Strategy to Increase the Competitiveness of Indonesian Processed Food Products to Thailand through the Role of Human Resources Competency (Revealed Comparative Advantage (RCA) and Dynamic Export Competitiveness Index (ECI))

Original Article

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Abstract

This research aims to formulate a strategy to increase the competitiveness of Indonesian food and beverage products in the Thai market through the role of human resource (HR) competencies and participation in international exhibitions. The research approach used is mixed-method, which combines qualitative and quantitative analysis. Qualitative data were collected through in-depth interviews with exporters and related stakeholders, while quantitative data were analyzed using the Partial Least Squares Structural Equation Modeling (PLS-SEM) method. In addition, product competitiveness is evaluated through the Revealed Comparative Advantage (RCA) approach and the Dynamic Export Competitiveness Index (ECI) dynamically for the period 2021–2024. The results of the study show that human resource competence has a significant effect on increasing export competitiveness, with a t-statistic value of 5.949 and a p-value of 0.000. The role of international exhibitions has also been proven to indirectly contribute to increasing competitiveness through improving human resource competence. RCA and ECI analysis showed positive trends in several superior products such as processed fish, sauces and spices, as well as margarine and fat mixtures. These findings reinforce the importance of human resource development strategies and the use of international exhibitions as a means of market penetration. This study recommends that governments, stakeholders, and business actors be able to strengthen export-oriented HR training programs and encourage active participation in curated international exhibitions. This research also opens up further study space regarding the integration of digitalization aspects in the promotion of Indonesia's superior products to the global market.

Keywords: Export Competitiveness, HR Competence, International Exhibition, RCA, ECI, Indonesian Food and Beverage, Thailand.

1. Introduction

In the era of globalization and trade liberalization, a country's competitiveness in the international market is an important indicator of its economic strength. Indonesia has great potential in the processed food industry, but still faces challenges in increasing market penetration in Thailand, which is known as a food hub in the ASEAN region. Trade relations between the two countries continue to grow, but Indonesia still experiences a trade deficit with

Thailand. In 2024, Indonesia's exports to Thailand will be recorded at USD 7.70 billion, while imports will reach USD 9.70 billion.

Thailand has a strategic position in the global food industry's supply chain, supported by strong regulation and standardization through the Thai FDA (Thai Food and Drug Administration) and ACFS (National Bureau of Agricultural Commodity and Food Standards). In addition, the organization of international exhibitions in Thailand, such as Thaifex Anuga Asia, is an effective means of strengthening Thai food product exports. On the other hand, Indonesian processed food products such as biscuits, instant noodles, and processed fish have entered the Thai market, but their contribution is still limited due to constraints of human resource (HR) competence, brand penetration, and international promotion strategies that are not yet optimal.

Based on these conditions, this study aims to analyze the role of human resource competencies and international exhibitions in increasing the export competitiveness of Indonesian processed food products in Thailand, with research limitations on ten processed food products based on the 4-digit HS code as follows:

Table 1. Processed Food Products Based on 4-digit HS Code

No.	HS Code	Description
1	1513	Coconut oil (copra), palm kernel or babassu and its fractions, purified or not, but not chemically modified.
2	1516	Animal or vegetable fats and oils and their fractions, partially or wholly hydrogenated, inter-esterified, re-esterified or elaidinized, purified or not, but not further processed.
3	1517	Margarine; edible mixtures or preparations of animal or vegetable fats or oils or of different fractions of fats or oils in this chapter, other than fats or oils or their edible fractions of heading 15.16
4	1604	Processed or preserved fish; caviar and caviar substitutes processed from fish eggs
5	1704	Confectionery (including white chocolate) does not contain cocoa.
6	1806	Chocolate and other processed foods contain cocoa
7	1902	Pasta, whether cooked or stuffed or not (with meat or other ingredients) or otherwise processed, such as spaghetti, macaroni, noodles, lasagna, gnocchi, ravioli, cannelloni, couscous, processed or not.
8	1905	Bread, pastries, cakes, biscuits, and other bakery products, containing cocoa or not; communion wafers, empty sleeves of a kind suitable for pharmaceutical purposes, sealing wafers, rice paper, and similar products.
9	2103	Sauces and their preparations: a mixture of spices and a mixture of flavoring ingredients; mustard flour and coarse flour, mustard, and refined mustard.
10	2106	Processed foods that are not detailed or included in other posts.

This research is expected to be a scientific and practical contribution in formulating an effective strategy for Indonesian processed food industry players to enter and compete in the Thai market.

2. Literature Review

Research on increasing the competitiveness of Indonesian processed food products exports to Thailand is based on 3 main theories, namely the theory of international competitiveness, the theory of human resource competence, and the theory of international trade promotion. These three theories are the main framework for explaining the factors that affect a country's success in penetrating the global market.

2.1. National Competitiveness Theory

This research refers to the Theory of Nations' Competitive Advantage proposed by Michael E. Porter (1990) through the concept of the Diamond Model of National Advantage. According to Porter's Diamond model, a country's competitive advantage is also determined by: (1) factor conditions, (2) demand conditions, (3) related and supporting industries, and (4) firm strategy, structure, and rivalry. The quality of human resources is one part of the factor conditions that play a role in increasing productivity and the ability to penetrate the export market. In addition, the company's strategy in utilizing international promotions, including participation in trade shows, is an important instrument in increasing market access and strengthening the competitive position of export products.
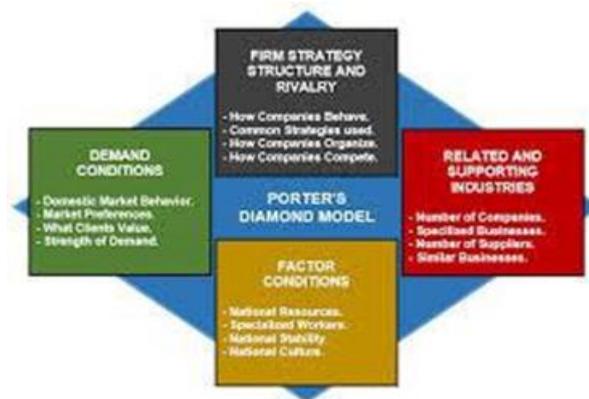

Figure 1. Porter Diamond

Meanwhile, to measure export competitiveness, it is analyzed through the Revealed Comparative Advantage (RCA) and Export Competitiveness Index (ECI) approaches, which are used to measure the relative ability of a country to export certain products compared to other countries.

2.2. Human Capital Theory

This research is also supported by the Human Capital Theory put forward by Becker (1964), which states that investment in education, skills, and labor experience can improve productivity and organizational performance.

In the context of international export and marketing, HR competencies play a critical role in navigating the complexity of highly dynamic global markets. According to Cateora et al. (2020), mastery of cultural differences, international law, market preferences, and cross-cultural negotiation techniques is key in marketing products globally.

Human resources who have high export competence will improve the company's ability to meet international standards, manage global business networks, and increase the success of foreign market penetration.

2.3. International Trade Promotion Theory

The role of international trade promotion emphasizes the importance of promotional activities as a means of increasing exports that have proven to be effective in increasing the competitiveness of products in the global market. With functions that include direct promotion to visitors, market research, image enhancement, and business network building, exhibitions are able to make a significant contribution to the export performance of a country or company. In Porter's Diamond, it is stated that the competitiveness of a nation (and the promotion of its trade) depends on the capacity of the industry to innovate, which is supported by production factors, demand conditions, and corporate strategies.

Participation in international exhibitions provides opportunities for business actors to increase product visibility, build business networks, and obtain relevant market information to increase export competitiveness.

The integration of the three theories mentioned above explains that export competitiveness is not only determined by product excellence, but also by the quality of human resources and the effectiveness of international promotion strategies. In this study, human resource competence is positioned as an internal factor of the company, while international exhibitions play a role as an external factor that functions as one of the tools for market penetration and increasing the competitiveness of Indonesian processed food products exports in Thailand.

3. Methods

In this study, the approach, techniques, and stages used to examine the Strategy to Increase the Competitiveness of Indonesian Processed Food Products to Thailand Through the Role of Human Resources Competency (RCA Analysis and Dynamic ECI) using the sequential exploratory mixed-method method, where the research approach combines qualitative and quantitative methods sequentially in one study. The first stage of research uses qualitative methods and then continues with the second stage using quantitative methods to obtain objective and measurable data.

To clarify the direction of the analysis, this study establishes the conceptual and operational definitions of the main variables as the basis for instrument preparation and data processing. The determination of these variables is based on the main problem, namely the low competitiveness of Indonesian processed food products exports to Thailand.

Table 1. Definition of Concepts and Variables

No.	Concept	Conceptual Definition	Indicator
1.	International Exhibitions	Cross-border trade promotion activities that bring together exporters and importers	Frequency participation, Quality *booth*, the result of business meetings and transactions, or potential transactions
2.	HR Competencies	Capacity and expertise of business actors and employees in marketing products abroad	Education, training, experience, export skills, foreign language mastery, understanding of local culture, and consumer preferences

No.	Concept	Conceptual Definition	Indicator
3.	Export Competitiveness	Capabilities of Indonesian processed food products to compete in the Thai export market	The value of RCA and the dynamic ECI of Indonesian processed food products compared to competitors

The research population was arranged according to the needs of qualitative and quantitative analysis. The qualitative population includes Indonesian processed food companies or business actors participating in the Thaifex Anuga Asia 2025 exhibition in Bangkok on May 27–31, 2025, with a total of 21 companies in the Indonesia Pavilion. Meanwhile, the quantitative population uses export-import data on processed food products from Indonesia and competing countries to Thailand during the period 2020–2024, focusing on ten processed food products based on HS codes as listed in Table 1.

4. Results and Discussion

This research was conducted on Indonesian food and beverage companies participating in the Thaifex Anuga Asia 2025 Exhibition, which took place on May 27–31, 2025, in Bangkok, Thailand. A total of 21 companies are members of the Indonesian Pavilion with the support of the Indonesian Embassy in Bangkok. The respondent company is engaged in processed food and beverages, including grain-based snack products such as corn and soybeans, biscuits, wafers, instant noodles, sweets and chocolates, instant drinks, packaged tea, as well as processed seafood products, coconut derivatives, chili sauce, and crackers. The composition of participants reflects a variety of business scales, ranging from MSMEs, start-up exporters, to large companies with international distribution networks.

For the qualitative component, the study involved 32 respondents who occupy strategic positions and are directly related to export activities and international market development. The majority of respondents came from the positions of export manager, export staff, international marketing, and international business officer, so they have a role in decision-making related to export activities and product promotion in the global market.

Meanwhile, for quantitative research objects, two types of research objects are used to comprehensively answer the objectives and formulation of problems, namely:

a) Quantitative Research Objects for Variable Relationship Analysis
The first research object is focused on the Thaifex Anuga Asia 2025 exhibitor companies. These companies were used as respondents to measure perceptions of three main variables, namely the Role of International Exhibitions (X), Human Resource Competence (Z), and Export Competitiveness (Y).
Data collection was carried out through the distribution of questionnaires, and the results were analyzed using Partial Least Squares-Structural Equation Modeling (PLS-SEM) with the help of SmartPLS 4 software. This approach is used to determine the direct and indirect influence between research variables, as well as to measure the relative contribution of human resource competence and the role of exhibitions to increasing export competitiveness.

b) Quantitative Research Objects for Product Competitiveness Measurement (RCA and ECI)
The object of quantitative research to measure the competitiveness of Indonesian processed food products in Thailand was focused on 10 (ten) processed food products based on the 4-digit HS code that have or have entered the Thai market. These products

are used as units of analysis to measure comparative competitiveness (RCA) and dynamic competitiveness (Dynamic ECI) based on Indonesia's export data to Thailand and to the world during the period 2020-2024. The selection of this object is based on Indonesia's superior products in the global market.

The analysis of the research results was carried out in stages through two approaches, namely qualitative analysis based on the results of interviews and observations, and quantitative analysis based on questionnaire data processing using the Partial Least Squares (PLS) method and RCA and ECI calculations. This analysis aims to answer the formulation of the problem and prove the hypothesis related to the influence of human resource competence and the role of international exhibitions on increasing export competitiveness.

4.1. Qualitative Analysis

The results of interviews with exporters and company representatives show that human resource competence is an important element in supporting export success. Respondents said that their ability to negotiate internationally, mastery of foreign languages, and understanding of export regulations to Thailand are determining factors for the success of trade transactions.

In addition, the role of international exhibitions such as THAIFEX Anuga Asia is seen as very strategic. The exhibition is not only a place to promote products, but also to strengthen business networks and open up access to new markets. Many business actors have succeeded in establishing long-term export cooperation after participating in the exhibition.

However, obstacles were also found, such as the limitation of professional human resources and the lack of systematic debriefing before participating in the exhibition. This shows the need for synergy between the government, associations, and business actors in improving the readiness of export human resources.

4.2. Quantitative Analysis

This study uses path analysis to test the causal relationship between research variables simultaneously. This method is used to analyze the influence of the Role of International Exhibitions on Export Competitiveness, either directly or indirectly through HR Competency as a mediating variable.
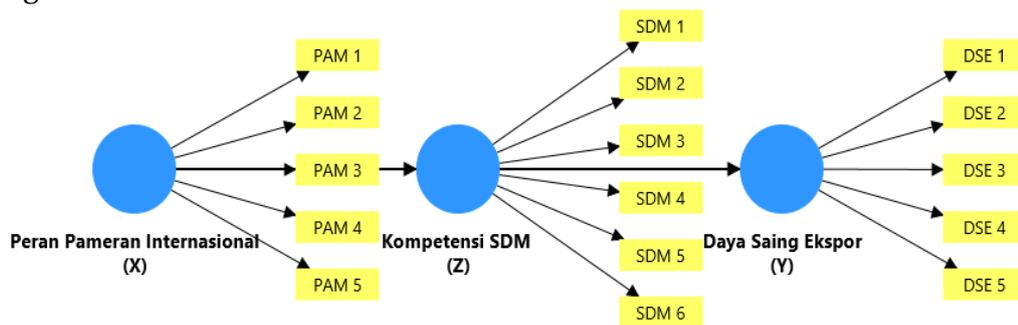

Figure 2. Path Path

a. Quantitative analysis of data processing using Smart PLS

Based on the results of the path model estimation, the following table shows the main findings of testing the relationship between latent variables using the bootstrapping method on SmartPLS.

Table 2. Mean, Standard Deviation, T-Statistics, and P-Values

Relationship	Original Sample (O)	Sample Mean (M)	Standard Deviation (STDEV)	T Statistics (O/STDEV)	P Values
Human Resource Competence (Z) → Export Competitiveness (Y)	0.583	0.611	0.098	5.949	0.000
International Exhibition Role (X) → Export Competitiveness (Y)	0.310	0.339	0.096	3.229	0.001
International Exhibition Role (X) → Human Resource Competence (Z)	0.532	0.553	0.115	4.628	0.000

a) The Role of International Exhibitions → Human Resources Competencies

The results of the analysis show that the role of international exhibitions has a significant effect on improving human resource competence, with *Original Sample* (O) values = 0.532 and P Value = 0.000. This shows that the more actively the company participates in international exhibitions, the more the experience and knowledge of human resources in facing the global market will increase.

b) Human Resource Competence → Export Competitiveness

Human resource competence has a very significant effect on export competitiveness, with *Original Sample* (O) = 0.583 and P Value = 0.000. This means that the higher the competence of human resources, the greater the opportunity for the company to expand the market and increase the value of exports to Thailand.

c) The Role of International Exhibitions → Export Competitiveness

International exhibitions have proven to have a positive and significant influence on increasing the competitiveness of food and beverage product exports to Thailand. This is indicated by the path coefficient value of 0.310, with a T-statistic of 3.229 and a p-value of 0.001. International exhibitions make a moderate contribution to increasing export competitiveness, so participation in the exhibition not only serves as a means of product promotion but also as a strategic instrument in building market access and strengthening the competitive position of Indonesian products in the Thai market.

The results of the study show that the competitiveness of Indonesian food and beverage products exports to Thailand is significantly influenced by the role of international exhibitions and the competence of human resources. International exhibitions serve not only as a means of promotion, but also as a medium for increasing human resource capacity that strengthens the success of market penetration. Therefore, an integrated policy is needed between export promotion programs and the sustainable development of human resource competencies. Key policy recommendations include: (1) increasing the facilitation of business actors' participation in international exhibitions, (2) strengthening export human resource training related to destination market standards and regulations, (3) strengthening government-association-business actor synergy, and (4) strengthening branding, curation, and assistance of superior products for the Thai market.

b. Quantitative Analysis of Export Competitiveness

Revealed Comparative Advantage *(RCA)* Analysis

Table 3. RCA Calculation Results (2020–2024)

No.	HS Code	2020	2021	2022	2023	2024
1	1513	2.46	1.78	2.59	2.41	0.31
2	1516	6.68	3.81	3.59	2.89	2.16
3	1517	6.35	0.59	0.55	0.79	1.20
4	1604	0.96	1.02	8.28	9.45	10.09
5	1704	18.10	20.56	19.01	21.83	19.81
6	1806	32.66	26.77	28.23	33.39	29.20
7	1902	3.67	36.46	4.50	36.38	3.19
8	1905	13.81	14.56	16.47	18.39	20.59
9	2103	1.64	2.52	2.75	3.10	3.46
10	2106	5.91	4.80	2.86	3.35	3.69

The RCA analysis is used to measure the comparative advantages of Indonesian food and beverage products exported to the Thai market. This indicator shows the relative position of the competitiveness of Indonesian products compared to competing countries based on actual export performance. The RCA value of > 1 indicates that Indonesian products in the group have a comparative advantage and are more competitive to be traded in the destination market. Therefore, the results of RCA can be used as a basis for determining Indonesia's superior products that deserve to be prioritized in the strategy to increase exports to Thailand.

From the table above, the following conclusions are obtained:

a) Processed Fish Products (HS 1604) showed a significant jump in the RCA value from 1.02 (2021) to 10.09 (2024), indicating great potential to continue to be improved. This is consistent with the increasing Thai market demand for seafood-based ready-to-eat products.

b) Sauce and Seasoning Products (HS 2103) have consistently increased their RCA from 1.64 (2020) to 3.46 (2024), indicating that these products are increasingly competitive and in line with the tastes of the Thai market.

c) Margarine and Mixed Fat Products (HS 1517) increased from 0.55 (2022) to 2.30 (2024). Although initially not competitive, the trend shows increased potential and can be the focus of strengthening in the future.

This interpretation shows that most of the products studied already have comparative advantages, and can be improved through branding strategies, flavor diversification, and halal standardization and food safety that are appropriate to the Thai market.

Analysis of the Dynamic Export Competitiveness Index (ECI)

Table 4. Dynamic ECI Calculation Results

No.	HS Code	2020	2021	2022	2023	2024
1	1513	–	0.18	1.50	0.67	0.20
2	1516	–	0.77	1.45	0.76	0.79
3	1517	–	1.13	0.93	1.26	1.89
4	1604	–	0.79	13.62	1.16	1.18
5	1704	–	0.93	1.07	1.05	0.96
6	1806	–	1.07	1.38	0.84	0.85
7	1902	–	0.92	1.18	0.90	1.10
8	1905	–	1.02	1.28	0.95	1.11
9	2103	–	1.20	1.05	0.95	1.30
10	2106	–	0.83	0.65	0.94	1.34

The ECI analysis is used to evaluate the competitiveness of exports based on the dynamics of export growth of Indonesian products compared to competitors in the Thai market. The ECI value > 1 indicates that the product has a relatively increased export competitiveness. The results of the dynamic ECI analysis for 2021–2024 are as follows:

a) Coconut Oil and its Derivatives (HS 1513) fluctuated with the highest ECI value in 2022 (1.50), but declined again in 2024 (0.20). This indicates the existence of competitive challenges from other countries (such as the Philippines and India) as well as possible technical or tariff barriers.

b) Animal/Vegetable Fats (HS 1516) showed a steady increase from 0.42 (2021) to 1.05 (2024), indicating a trend of slowly increasing competitiveness in the Thai market.

c) Products with a consistent ECI above 1 (ECI > 1) in the past 2 years reflect continued competitiveness and need to be given priority in export and promotion strategies.

Combined Analysis of RCA and Dynamic ECI

By combining RCA and dynamic ECI analysis, it can be concluded that:

a) Products such as processed fish and sauces/condiments have a comparative advantage and strong and stable export competitiveness, making them a top priority in the export enhancement strategy.

b) New products showing positive trends in both RCA and ECI (such as margarine) have the potential to be developed through product innovation and promotion intensification.

c) Products with declining ECI values despite high RCA (such as coconut oil) need to be examined and evaluated more deeply in terms of market barriers, price competition, or regulation.

Thus, the RCA and dynamic ECI approaches provide a quantitative basis that strengthens the findings of the survey results and PLS model, as well as recommend data-driven strategies to increase the competitiveness of Indonesian food and beverage products in Thailand sustainably.

5. Conclusion

This study shows that the export competitiveness of Indonesian food and beverage products in the Thai market is significantly influenced by the role of international exhibitions and the competence of human resources (HR). The results of the path analysis show that international exhibitions have a positive influence on human resource competence, which indicates that participation in exhibitions is able to improve experience, market knowledge, and the ability of business actors to understand international consumer standards and preferences.

In addition, human resource competence has proven to be the most powerful factor in increasing export competitiveness. This shows that the success of market penetration is not only determined by product promotion, but also by the ability of business actors to manage business opportunities, meet international trade standards, and develop global marketing strategies. International exhibitions also have a direct influence on export competitiveness, albeit with a moderate level of influence, so their effectiveness is highly dependent on the readiness of human resources to take advantage of the opportunities generated.

Meanwhile, the competitiveness of Indonesian food and beverage products in the Thai market shows a fairly competitive trend but needs strengthening. The results of the Revealed Comparative Advantage (RCA) analysis show that products such as processed fish (HS 1604), sauces and spices (HS 2103), and margarine (HS 1517) have an RCA value of > 1, even increasing from year to year, indicating Indonesia's comparative advantage in these products. Meanwhile, the results of Dynamic ECI show that Indonesia's export competitiveness to Thailand is volatile. Products such as coconut oil and vegetable fats show an increase in ECI value in one year, but decline again in the next. This reflects the need for a sustainable export strategy that is adaptive to market dynamics.

Overall, this study shows that the export competitiveness of Indonesian food and beverage products in the Thai market is influenced by the synergy between human resource competencies and the optimization of international exhibitions. Although some Indonesian products already have comparative advantages, fluctuations in export competitiveness indicate the need for a more sustainable strategy and adaptive to market dynamics. Therefore, strengthening human resource capacity and utilizing international exhibitions as strategic promotional instruments are key to increasing market penetration and strengthening the position of Indonesian food and beverage products in Thailand.

5.1. Recommendations

To increase the export competitiveness of Indonesian food and beverage products in the Thai market, structured and applicable operational steps are needed. Optimization of international exhibitions needs to be carried out through market research, preparation of promotional materials that highlight product excellence and certification, the use of English and Thai materials, and systematic post-exhibition business follow-up. On the internal side, improving the competence of export human resources is key through training on Thai food safety standards and regulations, strengthening negotiation and cross-cultural communication skills. In addition, businesses need to adapt products to the preferences of the Thai market, ensure the completeness of certifications, and develop trend-based innovations. Strengthening distribution networks is also important through partnerships with local importers and distributors, the use of digital platforms, and participation in business forums and business matching.

Based on the findings of the research, the government and related institutions need to expand export training and assistance programs, as well as increase the facilitation of MSME

participation in international exhibitions in a sustainable manner. Business actors are advised to strengthen human resource capacity, take advantage of promotional digitalization, and prioritize products with high RCA and ECI values, accompanied by consistency of quality and certification. The next research is expected to expand the scope of destination countries and analysis variables, including aspects of trade, logistics, FTA, and sustainability policies, as well as conduct longitudinal studies to assess the impact of promotion strategies and strengthening human resources on export performance.

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