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PATHWAYS TO SUCCESS: EXAMINING THE INFLUENCE OF ENTREPRENEURIAL POTENTIAL AND BUSINESS MANAGEMENT ON SOUTHERN THAI AGRI-FOOD COMMUNITY ENTERPRISE PERFORMANCE

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Abstract

This study examines the key drivers of community enterprise (CE) success in Thailand's southern border provinces, focusing on CEs processing agricultural products. A mixed-methods approach, combining quantitative and qualitative data, was employed. Quantitative data from 315 entrepreneurs (questionnaires) were analyzed using structural equation modeling (SEM), while qualitative data stemmed from in-depth interviews with nine entrepreneurs. Results reveal a robust positive relationship between entrepreneurial potential and business management effectiveness. Entrepreneurial potential, including risk-taking, proactiveness, and innovation, directly strengthens business management capabilities. Strong business management, encompassing production, marketing, financial, and human resource functions, significantly boosts CE performance (sales, profits, growth). The SEM model, explaining 74.3% of the performance variance, shows business management mediates the relationship between entrepreneurial potential and performance. Qualitative data strongly corroborate these findings, underscoring the vital role of entrepreneurial vision, resource allocation, and adaptability in achieving long-term CE success. This research emphasizes the necessity of interventions aimed at enhancing both entrepreneurial skills and business management practices within these CEs. The findings offer valuable guidance for policymakers and development organizations supporting rural CEs. Future research could explore external environmental factors and comparative analyses across diverse CE types.

Keywords: Entrepreneurial Potential, Business Management, Performance, Community Enterprises, Thailand

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Introduction

Businesses operate as community enterprises to efficiently manage community assets and promote family and community self-sufficiency. (Secretariat Office of Community Enterprise Promotion Board, n.d). Within this context, resources include all types of assets that improve operational efficiency along with maintaining sustainability within the community boundaries. This approach enhances communities through community development while minimizing inequality and creating jobs alongside income generation to promote greater community self-reliance. A steady increase in community enterprises throughout the southern border provinces has led to a total number of 1,793 groups. Processed agricultural production constitutes more than 50% of the enterprises operating within community development sectors (Department of Agricultural Extension, 2022). Entrepreneurs of community enterprises experience high business competition levels as they struggle with multiple challenges that span management, marketing, production, finance, and technology requirements. Community enterprises need sustained support because they require operational enhancement alongside increased business competitiveness (Baedcharoen et al., 2022; Anusonphat & Poompurk, 2022).

Effectiveness in competition requires efficient management for community enterprises (Chatwanichul et al., 2022). The business growth cycles heavily rely on entrepreneurs who guide essential management processes. Entrepreneurs' development of innovative ideas requires both entrepreneurial potential and experience utilization (Gumpert, 2003). Business operations heavily depend on these qualities because they drive competitive advantages as well as improve performance (Wongrat, 2021). Performance is reflected directly in three main quantitative measures, which together make up performance, such as revenue and costs alongside profits. Every entrepreneur places these goals at the top of their development objectives. These features of entrepreneurial potential alongside business management practices directly affect the performance results of community enterprises because of their fundamental importance. In addition, the 13th National Economic and Social Development Plan (2023-2027) sets the direction for developing and enhancing community enterprise entrepreneurs to make their performance more competitive (Office of the National Economic and Social Development Council, 2022). For this reason, this study examines the causal relationship model between entrepreneurial potential, business management, and the performance of community enterprises producing processed agricultural products in the three southern border provinces. The aim is to derive a model for developing entrepreneurial potential and business management that can enhance the performance of these enterprises. Such a model would bring sustainable benefits, including increased income and improved living standards for community enterprise members. It would also contribute to strengthening the local economy at the grassroots level in the southern border provinces, reducing poverty, and addressing social inequality in the long term.

Literature Review

This study is developed based on the Resource-Based View Theory (RBV), which explains the relationship between entrepreneurial potential, business management, and performance. According to RBV, when an organization possesses unique and distinctive resources and capabilities, it can perform better than competitors in the same industry (Barney & Hesterly, 2008).

Entrepreneurial Potential

Entrepreneurial potential is a vital element that contributes to the success of a business. It encompasses decision-making processes, operations, and behaviors that foster stable and effective growth (Intanam et al., 2020). Entrepreneurial potential entails independent decision-making along with elements of innovation and proactive measures that result in competitive strength and a willingness to embrace risk (Hernández-Linares et al., 2020). Every business

leader has entrepreneurial potential, as it facilitates efficient management and provides an edge over rivals (Khammadee, 2023). Components of entrepreneurial potential include: 1) Risk-taking: the readiness to accept uncertainty and risks within business operations. 2) Proactiveness: the promptness in taking action to secure a competitive advantage. 3) Innovativeness: the generation of new ideas or methods to improve business efficiency. 4) Competitive aggressiveness: the ability to successfully compete within the market. 5) Autonomy: the liberty to make independent decisions in business operations (Lumpkin & Dess, 1996). Furthermore, research has indicated that entrepreneurial potential has a positive impact on business management (Tansiri, 2023). Entrepreneurial traits also have a favorable effect on business success (Saelee & Jadesadalug, 2015). Additionally, entrepreneurial potential positively influences business management and affects performance both directly and indirectly (Wongrat, 2021).

Business Management

Effective management in business is dependent on several resources such as personnel, finances, equipment, and information to meet business objectives. These elements are essential for the success of business operations (Basco et al., 2020). Entrepreneurs must cultivate their skills in resource management to gain an edge over competitors (Barney et al., 2011). Business management entails utilizing management, production, marketing, and financial processes as analytical tools for organizations to prepare for competition, since these functions are crucial (Gerdsuk, 2022). Research conducted on the aspects of business management in community enterprises that produce processed agricultural goods in the three southern border provinces identified that business management includes: 1) Production Management: Ensuring the effectiveness of the processes involved in creating goods or services. 2) Marketing Management: Matching products with customer requirements, promoting products, and overseeing distribution channels. 3) Financial Management: Overseeing capital acquisition, financial operations, and accounts receivable. 4) Human Resource Management: Ensuring sufficient staffing, aligning skills with responsibilities, and providing suitable training and compensation (Maneenin & Kamphaengdee, 2025). Additionally, research has indicated that business management has a positive effect on performance (Gerdsuk, 2022) and exerts both direct and indirect beneficial impacts on performance (Chatwanichul et al., 2022).

Performance

The results of business operations are indicators of success. Kaplan & Norton (1996) introduced the Balanced Scorecard (BSC), which highlights the importance of evaluating performance through various dimensions, which include: 1) Financial Perspective: Revenue, profit, and growth. 2) Customer Perspective: Customer satisfaction and market share. 3) Learning and Growth Perspective: Employee development and innovation. 4) Internal Process Perspective: Efficiency and quality of internal operations. This research concentrates on the financial aspect of performance, which encompasses: 1) Sales: An increase in the quantity of products sold. 2) Profit: The rise in value after subtracting expenses and costs, along with reserves for business expansion. 3) Growth: An increase in sales or profit, an expansion of the customer base, and additional operational resources.

Hypotheses and Research Framework

Based on the literature review, the following hypotheses and research framework (as shown in Figure 1) are proposed:

Hypothesis 1: Entrepreneurial potential has a direct positive effect on the business management of community enterprises producing processed agricultural products in the three southern border provinces.

Hypothesis 2: Entrepreneurial potential has a direct positive effect on the performance of community enterprises producing processed agricultural products in the three southern border provinces.

Hypothesis 3: Business management has a direct positive effect on the performance of community enterprises producing processed agricultural products in the three southern border provinces.
Hypothesis 4: Entrepreneurial potential has an indirect positive effect on the performance of community enterprises producing processed agricultural products in the three southern border provinces, with business management acting as a mediating variable.

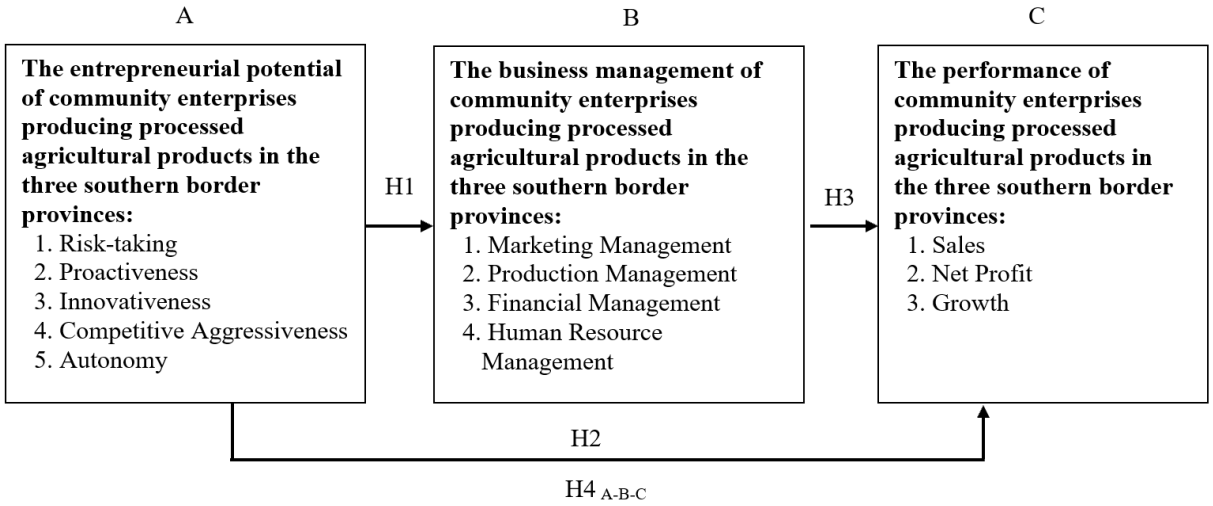

Figure 1 Conceptual Framework

Research Methodology

This study employed a mixed-method approach, combining quantitative and qualitative research. The population for the quantitative research consists of entrepreneurs from community enterprises producing processed agricultural products in the three southern border provinces in 2022. These enterprises are categorized as food processing community enterprises, totaling 1,712 individuals (Community Enterprise Promotion Division, 2022). The sample size was determined based on the appropriate sample size ratio to the number of variables studied. Hair et al. (2010) state that the ratio should be at least 20 samples per variable. This study has 12 observable variables, so the minimum sample size required is 240. However, to account for potential non-responses and enhance statistical accuracy, the sample size increased to 450. Cluster random sampling was used, with provinces as the clustering criterion. The sample distribution is as follows: Yala: 85 respondents, Pattani: 235 respondents, and Narathiwat: 130 respondents. The qualitative research involved key informants from community enterprises producing processed agricultural products. These informants were selected based on their improvement in potential assessment from moderate to reasonable levels in 2022. The selection was purposive, focusing on the top three enterprises with the shortest development time in each province, totaling nine informants.
The questionnaire consisted of five sections: 1) General Information: 8 closed-end questions with multiple-choice options. 2) Entrepreneurial Potential: 10 items measured on a 5-point Likert scale (1 = least, 5 = most). 3) Business Management: 10 items measured on a 5-point Likert scale. 4) Business Performance: 10 items measured on a 5-point Likert scale. 5) Additional Comments: Open-ended questions for additional feedback. Content Validity was assessed by three experts, with an Item Objective Congruence (IOC) index greater than 0.5 for all items (Phonphotthanamat, 2022). Then, it was tested on 30 non-sample community enterprise groups.
The reliability was assessed using Cronbach's alpha, with a threshold of ≥ 0.70 (Cronbach, 1984). The findings were as follows: Entrepreneurial Potential: 0.788, Business Management:

0.949, and Business Performance: 0.900. The qualitative research tools comprised Semi-Structured Interviews. The interview guidelines were designed to align with the research aims and expert suggestions. The topics covered in the interviews included basic information about the participants, entrepreneurial potential, business management practices, business performance, and the connections between entrepreneurial potential, business management, and business performance.

Data Analysis of this study utilized descriptive statistics: Frequency, percentage, mean, and standard deviation were calculated using SPSS, and path analysis: Structural equation modeling (SEM) was conducted using LISREL 8.80 to test the causal relationships. The following fit indices were used to evaluate the model: Chi-square/degrees of freedom (χ^2/df) < 5, Goodness of Fit Index (GFI) ≥ 0.90, Comparative Fit Index (CFI) ≥ 0.90, Adjusted Goodness of Fit Index (AGFI) ≥ 0.90, Standardized Root Mean Square Residual (SRMR) < 0.05, and Root Mean Square Error of Approximation (RMSEA) < 0.08 (Schumacker & Lomax, 2010). Qualitative data analysis utilized the content analysis method.

Research Results

A total of 315 complete questionnaires were gathered, accounting for 70.00% of the intended sample size. The findings are as follows: The majority of entrepreneurs in community enterprises that focus on processed agricultural products in the three southern border provinces are: Gender: Female (249 respondents, 70.04%) and male (66 respondents, 20.96%). Age: 256 respondents (81.27%) fall within the 30-60 age range. Education: 153 respondents (48.57%) have finished high school or vocational training. Business Experience: 147 respondents (46.67%) have been operating their businesses for 5-10 years. Number of Members: 154 respondents (48.88%) have between 11-20 members in their businesses. Type of Agricultural Products: 244 respondents (77.46%) are processing plant-based products. Initial Investment: 137 respondents (43.50%) began with less than 10,000 THB. Monthly Sales: 131 respondents (41.50%) report monthly sales totaling less than 10,000 THB.

Entrepreneurial Potential: The average score is relatively high ($\bar{x}$ = 3.85, S.D. = 0.59). The factors are ranked from highest to lowest as follows: Autonomy ($\bar{x}$ = 3.94, S.D. = 0.59), Innovativeness ($\bar{x}$ = 3.93, S.D. = 0.55), Competitive Aggressiveness ($\bar{x}$ = 3.82, S.D. = 0.49), Proactiveness ($\bar{x}$ = 3.79, S.D. = 0.59), and Risk-taking ($\bar{x}$ = 3.77, S.D. = 0.70). These results align with qualitative research findings that show entrepreneurs prioritize independence in their decision-making, are dedicated to achieving success in their ventures, and are adaptable to changing circumstances through innovative strategies that provide a competitive advantage. Business Management: The average score is notably high ($\bar{x}$ = 3.83, S.D. = 0.62). The components listed from highest to lowest include: Production Management ($\bar{x}$ = 3.98, S.D. = 0.57), Human Resource Management ($\bar{x}$ = 3.91, S.D. = 0.63), Marketing Management ($\bar{x}$ = 3.81, S.D. = 0.63), and Financial Management ($\bar{x}$ = 3.62, S.D. = 0.64). These results reflect qualitative research, emphasizing that entrepreneurs effectively plan and manage production processes, motivate team members to acquire additional knowledge, and concentrate on marketing strategies to boost sales. Performance: The average score is considerably high ($\bar{x}$ = 3.63, S.D. = 0.62). The components are ranked from highest to lowest: Net Profit ($\bar{x}$ = 3.70, S.D. = 0.60), Sales ($\bar{x}$ = 3.68, S.D. = 0.67), and Growth ($\bar{x}$ = 3.68, S.D. = 0.59). These results are consistent with qualitative research, indicating that entrepreneurs assess performance in terms of net profit. A robust profit margin enables them to reinvest in their business, enhancing liquidity and resources and supporting growth.

The empirical data showed that all variables studied are approximately normally distributed. The skewness and kurtosis values for all variables, both overall and by component, fall within acceptable thresholds (skewness ≤ +2 and kurtosis ≤ +7), indicating a normal distribution (Hair et al., 2010; Byrne, 2010) as shown in Table 1.

Table 1 Mean, Standard Deviation, Skewness, and Kurtosis of Variables

Variables	$\bar{x}$	S.D.	Skew.	Kur	Level
Entrepreneurial Potential	**3.85**	**0.59**	**-0.21**	**0.59**	**High**
Risk-taking	3.77	0.70	-0.15	-0.17	High
Proactiveness	3.79	0.59	0.06	0.04	High
Innovativeness	3.93	0.55	-0.26	1.39	High
Competitive Aggressiveness	3.82	0.49	0.04	0.55	High
Autonomy	3.94	0.59	-0.73	1.13	High
Business Management	**3.83**	**0.62**	**-0.28**	**1.15**	**High**
Financial Management	3.62	0.64	0.38	-0.41	High
Production Management	3.98	0.57	-0.33	0.59	High
Marketing Management	3.81	0.63	0.07	-0.37	High
Human Resource Management	3.91	0.63	-1.24	4.77	High
Performance	**3.69**	**0.62**	**-0.34**	**1.24**	**High**
Sales	3.68	0.67	-0.76	2.37	High
Net Profit	3.70	0.60	-0.29	1.06	High
Growth	3.68	0.59	0.04	0.30	High

The bivariate relationships between variables were examined using Pearson's correlation coefficient for the 12 observed variables. The results indicate that all pairs of observed variables have a statistically significant positive correlation at the 0.01 level, with correlation coefficients ranging from 0.370 to 0.835. This confirms that the direction of the relationships aligns with the developed conceptual framework. In addition, since none of the correlation coefficients exceed 0.85, there is no evidence of multicollinearity, which would occur if variables were too highly correlated (Hair et al., 2010). The following abbreviations are used for the observed variables: SALE: Sales, PROF: Profit, GROW: Growth, FIN: Financial Management, PROD: Production Management, MKT: Marketing Management, HUM: Human Resource Management, RISK: Risk-taking, PRO: Proactiveness, INNO: Innovativeness, AGG: Competitive Aggressiveness, and DEPE: Autonomy as shown in Table 2.

Table 2 Correlation Coefficients Between Observed Variables

Variables	SALE	PROF	GROW	FIN	PROD	MKT	HUM	RISK	PROA	INNO	AGGR	DEPE
SALE	1.000											
PROF	0.835**	1.000										
GROW	0.784**	0.804**	1.000									
FIN	0.696**	0.596**	0.656**	1.000								
PROD	0.481**	0.482**	0.561**	0.484**	1.000							
MKT	0.727**	0.685**	0.696**	0.659**	0.700**	1.000						
HUM	0.704**	0.634**	0.596**	0.549**	0.610**	0.751**	1.000					
RISK	0.531**	0.441**	0.476**	0.547**	0.309**	0.526**	0.482**	1.000				
PRO	0.607**	0.613**	0.643**	0.577**	0.417**	0.562**	0.502**	0.669**	1.000			
NNO	0.528**	0.551**	0.607**	0.423**	0.561**	0.592**	0.569**	0.511**	0.600**	1.000		
AGG	0.539**	0.532**	0.499**	0.553**	0.508**	0.540**	0.567**	0.433**	0.509**	0.510**	1.000	
DEPE	0.612**	0.583**	0.556**	0.439**	0.671**	0.620**	0.664**	0.370**	0.444**	0.575**	0.520**	1.000

** Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level

Examination of model fit indices and causal relationships revealed that the analysis of the goodness-of-fit indices for the causal relationship model indicates that the model is consistent with the empirical data. The findings are as follows: Hypothesis 1: Entrepreneurial potential directly affects business management, with an effect size of 0.938 ($p < .01$). This supports Hypothesis 1. Hypothesis 2: Entrepreneurial potential directly affects performance, but this effect is not statistically significant, with an effect size of 0.021. Therefore, Hypothesis 2 is rejected. Hypothesis 3: Business management directly affects performance, with an effect size of 0.896 ($p < .01$). This supports Hypothesis 3. Hypothesis 4: Entrepreneurial potential has an indirect positive effect on performance through the mediating variable of business management, with an effect size of 0.841 ($p < .01$). This supports Hypothesis 4. The results demonstrate that the variables entrepreneurial potential and business management collectively explain 74.30% of the variance in performance. The model fit indices are as follows: $\chi^2 = 34.246$, df = 23, CFI = 0.998, GFI = 0.982, AGFI = 0.939, and RMSEA = 0.0395 as shown in Table 3 and Figure 2.

Table 3 Direct, Indirect, and Total Effects Between Causal and Outcome Variables

Causal Variables	Outcome Variables					
	Business Management			Performance		
	Total Effect	Direct Effect	Indirect Effect	Total Effect	Direct Effect	Indirect Effect
Entrepreneurial Potential	0.938** (0.063)	0.938** (0.063)	-	0.862** (0.053)	0.021 (0.219)	0.841** (0.214)
Business Management	-	-	-	0.896** (0.222)	0.896** (0.222)	-
R^2	0.880			0.743		
χ^2 = 34.246, df = 23, *Relative* χ^2/df = 1.489, CFI = 0.998, GFI = 0.982, AGFI = 0.939, RMSEA = 0.0395, SRMR = 0.0205						

** p < 0.01

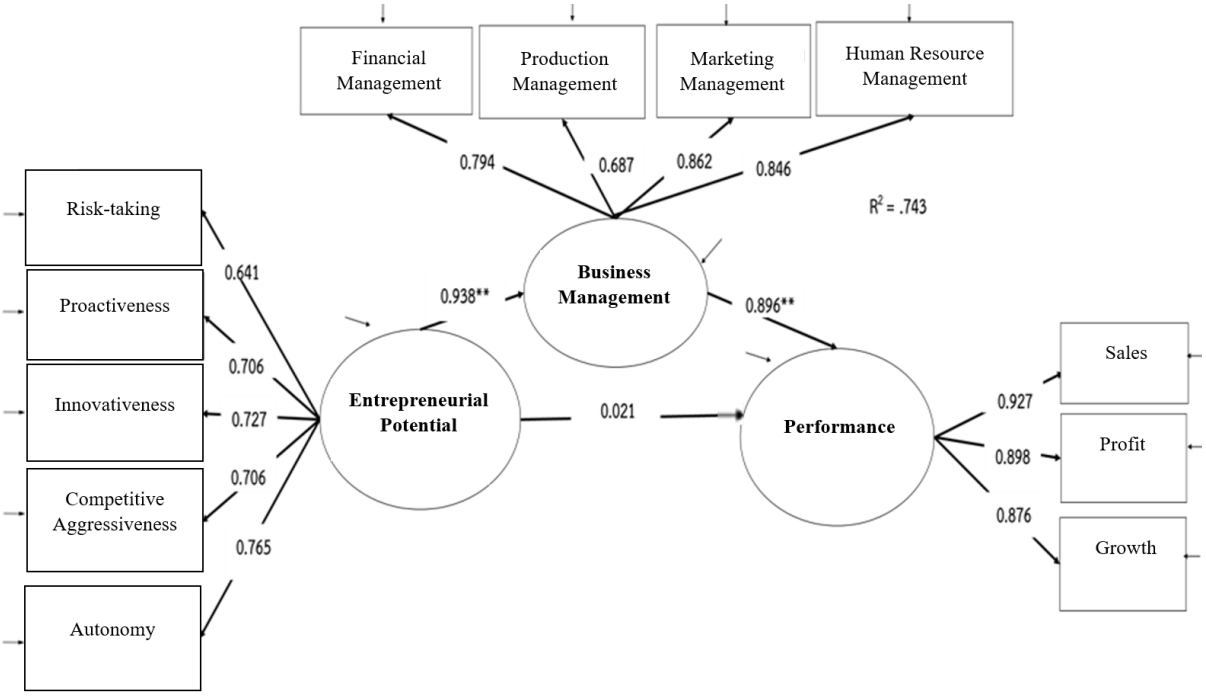

Figure 2 Causal Relationship Model of Entrepreneurial Potential and Business Management on Performance of Community Enterprises Producing Processed Agricultural Products in the Three Southern Border Provinces

Conclusion and Discussion

This study found that the causal relationship model of entrepreneurial potential and business management on the performance of community enterprises producing processed agricultural products in the three southern border provinces is consistent with empirical data. Entrepreneurial potential has a direct positive effect on business management. This is likely because entrepreneurial potential encompasses unique personal traits such as risk-taking, proactiveness, innovativeness, competitive aggressiveness, and autonomy. These traits enable entrepreneurs to effectively manage their businesses in a dynamic environment, enhancing competitiveness and achieving business goals. This finding is consistent with previous studies indicating that entrepreneurial potential positively influences business management (Tansiri, 2023) and that entrepreneurial characteristics positively impact business success (Saelee & Jadesadalug, 2015). Qualitative interviews also highlighted that entrepreneurs need knowledge, courage, and experience to make decisions that create competitive advantages and increase the

likelihood of business success. Business management has a direct positive effect on performance.

Effective management of resources, including marketing, human resources, finance, and production, enhances competitiveness and leads to better business outcomes. This finding is consistent with studies showing that business management positively influences performance (Gerdsuk, 2022). Interviews revealed that business success depends on proper management across all areas, continuous skill development, and aligning products and services with market demands to increase revenue. Entrepreneurial potential has an indirect positive effect on performance through business management. This suggests that entrepreneurial potential drives effective business management and improved performance. This finding is consistent with studies reporting a positive relationship between business management and performance (Chatwanichul et al, 2022) and the indirect influence of entrepreneurial potential on business outcomes (Wongrat, 2021). Interviews emphasized that entrepreneurial potential is essential for efficient resource allocation, timely production, and continuous skill development, contributing to increased sales and profits.

Recommendations

The following recommendations are proposed for Entrepreneurs and Government Agencies to enhance the performance of community enterprises producing processed agricultural products in the three southern border provinces.

1) Enhancing Entrepreneurial Potential: Focus on developing all aspects of entrepreneurial potential, including risk-taking, proactiveness, innovativeness, competitive aggressiveness, and autonomy. Provide specialized training programs to equip entrepreneurs with the skills needed for long-term decision-making and effective business management.

2) Improving Business Management: Emphasize the importance of financial, production, marketing, and human resource management, as these are critical to achieving better performance.

For Future Research

Investigate external factors affecting performance using frameworks such as Institutional Theory to identify additional variables that explain performance in the context of community enterprises. In addition, comparative studies with other types of community enterprises will be conducted to validate and generalize the findings of this research further.

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