

## **The Entrepreneurial Decision-Making Approaches of Dried Fish Processing Business Operators in Coastal Sri Lanka**

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The Sri Lankan marine dried fish sector significantly contributes to the country's economy, livelihoods, and well-being of fishing communities. Nevertheless, these individuals who own and operate dried fish processing businesses function in a resource-constrained environment shaped by external shocks and internal stressors. Despite these resource constraints, some Dried Fish Processing Business Operators (DBOs) have managed to survive and grow their businesses. The study aimed to investigate the types of Entrepreneurial Decision-Making (EDM) approaches adopted by DBOs, and whether the EDM types change with the characteristics of business owners and their businesses. In doing so, the study drew on three different concepts of EDM approaches—causation, bricolage, and effectuation. The research was conducted in fishing communities in Negombo area. The research employed mixed methods including a questionnaire survey with DBOs (n=86) and in-depth interviews with a subset of the sample (n=20). Data were analyzed using statistical tests (MANOVA and ANOVA) and were supplemented with insights emerged through qualitative data. The findings revealed that DBOs adopted all three EDM approaches to different degrees. The results further revealed that these approaches significantly vary with the age and gender of DBOs as well as stage of operation, and size of their businesses ( $P < 0.05$ ). In particular, younger owners highly adopt effectuation while older owners highly adopt causation. In contrast, younger-female DBOs adopt both effectuation and bricolage. Additionally, experienced owners rely more on the causation approach. Moreover, the findings related to business characteristics showed that effectuation and bricolage approaches are common in small-scale businesses and start-ups, whereas large-scale and developed businesses adopt causation approach. The findings of the study suggest that policies and interventions that seek to improve dried fish businesses should pay attention to the diversity among DBOs and their approaches to sustain their business by going beyond the usual loan facilities towards business development.

**Keywords:** Bricolage theory, Causation, Dried fish processing business operators, Effectuation, Entrepreneurial decision-making approaches

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