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# Factors Influencing the Success of Local Products: A Case Study of Sakon Nakhon Province

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## บทคัดย่อ

การวิจัยครั้งนี้มีวัตถุประสงค์เพื่อศึกษาปัจจัยที่มีอิทธิพลต่อความสำเร็จของผลิตภัณฑ์ชุมชน กลุ่มแปรรูปผ้าฝ้ายย้อมคราม บ้านสงเปลือย ตำบลไฮหย่อง อำเภอพังโคน จังหวัดสกลนคร ผู้ศึกษาสนใจเรื่องนี้เนื่องจากผ้าฝ้ายย้อมครามในจังหวัดสกลนครได้รับการส่งเสริมจากสมเด็จพระนางเจ้าสิริกิติ์พระบรมราชินีนาถ โดยให้จัดตั้งกลุ่มผ้าฝ้ายย้อมครามเป็นอาชีพเสริมแก่เกษตรกร และให้อนุรักษ์ผ้าพื้นเมืองประจำท้องถิ่นในจังหวัดสกลนคร งานวิจัยนี้ใช้ระเบียบวิธีวิจัยเชิงคุณภาพและการวิจัยแบบมีส่วนร่วม เก็บรวบรวมข้อมูลจากการสัมภาษณ์กลุ่มเชิงลึกกับประธานและสมาชิกกลุ่มแปรรูปผ้าฝ้ายมัดย้อมบ้านสงเปลือย ตำบลไฮหย่อง อำเภอพังโคน จังหวัดสกลนคร จำนวน 10 คน โดยใช้แบบสัมภาษณ์แบบมีโครงสร้าง และวิเคราะห์แบบบรรยายเชิงพรรณนาโดยใช้ทฤษฎีอ้างอิง ผลการศึกษาพบว่า ปัจจัยภายนอกและปัจจัยภายในมีผลต่อความสำเร็จของผลิตภัณฑ์ชุมชนกลุ่มแปรรูปผ้าฝ้ายมัดย้อมบ้านสงเปลือย ปัจจัยภายนอก ได้แก่ การส่งเสริมจากรัฐบาล และการสร้างเครือข่ายกับกลุ่มผลิตภัณฑ์แปรรูปผ้าครามในจังหวัดสกลนคร และปัจจัยภายใน ได้แก่ การบริหารจัดการกลุ่มแบบครอบครัว การมีฝีมือ และภูมิปัญญาท้องถิ่นของสมาชิกในกลุ่ม สรุปได้ว่า ทั้งปัจจัยภายนอกและภายในมีส่วนสำคัญที่ทำให้การพัฒนาผลิตภัณฑ์ท้องถิ่นของกลุ่มแปรรูปผ้าคราม บ้านสงเปลือย ตำบลไฮหย่อง อำเภอพังโคน จังหวัดสกลนครประสบความสำเร็จ

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## Abstract

The objective of this research was to study the factors influencing the success of local product development at Songpueay, Tambol HaiYong, Phangkhon, Sakon Nakhon in Northeast Thailand. SMEs in Thailand are seen as an interesting research focus on the textile sector, since the textile Indigo-dyed cotton group in Sakon Nakhon is also supported by HM Queen Sirikit. Queen Sirikit has promoted local textile production for international trade. As part of this process, it was necessary for the textile sector to improve their business to achieve a better financial performance. This study used a qualitative and participatory approaches. Data were gathered from ten respondents from the Songpeauy group. The ten respondents agreed to participate and schedule a group in-depth interview. A semi-structured interview of approximately 30 minutes was conducted with each of the respondents in the group interview. This data was then analyzed and conclusions derived by qualitative research methodology. Data was also derived at participatory meetings and discussions. SWOT analysis was done by participants of the group interview. Finally, the research was analyzed and the

conclusions were drawn from forums within those meetings. This study is significant by providing issues for success factors in Thai SMEs. The result of this study showed both internal and external key success factors. The main external factors were government policy and networks. Secondly, internal factors indicated that family group management, strong leadership, professional skill of members and corroboration and networking of local product development groups are key success factors. Coupled with this was the push for local product development success.

**Keywords:** Factors Influencing Success, Local Product, Textile Sector Indigo-dyed cotton, Sakon Nakhon

## Introduction

After the 1997 Thai economic crisis, it was necessary for the Thai government to rebuild the economy. Prior research recorded that small and medium enterprises (SMEs) played a significant role in the Thai economy (Chittithaworn, et al., 2011: 180). Consequently, the efficiency of the small and medium enterprises is closely associated with the efficiency of the country. In Thailand small and medium enterprises account for the great majority of businesses in the various areas.

Chittithaworn, et al. (2011: 180) revealed that Thai SMEs comprise 93.8 percent of all establishments. Moreover, SMEs are increasingly seen as creating new jobs (Swierczek and Ha, 2003), and Vietnamese SMEs employ 64% of the industrial work force. SMEs in Thailand play an important role in the country's economic development. According to statistics provided by NSO (2007), SMEs accounted for 76.1% of

all establishments in the manufacturing sector in the year 2012. The largest number of SMEs in Thailand are concentrated in the food and beverage sector, textiles, wearing apparel and wood products (Thailand, National Statistical Office, 2007).

The motivation behind this study came from a review of literature. Researchers have acknowledged that the factors affecting SMEs business success were the characteristics of SMEs, management and know-how, products and services, customers and markets, the way of doing business and cooperation, resources and finance, strategy and external environment (Chittithaworn, et al., 2011: 180-190). The intention of this paper is to identify the factors influencing the success of local product (SMEs) development at Tambol HaiYong, Phangkhon District Sakon Nakhon Province in Northeast Thailand. This paper focused only on the textile sector. This study is significant in identifying success factor issues in Thai SMEs.

The definition of small and medium sized enterprises (SMEs) varies. Thai SMEs have been classified into three broad sectors:

1. Production Sector: Agriculture Processing, Manufacturing and Mining
2. Trading Sector: Wholesale and Retail
3. Service Sector

However, types of SMEs in Thailand have also been defined according to the value of assets of each type of enterprise and the number of full-time employees in each type of enterprise.

1. Value of assets of each type of enterprise

1.1 Production Sector: medium size not exceeding 200 million baht and small size not exceeding 50 million baht.

1.2 Trading Sector: medium size not exceeding 100 million baht and small size not exceeding 50 million baht.

1.3 Service Sector: medium size not exceeding 200 million baht and small size not exceeding 50 million baht.

2. Number of full-time employees of each type of enterprise

2.1 Production Sector: medium size not exceeding 200 employees and small size not exceeding 50 employees.

2.2 Trading Sector: wholesale medium size not exceeding 50 employees, retail medium

size not exceeding 30 employees and small size not exceeding 15 employees.

2.3 Service Sector: medium size not exceeding 200 employees and small size not exceeding 50 employees (Norlaphoompipat, 2008).

This paper examined SMEs in small and medium enterprises when compared to other SMEs in most business practices. The paper is structured as follows: Section Two provides Research Objectives. The third section deals with the Methodology. The fourth provides a description of the Findings. The fifth section summarizes the Conclusions.

## **Research Objectives**

The objective of this research was to identify internal and external factors influencing the success of local product development. The case study was carried out at Tambol HaiYong, Phangkhon District, Sakon Nakhon Province in Northeast Thailand.

## **Methodology**

Data were gathered from ten respondents from the Songpeauy group. The ten respondents agreed to participate and schedule a group in-depth interview. A semi-structured interview of approximately 30 minutes was conducted with each of the respondents. The specific questions focused on one of the research questions in this study, such as “What do you think are the

internal and external factors influencing the success of Thai local product development?” This data was then analyzed and conclusions drawn by qualitative research methodology. Data was also derived at participatory meetings and discussions. SWOT analysis was done during group interview participation. Finally, the research was analyzed and conclusions drawn from forums within those meetings.

## **Research Results**

The analysis of this paper was divided into two parts. The first part was reported by SWOT analysis. SWOT analysis is one of the most reliable and prevalent tools of strategic planning. SWOT analysis was categorized into internal and external factors. Internal analysis showed strengths and weaknesses. External analysis revealed opportunities and threats. Secondly, this paper discussed the factors that affect and influence the success of textile SMEs in Sakon Nakhon, Thailand.

### **SWOT Analysis for Textile Local Product Development of SMEs in Sakon Nakhon**

#### **Internal Analysis: Strengths**

The Thai government has encouraged the privatization and policy reform of SMEs since the economic crisis in 1997. Government policy has supported one tambol one product (OTOP) as a new venture creation.

Thailand is a small country with a variety of natural resources that make it uniquely suited for local production for the world market, such as local textile products. The local product is presented by green and healthy local production concept. This also is good for Family support.

#### **Internal Analysis: Weaknesses**

In Sakon Nakhon, textile sector SMEs tend to have lower use of information technology. Technological investment and training are also needed to support the continued growth of the textile sector for SMEs in Thailand.

A lack of professional and workforce skill leads to a lack of new product development for the textile sector. A lack of consultant and lower level of research and development are the key weaknesses. The need for research grants and other means of support can lead to improvements in key sectors that are currently unproductive. This can also lead local product distribution to the export market.

An improvement in public financial transparency is a key success factor of SMEs in Sakon Nakhon. This is because the members of the textile SMEs process the business, not only the leader of groups. Therefore, role models and entrepreneurial leaders are needed to change the culture. An improvement of entrepreneurial teams is needed for textile SMEs.

Another frequently mentioned weakness in business networking is the need for collecting production data, for management and local product networking. An IT system could help with the process of business creation for textile sector SMEs in Sakon Nakhon.

### **External Analysis: Opportunities**

SMEs and entrepreneurship education programs in Thai universities are growing and this represents an opportunity for new ventures. Entrepreneurship and innovation programs are available ;for example, at Thammasat and Chulalongorn Universities.

Low cost businesses and new product development of textiles tend to stimulate more interest in local production in Northeast Thailand.

In addition, the varied geography and topography are of interest to tourists in

Thailand. Local Textile production has become a more traditional business practice. Every part of Thailand has individual styles of traditional textile production. Therefore, it allows new venture start-ups to capitalize on opportunities in tourism and new traditional business services, which represent the most important opportunities.

### **External Analysis: Threats**

The Thai economic crisis in 1997 caused the country's industrial base to experience drastic restructuring, with layoffs and changes in many corporate practices. Therefore, improvement in personal income and changes in consumer-spending patterns are needed in Thailand. Government policy, regulation and rules to promote new ventures of SMEs are needed for change.

**Table 1** SWOT Analysis for Textile Sector

<b>Strengths</b>	<b>Weaknesses</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Strong leadership of SMEs group</li> <li>- Family support</li> <li>- Resources and product (green local and healthy products)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Lower level of research and development</li> <li>- Lower use of information technology</li> <li>- Lack of professional and component workforce skill</li> <li>- Lack of new product development</li> <li>- Lack of product networking</li> <li>- Lack of textile technology</li> <li>- Lack of financial transparency</li> <li>- Lack of entrepreneurial teams</li> <li>- Lack of consultation</li> <li>- Lack of production data management</li> <li>- Lack of IT</li> </ul>
<b>Opportunities</b>	<b>Threats</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- SMEs education and program</li> <li>- Low cost and new product development</li> <li>- Tourism</li> <li>- Government policy supporting</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- High level of competition</li> <li>- Regulations and rules of production standard</li> </ul>

### **The Key Management Practices of Successful SMEs in Thailand**

Previous studies by Islam, Mian, and Ali (2002) and Chittithaworn, et al. (2011) arrived at the conclusion that factors influencing SMEs business success were: (1) entrepreneurial characteristics (Kristiansen, Furuholt, and Wahid, 2003; Rutherford and Oswald, 2000), (2) characteristics of SMEs (Kristiansen, Furuholt, and Wahid, 2003), (3) management and know-how (Swierczek and Ha, 2003), (4) products and services (Hitt and Ireland,

2000; Wiklund and Shepherd, 2004), (5) customers and markets (William, Janes, and Susan, 2005), (6) the way of doing business and cooperation (Hitt and Ireland, 2000), (7) resources and finance (Kristiansen, Furuholt, and Wahid, 2003; Swierczek and Ha, 2003), (8) strategy (McMahon, 2001), (9) external environment (Huggins, 2000; Indarti and Langenberg, 2005) and (10) the internet (Benchmarking National and Regional E-Business Policies for SMEs: Final Report of the E-Business Policy Group, 2002).

As previously discussed, the SWOT analysis is a time capsule picture of the present. This is because the environment is constantly changing and new strategies also change the internal strengths and weaknesses environment. This paper adds to the literature

by highlighting internal and external factors influencing the success of Thai local products in the textile sector. The findings of this study repeat and confirm pervious studies showing that both external and internal factors influence the success of SMEs.

**Table 2** Key Success Factors of SMEs in the Textile Sector in Sakon Nakhon, Thailand

<b>Internal factors:</b>	<b>Key SMEs success factors (From previous research)</b>
<b>Strengths</b>	
- Strong leadership of SMEs group	- Management and know-how
- Family support	- Entrepreneurial characteristics
- Resources and product (green local and healthy products)	- Resource and finance
<b>Weaknesses</b>	
- Lower level of research and development	- Resources and finance
- Lower use of information technology	- Resource and finance
- Lack of professional and component workforce skill	- Management and know-how
- Lack of new product development	- Customer and markets
- Lack of product networking	- The way of doing business and cooperation
- Lack of textile technology	- Management and know-how
- Lack of financial transparency	- Resource and finance
- Lack of entrepreneurial teams	- Entrepreneurial characteristics
- Lack of consultation	- Management and know-how
- Lack of production data management	- Products and services
- Lack of IT	- Internet
<b>External environment factors</b>	<b>SMEs success factors</b>
<b>Opportunities</b>	
- SMEs education and program	- External environment
- Low cost and new product development	- Product and service
- Tourism	- External environment
- Government policy support	- Government support
<b>Threats</b>	
- High level of competition	- External environment
- Regulations and rules of production standard	- External environment

There are different ways of analyzing the situation. The question may be raised whether one should start with the analysis of the firm's internal resources or with the external environment. There is no single answer. Moreover, this paper provided TOWS Matrix to support strategy and direction for the textile sector in terms of local product development in Sakon Nakhon. In practice the TOWS Matrix, Table 3, indicates four conceptually distinct alternative strategies as follows:

**(1) Strengths and Opportunities (SO):**

The objective of the SO Strategy (maxi-maxi) is to maximize both strengths and opportunities. This situation is where they can work from strengths to take advantage of opportunities. Such an enterprise can lead from strengths, utilizing resources to take advantage of the market for its products and services. For example, products of the Songpueay group, rich with local wisdom and a green quality image, can take advantage of government policy to support local product marketing and technology production.

**(2) Strengths and Threats (ST):**

The ST strategy is based on the strengths of the organization that can deal with threats in the strengths environment, for example collaboration between local textile product groups and development of new products with green local and healthy product. In addition, to promote and create value added products by linking with the Supply Chain Management concept.

**(3) Weaknesses and Opportunities (WO):**

The WO strategy attempts to minimize the weaknesses and to maximize opportunities. One possible strategy would be to acquire this technology through cooperation with a firm having competence in this field. For example, the Songpueay group should exchange knowledge and production technology with local textile product groups. In addition, another strategy is cooperative research and product development with a local university.

**Table 3** Tows Matrix for the Textile Sector in Sakon Nakhon, Thailand

	<b>Strenghts</b>	<b>Weaknesses</b>
<b>Opportunities</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Government policy to support local product marketing and technology</li> <li>- Financial support for professional training and technology</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Co-Research and product development with a local university</li> <li>- Exchange knowledge and production technology between local textile product group</li> </ul>
<b>Threats</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Collaboration between local textile product groups and develop new product</li> <li>- Create value added by linking with Supply Chain Management</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Review local product standards</li> <li>- Marketing network between public and private organization</li> </ul>

**(4) Weaknesses and Threats (WT)**

The WT strategy is to minimize both weaknesses and threats. For example, the Songpueay group should reduce the competitive threat by developing new product lines with green quality and a healthy image and review how local products meet community product standards. In addition, the group should review how the firm deals with the marketing network between public and private organizations. However, the WT position is one that any firm will try to avoid.

**Conclusions and Discussion**

The purpose of this study was to identify the factors influencing the success of local SMEs products in the textile sector in Sakon Nakhon, Thailand. The result of this study showed key success factors include both internal and external factors. The main external

factors are government policy and networking. Secondly, internal factors indicate that family group management, strong leadership, professional skill of members and corroboration and networking of local product development groups are key success factors. Coupled with this was the push for local product development success. The findings of this study repeat and confirm pervious studies that both external and internal factors influence the success of SMEs (Benchmarking National and Regional E-Business Policies for SMEs: Final Report of the E-Business Policy Group, 2002; Hitt and Ireland 2000; Huggins, 2000; Indarti and Langenberg, 2005; Kristiansen, Furuholt, and Wahid, 2003; McMahon, 2001; Rutherford and Oswald, 2000; Swierczek and Ha, 2003; William, Janes and Susan, 2005).

This paper has provided factors influencing the success of the SMEs textile sector in

Sakon Nakhon, Thailand. The contributions of this study are fourfold. First, it has expressed quantitative research methodology that has described the complexity of the SMEs study. Secondly, this paper has integrated internal and external factors that can be barriers to, and facilitators of, the success of SMEs. Thirdly, this paper provided TOWS Matrix strategy for SMEs in Sakon Nakhon. Fourth, it has revealed key success factors of SMEs in the textile sector. These results may provide helpful frames of reference by means of which both large and small companies will be able to examine and strengthen their competitive position in the global economic environment.

## Recommendations

This study provides only one case study of evidence that the factors presented are influencing the success of SMEs in Thailand. However, the result of this study may not be representative of all textile SMEs in Thailand since the study was for only one case in the textile sector in Northeast Thailand. The SWOT analysis is also a short picture. This is due to the constantly changing environment and new strategies, as well as the constant ongoing changes in internal strengths and weaknesses. The analysis could be expanded with the inclusion of a broader scope of viewpoints including interviews with key SMEs stakeholders, governmental leaders and other policy makers.

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