FROM passion to profit: the strategic and creative drivers of entrepreneurial efficacy among homegrown restaurants in Caraga REGION

Donald Cyndyl L. Miguel[1], Emma V. Sagarino, DBM[2]

[1]Assitant Professor I, Administration/Agusan del Sur State College of Agriculture and Technology/Trento
miguell.donald01@gmail.com

[2]University of the Immaculate Conception, Davao City
esagarino@uic.edu.ph

ABSTRACT

This study explores the critical relationship between entrepreneurial efficacy, entrepreneurial strategy, and entrepreneurial design thinking among homegrown restaurant owners in the Caraga Region, Philippines. Entrepreneurial efficacy, defined as an entrepreneur's confidence in executing business activities, is essential for individual business success and broader economic growth. However, entrepreneurs, especially in developing regions, face challenges such as limited access to mentoring, skills development programs, and professional networks, which hinder their ability to innovate and sustain their businesses. The study employs a descriptive correlational design to assess how entrepreneurial strategy and design thinking predict entrepreneurial efficacy. Utilizing a modified questionnaire, data were collected from 200 respondents, including owners and managers of homegrown restaurants. The results indicate that entrepreneurial efficacy is generally high, with the highest scores observed in building an innovative environment. Entrepreneurial strategy and design thinking were also rated highly, with creative capabilities and empathy as the most significant domains. Regression analysis revealed that both entrepreneurial strategy and design thinking significantly influence entrepreneurial efficacy, with design thinking emerging as the stronger predictor. These findings highlight the importance of integrating strategic planning and user-centered innovation to enhance entrepreneurial confidence and performance. The study provides actionable insights for local business owners, educators, and policymakers, recommending targeted training programs to foster strategic thinking and design thinking skills. Future research should explore other determinants of entrepreneurial efficacy and expand the scope to include various industries.

KEYWORDS: *Business Management, entrepreneurial strategy, design thinking, Philippines.*

INTRODUCTION

Entrepreneurial efficacy is largely determined by the confidence entrepreneurs have in their ability to execute business activities successfully. For many aspiring business owners, especially in developing nations, the lack of access to important resources such as mentoring, skills development programs, and professional networks is a constant challenge. These resources help entrepreneurs navigate complex markets, adapt to changing business conditions, and innovate effectively. Entrepreneurial efficiency lowers without them, thereby raising rates of stagnation and business failure. This challenge keeps entrepreneurs from realizing their full potential and limits specific corporate objectives, thereby hindering overall economic progress (Urban, 2020; Newman et al., 2019). (Baluku et al., 2016) emphasized powerful and resilient entrepreneurial environments would result from an awareness of the factors affecting entrepreneurial efficacy and the removal of the barriers inhibiting the success of aspiring business owners.

Moreover, both individual company success and broader societal and economic benefits depend on entrepreneurial efficacy. Highly effective entrepreneurs are more likely to seek opportunities, be creative, and remain strong in the face of adversity, thereby enhancing the profitability and sustainability of their businesses (Cardon & Kirk, 2015). This then drives neighborhood development, economic expansion, and employment generation. Furthermore, entrepreneurial efficacy enhances adaptation, enabling entrepreneurs to navigate challenging, competitive marketplaces, thereby supporting long-term business growth and social impact (Santos & Liguori, 2020). Therefore, entrepreneurial efficacy has great societal value, as it encourages personal success and economic prosperity, and should be reinforced through education, mentoring, and supportive laws.

Moreover, the link between entrepreneurial strategy and entrepreneurial efficacy is essential for the success of a company as strategic decisions immediately affect the confidence of an entrepreneur in carrying out corporate activities. Clear, flexible methods help entrepreneurs to be more efficient, thereby enhancing their capacity to innovate, control resources, and take measured risks (Kreiser et al., 2019). Similarly, entrepreneurial design thinking which gives user-centered innovation and creative problem-solving first priority strengthens entrepreneurial effectiveness by arming business owners with the means to address difficult circumstances and ambiguity. Design thinking

promotes iterative learning and experimentation, thereby improving entrepreneurs' perceptions of control and competency and, in turn, their efficacy (Linton & Klinton, 2019). Growing entrepreneurial effectiveness therefore rely on both design thinking and strategic planning, which generates great economic success and adaptation in demanding surroundings.

Though much research has been done on entrepreneurial efficacy and how it influences corporate success, knowledge of how particular entrepreneurship strategies and design thinking techniques directly improve entrepreneurial efficacy especially as regard to small businesses and homegrown companies remains rather lacking. Most contemporary studies focus on factors affecting entrepreneurial efficacy, including prior experience and education. Few, however, have examined how rigorous procedures and creative problem-solving strategies from design thinking can boost confidence and performance in dynamic, real-world market situations. Moreover, while prior studies have examined entrepreneurial efficacy in relation to education, experience, and entrepreneurial competencies, limited empirical evidence exists regarding how entrepreneurial strategy and entrepreneurial design thinking jointly influence entrepreneurial efficacy among homegrown restaurant owners in the Caraga Region. This contextual gap is particularly important because locally owned restaurants operate under unique resource constraints, cultural influences, and competitive pressures that differ from those experienced by large enterprises and technology-driven ventures.

This study identified major stakeholders who may benefit from its insights into the correlation among design thinking, strategy, and entrepreneurial efficacy. Publications, seminars, and academic conferences will promote the dissemination of findings among entrepreneurship scholars, business development groups, and legislators. Local business incubators, entrepreneurship centers, and native restaurant owners will also be important recipients, as the study's findings can be applied to develop targeted training courses that support strategic and design thinking methods, thereby enhancing their company operations. Moreover, legislators might use the findings to create enabling conditions for entrepreneurship through funding and mentoring initiatives that promote effectiveness and creativity. Start-ups, small company owners, and notably local restaurant entrepreneurs among other members of the larger entrepreneurial community will learn a lot about how strategic planning and design thinking could increase their confidence and success in competitive marketplaces.

Anchored on Social Cognitive Theory, this study posits that entrepreneurs' beliefs in their capabilities influence their actions and performance, while entrepreneurial strategy and design thinking enhance their ability to navigate business challenges and opportunities. Guided by these theoretical foundations, the study examines how entrepreneurial strategy and entrepreneurial design thinking influence entrepreneurial efficacy among homegrown restaurant owners, leading to the formulation of the following research questions.

Research Question

1. Assess the Level of Entrepreneurial Efficacy among homegrown restaurants in Caraga Region
2. Determine the Level of Entrepreneurial Strategy among homegrown restaurants in Caraga Region
3. Evaluate the Level of Entrepreneurial Design-Thinking among homegrown restaurants in Caraga Region
4. What is the relationship between Entrepreneurial Strategy and Entrepreneurial Design Thinking
with Entrepreneurial Efficacy among homegrown restaurants in the Caraga Region?
5. Which among Entrepreneurial Strategy and Entrepreneurial Design Thinking is the best predictor
of Entrepreneurial Efficacy among homegrown restaurants in the Caraga Region?

Research Design

The study employed a descriptive correlational research design to determine the relationships between entrepreneurial strategy and entrepreneurial design thinking as predictors of entrepreneurial efficacy among homegrown restaurant owners and managers. This design is appropriate for identifying patterns and associations among variables without manipulating them, allowing the researcher to draw conclusions about existing conditions and predict potential outcomes based on current observations. According to Bhandari (2022), correlational research explores the statistical relationship between two or more variables as they naturally occur, without researcher intervention, and is useful in identifying whether a meaningful association exists between them. In this study, the correlational approach enabled the researcher to assess how entrepreneurial behaviors and mindsets relate to entrepreneurial confidence and performance in the local restaurant industry.

Research Locale

The study was conducted in selected areas of the Caraga Region (Region XIII), Philippines, with a focus on understanding the entrepreneurial efficacy of homegrown restaurant owners and managers, as influenced by entrepreneurial strategy and entrepreneurial design thinking. The region was selected for its growing importance in Mindanao's economic landscape, particularly in small- and medium-sized enterprise development. According to the Department of Trade and Industry's (DTI) Summary Statistics for Accommodation and Food Service (2021), the Philippines had a total of 33,215 registered food establishments, of which 583 were located in the Caraga Region, indicating a vibrant and growing food service sector in the area.

The research specifically covered six major cities: Butuan City, Bayugan City, Bislig City, Cabadbaran, Surigao City, and Tandag City and four municipalities: Trento, San Francisco, Talacogon, and General Luna. These locations were purposively selected for their notable concentration of homegrown, independently owned, locally established restaurants. These establishments are crucial players in local economies and serve as fertile ground for studying entrepreneurial behavior, particularly given the dynamic business environments in which they operate. To ensure the relevance of the study, only homegrown restaurants that had been operating continuously for at least three (3) years were included. This criterion was established to ensure that participating establishments possessed sufficient entrepreneurial experience and operational stability to provide meaningful responses regarding entrepreneurial efficacy, strategy, and design thinking.

Research Participants

To ensure meaningful and representative data collection, the study used purposive sampling, aiming for a minimum of 20 qualified participants per city or municipality or total of 200 participants. Target participants were screened to ensure they were owners or managers of qualified homegrown restaurants that met specific inclusion criteria. The researcher coordinated closely with the DTI Regional Office to access updated records and identify eligible establishments. The minimum target of twenty (20) respondents per locality was established to ensure adequate representation across the selected cities and municipalities while maintaining feasibility in data collection. When potential participants declined or were unavailable, replacement respondents who met the inclusion criteria were identified using the same purposive sampling procedure. This approach minimized potential sampling bias and ensured the attainment of the required

sample size.

Research Instrument

The study utilized a modified questionnaire to assess entrepreneurial strategy, entrepreneurial design thinking, and entrepreneurial efficacy. The entrepreneurial strategy tool was adopted from Sadq et al. (2020) and included indicators such as creative capabilities, risk-taking, and entrepreneurial culture. The entrepreneurial design thinking section, adapted from Inegbidion (2022), measured empathy, problem definition, ideation, prototyping, and testing. Lastly, the entrepreneurial efficacy scale, developed by Naktiyok et al. (2009), assessed key dimensions including product and market development, coping with challenges, and building innovative environments. Reliability testing confirmed that all instruments were statistically reliable, with Cronbach's alpha scores ranging from 0.71 to 0.85.

Data Gathering Procedure

Before conducting the study, the researcher obtained approval from the Dean of the Graduate School and sent a formal letter to the DTI Regional Office in Caraga Region, requesting a list of homegrown restaurants in the area. The list provided by DTI included the business names, owner names, and addresses of these establishments. If the information was incomplete, the researcher conducted on-site inspections to verify eligible restaurants based on set criteria.

Once the target restaurants were identified, the researcher personally visited the owners or managers, presenting a request letter and explaining the purpose of the study. Participants were informed that their involvement was entirely voluntary, and the researcher ensured they understood the contents of the informed consent form. Participants were also told of their right to ask questions or withdraw from the study at any time without penalty. After receiving their signed consent, the researcher distributed the survey questionnaires.

To accommodate participants' schedules, the researcher allowed 1 week to complete the questionnaires, which typically took 5 to 10 minutes each. Surveys were collected in person, city by city, across six cities and four municipalities in the Caraga Region. Data collection was completed within one month, and the researcher maintained open communication to address any questions or concerns raised by participants.

Ethical Statement

The researcher is committed to upholding the highest ethical standards throughout this study. To ensure compliance with these standards, the research protocol was reviewed and approved by the University of the Immaculate Conception Research Ethics Committee (UIC-REC) under Protocol Code: GS-FB-11-24-0169. All ethical principles including respect for persons, beneficence, justice, transparency, confidentiality, and voluntary participation were strictly observed during data collection, analysis, and reporting. Informed consent was obtained from all participants, with their rights, privacy, and welfare safeguarded at every stage of the research. The researcher ensured that no harm would come to any participant and maintained strict data privacy in accordance with the Data Privacy Act of 2012 (RA 10173). Both physical and digital data were handled with care, securely stored, and used only for academic purposes. Participants were also informed of their right to withdraw from the study at any time without consequence.

This study was conducted by a researcher who is both a BS Entrepreneurship program chairperson and college instructor, thus bringing relevant industry insights and academic grounding to the research. The researcher also had access to institutional support and resources, such as the UIC Library and other university facilities, which provided critical assistance in completing the study. This research further emphasized community engagement, transparency, and inclusivity by integrating employees' perspectives in homegrown restaurants while promoting sustainable practices for broader societal impact.

RESULTS and DISCUSSION

Table 1 presents The level of entrepreneurial efficacy, is generally rated as high, with an overall mean of 4.12 which means entrepreneurial efficacy is evident. The average scores across its domains range from 4.06 to 4.18, indicating that the indicators of entrepreneurial efficacy are consistently evident among respondents. Interestingly, the domain Building an Innovative Environment recorded the highest mean score of 4.18, indicating a strong presence of innovation in homegrown restaurants' practices.

Table 1
Level of Entrepreneurial Efficacy of Homegrown restaurants in Caraga Region

Latent Variables	Mean	SD	Description
Developing New Product and Market Opportunities	4.11	0.44	High
Coping With Unexpected Challenges	4.06	0.52	High
Developing Critical Human Resources	4.11	0.54	High
Defining Core Purpose	4.12	0.50	High
Building An Innovative Environment	4.18	0.53	High
Initiating Investor Relationships	4.11	0.64	High
Overall Mean	**4.12**		**High**

Table 2 presents the first independent variable, entrepreneurial strategy, also received a high overall rating, with a mean of 4.19 which means entrepreneurial strategy is evident. The domain means range from 4.17 to 4.22, Among the domains, Creative Capabilities stood out with a very high mean of 4.22, showing that the ability to generate new and useful ideas is a notable strength in their strategic efforts.

The study reveals that Entrepreneurial Strategy among homegrown restaurants is evident, with Creative Capabilities receiving the highest mean score, rated as very high. This suggests that creativity plays a crucial role in how these businesses differentiate themselves and sustain competitiveness in the market. The findings corroborated with the study by Frese and Gielnik (2014), highlights Risk-taking and entrepreneurial culture are vital for long-term success, as they empower homegrown restaurants to remain adaptable and competitive through strategic creativity and proactive decision-making. Furthermore, (Brändle et al., 2021) reveals creativity is a key component of

entrepreneurial strategy and enables small firms to stand out in highly competitive environments.

Table 2
Level of Entrepreneurial Strategy of Homegrown restaurants in Caraga Region

Latent Variables	Mean	SD	Description
Creative Capabilities	4.22	0.46	Very High
Risk-taking	4.17	0.51	High
Entrepreneurial Culture	4.18	0.48	High
Overall Mean	**4.19**		**High**

Table 3 Presents the second independent variable, entrepreneurial design thinking, is typically rated as high, with an overall mean of 4.14 which means the entrepreneurial Design-Thinking is evident. The scores for its domains range from 4.05 to 4.28. Notably, the domain Empathy received a very high rating of 4.28, highlighting its importance in understanding customer needs and guiding thoughtful product or service innovations.

The overall results for Entrepreneurial Design Thinking are high, with Empathy receiving the highest mean score, described as very high. This suggests that homegrown restaurant owners prioritize understanding customer needs and tailoring their services accordingly. The study corroborates Liedtka's (2015) emphasis on the significance of empathy in design thinking and its role in creating user-centered solutions. Studies have further highlighted the critical role of empathy in design thinking, particularly in fostering user-centered solutions among entrepreneurs. Moreover, Gasparini (2015) explores the emotional and cognitive aspects of empathy in design thinking, emphasizing its importance for understanding users' needs and creating meaningful solutions.

Table 3
Level of Entrepreneurial Design Thinking of Homegrown restaurants in Caraga Region

Latent Variables	Mean	SD	Description
Empathy	4.28	0.55	Very High
Problem Definition	4.05	0.58	High
Ideation	4.13	0.55	High
Prototyping	4.07	0.60	High
Testing	4.15	0.54	High
Overall Mean	**4.14**		**High**

The data in Table 4 show the correlation between Entrepreneurial Strategy and Entrepreneurial Design Thinking and Entrepreneurial Efficacy. Based on the results, both independent variables show significant correlations with Entrepreneurial Efficacy, with Pearson r values of 0.669 and 0.824, respectively ($p < 0.01$).

The study reveals a significant correlation between Entrepreneurial Strategy, Entrepreneurial Design Thinking, and Entrepreneurial Efficacy. Statistical analysis indicates that Entrepreneurial Design Thinking has the greatest influence on Entrepreneurial Efficacy among homegrown restaurant entrepreneurs. This suggests that applying design thinking principles significantly enhances their entrepreneurial efficacy. This finding aligns with previous research, such as Goldsby et al. (2017), which found that design-centered entrepreneurship fosters innovative solutions and enhances entrepreneurial outcomes. Furthermore, Vanevenhoven et al. (2011) highlight that integrating design thinking with entrepreneurial bricolage facilitates opportunity development, thereby contributing to overall entrepreneurial efficacy. These insights indicate the pivotal role of incorporating effective design thinking strategies to empower aspiring entrepreneurs.

Moreover, Linton & Klinton (2019) supports a positive correlation between design thinking and entrepreneurial success, suggesting that such approaches contribute to overall entrepreneurial efficacy. Lackéus (2015) emphasizes the importance of design thinking in entrepreneurship education, highlighting its role in developing entrepreneurial competencies and fostering innovative solutions. Additionally, Liedtka (2018) discusses methods to support design thinking in entrepreneurial contexts, underscoring how fostering a design thinking mindset can act as a catalyst for creative problem-solving and adaptability in dynamic business environments.

Table 4
Correlation between Variables

Variables Paired with Entrepreneurial Efficacy	R	p	Interpretation
Entrepreneurial Strategy	.699**	.000	Significant
Entrepreneurial Design Thinking	.824**	.000	Significant

Furthermore, the significant relationships indicated in justify the use of multiple regression analysis to determine the extent to which Entrepreneurial Strategy and Entrepreneurial Design Thinking influence Entrepreneurial Efficacy. The data in Table 5 shows that both Entrepreneurial Strategy and Entrepreneurial Design Thinking, in their singular capacity, significantly influence Entrepreneurial Efficacy ($p < 0.01$). Specifically, a unit increase in Entrepreneurial Strategy results in an increase of 0.244 in Entrepreneurial Efficacy, while a unit increase in Entrepreneurial Design Thinking leads to an increase of 0.668, holding other variables constant.

As a model, the R2 value of 0.711 suggests that 71.1% of the variation in Entrepreneurial Efficacy can be attributed to the combined influence of Quantitative data confirmed this, with participants explaining how both their strategic choices and customer-centered innovations contribute to their confidence and effectiveness as entrepreneurs. This shows that the nature of

integration is also merging-confirming, as both the numbers and narratives align. Supporting this are the works of Klenner et al. (2021), who detailed how design thinking augments entrepreneurial problem-solving and creativity, and Magistretti et al. (2022), who developed a process model integrating design thinking into entrepreneurship highlighting defining, framing, experimenting, and learning as core innovation drivers. These studies affirm the synergistic relationship between strategy and design thinking in shaping entrepreneurial efficacy and performance.

Table 5
Regression Analysis

Independent Variable	B	*p*	t	Remarks
Entrepreneurial Strategy	.244	.000	.000	Significant
Entrepreneurial Design Thinking	.688	.000	.000	Significant
r2 = .711				
F = 245.41				
p = .000				

CONCLUSION

The quantitative results showed that entrepreneurial efficacy was high, indicating a high degree of perceived entrepreneurial confidence among the respondents. More so, it was also found out that entrepreneurial strategy has a high level as well. Additionally, the same high level of entrepreneurial design thinking was common and evident, as evidenced by the higher percentage among the participants.

The results of the regression analysis confirm that both entrepreneurial strategy and entrepreneurial.design thinking have a significant and positive

influence on entrepreneurial efficacy. When examined individually, each factor plays a critical role in shaping entrepreneurs' confidence in their ability to perform essential business tasks. Among the two, design thinking emerges as the dominant contributor, underscoring the importance of creativity, empathy, and innovation in enhancing entrepreneurial confidence. When combined, these two elements account for a substantial portion of the variation in entrepreneurial efficacy, suggesting that integrating strategic planning and design thinking practices strengthens entrepreneurs' belief in their capabilities. Overall, the findings clearly demonstrate that these factors, both alone and together, meaningfully contribute to the development of entrepreneurial efficacy, reinforcing their value in entrepreneurial practice and education.

Moreover, the interactive effect of entrepreneurial strategy (ES) and design thinking (DT) on entrepreneurial effectiveness (ES) was statistically significant, as evidenced by the high explanatory power of the model. The outcomes show that there is a wide proportion of entrepreneurial effectiveness explained through ES and DT, and this is only partly influenced by the other independent variables out of scope for the investigation

Recommendation

The study provided several recommendations for different stakeholders based on the findings.

For Homegrown Restaurant Owners, it is advised that they explore entrepreneurship development programs that educate them on the benefits of engaging with investors. Workshops can demystify investor relationships by showcasing success stories, customizable agreements, and shared control frameworks, thereby shifting perceptions of investors from threats to strategic partners. This can empower owners to explore growth opportunities without compromising their values.

To build resilience, restaurant owners are encouraged to enhance their ability to cope with unexpected challenges through scenario-based training, business continuity planning, and crisis simulation exercises. Mentorship from experienced entrepreneurs who have overcome business setbacks can also boost their confidence and preparedness.

For Research Participants, the study emphasizes the importance of practicing design thinking, particularly through empathy, ideation, prototyping, and testing. Participants are advised to engage in workshops that enhance their design thinking skills, increasing customer orientation and innovation.

For Business Owners and Managers, it is recommended to maintain strategic flexibility through regular planning meetings and continuous strategy evaluation. Integrating design thinking into daily operations can enhance problem-solving and innovation, while fostering a culture that encourages experimentation and creative solutions.

For Educational Institutions, the study suggests offering modular courses in entrepreneurial strategy and design thinking for small business owners. Institutions can also facilitate linkages between entrepreneurs and innovation centers to promote cross-learning and industry exposure.

For Business Graduates, the study advises undertaking experiential learning through internships, entrepreneurship immersion programs, or mentorship with successful entrepreneurs. This approach bridges the gap between theory and practice, enhancing their strategic and creative skills in real-world settings.

For Future Researchers, it is recommended to explore additional factors influencing entrepreneurial success, such as digital transformation, community support, or emotional intelligence. Comparative studies across industries or regions, as well as longitudinal designs, may offer deeper insights into how strategies and design thinking evolve over time.

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