing a Research Approach

For the research question “What factors contribute to the growth and sustainability of Catherine & Claire Cakery as a home-based bakery business?”, recommend a realistic research approach for a final-year undergraduate research project. The study will focus on one home-based bakery in Bintulu, Sarawak. Compare qualitative and quantitative approaches and recommend the most suitable research philosophy, research design, data collection method and sampling method. Consider that the researcher has direct access to the business owner but limited time and resources.

Selected AI output:

“A qualitative research approach would be most suitable because the research question seeks to explore the experiences, strategies and factors contributing to the growth and sustainability of one specific home-based bakery. An interpretivist philosophy could be adopted because the study focuses on understanding the business owner’s experiences and interpretations of business growth and sustainability. A single-case study design would allow the researcher to examine Catherine & Claire Cakery in its real-world context. Semi-structured interviews with the business owner would provide detailed information while allowing follow-up questions. Purposive sampling would be appropriate because the owner has direct knowledge of the business and its development. Supporting evidence, such as business social-media content, photographs, menus or other available documents, could also be used to strengthen the findings.”

Since the research question asks what elements contribute to the growth and sustainability of a specific organization, I would apply a qualitative research approach. The goal is to comprehend the owner’s experiences, choices, difficulties, and tactics rather than to scientifically measure the link between variables.

Also, considering the research will aim to comprehend the significance and experiences associated with business growth and sustainability from the owner’s perspective, an interpretivist philosophy is applicable. This is especially useful when investigating a small business when the owner’s own expertise and experiences are valuable information sources.

For data collection, I would interview the business owner in a semi-structured manner because this would enable predetermined enquiries based on the elements while still allowing the owner to provide a thorough explanation of experiences. For instance, Malaysian SMEs also have been using this approach for research purposes to explore business practices and sustainability.

To strengthen the research, I could also examine supporting documentation like the bakery's social media accounts, product photos, menus, or other relevant business documents to bolster the study.

Task 4: Research Proposal Summary

Catherine & Claire Cakery is the selected case for this study, focusing on a home-based bakery located in Bintulu, Sarawak. From a modest family run bakery, the company has grown into a thriving bakery offering a wide range of baked goods to its customers. However, there are shortcomings to business expansion as well, such as growing orders, keeping a constant level of product quality, and adapting to shifting consumer demands. Therefore, this study aims to investigate What Factors Contribute to the Growth and Sustainability of Catherine & Claire Cakery as a Home-based Bakery Business in Bintulu.

There are three main key terms used in the research question which include growth, sustainability and home-based bakery business. According to Caleb Hinton (2025), growth means to increase the size or scope of a company's operations. Growth also occurs when businesses begin to earn a profit, have a steady and higher cash flow, and observe an upward trend in the value of their goods (CFO Systems, 2026). In the context of Catherine & Claire Cakery, growth will be understood as expanding from selling cakes and cookies to offering pastries, gift sets, and local favourites.

Next, sustainability refers to an organization's capacity to function in a way that minimises adverse effects on the environment and society while promoting long term economic performance (Ricciardi, 2025). It could also involve managing resources, upholding client connections, adjusting to changes, and sustaining steady business performance in addition to producing profits. Catherine and Claire Cakery's long term success depends on more than just sales, thus sustainability is important. As a home based bakery, it operates with limited space, equipment, employees and financial resources. So, the owner must manage client demand while preserving product quality, keeping expenses under control, and guaranteeing that orders can be fulfilled efficiently. For instance, appropriate staff training and well defined operational procedures can help the bakery to maintain quality and minimize errors when demand spikes during holiday seasons. These methods demonstrate how the everyday operations and long term growth of the bakery can be linked to sustainability.

A home based business is any type of business where a person's home serves as the primary location for managerial and administrative tasks. Thus, there are many different reasons why people launch a home-based business.

This research question was selected in order to determine and investigate the various elements that support Catherine & Claire Cakery's expansion and long-term feasibility as a home-based bakery business in Bintulu. Instead of concentrating on just one variable, the phrase "what factors" enables me to look at other potential influences. These could include client focus, innovation, adaptability, operational competence, and entrepreneurial competencies, according to the literature assessment. Since "growth and sustainability" are connected but not the same, I included them. Growing orders can help a business expand, but they can also make it more difficult to meet customer demands, manage workload, maintain

product quality, and control production capacity. As a result, this research question enables me to investigate both the elements that promote business expansion and the bakery's capacity to continue operating.

This study will adopt interpretivism philosophy as its research philosophy as it seeks to comprehend the owner's experiences, viewpoints, and interpretations of the elements influencing the expansion and sustainability of Catherine and Claire Bakery. Researchers that use interpretivism interpret certain aspects of a study. Consequently, interpretivism integrates human interest into a study (Myers, 2008).

Focusing on Catherine and Claire bakery operations business in Bintulu, the research design is a single case study. In order to provide a comprehensive knowledge of the business's growth and sustainability, it will be analysed within its real life environment. Since it enables the researcher to thoroughly examine a single business, this concept is practical for this research. However, the findings will not be claimed to statistically represent every home based bakery in Malaysia.

Systematic questionnaires with consistent questions associated with the study question will be applied in order to guarantee consistency and dependability. The business owner will receive the questions in the same order with clear wording. To guarantee that the data is consistently recorded, the researcher will keep thorough records of the questionnaire answers and the study procedure. Open-ended questions will allow the interviewee to provide detailed explanations based on her own experiences.

Validity and credibility will be strengthened by ensuring that the questionnaire questions directly address the research question. The business owner is an appropriate participant as she has direct knowledge and experience of Catherine and Claire Bakery. To further grasp ambiguous responses, the researcher may need clarification questions when needed. The researcher will refrain from assuming anything and will not declare that the results are applicable to all Malaysian home based bakeries. Additionally, secondary data such as online articles, academic publications, and reports will also be utilised to ensure that all the data collected are supported.

This study will use a qualitative research method to investigate the factors contributing to the growth and sustainability of Catherine and Claire Bakery. An open ended questionnaire will be used to gather data from the business owner. Questions about the bakery's commercial development, customer relations, marketing tactics, operational difficulties, and methods for preserving sustainability will all be included in the survey. The owner will be able to give thorough answers based on her experiences and viewpoints when the questions are open-ended. The questionnaire then will be disseminated via Whatsapp in Microsoft Forms format. The collected replies will be organised and analysed thematically by identifying recurring ideas, patterns and important elements associated with the research question.

However, several issues may arise during the data collection process. Firstly, the business owner may have limited time to complete the questionnaire due to her business responsibilities. As a result, the researcher should give a fair amount of time for responses and refrain from posing pointless queries. Secondly, some questions might be misinterpreted, leading to answers that are ambiguous or insufficient. So, to reduce this issue, the questionnaire should use simple, clear and relevant language, and clarification may be requested when necessary. Other than that, the business owner could be reluctant to share sensitive business information such as their operational challenges. Researchers should clarify that participation is completely voluntary, that answers will be kept private, and that the data will only be utilised for academic study. Lastly, because the study only focuses on

one business, the findings may not be broadly applicable and should not be claimed to represent all home based bakeries in Malaysia.

Task 5: Research Proposal Presentation

Slides Link:

<https://drive.google.com/file/d/1w2hWsj0dvw8e5ZcCRSUzt6seVQuA6WGX/view?usp=sharing>

Presentation Link:

<https://drive.google.com/file/d/12TC5Yn419K7kE6b74gWF1bWfw4CjNvzX/view?usp=sharing>

Task 6: Gibbs Reflective Cycle

1. Description

I looked at the expansion and viability of Bintulu, Sarawak's home-based bakery, Catherine & Claire Cakery. Mrs. Claire and Mrs. Catherine Yong started the bakery in 2013, first making cakes and cookies for friends and family before branching out into pastries, gift sets, local favourites, and event services. However, issues with workload, manufacturing capacity, product quality, and shifting consumer preferences have been brought about by the rise in customer demand, especially around holidays like Christmas and Hari Raya.

I used Generative AI to investigate scholarly literature in order to gain a deeper understanding of the problem. To find pertinent ideas like entrepreneurial competency, creativity, client orientation, adaptability, operational capabilities, and company resilience, I used ChatGPT. After that, I came up with a number of potential research topics before deciding on "What factors contribute to the growth and sustainability of Catherine & Claire Cakery as a home-based bakery business in Bintulu?" I suggested a qualitative single-case study that would gather data from the business owner utilising an open-ended questionnaire and an interpretivist methodology.

2. Feelings

I wasn't sure how to choose an appropriate research problem and turn it into a workable research question at the start of the assignment. At first, I had trouble making the connection between the bakery's practical issues and academic ideas, even though I could recognise them through observation. Using AI gave me new vocabulary and research concepts that I had never thought of before, which boosted my confidence.

When I understood that not all Malaysian home-based bakeries needed to be included in the study, I also felt more assured. The research was easier to handle and I was able to go further into the owner's experiences by concentrating on a single company.

3. Evaluation

One benefit of the approach was that AI made it easier for me to swiftly come up with ideas and arrange the key themes surrounding the sustainability of small businesses. It made it easier for me to see how operational management, innovation, customer focus, adaptability, and entrepreneurial aptitude are related. I also learned from the literature review that these elements can cooperate rather than function independently. For instance, taking more orders can boost income, but it may also make it harder to maintain quality.

Creating a research approach that aligned with the study question was another advantageous feature. Instead of measuring relationships quantitatively, I wanted to understand the owner's experiences, choices, and tactics, thus a qualitative approach made sense. But I also acknowledged some shortcomings. I had to review and substantiate the material with scholarly literature because AI-generated data cannot be immediately regarded as trustworthy academic evidence. I also understood that gathering information from a single company restricts how broadly the results can be applied.

4. Analysis

I learned from this experience that identifying a business problem is only one aspect of a good research effort. The issue must be developed into a specific research question and linked to pertinent academic concepts. I learned from the literature review that a small bakery's ability to survive depends on a number of interrelated elements. For instance, while adaptability allows the company to react to shifts in consumer preferences and market situations, entrepreneurial competency can aid in decision-making.

I also discovered that the research purpose and the research methodology must be directly aligned. An interpretivist philosophy and qualitative case study were appropriate because the goal of my research was to comprehend the owner's experiences and viewpoints. I became aware of real research difficulties as a result of the project, such as the owner's time constraints, potential misinterpretation of the questions, and reluctance to provide private company information.

5. Conclusion

All things considered, finishing this task enhanced my comprehension of how to carry out a small-scale research study. I gained knowledge about how to proceed from witnessing an actual business issue to conducting a literature study, formulating a research topic, and choosing a suitable research methodology. I also discovered that while AI can be a good place to start when coming up with concepts, academic judgement and verification are still required.

6. Action Plan

In the future, I'll start my research endeavours by precisely identifying the business problem before looking for scholarly literature. Additionally, rather than using AI as my primary academic source, I will mostly use it as a supporting tool for structuring thoughts, recognising terminology, and brainstorming. I'll devote more attention to verifying that statements are adequately supported by original scholarly references. I will create precise, succinct questions for data collecting and provide participants enough time to answer. In order to bolster the conclusions, I'll also think about using supporting data like photos, menus, social media posts, and pertinent company documents.

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Generic Assessment Criteria		Marks available	Marks awarded
1. Engagement with Literature Skills		20	
2. Knowledge and Understanding Skills		20	
3. Cognitive and Intellectual Skills		20	
4. Practical Application Skills		20	
5. Transferable Skills for Life and Professional Practice		20	

Assessment Mark (Assessment marks are subject to ratification at the Exam Board. These comments and marks are to give feedback on module work and are for guidance only until they are confirmed.)			%
Late Submission Penalties (tick if appropriate)			
Up to 1 week late (40% Max)			
Over 1 week late (0%)			