

GRACIA YAP

Starting a business during a pandemic was no easy feat, but Ms Rebecca Kwan and Ms Lavender Chia went ahead and set up MoguShop, an online Japan-centric grocer.

Ms Kwan told The New Paper: "We want to give our customers a taste of Japan since they can't travel there now."

The entrepreneurs, both 24, started MoguShop in April after graduating from Singapore Management University (SMU) and did not expect their business to flourish within six months.

"We were surprised by the success. As I just came out of university and times were uncertain, I didn't know if people would take to it," said Ms Kwan.

They are expanding their business, which offers more than 500 products including air-flown unagi, Miyazaki wagyu beef, sashimi-grade Hokkaido scallops as well as top-grade Japanese seasonal fruits.

They also launched SnackBar by MoguShop, which has a large selection of authentic Japanese treats, beverages and alcohol, including traditional, seasonal and limited-edition Japanese products and Christmas hampers.

Ms Kwan and Ms Chia pooled together a low start-up capital

Entrepreneurs give people a taste of Japan amid pandemic

SMU graduates surprised by how their new online Japan-centric grocer has flourished despite challenges



(From left) Ms Rebecca Kwan and Ms Lavender Chia, the founders of MoguShop. Its offerings include Japanese treats and Christmas hampers (right).
PHOTOS: MOGUSHOP



with a few other people, and while they have yet to break even, Ms Chia said profitability is around the corner.

Their success was not without challenges.

"We planned for pop-up shops and roadshows to introduce our brand to people, but we had to quickly change plans due to the circuit breaker," said Ms Kwan.

Ms Chia said: "We also partnered with other brands such as Udders Ice Cream, where we sold their ice cream on our website."

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They were not taken seriously at times because of their age.

Ms Chia said: "We have to show people that we are serious and take a stand, so people don't

mess with us now."

Despite only having two other workers on their team, Ms Kwan and Ms Chia still strive to connect with their customers, even carrying out deliveries themselves or when their drivers are unable to deliver at odd hours.

Covid-19 also affected their imports and prices.

Ms Chia said: "Things quoted before the circuit breaker would

shoot up by 30 per cent."

Thankfully, they were able to source for produce and converse with suppliers through interpreters and even worked with a Japanese home cook who advised them on the best items to sell. Their efforts paid off as they had more than a 50 per cent increase in customers since last month.

"We are very excited. With every challenge we face, we want to fix it and better serve our customers. It helps that our families and friends are also supportive of what we are doing," said Ms Kwan.

Ms Chia said: "We don't regret taking this path. It brings us joy that we can service our customers to the best of our abilities and we hope everyone can enjoy the MoguShop experience."

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