

EXPANSION OPPORTUNITIES OF COMMUNITY ENTERPRISES IN THAILAND TO CHINA

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ABSTRACT:

This study aims to 1) study the effect of demographic characteristics of Chinese tourists in Thailand on the purchase decision of processed mango products (PDPM), 2) study opinions on marketing mix affecting the PDPM of Chinese tourists in Thailand, 3) analyze the causal relationship of marketing mix affecting the PDPM of Chinese tourists in Thailand and 4) study the competitiveness of Thailand affecting the processed mango export to China and propose guidelines to develop the processed mango export to China. The research was designed using mixed methods research. The sample in the quantitative study comprised 400 Chinese tourists in Chachoengsao Province. Accidental sampling was used to select the respondents to answer the questionnaires and the sample in the qualitative study comprised 12 key informants participating in in-depth interviews. The statistics used to analyze data consist of frequency, percentage, mean, standard deviation, independent sample t-test, One-Way ANOVA F-test, and multiple regression. The results found that different demographic characteristics differently affected PDPM without statistical significance, while the marketing mix had a relationship with PDPM with statistical significance. The study, moreover, suggested that government should participate with farmers and exporters in dealing with the export system to meet the product quality standard control as well as modern tools that should be promoted for developing processed mango exports to China.

Keywords: Community Enterprises, Thailand, China

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Introduction

In the near future, free trade area of Thailand-ASEAN (Myanmar, Laos, Vietnam, Malaysia, Singapore, Indonesia, Philippines, Cambodia, and Brunei), ASEAN +3 (China, Japan, South Korea), and ASEAN +6 (China, Japan, South Korea, Australia, India, and New Zealand) will provide opportunities for expanding Thai products to the ASEAN market, included endorsing ASEAN international trade. Entrepreneurs, besides, can reduce the production costs of imported raw materials at lower prices so that consumers benefit from lower prices of imported products. Low-quality products, however, are more sold in Thailand as well as entrepreneurs must face more competitors and highly competitive markets (Siam Commercial Bank, 2019). Therefore, all sectors must prepare to defend foreign competitors, importing lower-priced agricultural products to compete for market share. If Thai entrepreneurs have high production costs, the market could be seized easily due to the price disadvantage. Thus,

they should be prepared by developing products that meet the needs of consumers.

Processed foods are very unique as the Thailand market focuses on healthy products according to the rising trend of health wakefulness, for example, the THAIFEX World of Food ASIA trade and food fair. Processed fruits are remarkable, especially dehydrated fruits and vacuum fried fruits (Office of Agricultural Research and Development, 2019). In 2019, processed fruits had an export value of 13 billion Baht approximately. The top four importing countries were the United States, Japan, Russia, and China (Office of the Permanent Secretary of Commerce, 2019).

However, the export of processed fruits to ASEAN markets, ASEAN +3, and ASEAN +6 require business readiness in terms of funding, personnel, language, transportation, and product quality development to be certified standards according to the consumers' needs and the regulations of each country. Many processed fruit

manufacturers in Thailand do not have sufficient potential for such export markets, so they should rely on the local market and tourism opportunities to generate trade benefits in expanding the markets and customers. In 2019, there were more than 40 million tourist arrivals to Thailand, representing mostly more than 11 million Chinese tourists (Department of Tourism, 2019). Due to the continued increase in the number of Chinese tourists as a result of the expansion of the Chinese economy, better income levels as well as the relaxation of the Chinese government's tourist control policy that makes the passport process easier. As a result, more Chinese people travel abroad. Besides, since August 2014, the National Council for Peace and Order (NCPO) has considered tourism promotion by canceling visa fees for Chinese tourists to encourage tourists to travel in the second half of the year, increasing the number of Chinese tourists. Therefore, the Chinese tourist market in Thailand is a more attractive market for community enterprises than the export market due to the high costs and risks of exports for small entrepreneurs.

The study of the processed fruit market and purchase decisions of Chinese tourists will make the processed fruit manufacturers see a way to develop products to meet the needs of the Chinese people in both product form and quality, plus packaging, distribution channels, and marketing communication channels by studying from information about the behavior of Chinese tourists. From the preliminary study, it was found that Chinese tourists' average costs of a recent trip abroad were US\$ 3,824, and a survey by China Tourism Academy in 2011 found that more than 26% of Chinese tourists who traveled abroad spend most of their money on shopping to buy gifts for their family, friends or colleagues, including to show the social status. In Thailand Chinese tourists, representing 35.4%, are aged 25-34 years, followed by 25.7% of those aged 35-44 years. They were born after the Chinese Cultural Revolution during 1960 - 1970, well educated, had a good job, obtained high income, and worked

in private and multinational companies, so they were ready to travel abroad. Their main tourism activities were visiting important places, followed by shopping (Export-Import Bank of Thailand, 2019).

The Chinese people's popular products are Thai fresh fruits such as mango, including processed fruits such as dehydrated and crispy mangoes in Chachoengsao Province. This is due to the short distance, Chinese films that were filmed in Thailand, and Thai television dramas that make the Chinese people know Thai cultures, Thai foods, as well as fruits. With the endorsement of Thailand export to China, the study on the purchasing decisions of fruits, especially processed mango products in Chachoengsao Province, among Chinese tourists, therefore, is necessary (Phoomchai, 2014; Freire Seoane et al., 2019; Peng & Chen, 2019; Demirci et al., 2019). Consumer research, besides, is essential market research to build the confidence of Chachoengsao manufacturers in producing a processed mango product that meets the actual customer needs, as suggested by Perner (2015). Therefore, the study will help processed mango manufacturers and marketers understand the factors that influence tourists' purchase decisions to find purchasing behavior solutions and enhance tourism market responsiveness. The study, besides, benefits the developments of processed mango products, market segmentation, marketing strategies, marketing communication, and competitive advantage so that Thai entrepreneurs are prepared well for entering the ASEAN community market in the future. Therefore, the objectives of the research are to 1) study the effect of demographic characteristics of Chinese tourists in Thailand on the purchase decision of processed mango products, 2) study opinions on marketing mix affecting the purchase decision of processed mango products of Chinese tourists in Thailand, 3) analyze the causal relationship of marketing mix affecting the purchase decision of processed mango products of Chinese tourists in Thailand and 4) study the competitiveness of Thailand

affecting the processed mango export to China and propose guidelines to develop the processed mango export to China.

Literature Review

Tourist behavior

Tourist behavior refers to individual expressions directly related to the use of goods and services in the tourism industry, including the decision-making process that affects the expression. Tourists can be classified into a group tour and an independent tour. Tourism objectives are as follows: (Swarbrook and Honer, 2007)

- Visiting Friends and Relatives
- Business Tourism
- Religious Tourism
- Health Tourism
- Social Tourism
- Educational Tourism
- Cultural Tourism
- Scenic Tourism
- Hedonistic Tourism
- Activity Tourism
- Special Interest Tourism

Purchase decision

The purchase decision is considered a consumer behavior that is a process and activity in which an individual is involved in finding, purchasing, consuming, evaluating, and selecting products and services (Belch and Belch, 2013; Jermstittiparsert, 2019b)). The purchase decision is caused by the 4 procedures, called S-R Theory as suggested by Kotler and Keller (2009) as follows:

- Stimulus
- Buyer's characteristic
- Buyer's decision process
- Buyer's response

Marketing mix strategy

The marketing mix strategy is a basic marketing strategy. Originally, the concept of the 4Ps marketing mix is widely accepted and used all over the world (Jermstittiparsert, 2019b), consisting of 4 elements: product, price, place,

and promotion. This marketing mix strategy was later added to the 5Ps with the fifth element, packaging, as theorized by Kotler and Keller (2009). At the end of 1970, most marketers say that the marketing mix should be improved. Later et al. (1981) combined 4Ps into the service mix to formulate strategies for products with services marketing, resulting in a 7Ps marketing mix that comprises three additional elements: people, process, and physical evidence. This 7Ps strategy is suitable for the restaurant service business, as recommended by Lin (2011).

Marketing communication

Marketing communication is the communication process between manufacturers or dealers and consumers through various communication channels (Sutduean, Prianto, & Jermstittiparsert, 2019). In the past, it was divided into advertising, public relations, and other channels, and then integrated marketing communication (IMC) was used. IMC is a recognition of the value of planning a diverse communications strategy, encompassing advertising, public relations, and personal selling, promotion, and other communication channels to ensure the greatest communication influence (Belch, 2014), especially on brand awareness (Jangjanakit, 2013). Besides, Smith and Taylor (2004) identified that IMC consists of word of mouth, corporate identity, merchandising, selling, internet, advertising, sale promotion, direct marketing, publicity and public relations, sponsorship, exhibitions, e-marketing, and packaging. Be aware of how these marketing communication elements are selected, combined, and connected. Besides, for an effective marketing program, marketing communication evaluation must be adopted (Todorova, 2015).

Processed fruits

Fruits have a yielding season, often for a short time. Moreover, the products harvested do not have a long shelf life. Therefore, it is imperative to use the food preservation process to be able to

have edible products during the off-season or to deliver goods to other areas or outlying countries, in which fruit processing can be done in several ways (Klawittayakun, 2013; Office of Agricultural Research and Development, 2019).

Business environment analysis

Porter's diamond model theory (Porter, 1998) is a concept used for analyzing the competitiveness of a country and the factors affecting its competitive advantage as follows.

1) Factor Conditions consist of fundamental and advanced factors. Fundamental factors refer to domestic production that affects a country's competitive advantage. While advanced factors refer to factors that required high investment and accumulated over a long period.

2) Demand Conditions comprise market demand and demand for goods of a country. Market demand refers to the nature of the demand for products and services both within and outside the country, which affects the development of the country. Demand for goods of a country refers to the people's demand for products, which influences the development production process and volume.

3) Supporting and Related Industries will enhance a country's competitive advantage as it develops and promotes the potential of related industries in terms of production costs, production process, and product quality to meet more domestic and international needs.

4) Firm Strategy, Structure, and Rivalry create a competitive advantage since the proper management of the structure and management system of the manufacturers in the industry and the competition among manufacturers of the same industry in the country will develop efficient management and production and will meet the needs of consumers. So, high competition will lead to higher development as well.

5) Government is an organization or agency that specifies four factors mentioned above and controls both positive and negative trends, for example, factor conditions have been affected by

the policy of the stock market, education, and government subsidies, as well as firm strategy and structure in the country, are influenced by the government's main policies on taxation and product monopoly, etc.

6) Chances refer to events, situations, or changes that are beyond the control or may not be predictable, such as the emergence of innovations, technology, competitors, world currency variations or exchange rate, war, etc.

Hypothesis development

The related research on Chinese tourists and consumers were reviewed to set the hypotheses. Past studies reveal that household incomes per capita are strongly associated with household expenditures per capita and housing or medical expenses, reduce the demand for household consumption (Fuqian, 2009). Besides, demographic factors have a relationship with spending behavior (Agrusaa et al., 2011), especially in tourism (Yung-Lun Liu and Pen-Fa Ko, 2011) and food consumption (Maka, et al., 2012; Chang et al., 2010). Besides, the behavior of the tour guide affects the shopping behavior of Chinese tourists (Kang Yu, 2011). Furthermore, Chinese teenagers tend to travel to Thailand (Utarak, 2012; Channuan, 2012). The study, therefore, hypothesizes that:

H1: Different demographic characteristics differently affect the purchase decision of processed mango products.

H1.1: Different genders differently affect the purchase decision of processed mango products.

H1.2: Different ages differently affect the purchase decision of processed mango products.

H1.3: Different occupations differently affect the purchase decision of processed mango products.

H1.4: Different incomes differently affect the purchase decision of processed mango products.

H1.5: Different statuses differently affect the purchase decision of processed mango products.

H1.6: Different educational levels differently affect the purchase decision of processed mango products.

H1.7: Different places of residence differently affect the purchase decision of processed mango products.

H1.8: Different expenses per time differently affect the purchase decision of processed mango products.

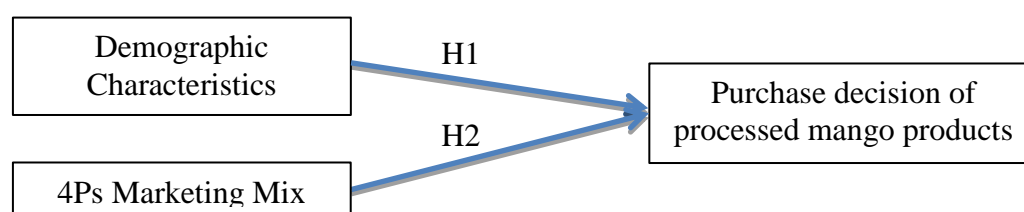
Additionally, Guo (2012) portrays that security and privacy are the most important factor influencing Chinese consumers' purchasing behavior, followed by other factors such as the price, quality service, commercial credit, and store design, in turn. Moreover, production safety, healthy raw materials, ease-of-eating packages (Lin, 2013), product quality, varieties of products (Xu and McGehee, 2012), and entertainment

services (Chowa and Murphyb, 2011). The study, therefore, hypothesizes that:

H2: The marketing mix has a relationship with the purchase decision of processed mango products.

The conceptual framework, as shown in Figure 1, depicts two phases: quantitative and qualitative studies. For the quantitative study, the independent variables were demographic characteristics and the marketing mix (4Ps), while the dependent variable was the purchase decision of processed mango products. In a qualitative study, four factors from Porter's diamond model theory were used as the dimensions in studying competitiveness and guidelines on Processed Mango Export to China.

Phase 1: Quantitative Study



Phase 2: Qualitative Study

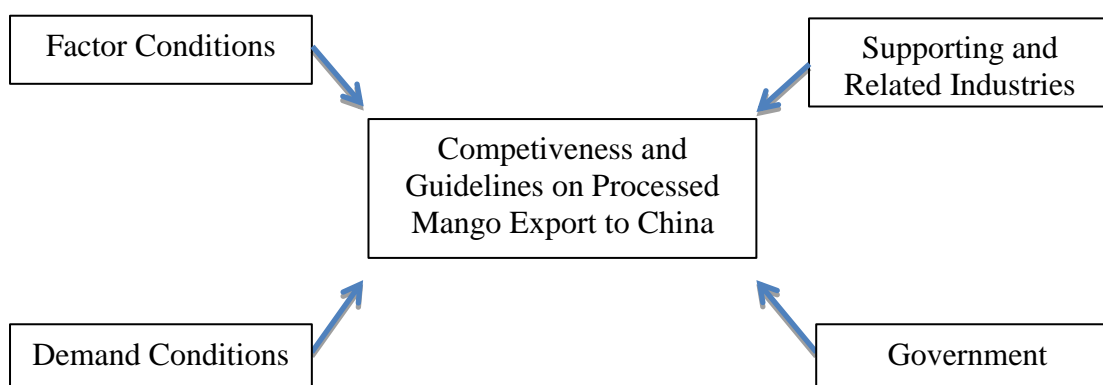


Figure 1: Conceptual Framework

Methodology

The research was designed using mixed methods research. The sample in the quantitative study comprised 400 Chinese tourists in Chachoengsao Province, based on the case of an unknown

population, as suggested by Cochran (1977). Accidental sampling was used to select the respondents to answer the questionnaires, a quantitative research instrument, on a 4Ps marketing mix. The researchers, besides,

conducted the qualitative study by collecting data from those involved in processed mango export business in Chachoengsao, comprising 10 mango growers, 1 entrepreneur exporting processed mangoes to China, and 1 personnel from the Chachoengsao Provincial Commercial Office, totaling 12 informants. The in-depth interviews were used as a qualitative research instrument. The data were collected from December 2019 - February 2020.

Regarding data analysis, descriptive statistics were used to analyze opinions on the marketing mix, included frequency, percentage, mean, and standard deviation. Whereas inference analysis

was used to test the differences among demographic information that affect the purchase decision of processed mangoes by Independent sample T-test and One-Way ANOVA F-test. While multiple regression analysis was used to test marketing mix that related to purchasing decision of processed mango products, in which multicollinearity was checked considering correlations ≤ 0.8 , Variance Inflation Factor (VIF) ≤ 10 , Tolerance > 0.1 , and Durbin-Watson between 1.5-2.5, as suggested by Chatterjee and Hadi (2012). For qualitative data, they were analyzed using methodological triangulation to ensure valid and reliable data (Braun and Clarke, 2013).

Table 1: Sample Demographics Summary

General information	Number (persons)	Percentage
Gender		
Male	128	32.00
Female	272	68.00
Age		
Less than 25 years	42	10.50
25-30 years	55	13.75
31-35 years	72	18.25
36-40 years	110	27.50
More than 40 years	120	30.00
Occupation		
Student	24	6.00
Business Owner	160	40.00
Private employees	204	51.00
Civil servants/state enterprise employees	12	3.00
Average monthly income		
Less than 3,000 Yuan	25	6.25
3,000-5,000 Yuan	100	25.00
5,001-7,000 Yuan	130	32.50
More than 7,000 Yuan	145	36.25
Status		
Single	152	38.00
Married	230	57.50
Divorce	18	4.50
Educational Level		
High School	34	8.50
Diploma	111	22.75
Bachelor	230	57.50

Higher than bachelor	25	6.25
Place of residence		
Xiamen	16	4.00
Shandong	3	0.75
Chengdu	2	0.50
Chongqing	20	5.00
Shenzhen	64	16.00
Beijing	103	25.75
Shanghai	54	13.50
Guangzhou	28	7.00
Tianjin	80	20.00
Macau	30	7.50
Expense per time		
Less than 500 Yuan	123	30.75
500-750 Yuan	192	48.00
751-1,000 Yuan	73	18.25
More than 1,000 Yuan	12	3.00

Data Analyses

Marketing Mix Analysis

This part is the analysis of opinions on marketing mix, comprising product, price, place, and promotion. As shown in Table 2, it was found that the marketing mix influencing the overall decision to purchase processed mango products was at a high level (mean = 3.93, SD = 0.422). When

considering the marketing mix dimensions, it is found that all of them was at a high level by which the product was most important (mean = 4.10, SD = 0.425), followed by price (mean = 3.95, SD = 0.405), place (mean = 3.90, SD = 0.423), and promotion (mean = 3.78, SD = 0.437), respectively.

Table 2: Mean and Standard Deviation of Marketing Mix

4Ps	\bar{X}	S.D.	Interpretation	Rank
Product	4.10	0.425	High	1
Price	3.95	0.405	High	2
Place	3.90	0.423	High	3
Promotion	3.78	0.437	High	4
Total	3.93	0.422	High	

Hypotheses Testing

For the testing result of H1, different demographic characteristics differently affect PDPM, using an independent sample t-test at a significance level of .05, it failed to reject H0 (P-value=.654). While in testing H1.1-1.8 by using a One-way ANOVA F-test at a significant level of .05, it also failed to reject H0 (P-values=.360-842). On the contrary, in testing H2, the marketing mix has a relationship with the purchasing decision of processed mango products, it rejected H0 since p-value=.000 when considering F-test in multiple regression equations, as shown in Table 3

Table 3: Hypothesis Testing Results

No.	Hypothesis	Testing Results
1	H1: Different demographic characteristics differently affect PDPM.	Fail to reject H_0
2	H1.1: Different genders differently affect PDPM.	Fail to reject H_0
3	H1.2: Different ages differently affect PDPM.	Fail to reject H_0
4	H1.3: Different occupations differently affect PDPM.	Fail to reject H_0
5	H1.4: Different incomes differently affect PDPM.	Fail to reject H_0
6	H1.5: Different statuses differently affect PDPM.	Fail to reject H_0
7	H1.6: Different educational levels differently affect PDPM.	Fail to reject H_0
8	H1.7: Different places of residence differently affect PDPM.	Fail to reject H_0
9	H1.8: Different expenses per time differently affect PDPM.	Fail to reject H_0
10	H2: The marketing mix has a relationship with the purchasing decision of processed mango products.	Reject H_0

The multiple regression results depicted the statistically significant relationships: product (X_1) positively related on PDPM ($\beta=0.293$; $p=0.000$), place (X_3) positively related on PDPM ($\beta=0.257$; $p=0.000$), and price (X_2) positively related on

PDPM ($\beta=0.224$; $p=0.000$), respectively. On the other hand, promotion (X_4) positively related to PDPM without statistically significant ($\beta=0.008$; $p=0.632$), as shown in Table 4.

Table 4: Multiple Regression Results

Model	Coefficient					Collinearity	
	b_0	SD	β_0	t	Sig	Toleranc e	VIF
Constant	0.52	0.243		2.525	0.008		
Product (X_1)	0.289	0.055	0.293	6.753	0.000***	0.824	1.195
Price (X_2)	0.296	0.036	0.224	4.852	0.000***	0.636	1.621
Place (X_3)	0.345	0.072	0.257	4.876	0.000***	0.485	2.159
Promotion (X_4)	0.056	0.088	0.008	0.086	0.632	0.696	1.664

* P-value ≤ 0.05 , ** P-value ≤ 0.01 , *** P-value ≤ 0.001

Qualitative Results

As the fourth objective of the research is to study the competitiveness of Thailand that affects the export of processed mango to China and provide the guidelines to develop the processed mango export to China, the quantitative results were divided into 2 parts: 1) Chachoengsao's competitiveness affecting the processed mango export to China and 2) guidelines to develop the processed mango export to China.

1. Chachoengsao's Competitiveness Affecting Export of Processed Mangoes to China

The results in this part were divided into 4 dimensions based on the Diamond Model, as suggested by Porter (1998). First, regarding factor conditions, the production costs were not high, however, there was a labor shortage that sometimes influences higher wages to motivate them to work. Besides, the province had a resourceful location and convenient communication as well as transportation. Second, in connection with demand conditions, processed mango consumptions were very popular in the province, including its distribution was extensive in the area. Third, according to supporting and

related industries, it was divided into three processes: production, collection, and export. The industries involved in the production process were fertilizers, agricultural tools, employment, and community enterprises. While the process of collection composed cold storage plants and packaging staff. Whereas export-related industries included shipping companies, retail markets in China, and mango processing plants. Forth, concerning governmental roles, the government provided a training program to educate laborers in the province in terms of production, export, and distribution, including establishing processed mango community enterprises and organizing events or trade shows to create tourists' confidence in product quality.

2. Guidelines to develop the processed mango export to China

The guidelines were divided into 4 issues based on Chachoengsao's Competitiveness qualitative findings. First, in terms of guidelines for factor conditions, key informants suggest promoting modern tool usage instead of human labor, training program for workforces to meet the standards, and building a distribution center as a hub to distribute products to China. Second, concerning demand conditions, entrepreneurs should consider increasing the advertisement of processed mangoes as much as possible, followed by the maintenance of the quality of processed mangoes, and standard pricing. Third, concerning supporting and related industries, farmers' networks and cooperative systems should be promoted to purchasing fertilizers and agricultural equipment at cheap prices by establishing standards and fair prices for the shipping companies. Forth, along with governmental roles, the government should solve the problem of processed mango oversupply in certain seasons and support the expansion of processed mango exports to other countries to generate income for farmers and communities in the province. In addition, the export destination suggested was Jieyang City as it had the most appropriateness when considered comprehensively.

Discussions and Conclusion

The study concludes both quantitative and qualitative results as follows. Quantitative results display that demographic characteristics do not affect the purchase decision of processed mango products, as studied by past studies on similar products such as processed seafood and dehydrated fruits. Moreover, the results portray that the marketing mix in terms of price and distribution relates to the purchase decision of processed mango with statistical significance at 0.05 level, as revealed by Aunyawong et al., (2020). This reflects that Thailand has processed mango products that can meet the needs of Chinese tourists in every group with an attractive price, beautiful product appearance, good quality raw materials, and eye-catching packaging.

Whereas qualitative results on the competitiveness of Thailand depict that the province has a suitable location for growing mangoes for processing because the province has the soil with organic matters, as in agreement with Naramas (2015) and Songhongsa (2012). Besides, since processed mangos are known as provincial products and they are also selected as a product that is certified quality from the Ministry of the Interior so that consumers have a confidence to buy processed mangos from the province, resulting in higher demand due to the good image of products, as suggested by Promthep (2015). Additionally, the processing of mangoes generates more varieties of mango products, promoted via tour companies or hotels, which increases processed mango export volume, as revealed by the Export-Import Bank of Thailand (2020). The government sector, furthermore, provides farmers with training programs on production. However, the government still lacks the participation of farmers and exporters in dealing with the export system to meet the product quality standard control, as exposed by Utsaha (2012) and Wangapai (2016). The government, therefore, should assess the export situation each year to plan and stabilize processed mango exports to China.

Concerning guidelines for developing the competitiveness of Thailand affecting processed mango exports to China, modern tools should be promoted in place of human labor. Also, processed mangoes should be promoted by processing mangoes as the main products of related businesses such as hotel and tourism businesses, as consistent with Setthachotsombut and Aunyawong (2020).

Implications of the Study

The main implication of this study is that the fruit entrepreneurs should select the location appropriate for planting the specific fruits and attend the training program held by government sectors to enhance the manufacturing capacity. Besides, they should promote the products through associated community enterprises, set a reasonable price, and ensure the quality of products by the certification from related authorities so that the products are well-known, reliable, and attractive. These practices lead them to obtain business opportunities, especially in exporting their products, as competitiveness is engendered. Further study should use the data collected in many areas to obtain more different information as well as additional variables that might enhance exporters' performance, such as supply chain management of processed fruits, as suggested by Aunyawong et al. (2020).

Limitations and Future Research Direction

Further study should use the data collected in many areas to obtain more different information as well as additional variables that might enhance exporters' performance, such as supply chain management of processed fruits, as suggested by Aunyawong et al. (2020).

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