

Entrepreneurial Potential, Digital Marketing Strategies, Vision and Goals, and Management Innovations That Influence the Success of Bakery Franchise Operators in Thailand

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Abstract

This research investigates the critical determinants driving business success within the highly competitive bakery franchise sector in Thailand. Specifically, it examines the causal relationships between entrepreneurial potential, digital marketing strategies, organizational vision and goals, and management innovations. Utilizing a mixed-method research design to ensure a comprehensive analysis, the study employs quantitative data collected from 300 bakery franchise operators via stratified random sampling, alongside qualitative insights gathered from semi-structured in-depth interviews with 20 key franchise executives. The inquiry aims to assess the current levels of these critical factors, determine their direct and indirect influences on business success, and construct an integrated success model tailored to the Thai context. The expected outcomes intend to provide a strategic framework for franchise owners and investors, highlighting how aligning digital capabilities with visionary leadership and management innovation can sustain competitive advantage in a fluctuating economic landscape.

1. Introduction

The global bakery industry has transcended its traditional boundaries to become a dynamic sector driven by evolving consumer preferences and rapid technological integration. Bakery products, ranging from staple breads to artisanal pastries, remain a fundamental component of global diets, yet the market is witnessing a significant paradigm shift toward health-conscious options, such as whole wheat, sugar-free, and fiber-enriched products. This evolution is fueled by sophisticated consumer demands and the adoption of automation in production processes. According to market projections by Mordor Intelligence (2025), the global bakery products market is anticipated to reach a valuation of USD 655.46 billion by 2025, with a compound annual growth rate (CAGR) of 5.45% propelling it to USD 854.63 billion by 2030. Within this expansive market, the franchise model has emerged as a dominant strategy for business expansion, offering entrepreneurs a pathway to ownership with reduced risk through established branding and standardized management systems.

In the context of Thailand, the bakery sector has demonstrated remarkable resilience and growth following the COVID-19 pandemic. The recovery is evidenced by a resurgence in consumption and the continuous proliferation of cafés and bakery outlets. Data indicates that in 2023, the sales value of bakery products in Thailand exceeded 45,230.30 million baht, with forecasts suggesting that the broader beverage and bakery market will expand to approximately 85,320 million baht by 2025. The franchise sector plays a pivotal role in this economic landscape. As of May 2025, Thailand hosts 670 franchise businesses with a total market capitalization surpassing 300,000 million baht, wherein the food and bakery category constitutes the largest segment at 32.69%. This dominance underscores the sector's economic significance and its attractiveness to investors seeking high-turnover opportunities.

However, the proliferation of bakery franchises brings intensified competition and complex challenges. Operators face pressure from both large-scale market leaders, who command nearly 28.5% of the market share, and agile independent retailers. Furthermore, the landscape is complicated by the influx of foreign franchise brands and rapid shifts in consumer behavior toward digital platforms and personalized experiences. To survive, operators must transcend traditional management practices. Kotler and Keller (2020) emphasize that franchising is not merely about branch expansion but serves as a critical network strategy that requires rigorous quality control and adaptation to local market nuances. Despite the sector's growth, there remains a notable gap in academic literature regarding a systematic analysis of how specific internal capabilities—namely entrepreneurial potential, digital marketing strategies, and strategic vision—interact to foster management innovation and subsequent business success in the Thai context.

Addressing these challenges necessitates a robust investigation into the strategic variables that distinguish successful operators from those who struggle. Consequently, this research posits that success is not accidental but is a derivative of aligned strategic factors. The study outlines three primary objectives: (1) to examine the current levels of entrepreneurial potential, digital marketing strategies, vision and goals, management innovation, and business success among Thai bakery franchise operators; (2) to analyze the influence of these independent variables on the success of the franchisees; and (3) to construct and validate a model of success for bakery franchise entrepreneurs in Thailand. By integrating these elements, this research aims to offer actionable insights for elevating the competitiveness of Thai entrepreneurs in the digital economy.

2. Literature Review

This research integrates theoretical frameworks regarding entrepreneurial success, individual competencies, digital marketing, and strategic vision to construct a comprehensive model for the Thai bakery franchise sector. The following sections critically analyze the independent variables underpinning the study.

2.1 Entrepreneurial Success: Beyond Financial Metrics

In the context of small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) and franchise operations, entrepreneurial success is a multifaceted construct that transcends mere profitability. While traditional metrics such as return on investment (ROI) remain pivotal, modern scholarship advocates for a broader definition that encompasses market adaptability and long-term sustainability. Chaves-Maza and Fedriani (2022) conceptualize entrepreneurial success through three distinct dimensions: positioning, expectations, and evolution. *Positioning* refers to the tangible economic standing of the firm relative to competitors; *expectations* relate to the entrepreneur's personal satisfaction and psychological fulfillment; and *evolution* captures the firm's growth trajectory over time. This tri-dimensional approach is particularly relevant to bakery franchises, where operator satisfaction with the franchisor's system is as critical as daily sales figures. Furthermore, Shirke (2024) argues that sustainable success is contingent upon "Product-Market Fit" and deep market understanding. For bakery operators, this implies that success is not solely derived from adhering to the franchise manual but also from the ability to interpret local consumer behavior and adapt swiftly to market fluctuations. Therefore, this study operationalizes success as a composite of high profitability, alignment with market demand, and sustained competitive advantage.

2.2 Entrepreneurial Potential: The Engine of Franchise Operations

Entrepreneurial potential refers to the intrinsic capabilities, skills, and psychological traits that enable an individual to navigate business challenges effectively. Sarwoko (2014) posits that business performance—measured by sales, capital, and profit growth—is directly correlated with the specific competencies of the entrepreneur. In the franchise bakery sector, where the product is standardized, the differentiator often lies in the operator's managerial acumen. Liu (2024) expands on this by proposing an "Entrepreneurial Competency Quality Model," which categorizes potential into six dimensions: knowledge structure, entrepreneurial skills, personal qualities, intrinsic motivation, values, and ability potential. This framework suggests that successful franchisees must possess a unique blend of "hard" operational skills and "soft" resilience. They must be capable of executing the franchisor's standard operating procedures (SOPs) while simultaneously exhibiting the creativity to engage local customers. Consequently, entrepreneurial potential in this study is viewed as a prerequisite for leveraging technology and driving management innovation.

2.3 Digital Marketing Strategies: The New Frontier of Engagement

The digital transformation of the retail landscape has necessitated a strategic shift from traditional advertising to integrated digital marketing ecosystems. Kingsnorth (2016) asserts that digital marketing should not be treated as a collection of isolated tools but as a holistic strategy that aligns technology, platforms, and content to create a seamless customer experience. For bakery franchises, where visual appeal is paramount, digital platforms serve as the primary medium for customer engagement. Nuseir et al. (2023) highlight that social media marketing is particularly effective due to its interactive nature, allowing for real-time

personalization and the cultivation of brand loyalty through influencers and user-generated content. In the post-COVID-19 era, the ability to utilize digital channels for delivery, pre-ordering, and storytelling has become a survival mechanism rather than a luxury. Thus, digital marketing strategy is analyzed here not merely as a promotional tool, but as a critical driver of brand equity and operational agility.

2.4 Vision and Goals: The Strategic Compass

While entrepreneurial potential and digital tools provide the means for operation, strategic vision and goals provide the direction. Jadhav et al. (2024) emphasize that a clear vision acts as a "compass" for long-term growth, while specific goals serve as the actionable steps to realize that vision. In a franchise system, the alignment between the franchisor's global vision and the franchisee's local goals is essential for network cohesion. A strong strategic vision fosters organizational commitment, influences resource allocation, and inspires staff engagement. Operators who possess a forward-looking vision are more likely to invest in necessary innovations and persevere through economic downturns. Therefore, vision and goals are treated as foundational elements that dictate how resources—both human and technological—are mobilized to achieve business objectives.

2.5 Management Innovation: The Strategic Mediator

In the rapidly evolving landscape of the bakery franchise industry, innovation is often erroneously limited to product development or technological hardware. However, this study posits **Management Innovation** as a distinct and critical mediating variable. Unlike technical innovation, which focuses on products or manufacturing processes, management innovation entails the adoption of novel organizational structures, administrative processes, and strategic decision-making frameworks designed to enhance competitiveness. Lu (2025) elucidates that management innovation involves shifting towards agile structures—such as decentralized decision-making and data-driven strategies—which are crucial for modern entrepreneurs. Similarly, Akbarov (2023) argues that innovative strategies must extend beyond the product to include new business models and process renewals. In this research, management innovation is operationalized through three key dimensions: **Brand Trust and Image Innovation**, ensuring transparency and professional communication; **Customer Satisfaction Innovation**, which focuses on refining service delivery to exceed expectations; and **Modern Marketing and Digital Channel Innovation**, which integrates online and offline channels for a seamless customer experience. It is hypothesized that these managerial advancements act as the conduit through which internal capabilities are translated into tangible business success.

2.6 Hypothesis Development

2.6.1 The Influence of Entrepreneurial Potential (H1, H2)

The capability of the franchise operator is the bedrock of business performance. Literature consistently suggests that high levels of entrepreneurial competency directly correlate with business growth. Sarwoko (2014) identifies a direct link between an entrepreneur's strategic capability and firm performance metrics such as sales and profit. Furthermore, Avelar et al. (2019) argue that in the bakery sector, specific competencies—such as the ability to identify market gaps and manage operational complexities—are prerequisites for survival. Consequently, it is posited that **Entrepreneurial potential has a positive effect on the success of bakery franchise entrepreneurs (H1)**. Beyond direct success, these competencies also drive change. Putra et al. (2024) highlight that entrepreneurs with high technological and

creative potential are more likely to adopt innovative management systems, such as AI-driven analytics or automated inventory controls. Thus, **Entrepreneurial potential has a positive effect on management innovation (H2)**.

2.6.2 The Role of Digital Marketing Strategies (H3, H6)

Digital marketing serves a dual function: it is both a driver of immediate sales and a catalyst for organizational change. Santoso and Purnomo (2024) demonstrate that digital marketing strategies are fundamental to market penetration and sales conversion in the post-pandemic economy, directly influencing profitability. Therefore, **Digital marketing strategies have a positive effect on the success of bakery franchise entrepreneurs (H6)**. Simultaneously, the adoption of complex digital strategies necessitates internal restructuring. Implementing omnichannel marketing or customer relationship management (CRM) systems requires significant management innovation to handle data and customer interactions effectively. Akbarov (2023) notes that digital strategy often forces a renewal of business processes. Hence, **Digital marketing strategies have a positive effect on management innovation (H3)**.

2.6.3 The Impact of Vision and Goals (H4, H5)

Strategic vision provides the trajectory for the enterprise. Jadhav et al. (2024) and Tariq (2025) concur that a clear, inspiring vision acts as a "compass" that aligns organizational resources toward long-term goals, directly impacting survival and competitive advantage. Thus, **Vision and goals have a positive effect on the success of bakery franchise entrepreneurs (H5)**. Furthermore, innovation does not occur in a vacuum; it requires direction. Mbetwa et al. (2018) argue that without clear goals, entrepreneurs cannot effectively implement innovative management practices. A strong vision encourages the organization to embrace change and adopt new administrative methods to remain relevant. Therefore, **Vision and goals have a positive effect on management innovation (H4)**.

2.6.4 The Consequence of Management Innovation (H7)

Finally, the theoretical model culminates in the assertion that management innovation is a proximal predictor of success. Liu and Sawasdiruk (2023) found that management innovation significantly enhances organizational efficiency and sustainability, often surpassing the impact of purely technical innovations in SMEs. By fostering brand trust and optimizing customer satisfaction processes, management innovation leads to higher retention rates and profitability. Consequently, it is hypothesized that **Management innovation has a positive effect on the success of bakery franchise entrepreneurs (H7)**.

3. Research Methodology

This study employs a mixed-method research design, integrating quantitative and qualitative approaches to provide a comprehensive analysis of the factors influencing the success of bakery franchise operators in Thailand. The quantitative phase utilizes a cross-sectional survey to test the proposed structural model, while the qualitative phase involves in-depth interviews to gain deeper insights into the strategic behaviors of entrepreneurs. This methodological triangulation ensures both the statistical generalizability of the findings and a nuanced understanding of the contextual dynamics.

3.1 Quantitative Research Methodology

Population and Sample

The population for this study comprises entrepreneurs operating within the 53 registered bakery franchise businesses in Thailand, accounting for approximately 3,036 branches as of 2024 (Ministry of Commerce). To determine the appropriate sample size for Structural Equation Modeling (SEM), the study adhered to the guidelines proposed by Hair et al. (2010), which suggest a ratio of 20 respondents per observed variable. Given the model includes 15 observed variables, the minimum required sample size was calculated at 300 respondents.

The sampling process utilized a Multi-Stage Random Sampling technique to ensure representativeness across the country's diverse economic landscapes. In the first stage, Cluster Sampling was employed to categorize the population into six key geographical regions: North, Central, Northeast, East, West, and South. Subsequently, Convenience Sampling was applied to select specific entrepreneurs within these clusters who were accessible via franchise expos and online professional networks. The distribution of the 300 respondents was proportional to the density of franchise operations in each region, ensuring a balanced dataset.

Research Instrument and Validation

The primary instrument for data collection was a structured questionnaire designed with a 5-point Likert scale, ranging from 1 (Strongly Disagree) to 5 (Strongly Agree). The questionnaire assessed the four core constructs: Entrepreneurial Potential, Digital Marketing Strategies, Vision and Goals, and Management Innovation. To ensure the quality of the instrument, a rigorous validity and reliability check was conducted.

- **Content Validity:** The questionnaire underwent review by five experts in the fields of innovation management, business research, and measurement evaluation. The Item-Objective Congruence (IOC) index was calculated, with all retained items scoring above the threshold of 0.50.
- **Reliability:** A pilot test was conducted with 30 bakery entrepreneurs. The internal consistency of the scale was assessed using Cronbach's Alpha coefficient, with all variables exceeding the acceptable standard of 0.70, indicating high reliability.

Data Analysis

Quantitative data analysis was performed using Structural Equation Modeling (SEM) via the AMOS software. The analysis proceeded in two stages: first, a Confirmatory Factor Analysis (CFA) was conducted to verify the measurement model's construct validity, ensuring that Factor Loadings and Average Variance Extracted (AVE) exceeded 0.50. Second, the structural model was tested to evaluate the hypothesized relationships. The goodness-of-fit was assessed using stringent criteria: Chi-square/df ≤ 3.00 , Comparative Fit Index (CFI) ≥ 0.90 , and Root Mean Square Error of Approximation (RMSEA) ≤ 0.08 (Hair et al., 2010).

3.2 Qualitative Research Methodology

Key Informants

The qualitative phase involved semi-structured in-depth interviews with 20 key informants. The selection process utilized Purposive Sampling based on specific criteria: informants must

be franchise owners or executives with over one year of operational experience and a demonstrated track record of business stability. To access hard-to-reach successful operators, Snowball Sampling was subsequently employed, where initial interviewees referred other qualified peers within the industry network.

Data Collection and Analysis

Data were collected through face-to-face and virtual interviews, allowing for an exploration of the "how" and "why" behind the quantitative results. The discussions focused on real-world applications of digital marketing, the articulation of strategic vision, and specific management innovations adopted during economic fluctuations. The qualitative data were analyzed using Content Analysis and Thematic Analysis, following the framework established by Braun and Clarke (2006). This involved transcribing interviews verbatim, generating initial codes, and collating these codes into potential themes. To ensure trustworthiness, the study employed triangulation of sources and member checking, where participants verified the accuracy of the transcribed data and the researcher's interpretations. This dual-method approach allows the study to validate the statistical relationships found in the SEM analysis with rich, contextual evidence from successful practitioners in the Thai bakery sector.

4. Conceptual Framework and Expected Contributions

4.1 The Conceptual Model

The research framework developed for this study integrates resource-based theories and innovation management principles to explain the variance in entrepreneurial success within the Thai bakery franchise sector. The model posits a structural relationship where **Entrepreneurial Potential**, **Digital Marketing Strategies**, and **Vision and Goals** function as the independent variables. These factors are hypothesized to exert both a direct influence on the dependent variable, **Entrepreneurial Success** (comprising profitability, market demand, and competitiveness), and an indirect influence mediated through **Management Innovation**. This mediation path suggests that while internal capabilities and strategic tools are essential, they are most effective when they catalyze tangible improvements in organizational structure, brand trust, and customer satisfaction processes. The visual flow of the model moves from antecedent capabilities (IVs) through the transformative process of management innovation (Mediator) to the ultimate outcome of sustainable business performance (DV).

4.2 Discussion of Expected Results

Based on the theoretical underpinnings and the post-pandemic economic context, the study anticipates several significant findings. First, it is expected that **Digital Marketing Strategies** will demonstrate the strongest positive effect on **Management Innovation** (H3). As the Thai bakery market undergoes rapid digitalization, franchise operators are compelled to adopt new technologies not merely for promotion but for operational survival. Consistent with the views of Santoso and Purnomo (2024), the shift towards online delivery platforms and social commerce requires operators to innovate their internal management processes—such as real-time inventory tracking and automated customer relationship management (CRM)—thereby linking digital strategy directly to management innovation.

Second, the study anticipates confirming that **Entrepreneurial Potential** serves as the root cause of sustainable success (H1). While franchise systems provide a blueprint, the operator's individual competency—specifically creativity and technological adaptability—is expected to

be the deciding factor in whether a branch thrives or merely survives. Following Sarwoko (2014) and Liu (2024), the results are likely to show that operators with high potential are better equipped to navigate market volatility, making them more resilient than those who rely solely on the franchisor's support. Furthermore, **Vision and Goals** are expected to play a critical role in fostering **Management Innovation** (H4). As suggested by Jadhav et al. (2024), a clear strategic vision provides the "reason" for innovation, motivating staff to embrace new methods and driving the allocation of resources towards value-creating activities rather than routine maintenance.

4.3 Contributions to Knowledge and Practice

The anticipated outcomes of this research offer distinct contributions across academic, managerial, and policy dimensions.

Academic Contribution

This study fills a critical gap in the literature regarding franchise management in emerging economies. While extensive research exists on general SME success, there is a paucity of studies focusing specifically on the **Thai bakery franchise sector**, which possesses unique characteristics blending manufacturing and service. By integrating **Management Innovation** as a mediator, this research offers a novel theoretical perspective, demonstrating that technical innovation alone is insufficient; it is the *innovation of management practices* that truly unlocks the value of digital tools and entrepreneurial skills.

Managerial Contribution

For franchise owners (Franchisors) and operators (Franchisees), the findings will provide a strategic roadmap for training and development. The model suggests that training programs should evolve beyond standard operational procedures (SOPs) to include **digital literacy** and **visionary leadership**. Franchisors can use this framework to screen potential franchisees by assessing their *Entrepreneurial Potential* and *Vision alignment* prior to contract signing, thereby reducing the rate of branch failure. Furthermore, the emphasis on **Management Innovation** encourages operators to prioritize building brand trust and refining customer service protocols, rather than competing solely on price.

Policy Contribution

For policymakers and government agencies supporting SMEs, the study highlights the necessity of shifting support from financial subsidies to capability building. The expected strong link between **Digital Marketing** and **Success** suggests that government initiatives should focus on infrastructure support for digital transformation—such as funding for CRM software or digital marketing workshops. By fostering an ecosystem that enhances the *Entrepreneurial Potential* of local operators, the government can stimulate job creation and economic stability within the food and beverage sector, aligning with national goals for a value-based digital economy.

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