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# POTENTIAL DEVELOPMENT FOR COMPETITIVENESS ENHANCEMENT OF COMMUNITY ENTERPRISES IN THAILAND

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#### **ABSTRACT**

The objective of this research was to propose the guidelines for the potential development for competitiveness enhancement of community enterprises in Thailand. This was the qualitative research method using the in-depth interview with the entrepreneurs of community enterprises and the Outside-in. The study is in the southern borderal provinces of Thailand. The research results revealed that (1) Factor Condition focused on the provision of important knowledge and skills to support technology and innovation, (2) Demand Condition focused on customer demand analysis to reach the target customers with the Customer Relationship Management, (3) Related & Support Industry supported the network for product development and potential to build Collaborative Ecosystem, (4) Firm Strategy, Structure and Rivalry promoted marketing through Digital Marketing and Social Media supplying certain target market to generate recurring revenue along with producing the quality products to meet international standards, make difference, create the story about products in the uniqueness, local wisdom, support for new business models to develop products according to Product life cycle and cultivate Agile Mindset, (5) The Role of Government supported to promote commercial channels to generate recurring revenue giving knowledge in the important matters to reduce the procedure for regulatory complexity and promote the "Made in Thailand" and (6) Chance focused on the current environmental change opportunities in environmental protection, product development for the Aging Society. Bringing the Outside-In to help developing will find the difference in the proactive concept to create the competitive advantage, create added value, and develop sustainability for the community enterprises.

**Keywords:** Community Enterprises, Potential Development, Competitiveness

### **INTRODUCTION**

The transition from the world in the 20<sup>th</sup> century to the 21<sup>st</sup> century was an important structural transition. Technology and communication are evolving at great speed resulting in the change in the context of today's competition like never before. According to the competitiveness ranked by the World Economic Forum (WEF) 2017, it revealed that the world is developing competitive advantage through innovation, creativity, science and technology to replace the comparative advantages of the factors of production and natural resources. The context of the present competition has complex dimension of economic, political and social interrelationships with almost infinite linkages as well as being driven on the drastic and rapid change. This makes the competition difficult to be predicted with high volatility. The analysis of the World Economic Forum (WEF) 2017 revealed that the stability gap between the rich and the poor is widening indicating that the economy is recessing. Many poor people are exploited for the benefit of large corporations and capitalists. The world leaders, both public and private, should take action to transform the economy in a tangible way in order to tackle the common

problem in reducing social inequality. According to the World Economic Forum (WEF) 2014 survey, the main obstacle in the business operation was that the workforce did not have high enough education and could not create as much innovation as it should be. The survey of Asian Development Bank (2015) revealed that the slowdown in economic growth was primarily caused by structural problems. The technological development was required together with the research and development in order to create innovation and promote competition. For Thailand, the development to enhance competitiveness aims at enhancing the potential of Thailand in various dimensions based on three concepts; 1. "Further from the past" by looking back at the economic roots, identity, culture, tradition, way of life and the strengths of various natural resources as well as the comparative advantage of the country in other areas applied in combination with technology and innovation. This is in line with the context of the economy and society in the modern world. 2. "Adjust the present" is to pave the way for the future through the development of the country's infrastructure in various dimensions and 3. "Create new value in the future" by enhancing the potential of entrepreneurs, developing new generations, adjusting the business model to meet the market demand, combining strategies that support the future based on the past and the present along with promotion and support from the government. These will enable Thailand to build an income base and expand trade and investment opportunities on the world stage along with raising income levels and living (Committee for the Preparation of the National Strategy, 2016). This shall be supplementary with the 12<sup>th</sup> National Economic and Social Development Plan (B.E.2560-2564) in creating fairness and reducing inequality in the society. The goal is to enhance the capacity of the community and the foundation economy to be strengthened for the community to be more selfreliant and receive greater share of economic benefits. This builds community capacity, community economic development, and strengthens the financial foundation according to the philosophy of sufficiency economy so that the community can be self-reliant (Office of the National Economic and Social Development Board, 2016). Apart from increasing productivity using technology, research, development, and innovation in all fields of production and services that are the original and the new income base, at the same time, building competitiveness requires the solid foundation to support the enhancement of competitiveness both in terms of stability and economy. From developing the areas, Thailand can use the strengths of each area and community to develop the economy entirely. This is to support the distribution of income to different regions, reduce inequality in all dimensions, and build sustainable economic and social strength at the local level. It includes the development of the foundation economy to build local community economic system to be self-reliant. From the background and the importance, it was found that community enterprises in Thailand need to develop their professionalism in order to enhance their competitiveness to be ready to apply the guidelines to the community enterprises for benefiting and developing entrepreneurs to become technological and innovative entrepreneurs. This is to promote and strengthen the economy in a creative way to raise the level of competitiveness to expand commercial opportunities to the world stage. This is the background of the study objectives to propose the guidelines for the potential development for enhance competitiveness of community enterprises in Thailand.

#### LITERATURE REVIEW

#### **Concepts and Theories of Competitiveness**

Regarding the Competitive Advantage of Nation, Michael E. Porter (Dynamic Diamond Model) (Porter, 1998) gave the idea that the competitiveness of a country depends on the ability of companies in the industry to create innovation and upgrade. The companies in the national industry have an advantage over their competitors around the world due to pressure and

challenge. The companies benefit from strong domestic competitors, domestic manufacturers that work proactively, and the needs of domestic advanced customers. In addition, the differences in values, culture, economic structure, and the history of each country all affect the success of the competition. No country has an advantage in every industry. This depends on the domestic environment. It is correspondent with the work of Ahmedova (2015) studying the Factors for Increasing the Competitiveness of Small and Medium-Sized Enterprise (SMEs) in Bulgaria. The study was conducted on the ability to overcome the difficulty caused by the world financial crisis by investigating 5 main components including Access to Finance, Innovation Activity, Intellectual Property, Internationalization, and Best Practices in the Information and Communication Technology (ICT), human capital management, and strategic management. The research indicates that integrating the five components altogether can increase competitiveness. Porter has also proposed the Diamond Model to analyze the competitiveness of the industry at a national level. There are six factors that determine the competitive advantage of a country. All of which are interrelated. (1) Factor condition includes labor, land, natural resources, capital and infrastructure. This also covers the technology used in determining the competitive advantages. The idea agrees with Kianto, Andreeva & Pavlov (2013) finding that using intellectual capital, innovation competence, and entrepreneurship altogether can drive towards competitiveness created with innovative ability to develop and improve products, working process, and seek marketing management methods. (2) Demand Condition is that the domestic demand both in the quantity and quality will require domestic manufacturers to create innovations in the production to meet more complex consumer needs. It is correspondent with the research of Baken & Dogan (2012) studying Competitiveness of the Industries Based on the Porter's Diamond Model: An Empirical Study. The demand condition factor is found to have the highest influence on the competitive advantage. Yusof & Jarad (2011) also found that the innovation in the organization occurs under the thinking of differentiation in rapidly changing market demands together with the addition of sophisticated technology as well as the intelligence of the customers to make choices. (3) Related & Support Industry is that the industry will have a competitive advantage and must have supporting and related industry that can promote the capability and potential of such industry in the production, production cost, and product quality. It corresponds to the idea of Mu (2015) finding that the ability to connect with alliances or partners allows organizations to apply their capabilities and resources through access to insights, resources and partner specific skills. These include the market and customer information of the affiliate in the network in order to create value to the customers further. (4) For Firm Strategy, Structure and Rivalry, the domestic competition is a key determinant of the country's competitive advantage. The intense competition in the domestic industry will put pressure on companies to innovate and leverage. The company will try to lower the costs, improve products and services, create new products and new production processes. This gives the industry competitive advantage in the international market. It is consistent with Wingwon's research (2012) finding that studies in SMEs, entrepreneurial conditions, strategic decisions, and innovation drive towards competitive advantages of small and medium enterprises. The operating conditions, strategic decisions, and innovation are positively related to the competitive advantages of small and medium enterprises. The operating conditions have an influence on strategic decisions and innovation. The innovation also affects the competitive advantages of medium-sized and small-sized enterprises the most. (5) The Role of Government or the government policy affects the competitive potential of the country. The role of the government should be the policy maker to promote, support and create an environment for companies in the industry to create their own competitiveness. This is correspondent with Lucica Matei & Ani Matei (2014) studying the relationships that affect the success of social enterprise in the United Kingdom. It is said that the importance of government support for social enterprise can stimulate and support social enterprise in the form of regulations, supporting policy. In addition, the work of Purnomo, Pujianto & Efendi (2015) and

Cung, Dul, Oanh & Hong Gam (2012) focused and supported the roles of the public sector in promoting the achievement of social enterprise. (6) Chance is a factor beyond the control of companies in the industry. It results in the change of position in the competition and creates channels for the company to create competitive advantage in response to changing conditions. Such impacts affect each country differently depending on the country's ability to adapt and take advantage of the incidents. This can create competitive advantage for the country in agreement with the findings of Ozgen (2011). It was found that the creation of a national competitive advantage is the management of inputs to stimulate cognitive view of business opportunities.

#### RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The Qualitative Research Methodology was employed with the In-depth interview and the Content Analysis. The population consisted of community enterprise groups in the southern borderal provinces of Thailand, groups of government officials, academicians, and consumers of community enterprise products. The sample groups were selected by Purposive Sampling totaling 12 people divided into 2 groups with the following criteria. Group 1 consisted of community enterprise entrepreneurs in the southern borderal provinces of Thailand as it was an area with economic potential in agriculture, investment, trade and travel. There was a wide variety of multiculturalism by product categories such as food, textiles and clothing, appliances, decorations, non-food herbal products, beverage, souvenirs, and crafts. These can reflect the development of potential of community enterprises in Thailand to enhance the competitiveness in 6 people, classified by product group. Group 2 consisted of government officials, academicians, and stakeholders in the fields of consumers, products, community enterprises that understand the business operations of community enterprises to reflect the approaches in the potential development of community enterprises in Thailand to raise the level of competitiveness of 6 people. This is the expression of opinion of the Outside-In. This research was considered on the ethics of research in humans, Burapha University, with the research project code of HU092/2020. The Ethical Review of Human Research was certified with the certificate No. 070/2020. The certification date was 23<sup>rd</sup> November, 2020.

#### **RESEARCH RESULTS**

The interview with community enterprise entrepreneurs in southern borderal provinces of Thailand was classified by product types and interviews with government officials, academicians, and stakeholders in the fields of consumers, products, community enterprises in Thailand from the Outside-in. The research results were as follows.

Factor Condition sorted by frequency was as follows. The first was to provide knowledge and skills in production and services, promote language skills to communicate with foreign customers, and apply them to international trade, support new technology and production innovation to create added value, create the uniqueness, culture and local wisdom to the group's products in order to create the added value. The second was to provide rge production machines suitable for the production in terms of production capacity and price of tools and machines with reasonable purchasing power. The third was in promoting the easy-to-understand education in order to be communicable for practice. The fourth was in promoting systematic financing. The fifth was to raise the leadership among the group members. The sixth was to focus on the member's work environment such as physical movement in the workplace taking into account Time and Motion Study. This was to increase work efficiency. The seventh was knowledge in basic accounting for the calculation of costs, break-even point and profit setting correctly.

Demand Condition sorted by frequency was as follows. The first was to promote healthy products which responded to consumer behaviors nowadays in health care. The second

was the analysis on the customer's demands to reach the target group of consumers. The third was to promote creativity, products and packaging that appealed to consumers. The fourth was to have the system of Customer Relationship Management. The fifth was to create brand awareness that brings the strengths of community products to communicate with consumers.

Related & Support Industry sorted by frequency was as follows. The first was to support local educational institutes to help with research and development including product design to create innovation altogether. The second group was that The civil state project in each province to help filling in the business network. The third was to promote participation in community enterprise networks in the development of production potential to create productivity to support large volume orders. In supporting more distribution channels from business operators related to hospitality and tourism, the public and private sectors must support the organizations of convention activities in Thailand to support local income generation. The fourth was the Collaborative Ecosystem that promotes social responsibility and cooperation in creating innovation and networking, for example, selling products of community enterprises through marketing platform.

Firm Strategy, Structure and Rivalry sorted by frequency was as follows. The first was to promote Digital Marketing and Social Media. The second group was to provide certain target market for selling products to generate Recurring revenue. The production of quality products at international standards was promoted such as the FDA, halal product certification, etc. to achieve acceptance in the international market as well as promoting the development of modern products, processing and packaging. The third was to promote proactive marketing knowledge in producing products mainly according to customer needs. The fourth was to enhance the competitiveness in differentiation in the product for added value such as in processing. The fifth was to create the story about products in the uniqueness, culture, local wisdom. The sixth was to support the emergence of new business models such as Subscription Model, application of Model Business Canvas to be used in assessing the organization to have competitive conditions by producing and developing products according to the product life cycle as well as cultivating Agile Mindset to work in a new and flexible way with efficiency, resources saving, and keep.

The Role of Government sorted by frequency was as follows. The first was to encourage government personnel to use products of local community enterprise groups to generate the Recurring Revenue as well as providing knowledge on trade and investment. The second group was to promote production to meet international standards by making clear systems and processes which are easy to practice and reduce the complicated steps. The third Support the access to funding of entrepreneurs, promote domestic consumption in times of economic crisis or epidemic conditions according to the "Made in Thailand" approach. The public sector must provide legal knowledge in doing business.

Chance sorted by frequency was as follows. The first was to promote local tourism with a focus on community tourism to generate income for the community as well as promoting environmental protection production and packaging. The second was to develop products for the elderly which in the future, Thailand will face an aging society according to the changing population structure. The third was the trend of health-loving people has created an opportunity to produce health products for sale. The fourth was the state of economic crisis and epidemic disease leading mainly to domestic consumption.

#### DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

The research result revealed that the development in Factor Condition included the provision of knowledge and skills in the production of products and services, the promotion on language skills to support foreign consumers, and the support of technology and innovation that can create identity, culture, and local wisdom to the products as well as creating the added value

influencing the competence of the organization. This is in accordance with the study of Meengoen, Sirariyakul, Limphothong, Tomcharoen & Jermsittiparsert (2020) finding that the competitive advantage acts as a mediator of an entity's performance and correlates with the intellectual capital of the organization. This agrees with Gallego-Burin, Stevenson, Llorens-Montes & Perez-Arostegui (2018); McDowell, Peake, Coder & Harris (2018) finding that the Resource Based View (RBV) includes the uniqueness, culture and wisdom that are difficult to imitate. It is the connection that creates the competitiveness of the organization, promote education that is easy to understand and communicate to put into action with systematic financing to cultivate leadership among members. This point will be aligned with the roles and skills of professional human resources (Rasmussen & Ulrich, 2015). It must support the organization to succeed by applying information and communication technology to increase operational efficiency. Changing roles as an activist and changing the passive practice to be proactive can lead to the changes by adopting new innovations and technologies. The focus is on members' work environments such as the physical movement of the workplace taking into account Time and Motion Study to increase work efficiency, knowledge of basic accounting for cost calculation, break-even point and profit-setting. These were analyzed accurately in line with the cost dimension of Yeoman & Beattie (2011) finding that the cost control demonstrated how cost changes affect profits. It represents the potential for increasing the profitability. It can be seen that most development issues focus on the development of knowledge and skills of human resources because human resources are the most valuable resource in an organization, knowledge, skills and work experience that will add value to the organization. This is correspondent with the work of Batarliene, Ciziuniene, Vaiciute, Sapalaite & Jarasuniene (2017) studying that the HR department has to adapt and adjust to be HR Professional and Business Partner.

The development in Demand Condition included the promotion on healthy products, analysis on customer needs to reach target customers, promotion on creativity, products and packaging that appeals to consumers with Customer Relationship Management to create brand awareness that brings the strengths of community products to communicate with consumers. This agrees with the concept of Yusof & Jarad (2011) finding that the innovation in the enterprise is thought through the differentiation of rapidly changing market demands, with the added complexity of technology adding to the intelligence of the customer when making choices. What matters is anticipation to foresee in anticipation of customer response, which is the primary goal of the organization so that the organization can have potential and competitiveness. Nicholls & Bumgardner (2018); Somjai, Vasuvanich, Laosillapacharoen & Jermsittiparsert (2020) studied the modern business which is the business competition in the marketing of production varied according to the complexity of the consumers who prefer quickness and meet the needs of the consumers. This is essential to flexibility in production in a competitive market situation.

The development in Related & Support Industry is as follows. The support in local educational institutes helped with research and development including product design to create innovation together. The civil state project in each province helped filling in the business network. The promotion on the participation in community enterprise networks in the development of production potential created productivity to support large volume orders. The support in more distribution channels from operators of businesses was related to services and tourism. This was correspondent with Avci Ozturk & Ozcelik (2014); Creech, Pass, Gabriel, Voora, Hybsier & Marquard (2014) stating that the importance of bringing business partners or suppliers to work in the production process can make the production results more efficient than ever such as cost sharing to develop quality together from the expertise of partners. The public and private sectors must support the organization in conferences and meetings in Thailand to generate local income. The Collaborative Ecosystem can promote the collaboration in innovation and networking such as selling products of community enterprises through a marketing platform.

This agrees with Wirtz, Den Ambtman, Bloemer, Horvath, Ramaseshan, Van De Klundent, Canli & Kandampully (2013) finding that Platform is an operating system for managing work processes with stakeholders with the same goals and interests. It is a system where all stakeholders can contribute to making information easier and more quickly. This is an innovation that will benefit the people of the community and will allow the community enterprise to grow in the age of digital transformation steadily and sustainably. If considering the aspects of the Supply Chain Management that affects the competitiveness, Ploenhad, Laoprawatchai, Thongrawd & Jemsittiparsert (2019) finding that the efficiency of supply chain implementation can increase the performance of the organization and bring the competitive advantage.

The development in Firm Strategy, Structure and Rivalry included the Digital Marketing and Social Media to provide certain target market for selling products to generate recurring revenue. This is in accordance with the concept of Sjoerd & Tanya (2017) finding that the social media generates information, feelings, emotions, reactions, relationships with the outcome of personal and professional life to become more and more Big data into the business. It is an opportunity to bring technology to support business decision making, promote the production of quality products that meet international standards in order to achieve acceptance in the international market and promote product development. State-of-the-art processing and packaging provide proactive marketing knowledge in the production of customized products. It can create the distinction in products to add value such as transformation, story creation in the area of identity, culture, and local wisdom. The support for the emergence of new business models such as Subscription Model, Model Business Canvas can be useful in analysis. There is an assessment of competitive conditions by producing and developing products according to the product life cycle. This included cultivating Agile Mindset in a new flexible working style for efficiency, save of resources, and continuous development. This is correspondent with Haseeb, Hussain, Kot, Androniceanu & Jermsittiparsert (2019) finding that the social and technological challenge is important to sustainability in performance. It is an important factor that stimulates the competitiveness of SMEs.

The development in the Role of Government was as follows. It was to support government personnel to use products of local community enterprise groups. It was to promote trade channels to generate Recurring Revenue as ewll as providing knowledge on trade and investment. The production was promoted to meet international standards by making clear systems and processes which were easy to practice, reduce steps and complexity. This supports entrepreneurs access to capital, promote domestic consumption during economic crises or disease outbreak according to the "Made in Thailand" approach. It can also educate the law on business conduct. This is in line with Lucica & Ani (2014) studying the relationships that affect the success of UK social enterprise. It was found that the importance of government support for social enterprise stimulates and supportes social enterprise in the form of regulations, support policy, or exceptions to activities from the public sector that may create barriers to conducting social enterprise activities. There are also the works of Purnomo, Pujianto & Efendi (2015) and Cung, Dul, Oanh & Hong (2012) focused on the government's role in supporting the success of social enterprises. Therefore, the government sector has to provide assistance and support for community enterprises in providing knowledge, understanding and simplifying the steps and complexity of the system to be able to operate, resulting in sustainable development.

The development in Chance was as follows. The domestic tourism promotion could generate income and promote environmental protection production and packaging product development for the elderly. In the future, Thailand will have to face an aging society according to the changing civil structure. In a state of economic crisis and epidemic, it mainly promotes domestic consumption. This is consistent with the research of Ozgen (2011) finding that the awareness of business opportunities can create a competitive advantage affecting the synthesis of business opportunities. If the community enterprise knows to analyze opportunities and can

respond to the market under the circumstances that arise, it will give an advantage in the distribution of the product and create the competitiveness of the group.

From the above research, it can be found that bringing an Outside-In to help developing will yield the differences in the concept of taking a proactive perspective on adaptation, with an emphasis on customer base development in the product side. The competitive processes occurring in the digital age by adopting technology and innovation to be adapted to meet the economic and social conditions was in line with Mu (2015) finding that the marketing ability from outside to inside (Outside-In) enhances the Good relationship with customers. It can affect the development of new products to increase marketing potential and develop professional personnel under changing society and environment which is essential to gain a competitive advantage to create added value and develop sustainability for community enterprises

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