AN ESTABLISHMENT OF COMPETITIVE ADVANTAGE FOR ENTREPRENURES TOWARDS THAILAND 4.0 MODEL: CASE STUDY OF PRINTING AND PUBLISHING BUSINESS IN UBON RATCHATHANI PROVINCE

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Abstract - Small and medium enterprises (SMEs) in Thailand have been driving dramatically economic growth within domestic. The main purpose of this study was to investigate empirically the implementation in how to conduct a competitive advantage which will be focused on printing and publishing business in Ubon Ratchathani Province, Thailand by using a case study approach. The five purposive selected cases of printing and publishing business in Ubon Ratchathani Province, Thailand were employed. Triangulation of interpretation, theory and method was used to verify validity and reliability of particular qualitative approach. The present study had investigated the forces which enable to drive a competitive advantage of printing and publishing business. For internal forces which influence to the competitive advantage in this case were mentioned into resource-based views namely finance, human resource, technology, knowledge and innovation. For external forces, the firms in this case study had to focus seriously in economics, society, environment, politic and law in order to establish its competitive advantage. Interestingly, in side of marketing-based view, printing and publishing business in this case emphasized on customer satisfaction and customer relationship which enable to drive the competitive advantage. Furthermore, network for outsourcing was an important factor in order to link both of internal and external forces competitive. Importantly, during the time a firm faces uncertain and turbulent change, printing and publishing business had been trying in allocating firm's resources and competences over time, and especially a firm's product or service as called dynamic capability.

Keywords - Competitive Advantage, Entrepreneurs, Thailand, Printing and Publishing Business, Ubon Ratchathani.

I. INTRODUCTION

In terminology, Wagner (2001) defined the competition as a process by which competitors seek to obtain an advantage over their competitors with continuing, ceaseless implementation and not static affairs. Carrie (1999) concluded that the competition was between companies where they made most of their products or assembles by themselves during 1960s and 1970s. Later, in 1980s and 1990s, many firms tended to make outsourcing in their materials or assemblies and became increasing enterprise. Interestingly, in 2000s, the competition moves to be truly competitive global by the competitiveness is done widely of any regions in the word through every kind of business (Barchuk & Harkins, 2010).

In the present, transferring to be Thailand 4.0 Model or "Innovative Drive Economy" has been focused significantly for moving forwards to generate higher income (Ministry of Industry, 2016). An entrepreneur operates his business to serve the needs of the interaction among individuals, families and communities (Peredo & Chrisman, 2006). Interestingly, small and medium enterprises (SMEs) plays important role in driving economic growth in Thailand (Chittithaworn et al., 2011). The 37.4 percent of proportional contribution in SMEs forces total Thailand's Gross Domestic Product (GDP) in 2013. The total national employment by 81.5 percent comes from SMEs. Additionally, new SMEs entrants increase by 5.41 percent in year 2013 (The Office of Small and Medium Enterprises Promotion (OSMEP), 2013). However, in 2015, SMEs found a huge obstacle in a continuing economic slowdown in Thailand.

Department of Industrial Promotion (2016) represents economic slowdown in Thailand affected SMEs' entrepreneurs lose their income. There are more than 2.7 million entrepreneurs or 97.2 percent of total enterprises seem problematic. Importantly, the SME Trade & Service Sentiment Index (TSSI) remained on the low side for most of the year (OSMEP, 2013). The main barriers found in SMEs are financial performance, human resource management, marketing, and technology and innovation (Department of Industrial Promotion, 2016).

Competition will be conducted between groups of interrelated firms that add and generate value through their cooperation (Carrie, 1999). Colgate (1998) viewed that for firms to survive, it is very necessary for them to keep ahead among their competitors by making differentiated implementation. Additionally, Barney (1991) suggested that competitive advantage can cause either from doing a value-creating strategy which not being implemented or duplicated similarly with any current competitors. Competitor analysis, in field of marketing, is an important component in developing the effective and sufficient marketing strategies and launching marketing activities (Lemmink & Kasper, 1994). Moreover, Walley (1998) pointed out that any companies are mostly achieving their competitive advantage in the different

route especially, companies compete in both of costs and products. However, their competitive advantages come formerly from one route or the other.

However, for in-depth narratives of how small and medium-sized firms particularly in printing and publishing business, it is able to allocate their resources and prepare effective planning to provide sustainable competitive advantage in order to respond to Thailand 4.0 age is rare. Importantly, with the fast change in technology and relevant appliances namely printer, cutter machine, material and others, it need for printing and publishing business to gain competitive following the policy in Thailand 4.0. It is therefore the purpose of this study to explore how to establish a competitive advantage towards Thailand 4.0 Model. The present study also seeks to conduct a framework of competitive advantage which will be described fundamentally in the detail orientation.

II. LITERATURE REVIEWS

SMEs in Thailand

By the information following the yearly report of The Office of Small and Medium Enterprises Promotion (OSMEP) (2013), Ministry of Industry that is responsible in coordinating the work of related agencies, helping to guide and promote the operation of Thai SMEs, it represents the important and reliable database of SMEs in Thailand. This is because OSMEP was endorsed by the Small and Medium Enterprises Promotion Act, B.E. 2000 (A.D. 2000).

In 2013, Thailand's Gross Domestic Product (GDP) reaches by 11.899 trillion baht. The portion of GDP is to SMEs by 4,454,939.6 million (4.455 trillion) baht, or a 3.8 percent increase over the previous year. The 37.4 percent portion shared of overall GDP. At the same time, contributions to GDP of small business enterprises (SE) in 2013 reached at 3.014 trillion baht, or 4.6 percent up from the previous year, and which made up 25.3 percent of the overall GDP. Furthermore, from medium enterprises (ME), it hit at 1.441 trillion baht, representing a growth of 2.4 percent and a proportional contribution of only 12.1 percent. The most significant of SME contributions to economic growth came from the services sector driving 34.8 percent of GDP.

At the end of 2013, the status of SMEs in both of number and employment is represented. There are 2,763,997 SMEs' entrepreneurs or 97.2 percent of the total enterprises which 684,730 entrepreneurs are registered as commercial juristic persons, however 2,079,267 are not. The largest group of SMEs is in trade and repair sector by 1,201,070 operators. The next largest group is in services sector by 1,083,593 operators. And the rest, some 479,334 operators (17.3 percent), they are in the manufacturing sector. In addition, employment figures for Thai industries of all sizes reached at 14,470,437 jobs. Some 2,668,951 jobs (18.4 percent) were recruited by large enterprises (LE), and the remaining of 11,799,948 jobs (81.5 percent) belongs to the national SME hiring. The highest extent of SME employment is in services sector which provided 5,238,207 jobs (44.4 percent).

In summary, SMEs is very important and significant for economic growth in Thailand by consideration in both of portion in GDP and employment. It means that establishment of competitive advantage for SMEs is a necessity (Bakiewicz, 2005).

Thailand 4.0 Policy

Under the Thailand Industrial Development Strategy 4.0 during year 2017 to 2036, Thailand development model is addressed dominantly. Ministry of Industry (2016) has reported that originally, agriculture development was implemented in Thailand 1.0 era. Then, for Thailand 2.0, light industry was employed. Following with heavy industry for Thailand 3.0 was later publicized. Lastly, in the recent, Thailand 4.0 has been promoting in which "Innovative Drive Economy".

According to Ministry of Industry (2016), there three targeted-dimensions for being Thailand 4.0 are prosperity, security and sustainability. Technology and innovation are emphasized to move the nation forwards. For instance, changing a traditional farm to be smart farming. Moreover, for traditional SMEs, they have to develop to be a smart enterprise and startup. Lastly, a traditional service must be transferred to be high value services.

In brief, the three common goals of Thailand 4.0 era are mentioned in generating higher income, distributing wealth, and being friendly environment. Technology and innovation have to be developed and implemented in both of manufacturing and service sectors.

Competitive Advantage Concept

Competitive advantage, the most common use in business today, it is widely applied as a key concept in strategic management (Wiggins & Ruefli, 2002). Terminologically, Ansoff (1965) defined competitive advantage as characteristics of product or market which provide strong position to compete with other competitors. Besides, Uyterhoeven, Ackerman & Rosenblum (1973) and Hofer & Schendel (1978) argue that competitive advantages are any activities that a firm can apply to produce individual product or market based on its skills. Importantly, Porter (1980; 1985; 1990) defined competitive advantage as the organizational factors which can drive a firm to outperform among its competitors.

In order to sustain the competitive advantage, the resources within the organization taking main role have to be valuable, rare, inimitable and not-substitutable (Barney, 1991; Capron & Hulland, 1999). As a result of importance of resources within firm that can considered as internal forces (Claycomb, Droge & Germain, 1999) in order to drive organizational goal. Theoretically, the resource-advantage theory refers to a process theory which emphasizes on the importance of market segments

and resources and how a firm should behave among its competitors (Hunt, 1997).

In short, the components of resource-based view indicated as internal force, are reviewed into four main factors which enable to be sustainable competitive advantage for any firms namely financial resources, information technology and innovation, knowledge management, and human resource management (MacKenzie, 2010). On the contrary, there are many specific researches about what tool will be used effectively to achieve sustainable competitive advantage such as market-based approach, and firm's strategies and organization design (Pelham, 1993; van Raaij, 2001).

There are many of studies about how to make a competitive advantage especially consideration in internal forces (Learned, 1995; Lynch & Baines, 2004). For internal forces, the concept of resource-based view (Dickinson, 2009; MacKenzie, 2010) is used widely in order to indicate the competitive which contains of financial resources, information technology and innovation, knowledge management, and human resource management. Other aspects concerning with a competitive advantage of any firm are identified as market-based approach (Afful-Koomson, 2000; Pelham, 1993; van Raaij, 2001) which related through products and services to satisfy customer effectively. Furthermore, firm's strategies and organization design are also very important to achieve competitive advantage (van Raaij, 2001). Therefore, the Figure 2.1 shows the relationship of internal forces affected to the competitive advantage of any organization.

III. METHODOLOGY

Case of printing and publishing business is taken for particular study in order to serve Thailand 4.0 policy. The main reason of selecting the type of business is related with the detail orientation in Thailand 4.0 model. As mentioned in previous chapter, transferring to be Thailand 4.0 model or "Innovative Drive Economy" has been focused significantly for moving forwards to generate higher income (Ministry of Industry, 2016). Innovation comes from the technology development through research and development activities. Having caused fast growth in technology nowadays, printing and publishing businesses have to learn how to survive in a competitive business environment. This is because the fast and new changes in printing technology combined with the growth of information and communication technology, it needs to investigate how this business makes them competitive. In Ubon Ratchathani Province, there are many printing and publishing businesses; however, the five purposive sampling cases are employed. The criteria are being SME and operating at least three years. This is because the period of time operation can be identified through a competitive advantage for a firm.

The two main reasons that this case has been selected are stated. First, these five SME firms have been operating at least three years with simple implementation and now, it is still being done with getting profit continuously. That means, this firm has been doing by emphasizing on the competitive advantage. Second, the author is able to access to the firm comfortably with appreciated welcome by the owners. Therefore, this case was chosen by directing to the purpose of the present study. However, a particular case study is not generalized through other firms, the value of this research represents on itself (Kulvisaechana, 2005).

In conclusion, for this research, a case study of five printing and publishing businesses will be used in order to provide rich and deep understanding related to establishment the competitive advantage. Importantly, in methodological approach, triangulation has to be implemented for increasing validity and reliability of the results. Moreover, the present study is designed into five processes starting with defining objective through analyzing data and reaching conclusions. For the present case, five printing and publishing firms located in Ubon Ratchathani Province, Thailand and have been operating at least three years were selected. In short, this case study research as an exploratory research will be conducted based on inductive approach with multi-methods in order to provide strengthened findings.

IV. FINDINGS

Internal Forces for Competitive Advantage

Form the interview, the cases represented the importance of how to manage and allocate bundle resources in order to conduct competitive advantage. One of resources, it is mainly concerned in finance or budget to invest and drive business continuously. Especially, printing machine is too expensive so that investment capital needs to be prepared sufficiently. Moreover, working capital is also important to be achieved in driving the business transaction.

"In the first step of operating this business, I have to plan how to allocate my money to serve both investment and also with working capital in the future" (Interview: Firm I)

"[…] as we know that these copy machines are too expensive, so in the beginning, financial support from the bank is very significant for us." (Interview: Firm V)

"…[…] because of most of our jobs are form public organization, working money or cash in running daily or even monthly is very important. The credit may due 30 or 45 days upon each organization." (Interview: Firm I, II & IV)

Besides the labor skills is very important in order to receiving customers' order and do the job effectively. The skills of staffs are firstly in catching up what is the exactly requirement of the customers in both of quantity and quality. The urgent jobs were usually delivered from both of private and public organization. It is therefore human resource is very significant for making a competitive advantage for printing and publishing business. According the studies of Murphy (2006), Nummelin (2009) and MacKenzie (2010) state that human is an important capital for sustaining business and can make competitive advantage.

"[…] our staffs have to train how to serve our customers. They have to describe the details of particular job, how quality would be, I mean the quality of material or even colors, and how many of them. If our staffs miss the communication, the waste of time and money is lunched …" (Interview: Firm III & IV)

"I have asked my customers, they told me that they were very impressed our staffs that can get their exactly requirement and did the job in timetable […]" (Interview: Firm I, II & IV)

"We employ not many labors to work but we emphasize skillful and responsible employees. For example, an employee who works in printing and publishing business, he has to skillful and has technical skill in order to repair failed machine."(Interview: Firm I, II, III & IV)

Furthermore, printing and publishing business also requires technology for its business especially in notion of printing and publishing technology included ink technology, printed material technology, and communication technology. Thus, technology related business activity is required for sustainable competitive advantage (Abdullah, 2008; Bartek, 2009; Suter, 2008; Wurtz, 2008; Zona, 2009).

"For us, technology plays significant and important for serving our business. As we know that, it has been fast changing in printing machine especially high new quality of printed material and ink technology." (Interview: Firm I, II, III, V)

"[…] communication with customers by using information technology such as social media channel is also an important tool that we use. We can reduce time in communication and importantly saving cost for us." (Interview: Firm II & IV)

Additionally, knowledge management is an important factor which this firm is seriously concerned for making a competitive advantage (Behnke, 2010; Chew, 2008; Liu, 2009; Seitova, 2009; Unsworth, 2007). This is because it is likely family business, everybody has to understand and able to work instead together effectively. The knowledge of working in particular job tasks is transferred in both of direct training and learning from experiences.

"As you know that, this job needs an experienced person to operated and check all of job done through the process of printing. It is therefore knowledge in particular task is very significant mainly in real practical knowledge." (Interview: Firm III)

"During the machine has been running its process, the worker has to know how to check and observe in abnormal symptoms such as color of ink is changed or other risks […]"(Interview: Firm I, II & IV)

Interestingly, innovation seems to be generated for establishing a competitive advantage for printing and publishing business. Innovation comes from both know-how and diverse products and services.

"[…] our customers nowadays have many choice in printing their paper or vinyl work, the new of work done impressive for them such as they do love in new paper type of printing. …and also with the innovative ideas and management of our firm is done through all process in order to serve our customers' requirement." (Interview: Firm III, IV & V)

In marketing-based view, printing and publishing business in this case emphasizes on customer satisfaction and customer relationship which are enable to drive competitive advantage (Brown, 2006; Carter, 2009; Lam, 2009; Lee, 2005; Soh, 2005).

"Most of our customers are individual, private and public organization who knows well about us. Not only cheapest price provided, the customers' impression or satisfaction is considered seriously. … […] They trust us in order to give any asks for job done of printing and publishing. We can make creditable payment as well. It may from we have been doing this business for a long time […]." (Interview: Firm IV & V)

For a conclusion, the internal forces that drive printing and publishing business to be competitive advantage are come from both resource-based view and market-based approach. The competitive resources are in finance, human, technology, knowledge and innovation. Moreover, a market-based approach aims to reach particularly in customer satisfaction and customer relationship.

External Forces for Competitive Advantage

From the data of interview, it found that the external forces such as economics, society, environment, politics and law were mostly influences to printing and publishing business in the present study in order to conduct a competitive advantage (Baumgartner &

Ebner, 2010; Loorbach, Bakel, Whiteman & Rotmans, 2010).

"…The economics today is not very good for me to invest in buying new printing machine. I have to consider whatever economic trends to be but it is very hard to predict because I do not have enough information especially in printing and publishing market. However, I can ask my partnerships about what economic situation is." (Interview: Firm IV & V)

"Now, society is a factor that I have to mention seriously. I donated my money for school for help poor students and preparing stationaries for them in an occasionally…In our village, there are many problems such as drug…I want my village to be peaceful and if there is something that I can help or support, I will do it to make anything developed. I really thought that these circumstances make us many jobs nowadays" (Interview: Firm I, II, IV & V)

"…At the first time, my firm was in the central of the village. We have moved it to locate here because of my business activity is generating much noise. Importantly, we do not want to disturb anyone in the village. (Interview: Firm III & V)

"Because of our business is not supported by the government or other public sectors so, if the government supports and help us effectively such as money to invest or other policies, it can make us easily to run our business…even the period of election, it is the time for us to get a lot of jobs in order to promote each candidate […]" (Interview: Firm I, II & V)

"As some our jobs are from public organization, all process starting with receiving as auction until ending a job must be followed the law definitely." (Interview: Firm I, II, III, IV & V)

Network for Outsourcing

Additionally, from the interview, it also found that network for outsourcing is an important factor in order to make internal and external forces competitive.

"[…] we accept all jobs from the customers even we cannot do it by ourselves, why I said that, it is because we have partners who we outsource for running some special job. We act like we are middlemen as well." (Interview: Firm I, II & III)

"With the limitation of our machine capacity, my friend' shop is selected for helping me in this job. Many cases that I asked him to help me because of his copy machine can work a heavy load." (Interview: Firm IV & V)

Dynamic Capability

During the time a firm faces environmental change, printing and publishing business try in changing a firm's resources and competences over time and especially a firm's product or service. Conversely, McGuinness & Morgan (2005) call this ability as an organizational change capability. Basically, the managerial processes, organizational routines, and managerial know-how are included in the process for building dynamic capabilities and competitive advantage (Zheng, Zhang, Wu & Du, 2011).

"[…] in working we have not to be static because everything surrounding us is changed continuously. We have to prepare ourselves in both of labor, knowledge, machine to serve those changes." (Interview: Firm II & III)

"Working without adaptation makes us very risky in this business. How much we can be competitive cause from how much we change ourselves to uncertainty." (Interview: Firm I, IV & V)

In brief, the competitive advantage of printing and publishing business is done through internal and external forces. Network for outsourcing links these forces to generate a competitive advantage. Importantly, how much of being competitive is occurred on dynamic capability of a firm.

SUMMARY AND CONCLUSION

From the interview data, it found that there are two main forces impact to establishment of a competitive advantage. The internal forces contain of resource-based view (finance, human resource, technology, knowledge and innovation) and market-based approach (customer satisfaction and customer relationship). Moreover, the external forces combine of economics, society, environment, law and politics. The other factor, network for outsourcing, links both internal and external forces to be competitive advantage. Lastly, the level of being competitive advantage seems up to its dynamic capability or ability to adapt itself to uncertain and turbulent environment. The conceptual framework of this study shows in a given Fig. 1.

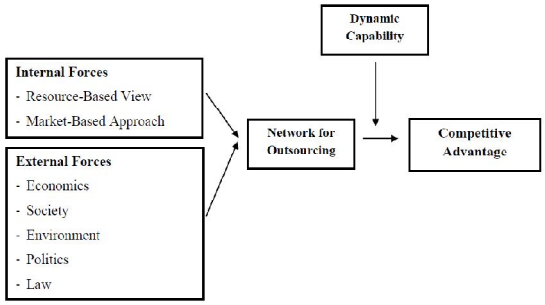


Fig. 1 The framework of establishment a competitive advantage of printing and publishing business from the present study

LIMITATION AND FUTURE RESEARCH

A single case study for this study provides rich context and in-depth data (Yin, 1994). However, as the suggestion of Eisenhardt (1989) and Grill (1993), the selected case is used for theoretical rather than statistical generalizability for conducting theory development. Besides, the sample will be chosen by purposive sampling from information-rich cases (Djuric, 2009; Patton, 2002). In side of study timeframe which is too short, the gathered data may be not played enough to describe all phenomena within case. The longitudinal study and different case comparative study are suggested for future research (Kulvisaechana, 2005). The different business may be addressed in various perspectives in order to establish the competitive advantage for other SMEs type in Thailand.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

This research is a partial fulfillment in the "Project of Clinic for Increasing Performance in ICT for Competitive Entrepreneurs" supported by The Ministry of Digital Economy and Society, Thailand and the Faculty of Management Science, Ubon Ratchathani University, Thailand.

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