

ANTECEDENTS AND ELEMENTS REINFORCING COMPETITIVENESS OF COMMUNITY ENTERPRISES IN UPPER NORTH OF THAILAND

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Abstract

The community enterprise concept is the grassroot economic development strategy to develop people's quality of life. Its business operation is run by each community itself and related to the production of products and provision of services. The establishment is initiated by the integration of the group of persons who are involved and have a common way of life on the purpose of generating income and for self-reliance of the family community. However, the development of community enterprise remains faces many problems and lack of capability and competitiveness. Consequently, this research aims to 1(examine the level of the following antecedents; creative leadership, participation, strategic management, organizational culture and competitiveness of the community enterprises in upper North of Thailand, 2(explore the influence of such antecedents; creative leadership, participation, strategic management and organizational culture towards the competitiveness of the community enterprises in upper North of Thailand, and 3(develop the model of reinforcing the competitiveness of the community enterprises in upper North of Thailand. The mixed research method between quantitative and qualitative terms was conducted. In view of the quantitative term, the sample group consisted of 440 entrepreneurs from the community enterprises, at outstanding level, in upper North of Thailand whereas the sampling size was defined based on the multi-stage sampling method with 20-time criteria of the observed variables. Data collection was conducted through questionnaires that were later analyzed by the structural equation modelling. For the qualitative term, an in-depth interview was made with the target group of 20 informants that were entrepreneurs of the community enterprises, at outstanding level, in upper North of Thailand. The findings revealed that 1(creative leadership, participation, strategic management, organizational culture and competitiveness of the community enterprises in upper North of Thailand were all at high level, 2(creative leadership, participation, strategic management, and organizational culture influenced the competitiveness of the community enterprises in upper North of Thailand with statistical significance level of .05, and 3(the model for reinforcing the competitiveness of the community enterprises in upper North of Thailand as developed by the researcher was called "C P S O Model" (C = Creative Leadership, P =Participation, S =Strategic Management, O =Organization Culture, respectively). Addition to this, in view of qualitative findings, it was found that to enhance the success of community enterprises in upper North of Thailand, the entrepreneurs were required to provide qualified products and services at international standard, reduce unnecessary costs and errors at work to increase competitiveness. The entrepreneurs of community enterprises can further apply the research findings of this study as a guideline for differentiating their products and services to be more remarkable and valuable that will lead to creative and innovative strategy on provision of products and services having more value proposition than competitors affecting reinforcement of the community enterprises' competitiveness and income generation to community members for their stable and sustainable self-reliance.

INTRODUCTION

Strategies for competitiveness of the global economy have set a framework for working to increase the country's competitiveness. It suggests that the economic, social and environmental development direction need to be adjusted to serve as a base to support the development of the country by defining the concept of driving the economy based on the use of knowledge, education, creativity and intellectual property. These connect with the cultural basis and the accumulation of wisdom of society and modern technology/innovation. At the same time, the concept of "Thailand 4.0" has been put forward about the development of the Thai economy from the agricultural era into the light industry era and the heavy industry era. Thailand, however, has been trapped in the middle-income trap for at least 20 years (Wimonsiri, 2017) because the country has many problems such as political problems, political instability, structural changes, conflicts and political turmoil (Wongsiltuvises & Jaroonpipatkul, 2017).

Due to political problems and economic crises in the past, Thailand had to restructure its industry to overcome competitive obstacles including the liberalization of the ASEAN Economic Community. The approach that can increase competitiveness is developing industrial groups in which Thailand has an advantage over other countries. The community enterprise group is a business group that the government attaches importance to promoting and developing in order to increase competitiveness because it is a large foundation business group of the country (Kerdpitak, 2022).

Nevertheless, it is a business community that lacks the strength to fight with both domestic and foreign large businesses. As a result, entrepreneurs have to adapt to the intense competition (Kerdpitak, 2021). Therefore, to increase the potential of the community, they need to use the community's strengths in culture, way of life and wisdom to connect to the manufacturing and service sectors in order to create their own identity and expand market opportunities even more. It is one of the ways to increase the capacity of the community (Kotler & Keller, 2012).

LITERATURE REVIEW

Creative Leadership

Leaders will now have the ability to manage effectively, if leaders have a broad vision and the ability to adapt to change, including innovative strategies or proactive measures are formulated to strengthen the organization's ability to cope with ever-changing changes. Moreover, communication to create understanding of personnel at all levels of the organization to have knowledge to keep up with changes and various impacts that will occur in the future to can cope with such changes in a timely manner.

The next factor that may affect cooperation is leadership, a process that people have influence on the group to achieve common goals (Northouse, 2016). Today organizations should develop leadership to occur with employees at all levels and should not be limited to leaders holding official positions only (Chongvisal, 2018). The concept of authentic leadership is a new leadership style that focuses on ethical issues. The research confirms that the characteristics of authentic leadership are also related to cooperation (Chakkol, Finne, & Johnson, 2017). In

addition, another factor that may affect cooperation is the spirit in the workplace spirituality which is an awareness of the organizational culture that values the humanity of employees.

However, what they have in common is that leadership takes place everywhere there are people. No society is without leaders, while some societies do not have a single leader. Similarly, leadership can be found by many people. In the 21st century, shared leadership is of great interest to many organizations because one person does not have the expertise and experience enough to enable the organization to achieve its goals. Therefore, every member must have leadership to be able to take turns being a leader (Chongvisal, 2018).

Leadership is not born of talent but caused by self-development to always learn and prepare to apply to the self-duties and roles. Perfect leadership must consist of readiness of knowledge, courageous decision making, professional presentation and team management because leadership development is like starting a good seed that are ready to grow with quality and essential techniques to develop processes.

Participation

From the literature review related to participation, it was found that there were four important components: 1(Decision making, 2(Implementation, 3(Benefit, and 4(Evaluation, as defined as follows (Chaibil, 2020; Laphasphasit, 2021):

- 1) Participation in decision making refers to the setting of needs and priorities, activity determination, promotion of community activities, planning, and decision making in community enterprise development. It is a continuous process that must be carried out indefinitely from decision making at the beginning, decision making during planning and decision-making during the implementation of the plan until the completion of the operation.
- 2) Participation in implementation refers to the support of resources, participation in the administration and coordination of requests for cooperation, participation in the implementation of planned activities and participation in resource investments that people who are domiciled in the area have the capacity to help themselves for the promotion and development of community enterprises.
- 3) Participation in benefit refers to receiving benefits from community enterprises' operational activities, both directly and indirectly, whether they are material benefits, social benefits, personal benefits and local benefits that help member citizens earn more.
- 4) Participation in evaluation refers to evaluating the extent of the work that one has carried out in relation to the promotion of community enterprise activities and various obstacles that have been received from the operation, including conducting problem analysis and finding solutions together.

Strategic Management

Strategic management has important components, consisting of 5 observation variables: 1) Organizational direction, 2) strategic analysis, 3) strategic planning, 4) strategic

implementation, and 5) control and evaluation. Organizational direction is the use of data obtained from an analysis of the environment to determine the direction that will lead to the achievement of the organization's goals, including setting the direction, vision, short-term and long-term goals of the organization (Kerdpitak et al., 2022).

The clearly organizational direction causes great benefits to the organization because there will be vibrant goals and operational guidelines in the organization to achieve the goals and be able to measure. This makes the strategy formulation clear and can be truly put into practice (Romphoree, 2018). Strategic analysis refers to the analysis of the internal and external environments of the organization. It is the process of collecting and analyzing data to find weaknesses, strengths, opportunities and obstacles of the organization using SWOT Analysis tool (Cho & Pucik, 2005).

The analysis of the external environment of the organization in terms of social, cultural, technological, economic, political and legal contexts will let the entrepreneurs know the impact that is both an opportunity and an obstacle. Whereas, the analysis of the internal environment is an analysis of the organizational structure, financial status, technology, corporate values or corporate culture, organizational resources, including competence to find weaknesses and strengths in each aspect of the organization.

For analyzing the internal environment, many scholars have pointed out that strategic management based on Mckinsey's 7s Framework affects the success of business operations (Koyalkar & Gankar, 2018; Leklersin, 2017; Firman et al., 2020). The analysis of the strengths and weaknesses of the organization is divided into 2 main areas: hard elements comprise strategy, structure, and systems, while soft elements which focus on human resources consist of shared values, skills, top management style and staffs, totaling 7 key elements in analyzing the internal environment of the organization.

Organizational Culture

Organizational culture refers to the perception of organizational culture according to actual condition. It consists of four types of culture: 1) kinship, 2) adaptive, 3) bureaucratic, and 4) Success-focused, as defined as follows (Payakhan & Chadcham, 2021).

- 1) Kinship organizational culture refers to the perception of organizational characteristics that place importance on the participation of personnel within the organization and their needs. The working atmosphere is like being in the same family. The personnel have mutual trust. Leaders focus on operational cooperation, fairness, and generosity for both personnel and customers and adherence to commitment.
- 2) Adaptive organizational culture refers to the perception of organizational characteristics that pay attention to the external environment, such as the global economic environment, technology or the changing situation of the world, etc. Personnel are independent in making their own decisions and ready to take action immediately when necessary in order to respond to customers. Leaders play an important role in creating change in the organization by encouraging personnel to dare to think, decide and do new things.

- 3) Bureaucratic organizational culture refers to the perception of organizational characteristics that give importance to the environment within the organization. The institute focuses on consistency in execution to ensure stability, rational orderliness of work, upholding and complying with the rules, sticking to the principle of saving. The personnel involved in the operation are less.
- 4) Success-focused organizational culture refers to the perception of clear organizational characteristics in the goals and achievements of the organizational goals. The organization emphasizes servicing a specific group of customers in an external environment but there is no need to be flexible or change quickly. One personnel may be responsible for specific performance results.

Competitiveness

According to the various meanings of competitiveness, the researchers will mention competitiveness as a comparative factor that measures one's abilities or performance against competitors. Developing competitiveness to outperform competitors is therefore the goal of every country/every business organization. Competitiveness is the ability to grow your business compared to competitors. It is a guideline that will lead to creating competitive advantages. According to the concept of Matchuang (2014), the measurement of variables used in this research consists of 4 observed variables: 1. quality, 2) innovation, 3) efficiency, and 4) customer responsiveness, as detailed as follows (Anderson & Zeithaml, 1984).

- 1) Quality refers to the criteria or levels of standardization of goods and services to be durable and suitable for the job used and in accordance with the needs of the customers, which will lead to higher satisfaction and profits.
- 2) Innovation refers to ideas to create products and services, practice or invent new things that have not been used before or development adapted from an existing one to be modern and more effective. Innovation must consist of newness and be valuable to business and customers. Levels of innovation in that industry may be gradual from what exists originally and then they may be developed relentlessly. Otherwise, they may be a great leap forward according to the readiness of the organization (Khoury & Analoui, 2004).
- 3) Efficiency refers to operations that use available resources such as people, money, raw materials, equipment, machinery, and capital, to maximize benefits and to be able to complete the work according to the objectives of the organization effectively. Organizational optimization is a planning process aimed at improving organizational capabilities (Kerdpitak, 2022).
- 4) Customer responsiveness refers to providing good products and services to customers and offering what customers want. Providing accurate information quickly creates new choices for customers. Studying the needs of each individual more can achieve the highest customer satisfaction. Responding to customer needs, e.g. fast service and readiness to serve when customers need, can create customer satisfaction and make customers have the highest satisfaction.

METHODOLOGY

This study is a mixed methods research, comprising qualitative research and qualitative research, with the objectives of studying the level of factors and components that enhance the competitiveness of community enterprises in the upper northern region of Thailand, studying the influence of factors and components that enhance competitiveness of community enterprises in the upper northern region of Thailand, and creating a model of preconditions and elements for enhancing the competitiveness of community enterprises in the upper northern region of Thailand.

The population used in the research was 13,530 community enterprise entrepreneurs registered in the upper northern region in 8 provinces: Lampang, Chiang Mai, Lamphun, Phayao, Phrae, Nan, and Chiang Rai. And Mae Hong Son Province, with 197,600 members. The sample size was determined using the criterion of 20 times greater than the number of observed variables (Schumacher & Lomax, 1996., Hair et. al., 1998) or in a ratio of 1 to 20. In this study, 22 observed variables were obtained, so the sample was (22 x 20) 440 samples.

In quantitative research, the researchers collected data using questionnaires on creative leadership, participation, strategic management, organizational culture and competitiveness of community enterprises in order to use the data obtained for analysis of the Structural Equation Modeling (SEM) model by using the software package.

In qualitative research, the researchers collected data by using an in-depth interview by specifying the target population and the sample that the researchers have visited the area for an in-depth interview by purposive sampling. Then the results of field visits were analyzed to develop a model of causal factors influencing creative leadership, participation, strategic management, organizational culture and competitiveness to confirm that variables and factors were fit.

RESULTS

This study used the analysis of survey data to test the relationship between variables (Adamski et al., 2005). Data analysis was an important part of proving research hypotheses because it was very important to eliminate data errors before analyzing the data. The preliminary data analysis was shown in Table 1, given the standard deviation, data normality and p-value.

Table 1: Statistical test of empirical variables (n=440)

Variables	\bar{X}	S.D.	%CV	Sk	Ku	χ^2	P-value
VISIO	4.15	.71	17.11	-2.896	-1.480	1.580	.005
IMAG	4.07	.76	18.67	-2.599	-1.420	8.768	.012
FLEX	4.13	.80	19.37	-3.005	-1.483	11.227	.004
SOLV	4.08	.74	18.14	-2.457	-1.907	9.669	.008
TRUS	4.16	.72	17.31	-3.088	-3.669	22.999	.000
DECIS	4.18	.71	16.99	-3.021	-2.486	15.309	.000
OPER	4.02	.75	18.66	-2.208	-1.198	6.308	.043
TAKI	4.27	.73	17.10	-3.148	-2.057	14.137	.001
EVAL	4.20	.75	17.86	-3.548	-2.178	17.334	.000
DIRE	4.25	.68	16.00	-3.282	-2.609	17.581	.000
ANAL	4.23	.72	17.02	-3.285	-1.775	13.943	.001
SETI	4.06	.80	19.70	-2.883	-3.543	2.863	.000
ORSTG	4.10	.77	18.78	-2.722	-2.496	13.641	.001
CONT	4.19	.71	16.95	-3.132	-3.407	21.414	.000
KINS	4.21	.68	16.15	-2.875	-1.964	12.121	.002
ADAP	4.26	.74	17.37	-3.761	-1.866	17.628	.000
BURE	4.22	.79	18.72	-3.913	-2.089	19.673	.000
FOCUS	4.17	.75	17.99	-3.393	-3.300	22.402	.000
QUAL	4.14	.72	17.39	-2.695	-2.030	11.381	.003
INOV	4.12	.76	18.45	-2.928	-1.927	12.287	.002
EFFI	4.28	.75	17.52	-3.077	-1.888	13.033	.001
RESP	3.98	.77	19.35	-2.053	-2.364	9.804	.007

Note: Chi-square χ^2 (with statistical significance)P-value <.05) indicates a non-normal distribution.

The results of checking the normal curve distribution (Normal Score) of the empirical variables studied in the structural equation model using chi-square (χ^2) depicted statistical significance ($p > .05$) for all variables. So, all empirical variables had non-normal distribution. In addition, a large sample ($n \geq 400$) could statistically consent that the data measured with the rating scale questionnaire had a normal curve distribution, according to The Central Limit Theorem as suggested by Kelloway (1998).

Such results may result in assessing whether the model was empirically fit. The chi-square (χ^2) was problematic, so the researchers solved the problem by estimating fit using the ratio of chi-square (χ^2) to degrees of freedom (df). If the value was less than 5.00, the model was fit to empirical data, although the chi-square (χ^2) test was statistically significant (p -value < .05) (Wanichbanha, 2013; Hair, et al., 2006).

Table 2: Factor Loadings. (n = 440)

Variables	Factor Loading λ(	Error θ(	t	R ²
Creative Leadership)CRLED(
Vision)VISIO(	.65	.57	14.2	.43
Image)IMAG(	.76	.42	16.18	.58
Flexibility)FLEX(	.69	.53	15.09	.47
Problem Solving)SOLV(	.74	.46	15.42	.54
Trustworthiness)TRUS(	.63	.30	13.55	.70
$\rho_c = .84 \quad \rho_v = .51$				
Benefit Participation)BENEF(
Decision)DECIS(	.76	.42	13.2	.58
Operation)OPER(	.63	.41	11.46	.59
Taking Benefits)TAKI(	.58	.27	9.68	.73
Evaluation)EVAL(	.59	.45	10.97	.55
$\rho_c = .81 \quad \rho_v = .52$				
Strategic Management)STGMA(
Organizational Direction)DIRE(	.65	.38	11.68	.62
Strategic Analysis)ANAL(	.66	.37	11.77	.63
Setting Strategy)SETI(	.57	.37	11.05	.63
Operational Strategy)ORSTG(	.49	.36	8.27	.64
Control and Evaluation)CONT(	.71	.39	13.14	.61
$\rho_c = .84 \quad \rho_v = .51$				
Organizational Culture)CULT(
Kinship)KINS(	.73	.37	14.94	.63
Adaptive)ADAP(	.75	.34	15.47	.66
Bureaucratic)BURE(	.55	.39	11.01	.61
Success-focused)FOCUS(	.61	.33	12.29	.67
$\rho_c = .83 \quad \rho_v = .55$				
Competitiveness)COMPE(
Quality)QUAL(	.69	0.53	14.99	.47
Innovation)INOV(	.79	0.38	17.8	.62
Efficiency)EFFI(	.76	0.43	16.94	.57
Responsiveness)RESP(	.70	0.51	15.32	.49
$\rho_c = .82 \quad \rho_v = .54$				

Table 3. Measurement Model (n=440)

Dependent Variables	R ²	Effects	Independent Variables			
			Benefit Participation)BENEF(	Strategic Management)STGMA(	Organizational Culture)CULT(	Creative Leadership)CRLED(
Benefit Participation)BENEF(	.68	DE	-	-	-	.83*)13.99(
		IE	-	-	-	-
		TE	-	-	-	.83*)13.99(
Strategic Management)STGMA(	.75	DE	.38*)3.79(	-	-	.53*)5.23(
		IE	-	-	-	.31*)3.84(
		TE	.38*)3.79(	-	-	.84*)13.21(
Organizational Culture)CULT(	.89	DE	.47*)7.85(	.88*)7.21(	-	.54*)7.45(
		IE	.33*)3.40(	-	-	.38*)6.54(
		TE	.80*)7.75(	.88*)7.21(	-	.92*)12.47(
Competitiveness)COMPE(	.69	DE	-	.37*)6.05(	.45*)3.19(-
		IE	.67*)7.84(	.33*)2.82(	-	.65*)10.99(
		TE	.67*)7.84(	.70*)5.22(	.45*)3.19(	.65*)10.99(

$\chi^2 = 377.78$ df = 196 p-value = .00000, $\chi^2 / df = 1.92$, RMSEA = .046, RMR = .022, SRMR = .040, CFI = .99, GFI = .93, AGFI = .91, CN = 276.40

* Statistically Significant Level of .05

Note: The t-test statistical values were shown in parentheses. If the values were not between -1.96 and 1.96, they have statistically significant level of .05.

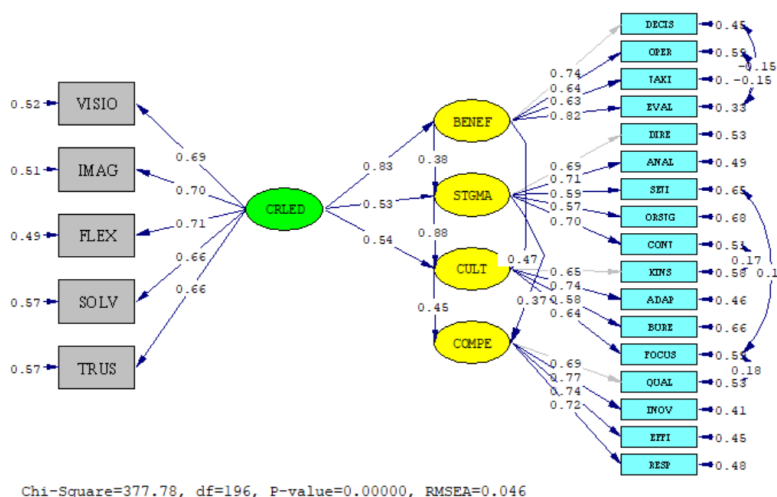


Figure 1: Adjusted Model (n=440)

The results of the analysis of the adjusted structural equation model found that it was fit to the empirical data ($\chi^2 = 377.78$ df = 196 p-value = .00000, $\chi^2 / df = 1.92$, RMSEA = .046, RMR = .022, SRMR = .040, CFI = .99, GFI = .93, AGFI = .91, CN = 276.40). The researchers, therefore, relied on the estimation of parameters in the model and reported the equation that

occurs in the model both in the part that reports the results of the equation and the measurement model part. It portrayed the factor loadings of the observed variables with their latent variables. In addition, the structural model reported the relationship among latent variables according to the research hypotheses. Interpretation of equations in measurement models and structural model considered three important statistic tests: 1) R^2 was the rate of the ability to use latent variable to describe the variance of the observed variable, which factors of the latent variable, 2) the standardized factor loadings or standardized solution (λ) was an approximation of the parameter estimation of the factor/correlation between the observed variables and the latent variables, 3) standard error was the variation of the measurement error of the observed variable, and 4) the t-test was used to analyze the statistically significant reliability of the measurement by which the t-test greater than 1.96 indicated statistically significant level of .05, while the t-test between -1.96 – 1.96 was not statistically significant. The results of the measurement equation and the structural equation that described the structural equation model were reported sequentially.

CONCLUSION

Quantitative and qualitative analysis results have found that the competitiveness of community enterprises in the upper northern region of Thailand has variables: creative leadership, participation strategic management and organizational culture. Therefore, the researchers have an idea to create a model for enhancing the competitiveness of community enterprises in the upper northern region of Thailand. It has been developed from the structural equation of variables affecting the creation of a model for enhancing the competitiveness of community enterprises in the upper northern region of Thailand. It has found that the participation, strategic management and creative leadership have a direct influence on organizational culture, affecting the competitiveness of community enterprises in the upper northern region of Thailand. With this concept, the researchers have created a model for enhancing the competitiveness of community enterprises in the upper northern region of Thailand.

Recommendations for Implementation

The results have shown that creative leadership influences participation, strategic management and organizational culture, participation influences strategic management, organizational culture and strategic management influences organizational culture and competitiveness, and organizational culture influences competitiveness. Therefore, the study recommends applying the research results as follows:

- 1) Government agencies should provide management knowledge in order to increase competitiveness of leaders and members of community enterprise groups as a guideline for group management.
- 2) Government agencies should promote links with other agencies in the study visits of community enterprises in the upper northern region of Thailand to increase marketing capabilities and revenues for the group.

- 3) Groups and the government sector should pay attention to the creation of community enterprise networks to create more cooperation in various fields so that community enterprises in the upper northern region of Thailand are strong and have the ability to compete with the mainstream market.
- 4) For operations of community enterprises in the upper northern region of Thailand, members should be developed to have knowledge and abilities in various fields such as coordination, management, finding markets. Moreover, there should be creating a new generation of leaders to inherit the intention of continuing the activities of the group.

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