

Market Focus Factors Influencing on the Competitiveness of Small and Medium Enterprises (SME) in the Case of the Covid-19 Crisis in Nonthaburi Province

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Abstract

This research aimed to study market focus factors influencing on the competitiveness of small and medium enterprises (SME) in the case of the Covid-19 crisis in Nonthaburi Province. The research instrument was a questionnaire. The population in the research was a group of small and medium-sized business (SME) entrepreneurs in Nonthaburi Province. There were 400 samples. For a test of research instrument, the IOC value was 0.88 and the confidence value was 0.989. The data were analyzed by using statistical techniques to analyze the structural equation model, percentage, mean, standard deviation.

The results were found as follows:

The relationship path model of factor causal structure based on the influential market focus factors was relatively consistent with the empirical data by

considering the evidence as follows: (1) Chi-square Probability Level: CMIN-p is 16.829, (2) Relative Chi-square: CMIN/df is 1.683, Goodness of Fit Index: GFI is .930, and (4) Root Mean Square Error of Approximation: RMSEA is .079. Considering the sum of influences was found that the market focus factors of small and medium-sized businesses (SMEs) consist of 3 areas. They are 1) customer focus factor 2) competitor focus factor, and 3) coordination factors within the organization influencing factors of competitiveness of small and medium-sized business operators (SME) in the case of the COVID-19 crisis in Nonthaburi Province with a sum of influence equal to 0.47

Keywords: Market Focus Factors, Competitiveness, Covid-19 Crisis, SMEs.

Introduction

At present, it can be seen that Thailand has changed its direction to drive the country's economy by applying science-based product and

service development together with reducing the use of resources as a basis (Resource Based) in the production of goods and services, and reducing the use of intensive labor (Labor-Intensive) Suchart Triphopsakul and Sahattaya Chuchatpong, 2014).

The survey data of the Office of Small and Medium Enterprises Promotion (OSMEP) for the year 2018 were found that most of the business sectors in Thailand are 3,046,793 SMEs. A growth rate of 1.30% results in employment of 12,155,647 people, accounting for 82.22% of the total employment and creating value for the gross domestic product (GDP) 6,551,718 million baht or 42% 4 of the country's GDP. From the number of small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs), it can be seen that there are 85,429 community enterprises, accounting for 2.8 percent of the total number of SMEs. Only 675,633 SMEs registered juristic persons or accounted for only 22.18%. The last group includes 2,371,160 SMEs entrepreneurs. About 75.02% are SMEs of the natural type, which are divided into 2,282,695 small enterprises, and 3,036 medium-sized enterprises. It can be seen that a large number of SMEs are small enterprises. and there is only 0.6 percent of medium-sized enterprises. In developed countries, the proportion of medium-sized enterprises ranges from 5 to 19 per cent, and from the results of the global economic competitiveness index (Global Competitiveness list (CI)) divided by levels of development potential. Tier 1 is a group of countries that rely on factor driven economics such as the Philippines and Vietnam. Tier 2 is a group of countries that rely on efficiency driver economics such as Malaysia, Indonesia, China, Thailand. Tier 3 is a group of countries that rely on innovation to drive the country's economy (Innovation-Driven Economics) including Singapore, Japan, South Korea and Taiwan (only in ASEAN+3 member countries) (Bosma, 2012). Considering investment data in research was found that only 0.26 percent compared to the gross domestic product. While Singapore, Taiwan, South Korea and Japan, which are newly industrialized countries in Asia have 2.10 percent investment in research (Chanthawan Sucharitakul, 2015). The government aims to develop the country in order to transform Thailand from a developing country to a developed country by using innovation and research. In 2016, it wanted people and youth in all regions of the country to have access to learning resources and technology services, and innovation thoroughly by focusing on supporting the country's research and development expenditure at 1% of GDP. IN year 2021-2026, the government want people to have an average income of 400,000 baht per person per year.

The GDP per capita of all provinces differs from the average by no more than 30%, and the greenhouse gas emissions growth rate is lower than the GDP growth rate, which costs 2% of GDP and leaves the group of countries with moderate income in order to reduce inequality, spread the opportunity evenly, and grow environment friendlily at the end of 2006. In the case of the Covid-19 crisis, it was found that small business

entrepreneurs had opinion that it was an obstacle in access to credit in the system of their entities due to the lack of collateral, lack of a good business plan, and lack of payment history / or it is a new business. Considering the opinions of small entrepreneurs about the difficulty of borrowing money from financial institutions was found that most operators view loans from financial institutions as having too strict terms. Problems in accessing funding sources in the system of small businesses are the result of limitations on the part of the business, and limitations on the part of financial institutions.

Asking for a loan in case the company will have a need for capital because all large and medium-sized enterprises choose to borrow money in the system. While most small businesses choose to borrow money in the system, some businesses choose to borrow money outside the system, because entrepreneurs are of the opinion that it is a fast source of funds, and mainly easy to borrow. The overall debt and access to funding sources of the company are considered quite good. This is because business operators of all sizes rely heavily on funding sources in the system. Although some businesses rely on some informal sources of funding, there is a small proportion of dependence. Large and medium-sized enterprises have a low level of access to funding in the system compared to smaller firms. This is partly due to the stringent borrowing conditions of financial institutions. As a result, small businesses do not meet various conditions and cannot be approved for credit. Relevant agencies may step in to assist in reducing the terms and conditions of borrowing regulations to be more relaxed and more flexible to allow small businesses to access more capital in the system from such reasons, which affects the competitiveness of medium-sized business entrepreneurs, and small (Office of Small and Medium Enterprises Promotion, 2020). Sustainable development trend by development in economic, social and environmental results in participation of society in solving problems and the government's support from the Pracharath love and unity policy. Such factors make social enterprises more competitive, but no sustainability because the strategies that can be developed to improve the competitiveness of social enterprises cannot be formulated.

Previous research said that competitiveness is a comparative factor used to measure competence, or their own performance compared to competitors in order to develop competitiveness to be superior to competitors. Porter (1990, pp. 73-91) has said that competitiveness is the ability to grow your business compared to competitors. The ability to compete in many forms both in terms of product cost, and speed to meet customer needs, differentiation in products and services. (Suthiwartnarueput, 2009, p. 58). Barney (1986, pp. 656-658) looked at the resource-based competitiveness (Resource Based View). This theory focuses on the internal environment of the organization, and focusing on resources within the organization and the ability of the organization

as the main. However, the factors in increasing the competitiveness of social enterprises are different from general enterprises. Mulgan (2006, p. 74) said that the factors creating the competitiveness of social enterprises can arise from the external environment and the internal environment of social enterprises. The external environment can support and promote the internal environment to be stronger.

In the past, there was support and promotion to develop the competitiveness of social enterprises. Therefore, small and medium-sized businesses (SMEs) in the case of the COVID-19 crisis in Nonthaburi province need to be developed for competition, and realize the importance of being able to compete (Competitiveness) of their own importance. Although there are strategies to support small and medium-sized businesses (SME) in Nonthaburi Province, the most important thing to compete in the era of globalization is building the competitiveness of entrepreneurs themselves. There are many different factors affect the ability of the competition especially the competition in Nonthaburi Province (Patima Pimsakul and Suthep Nimsai, 2015). However, the cause of small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) in Nonthaburi province is not enough to develop sustainable competitiveness because 1) social entrepreneurs and the government don't understand the competitiveness of Thailand's social enterprises today resulted from the Covid-19 crisis, and 2) unable to create a strategy that connects the external environment to support the internal environment to develop competitiveness resulting in inefficiency in operations. From the reasons mentioned above, the researcher aims to study the factors influencing the competitiveness of small and medium enterprises (SME) in the case of the Covid-19 crisis in Nonthaburi province to be effective.

Objectives of research

To study the market focus factors influencing on the competitiveness of small and medium enterprises (SME) in the case of the Covid-19 crisis in Nonthaburi Province.

Research procedures

Population and Samples

The demographic scope and sample of this research are as follows:

The target population involved in this research are 2,695 small and medium-sized business (SME) entrepreneurs in Nonthaburi Province. There are 6 districts such as Mueang Nonthaburi District, Bang Kruai District, Bang Yai District, and Bang Bua Thong, Sai Noi District and Pak Kret District (Office of Small and Medium Enterprises Promotion

(OSMEP), 2021). The samples and the sample size determination are small and medium-sized business operators (SME) in Nonthaburi Province. The sample population was determined according to the Taro Yamane formula (Taro Yamane, 1973) at 95% confidence level and 5% tolerance. The researchers calculated from 400 samples, and selected using cluster sampling.

Research instruments

This research created 5 parts of questionnaire as follows:

Part 1: There were 4 items about the personal status of the respondents such as sex, age, educational level and working experience in community enterprises. They were closed-ended, multiple choice questions (Check List).

Part 2: Opinions on the market-focused factors of small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) consisted of 1) customer-focused factors, 2) competitor-focused factors, and 3) internal coordination factors. The questionnaire consisted of 12 questions from 3 components. It was a rating scale questionnaire which was defined on 5 levels, namely, the most, many, medium, the little, and the least. The score level was set to 5, 4, 3, 2 and 1, respectively.

Part 3: Comments on competitiveness factors consisted of 1) low cost factor, 2) innovation differentiation factor, 3) marketing differentiation factor, and 4) differentiation factor. The questionnaire consisted of 14 questions from 3 components. It was a rating scale questionnaire which was defined at 5 levels, namely, the most, many, medium, little, and the least. The score level was set to 5, 4, 3, 2 and 1, respectively.

Part 4: There was an open-ended questionnaire of recommendations on the competitiveness of small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) in the case of the COVID-19 crisis in Nonthaburi province.

The questionnaire had an IOC value of 0.88, which was greater than 0.5, indicating the structure validity, content validity, text clarity, suitability and concordance of research tools (McKeen & Smith, 2003, p. 51). Measure the reliability of the instrument by trying out the questionnaires with a group of people who had the same characteristics as the samples. There were 30 respondents from the community enterprise, which were not from Bangkhontee district, Samut Songkhram Province. The questionnaires were analyzed to determine the reliability of the questionnaire by calculating the alpha coefficient (α -Coefficient) according to the Cronbach method (Cronbach, 2001, p. 164). They must have correlation score greater than 0.70 and have reliability of the whole issue greater than 0.80. It was found that the questionnaire had a value of 0.989. Therefore, the quality of

questionnaire tools was found that the validity and the reliability were at a high level.

Data and Statistics Analysis

Quantitative Statistic Inferential analysis is a statistical method used to test hypothesis statistics to find a causal relationship for all variables, and determine the level of factors that influence both direct and indirect variables with the structural equation model (SEM) through the confirmatory factor analysis process. Confirmatory Factor Analysis (CFA) is a parameter estimation procedure, model consistency verification, and interpretation analysis. The process of structural equation analysis is a combination of 2 methods: 1) Confirmatory Factor Analysis, and 2) Path Analysis (PA) (Kris Rangsoongnoen, 2011, and Kalaya Wanichbuncha, 2014, pp. 33-42).

Research results

1) Factors focuses on small and medium-sized businesses (SMEs) in the case of the COVID-19 crisis in Nonthaburi Province

Table 1 shows the mean and standard deviation of market focus factors

Market Focus Factors	Opinion Levels		
	\bar{x}	SD	Meaning
1) Customer focus factors	3.38	0.315	Moderate
2) Competitor focus factors	3.33	0.309	Moderate
3) Coordination within the organization	3.36	0.307	Moderate
Total	3.36	0.36	Moderate

From Table 1, it was found that the respondents expressed their opinions about the market focus factor that the overall was moderate (\bar{x} = 3.36, SD = 0.357). The respondents expressed their opinions on each market focus factor. The highest factor was the customer focus which was moderate (\bar{x} = 3.38, SD = 0.315), followed by the average internal coordination (\bar{x} = 3.36, SD = 0.307) and the lowest mean factor was the competitor focus which was moderate (\bar{x} = 3.33, SD = 0.309), respectively.

2) Competitiveness of Small and Medium Business Entrepreneurs (SME) in the case of the Covid-19 Crisis in Nonthaburi Province.

Table 2 shows the mean and standard deviation of Competitiveness factor

Competitiveness factor	Opinion levels		
	\bar{x}	SD	Meaning
1) Cost management factor	3.31	0.382	Moderate
2) Innovation Differentiation Factors	3.30	0.307	Moderate
3) Market Differentiation Factors	3.36	0.302	Moderate
4) Quality Differentiation Factors	3.43	0.396	Many
Total	3.35	0.336	Moderate

From Table 2, it was found that the respondents expressed their opinions. The overall average of competitiveness factor was moderate (\bar{x} =3.35, SD= 0.336).

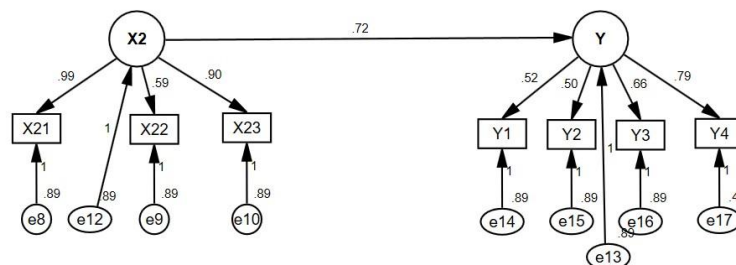
The respondents expressed their opinions on each competitiveness factor. The highest mean factor was the quality differentiation factor, which was at a high level (\bar{x} =3.43, SD= 0.396), followed by the marketing differentiation factor, which was average. The factor with the lowest mean was that the innovation differentiation factor was moderate (\bar{x} =3.3, SD= 0.307), respectively.

3) Market Focus Factors influencing the Competitiveness of Small and Medium Enterprises (SMEs) in the Case of the Covid-19 Crisis in Nonthaburi Province.

The researcher defined a causal relationship path analysis model over identified model as shown in Figure 1.

Figure 1 Path analysis model of the studied variables

Chi-square = 69.146 df = 18 p-value = .000 GFI = .773 RMSEA = .229

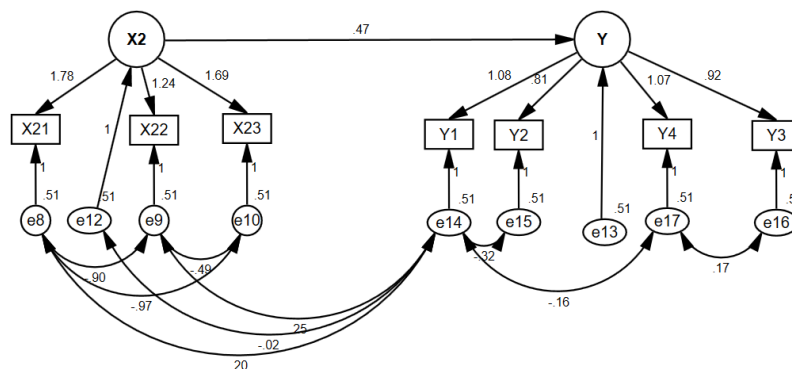


The results of the path analysis of the full correlation model of independent variables and dependent variables (latent variables) created by the researcher based on the above concepts, theories and related research. The over identified model is a model that has a path between variables in the same direction linked to variables that are internal variables or latent variables for all structural equations. It shows statistical values of the relationship between variables with the standard regression coefficient (Standardized Regression Weights), t-Value (Critical Ratio: C.R.), p-Value, and Standard (S.E.)

As a result, the model parameter estimation results can be displayed. The estimation results of various coefficients showed statistical values showing the relationship between variables with standard regression coefficients (Standardized Regression Weights), standard deviation (S.E.), t-Value (critical ratio: C.R.) and p-Value. The path coefficients of each structural equation can be written. The path of the causal relationship model through the enrichment of the correlation is an parsimonious model to get the model with the best relationship as shown in Figure 3.

Figure 2 shows a modified causal relationship path model.

Chi-square = 16.829 df = 10 p-value = .078 GFI = .930 RMSEA = .079



From Figure 2, the causal relationship path model contains small and medium-sized enterprises (SME). There are 3 variables, namely, customer focus factor variable (X21), competitors focus factor variable (X22), and organizational coordination factor variables (X23).

The influence on the competitiveness factor variables of small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) in the case of the COVID-19 crisis in Nonthaburi Province (Y) consisted of 4 variables, namely low cost factor (Y1) 1), innovation differentiation factor (Y2) marketing differentiation

factor variable (Y3), and Quality differentiation factor variable (Y4) by assessing the coherence of the Data-Model Fit model, and the statistical value used to check the fit of the empirical model with the theoretical model. The Value must be statistically significant greater than .05. Based on the research results corresponding empirical data presented in Table 3 as follows:

Table 3. Criteria and results of the review in the concordance of the theoretical model and the empirical data.

Symbols	Statistics	Objectives	Criteria	Research results	Consideration
CMIN-p	Chi-square Probability Level	to determine the chi-square probabilities, which must be statistically insignificant.	$p > .05$.078	concordance/ the criteria pass
CMIN/df	Relative Chi-square	to verify that the model is consistent with the empirical data.	< 3	1.683	concordance/ the criteria pass
GFI	Goodness of Fit index	to measure the degree of harmony with a value between 0-1.00	$> .90$.930	concordance/ the criteria pass
RMSEA	Root Mean Square Error of Approximation	to tell the model's deviation in terms of the root of the squared mean of the deviation with estimation value between 0-1.00	$< .08$.079	concordance/ the criteria pass

Table 3 and Figure 2 check the coherence of the model or check the relationship between variables to see if they are consistent or not. They can be analyzed if they are consistent. If the variables are not consistent, then structural equation models cannot be calculated. The researcher must adjust the model until it is complete, acceptable and credible according to the principles of the research process first.

Therefore, the development of a model to be consistent with the empirical data is popularly called “Model Fit”. The results were found that the

empirical model and theoretical model (master model) are consistent which passed the model examination criteria (Thanin Silcharu, 2012) as follows:

- 1) value of Chi-square Probability Level: CMIN-p equals 16.829.
- 2) Relative Chi-square: CMIN/df equals 1.683
- 3) Goodness of Fit Index: GFI equals .930

4) Root Mean Square Error of Approximation: RMSEA equals .079

It can be concluded that the hypothesis testing of the model to test that the theoretically generated path model is consistent with the actual data.

Analyzing the path model, with the causal structure of factors influencing the competitiveness of small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) in the case of the COVID-19 crisis in Nonthaburi province was the potential development variable to create added value in products of Small and Medium Business Entrepreneurs (SME). Analyzing the factor used confirmatory factor analysis (CFA) and Path Analysis(PA). Therefore, the correlation path model of the decorated or modified variable was found that the market focus factors of small and medium enterprises (SME) consisted of 3 aspects: 1) customer focus factor, 2) competitor focus factor, and 3) influential internal organization coordination factor of small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) in the event of the COVID-19 crisis in Nonthaburi Province with a sum of influence equal to 0.47

Discussion

The market focus factor of small and medium enterprises (SME) in the case of

the COVID-19 crisis in Nonthaburi province had overall average at a moderate level due to economic prosperity expanding more and more. Businesses are starting to pay more attention and focus on marketing causing the concept of marketing change to a marketing concept focusing on social marketing. Marketing concepts that businesses and organizations have embraced and practiced have been used both in the past and present. In order to achieve the marketing objectives, the entrepreneurs play a huge role in both the success and failure of a business because entrepreneurs are both investors and executives at the same time for both duties. Therefore, the entrepreneurial responsibilities of small and medium-sized businesses appear to be much broader than the responsibilities of large-scale business operators. The organization has to constantly change. Executives must study and formulate strategies to keep up with the current competitive conditions because in addition to having to fight with the same competitors, there must still be a fight with new competitors trying to enter the market. There are also many factors that organizations cannot control including the technology that has been developed all the time. This is consistent with the work of Chaiwat Somsri and his team (2019), who have studied the influence of business strategy, innovation, participation, and market focus on the competitive advantage of community enterprises in Lampang Province. The results showed that community enterprises give importance to every factor at a high level descending order as follows:

1. Competitive advantage, market focus, innovation, participation, business

strategy, and the study of factors influencing the competitive advantage of community enterprises in Lampang province were found that factors influencing competitive advantage include business strategy, innovation, and participation. The most influential factor was innovation, followed by participation. The least influencing factor was business strategy.

2. Factors of competitiveness of Small and Medium Business Entrepreneurs

(SMEs) in the Case of the Covid-19 Crisis in Nonthaburi Province had the moderate average. Due to the high competition in the world like this, business owners urgently need to change their operating model to be able to respond to the needs of customers that are changing rapidly. It has given small business owners and large entrepreneurs the necessary knowledge to create inspiration to use them to develop their business skills. It also helps create a favorable environment so that everyone can achieve their dreams and increase competitiveness by acquiring the necessary knowledge and resources. These entrepreneurs are able to bring their products and services to the global market and also contribute to the growth of the local economy even more, in accordance with Nittaya Supaporn's work (2021) who studied ability and competitive advantage of Small and Medium Enterprises (SMEs) in Nonthaburi Province. The results of the research were found that 1) the ability of small and medium enterprises entrepreneurs were at the highest level in 2 aspects, namely the ability to control the situation and the aspect of their own; and 2) the advantage. The competition for small and medium enterprises is at a high level descending order as follows: Cost Leadership in making a difference fast response aspect and focusing on specific market segments, respectively.

3. Market Focus Factors of Small and Medium Enterprises (SME) consists of 3

aspects: 1) Customer Focus Factor 2) Competitor Focus Factor and 3) Organizational Coordination Factor influencing factors of competitiveness of small and medium sized business operators (SME) in the case of the COVID-19 crisis in Nonthaburi Province with a sum of influence equal to the highest 0.47. The competitiveness of small and medium-sized businesses (SMEs) caused by the impact of the efficiency of production management and competitiveness was found that the production management efficiency and choosing the location of the industrial factory have a positive relationship and competitiveness. Overall production efficiency business network and the source of technology production management efficiency, and safety have positive relationship with competitiveness.

Overall, the learning aspect of the business networking organization, source of technology, and operational aspects focusing on the efficiency of production management have a positive relationship with production planning and competitiveness.

Overall, market-focused efficiency, customer relationship, source of technology, knowledge management, and operations focusing on entrepreneurship production management efficiency, and production control have a positive relationship with competitiveness. Overall, the learning aspect of the organization, business network, source of technology knowledge management, production management efficiency, and quality control have positive correlations with the potential for competition. Overall, the learning aspect of the organization, business network, knowledge management, production management efficiency, purchasing and inventory management have positive relationship with competitiveness. Overall, customer relationship and business network are in accordance with Nilawan Sawangrat (2015) who studied structural influences of entrepreneurship focusing on market, innovation, and learning on the performance of the organization.

The purpose of this research was to study entrepreneurship, marketing focus, innovation focus, learning focus and the performance of the food industry organization in Thailand, as well as studying the influence of entrepreneurship, marketing focus, innovation focus, and learning focus as a causal variable influencing the performance of the food industry organization in Thailand. This is a mixed research which is to study both quantitatively and qualitatively with a sample of entrepreneurs or representatives of entrepreneurs who are high-level executives of the food industry in Thailand.

Quantitative research was found that the entrepreneurship focusing on markets, innovation, learning, the overall performance of the organization were average at a high level.

The analysis of variables with a causal influence on organizational performance was found that entrepreneurship had an inverse effect on market focus (TE=0.746, TE=0.579).

and had a counter-influence on the focus on learning (TE=0.670, TE=0.725) both routes.

Moreover, entrepreneurship had a direct influence on innovation focus (TE=0.622) and an indirect influence on organizational performance (TE=0.575). Market focus (TE=0.534), innovation focus (TE=0.216) and learning focus (TE=0.196) had direct influence on organizational performance. The qualitative research results confirmed the research question because the results of the two parts of the research were consistent.

Recommendations

Suggestions for applying the research results

1) The proposal to implement the competitiveness factors is as follows: (1) Cost management factor should add more the development and improvement of the production process, (2) the factor of innovation differentiation should add more the presence of production and marketing of new products; the presence of research or development of new products, (3) the factors creating differentiation in marketing should add more brands reflecting the identity of small and medium-sized businesses (SMEs) during the COVID-19 crisis. The products should be diversified to meet consumer needs and (4) the quality differentiation factors should add more continuous product quality control, and the availability of products to meet the needs of customers quickly.

2) The proposal puts into practice the following market focus factors: (1) Customer focus should add more small and medium businesses (SMEs) during the Covid-19 Crisis, track the demand for services or products and the satisfaction of small and medium enterprises (SME) customers during the COVID-19 crisis, and provide services or products by taking into account the benefits and value of customers, (2) Focusing on competitors should add more small and medium enterprises (SMEs) during the COVID-19 crisis, target the customer groups to develop competitive advantages of small and medium enterprises (SMEs) during the COVID-19 crisis, and analyze the situation and strategies of competitors' services or products, and (3) The internal organization coordination should add more members of small and medium-sized businesses (SMEs) during the COVID-19 crisis, are synchronize information to meet and fulfill customer needs of small and medium-sized businesses (SMEs) during the COVID-19 crisis, and formulate strategies for coordinating all parties together.

Suggestions for next research

1) should study other latent variables that may affect factors influencing the competitiveness of small and medium-sized businesses (SMEs) in the case of the COVID-19 crisis in Nonthaburi, such as leadership skills in management, factors for upholding morality, work motivation factor and teamwork factors, etc.

2) should study other observation variables that may affect factors influencing the competitiveness of small and medium enterprises (SME) in the case of the Covid-19 crisis in Nonthaburi province, such as the perception of justice within the organization, corporate atmosphere, and job skills, etc.

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