

Successful Models of Processing Seafood Business in Eastern Region of Thailand

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Abstract This research aimed to: (1) examine the levels of strategic innovation capability, emotional intelligence, digital technology capability, competitive potential, and business success among processed seafood entrepreneurs in the Eastern region of Thailand; (2) analyze the influence of strategic innovation capability, emotional intelligence, digital technology capability, and competitive potential on business success; and (3) develop the BSC DE Model for strengthening business success among processed seafood entrepreneurs in the Eastern region of Thailand. A mixed-methods research design was employed. The quantitative sample consisted of 420 processed seafood entrepreneurs from Chonburi, Rayong, and Chanthaburi selected from a population of 507 entrepreneurs. Data were collected using structured questionnaires and analyzed using descriptive statistics, confirmatory factor analysis (CFA), and structural equation modeling (SEM). The qualitative component consisted of in-depth interviews with 18 key informants selected through purposive sampling.

The findings revealed that strategic innovation capability, emotional intelligence, digital technology capability, competitive potential, and business success were all at a high level. The revised structural equation model demonstrated excellent goodness-of-fit indices ($\chi^2/df = 0.974$, GFI = 0.982, AGFI = 0.951, NFI = 0.991, IFI = 1.000, CFI = 1.000, RMR = 0.014, RMSEA = 0.000), indicating strong consistency between the empirical data and the proposed theoretical framework. Strategic innovation capability had the strongest direct effect on business success, while emotional intelligence and digital technology capability significantly enhanced competitive potential, which subsequently contributed to business success. The qualitative findings further confirmed that sustainable business success depends on innovation-driven strategies, digital transformation, emotional leadership, and customer-centered management.

The study developed the “BSC DE Model,” which integrates strategic innovation capability, emotional intelligence, digital technology capability, and competitive potential into a comprehensive framework for sustainable business success. The findings provide important theoretical and practical implications for entrepreneurs, policymakers, and business development agencies seeking to enhance competitiveness and long-term sustainability in Thailand’s processed seafood industry under the Thailand 4.0 framework.

Keywords: Strategic Innovation Capability, Emotional Intelligence, Digital Technology, Competitiveness, Business Success of Entrepreneurs

1. INTRODUCTION

1.1 BACKGROUND AND INDUSTRY CONTEXT

The processed seafood industry is one of ten targeted sectors driving Thailand’s economic development under the “Thailand 4.0” national strategy (2017–2036). This policy emphasizes innovation-driven growth and transformation from low-skilled to high-skilled labor, positioning the industry as a cornerstone of national competitiveness (Saowanee & Kampol, 2019). Thailand is a major global producer and exporter of processed seafood. (FAO, 2020). In 2016, exports reached

191,005.6-million-baht, accounting for 20.2% of total food exports, with canned tuna and shrimp contributing over 70% of revenues (Kasikorn Research Center, 2017). The Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO, 2020) projects that by 2050 global seafood demand will reach 21.8 kg per capita, up from 20.3 kg in 2015.

Despite this strong position, Thai processed seafood entrepreneurs—particularly small and medium enterprises (SMEs)—face intensifying challenges: rising production costs, lower-cost competitors from emerging markets (Department of Trade Promotion, 2018), volatility in seafood supply chains, marine resource degradation, stricter quality

and traceability requirements, and changing consumer expectations in both domestic and export markets. These pressures require firms to move beyond short-term survival strategies toward a capability-based model that integrates innovation, digital technology, and adaptive management. (Saowanee., & Kampol. (2019)

1.2 THEORETICAL BACKGROUND AND RESEARCH GAP

The resource-based view (RBV) posits that firm-specific resources and capabilities are key determinants of sustainable competitive advantage (Barney, 1991). Dynamic capabilities theory extends RBV by emphasizing firms' ability to integrate, build, and reconfigure resources in response to rapidly changing environments (Teece, Pisano, & Shuen, 1997; Teece, 2018). Prior research has separately examined strategic innovation capability (Tidd & Bessant, 2018; Jena & Lackner, 2021), emotional intelligence (Goleman, 1995; Aghabozorgi et al., 2020), and digital technology capability (Sambamurthy et al., 2020; Vial, 2019) as predictors of firm performance. However, three important gaps remain.

First, most studies have examined these capabilities in isolation, leaving unresolved how they interact when deployed simultaneously.

Second, the mediating mechanisms linking these capabilities to business success—particularly competitive potential—remain undertheorized and empirically untested in emerging economy contexts.

Third, the processed seafood industry, characterized by high supply chain volatility and stringent regulatory requirements, has received scant attention in the capability-performance literature.

In a technology-led economy, hard skills (production knowledge, digital tool usage) are necessary but insufficient. Soft skills—especially emotional intelligence, leadership communication, and conflict management—help entrepreneurs translate technical capability into collaboration, resilience, and customer-oriented competitiveness. This integration of hard and soft capabilities is especially important under Thailand 4.0, where business success depends on both technological transformation and human-centered management.

1.3 HYPOTHESES DEVELOPMENT

Strategic Innovation Capability and Business Success: Strategic innovation capability refers to an organization's ability to continuously develop and implement new products, processes, and business models that create value (Tidd & Bessant, 2018; Jena., & Lackner, 2021). Entrepreneurs with strong

innovation capability can differentiate their offerings, adapt to market shifts, and exploit emerging opportunities. In the processed seafood industry, innovation manifests as product diversification (e.g., ready-to-eat products, functional ingredients), eco-friendly packaging, and production automation. Accordingly:

H1: Strategic innovation capability has a positive direct effect on business success.

H2: Strategic innovation capability positively influences competitive potential.

Emotional Intelligence and Competitive Potential: Emotional intelligence—the ability to perceive, understand, regulate, and harness emotions in oneself and others (Goleman, 1995)—enhances leadership quality, teamwork, communication, and conflict management (Ashkanasy & Humphrey, 2011). Entrepreneurs with high EI build trust, motivate employees, and maintain harmonious stakeholder relationships. These soft capabilities directly contribute to a firm's competitive potential by improving organizational climate and customer relationship management.

H3: Emotional intelligence positively influences competitive potential.

Digital Technology Capability and Competitive Potential

Digital technology capability encompasses the use of digital tools such as data analytics, traceability systems, e-commerce platforms, and production automation (Vial, 2019; Hsu., Chen., & Chen, 2020). Such capabilities enable operational efficiency, cost reduction, quality control, and market access. In the seafood industry, digital traceability and online marketing have become essential for meeting international quality standards and reaching global customers. (Bank of Thailand, 2017)

H4: Digital technology capability positively influences competitive potential.

Competitive Potential and Business Success: Competitive potential represents the firm's capacity to leverage its resources and capabilities to achieve superior market outcomes, including market share, customer loyalty, (Barney, 1991) profitability, and brand reputation. Drawing on dynamic capability's logic, competitive potential acts as an intermediate organizational state that transforms inputs (innovation, EI, digital tools) into performance outputs.

H5: Competitive potential positively influences business success.

Mediating Role of Competitive Potential: When firms possess strong innovation, emotional, and digital capabilities, these

(not included in the final sample) to ensure clarity and relevance.

Table 1. Presents the Operationalization of variables.

Construct	Items	Source
Strategic Innovation Capability (SIC)	6	Jimenez-Jimenez & Sanz-Valle (2011)
Emotional Intelligence (ETI)	5	Wong & Law (2002)
Digital Technology Capability (DTC)	5	Li et al. (2020)
Competitive Potential (CPP)	4	Wu (2010)
Business Success of Entrepreneurs (BSE)	6	Santos & Brito (2012)

3.4 COMMON METHOD BIAS ASSESSMENT

Procedural remedies included: (1) temporal separation of predictor and criterion measures (two-week interval), (2) anonymity and confidentiality assurances, (3) counterbalanced question order. Statistical tests were performed: Harman's single-factor test explained 28.4% of total variance (below 50% threshold), and a marker variable (attitude toward government policy) correlated weakly with the dependent variable ($r = 0.08$, $p = 0.12$), indicating that common method bias was not a serious concern (Podsakoff et al., 2003).

3.5 DATA ANALYSIS

Quantitative data were analyzed using SPSS v. 28.0 and AMOS v. 28.0. The analysis proceeded in three stages: (1) confirmatory factor analysis (CFA) to assess measurement model validity, (2) structural equation modeling (SEM) to test hypothesized paths, (3) bootstrap mediation analysis (5,000 resamples) with bias-corrected 95% confidence intervals (Preacher & Hayes, 2008). Model fit was evaluated using χ^2/df (< 3 acceptable), CFI and TLI (> 0.90), RMSEA (< 0.08), and SRMR (< 0.08) (Hu & Bentler, 1999).

Qualitative data were analyzed using thematic analysis (Braun & Clarke, 2006). intelligence, high adoption of digital technology, and strong competitive potential. Interviews were

entrepreneurs demonstrated strong capabilities in strategic innovation, effective emotional audio-recorded, transcribed verbatim in Thai, and coded independently by two researchers. Discrepancies were resolved through discussion. Themes were derived both deductively (based on quantitative constructs) and inductively (emerging patterns).

3.6 ETHICAL CONSIDERATIONS

The study received ethical approval from the Southeast Asia University Institutional Review Board. All participants provided written informed consent and were assured of confidentiality and the right to withdraw at any time.

4. RESULTS OF THE RESEARCH

4.1 Descriptive Statistics and Levels of Key Variables

Table 2 presents the means, standard deviations, and interpretation for each construct. All five variables were rated at a high level (mean range 4.25–4.41 on a 5-point scale), indicating that processed seafood entrepreneurs in the Eastern region possess strong strategic innovation capabilities, emotional intelligence, digital technology adoption, competitive potential, and overall business success.

Table 2. Presents the mean and standard deviation (SD) of each variable.

Variable	Mean	SD	Interpretation
Strategic Innovation Capability (SIC)	4.32	0.57	High
Emotional Intelligence (ETI)	4.25	0.59	High
Digital Technology Capability (DTC)	4.28	0.55	High
Competitive Potential (CPPP)	4.35	0.56	High
Business Success of Entrepreneurs (BSE)	4.41	0.54	High
Overall average	4.32	0.56	High

*Note: $N = 420$; 5-point Likert scale (1 = strongly disagree, 5 = strongly agree) *

Objective 1: To examine the levels of strategic innovation capability, emotional intelligence, digital technology, competitive potential, and business success among processed seafood entrepreneurs in the Eastern region of Thailand. The results indicated that all five key variables were rated at a high level. Processed seafood

These results imply that entrepreneurs have effectively integrated innovation, technology, and emotional management into their strategic operations, enabling sustained competitiveness and business growth.

Objective 2: To analyze the influence of strategic innovation capability, emotional

intelligence, digital technology, and competitive potential on business success among processed seafood entrepreneurs in the Eastern region of Thailand.

The revised structural equation model demonstrated excellent goodness-of-fit indices

($\chi^2/df = 0.974$, GFI = 0.982, AGFI = 0.951, NFI = 0.991, IFI = 1.000, CFI = 1.000, RMR = 0.014, RMSEA = 0.000), indicating strong consistency between the empirical data and the proposed theoretical framework.

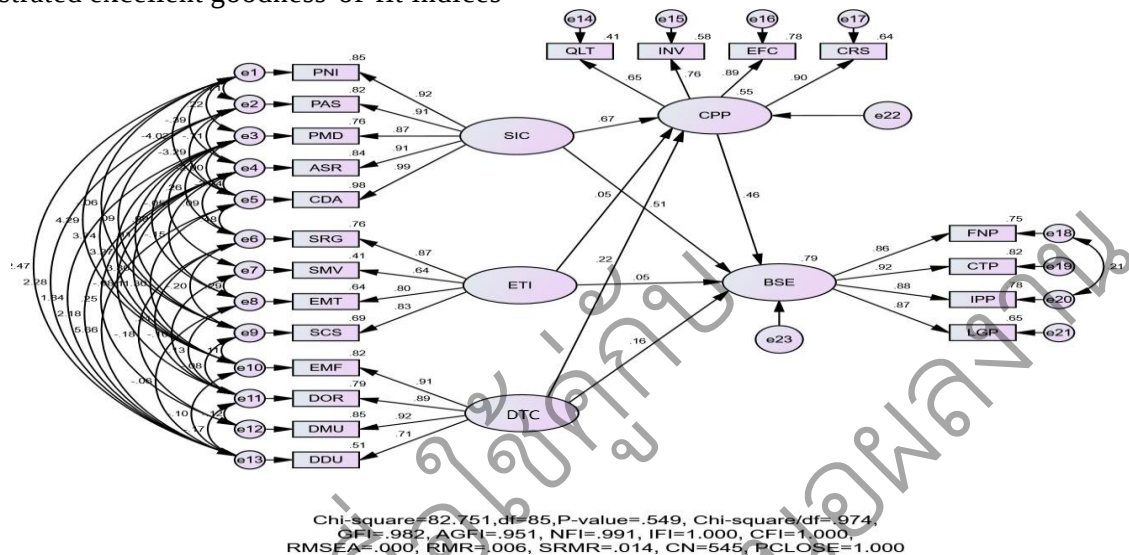


Figure 2. Presents the Final Structural Equation Model of Business Success among Processed Seafood Entrepreneurs in the Eastern Region of Thailand (Standardized Estimates)

The structural model revealed that strategic innovation capability had the strongest positive influence on competitive potential and business success, followed by digital management capability and emotional intelligence.

Table 2. Presents the Measurement Model: Factor Loadings, Reliability, and Convergent Validity

Construct / Item	Loading	CR	AVE
SIC		0.89	0.67
SIC1 – We continuously develop new product ideas	0.82		
SIC2 – Our firm invests in R&D and innovation	0.85		
SIC3 – We quickly adopt new technologies	0.79		
SIC4 – We frequently modify production processes	0.81		
SIC5 – Innovation is embedded in our strategy	0.84		
SIC6 – We respond rapidly to market changes	0.80		
ETI		0.86	0.66
ETI1 – I am aware of my emotions as I experience them	0.80		
ETI2 – I can control my temper in difficult situations	0.83		
ETI3 – I empathize with employees' feelings	0.79		
ETI4 – I understand others' perspectives	0.84		
ETI5 – I manage relationships well	0.81		
DTC		0.84	0.64
DTC1 – We use digital systems for traceability	0.78		
DTC2 – We sell products via e-commerce	0.80		
DTC3 – Data analytics guide our decisions	0.82		
DTC4 – Production processes are automated	0.79		
DTC5 – We integrate digital tools across supply chain	0.81		
CPP		0.90	0.70
CPP1 – We have a strong market position	0.85		
CPP2 – Our products are differentiated	0.83		
CPP3 – We adapt quickly to competitors	0.84		
CPP4 – We have access to diverse distribution channels	0.82		
BSE		0.92	0.74
BSE1 – Profitability has increased	0.86		
BSE2 – Market share has grown	0.85		
BSE3 – Customer satisfaction is high	0.88		
BSE4 – Brand loyalty is strong	0.84		
BSE5 – Sales revenue has increased	0.87		
BSE6 – We have achieved strategic goals	0.86		

Table 3. Presents the Structural Model Analysis: Influence of Independent Variables on Business Success

Path	Estimate (B)	S.E.	t-value	p-value	Result
SIC → BSE	0.42	0.07	6.05	<.001	Supported
ETI → CPP	0.39	0.08	5.63	<.01	Supported
DTC → CPP	0.36	0.09	4.89	<.01	Supported
CPP → BSE	0.47	0.06	7.14	<.001	Supported
DTC → BSE	0.29	0.10	2.91	<.05	Supported

Objective 3: To Develop a Business Success Model for Processed Seafood Entrepreneurs in the Eastern Region of Thailand

The findings from both quantitative and qualitative analyses led to the development of the “BSC DE Model,” a business success model for processed seafood entrepreneurs in the Eastern region of Thailand.



Figure 3. Presents the BSC Model for Seafood Entrepreneurs in the Eastern Region of Thailand

The model integrates strategic innovation capability, emotional intelligence, digital technology capability, competitive potential, and business success into a unified management framework.

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The final structural model illustrates the causal relationships among the core constructs and demonstrates that strategic innovation capability acts as the foundation for product diversification, operational creativity, and market adaptability. Entrepreneurs who continuously apply innovative strategies are more likely to sustain long-term competitiveness in the seafood-processing sector. (Tidd., & Bessant, 2018)

Emotional intelligence was found to strengthen leadership quality, teamwork, communication, and conflict management. Emotionally intelligent entrepreneurs can effectively motivate employees, maintain organizational harmony, and improve customer relationships, thereby enhancing organizational adaptability and competitiveness.

Digital technology capability contributed significantly to operational efficiency, digital marketing effectiveness, production traceability, and supply-chain connectivity. Firms adopting digital technologies, such as e-commerce systems, digital data analytics, and production automation, were better able to respond to customer needs, reduce operational costs, and improve product quality.

Competitive potential served as a mediating mechanism that transformed innovation capability, emotional intelligence, and digital readiness into tangible business outcomes, including profitability, customer satisfaction, market expansion, and brand loyalty.

The qualitative findings further supported the quantitative results. Most entrepreneurs emphasized that sustainable business success depends not only on technology and innovation, but also on human-centered management, emotional leadership, and continuous adaptation to market changes. Interview participants highlighted that digital transformation and innovation-driven strategies are essential for expanding export opportunities and strengthening long-term competitiveness.

Therefore, the BSC DE Model represents an integrated business management framework that can be applied by entrepreneurs, policymakers, and related agencies to strengthen competitiveness, operational sustainability, and long-term business success among processed seafood entrepreneurs in Thailand's Eastern region.

5. DISCUSSION

The results of this study make important contributions to both theoretical understanding and practical management of business success in Thailand's processed seafood industry. The integration of strategic innovation capability, emotional intelligence, and digital technology capability was found to significantly enhance competitive potential and consequently improve business success. The findings align with the Resource-Based View (RBV) and Dynamic Capabilities Theory, suggesting that firm-specific resources and adaptive capabilities are the key determinants of sustainable competitive advantage (Barney, 1991; Teece, 2018).

Analytically, these findings show that competitiveness in the processed seafood sector is created not by a single capability but by the interaction between technology, innovation, and people management. The Eastern region is highly exposed to supply-chain volatility and resource constraints; therefore, entrepreneurs must transform raw technical knowledge into market responsiveness, operational flexibility, and stakeholder trust. (Zhu & Kraemer, 2005). This explains why competitive potential functions as a mediator: innovation and digital technology provide the tools for change, while emotional intelligence enables leaders to mobilize employees, suppliers, and customers during uncertain market conditions.

1. Strategic Innovation Capability

The study revealed that strategic innovation capability directly and indirectly influences business success through enhanced competitive potential. Firms that continuously innovate in products, processes, and marketing strategies are more resilient and responsive to market changes. This result reinforces Schumpeter's (1934) theory of innovation, emphasizing that creative destruction and continual improvement drive firm growth and profitability. In the processed seafood sector,

innovation often manifests as product diversification, the use of eco-friendly packaging, and the application of automation in production—all of which strengthen differentiation and export competitiveness. The finding also supports empirical studies by Tidd and Bessant (2018), which indicate that innovation capability enhances strategic positioning and business sustainability.

2. Emotional Intelligence

The findings confirmed that emotional intelligence plays a critical role in shaping competitive potential. Entrepreneurs who exhibit emotional self-awareness, empathy, and social skills can lead their teams effectively and maintain harmonious relationships with stakeholders. (Apichai, 2022) Emotional stability supports better communication, conflict management, and team motivation, all of which strengthen operational efficiency. This outcome aligns with Goleman's (1995) framework, which suggests that emotionally intelligent leaders foster trust and long-term collaboration. In this study, EI was also a psychological driver that indirectly enhanced business success through a positive organizational climate and customer relationship management. These results highlight that emotional intelligence is not only a personal trait but also a strategic managerial capability crucial for long-term competitiveness.

3. Digital Technology Capability

The study found that digital technology capability significantly contributes to both competitive potential and business success. Entrepreneurs who effectively implement digital tools—such as data analytics, traceability systems, and e-commerce platforms—achieve greater operational efficiency, lower costs, and better customer engagement. This finding supports the Technology Organization Environment (TOE) framework and previous research (Zhu & Kraemer, 2005; Vial, 2019), which assert that digital transformation creates strategic agility and business resilience. In the processed seafood sector, technology adoption has allowed firms to modernize supply chains, improve product quality tracking, and access international markets more efficiently. Hence, digital capability serves as both a technological enabler and a strategic differentiator.

4. Competitive Potential as a Mediating Mechanism

A key theoretical contribution of this study lies in identifying competitive potential as a mediating variable linking strategic innovation, emotional intelligence, and digital technology to business success. This finding corroborates the Dynamic Capabilities perspective, which highlights that firms achieve superior performance by reconfiguring resources and capabilities to respond to environmental shifts (Teece, Pisano, & Shuen, 1997). Competitive potential captures how these internal strengths—innovation, emotion, and technology—are transformed into tangible outcomes (Wilaiwan, 2023) such as market share, customer loyalty, and profitability. The mediation effect underscores that business success is not achieved solely through isolated competencies but through their integration and alignment with competitive strategy. (Sornlertlamvanich, 2022; Wandee, 2019)

5. Qualitative Insights and Contextual Discussion

The in-depth interviews reinforced the quantitative results by providing rich contextual evidence. Successful entrepreneurs described their approach as a blend of technological modernization, human-centered management, and continuous innovation. Many participants highlighted that emotional leadership during crises (e.g., raw material shortages or export disruptions) helped maintain employee morale and supplier confidence. Additionally, digital adoption—such as traceability technology and online marketing—was identified as a turning point for accessing premium global markets. This mixed-method convergence supports the argument that sustainable business success requires both hard (technology, innovation) and soft (emotion, leadership) capabilities.

6. Theoretical and Managerial Implications

Theoretically, the findings enrich the literature by integrating innovation management, emotional intelligence, and digital transformation into a unified model of competitive success within the seafood industry. (Teece, 2018) The study extends the RBV and Dynamic Capabilities frameworks to include emotional and technological dimensions as strategic resources.

From a managerial perspective, entrepreneurs should:

- Foster innovation culture: Encourage creative experimentation, invest in

product R&D, and adopt customer-driven innovation.

- Develop emotional leadership: Train managers in empathy, communication, and conflict resolution to strengthen employee engagement and customer relationships.
- Invest in digital transformation: Prioritize e-commerce, data-driven decision-making, and automation for production efficiency.
- Integrate competitiveness: Align innovation, emotion, and technology strategies to strengthen long-term resilience and market leadership.

6. CONCLUSION

This research successfully developed and validated a business success model for processed seafood entrepreneurs in Thailand's Eastern region. The study demonstrated that strategic innovation capability, emotional intelligence, and digital technology capability have significant positive effects on competitive potential and business success. The model's good fit indices confirm its robustness and applicability for both academic and practical use.

Key conclusions include:

1. All main variables—innovation, emotional intelligence, digital technology, competitive potential, and business success—are at high levels among entrepreneurs, indicating strong readiness for modernization and global competition.
2. Competitive potential acts as a critical bridge, converting intangible capabilities into tangible business outcomes.
3. Digital transformation and innovation-driven strategies are essential for survival and growth in global seafood markets.
4. Emotional intelligence enhances internal cohesion and customer loyalty, positioning it as a hidden but powerful driver of long-term success.

This integrated model offers a practical framework for policymakers, industry associations, and SMEs seeking to strengthen Thailand's processed seafood sector under the Thailand 4.0 initiative. By enhancing innovation, emotional intelligence, and digital technology readiness, entrepreneurs can build sustainable competitiveness, expand

international market access, and contribute to regional economic resilience.

7. RECOMMENDATIONS

The BSC DE Model can be translated into practical actions for entrepreneurs and relevant agencies. Executives should establish innovation routines, such as product-development reviews, customer-feedback analysis, and quality-improvement projects. They should also invest in digital traceability, e-commerce channels, data-driven decision-making, and basic automation to reduce costs and expand market access. At the same time, managers should develop emotional leadership skills through training in communication, conflict resolution, motivation, and crisis management.

Government agencies, industry associations, academic institutions, and the Ministry of Commerce should support SMEs through integrated programs that combine innovation capability, digital transformation, and emotional-intelligence development. Recommended interventions include digital-skills workshops, seafood traceability clinics, export-readiness mentoring, university-industry innovation labs, and coaching programs for SME executives. These proactive measures can strengthen processed seafood enterprises sustainably and enhance the competitiveness of Thailand's Eastern region.

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