

MAMA SHOPS

A SINGAPOREAN HERITAGE

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BACKGROUND

What are mama shops anyway?



HDB New Town construction
1975-1998

Mama Shops



Convenience stores
providing daily amenities

Source of household
necessities for families
living in HDB flats before
the coming of large stores.

Located at HDB void
decks



Mama Shops

Provision shops located at the void decks of HDB flats

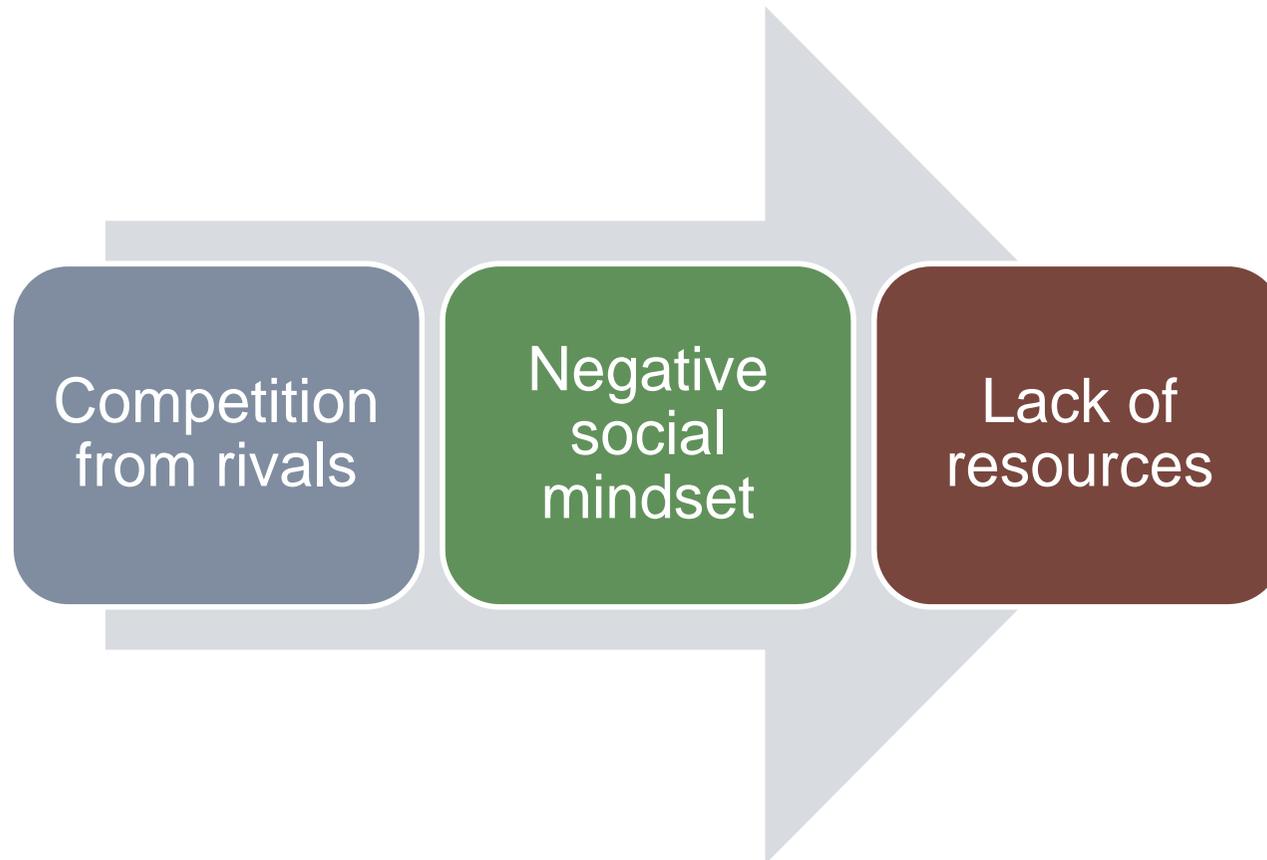


THE PROBLEM

What is happening to these Mama Shops?

Problem statement

Mama shops are facing increasingly stiff competition from various parties with more resources and popular support such as supermarkets and wet markets



Competition from rivals

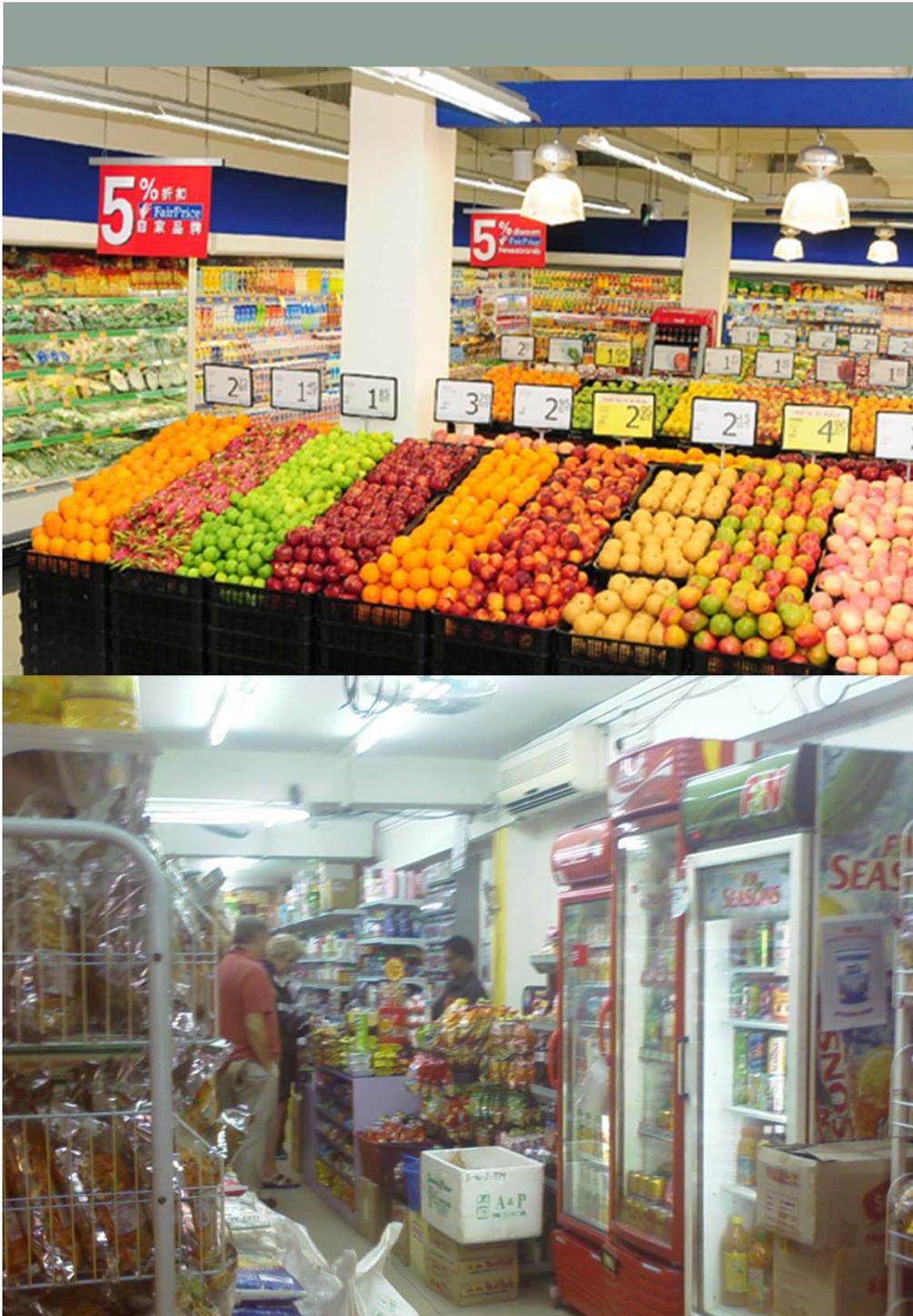
With an increasing number of supermarkets and convenience stores, customers are drawn away from mama shops



Negative social mindset

The younger generation see Mama Shops as dirty and less classy, hence they are reluctant to shop there.





Lack of resources

Mama shops lack the necessary resources, manpower and capital to keep up with the range offered by their competitors



Case study 1

Mr Gupta: Guptas Dhaba



Well, last time it was different because there were **less big supermarts**. Now SO many, hundreds of them.

And the customers are living all in different areas, near to the them (supermarts). They buy from supermarts near where they stay, and they have a **variety of choices**.



GUPTAS DHABA

Retail in : Provision, Drinks, Groceries, Cigarette, Beer etc

#01-K1



“So it was most profitable last time right, based on what you said?”

“Ya, before, few years back. Now no more, because so much competition. Very very keen competition. **Fighting for survival!**”



Case study 2

Mr Patraj: Amofa Pte Ltd



“So are you usually very busy?”

“Haha, yes I am. A lot of people living around this area come to my shop.”

“Wow, why do you think you have so many customers?”

“Oh I think it’s **mainly because there aren’t any supermarkets here so it’s more convenient.**”



FINDINGS

Our investigation?

Social Survey

- Conducted in our school (Raffles Institution)
- An accurate representation since students from our school generally live in almost all parts of Singapore – an accurate proportion of students to represent society.
- 63 anonymous respondents

Mama Shops Survey

Hi, this is a collaborative project where a bunch of us (RI students) are working with the National Heritage Board on a project concerning mama shops today. We'd greatly appreciate your feedback in this form. All results will be kept confidential, and the survey will, yes, take no more than 5 minutes to complete.

*** Required**

A Mama Shop is generally a provision shop at a HDB void deck. Did you know what a Mama Shop is before this survey? *

Yes
 No

How often do you visit Mama Shops to make purchases? *

I don't go to Mama Shops to buy stuff
 1-5 times a week
 5-10 times a week
 More than 10 times a week

Which amenity would you prefer to go to to get your household items and food? *

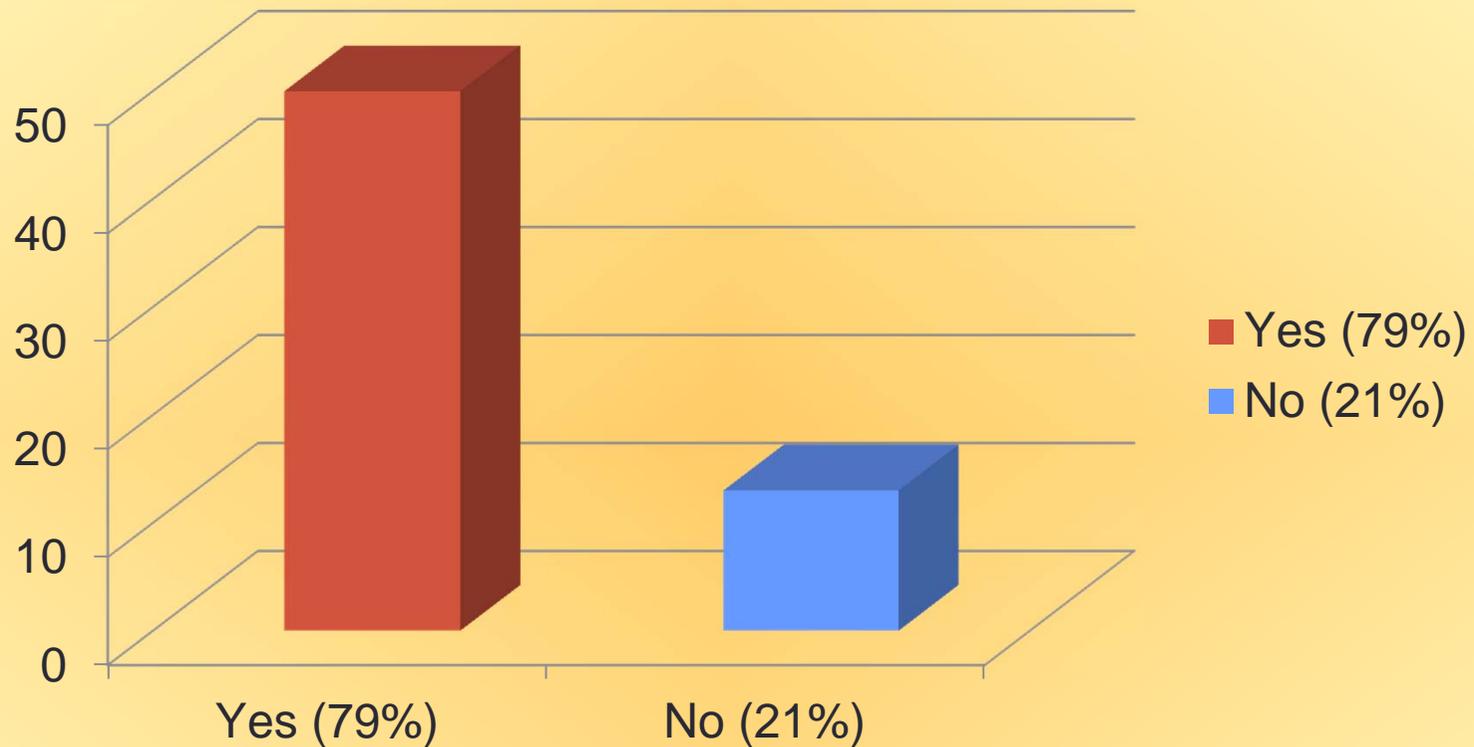
Which amenity would you NOT prefer to go to to get your household items and food? *

Do you think Mama Shops are an important part of our heritage? *

Yes
 No

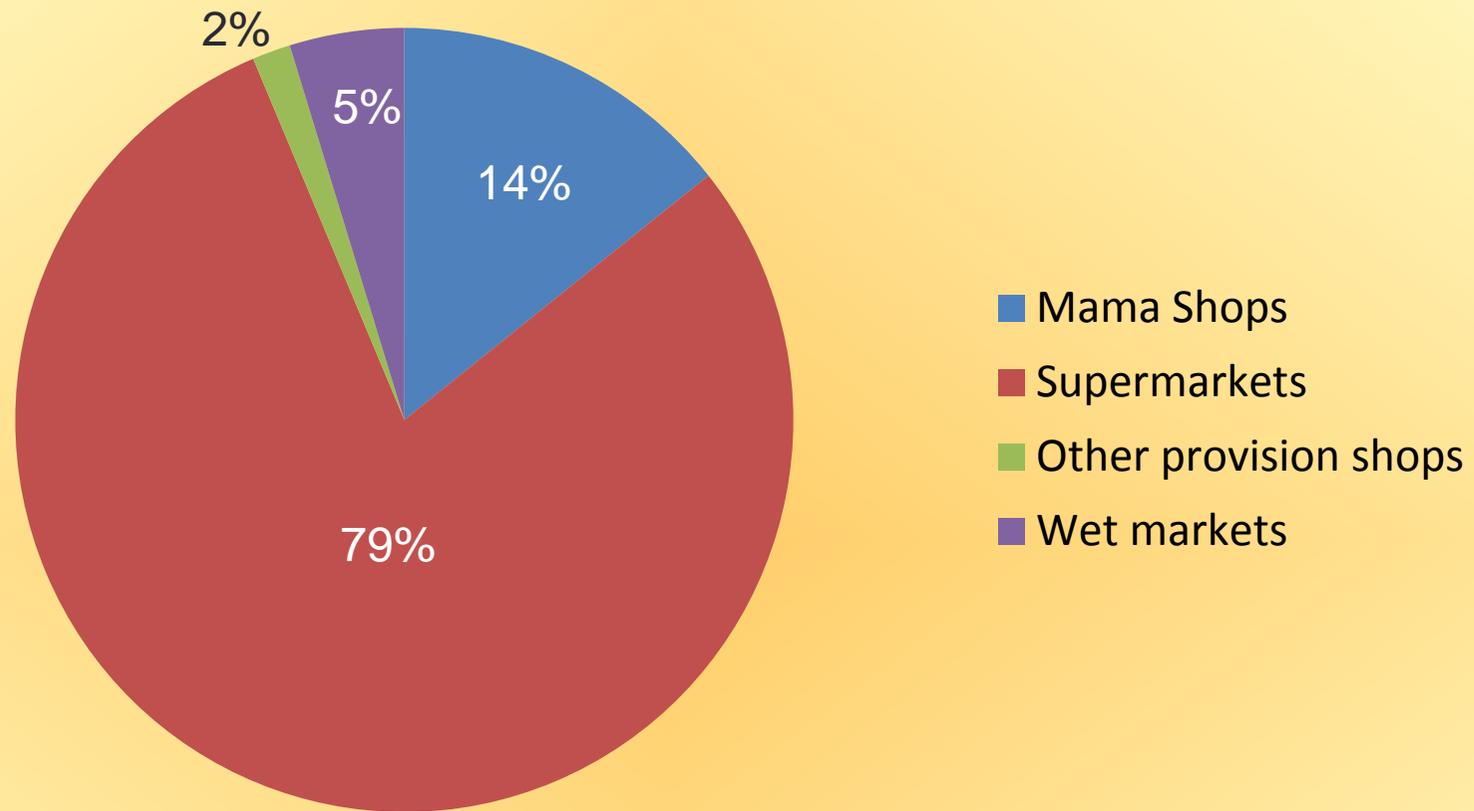
Why so? *

What is a Mama Shop?



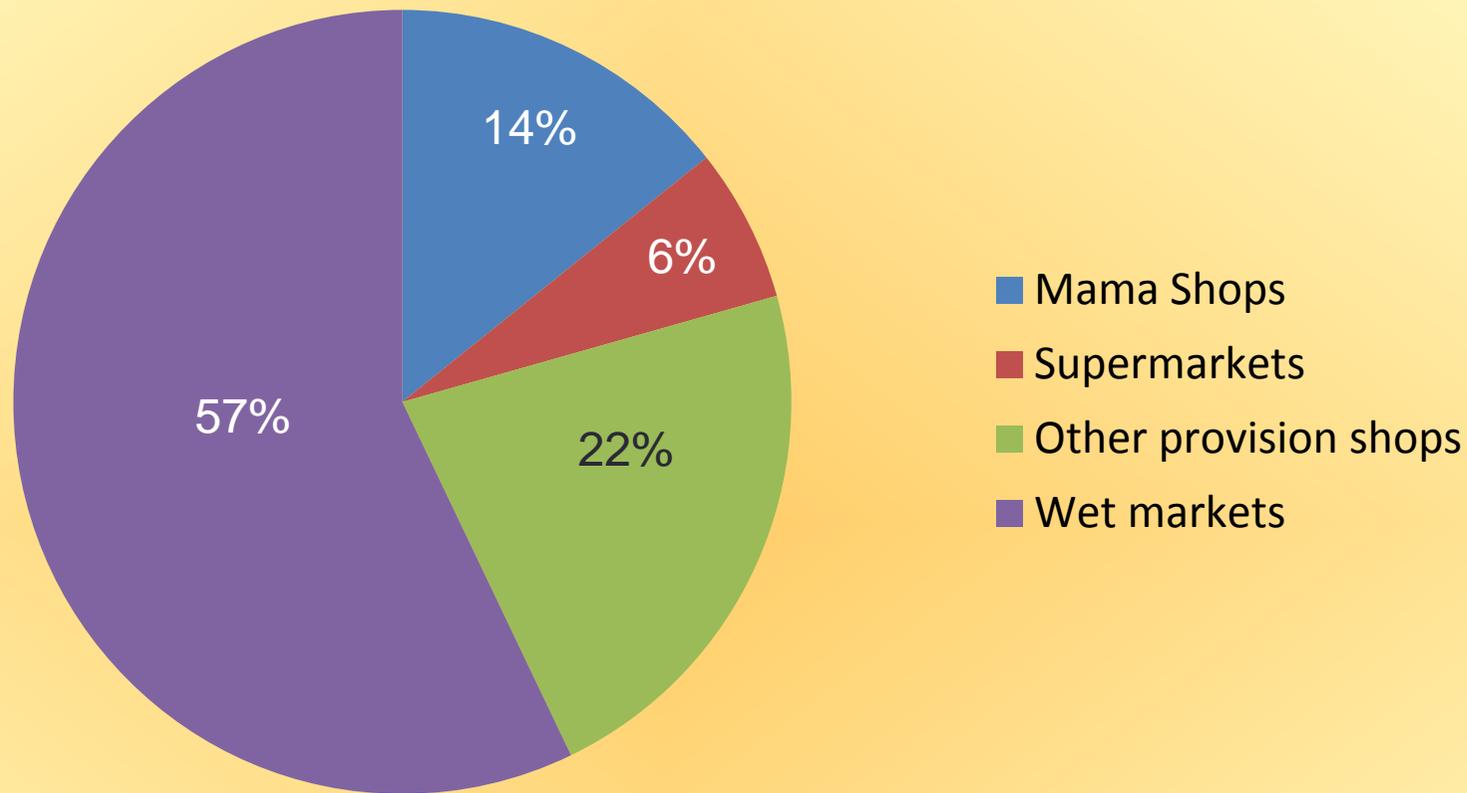
	Q1: A Mama Shop is generally a provision shop at a HDB void deck. Did you know what a Mama Shop is before this survey?
Yes	50
No	13

Preference for getting food



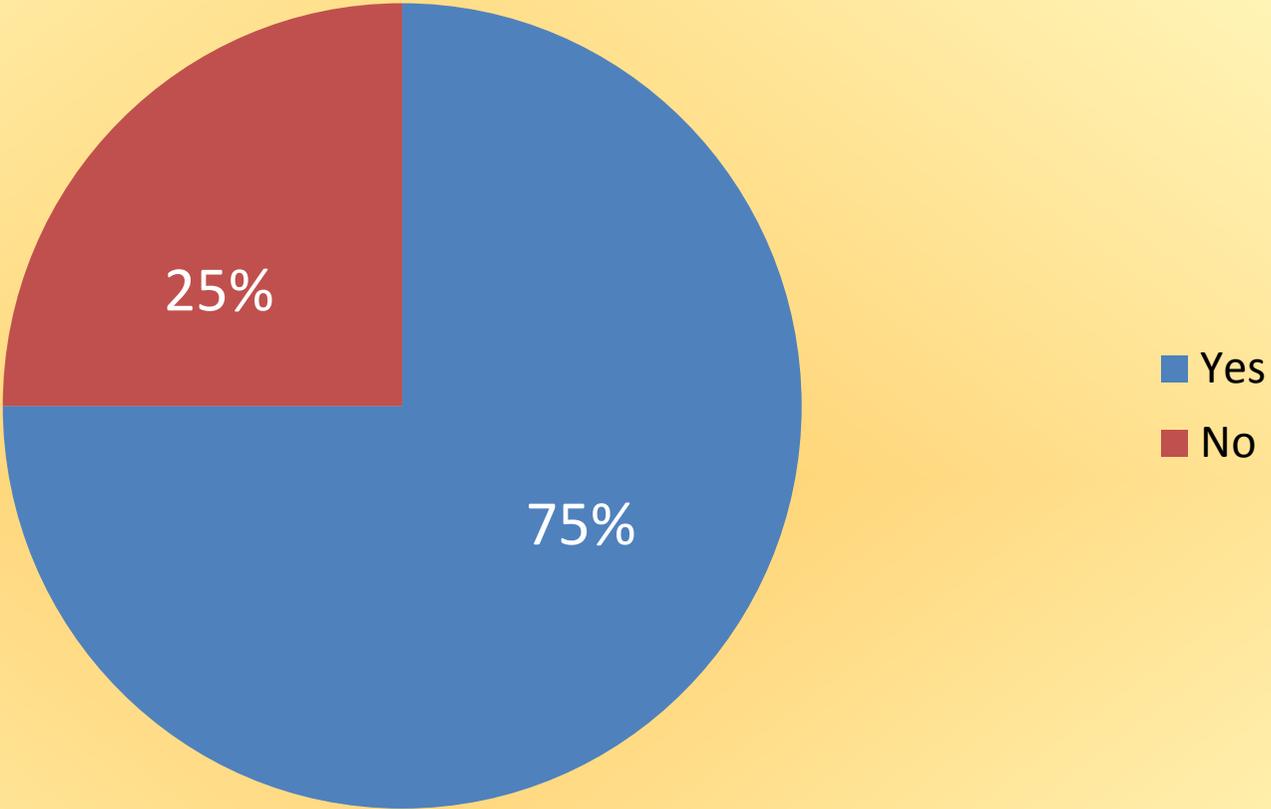
	Which amenity would you prefer to go to to get your household items and food?	
Mama shops	9	(14%)
Supermarkets	50	(79%)
Other provision shops	1	(2%)
Wet markets	3	(5%)

Dislike for getting food



Which amenity would you not prefer to go to to get your household items and food?	
Mama shops	9 (14%)
Supermarkets	4 (6%)
Other provision shops	14 (22%)
Wet markets	36 (57%)

Should we preserve them as heritage?



Do you think that we should preserve Mama Shops as part of our heritage?	
Yes	48 (75%)
No	16 (25%)

“ They give HDB estates their unique character. Even though I don't usually visit them they make a HDB estate unique.”



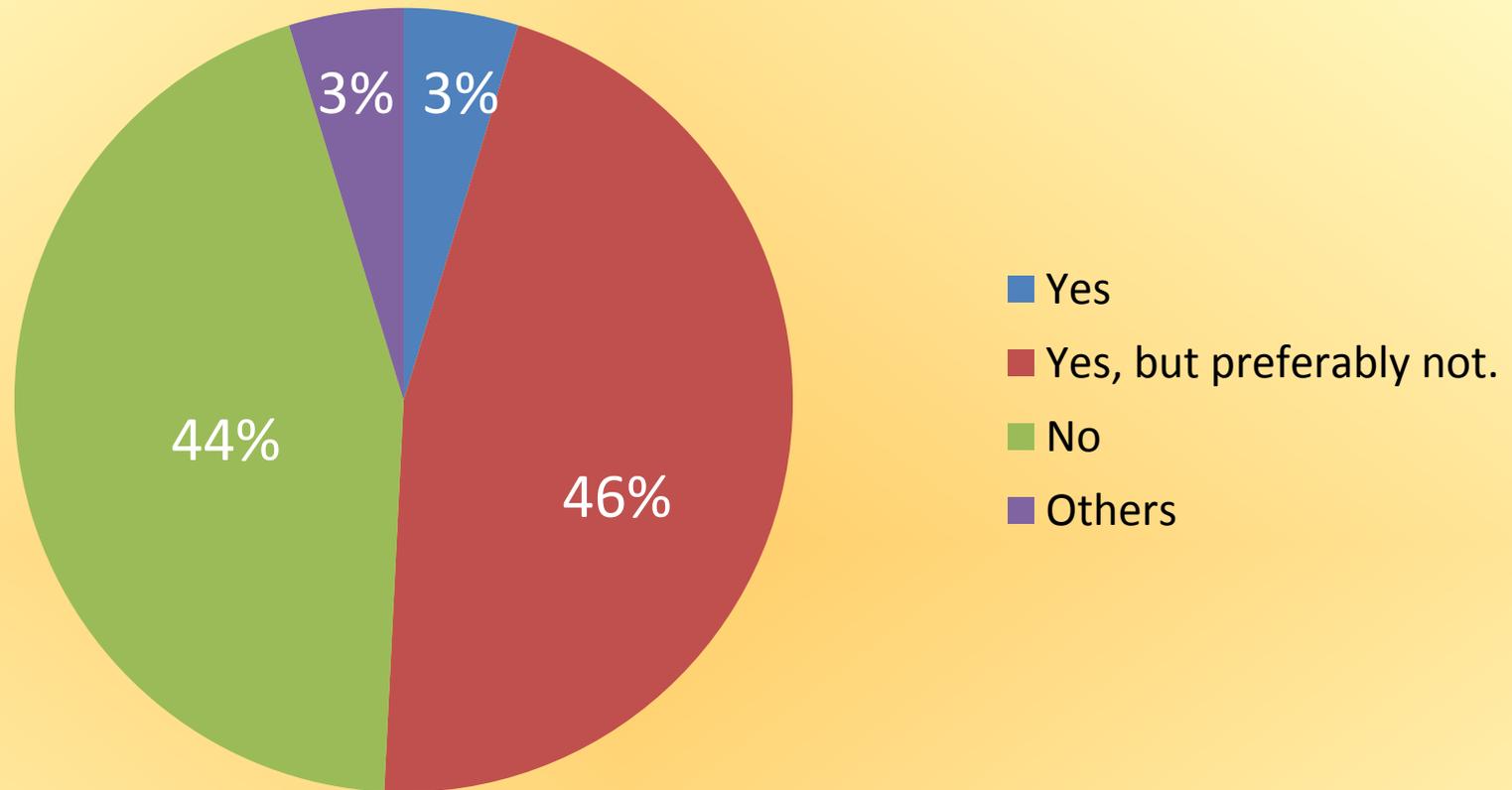


“They have been around since Singapore's inception. Our parents and grandparents grew up patronizing these Mama shops. And to think they still exist till this very day, selling everything from Pocky sticks to Pokemon cards. Surely this deems it worthy of being called "an important part of our heritage".”

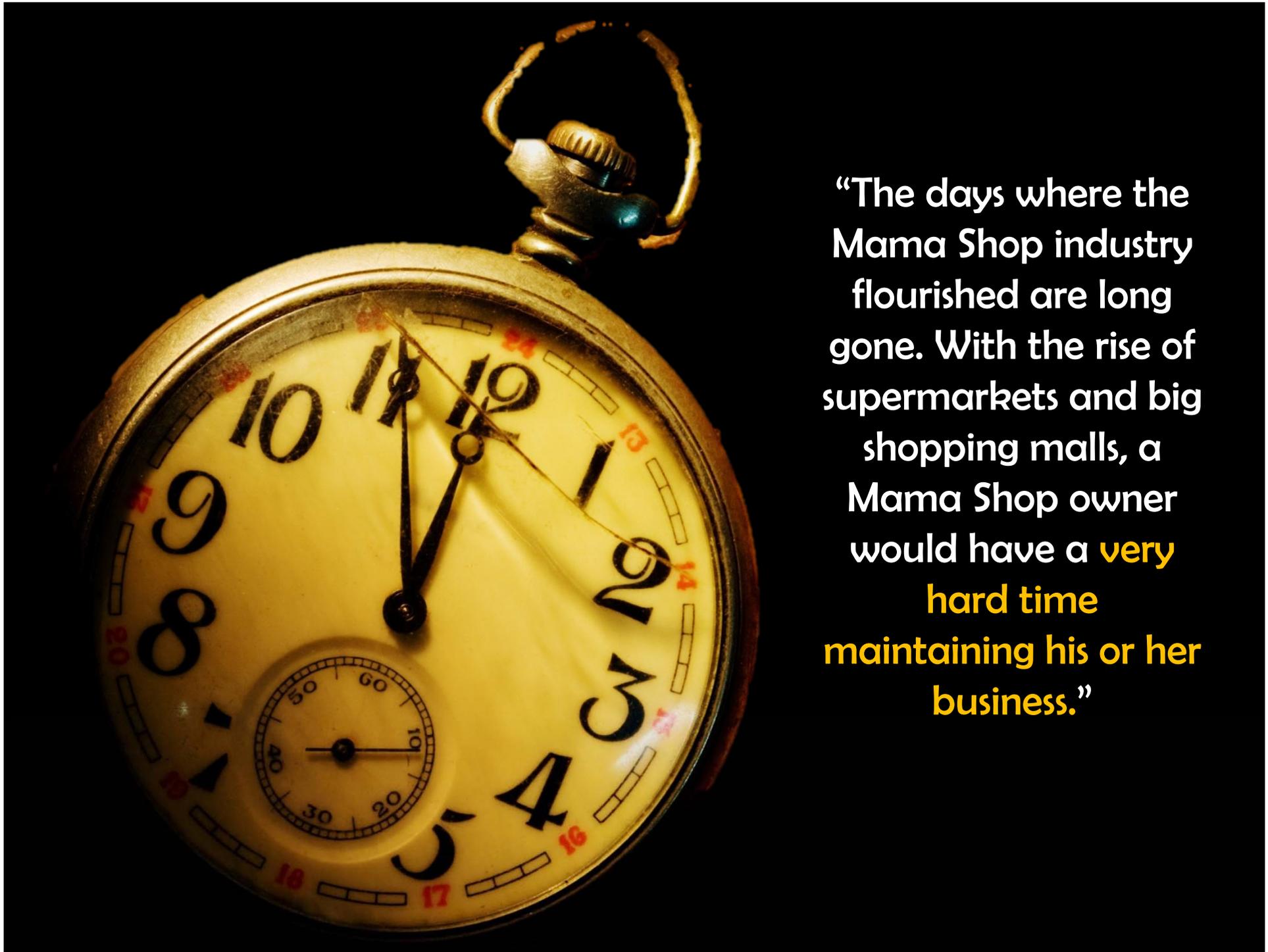


“They constitute our childhood memories, those times we bought candy together, or saved up \$1 to get a toy at the capsule machine beside it”

Setting up new mama shops



	Would you advise people to set up new Mama Shops as a business?	
Yes	3	(5%)
Yes, but preferably not.	29	(46%)
No	28	(44%)
Other	3	(5%)



“The days where the Mama Shop industry flourished are long gone. With the rise of supermarkets and big shopping malls, a Mama Shop owner would have a **very hard time maintaining his or her business.**”



“I will not actively encourage people to set up new Mama shops as too many of these are not likely to survive **with fierce competition from supermarkets**. I will however also not discourage as Mama shops are heritage that **ought to be preserved**. Young people who are able to **re-invent** Mama shop while still preserving its precious characteristic of **warmhearted, personalized** service should be encouraged to give it a try. ”



Respondents are also aware of many of the challenges these shopowners face:

All of them gave answers falling into the categories of **finance** and a **work-life tradeoff**



CURRENT SOLUTIONS

What are the owners doing?

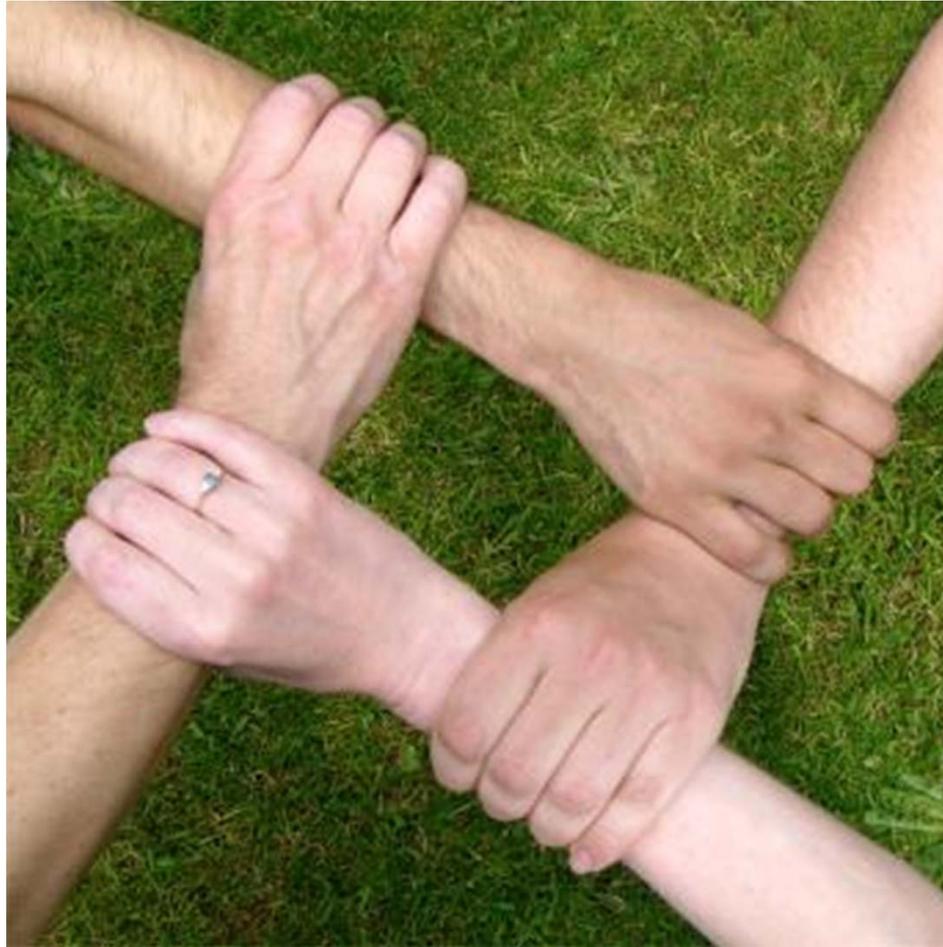


Interviewer: "So will you be encouraging any other people to actually run this mama shop in future?"

Gupta: "Whoever wants to run they can (go ahead). But you see this is long hours, fourteen hours fifteen hours a day, so hard to run the business."

Putting in more effort

- Shopkeepers constantly put in long hours to allow customers to come at any time they want.
- One shopkeeper even goes around distributing thousands of leaflets per week to the surrounding flats.



Being personal

- Shopkeepers try to maintain good relations with their customers so they will constantly patronize the store.
- Discounts are also an incentive given to old customers, similar to wet markets.



PROPOSED SOLUTIONS

What will we do?



Adopting a niche role/ specialization

- Mama shops can adopt a special role that supermarkets cannot play
- This can come in the form of specialized or extremely discounted goods, or specializing on the sale of a single type of item



Collaboration with rivals

- A deal with other Mama Shops, or even collaborations with supermarket chains can give these Mama Shops the capital and support they need to continue thriving.



Providing unique services

- Similar to what is shown in the pictures, Mama Shops can take the initiative to provide different services like photocopying and home delivery.



DISCUSSION

What can we take note of?



Issue of
heritage vs **economy**

Do we sacrifice identity for progress?



CONCLUSION

The final word

If you can't beat them, join them.

Mama shops have been outclassed and overpowered by newer supermarket chains. They need to adapt to the times with new methods and means to remain relevant, or risk disappearing altogether. Society should nevertheless support them as they represent a part of Singapore's unique heritage.



REFERENCES

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Acknowledgements

- Our Interviewees:
 - Limra Enterprises
 - Guptas Dhaba
 - Amofa Pte Ltd
- Our teacher mentors:
 - Mr Desmond Lim
 - Mrs Chee Mei Ling
- Our 63 survey respondents



The End!



Any questions?