

# Digital Entrepreneurs Toward Performances of Service Business in Southern Economic Corridor of Thailand

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## Abstract

The objectives of this research were threefold: 1. To study the operational characteristics of service businesses in the Southern Economic Corridor of Thailand; 2. To study the components of digital entrepreneurs, including customer orientation, competitor orientation, inter-functional coordination, and performance outcomes; 3. To study the comparison of small and medium-sized service businesses with large service businesses in the Southern Economic Corridor of Thailand; and 4. To develop a structural equation model (SEM) that portrays digital entrepreneurs' role in shaping service businesses' performance in the Southern Economic Corridor of Thailand. Quantitative and qualitative research methods were implemented in this study. The quantitative research sample comprised 150 large-scale and 150 medium- and small-scale. The qualitative research sample consisted of nine experts. Data were collected through surveys and analyzed using various statistical techniques, including descriptive statistics, inferential statistics, multivariate statistics, and hypothesis testing via structural equation modeling (SEM) with the advanced statistical software AMOS.

The research findings indicated that large-scale, medium-scale, and small-scale hotels all attach significant importance to the digital entrepreneurs performance in service businesses in the Southern Economic Corridor of Thailand. Overall, this importance is statistically significant. Further analysis reveals statistically significant differences across all dimensions at the 0.05 significance level. Specifically, large-scale businesses are more critical than medium-scale and small-scale businesses. Moreover, the SEM analysis reveals that the model fits the data well, with a

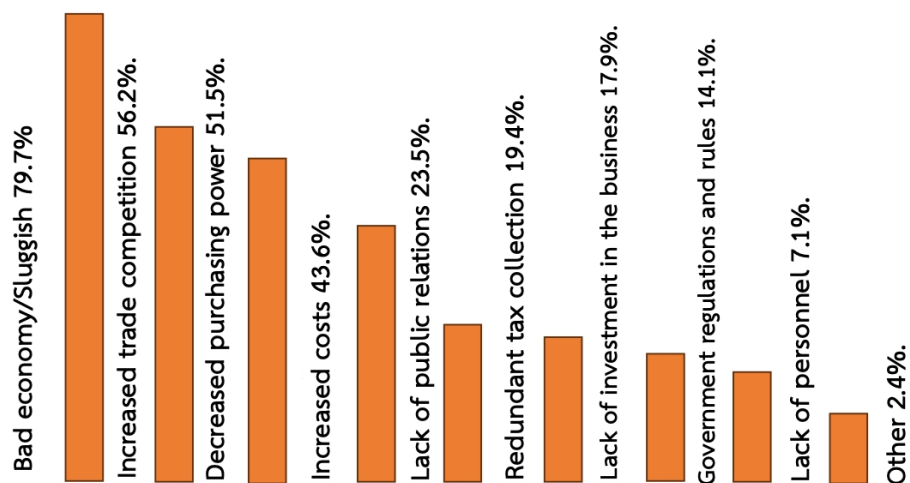
Comparative Fit Index (CFI) of 0.982, a Root Mean Square Error of Approximation (RMSEA) of 0.026, a Chi-square-to-degrees-of-freedom ratio (CMIN/DF) of 1.316, and a Chi-square value divided by the degrees of freedom (CMIN- $\rho$ ) of 0.118.

**Keywords:** Digital Entrepreneurship: Market Orientation: Firm Performance and Southern Economic Corridor

## Introduction

In recent years, global-scale changes have profoundly influenced the tourism industry, encompassing societal dynamics, economic factors, political landscapes, environmental concerns, and technological advancements. These transformations have led to a significant evolution in tourism, characterized by an expanding middle-class population, a quest for new tourist destinations, advances in contemporary technologies, and a growing preference for health-conscious travel experiences. These factors collectively impact the future of hotel businesses across four dimensions: 1) Demographic and social change, 2) Individualization, 3) Digital transformation and automation, and 4) Health and hygiene. Furthermore, Thailand is experiencing intensified competition in the tourism sector due to increased investment in infrastructure development and the promotion of tourism industry growth by various countries, especially those opening up as new tourism markets. These emerging markets possess abundant and novel tourism resources, similar geographical and climatic features to Thailand, and enhanced transportation networks within their countries. Additionally, some countries have received financial support from foreign investors, accelerating the construction of various infrastructure projects (Krungsri, 2021).

Moreover, hotels and accommodations in Thailand face challenges stemming from the country's economic slowdown. These challenges include a 75% increase in trade competition, a 56.2% reduction in customer purchasing power, a 51.5% rise in business operation costs, a 43.6% lack of tourism promotion, a 23.5% burden of overlapping taxes, a 19.4% shortage of investment capital, a 17.9% impact of government regulations, a 14.1% deficit in personnel, and other issues, accounting for 2.4%, respectively, as reported (National Statistical Office of Thailand, 2021). These challenges are illustrated in Figure 1.



**Figure 1.** Percentage of Challenges and Obstacles Faced by Hotel and Accommodation Establishments

**Source:** National Statistical Office (2023)

Therefore, entrepreneurs should focus on analyzing tourists' diverse and evolving needs, with technology playing a pivotal role in business development and marketing. Emphasis should be placed on customer orientation, competitor orientation, and inter-functional coordination. Fostering innovation and technology that align with the digital era's growth is crucial. Utilizing technology for innovative management practices or introducing new services is essential for continuous development. Additionally, research and development efforts should be directed towards establishing leadership in digital technology within the service industry, ensuring customer satisfaction and repeat business, ultimately enhancing the business's profitability. In light of these challenges and priorities, this study focuses on the Digital Entrepreneurs Toward Performances of Service Business in Southern Economic Corridor of Thailand.

## Objectives

1. To study the operational characteristics of service businesses Business in Southern Economic Corridor of Thailand
2. To study the components of digital entrepreneurs, including customer orientation, competitor orientation, inter-functional coordination, and performance outcomes.
3. To study the comparison of small and medium-sized service businesses with large service businesses in the Southern Economic Corridor of Thailand.
4. To develop a structural equation model (SEM) that portrays digital entrepreneurs' role in shaping service businesses' performance in Southern Economic Corridor of Thailand

## Literature Review

### Digital Entrepreneurship

Digital entrepreneurs must possess the qualities necessary to adapt to constant changes and be willing to learn new aspects of the digital realm. Customer behaviors evolve continuously, necessitating entrepreneurs to stay updated and employ technology to maintain competitiveness and enhance operational efficiency. Understanding customer requirements and leveraging data to improve services and develop organizations in the digital age is essential. Consequently, the key attributes that digital entrepreneurs should possess are: 1) Search & Discover, 2) Tools & Technologies, 3) Numbers and Analytics, 4) Customer Centric, and 5) Collaborate (Digital Day, 2019). Additionally, according to Frese (2000), successful entrepreneurs exhibit the following characteristics: 1) Autonomy, 2) Innovativeness, 3) Risk taking, 4) Competitive Aggressiveness, and 5) Stability and Learning.

Research has shown a correlation between digital entrepreneurs and market orientation, customer orientation, competitor orientation, and inter-functional coordination. For instance, Dsouza et al. (2022) found that entrepreneurs can enhance organizational performance by using market orientation, customer orientation, competitor orientation, and inter-functional coordination to create value for products and services. Moreover, Mansouri et al. (2022) highlighted the impact of market orientation, customer orientation, competitor orientation, and inter-functional coordination on business operations. These aspects are crucial as they involve employees in competitive analysis, data sharing with competitors, short-term meetings to address customer needs, and continuous customer behavior research to identify new product and service offering opportunities. Based on the relationships mentioned above, the following research hypotheses are proposed:

H1: Digital entrepreneurs directly influence customer orientation.

H2: Digital entrepreneurs directly influence competitor orientation.

H3: Digital entrepreneurs directly influence inter-functional coordination.

### Market Orientation

Market orientation is crucial for organizational success as it aligns an organization's capabilities with creating added value for products and services that meet customers' current and future needs. This involves systematic thinking and planning to transform products and services into tangible assets. Organizations need to develop by using market-oriented strategies as the foundation for managing the organization to stay current, produce high-quality products and services, and remain competitive. The research has shown that market orientation, customer orientation, competitor orientation, and inter-functional coordination are correlated with firm performance. For

example, Aydin (2021) found that market orientation, customer orientation, competitor orientation, and inter-functional coordination play significant roles in organizational performance. Various administrative units collaborate to create value in service processes and efficient marketing by implementing market orientation. Continuous coordination within and outside the organization helps efficiently align products and services with customer needs. Moreover, Alhakimi and Mahmoud (2020) highlighted that organizations continually communicate with customers to understand their evolving needs in the digital age, using methods like group discussions, surveys, and observations to gather customer insights and improve accordingly. Royo et. al. (2022) also discovered that market orientation, customer orientation, competitor orientation, and inter-functional coordination lead to high organizational performance. Given these relationships, the following research hypotheses are proposed:

H4: Customer orientation directly influences firm performance.

H5: Competitor orientation directly influences firm performance.

H6: Inter-functional coordination directly influences firm performance.

### **Firm Performance**

The changes in social, environmental, economic, and technological aspects are crucial for the adaptability of an organization. Failure to adapt can significantly affect a company's ability to generate profits, attract investments, and maintain competitiveness in the digital age. Consequently, firm performance is a multifaceted, strategic process that involves setting a direction for operations to foster a culture of innovative learning. This, in turn, stimulates the generation of new intra-organizational innovations (Migdadi, 2019). Simultaneously, assessing firm performance involves multiple dimensions, with no universally applicable method. The chosen approach depends on the objectives to achieve future profitability and long-term sustainability, thereby enhancing value creation. The concurrent goal is to formulate organizational strategies that confer a competitive advantage while navigating a business environment fraught with risks. This necessitates comprehensively evaluating internal and external environments to anticipate potential contingencies (Knights et. al., 2020; Akgun & Polat, 2022). Studies on firm performance typically involve performance evaluations. Looking back at the past years, strong performance has evolved continuously, with theorists constantly striving to develop new measurement tools for business success. It can be observed that the factors used as performance indicators vary between different eras, with some aspects being more relevant to specific industries than others. Some businesses choose to use the Balanced Scorecard as a performance measurement tool, consisting of four perspectives: 1) Financial Perspective,

2) Customer Perspective, 3) Internal Process Perspective, and 4) Learning and Growth Perspective (Kaplan & Norton, 1996)

## Conceptual Framework

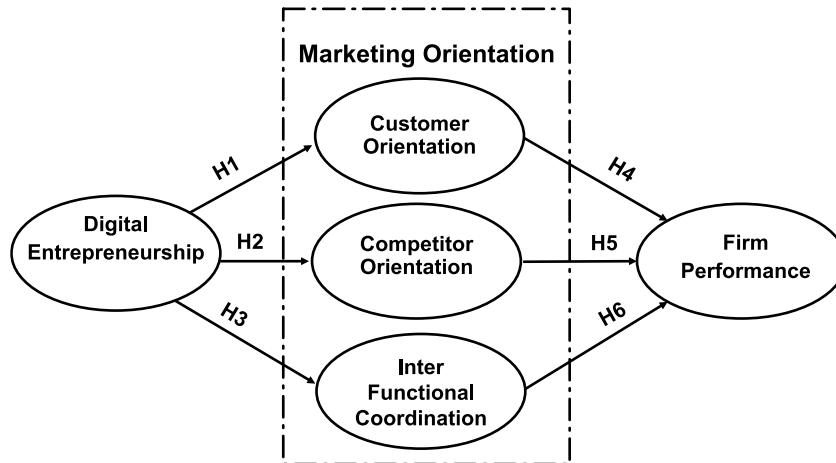


Figure 2. Conceptual Framework

## Research Methodology

Study design: This study was a mixed research method that are the qualitative and the quantitative.

Data collection and tools: Data collection was explained regarding types of research methods as follows.

Stage 1 Qualitative research: The data were collected through the in-depth interview. A sample group of this study consisted of nine experts from five different groups: academic group, public and related state agency group and service industrial group. The scope and subject matter were five factors: Digital entrepreneurs, Customer orientation, Competitor orientation, Inter-functional coordination and firm performance.

Stage 2 Quantitative research: The data were collected through a questionnaire. Population and Sample: The population consisted of hotel owners or managers certified under the Amazing Thailand Safety & Health Administration: SHA in 2021, totaling 943 businesses (Thai Hotels, 2021). Sample Selection: the research selected a sample size of 300 businesses. which is at a good level according to the recommendations of Comrey and Lee (1992) using a multi-stage sampling

method (Babbie, 2010), which included cluster sampling. The sample was divided into 150 large and 150 medium-sized/small-sized companies. The businesses were selected randomly. The researcher created a questionnaire divided into 8 steps as follows.

Step 1: Studying guidelines for creating a questionnaire based on the conceptual framework;

Step 2: Studying related information from books, documents, articles, and related works as the guidelines for writing question items;

Step 3: Setting subject matter and limits of question items based on the objectives and benefits of the study;

Step 4: Creating a draft questionnaire: The research developed a questionnaire based on relevant literature, including Fernandes et al. (2022), Zhao and Liang (2023), Sousa et al. (2023), Ismail (2023), Dsouza et al. (2022), Aydin (2021), Chen and Huang (2023), Asiedu et al. (2023), Charles & Aaron (2021), Knights et al. (2020), Mansouri et al. (2022), and Mansouri et al. (2022). The questionnaire was divided into seven sections: 1) General characteristics of the hotel businesses (Checklist format with five items), 2) Digital entrepreneurship (15 items), 3) Customer orientation (15 items), 4) Competitive orientation (15 items), 5) Internal-functional coordination (15 items), 6) firm Performance (10 items) For the sections 2 to 5, Likert's 5-point scale was implemented for assessment. and 7) suggestions;

Step 5: The researcher had the draft questionnaire and quality evaluation form verified by five experts, and the Index of Item-Objective Congruence (IOC) ranged from 0.70 to 1.00, indicating that the questionnaire items aligned with the research objectives and content, following Rovinelli and Hambleton (1977);

Step 6: Distributing the questionnaire evaluated by the experts to 30 similar subjects of the sampling group for try-out;

Step 7: The results of try-out were analyzed and results of discrimination index analysis of each item were between which ranged from 0.80 to 0.95, exceeding the accepted standard of 0.70, according to Nunnally and Bernstein (1994). And Cronbach's alpha coefficient for the questionnaire reliability was of 0.956.

Step 8: Improving and correcting the questionnaire based on the results of discrimination index and questionnaire reliability analysis before implementation.

Statistical Analysis: Data were analyzed using various statistical techniques, including frequency analysis for checklist items, mean and standard deviation calculations for Likert scale

items, t-tests to compare means between groups, and structural equation modeling (SEM) conducted using advanced statistical software, AMOS.

## Summary

**Results of analysis of business operations:** General business operations characteristics found that 50% of the businesses were large-sized, and the remaining 50% were medium-sized and small-sized. The majority of the companies offered the highest number of accommodation rooms, which were medium-sized (50.40%). The most common source of capital for business support came from financial institutions (47.20%), and the predominant business structure was limited companies (63.40%). Furthermore, most hotels had a 5-star rating (35.00%).

## Qualitative research

Research Results on Digital Entrepreneurship to Service Business Performance in Southern Economic Corridor of Thailand with the In-Depth Interview technique, the scope and content consist of five components.

**Digital entrepreneurs:** There is self-development to upgrade existing skills and create new skills necessary for future growth. There has a systematic thinking style that leads to the solutions in any various problems in a variety of ways. There is effective work planning. There is flexible with ideas own behavior and the service recipients. There gives importance to develop of innovation and modern technology to support growth in the digital age. There are including the skills in negotiation. There use the new innovations to develop services that are consistent and appropriate for each group of service recipients. A network of cooperation with external agencies has been created in order to learn new things together and use it as information to create innovative services for the organization. There participate in responsible for society as a whole and have ethics in conducting business. There has the ability to use, understand, and access digital technology effectively.

**Customer orientation:** There is accurate analysis of customer needs. There is including regularly following up on the results of customers' use of services. There welcomes the suggestions and comments to use as information which can improve services and find the customer needs. There are providing services that are consistent with current customer behavior and values

information. There gets knowledge about services which are clearly communicated to customers. The channels and methods for communicating with customers are created conveniently. It is very quick to satisfy customers including resolving various conflicts that arise from customers. There are giving importance to learn throughout the organization in order to create a competitive advantage. In addition, the customer groups have been divided, such as special customer groups and general customer groups. There know the needs of each group of customers and be able to organize the marketing programs to appropriately. There find the needs of each group of customers.

**Competitor orientation:** A network of cooperation with external agencies has been created. There learn the new things together. There use it as information to create innovative services. There is a modern service process design. It is very difficult to imitate from competitors. There is a study of service information both domestically and international in order to exchange knowledge. There use of new and modern innovations. There support the changes in marketing plans from the original format into a new format. There is a proactive market survey and market analysis. There is effectively determine organizational strategies and policies in the digital age. There is a new and unique tourism service design to offer to customers. There can enthusiastic in seeking new business opportunities to lead to the continuous development of the service business. There gives importance to developing service innovations that are superior to competitors. There has knowledge in using technology and understand Big Data systems in order to use data to plan marketing. There can create an image and increase efficiency for service businesses.

**Inter-functional coordination:** Teamwork is promoted rather than focusing on individuals. There creates a good atmosphere within the organization for working together happily. There is a control system for safe operations. There reduces the accident rate. The structure of departments and agencies has been changed to facilitate service innovation. There is coordination between agencies. There can open thinking and accept differences of opinion developing skills and abilities together. Everyone knows the importance of their duties in order to work successfully. Teamwork behavior is encouraged for employees at all levels. There reduces the gap between departments. There work in the same direction with everyone who has the same goal. There is systematic division of work to encourage creativity in services.

**Firm performance:** There expands the business into new service-related markets research which focus and develop to create service leadership. There have consistently high returns or can generate higher returns than usual. The variety of social networks are used. There are able to reach customers quickly. The price strategy is established. There create outstanding

services to increase business efficiency as much as possible. There use new methods of seeking customers. There lead to creating a competitive advantage. There is an emphasis on business partners. There can joint invest and share risks to expand the market quickly. There share knowledge and expertise in services. There makes it possible to carry out work until there reach common goals.

## Quantitative research

### **The results of the analysis of the importance of the components divided by the size of the business**

The overall importance analysis for medium and small-sized hotels indicated a high level of importance with the mean of 4.00 (S.D.= 0.51), When considering individual aspects, all aspects were fundamental, ranked as follows in decreasing order of importance: digital entrepreneurship with the mean of 4.68 (S.D.= 0.33), customer orientation with the mean of 4.66 (S.D.= 0.38), competitive orientation with the mean of 4.65 (S.D.=0.40), inter-functional coordination with the mean of 4.50 (S.D.= 0.35), and firm performance with the mean of 4.49 (S.D.= 0.35).

The overall importance analysis for large-sized hotels also revealed a high level of importance with the mean of 4.30 (S.D.= 0.63). When examining individual aspects, all aspects were essential, ranked as follows in decreasing order of importance: digital entrepreneurship with the mean of 4.65 (S.D.= 0.62), customer orientation with the mean of 4.64 (S.D.= 0.58), competitive orientation with the mean of 4.30 (S.D.= 0.57), inter-functional coordination with the mean of 4.27 (S.D.= 0.55), and firm performance with the mean of 4.24 (S.D.=0.54). The results are shown in Table 1.

### **Results of comparing small and medium sized service businesses with large service businesses**

In the overall comparison of the importance levels categorized by business size, a statistically significant difference at the 0.05 level was found. Large-sized hotel businesses give more importance to the role of digital entrepreneurship in the performance of service businesses in the Southern Economic Corridor Special Economic Zone compared to medium-sized and small-sized hotel businesses. For the analysis of differences on a per-aspect basis, statistically significant differences at the 0.05. The results are shown in Table 1.

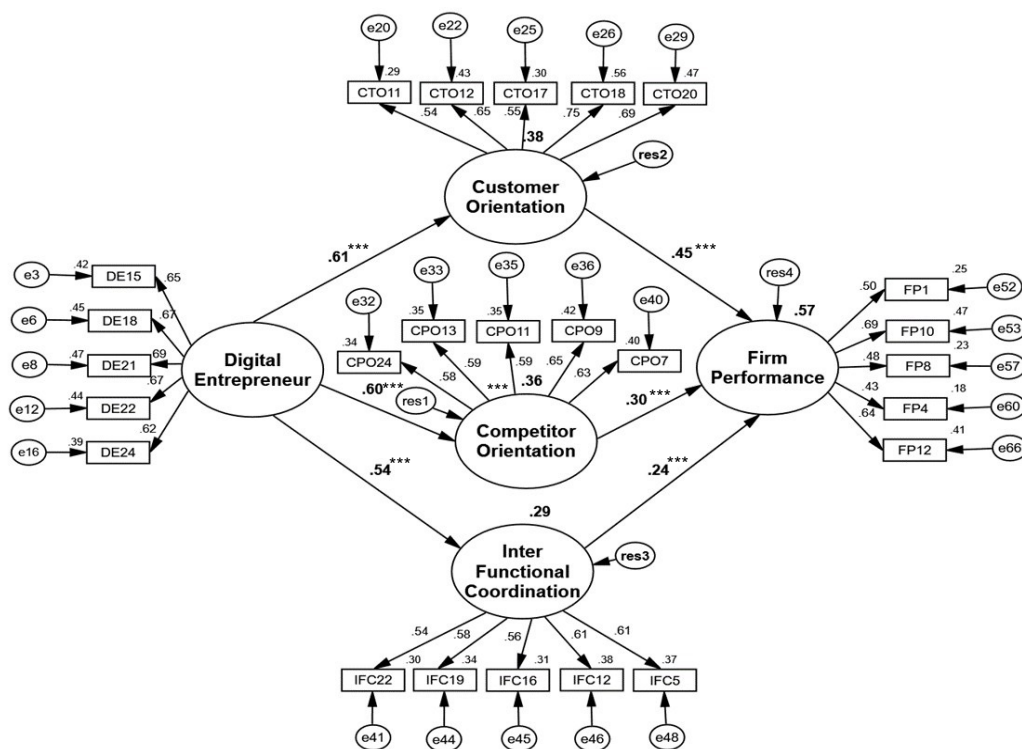
**Table 1** Mean Standard Deviation and Different comparison importance levels classified by business size, overall, and aspects.

| Variables                        | Medium and Small-Sized |      |            | Large-Sized |      | Different Comparison |         |
|----------------------------------|------------------------|------|------------|-------------|------|----------------------|---------|
|                                  | $\bar{X}$              | S.D. | Importance | $\bar{X}$   | S.D. | t-Value              | P-Value |
| Overall Importance Level         | 4.00                   | 0.51 | High       | 4.30        | 0.63 | -6.56                | 0.00*   |
| 1. Digital Entrepreneurship      | 4.68                   | 0.33 | High       | 4.65        | 0.62 | -6.07                | 0.00*   |
| 2. Customer Orientation          | 4.66                   | 0.38 | High       | 4.64        | 0.58 | -5.93                | 0.00*   |
| 3. Competitor Orientation        | 4.65                   | 0.40 | High       | 4.30        | 0.57 | -5.87                | 0.00*   |
| 4. Inter-Functional Coordination | 4.50                   | 0.35 | High       | 4.27        | 0.55 | -5.05                | 0.00*   |
| 5. Firm Performance              | 4.49                   | 0.35 | High       | 4.24        | 0.54 | -4.25                | 0.00*   |

\*Statistically significant at the 0.05 level.

### The results of the structural equation modeling analysis

The results of the structural equation modeling analysis revealed that the probability of Chi-square (CMIN- $\rho$ ) was 0.118, which was more significant than 0.05, the Chi-Square to Degrees of Freedom Ratio (CMIN/DF) was 1.316 which was less than 2.00, the Comparative Fit Index (CFI) was 0.982, which was more significant than 0.90, and the Root Mean Square Error of Approximation (RMSEA) was 0.026, which is less than 0.08. as suggested by Arbuckle (2016). These results are summarized in Figure 3 and Table 2.



**Figure 3.** Structural Equation Modeling

Table 2 Observational Variables

|                                 | Description   | loading | Variance | R <sup>2</sup> |
|---------------------------------|---|---------|----------|----------------|
| <b>Digital Entrepreneurship</b> |   |         |          | -              |
| DE15                            | Focus on the development of innovative services so that organizations can create, manage, apply and access modern business information to support growth in the digital age.  | 0.65    | 0.42     |                |
| DE18                            | Utilizes technology to manage operations or introduce new services to facilitate continuous development.  | 0.67    | 0.45     |                |
| DE21                            | Focuses on research and development to become a technology leader in digital service delivery that satisfies customers and encourages repeat business.  | 0.69    | 0.47     |                |
| DE22                            | Seeks new business opportunities to drive continuous development in the digital era.  | 0.67    | 0.44     |                |
| DE24                            | Adopts an agile operational approach and makes decisions when facing uncertain situations to seek the best opportunities in the digital age.  | 0.62    | 0.39     |                |
| <b>Customer Orientation</b>     |   |         |          | 0.38           |
| CTO11                           | Uses digital technology to transform services from traditional to new formats to support growth in the digital era.   | 0.54    | 0.29     |                |
| CTO12                           | Survey customer opinions and needs in order to analyze the data for use in marketing planning and marketing programs to respond appropriately to the needs of each customer group.  | 0.65    | 0.43     |                |
| CTO17                           | Offers various channels for e-commerce, allowing customers to access services and communicate with the business efficiently.  | 0.55    | 0.30     |                |
| CTO18                           | Communicate with customers about the responsibility of the business to society and build relationships with the community to help develop the community to meet their needs appropriately. Without damaging natural resources and environmentally friendly. | 0.75    | 0.56     |                |
| CTO20                           | Provides services that align with customer behavior and respond to lifestyle changes in the digital age.  | 0.69    | 0.47     |                |
| <b>Competitor Orientation</b>   |   |         |          | 0.36           |
| CPO7                            | Conducts aggressive market research and analysis to determine strategies and policies in the digital era efficiently.   | 0.63    | 0.40     |                |
| CPO9                            | Continuously participate in conferences, exhibitions of tourism products and services organized by the public and private sectors. To create national and international business opportunities.   | 0.65    | 0.42     |                |
| CPO11                           | Analyzes competitive market situations and trends in the digital era that directly impact the organization's operations.  | 0.59    | 0.35     |                |
| CPO13                           | A network of cooperation with external agencies has been established to learn new things together and use it as information to create innovative services to expand business opportunities in the digital age.  | 0.59    | 0.35     |                |
| CPO24                           | Supports the transformation of marketing plans from traditional formats to gain a competitive advantage in the digital era.   | 0.58    | 0.34     |                |

**Table 2** Observational Variables (continued)

|                               | Description   | loading | Variance | R <sup>2</sup> |
|-------------------------------|---|---------|----------|----------------|
| Inter-Functional Coordination |   |         |          | 0.29           |
| IFC5                          | Develops personnel to enhance service quality from the traditional format to a highly efficient new structure to support growth in the digital era. | 0.61    | 0.37     |                |
| IFC12                         | Prioritizes tasks appropriately and efficiently collaborates with various departments.  | 0.61    | 0.38     |                |
| IFC16                         | Develop employee skills and create new skills to quickly enhance future growth and work challenges in line with customer needs in the digital age.  | 0.56    | 0.31     |                |
| IFC19                         | Promotes teamwork over individualism and creates a positive atmosphere within the organization for effective collaboration.                         | 0.58    | 0.34     |                |
| IFC22                         | Improves work processes and continually enhances work quality, with all employees actively participating.   | 0.54    | 0.30     |                |
| Firm Performance              |   |         |          | 0.57           |
| FP1                           | Increased revenue growth, sales growth, customer profits, and more revenue from new customers.  | 0.50    | 0.25     |                |
| FP8                           | Expand business in new markets related to services, focus on research and development to build service leadership.                                  | 0.48    | 0.23     |                |
| FP4                           | Provides services of superior quality, uniqueness, and distinctiveness, making it difficult for competitors to imitate.                             | 0.69    | 0.47     |                |
| FP10                          | There is a systematic internal management. Reduce errors and shorten operational time It has a fixed or reduced cost.                               | 0.43    | 0.18     |                |
| FP12                          | Reduce system-wide costs more than competitors Able to generate higher returns than usual, achieve the set goals.                                   | 0.64    | 0.41     |                |

## Results of Hypothesis Testing

It was found that the results aligned with the set hypotheses, as shown in Table 3.

**Table 3** The results of hypothesis testing.

| Research Hypotheses   | Directly Influence | Results  |
|---|--------------------|----------|
| H1: Digital entrepreneurs directly influence customer orientation.          | 0.61               | Accepted |
| H2: Digital entrepreneurs directly influence competitor orientation.        | 0.60               | Accepted |
| H3: Digital entrepreneurs directly influence inter-functional coordination. | 0.54               | Accepted |
| H4: Customer orientation directly influences firm performance.              | 0.45               | Accepted |
| H5: Competitor orientation directly affects firm performance.               | 0.30               | Accepted |
| H6: Inter-functional coordination directly influences firm performance.     | 0.24               | Accepted |

## Discussion of Results and Research Recommendations

The overall level of importance analysis is very important. When considering each aspect, it was found that all aspects are important at a large level, in descending order of priority as follows: Digital entrepreneurship, with an emphasis on Emphasizes the importance of developing innovation and technology to stay up-to-date and support growth in the digital age. This is followed by a customer-oriented aspect. with an emphasis on Offers various channels for e-commerce, allowing customers to access services and communicate with the business efficiently. This is followed by a Competitor orientation aspect. with an emphasis on Has the ability to establish trade networks and partnerships to expand business opportunities in the digital age. This is followed by a Inter-functional coordination aspect. with an emphasis on Promotes teamwork over individualism and creates a positive atmosphere within the organization for effective collaboration. and firm performance aspect. with an emphasis on Provides services of superior quality, uniqueness, and distinctiveness, making it difficult for competitors to imitate.

**The results of H(1) In the aspect of digital entrepreneurs, they directly influence customer orientation.** This is because digital entrepreneurs possess knowledge of digital technology and focus on knowledge management to enhance service quality in line with customer demands. They prioritize training and developing digital skills among their staff and foster teamwork, equipping employees with adaptability to face future crises and enhance their competencies at all levels. This aligns with the findings of Baranauskas and Raisiene (2022), which suggest that digital entrepreneurs drive businesses to transform from traditional models into contemporary ones, adapting to the digital age. They play a crucial role in improving service quality, transitioning it from conventional to modern forms, thus delivering efficient customer service. Additionally, Ismail's study (2023) emphasizes customers' ever-changing behaviors and attitudes, underscoring the need for businesses to provide responsive services that cater to evolving customer demands, ensuring customer satisfaction and loyalty.

**The results of H(2) In the aspect of digital entrepreneurs, they directly influence competitor orientation.** This is because digital entrepreneurs employ business strategies that outperform competitors by understanding consumer behavior, analyzing business opportunities, and efficiently strategizing short-term and long-term competitor analysis. They actively enhance the quality of services to stand out, offering valuable solutions through digital systems, thereby increasing competitiveness and providing customer choices. This aligns with Borazon et al.'s study (2022), which found that focusing on competition enables organizations to plan marketing and suitable

tactics, reducing pressure from competitors and customers. Additionally, Bu et al.'s research (2022) emphasizes that efficient organizations are born from entrepreneurs who promote diverse service designs, differentiation from competitors, or the introduction of new service formats.

**The results of H(3) In the aspect of digital entrepreneurs, they directly influence inter-functional coordination.** This is because digital entrepreneurs bring forth new perspectives that differ from traditional ones. They initiate changes in department and unit structures to facilitate creative and high-quality service delivery. Additionally, there is support for encouraging employees to collaborate and introduce new ideas based on data to enhance service quality. Moreover, digital entrepreneurs introduce new digital technologies within the organization to make operations more convenient, efficient, and up-to-date. This aligns with the findings of Meher et al. (2022), which highlight that promoting modern work practices among employees results in improved internal coordination within the organization. This, in turn, leads to positive changes and fosters creative thinking regarding innovation and marketing.

**The results of H(4) In the aspect of customer orientation, they directly influence firm performance.** This is because organizations innovate services to be unique. They adapt service delivery according to customer needs, prioritize customer suggestions and feedback, and address customer complaints seriously. Additionally, continuous research is conducted to explore customer satisfaction. Zhao and Liang (2023) found that customer orientation, creating a favorable atmosphere and service quality improvements, leads to increased customer numbers. This, in turn, results in improved business operations, continuous growth, and enhanced performance. Sousa et al. (2023) also discovered that organizations prioritizing customer needs and offering services based on their capabilities or what can be readily obtained build customer confidence. They provide direct and honest information to customers and genuinely seek solutions to customer problems.

**The results of H(5) In the aspect of competitor orientation, they directly influence firm performance.** This is because organizations adjust their competitive strategies based on customer segments. They prioritize innovation that surpasses competitors, assess competitor potential, and analyze the internal and external business environment to formulate highly effective competitive strategies. Dahan and Shoham (2023) found that focusing on competitors through strategic analysis of their strategy and customer requirements helps generate new opportunities, create differentiation, and quickly respond to changing customer behaviors. Dsouza et al. (2022) also noted that marketing planning, analyzing competitor weaknesses and strengths, and sharing competitor data among employees contribute to efficiently formulating

strategies that cater to customer needs. These activities help organizations adapt swiftly and meet customer demands while creating engaging interactions.

**The results of H(6) In the aspect of inter-functional coordination, they directly influence firm performance.** This is because organizations are modernizing their systems to enhance service delivery and payment processing speed. They prioritize data sharing and promote the efficient utilization of organizational resources. Employees are encouraged to seek external knowledge and apply it effectively, enhancing operational capabilities through diversity. Borazon et al. (2021) found that market-oriented internal coordination is highly significant for employees, shareholders, and entrepreneurs and profoundly impacts operational efficiency, profitability, and business performance. Alhakimi and Mahmoud (2020) discovered that internal coordination contributes to well-structured interior resource planning, aligning human resources with knowledge and skills, which leads to improved organizational performance. Aydin (2021) also found that businesses implement systematic internal coordination to ensure efficient business operations and data sharing related to technology use and customer data within the organization.

## Research Recommendations

### 1. Recommendations from the Research

1.1 The government or relevant agencies should support and promote collaboration among all stakeholders to establish transparent processes and mutual understanding regarding quality service standards. This will stimulate growth and help attract more tourists to Thailand.

1.2 As a guideline for digital entrepreneurs in the service industry in the southern economic corridor area, organizations should emphasize the importance of each component for the success of digital entrepreneurs' roles in business operations. Based on research findings, organizations should prioritize E-commerce channels that offer various convenient options for customers to access services. These services should align with customer behavior and cater to the digital lifestyle.

1.3 Digital entrepreneurs should consider forming business partnerships to create relationships and connections for the benefit of their organizations. These partnerships can expand service channels, assist in cost management, and reduce risks. This will allow digital entrepreneurs to have diverse problem-solving methods, ultimately leading to profitability.

## 2. Recommendations for Future Research

2.1 Further research should explore additional factors that influence operational outcomes beyond the scope of this study. This will help create a competitive advantage. Additionally, the framework and concepts derived from this research should be studied in other industries significant to the Thai economy. This will guide organizational development, employee development, and the enhancement of products or services to achieve high-performance outcomes, making them well-prepared for growth in the digital era.

2.2 The service business entrepreneurs should cooperate with educational institutions or leading organizations to produce and develop employees. They have knowledge and skills in service at a high level especially skills in 2 areas: 1) skills necessary for working in the future world related to new technologies such as Big Data, Artificial Intelligence, Digital Marketing. 2) the developing existing work skills to be more efficient that have knowledge of new technology and have initiative to create new things. They have the ability to solve problems and can answer questions from service recipients accurately and accurately. They find the best choice for service recipients. They have a positive attitude towards all parties and have the ability to communicate. It is consistent with the needs of current and future service recipients.

## New Findings

The researchers have identified new knowledge regarding the characteristics that digital professionals should possess in the digital age. These characteristics encompass six dimensions:

**1. Digital Literacy:** This involves efficiently using, understanding, and accessing digital technology to modernize organizational processes and add value to the organization on multiple fronts.

**2. Digital Communication** pertains to communicating with target groups and stakeholders effectively, exchanging relevant information through diverse online channels.

**3. Digital Marketing:** This dimension encompasses marketing activities on digital platforms, each with specific objectives to create value for different services.

**4. Social Intelligence:** It involves accepting and understanding the diversity of people and adapting appropriately to various situations to reduce the likelihood of conflicts.

**5. Adaptive Thinking:** Adaptive thinking includes creative and analytical thinking skills, problem-solving abilities, and the capability to innovate and improve existing ideas to create additional value for the service business.

**6. Customer Centricity:** This entails understanding and reaching customers by offering valuable, beneficial, unique, and distinctive services that align with customer behavior in the digital age, as shown in Figure 4.

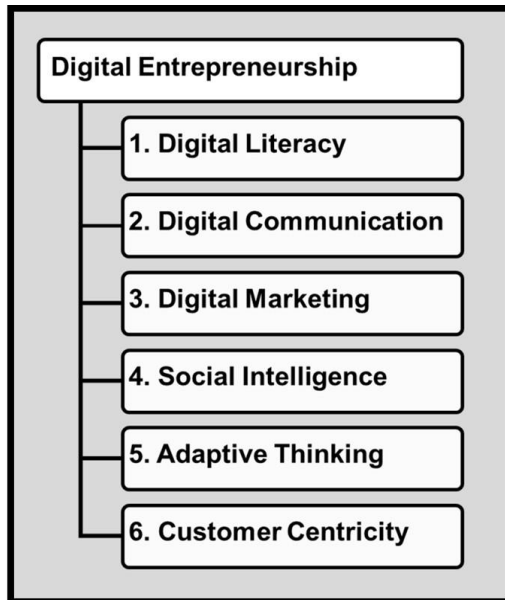


Figure 4. Characteristics of Digital Entrepreneurship

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