

ANTECEDENT FACTORS AFFECTING THE ADAPTIVE ADVANTAGE OF SME ENTREPRENEURS IN THE NEW NORMAL ERA IN THE PROCESSED FOOD AND FOOD PRODUCTS BUSINESS GROUP IN SAMUT PRAKAN PROVINCE

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ABSTRACT

This academic article aims to study and present the factors influencing the adaptive advantage of small and medium-sized enterprise (SME) entrepreneurs in the processed food and food products business group in Samut Prakan Province during the new normal era. A review of the literature and data synthesis reveals that strategic leadership plays a crucial role in setting the direction and driving organizations toward competitiveness. Leaders with vision who can adapt strategies appropriately to changing circumstances enable businesses to adjust effectively. Additionally, innovation management capability is another critical factor that supports business development and adds value to products and services, enhancing the organization's competitive potential. Change management in a diverse environment is also essential for addressing shifts in the business landscape. Organizations that can restructure operations flexibly and effectively leverage technology will maintain stability and sustainability. Furthermore, management innovation is a key factor in enhancing an organization's ability to adapt to market and technological changes, directly impacting adaptive capability. Organizations with efficient internal management can create competitive advantages and increase opportunities for growth in the new normal era.

Thus, the findings of this study can serve as a guideline for supporting and promoting SME entrepreneurs in the processed food and food products business group, enabling them to adapt effectively, gain competitive advantages, and operate sustainably.

Keywords: Strategic Leadership, Innovation Management Capability, Change Management in a Diverse Environment, Management Innovation, Adaptive Capability

INTRODUCTION

In the 21st century, the world is continuously advancing into the digital era, and Thailand is evolving into a society that integrates the digital world with reality. The country focuses on developing information systems and applying technology to enhance data management capabilities. However, Thailand is still in the early stages of adopting technology to build smart cities, lacking comprehensive principles and experience, particularly in data management and network integration. This limitation has resulted in the suboptimal efficiency of technological applications. Amidst increasing business competition, industrial organizations must restructure to be more flexible to compete effectively and respond to ongoing changes. Managing diversity to benefit the organization is a crucial aspect that executives must prioritize.

The primary goal of business organizations is to achieve profitability and sustainability. However, external volatility necessitates strategic adaptation to keep pace with changing circumstances. Organizations that can adapt quickly and efficiently tend to have higher competitiveness. Therefore, organizational adaptability is a key concept in business management for ensuring survival and growth in today's dynamic environment. Efficiently managed organizations can tackle emerging challenges and gain a competitive edge (Chung, Enz, & Lankau, 2023). Organizational adaptability depends on multiple factors, one of which is strategic leadership. This plays a crucial role in determining the organization's direction. Leaders with vision can inspire employees to develop new ideas and adjust strategies effectively according to the situation (Kimono, 2025). Additionally, innovation management

capability is another critical factor that enables organizations to add value to their products and services while effectively responding to shifting market demands (Elkin & Elkin, 2024).

Another key factor influencing organizational adaptability is change management in a diverse environment, which helps organizations develop flexible structures and corporate cultures to accommodate rapid changes. Furthermore, management innovation serves as a fundamental component that enhances operational capabilities to align with the current business landscape (Chen & Wang, 2018). Given these considerations, this study aims to examine the antecedent factors affecting the adaptive advantage of SME entrepreneurs in the new normal era within the processed food and food products business group in Samut Prakan Province. The study is based on a conceptual framework incorporating strategic leadership, innovation management capability, change management in a diverse environment, management innovation, and adaptive capability—all of which are key factors in helping organizations build competitive advantages and create long-term growth opportunities. The findings from this research can provide guidelines for SME entrepreneurs, government agencies, and relevant stakeholders, helping them formulate strategies to manage organizations effectively, ensuring stability and sustainability in business operations.

OBJECTIVE

1. To examine the levels of strategic leadership, innovation management capability, change management in a diverse environment, management innovation, and adaptive capability among SME entrepreneurs in the processed food and food products business group in Samut Prakan Province during the new normal era.

2. To study the adaptive capability of SME entrepreneurs in the processed food and food products business group in Samut Prakan Province during the new normal era.

2. Concepts and Theories on Factors Affecting Entrepreneurs' Adaptive Capability

2.1 Strategic Leadership

In an era where organizations face intense competition and rapid changes, strategic leadership plays a crucial role in guiding organizations toward survival and sustainable growth. It encompasses four essential elements: strategic vision, strategic planning and formulation, strategic decision-making, and strategy implementation (Chung, Enz, & Lankau, 2023; Thompson, 2024). Strategic vision refers to a leader's ability to set a clear direction and inspire personnel to work towards shared objectives, facilitating the organization's capacity to develop and adapt to change (Kimonoyo, 2025). Once a strong vision is established, strategic planning and formulation become necessary to ensure efficient business operations. Leaders must analyze relevant data and consider internal and external factors to formulate strategies that align with the organization's goals. In a rapidly evolving business environment, strategic decision-making is crucial in enabling organizations to respond effectively to opportunities and challenges. Leaders must be able to make well-informed decisions despite limited information and must carefully manage risks. Additionally, strategy implementation involves translating strategic plans into tangible outcomes, which requires effective communication and continuous monitoring to ensure that operations are aligned with organizational objectives (Saputra & Kusnadi, 2021).

From the literature review, the researcher synthesized the key components of strategic leadership into four aspects: strategic vision, strategic planning and formulation, strategic decision-making, and strategy implementation.

2.2 Innovation Management Capability

Innovation management capability enhances organizational processes and workflows by fostering creativity and the development of diverse new marketing channels. These innovations in marketing serve to elevate product value by creating business content through modern marketing platforms and expanding customer engagement channels. The introduction of new marketing approaches through advanced technology allows businesses to communicate more effectively with their customers while meeting market demands. Additionally, innovation management capability supports flexible and creative work methods that encourage adaptability, openness to change, and acceptance of new ideas and work processes. The integration of modern management practices creates an environment that promotes information exchange and continuous learning both within and outside the organization, ensuring that

the organization remains competitive amid change. Beyond marketing and operational improvements, innovation management capability also encompasses the ability to enhance product value, which involves upgrading product quality, improving product design, refining production processes, and optimizing distribution strategies. These enhancements ensure that businesses effectively respond to evolving consumer needs with efficiency and impact. The ability to create and implement innovative marketing channels, introduce new work methods, and enhance product value contributes to an organization's competitiveness and long-term sustainability (Chen & Wang, 2018; Gao, Liu, & Ma, 2019).

From the literature review, the researcher synthesized the key components of innovation management capability into three aspects: the development of new marketing channels, the implementation of new work methods, and the enhancement of product value.

2. 3Change Management in a Diverse Environment

Global changes have transformed national borders into mere geographical markers that no longer limit human connectivity. This interconnectedness has led to increased cross-border labor migration, foreign worker movements, and greater diversity in gender and ethnicity within the workforce. As a result, workforce composition has evolved, creating a more diverse and dynamic labor environment. The international mobility of labor has given rise to multicultural organizations, where employees from various cultural backgrounds contribute to the workplace. This diversity influences organizational outcomes, as employees' ability to understand and leverage cultural benefits directly impacts operational efficiency and business performance. Multicultural organizations comprise employees with diverse identities and cultural perspectives, which affect overall workplace effectiveness. The ability of personnel to comprehend and integrate cultural differences into their work contributes significantly to organizational success. However, managing this diversity presents challenges for leadership, requiring strategic approaches to ensure inclusivity and collaboration among employees. As organizations continue to embrace diversity, their management processes must adapt to accommodate cultural differences, fostering a work environment that values participation, collaboration, and mutual respect (Cheung et al., 2021). From the literature review, the researcher synthesized the key components of change management in a diverse environment into three aspects: organizational structure, technology application, and participatory culture.

2. 4Management Innovation

In the digital era, management innovation is a crucial factor that enhances an organization's competitiveness. It can be categorized into three main components: digital marketing management, quality management systems, and workforce capability (Arslan et al., 2024). Digital marketing management enables organizations to effectively reach customers by leveraging technologies such as artificial intelligence (AI) and big data analytics to develop targeted marketing campaigns. These technologies allow businesses to optimize customer engagement and personalize marketing strategies, ensuring higher efficiency in reaching their target audience. Quality management systems focus on improving production and service processes to minimize errors, enhance customer satisfaction, and establish competitive standards. By implementing robust quality control measures, organizations can streamline operations and maintain consistent product and service excellence. Workforce capability plays a fundamental role in organizational adaptability, particularly in the digital era. Organizations must invest in developing employees' digital skills and fostering a learning-oriented corporate culture to enhance resilience and innovation. A workforce equipped with the necessary skills and knowledge can drive continuous improvement and ensure that the organization remains competitive in an ever-evolving business landscape (Lisha et al., 2024). The integration of these three components—digital marketing management, quality management systems, and workforce capability—enables organizations to adapt effectively and maintain a competitive edge in a rapidly changing environment.

From the literature review, the researcher synthesized the key components of management innovation into three aspects: digital marketing management, quality management systems, and workforce capability.

3. Concepts and Theories on Entrepreneurs' Adaptive Capability

In a rapidly changing business environment, adaptive capability is a critical factor that enables organizations to survive and achieve sustainable growth. A literature review reveals that adaptive

capability consists of three key components: work flexibility, risk management, and product development. Each of these elements plays a crucial role in strengthening organizations to navigate uncertainty and market fluctuations effectively (Lazarova et al., 2023). Work flexibility refers to an organization's ability to adjust its structure and work processes to align with changing market conditions and customer demands. Organizations with high flexibility can efficiently respond to external factors such as emerging technologies, new regulations, and evolving consumer behaviors. Developing work flexibility also enhances swift decision-making and resource optimization, reducing the negative impact of uncertainty (Caligiuri & Caprar, 2022). Risk management is another essential component of adaptive capability. Organizational leaders must be able to assess potential risks arising from both external and internal factors and develop strategic measures to mitigate these risks, ensuring business continuity. Effective risk management minimizes business losses and strengthens an organization's ability to handle unexpected situations (Kuntz, 2024). Product development plays a significant role in helping organizations remain competitive in fast-changing markets. The ability to introduce new products or enhance existing ones in response to consumer needs creates a competitive advantage. The product development process relies on market research, technological integration, and the ability to implement innovative ideas, ensuring that businesses can continuously adapt to shifting customer preferences. Thus, adaptive capability—comprising work flexibility, risk management, and product development—is essential for organizations to thrive in an uncertain business environment. Entrepreneurs who incorporate these three components into their business strategies will be better positioned to enhance resilience and create sustainable growth opportunities.

From the literature review, the researcher synthesized the key components of adaptive capability into three aspects: work flexibility, risk management, and product development.

4. Causal Relationships Between Variables in the Study

4.1 The Relationship Between Strategic Leadership and Innovation Management Capability

Strategic leadership plays a crucial role in fostering innovation management within an organization. Leaders with vision and the ability to set strategic directions create an environment that encourages innovation development. A study by Li & Liu (2020) found that leadership support in enhancing employee capabilities and promoting creativity has a direct impact on the success of innovation management. Additionally, Smith & Johnson (2021) emphasized that trust and collaboration between leaders and employees are key factors influencing innovation success. These findings indicate that effective strategic leadership positively influences innovation management within organizations. Therefore, the researcher proposes the following hypothesis:

Hypothesis 1: Strategic leadership has a positive influence on innovation management capability.

4.2 The Relationship Between Change Management in a Diverse Environment and Innovation Management Capability

Change management in a diverse environment plays a vital role in enhancing an organization's innovation management capability. Accepting and supporting diversity in ideas, experiences, and employee skills enables organizations to develop new concepts and adapt effectively to changing environments. Choi & Sung (2023) found that trust and collaboration between leaders and employees are key factors contributing to innovation success. Additionally, Cheung et al. (2021) highlighted that leadership support in employee capability enhancement and creativity promotion has a direct impact on successful innovation management. These findings suggest that effective change management in a diverse environment positively influences innovation management capability within organizations. Therefore, the researcher proposes the following hypothesis:

Hypothesis 2: Change management in a diverse environment has a positive influence on innovation management capability.

4.3 The Relationship Between Strategic Leadership and Management Innovation

Strategic leadership plays a crucial role in promoting management innovation within organizations. Leaders with a strong strategic vision can set clear directions and create an environment conducive to management innovation. A study by Lee, Choi, & Kim (2022) found that strategic leadership directly influences innovation management, impacting the performance of private universities

in Thailand. Furthermore, effective strategic leadership encourages the application of innovative concepts in organizational management. These findings suggest that strategic leadership positively influences management innovation within organizations. Therefore, the researcher proposes the following hypothesis:

Hypothesis 3: Strategic leadership has a positive influence on management innovation.

4.4 The Relationship Between Innovation Management Capability and Management Innovation

Innovation management capability is a key factor in developing management innovation within organizations. Organizations with strong innovation management capabilities can continuously apply new concepts to enhance operational efficiency. A study by Chen & Wang (2018) found that organizations with a high ability to manage innovation develop new management approaches faster than those lacking a clear innovation strategy. Additionally, successfully implementing new management concepts requires a robust innovation management capability to ensure effective transitions. A related study by Gao, Liu, & Ma (2019) explored the connection between innovation management and organizational management practices, concluding that organizations prioritizing innovation management can systematically improve their organizational structure, administrative processes, and competitive strategies. These findings suggest that effective innovation management capability positively influences management innovation within organizations. Therefore, the researcher proposes the following hypothesis:

Hypothesis 4: Innovation management capability has a positive influence on management innovation.

4.5 The Relationship Between Change Management in a Diverse Environment and Management Innovation

Change management in a diverse environment is critical to fostering management innovation within organizations. Supporting diversity in thought, experience, and skills among employees helps organizations develop new management approaches that respond effectively to evolving environments. A study by Choi & Sung (2023) found that trust and collaboration between leaders and employees significantly contribute to innovation success. Additionally, leader support in enhancing employee capabilities and promoting creativity directly impacts successful innovation management. These findings suggest that effective change management in a diverse environment positively influences management innovation within organizations. Therefore, the researcher proposes the following hypothesis:

Hypothesis 5: Change management in a diverse environment has a positive influence on management innovation.

4.6 The Relationship Between Strategic Leadership and Entrepreneurs' Adaptive Capability

Strategic leadership is a crucial factor in strengthening entrepreneurs' adaptive capability. Leaders with vision and strategic direction-setting abilities can create an environment that fosters adaptation and responsiveness to change. A study by Mason & Parker (2021) found that effective change management relies on leaders who can communicate and guide organizations through transformation smoothly. Additionally, trust and collaboration between leaders and employees are essential factors in ensuring successful adaptation within organizations. These findings suggest that strategic leadership positively influences entrepreneurs' adaptive capability. Therefore, the researcher proposes the following hypothesis:

Hypothesis 6: Strategic leadership has a positive influence on entrepreneurs' adaptive capability.

4.7 The Relationship Between Change Management in a Diverse Environment and Entrepreneurs' Adaptive Capability

Change management in a diverse environment plays a significant role in enhancing entrepreneurs' adaptive capability. Accepting and supporting diverse perspectives, experiences, and skills within an organization allows businesses to adapt effectively to changing environments. A study by Lee, Choi, & Kim (2022) found that individual diversity and diversity management capabilities impact employee performance efficiency. Similarly, a study by Tang et al. (2021) indicated that effective change management requires leaders to communicate and navigate diversity successfully. These findings

suggest that effective change management in a diverse environment positively influences entrepreneurs' adaptive capability. Therefore, the researcher proposes the following hypothesis:

Hypothesis 7: Change management in a diverse environment has a positive influence on entrepreneurs' adaptive capability.

4.8 The Relationship Between Management Innovation and Entrepreneurs' Adaptive Capability

Management innovation is a key driver of entrepreneurs' adaptive capability. Implementing new management approaches enables organizations to respond effectively to changes and challenges. A study by Jerab & Mabrouk (2022) found that effective change management requires management innovation and leaders who can guide organizations through transformation. Additionally, Kuntz (2024) emphasized that organizational collaboration and trust are essential factors that drive management innovation. These findings suggest that effective management innovation positively influences entrepreneurs' adaptive capability. Therefore, the researcher proposes the following hypothesis:

Hypothesis 8: Management innovation has a positive influence on entrepreneurs' adaptive capability.

5. New Knowledge

This research study on "Antecedent Factors Affecting the Adaptive Advantage of SME Entrepreneurs in the New Normal Era in the Processed Food and Food Products Business Group in Samut Prakan Province" is based on an extensive review of literature, theories, and conceptual frameworks, as well as relevant prior studies. Through this process, the researcher has developed a conceptual framework for the study, as illustrated in Figure 1.

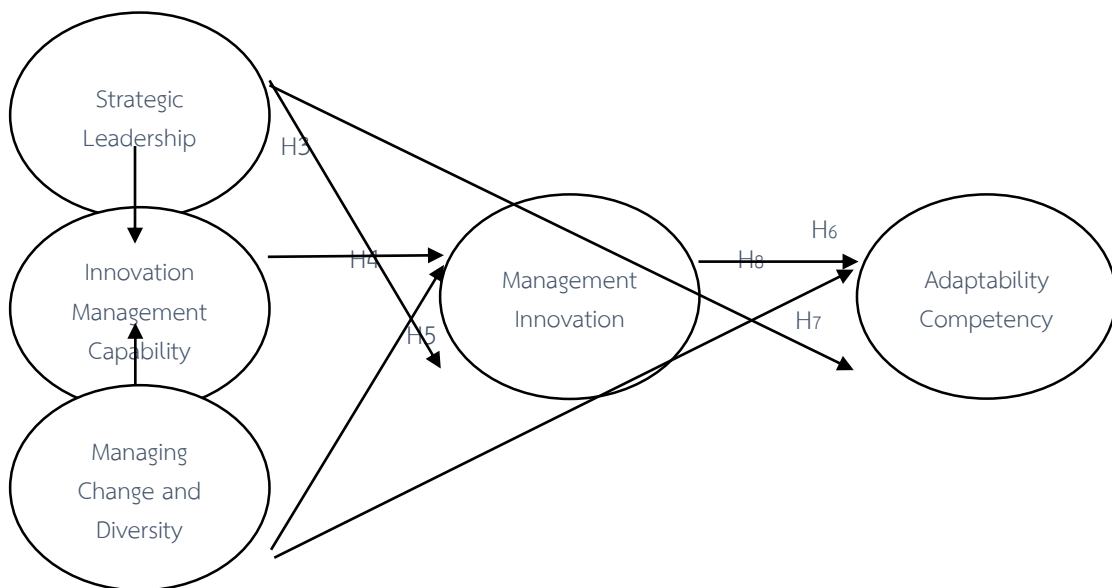


Figure1 Conceptual Framework

Source: Research synthesis of researchers

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