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The Role of Social Media and Online Platforms in Growing Home Baking Business

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Abstract: *The rise of social media and online platforms has revolutionized the way small businesses, particularly home-based ventures, operate and grow. This project explores the role of social media and online platforms in the growth of home baking businesses. It examines how platforms like Instagram, Facebook, WhatsApp, and TikTok, as well as e-commerce tools, enable home bakers to market their products, engage with customers, and scale their operations. This study is to identify the digitalization that has facilitated home bakers in growing their business. Secondly to lean the To learn about the difficulties home bakers encounter when utilizing social media. The study employs an analytical approach, combining questionnaires, surveys, and interviews with home bakers and customers. Case studies, surveys, and questionnaires with customers and home bakers are all part of the study's analytical methodology. According to research, social media is an essential tool for increasing sales conversion, customer interaction, and brand visibility. But there are drawbacks as well, like algorithm modifications, rivalry, and consistency issues. The project ends with suggestions on how home bakers might use digital tools and maximize their internet visibility for long-term success.*

Keywords: *Social Media Marketing, Home Baking Business, Digital Entrepreneurship, E-Commerce.*

I. INTRODUCTION

The opportunities for a new economy have been made feasible by the Internet, and anything from company Op initiatives to marketing, financial transactions, and food ordering can be done with just a single click. Digitalization is the process of improving business operations with the aid of information technology to streamline communication channels. It directly aids in attracting and keeping new clients. Industry-wide acceptance of digitalization is increasing. Due to the world's quick transition from offline to online business models, digitalization has become a crucial strategy for organizations in all sectors. By the end of 2021, commerce is predicted to account for 17.5% of global retail sales, having increased by 300% in recent years. Without a doubt, we live in a digital age when having an internet connection is crucial. When it comes to a business's success, internet business is crucial. Over the last 20 years, there has been a significant increase in the number of people using the Internet. At India, about 40% of people rely on internet meal delivery services. As a result, there are now chances for the internet food business as a whole that may have long-term consequences. In this market, digital transformation provides some small enterprises with a lifeline. In 2018, the Indian bakery market was valued at USD 7.22 billion and is growing at a strong rate of more than 9%. Additionally, it has been increasing sharply every year. According to market research firm IMARC, the Indian baked goods market is expected to continue growing, with a 2019 valuation of about \$8 billion. The Indian bakery market was valued at around USD 11.07 billion in 2023, according to a recent study by Expert Market Research titled "India Bakery Market Growth, Size, Share, Report and Forecast 2024-2032." The market is anticipated to expand at a compound annual growth rate (CAGR) of 9.5% between 2024 and 2032, driven by customer preferences for healthier and more natural components, and reach a valuation of around USD 25.16 billion by that time. This study will help you understand how digitalization can help growing businesses by providing a range of practical approaches like minimal startup costs, cost-effective marketing, simpler financial transactions, and more.

II. REVIEW OF LITERATURE

A study found that a variety of factors affect a customer's choice to purchase a product through social media. According to the study's findings, providing continuous customer service will boost client retention. New apps and social media platforms will appear, enabling more personalization and location-based, real-time media interactions. During lockdown, "Home bakers steal the shown the growth of the home baking business. Sales of home bakers who were active in the market before the outbreak have significantly increased since the middle of 2019. Since the newcomers offered their products at a reduced cost, the emergence of home bakers also seemed to pose a threat to those who were already involved in this sector.

The Economist highlighted the growing demand for baking ingredients in India in a blog post titled "Home baking is on the rise, Thanks to coronavirus lockdown" which was published in the Daily Chart section. The Times of India news item titled "Rise of the Home Bakers" dated January 02, 2021, described how social media use and the epidemic benefited home bakers. Social media has developed into a marketing tool. Many people's lives were profoundly affected by the pandemic, therefore they started baking as a coping mechanism for their stress and anxiety. These home bakers are all using their culinary endeavours to create a meaningful future, regardless of how different their backgrounds are." Some people view it as an innovative means of making money during lean times. Others see it as an opportunity to focus on a newly discovered purpose. In her article "Sweet nothings: Home bakers whip up and deliver delights amid lockdown," Ms. Malika Bhagat discussed Delhi's home bakers, who are struggling to maintain their businesses while meeting high demand with few resources and raw ingredients. Home bakers provide a unique lockdown menu that prioritizes guests' health and safety by offering healthier or keto desserts. 'The rise of home bakers amid pandemic, states about how the lockdown has pushed so many baking enthusiasts to start their own venture and convert their passion into profession.

III. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The Primary Data: A systematic questionnaire was sent through Google form, and home bakers from Chennai were contacted to get primary data. Out of the 70 home bakers who received the questionnaire, 60 provided input and were able to aid in the data analysis for the specific subject. The Secondary Data: A variety of printed and published materials, including official websites, e-papers, newspaper articles, blogs, and more, were consulted to gather secondary data. The Basic Percentage Analysis: One of the fundamental statistical methods that is frequently employed in the examination and interpretation of raw data is simple percentage analysis.

The simple percentage can be calculated by using the formula,

$$= \frac{\text{Actual Responses}}{\text{Total number of Responses}} \times 100$$

IV. DATA ANALYSIS AND INTERPRETATION

A. Simple Percentage Analysis

Age Group Of The Respondents

S.NO	AGE GROUP	NO.OF RESPONSES	PERCENTAGE
1	Below 18	0	0
2	18-25	5	8.3
3	26-35	10	16.6
4	36-45	17	28.3
5	45 and above	28	46.6

Over 75% of online enterprises are owned and run by people in the country who are 35 years of age or older. Anyone with a baking company idea can today become an entrepreneur thanks to digitalization. With the use of digitalization, candidates may now get beyond almost any barrier to launching and running a profitable baking business.

Gender of the Respondents

S.NO	GENDER	NO.OF RESPONSES	PERCENTAGE
1	Male	10	16.6
2.	Female	50	83.4

About 85% of online baking enterprises are run by women, demonstrating how digitalization has enabled women to become independent company owners. This change defies convention and makes it possible for women who work and stay at home to become financially independent. They can run their enterprises from anywhere at any time because to the flexibility of internet platforms, which encourages a positive work-life balance.

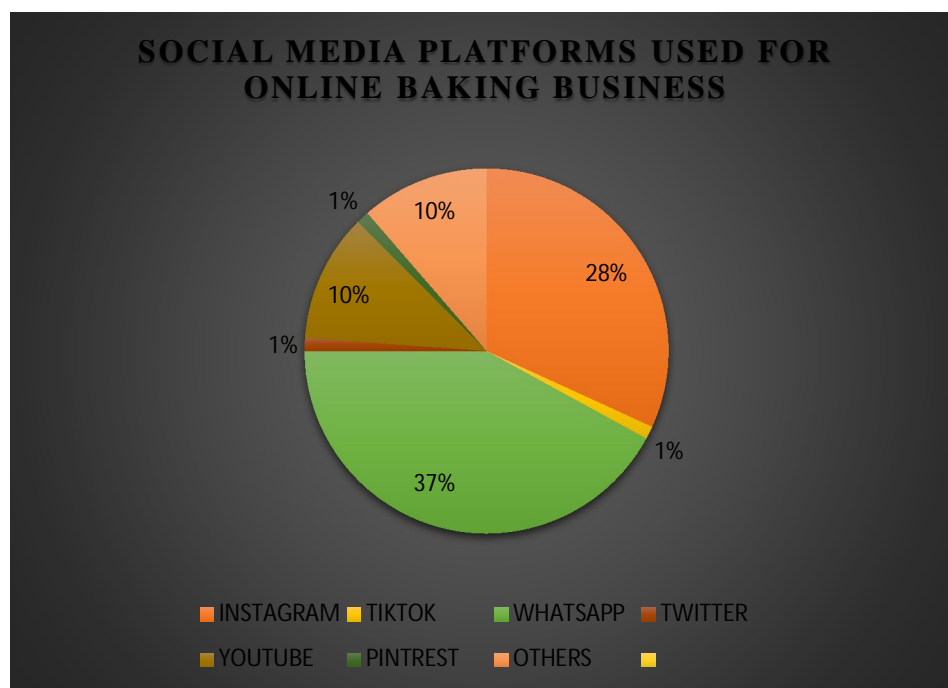
Online Bakers' Top-Selling Baked Goods

S.NO	PRODUCTS	NO.OF RESPONSES	PERCENTAGE
1	Cakes	28	46.7
2	Cookies	13	21.6
3	Cupcakes	9	15
4	Bread	3	5
5	Pastries	2	3.3
6	Others	5	8.4

Cakes account for 46.7% of online bakery sales, which is probably because they are so popular for birthday and wedding celebrations. Cookies come in second at 21.6%, valued for their mobility, extended shelf life, and gift-giving potential. Cupcakes offer individualized and customizable sweets, accounting for 15% of sales. Five percent of sales are bread, suggesting that customers prefer to buy fresh loaves in-store. Perhaps as a result of freshness concerns, pastries have the lowest proportion at 3.3%. The 8.4% that falls under the "others" category includes gourmet foods like muffins and brownies.

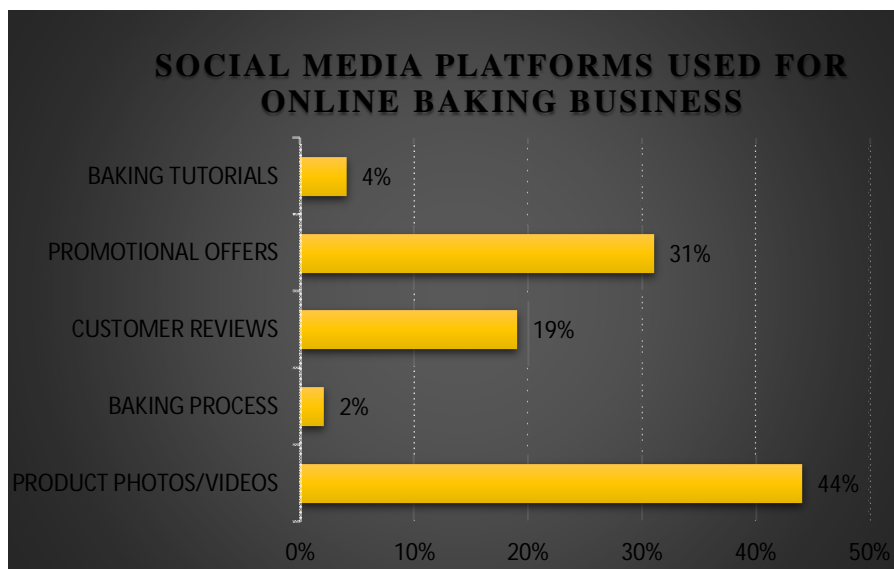
According to this data, the most popular celebration and snack foods in online bakery sales are cakes, cookies, and cupcakes. When creating methods to increase sales of bread and pastries, bakers who want to increase their web presence may find it helpful to concentrate on producing cakes of superior quality and offering convenient, snack-sized options.

Platform Mostly Used For Promoting Baking Business Through Social Media



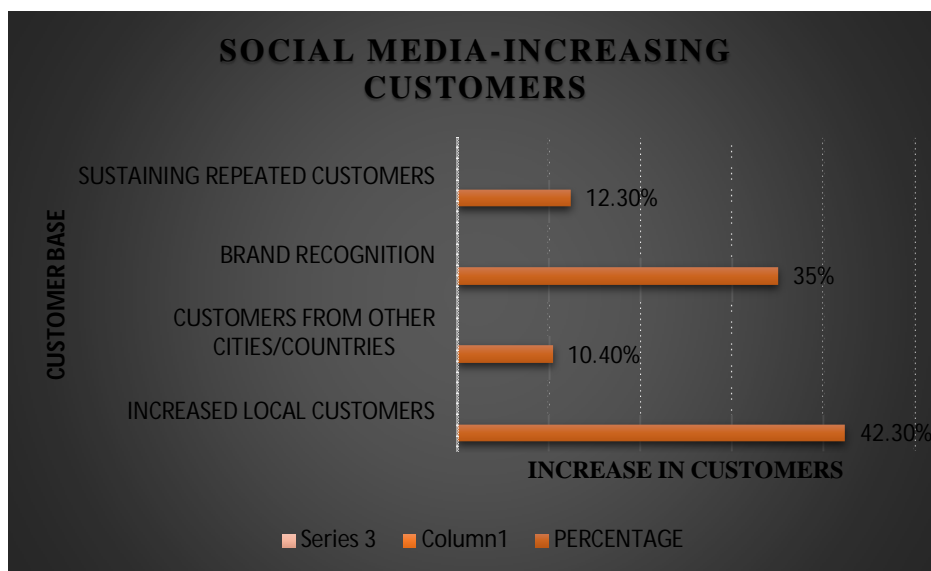
With 37% of respondents using it, WhatsApp is the most popular channel for advertising baking enterprises. This is probably because it makes it simple to share images, place orders, and communicate quickly. Thanks to its visual appeal, videos, and hashtag reach, Instagram has a 28% follower rate. Facebook is less engaging than Instagram and WhatsApp, but it is still useful for local company sites, ranking third at 12%. Although some bakers use video content for advertising, YouTube and other media make about 10% of the total.

Frequently Posted Content By Home Bakers On Social Media



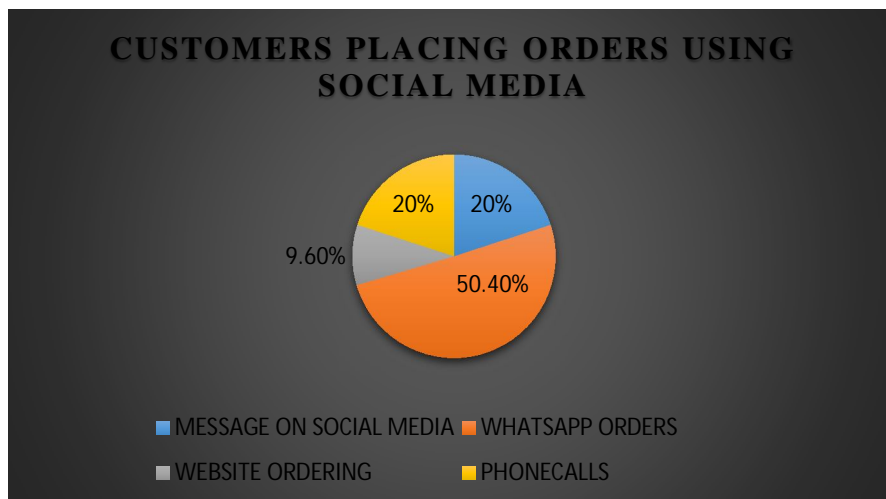
According to the statistics, internet bakers emphasize the visual attractiveness of their baked goods by using product images and videos as their primary promotional tactic 44% of the time. Another important factor is promotional offers (31%), which draw clients with special discounts and incentives. While baking instructions (4%) and baking process content (2%) are less frequently used, customer reviews (19%) aid in establishing credibility and trust, indicating that bakers prioritize showing finished goods above the backstage operations.

Help of Social Media In Growing Customer Base



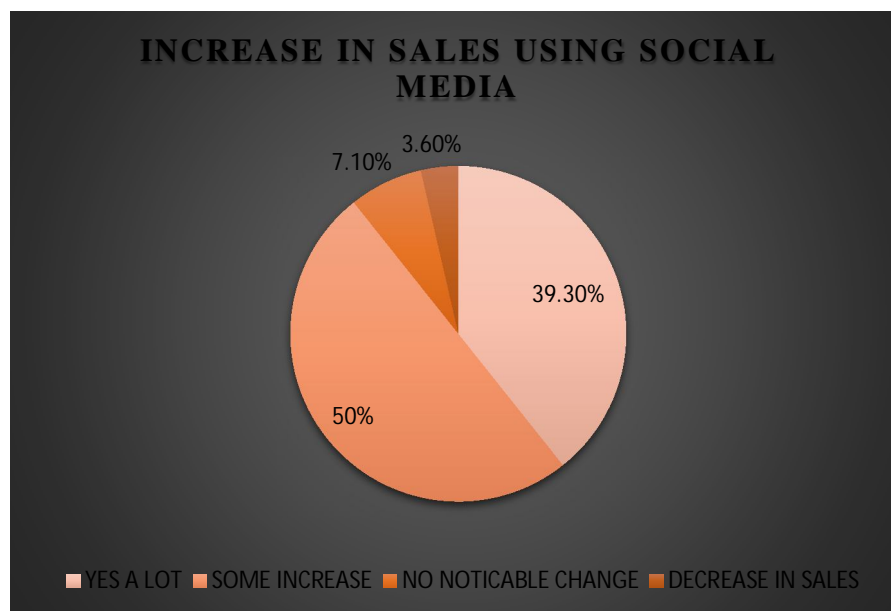
According to the report, local clients (42.3%) are the main driver of the notable development in online baking firms. This suggests robust community involvement and successful local marketing tactics. Another important factor that helps bakeries build a reputation and draw in new customers is brand familiarity (35%). Even if the percentage of clients from other cities and nations (10.4%) is very low, it shows the possibility of growing outside of local markets. Maintaining loyal consumers (12.3%) indicates that although bakers are attracting new clients, their customer retention tactics may be strengthened to secure sustained economic success.

How Customers Place Orders On Online Baking Using Social Media



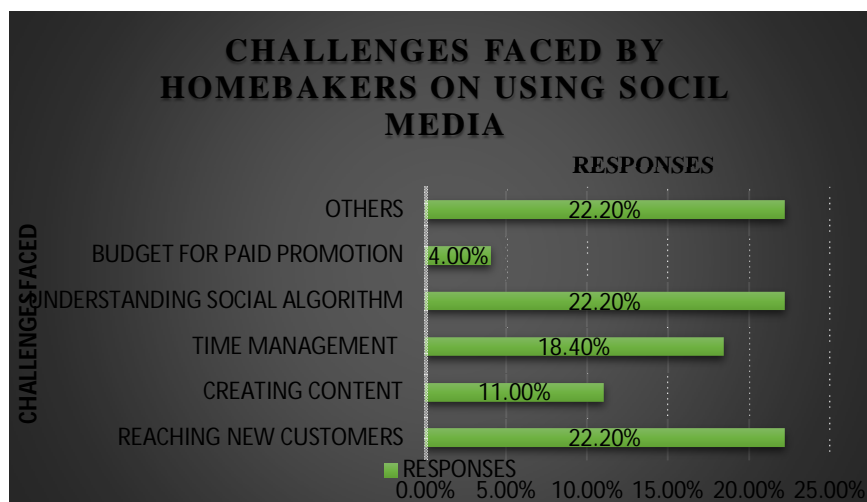
WhatsApp (50.4%) is the most popular channel for online shoppers to place orders with bakers, according to the statistics. This is probably because it's convenient and allows for direct communication. Phone calls (20%) and social media messages (20%) are also common, indicating that clients value prompt service and one-on-one communication. The least popular option, however, is online ordering (9.6%), which can mean that either online bakers offer few features on their websites or that customers prefer more immediate and direct methods of contact for their purchases. Its uptake may be accelerated by improving website usability and including smooth ordering processes.

Increasing Sales Of Home Baking Using Social Media



According to the research, home baking sales are greatly increased by social media, with 50% reporting a considerable rise and 39.3% reporting some increase. 3.6% noticed a decrease, compared to just 7.1% who saw no change. This demonstrates that social media is a viable sales tool, but success relies on practical tactics like audience engagement, targeted advertising, and interesting content.

Challenges Home Bakers Face While Using Social Media For Business Growth



The information identifies a number of significant obstacles that online home bakers have while utilizing social media for commercial purposes. Reaching new clients (22.2%), comprehending social media algorithms (22.2%), and other difficulties (22.2%) are the most important problems. These show that a lot of bakers have trouble being noticed, adjusting to platform changes, and overcoming other obstacles like competition, client interaction, or platform limitations.

Another big issue is time management (18.4%), as it may be very difficult to balance baking, marketing, and customer service. Furthermore, producing interesting material (11%) presents challenges because regular, excellent articles call for imagination and work. Although paid advertising is useful, the majority of home bakers rely on organic reach, as indicated by the lower percentage (4%) who find the budget for paid promotions difficult. All things considered, these difficulties highlight the necessity of improved planning, time management, and comprehension of digital marketing to fully utilize social media.

Types Of Customer Feedback Received By Home Bakers On Social Media

S.NO	TYPES OF FEEDBACK	NO.OF RESPONSES	PERCENTAGE
1	Positive reviews and referrals	19	31.6%
2	Requests for new products/flavours	21	35%
3	Complaints or suggestions for improvements	9	15%
4	No feedback	11	18.4%

According to the statistics, social media is a useful tool for interacting with customers, since most online home bakers receive insightful comments. Customer satisfaction and word-of-mouth marketing are important factors in business success, as seen by the noteworthy 31.6% of bakers who reported receiving favourable evaluations and recommendations. This implies that customers are more likely to recommend firms to their networks when they receive high-quality goods and services. Furthermore, 35% of consumers requested new flavours or goods, demonstrating how social media gives bakers direct access to client preferences. Innovation and the expansion of product offerings to satisfy changing wants are aided by this input. The Most interesting to note that 18.4% of bakers said they never heard back. This points to either a deficiency in consumer involvement or the necessity of more interactive marketing techniques to stimulate reactions. All things considered, the data emphasizes how crucial social media is for obtaining consumer insights, which enables home bakers to enhance their products, raise customer happiness, and spur company expansion.

Ways In Which Social Media Helped Online Home Bakers To Grow Their Business

S.NO	USES OF SOCIAL MEDIA	NO.OF RESPONSES	PERCENTAGE
1	Marketing Opportunities	15	25%
2	Customer Engagement	18	30%
3	Customer Attraction	18	30%
4	Reduced Expenditures such as in-store maintenance, rent etc.	9	15%

Social media facilitates direct communication and the development of trust, which increases client involvement (30%) and benefits home baking enterprises. While customer attraction (18%) aids in attracting new customers through advertisements and images, marketing opportunities and referrals (25%) broaden reach through sharing and recommendations. Additionally, online businesses are more sustainable due to lower maintenance and leasing expenses (9%). All things considered, social media plays a major role in the expansion of home bakers.

Types Of Marketing Strategy For Growing Online Home Baking Business

S.NO	MARKETING STRATEGIES	NO.OF RESPONSES	PERCENTAGE
1	Consistent Posting and Engagement	25	41%
2	Running Paid Promotion	4	8%
3	Collaborations with Influencers	12	20%
4	Offering Discounts and Giveaways	15	25%
5	Posting Baking Tutorials and Behind the Scenes Content	4	6%

According to the research, 41% of respondents said they use regular posting and interaction as their favourite marketing method to expand their online home baking companies. This strategy aids companies in connecting with their audience, developing a strong online presence, and cultivating brand loyalty. Increased exposure and client trust are frequently the results of consistent content updates and direct communication with followers. With 25% of respondents selecting this approach, giving away freebies and discounts is the second most preferred tactic. These kinds of promotions may create buzz about the company, draw in new clients, and promote repeat business.

They work especially well for increasing short-term revenue and improving client interaction. Twenty percent of the tactics are influencer collaborations. By collaborating with influencers, companies may reach a larger audience, acquire reputation, and access existing following networks. For new or specialized firms looking to reach a wider audience, this is quite helpful. While paid advertisements can offer targeted awareness, many home bakers prefer organic development through content and community-building initiatives, as seen by the fact that just 8% of respondents rely on paid marketing. Budgetary restrictions or a demand for genuine interaction may cause paid techniques to be underused. Finally, 4% of firms share behind-the-scenes content and baking lessons.

Although less popular, this tactic may successfully demonstrate abilities, establish a personal connection with the audience, and provide value through instructional material. It's especially helpful for attracting baking aficionados and positioning the company as an authority in the industry. According to the research, the best strategies for expanding an online home baking business include influencer partnerships, interactive promotions, and organic interaction.

B. The Impact of Social Media on Brand Visibility

Social media gives companies a platform to connect and interact with a worldwide audience, which is crucial for increasing brand awareness. Brands may establish a powerful online presence by publishing often, creating engaging content, and forming smart partnerships. Instagram and TikTok are excellent visual tools for communicating with potential consumers and promoting items. Influencer collaborations and sponsored campaigns may also increase reach and draw in new followers. All things considered, firms may establish themselves in cutthroat industries, boost notoriety, and leave a lasting impact by utilizing social media.

C. *The Role of Online Platforms in Scaling Operations*

Because they provide tools and resources for increased market reach, faster procedures, and enhanced consumer involvement, online platforms are crucial to the expansion of corporate operations. Social media, digital marketplaces, and e-commerce websites provide companies access to a worldwide audience, removing regional restrictions. Furthermore, tools like data analytics, targeted marketing campaigns, and automated order management facilitate effective operations and well-informed decision-making. Businesses may boost growth, optimize resources, and increase their consumer base by utilizing these platforms.

D. *Overcoming Obstacles in the Growth of a Home Baking Business Using Social Media and Online Platforms*

Although using social media and other channels to grow a home baking company can be profitable, there are drawbacks. Sustaining regular involvement and content production is one frequent problem. Bakers can get around this by using scheduling tools, batch-producing posts, and making content calendars. Making an impression in a crowded market is another difficulty. Businesses may create genuine relationships with their audience by exhibiting distinctive items, utilizing top-notch images, and offering behind-the-scenes or personal information. It may also be challenging to handle client concerns and unfavourable reviews on open platforms. Reputation may be improved by transforming bad encounters into positive ones by timely, professional responses and solutions. Budgetary restrictions may also restrict sponsored promotions or joint ventures. By creating interesting content, working with micro-influencers, and joining in on popular discussions, companies may instead take advantage of organic growth. It might be difficult to comprehend and evaluate platform analytics and algorithms. Reach and engagement may be increased by tracking performance, modifying tactics, and experimenting with various content forms using the insights that are now accessible. One effective strategy to increase trust is to invite clients to post images, videos, or reviews of your baked products. In addition to offering genuine testimonials, user-generated material expands the audience for your products. Reposting client material with appropriate attribution encourages loyalty and a feeling of community. To help consumers share their experiences, you may also establish hashtags for your company. Organizing live product previews, Q&A sessions, or baking demos may greatly improve your audience engagement. Real-time interaction is possible on platforms such as Facebook Live, Instagram Live, and TikTok. Stronger customer ties are fostered by interacting directly with followers, which increases trust and lets potential buyers see the person behind the company. Sales and consumer engagement may be increased by generating urgency through flash sales, seasonal items, or limited-time deals. During holidays or other special events, advertise special discounts or packages. Sneak peeks, "last chance" postings, and countdown timers may all heighten anticipation and promote last-minute purchases. Time-Limited Offers For home bakers, interacting with local communities may be very advantageous. You may increase your visibility by collaborating with local cafés, taking part in online marketplaces, or selling your goods at neighborhood gatherings. You may build a local presence and engage with local potential clients by joining local social media groups, particularly on sites like Facebook. Effectively exhibiting your baked products requires high-quality images. Your images may be improved by using natural lighting, basic props, and a clear backdrop. Short, interesting films that demonstrate detailed baking procedures or visually appealing cake designs also frequently do well on social media. Putting work into photography or videography guarantees that your stuff will appear good and draw attention on the internet. Customer endorsements and favorable reviews are effective forms of social proof. Credibility and trust may be increased by sharing client success stories via textual testimonials, photos, or video shoutouts. In addition to improving your reputation, showcasing user experiences on your website or social media sites entices potential buyers to test your goods. Your business may remain relevant by keeping an eye on viral challenges and current baking trends on sites like Instagram and TikTok. Engagement and exposure may be raised by taking part in popular themes like seasonal goodies or themed baking challenges. You may differentiate your business and gain more fans by putting your own spin on well-liked trends. Home bakers may successfully expand their businesses via social media and internet platforms by regularly implementing these tactics.

V. CONCLUSION

Research on how social media and internet platforms may help a home baking company develop shows how important they are for reaching a wider audience, building brand awareness, and boosting sales. Home bakers may display their goods, interact with consumers, and create a devoted following by using platforms like Instagram, Facebook, and TikTok, which provide affordable and easily accessible marketing options. Business development has been achieved via the employment of effective tactics including influencer partnerships, user-generated content, frequent publishing, and time-limited promotions. But issues like sustaining interest, differentiating oneself in a crowded industry, and handling unfavourable reviews still exist. Home bakers may get beyond these challenges and make the most of their internet presence by employing focused marketing techniques, making use of platform statistics, and being flexible with trends. In the end, social media and internet platforms are very helpful resources for home bakers, offering chances for long-term success and steady growth.

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