

Prioritizing Marketing Strategies for Market Competitiveness in a Small-Scale Tofu Enterprise: An Integrated SWOT-QSPM Case Study in Indonesia

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ABSTRACT

Background: Traditional food microenterprises must often choose between protecting established product-based advantages and investing scarce resources in promotion, technology, or production growth. UD Daya Rasa, a small tofu enterprise in Kediri, Indonesia, experienced incomplete market absorption in part of its intermediary distribution channel while relying primarily on word-of-mouth promotion.

Aims: This study identifies the enterprise's internal and external strategic factors, determines its IE position, formulates marketing alternatives, prioritizes them through QSPM, and interprets the resulting order as a resource-capability sequencing problem.

Methods: A descriptive single-case design used observation, interviews, enterprise records, and structured questionnaires collected in January–June 2023. The owner and an employee with at least ten years of experience provided IFAS–EFAS ratings, while one postgraduate academic expert provided QSPM attractiveness scores. Exact weights were reconstructed from the raw condition scores, and a one-factor $\pm 10\%$ weight-perturbation check was added without changing the original field data.

Results: The exact calculations reproduced IFAS = 2.84 and EFAS = 2.85 after rounding, placing the enterprise in Cell V. Seven SWOT alternatives were retained. The originally reported QSPM ranked quality and distinctive-product protection first (TAS = 6.78) and use of diverse promotional media second (TAS = 6.42); two intermediate strategies tied at 5.94. The first-ranked strategy remained highest across all 40 deterministic $\pm 10\%$ weight-perturbation scenarios.

Conclusion: The results support a cautious staged strategic implementation pathway in which the firm first protects and formalizes product quality, then amplifies that value through digital market communication, and scales production only after demand is verified. The study reframes SWOT–QSPM from a static ranking tool into a case-derived explanation of capability sequencing while explicitly acknowledging the limits of single-case and single-expert judgment.

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INTRODUCTION

Micro and small food-processing enterprises occupy a paradoxical position in contemporary markets: their local embeddedness and operational flexibility can support customer intimacy, yet the same small scale often limits managerial systems, technology, and market reach. Research on micro-enterprise supply chains shows that competitiveness depends on the interaction of internal resources, regional networks, and resilience rather than production efficiency alone (Silva et al., 2021). For food SMEs, these pressures are intensified by perishability, input-price volatility, demand uncertainty, and limited buffers for absorbing market shocks (Ali et al., 2021). At the same time, digitalization has lowered the cost of reaching customers and made promotional visibility easier to acquire, but it has also raised expectations for responsiveness, information quality, and channel coordination (Hanelt et al., 2021; Kraus et al., 2022). The resulting managerial tension is not simply whether a small food firm should modernize, but which capabilities should be protected, developed, and sequenced when resources are scarce. This tension makes strategic prioritization especially important for traditional food enterprises whose competitive advantage may still rest on product authenticity, consistent quality, and trusted local relationships.

The market challenge becomes sharper when traditional food firms operate through a mixture of stable customers and less predictable intermediary channels. Short food supply-chain research indicates that flexibility, collaboration, visibility, and low-cost digital tools can improve adaptation, but these

benefits depend on how operational and market capabilities are connected (Michel-Villarreal et al., 2021). Digital technologies can create new customer touchpoints and distribution options for SMEs, yet they do not automatically compensate for weak production routines or inconsistent value delivery (Matarazzo et al., 2021). Recent evidence further suggests that competitiveness in incumbent SMEs emerges from alignment among technical, organizational, and cultural elements rather than from isolated technology adoption (Meier et al., 2025). Consequently, aggressive promotion undertaken before product quality, order handling, and production readiness are stabilized may amplify operational weaknesses instead of creating durable market gains. A strategic framework for small food enterprises therefore needs to evaluate market expansion together with the resources and capabilities that make expansion sustainable.

This problem can be interpreted through the resource-based view and the dynamic-capabilities perspective, which jointly distinguish the value of existing resources from the ability to renew and redeploy them under changing conditions. Empirical RBV research shows that resource value, rarity, imitability, and organizational deployment are associated with competitive advantage and SME performance (Ferreira et al., 2022). Dynamic-capabilities studies complement this logic by emphasizing sensing changes in the environment, seizing opportunities through investment and market action, and reconfiguring routines when existing configurations no longer fit market conditions (Weaven et al., 2021). In SME contexts, digital transformation and resilience have similarly been linked to the development and recombination of capabilities rather than to technology acquisition alone (Khurana et al., 2022). Digital marketing research also shows that organizational readiness, innovativeness, managerial capability, and market pressure shape whether digital channels contribute to performance (Su et al., 2023; Wu et al., 2024). These perspectives imply that strategic marketing for a resource-constrained food enterprise should be analyzed as a problem of resource protection, capability development, and sequencing rather than as a stand-alone promotional decision.

The empirical setting of this study is UD Daya Rasa, a small-scale tofu processor in Pesantren District, Kediri City, East Java, Indonesia, with field data collected between January and June 2023. The enterprise produced approximately 1,600–2,400 tofu pieces per day, with about 60% distributed to regular outlets and roughly 40% marketed through smaller retailers, vegetable sellers, and mobile tofu sellers. Products in the latter channel were not consistently absorbed by the market, while formal promotion remained limited and depended largely on word-of-mouth communication. At the same time, the firm possessed long-standing production experience, distinctive product characteristics, affordable pricing, self-financed operations, competent workers, and established customer loyalty. The case therefore presents a strategic paradox in which a strong product-based competitive foundation coexists with weak market-development systems and exposure to local competitors, changing preferences, and soybean-price instability. Rather than treating Kediri as a geographic novelty, this study uses the case as an information-rich example of a traditional food microenterprise facing the broader problem of how to allocate scarce resources between protecting what already creates value and developing capabilities required for market expansion.

Recent SME literature consistently indicates that digital transformation is most productive when it builds on complementary organizational and marketing capabilities rather than functioning as an independent technological intervention. Matarazzo et al. (2021) show that sensing and learning capabilities support digital customer-value creation, while Scuotto et al. (2021) demonstrate that individual digital capabilities matter for SME growth and innovation. Soluk et al. (2023) further find that business networks can help resource-constrained SMEs develop dynamic capabilities for adopting non-disruptive digital technologies, and Gliga and Evers (2023) identify networking as an important mechanism for building specialized and dynamic marketing capabilities. At a more analytical level, Cadden et al. (2023) show that knowledge-integration mechanisms help transform data and marketing analytics into innovation and competitive advantage, whereas Ye et al. (2022) link social-media use to agility, adaptability, and firm capability development. These findings converge with evidence that digital transformation in SMEs depends on coordinated technical, organizational, and cultural change and that digital resources create value only when they are integrated into a coherent competitive configuration

(Cuthbertson & Furseth, 2022; Meier et al., 2025). The dominant conclusion across this literature is therefore not that digital promotion should always be prioritized, but that market-facing technologies become strategically meaningful when they complement a defensible resource base and adequate organizational readiness.

A parallel stream of research uses SWOT and QSPM to convert internal–external diagnosis into explicit strategic alternatives and ranked priorities, thereby reducing reliance on unstructured managerial intuition. Recent applications demonstrate the continuing usefulness of weighted strategic-factor analysis and QSPM for comparing competing choices, although methodological refinements increasingly emphasize transparent weighting and sensitivity to judgment (Mohammadi, 2023; Budiman & Sutrisno, 2024). In agroindustrial settings, SWOT–QSPM studies commonly identify product quality, production capability, partnerships, promotion, and technology as strategic levers, but they often stop at reporting the highest Total Attractiveness Score rather than explaining the capability logic connecting one priority to the next (Nurfaillah et al., 2024). Food-SME and supply-chain scholarship, by contrast, emphasizes that strategic responses should match resource and time constraints and that resilience frequently depends on combinations of flexibility, collaboration, market responsiveness, and operational capability (Ali et al., 2021; Michel-Villarreal et al., 2021; Sturm et al., 2023). Digital-marketing studies also show that adoption can follow an iterative path shaped by market pressure and organizational readiness rather than a one-step transition from offline to online promotion (Su et al., 2023; Wu et al., 2024). The critical research gap is therefore the limited integration between structured SWOT–QSPM prioritization and resource-capability theory for explaining how product-quality preservation, digital market amplification, and production scaling should be sequenced in a resource-constrained traditional food enterprise.

To address this gap, the study identifies the principal internal strengths and weaknesses and external opportunities and threats affecting UD Daya Rasa, calculates its IFAS and EFAS positions, and locates the enterprise within the Internal–External matrix. It then formulates seven strategic alternatives through SWOT matching and prioritizes them using QSPM while reproducing the original scoring logic and adding a transparent robustness check based on the underlying raw weights. The analysis is interpreted through a resource-based and dynamic-capabilities lens to examine whether market expansion should precede, accompany, or follow the protection of product-based competitive assets. The theoretical contribution lies in reframing a conventional SWOT–QSPM case from a static ranking exercise into a case-derived explanation of strategic capability sequencing under resource constraints. The practical contribution is a staged implementation pathway that links quality protection, digital market amplification, and demand-validated scaling without claiming that the recommended strategies have already improved post-implementation performance. By separating the 2023 empirical evidence from later literature used for interpretation, the study also establishes clearer boundary conditions for what the case can support and what remains to be tested longitudinally.

METHOD

2.1 Research Design and Study Setting

This study used a descriptive single-case design that combined qualitative field identification with quantitative strategic evaluation because the research questions required both contextual understanding of one enterprise and explicit prioritization of strategic alternatives. The unit of analysis was UD Daya Rasa, a small-scale tofu-processing enterprise located on Jalan Kapten Tendean, Gang 1, Bence, Pakunden Village, Pesantren District, Kediri City, East Java, Indonesia. Fieldwork was conducted from January to June 2023, and the focal product was white takwa tofu because the original study specifically examined the marketing problem associated with this product and its distribution channels. The case was treated as an information-rich, resource-constrained traditional food enterprise rather than as a statistically representative sample of Indonesian tofu firms. The research combined observation, interviews, structured questionnaires, enterprise documentation, and sequential strategic matrices, consistent with a mixed evidence logic in which qualitative information establishes context before quantitative scoring is

applied (Matović & Ovesni, 2023). All empirical descriptions and scores in the present article refer to conditions observed in 2023; no 2024–2026 field re-measurement was available, and later publications are used only to interpret the original findings rather than to retrospectively alter them.

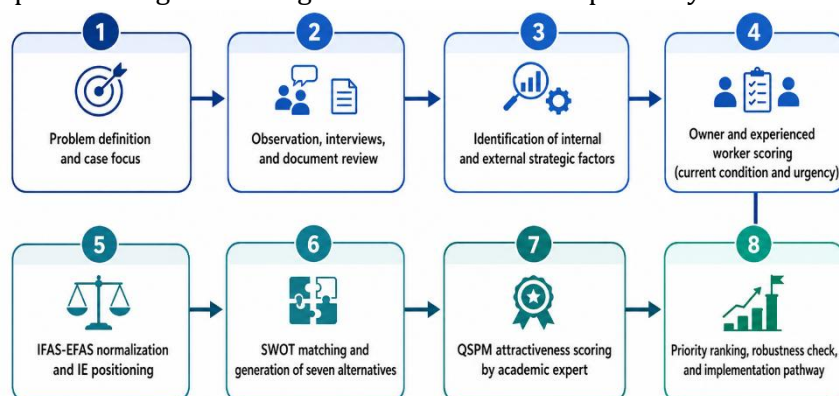


Figure 1. Research and strategic analysis workflow

Figure 1 summarizes the sequence from field diagnosis and key-informant scoring to IFAS–EFAS evaluation, IE positioning, SWOT matching, QSPM prioritization, and the deterministic robustness check. It is positioned in the Method section because it represents the analytical procedure rather than an empirical result.

2.2 Participants, Instruments, and Data Quality

Participants were selected purposively from people with direct knowledge of the enterprise and its strategic conditions, following the logic that information-rich respondents are more appropriate than probability sampling when the objective is expert case assessment (Ahmad & Wilkins, 2025). Three participants contributed to different stages of the analysis: the business owner, one employee who met the original inclusion criterion of at least ten years of work experience at UD Daya Rasa, and one academic expert, Adhitya Alam W., S.E., M.M., who met the original criteria of postgraduate education and relevant business-management experience. The owner and experienced employee completed the internal and external strategic-factor assessment, whereas the academic expert completed the QSPM attractiveness assessment. The instruments consisted of an observation guide, interview questions, an open-and-closed SWOT questionnaire, and a structured QSPM questionnaire. Internal indicators covered product, price, promotion, distribution, finance, human resources, and production location, while external indicators covered customers, competitors, suppliers, market conditions, technology, consumer preferences, raw-material prices, and lifestyle changes. The original scoring sheets retained separate entries for the owner and employee before aggregation, which provides an auditable record of how the IFAS and EFAS values were generated.

2.3 Data Collection Procedure

Data collection proceeded from direct observation of production and distribution activities to interviews about product characteristics, resources, customers, competitors, suppliers, finance, promotion, and operational constraints, followed by structured scoring of the identified factors. The owner and employee classified factors as strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, or threats and scored two dimensions on four-point scales: current condition from 1 (poor) to 4 (very good) and urgency from 1 (not urgent) to 4 (very urgent). The QSPM expert then evaluated the relative attractiveness of each strategy for each relevant factor on a four-point scale, where 1 indicated no attractiveness, 2 low attractiveness, 3 moderate attractiveness, and 4 high attractiveness. Observation notes, interview records, completed questionnaires, and enterprise documentation were retained as the audit trail for the strategic matrices. The respondent-level sheets were checked before aggregation so that the weight and rating calculations could be reconstructed from the archived raw scores. All empirical descriptions and scores reported in the article therefore refer to the January–June 2023 field period.

2.4 Strategic Analysis and Decision Rules

The analysis followed four linked stages: IFAS–EFAS evaluation, IE positioning, SWOT matching, and QSPM prioritization. For each internal or external factor i , the original raw current-condition total C_i from the two business informants was normalized within its respective matrix to obtain the exact weight $w_i = C_i / \sum C_i$, the rating r_i was calculated as the mean urgency score across the two informants, and the weighted factor score was $w_i \times r_i$; summing these weighted scores produced IFAS and EFAS totals. The IE matrix used the conventional three-band interpretation of 1.00–1.99 as weak/low, 2.00–2.99 as average/medium, and 3.00–4.00 as strong/high, so the resulting coordinates determined the strategic cell. SWOT matching combined SO, ST, WO, and WT conditions to generate the seven alternatives recorded in the original study; promotion-related alternatives were retained separately because they represented different mechanisms—resource allocation for promotion, use of promotional channels, and defensive communication against competitive pressure—even though they belong to the same broader strategic family. In QSPM, the factor weight was multiplied by the expert's Attractiveness Score AS_{ij} to obtain $TAS_{ij} = w_i \times AS_{ij}$, and the strategy score $STAS_j = \sum TAS_{ij}$ was used for ranking; to reproduce the originally reported TAS values, the complete QSPM table reports the two-decimal weights carried forward in the 2023 scoring sheet, while an exact-normalized recalculation from the raw condition totals is reported separately because two-decimal rounding caused the displayed internal QSPM weights to sum to 1.02 rather than exactly 1.00. As a robustness check, each of the 20 exact-normalized factor weights was perturbed by -10% and $+10\%$ one at a time and the affected internal or external weight set was renormalized to 1.00, creating 40 deterministic scenarios; this analysis tests ranking stability rather than statistical significance and was reproduced in Python 3 using the original AS matrix without adding respondents or changing field data.

$$w_i = C_i / \sum C_i; \quad r_i = U_i / n; \quad \text{Weighted Score}_i = w_i \times r_i \\ TAS_{ij} = w_i \times AS_{ij}; \quad STAS_j = \sum TAS_{ij}$$

where (w_i) represents the normalized weight of strategic factor (i), (C_i) is the total current-condition score assigned to factor (i) by the business informants, and ($\sum C_i$) is the sum of current-condition scores for all factors within the corresponding internal or external matrix. The rating (r_i) represents the mean urgency score for factor (i), calculated by dividing the total urgency score (U_i) by the number of business informants (n); in this study, ($n=2$) for the owner and the experienced employee. The weighted score for each factor was obtained by multiplying its normalized weight by its mean rating, and the sum of these weighted scores produced the total IFAS or EFAS score. In the QSPM stage, (AS_{ij}) denotes the Attractiveness Score assigned to strategic factor (i) for alternative strategy (j), using a scale from 1 to 4, where a higher value indicates greater relative attractiveness. The Total Attractiveness Score (TAS_{ij}) was calculated by multiplying the factor weight (w_i) by (AS_{ij}), whereas the Sum Total Attractiveness Score ($STAS_j$) was obtained by summing all (TAS_{ij}) values for strategy (j). The strategy with the highest ($STAS_j$) was interpreted as the most attractive strategic priority within the QSPM framework, although differences among $STAS$ values represent relative expert-based rankings rather than tests of statistical significance.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Results

3.1 Business Characteristics and Focal Marketing Problem

UD Daya Rasa was established in 2005 and operated as a small-scale tofu processor with a product portfolio that included white takwa tofu, white vegetable tofu, yellow takwa tofu, and tofu sticks. The analysis focused on white takwa tofu, which had an approximate size of 6 cm × 6 cm × 5 cm and was characterized in the field records by a soft texture and savory taste. Production was conducted approximately eight to twelve times per day and generated around 1,600–2,400 tofu pieces, supported by five workers. During the study period, white takwa tofu was sold for approximately IDR 15,000 per ten pieces, or about IDR 1,500 per piece. The enterprise used selected soybeans, produced the focal product

without preservatives, operated from a privately owned production location, and relied on self-financed capital. These characteristics established a resource base centered on product quality, production experience, cost control, and continuity rather than on scale or formalized marketing systems.

The distribution system combined direct purchasing, deliveries to established customers, and sales through smaller intermediary channels. Approximately 60% of production was distributed to regular customers such as restaurants and souvenir shops, while the remaining 40% was marketed through small retailers, vegetable sellers, and mobile tofu sellers. The latter segment did not consistently sell all allocated products, making market absorption a practical concern even though the enterprise maintained a stable core customer base. Promotion was largely dependent on word of mouth, and systematic social-media promotion had not been established during the 2023 field period. The business therefore faced a mismatch between relatively strong product and customer assets and limited capability to communicate those assets to a broader market. This mismatch formed the empirical basis for evaluating whether the firm should prioritize quality preservation, market communication, productivity, pricing, or production expansion.

Table 1. Focal business and marketing characteristics

Characteristic	Observed condition (2023)
Business age at fieldwork	Established in 2005
Focal product	White takwa tofu
Production frequency	Approximately 8–12 production cycles/day
Output	Approximately 1,600–2,400 tofu pieces/day
Workers	5
Price during study	Approximately IDR 15,000 per 10 pieces
Regular-customer channel	Approximately 60% of production
Secondary/intermediary channel	Approximately 40%; not consistently sold out
Promotion during fieldwork	Predominantly word of mouth

Table 1 reports only conditions documented in the 2023 field study and should not be interpreted as a 2026 market update.

3.2 Internal Strategic Factor Evaluation

The internal assessment identified seven strengths and three weaknesses, and the complete scoring logic is reported in Table 2 rather than only the final aggregate score. High product quality received the largest raw current-condition total of 8 and an exact normalized weight of 0.1429, producing a weighted score of 0.4286 after applying the mean urgency rating of 3.0. Distinctive product characteristics, affordable price, and competent workers each received a current-condition total of 7, an exact weight of 0.1250, and a weighted score of 0.3750. Among the weaknesses, simple financial recording produced the largest weighted weakness score of 0.1429, followed by limited promotional activity at 0.1071 and limited production space at 0.0714. The exact normalized weights sum to 1.0000, and the resulting IFAS total is 2.8393, which rounds to the originally reported value of 2.84. The internal result therefore indicates an average overall strategic position in which several product and operational strengths coexist with managerial and market-development constraints.

Table 2. Complete Internal Factor Analysis Summary (IFAS) reconstruction

Type	Internal factor	Condition total	Exact weight	Rating	Weighted score
Strength	High product quality	8	0.1429	3.0	0.4286
Strength	Distinctive product characteristics	7	0.1250	3.0	0.3750
Strength	No preservatives	6	0.1071	3.0	0.3214
Strength	Affordable price	7	0.1250	3.0	0.3750

Type	Internal factor	Condition total	Exact weight	Rating	Weighted score
Strength	Privately owned production location	6	0.1071	3.0	0.3214
Strength	Self-financed capital	6	0.1071	3.0	0.3214
Strength	Competent workers	7	0.1250	3.0	0.3750
Weakness	Limited production space	2	0.0357	2.0	0.0714
Weakness	Limited promotional activity	3	0.0536	2.0	0.1071
Weakness	Simple financial recording	4	0.0714	2.0	0.1429
Total		56	1.0000		2.8393 $\approx$ 2.84

Exact weight = factor condition total / 56; rating = mean urgency score of the two business informants. The raw respondent sheet is used for the ordering of the two weakness labels because the summarized thesis table appears to reverse them.

3.3 External Strategic Factor Evaluation and IE Position

The external assessment identified six opportunities and four threats, with the exact scoring components shown in Table 3. High consumer interest in tofu received the largest raw condition total of 8 and the highest weighted opportunity score of 0.5283 because its mean urgency rating was 3.5. Customer loyalty and diverse promotional media each carried an exact normalized weight of 0.1321 and a weighted score of 0.3962, while development of production technology reached the same weighted score through a 0.1132 weight and a 3.5 rating. The strongest threat signal was shared by changing consumer preferences and changing lifestyles, each with a weighted score of 0.1509, followed by unstable raw-material prices at 0.1132. The exact external weights sum to 1.0000, and their weighted total is 2.8491, which rounds to the reported EFAS score of 2.85. Taken together, the external profile is moderately favorable but contains meaningful competitive, behavioral, and input-price uncertainty.

Table 3. Complete External Factor Analysis Summary (EFAS) reconstruction

Type	External factor	Condition total	Exact weight	Rating	Weighted score
Opportunity	High consumer interest in tofu	8	0.1509	3.5	0.5283
Opportunity	High customer loyalty	7	0.1321	3.0	0.3962
Opportunity	Availability of raw materials	6	0.1132	3.0	0.3396
Opportunity	Development of production technology	6	0.1132	3.5	0.3962
Opportunity	Diverse promotional media	7	0.1321	3.0	0.3962
Opportunity	Broad potential market	6	0.1132	3.0	0.3396
Threat	Numerous competitors	2	0.0377	1.0	0.0377
Threat	Changing consumer preferences	4	0.0755	2.0	0.1509
Threat	Unstable raw-material prices	3	0.0566	2.0	0.1132
Threat	Changing lifestyles	4	0.0755	2.0	0.1509

Type	External factor	Condition total	Exact weight	Rating	Weighted score
Total		53	1.0000		2.8491 $\approx$ 2.85

Exact weight = factor condition total / 53; rating = mean urgency score of the two business informants. The exact reconstruction reproduces the reported EFAS total of 2.85 after rounding.

Plotting IFAS 2.84 and EFAS 2.85 places UD Daya Rasa in Cell V of the 3×3 Internal–External matrix shown in Figure 2. Both coordinates fall inside the 2.00–2.99 middle bands, so the enterprise is neither in a strong-growth cell nor in a weak-defensive cell. The position is therefore interpreted as hold and maintain, with selective growth or stability-oriented actions rather than indiscriminate expansion. This result is consistent with the coexistence of a viable product foundation and unresolved weaknesses in promotion, production space, and financial recording. The IE position also constrains how the later QSPM ranking should be read because high-scoring strategies should reinforce current strengths while avoiding resource commitments that assume unverified demand growth. Accordingly, the strategic problem is one of selective upgrading rather than wholesale transformation of the product or business model.

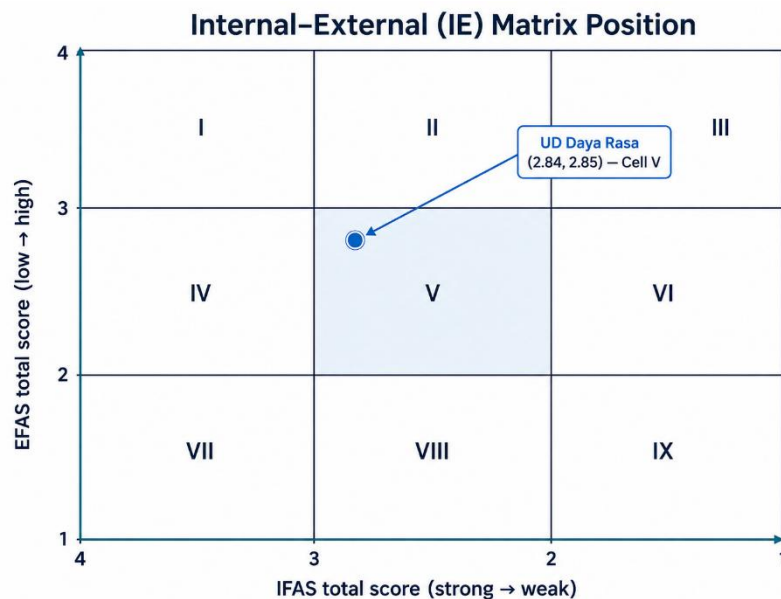


Figure 2. Internal–External matrix position of UD Daya Rasa

IFAS = 2.84 and EFAS = 2.85 locate the enterprise in Cell V. The figure belongs to Results because the plotted coordinates are direct outputs of the strategic-factor calculations.

3.4 SWOT Strategy Formulation

SWOT matching generated seven alternatives consisting of three SO strategies, one ST strategy, two WO strategies, and one WT strategy, as summarized in Table 4. The alternatives covered five substantive themes: quality-based differentiation, productivity improvement, promotional resource allocation, competitive pricing, and market expansion through promotion or increased production. Three alternatives were promotion-related, but they were retained separately because A3 concerns allocation of capital and human resources, A5 concerns use of available media channels, and A7 is a defensive response to competitors and changing consumer behavior. This distinction preserves the logic of the original SWOT matching while making the overlap among the three strategies explicit rather than treating them as conceptually independent market phenomena. The productivity alternatives were similarly distinguished between improving output through technology and competent workers and expanding production by combining raw-material availability, technology, and market opportunity. The resulting strategy set therefore represents the original decision space while allowing the later interpretation to group related alternatives into broader capability families.

Table 4. SWOT-derived strategic alternatives retained from the original study

Code	Type	Strategic alternative
A1	SO	Maintain product quality and emphasize distinctive characteristics while maintaining price stability to protect loyalty and stimulate interest
A2	SO	Increase productivity using improved production technology and competent workers to meet market demand
A3	SO	Increase capital allocation and optimize human resources for promotional activities using diverse media
A4	ST	Apply competitively lower prices where financially feasible to respond to competition and changing preferences
A5	WO	Use diverse promotional media to strengthen promotion and marketing
A6	WO	Use raw-material availability, production technology, and market opportunities to increase production
A7	WT	Strengthen promotion to respond to competitors and changing consumer preferences and lifestyles

The three promotion-related alternatives are retained because they represent different original SWOT mechanisms: resource allocation, channel utilization, and defensive competitive communication.

3.5 QSPM Prioritization and Robustness

The original QSPM ranked A1, maintaining product quality and distinctive characteristics to protect customer loyalty, first with a TAS of 6.78, followed by A5, utilization of diverse promotional media, with a TAS of 6.42. A2 and A3 both obtained 5.94, so they should be interpreted as tied in attractiveness rather than as substantively different third- and fourth-ranked choices. Competitive pricing obtained 5.88, production expansion obtained 5.72, and the defensive promotion alternative obtained 5.63. The complete AS-by-factor computations are reported in Tables 6A and 6B so that every published TAS can be reproduced from the original two-decimal QSPM weights. The 0.36 difference between A1 and A5 indicates a numerical preference within the expert-based matrix, but it does not represent a statistical test or an effect-size estimate. For that reason, the two highest strategies are interpreted as a priority sequence—protect the product-based value proposition and then amplify it through broader market communication—rather than as mutually exclusive alternatives.

Table 5. QSPM ranking and interpretation

Rank	Code	Alternative (short label)	Original TAS	Exact-normalized check
1	A1	Quality and distinctive-characteristic protection	6.78	6.714
2	A5	Use diverse promotional media	6.42	6.363
=3	A2	Technology- and competence-based productivity	5.94	5.889
=3	A3	Capital and human-resource allocation for promotion	5.94	5.891
5	A4	Competitive pricing where financially feasible	5.88	5.838
6	A6	Production expansion using inputs, technology, and market opportunity	5.72	5.678
7	A7	Defensive promotional strengthening	5.63	5.592

Original TAS values reproduce the 2023 QSPM sheet. The exact-normalized column is a robustness recalculation and does not replace the reported values.

Table 6A. Complete QSPM factor-level computation for alternatives A1–A4

Factor	Wt	A1 AS	A1 TAS	A2 AS	A2 TAS	A3 AS	A3 TAS	A4 AS	A4 TAS
S1 High product quality	0.14	4	0.56	3	0.42	3	0.42	3	0.42
S2 Distinctive product characteristics	0.13	4	0.52	4	0.52	3	0.39	3	0.39
S3 No preservatives	0.11	3	0.33	3	0.33	3	0.33	3	0.33
S4 Affordable price	0.13	4	0.52	3	0.39	3	0.39	4	0.52
S5 Privately owned production location	0.11	3	0.33	3	0.33	3	0.33	3	0.33
S6 Self-financed capital	0.11	3	0.33	3	0.33	3	0.33	3	0.33
S7 Competent workers	0.13	4	0.52	3	0.39	4	0.52	3	0.39
W1 Limited production space	0.04	3	0.12	2	0.08	1	0.04	1	0.04
W2 Limited promotional activity	0.05	2	0.10	2	0.10	2	0.10	2	0.10
W3 Simple financial recording	0.07	2	0.14	2	0.14	2	0.14	1	0.07
O1 High consumer interest in tofu	0.15	4	0.60	3	0.45	3	0.45	3	0.45
O2 High customer loyalty	0.13	4	0.52	4	0.52	3	0.39	4	0.52
O3 Availability of raw materials	0.11	3	0.33	3	0.33	3	0.33	3	0.33
O4 Development of production technology	0.11	3	0.33	3	0.33	3	0.33	3	0.33
O5 Diverse promotional media	0.13	4	0.52	3	0.39	4	0.52	4	0.52
O6 Broad potential market	0.11	3	0.33	3	0.33	3	0.33	3	0.33
T1 Numerous competitors	0.04	4	0.16	3	0.12	2	0.08	3	0.12

Factor	Wt	A1 AS	A1 TAS	A2 AS	A2 TAS	A3 AS	A3 TAS	A4 AS	A4 TAS
T2 Changing consumer preferences	0.08	3	0.24	3	0.24	3	0.24	1	0.08
T3 Unstable raw-material prices	0.06	2	0.12	2	0.12	2	0.12	2	0.12
T4 Changing lifestyles	0.08	2	0.16	1	0.08	2	0.16	2	0.16
TOTAL			6.78		5.94		5.94		5.88

AS = Attractiveness Score; TAS = weight × AS. The complete factor-level matrix is reported here to make the published strategy totals directly auditable from the original scoring sheet.

Table 6B. Complete QSPM factor-level computation for alternatives A5–A7

Factor	Wt	A5 AS	A5 TAS	A6 AS	A6 TAS	A7 AS	A7 TAS
S1 High product quality	0.14	4	0.56	3	0.42	3	0.42
S2 Distinctive product characteristics	0.13	4	0.52	3	0.39	3	0.39
S3 No preservatives	0.11	3	0.33	3	0.33	3	0.33
S4 Affordable price	0.13	3	0.39	3	0.39	3	0.39
S5 Privately owned production location	0.11	4	0.44	4	0.44	3	0.33
S6 Self-financed capital	0.11	3	0.33	3	0.33	3	0.33
S7 Competent workers	0.13	3	0.39	3	0.39	3	0.39
W1 Limited production space	0.04	3	0.12	2	0.08	3	0.12
W2 Limited promotional activity	0.05	2	0.10	2	0.10	2	0.10
W3 Simple financial recording	0.07	2	0.14	3	0.21	2	0.14
O1 High consumer interest in tofu	0.15	4	0.60	3	0.45	3	0.45
O2 High customer loyalty	0.13	3	0.39	3	0.39	3	0.39
O3 Availability of raw materials	0.11	3	0.33	3	0.33	3	0.33

Factor	Wt	A5 AS	A5 TAS	A6 AS	A6 TAS	A7 AS	A7 TAS
O4 Development of production technology	0.11	3	0.33	3	0.33	3	0.33
O5 Diverse promotional media	0.13	4	0.52	3	0.39	3	0.39
O6 Broad potential market	0.11	3	0.33	3	0.33	4	0.44
T1 Numerous competitors	0.04	4	0.16	3	0.12	2	0.08
T2 Changing consumer preferences	0.08	2	0.16	2	0.16	1	0.08
T3 Unstable raw-material prices	0.06	2	0.12	1	0.06	2	0.12
T4 Changing lifestyles	0.08	2	0.16	1	0.08	1	0.08
TOTAL			6.42		5.72		5.63

The original two-decimal carried weights are retained for auditability; the exact-normalized robustness results are reported separately below.

Recalculating the QSPM with exact normalized weights derived from the raw condition totals preserved the substantive ordering of the two leading strategies, with A1 scoring 6.714 and A5 scoring 6.363. The recalculation produced only a negligible reversal between the originally tied A2 and A3, with exact scores of 5.889 and 5.891 respectively, confirming that they are practically indistinguishable at the precision supported by the data. The one-factor sensitivity analysis then perturbed each of 20 exact-normalized weights by -10% and $+10\%$ while renormalizing the relevant weight set, yielding 40 scenarios. A1 remained the highest-scoring strategy in all 40 scenarios, and its lead over A5 ranged from approximately 0.338 to 0.363. This robustness check supports the stability of the first-ranked strategy under moderate weight changes but does not remove the subjectivity associated with a single QSPM expert. The result therefore strengthens confidence in the ranking direction while preserving a cautious interpretation of the magnitude of the score differences.

Table 7. Weight-sensitivity summary

Diagnostic	Result
Perturbation design	20 factors $\times$ 2 directions (-10% , $+10\%$) = 40 scenarios
Renormalization	Within the affected internal or external weight set to sum to 1.000
Highest-ranked strategy	A1 in 40/40 scenarios
Second strategy	A5 in 40/40 scenarios
A1–A5 gap	Approximately 0.338–0.363 across scenarios
Interpretation	Ranking robustness only; not a statistical significance test

The sensitivity check uses the original AS matrix and exact-normalized weights; it introduces no new observations or expert judgments.

3.6 Case-Derived Strategic Implementation Pathway

The combined QSPM ranking and robustness analysis suggest a sequential managerial logic rather than simultaneous implementation of all seven alternatives. The first stage protects the enterprise's product-based assets through quality consistency, distinctive product characteristics, and customer trust. The second stage amplifies these assets through digital promotion, market communication, and more visible ordering channels. The third stage scales production efficiency, capacity, and distribution only after sell-through and repeated demand indicate that market absorption rather than market visibility has become the binding constraint. This sequence is an interpretation of the observed strategic ranking and not a tested causal pathway. Figure 3 summarizes the case-derived protect–amplify–scale logic that is examined critically in the Discussion.

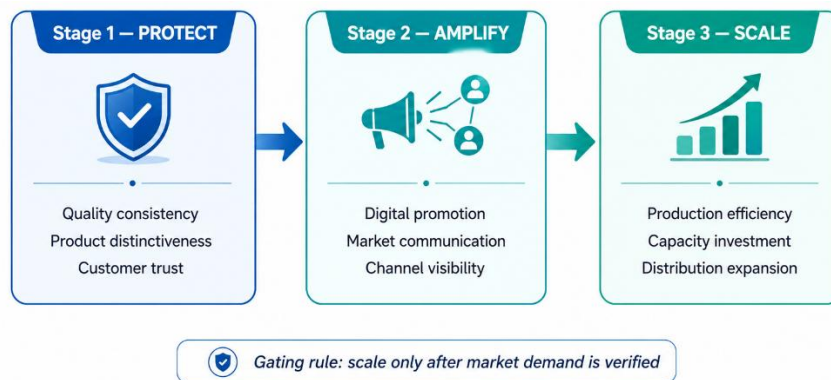


Figure 3. Case-derived staged strategic implementation pathway

The pathway is derived from the Results and is therefore located before the Discussion. It should be read as a strategic interpretation of the 2023 case, not as evidence of causal effects or post-implementation performance.

Discussion

The first and most important finding is that quality-based differentiation received the highest strategic priority, indicating that the enterprise's immediate competitive problem is not a lack of a value proposition but the need to protect and formalize the resources on which that value proposition already depends. From an RBV perspective, consistent quality, distinctive product characteristics, practical production knowledge, privately controlled facilities, and customer trust can function as valuable firm-specific resources when they are organized coherently rather than treated as routine production attributes (Ferreira et al., 2022). This interpretation is compatible with research showing that small firms survive turbulent conditions by combining owner knowledge, resource discipline, and context-specific capabilities rather than attempting to replicate the scale advantages of larger competitors (Weaven et al., 2021). It also extends food-SME resilience arguments by showing that a low-cost defensive response need not begin with price reduction; protecting product reliability can be a more strategically coherent way to preserve customer relationships when margins are exposed to raw-material volatility (Ali et al., 2021). The finding differs from SWOT–QSPM cases in which market penetration or production expansion emerges as the dominant recommendation, illustrating how the attractiveness of growth strategies depends on the initial resource configuration and market bottleneck rather than on a universal hierarchy of strategic options (Nurfaillah et al., 2024). The broader implication is that resource-constrained traditional food enterprises should make the quality system explicit—through simple standards for raw materials, size, texture, freshness, and process consistency—before exposing the business to demand that could magnify production variation.

The second-ranked strategy, broader use of promotional media, shows that protecting product quality is not an argument for remaining digitally passive but a condition for making market communication more credible and scalable. Dynamic-capabilities research explains this relationship by treating digital tools as mechanisms through which firms sense demand, seize market opportunities, and

reconfigure customer-facing routines rather than as performance-generating assets in isolation (Matarazzo et al., 2021; Khurana et al., 2022). Empirical studies of SMEs similarly find that digital marketing performance depends on managerial readiness, innovativeness, and strategic capability, while social-media use becomes more valuable when it is integrated with market-sensing and relationship capabilities (Su et al., 2023; Wu et al., 2024; Ye et al., 2022). For UD Daya Rasa, this explains why digital promotion can be the logical second step despite being one of the clearest weaknesses in the original assessment: the firm already has tangible product claims to communicate, including preservative-free production, distinctive size, taste, and established customer acceptance. The finding is also consistent with evidence that networks and low-cost digital technologies help SMEs overcome resource constraints by expanding access to information, customers, and complementary knowledge without requiring immediate heavy capital expenditure (Gliga & Evers, 2023; Soluk et al., 2023). Accordingly, the practical mechanism is not 'more promotion' in the abstract, but conversion of existing product-based resources into visible digital market signals, order information, customer feedback, and repeatable communication routines.

The Cell V IE position provides the structural explanation for why selective upgrading is more defensible than aggressive expansion in this case. An average internal score and medium external score imply that the enterprise has enough capability to maintain and improve its position but lacks evidence for a resource-intensive growth strategy that assumes demand will automatically absorb greater output. This logic aligns with studies showing that digital transformation in SMEs is typically stepwise and contingent on organizational readiness, capability alignment, and the firm's ability to reconfigure resources as learning accumulates (Hanelt et al., 2021; Kraus et al., 2022; Meier et al., 2025). It also parallels research in short food supply chains, where resilience arises from combinations of flexibility, visibility, collaboration, and digitally enabled coordination rather than from capacity alone (Michel-Villarreal et al., 2021). The case therefore supports a staged strategic implementation pathway—protect, amplify, then scale—in which quality and trust are stabilized first, digital communication is used to validate broader demand second, and production or facility investment follows only when market evidence indicates that capacity has become the binding constraint. This pathway should be understood as a theoretically informed interpretation derived from one case, not as a universally validated model of SME growth.

The lower ranking of aggressive pricing and production expansion further indicates that resource allocation should respond to verified market constraints rather than to generic assumptions that lower prices or higher volume automatically improve competitiveness. Price competition is particularly risky for a tofu processor because soybean-price instability can compress already limited margins, while lowering price may weaken the signaling value of quality differentiation when competing products are readily available. Supply-chain research emphasizes that resilience and commercial performance depend on how entrepreneurial action is coordinated with operational capabilities and resource exposure, especially when firms face input shocks and volatile market conditions (Sturm et al., 2023; Silva et al., 2021). Similarly, digital-transformation research shows that competitive advantage arises from coherent combinations of physical, knowledge, and digital resources rather than from substituting one resource class for another (Cuthbertson & Furseth, 2022; Chaudhuri et al., 2022). For the focal firm, increasing production before solving the absorption problem in the secondary channel could raise the volume of unsold or returned product, whereas demand-led investment would allow technology and worker competence to be deployed after the market signal becomes clearer. The result therefore extends the QSPM ranking into a causal managerial logic: market validation should precede capacity escalation because the present bottleneck appears to be customer reach and channel absorption rather than insufficient nominal production volume.

A fifth finding concerns the interpretation of the QSPM scores themselves, because the relatively small difference between A1 and A5 and the exact tie between A2 and A3 demonstrate why expert-based rankings should not be treated as statistical proof of substantive superiority. QSPM is useful because it forces decision makers to compare alternatives against a common factor set, but the attractiveness scores remain judgment-based and are sensitive to how factors, weights, and strategic alternatives are defined

(Mohammadi, 2023). The robustness analysis strengthens confidence that A1 remains first under moderate weight perturbation, yet it cannot compensate for the absence of multiple independent QSPM experts or formal inter-rater agreement. The overlap among A3, A5, and A7 also illustrates a common conceptual problem in SWOT applications: alternatives generated from different quadrants may represent distinct tactical mechanisms while still belonging to a single broader capability domain. Retaining the original seven alternatives preserves data integrity, but grouping them analytically into quality, market amplification, operational scaling, and cost-resilience families produces a clearer strategic architecture than reading seven ranks as seven unrelated actions. This critical interpretation moves the contribution beyond mechanical matrix scoring and clarifies the boundary between what the empirical judgment supports, what the sensitivity analysis corroborates, and what remains a theoretical inference.

Taken together, the findings position this case within global SME research by showing how a traditional food microenterprise can combine resource protection with incremental digitalization instead of framing modernization as the replacement of legacy practices. Studies of digital transformation increasingly argue that competitiveness is created through aligned technical, organizational, marketing, and knowledge capabilities, and the present case provides a micro-level strategic prioritization consistent with that view (Cadden et al., 2023; Browder et al., 2024; Meier et al., 2025). The theoretical contribution is therefore modest but specific: the study suggests that QSPM rankings can be interpreted as evidence for capability sequencing when the alternatives are mapped onto an RBV–dynamic-capabilities logic and when score differences are treated cautiously rather than as causal effects. The practical contribution is equally conditional, because the proposed sequence converts the ranking into an implementable order that begins with explicit quality standards, proceeds to low-cost digital market communication and order capture, and delays capital-intensive scaling until demand indicators justify it. This perspective fills the identified gap between static SWOT–QSPM prioritization and process-oriented SME capability research by connecting 'what should be prioritized' with 'why that priority should precede the next capability investment.' Future multi-case and longitudinal tests are required before the staged pathway can be generalized, but the present study demonstrates how a conventional strategic matrix can generate a more theoretically meaningful explanation when its raw calculations, limitations, and implementation logic are made transparent.

Implications

The findings offer practical implications for small-scale traditional food enterprises that must allocate limited resources across product quality, promotion, and production expansion. For UD Daya Rasa, the immediate managerial priority is to formalize product-quality standards, maintain the distinctive characteristics of white takwa tofu, and strengthen basic financial recording so that existing competitive resources are protected. Digital promotion should then be developed as a complementary capability through consistent product information, social-media communication, customer interaction, and simple digital ordering channels rather than as an isolated marketing activity. Production technology, workspace expansion, and additional capacity investment should be considered only after repeated orders, improved channel sell-through, and sustained demand indicate that production capacity has become the main constraint. More broadly, the study suggests that resource-constrained food SMEs can improve strategic coherence by sequencing capability development from protecting core value, to amplifying market visibility, and finally to scaling operations when market evidence justifies further investment.

Limitations And Future Research

This study has several limitations that should be considered when interpreting the findings. First, the research focuses on a single tofu enterprise, meaning that the results provide analytical insight into one resource-constrained traditional food business rather than statistical generalization across all food SMEs. Second, the IFAS and EFAS assessments were based on the business owner and one experienced employee, while the QSPM attractiveness scores were provided by one academic expert, leaving the prioritization process exposed to informant and expert-judgment bias. Third, the empirical data were

collected between January and June 2023, and no later field validation was conducted, so subsequent changes in competition, soybean prices, promotional practices, technology adoption, or consumer behavior cannot be inferred from the present dataset. Finally, the study evaluates the relative attractiveness and robustness of strategic alternatives rather than their realized post-implementation effects, and therefore no causal claim can be made that the proposed strategy sequence has already improved sales, customer loyalty, profitability, or market reach.

Suggestions And Future Research

Future research should extend the present analysis by examining multiple tofu and traditional food enterprises with different market orientations, digital maturity levels, production scales, and distribution structures. A broader panel of business practitioners, customers, retailers, suppliers, and independent experts should be involved in IFAS, EFAS, and QSPM assessments so that inter-rater agreement and variation in strategic judgment can be evaluated more systematically. Longitudinal studies are also needed to test whether quality formalization followed by digital promotion actually improves sell-through, repeat purchasing, customer retention, gross margins, and market reach before major production investment is undertaken. Methodologically, subsequent studies could compare conventional QSPM with AHP-QSPM, fuzzy-QSPM, scenario analysis, or probabilistic sensitivity analysis to determine whether the strategic ranking remains stable under alternative weighting and judgment assumptions. Such extensions would help establish whether the protect–amplify–scale pathway identified in this case represents a transferable strategic-capability sequence or remains specific to the conditions observed at UD Daya Rasa.

CONCLUSION

This study provides a transparent strategic assessment of UD Daya Rasa by integrating IFAS, EFAS, the IE matrix, SWOT matching, QSPM, and a weight-sensitivity check while preserving the original 2023 field evidence. The exact recalculation confirms an IFAS score of 2.84 and an EFAS score of 2.85 after rounding, positioning the enterprise in Cell V and supporting a hold-and-maintain or selective-upgrading orientation. Seven alternatives were retained from the original SWOT analysis, and QSPM ranked protection of product quality and distinctive characteristics first with the reported TAS of 6.78, followed by use of diverse promotional media with a TAS of 6.42. The first strategy remained highest across 40 one-factor $\pm 10\%$ weight-perturbation scenarios, although the score difference is interpreted as ranking stability rather than statistical significance. Substantively, the results indicate that the firm's strongest near-term logic is to formalize and protect product-based value before broadening market communication and committing additional resources to production expansion. The evidence therefore supports a cautious staged strategic implementation pathway rather than an immediate growth prescription.

The study contributes theoretically by connecting a conventional SWOT–QSPM ranking to a resource-based and dynamic-capabilities interpretation of strategic sequencing in a resource-constrained traditional food enterprise. Its central proposition is that digital market amplification is more defensible when it builds on a stable product-value foundation, while capacity scaling should follow evidence of sustained demand rather than precede it. Practically, UD Daya Rasa can begin with simple quality standards and financial records, establish consistent digital product communication and order channels, and then evaluate equipment or facility investment using sell-through, repeat-purchase, margin, and capacity-utilization indicators. These recommendations remain conditional because the study did not observe post-implementation outcomes and because the strategic judgments were generated by a small purposive informant set. Accordingly, the findings should be transferred to other SMEs by comparing mechanisms and boundary conditions rather than by assuming that the same numerical ranking will apply elsewhere. A multi-case longitudinal test with broader stakeholder participation would be the appropriate next step for determining whether the protect–amplify–scale sequence can develop from a case-derived pathway into a more general explanation of competitiveness upgrading in traditional food microenterprises.

AUTHOR CONTRIBUTION STATEMENT

Achmad Ridho Triagil: Conceptualization, research design, investigation, field data collection, data curation, formal analysis, interpretation of the IFAS, EFAS, IE, SWOT, and QSPM results, and preparation of the original research report. The revised manuscript reconstructs the archived matrix calculations, reports the analytical trail more transparently, and adds the deterministic weight-sensitivity analysis without introducing new field observations. The author is responsible for reviewing the final manuscript, confirming the correspondence details, approving the submitted version, and remaining accountable for the integrity and accuracy of the work.

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