

**Competitive Ability of Community Enterprises in
Sakon Nakhon to Compete within ASEAN
Economic Community**

Wannida Sareekham^{1,a}, Kanokkan Vichasilp^{1,b} and Chudchai Rattanaphunt^{1,c} ¹Department
of Business Administration, Faculty of Industry and Technology,

Rajamangala University of Technology Isan Sakon Nakhon Campus,

199 Village No. 3, Phang Khon Sub-district, Phang Khon District, Sakon Nakhon Province 47160,
Thailand

^a<wannida.sar@gmail.com>, ^bkvichasilp@gmail.com, ^cchudchai4080@gmail.com

ABSTRACT

This research aims to: 1) Study the competitive ability of community enterprise in Sakon Nakhon province to compete within ASEAN Economic Community. 2) Compare the competitive ability of community enterprise in Sakon Nakhon province to compete within ASEAN Economic Community. The sample group of *Sakon Nakhon*. By using a purposive sampling method. *The research instrument a questionnaire. The data was analyzed by percentage, arithmetic mean, standard deviation values, t-test (independent sample) and F-test (ANOVA). The results of this present study revealed that: 1) Their overall ability to compete within ASEAN Economic Community was at a good level. 2) The different types of community enterprises, the number of their group member, budgets durations, and types of products did not affect their ability to compete in textile and garment industry. 3) The different average income affected on their competitive abilities different at 0.05 level of signification. Therefore, the ability to compete in the ASEAN Economic Community market of textile and garment community enterprises in Sakon Nakhon Province consists of the ability to meet the needs of the market, production and operation, corporate competitive strategies and establishing relationships with suppliers. The adaptation to keep up with the changing situation gives the textile and garment community enterprises in Sakon Nakhon province a competitive advantage which help them to compete in the ASEAN Economic Community market.*

Keywords: *Competitive ability, Ability to compete within ASEAN Economic Community, Community enterprise*

Introduction

Impact of the ASEAN Economic Community (AEC), is undoubtedly driving trade, investment, and marketing of its member countries due to the integrated market and production base. In addition, it reduces to trade protectionism, especially *non-tariff barriers*. *As the matter of the fact, there is greater linkages between ASEAN countries including Thailand [1].* It is, therefore, very challenging to drive both domestic or international entrepreneurs and small or large business. Local entrepreneurs have to adapt to the changes within the ASEAN Economic Community including the rapid changes of economic, social, cultural, legal, political and modern technology environments that will have an impact on the business operations [2]. The rapid changes in ASEAN might create competitive opportunities for large businesses more than small or medium-sized enterprises which are an important part of the economy of many countries [3]. Therefore, it is vital to create a more efficiently and effectively competitive advantages and competitive strategies in different forms to create business opportunities and to reduce the risk that may affect the operations, resulting in the growth and sustainable survival of the business. Therefore, the management must be adapted to keep up with the competitive environment. Considering and selecting suitable strategies, creating competitive advantages helps entrepreneurs determine the direction of business operations.

Competitive ability is something that businesses need to pay attention to because it indicate the competitive ability of the organization. The most important thing for entrepreneurs is to develop operational capabilities that create credibility for customers, counterparties or even financial institutions by developing standardized and systematic management, bringing technology to enhance operational efficiency and increase marketing channels that can reach the target customers. Development of capabilities that can support large quantities of orders by linking with manufacturers both in production groups and support groups in the supply chain. In addition, business networks may be linked to help support and increase access channels for customers and be able to enter the ASEAN market, such as the export network and trade associations [4].

Community enterprises play a vital role for nation economy by strengthening the grassroots economy and strengthening career opportunities, being a source of income and reduce the burden of expenses for the majority of citizens. It is a tool to solve poverty by distributing income to local areas. Community enterprises are therefore an important element in driving the economy [5]. Thailand has been operating in textiles and clothing for a long time which lead to skilled labor in production. But at the same time, the textile industry has a lot of competitors in the ASEAN. Therefore, to maintain the competitive ability of this industry, entrepreneurs need to change the mechanism of production, create new product innovations, and use new technology to increase production [6].

Sakon Nakhon province is considered as the city of the wisdom and culture of and indigo dyeing clothes with original patterns and unique applied patterns. It is well-known as

a city of indigo or Sakon Nakhon of Indigo. Sakon Nakhon Province has promoted the integration of Indigo dyed fabric manufacturers along with the development of quality and maintaining standards. The products from Sakon Nakhon Province was distributed widely and are redesign to be modern as a souvenir and home decorators for tourists and people who are fascinated with the charm of indigo cotton in order to meet the need of the consumers.

The researcher, therefore, studied the competitive ability of the ASEAN Economic Community of textile and garment community enterprise in Sakon Nakhon Province. The results from the research can be used as data for business development to create competitive advantages, create competitive strategy as well as develop and improve the operations of the textile and garment community enterprises to be able to compete with other competitors and enter the ASEAN Economic Community market to be sustainable for the future.

Research objectives

1. To study the competitive ability of the ASEAN Economic Community of textile and garment community enterprise in Sakon Nakhon Province
2. To compare the competitive ability of the ASEAN Economic Community market of textile and garment community enterprises in Sakon Nakhon province which have different organizational factors

Research Methodology

1. Sample group

This research is survey research to study the competitive ability of the ASEAN Economic Community of Textile and Apparel Community Enterprise in Sakon Nakhon Province.

The sample group in this research is 297 groups of textile and garment community enterprises in Sakon Nakhon Province [7]., selected by purposive sampling method.

2. Research Instrument

This research is survey research to study the competitive ability of the ASEAN Economic Community market of textile and garment community enterprises in Sakon Nakhon Province. The tools used for collecting these data were questionnaires which was developed in accordance with the theoretical framework and research objectives. The questionnaire is divided into 2 parts: general information and the competitive ability to the ASEAN Economic Community market of textile and garment community enterprises in Sakon Nakhon Province. Five Likert Scale are used to represent the degree of competitive

ability to the ASEAN Economic Community market of textile and garment community enterprises in Sakon Nakhon Province as follows [8].

Very high degree of competitive ability	=	5
High degree of competitive ability	=	4
Moderate degree of competitive ability	=	3
Low degree of competitive ability	=	2
Very low degree of competitive ability	=	1

3. Research Instrument Development

In this study, the research instrument was developed by using the following steps:

3.1) Study concepts, theories, literature and related research to be a guideline for defining the terminology and creating a questionnaire in accordance with the objectives and frameworks,

3.2) Create a questionnaire in accordance with the definitions of every variable,

3.3) Check the accuracy and the completeness of the questionnaire,

3.4) Conduct a pilot study with 30 textile and garment community enterprises in Nakhon Phanom Province.

3.5) Conduct a reliability test by using a statistical computer software to find the reliability according to the Alpha Coefficient. In this study, Cronbach's Alpha is greater than 0.70 which the Alpha Coefficient is between 0.708-0.952. Therefore, the questionnaire is reliable [9].

4. Data collection

In this study, the data was collected by using the following steps:

4.1) There are 297 questionnaires distributed according to population of the textile and garment community enterprises in Sakon Nakhon Province,

4.2) There are 247 questionnaires collected,

4.3) The responded questionnaires are checked for the completeness of the responses, and it is found that the responding rate is 83.17 percent which more than 20 percent as Aaker, Kumar and Day said that the response rate should not be less than 20 percent [10]. Therefore, the response rate of 83.17 percent, which is greater than 20 percent, is acceptable.

5. Data Analysis

Data analysis in this study are presented as follows:

5.1) General data of community enterprises are reported with descriptive statistics which consists of frequency and percentage.

5.2) Competitive ability of textile and garment community enterprises in Sakon Nakhon Province to the ASEAN Economic Community market are reported with descriptive statistics which consists of mean and standard deviation. The degree of competitive abilities was interpreted according to the criteria [8].

4.21 - 5.00 = Very High

3.41 - 4.20 = High

2.61 - 3.40 = Moderate

1.81 - 2.60 = Low

1.00 - 1.80 = Very low

5.3) Hypothesis testing uses t-test (Independent Sample) for testing the difference between the two variable mean groups and F-test (One Way ANOVA) for testing the difference between the mean values of more than 2 test groups. Differences between pairs using Least Significant Difference (LSD) Post Hoc Analysis.

Research Results

1) Most of the textile and garment community enterprise group have an average monthly income of 10,000 - 20,000 baht with a 5-10-year operation period. The type of the business is production and distribution with 30 members in the group. The initial capital is 30,000 - 50,000 baht. The main products are processed products from handwoven fabrics.

2) The ability to compete in the ASEAN Economic Community market of textile and garment community enterprises in Sakon Nakhon Province is at a high level. When considering each aspect, it was found that competitive ability in the ASEAN Economic Community market of textile and garment community enterprises in Sakon Nakhon Province is at a high level in 3 areas that are *market response* and is at a moderate level in an area as shown in Table 1.

Table 1 Descriptive Statistics about Competitive Ability in the ASEAN Economic Community Market of Textile and Garment Community Enterprises in Sakon Nakhon Province

Competitive Abilities	\bar{X}	S.D.	Level of Attitude
<i>Market response</i>	3.648	0.349	High
Production/operations	3.470	0.292	High
<i>Competitive strategies and organizational structure</i>	3.291	0.456	Moderate
Connecting with relevant suppliers	3.422	0.411	High
Total	3.458	0.246	High

From Table 1, it is found that the competitive ability of the ASEAN Economic Community market of textile and garment community enterprises in Sakon Nakhon Province is at a high level ($\bar{X} = 3.458$). When considering in each aspect, it is found that, it is found that the competitive ability to join the ASEAN Economic Community market of textile and garment community enterprises in Sakon Nakhon Province is at the high level in 3 areas, which were market response ($\bar{X} = 3.648$), production/operation ($\bar{X} = 3.470$), and *Competitive strategies and organizational structure* ($\bar{X} = 3.422$). However, the ability to connect with relevant suppliers is at an average level ($\bar{X} = 3.291$).

Table 2 The ability to response to market in ASEAN Economic Community market of textile and garment community enterprises in Sakon Nakhon Province

The Ability to Response to Market	\bar{X}	S.D.	Level of Attitude
The ability to reach the customers	3.890	0.451	High
The ability to increase consumer demand for products	3.678	0.704	High
The efficiency and mechanism of consumer protection	3.601	0.609	High

The ability to <i>response to</i> the growth rate of consumers	3.589	0.604	High
The ability to <i>response to purchasing power of consumers</i>	3.479	0.630	High
Overall Average	3.640	0.341	High

From Table 2, it is found that the competitive ability in response to market needs of the ASEAN Economic Community market of textile and garment community enterprise in Sakon Nakhon Province is at a high level ($\bar{X} = 3.640$). When considering each item, it is found that there is a high level in every item as follows: the ability to reach the customers ($\bar{X} = 3.890$), the ability to increase consumer demand for products ($\bar{X} = 3.678$), the efficiency and mechanism of consumer protection ($\bar{X} = 3.601$), the ability to *response to* the growth rate of consumers ($\bar{X} = 3.589$), and the ability to *response to purchasing power of consumers* ($\bar{X} = 3.479$), respectively.

Table 3 The ability in production/operation in ASEAN Economic Community market of textile and garment community enterprises in Sakon Nakhon Province

The Ability in Production/Operation	\bar{X}	S.D.	Level of Attitude
The ability in the production process to increase product value	3.926	0.719	High
the sufficiency of the workforce	3.817	0.653	High
quality/potential of labour skills in production process	3.817	0.713	High
the sufficiency of the raw materials	3.471	0.655	High
the ability to access to raw materials	3.398	0.702	Moderate
high technology in the production process	3.101	0.858	Moderate
The ability to apply local wisdom	3.613	0.751	High
innovation development	3.061	0.833	Moderate

the ability to access funding sources	3.028	0.882	Moderate
Overall Average	3.470	0.292	High

From Table 3, it is found that the competitive ability of the ASEAN Economic Community Market of Textile and Garment Community Enterprise in Sakon Nakhon Province in terms of production/operation is at a high level. When considering individual item, it is found that there is a high level of 5 items which are the ability of the production process to increase the value of the product ($\bar{X} = 3.926$), the sufficiency of the workforce ($\bar{X} = 3.817$), quality/potential of labour skills in production process ($\bar{X} = 3.817$), the ability to apply local wisdom ($\bar{X} = 3.613$), the sufficiency of the raw materials ($\bar{X} = 3.471$). There are 4 aspects which are at a moderate level that are the ability to access the source of raw materials ($\bar{X} = 3.398$), technology used in the production process ($= 3.101$), the ability to develop innovation ($\bar{X} = 3.061$), and the ability to access funding sources ($\bar{X} = 3.028$), respectively.

Table 4 The competitive ability to build relationships with suppliers in ASEAN Economic Community market of textile and garment community enterprises in Sakon Nakhon Province

The ability to build relationships with suppliers	\bar{X}	S.D.	Level of Attitude
the ability to connect with relevant suppliers	3.191	0.782	Moderate
data exchange capabilities	3.565	0.762	High
innovation research and development	3.182	0.702	Moderate
the strength of supporting industries	3.191	0.688	Moderate
the readiness of the basic structure of the group etc.	3.329	0.767	Moderate
Overall Average	3.291	0.456	Moderate

From Table 4, it is found that the competitive ability of the ASEAN Economic Community Market of Textile and Garment Community Enterprises in Sakon Nakhon Province concerning building relationships with suppliers of production factors. Overall, the average value is at a medium level. When considered individually, it was found that there was a high level of average in 1 item, the ability to exchange information ($\bar{X} = 3.565$) and four

items of a moderate level of meanings, which were the readiness of the group's infrastructure ($\bar{X} = 3.329$). Linked with other related businesses ($\bar{X} = 3.191$), the strength of activities or supporting industries ($\bar{X} = 3.191$), and research and development that drives innovation ($\bar{X} = 3.182$) respectively.

Table 5 The competitive ability in *competitive strategies* and *organizational structure* in ASEAN Economic Community market of textile and garment community enterprises in Sakon Nakhon Province

<i>Competitive Strategies and Organizational Structure</i>	\bar{X}	S.D.	Level of Attitude
The connection with the related business	3.174	0.749	Moderate
Competitive strategies in pricing	3.650	0.605	High
Competitive strategies in products	3.569	0.620	High
Increase market share	3.296	0.754	Moderate
Overall Average	3.422	0.411	High

From Table 5, it is found that the competitive ability of the ASEAN Economic Community market of textile and garment community enterprise in Sakon Nakhon Province in terms *Competitive Strategies* and *Organizational Structure* is at a high level. When considering each item, it was found that there were 2 items are at a high level that are competitive strategies in pricing ($\bar{X} = 3.650$), the product competition strategies ($\bar{X} = 3.569$). There are 2 items which are at a moderate level that are the market share compared with the competitors ($\bar{X} = 3.296$), and the connection with the related business ($\bar{X} = 3.174$) respectively.

3) The competitive ability to the ASEAN Economic Community market of textile and garment community enterprises in Sakon Nakhon Province in term of the average monthly income, periods of operations, types of the business, number of members in the group, initial funds, and the main products are shown in Table 6-7.

Table 6 The competitive ability of textile and garment community enterprises in Sakon Nakhon Province in ASEAN Economic Community market in term of types of business

	Types of business		t-value	p-value
	Production	Production and Distribution		
The competitive ability	3.286	3.468	3.008	0.084

** Statistical significance at the level of 0.05

From Table 6, it is found that the textile and garment community enterprises of Sakon Nakhon Province that have different types of businesses did not have different ability to compete to the ASEAN Economic Community market with statistical significance at the level of 0.05.

Table 7 The comparative of *Organizational Factors* and Competitive Ability of Textile and Garment Community Enterprises in Sakon Nakhon Province

<i>Organizational Factors</i>	Source of variation	Df	SS	MS	F	p-value
Average Income	Between and Within Variance	3	1.417	0.472	8.487	0.000*
		242	13.464	0.056		
		245	14.880			
Period of business operating	Between and Within Variance	2	0.148	0.074	1.222	0.297
		243	14.732	0.061		
		245	14.880			
Number of members	Between and Within Variance	2	0.024	0.012	0.197	0.821
		243	14.856	0.061		
		245	14.880			

Initial fund	Between	2	0.156	0.078	1.283	0.279
	and Within					
	Variance	243	14.725	0.061		
		245	14.880			
Main products	Between	3	0.051	0.017	0.227	0.842
	and Within					
	Variance	242	14.829	0.061		
		245	14.880			

** Statistical significance at the level of 0.05

From Table 7, it shows competitive ability of textile and garment community enterprises in Sakon Nakhon province. It was found that there are no significant differences of competitive ability among textile and garment community enterprises which have difference in period of business operating, number of members, initial fund, and main products. *However, the relation between the income and the competitive ability is statistical significance with statistical significance at the level of 0.05.*

Table 8 The Comparison of Average Income and Competitive Ability of Textile and Garment Community Enterprises in Sakon Nakhon Province

Average Income	\bar{X}	Less than 10,000 Baht	10,000-20,000 baht	20,001-30,000 Baht	More than 30,001 Baht
				3.196	3.461
Less than 10,000 Baht	3.196	-	0.000*	0.000*	0.028*
10,000-20,000 baht	3.461		-	0.018*	0.642
20,001-30,000 Baht	3.580			-	0.702
More than 30,001 Baht	3.525				-

* Statistical significance at the level of 0.05

From Table 8, it is found that textile and garment community enterprises in Sakon Nakhon Province that have an average monthly income 10,000-20,000 baht, 20,001-30,000 baht and more than 30,001 baht, have the ability to compete in the ASEAN Economic Community market more than community enterprises with average monthly income of less than 10,000 baht and community enterprises with average monthly income 20,001-30,000 baht, more competitive in the ASEAN Economic Community market than community enterprises with average monthly income 10,000-20,000 baht with statistical significance at the level of 0.05.

Research Result

According to the results of this present study toward competitive ability of *community enterprises in Sakon Nakhon* to compete within ASEAN Economic Community, the summary of the results is provided in this section.

1) Competitive ability towards the ASEAN Economic Community Market of textile and garment community enterprises in Sakon Nakhon Province is at a high level in 3 areas that are *market response* such as the ability to reach the customers, the ability to increase consumer demand for products, the ability to *response to* the growth rate of consumers as well as the efficiency and mechanism of consumer protection, etc. In terms of production/operations such as the ability in the production process to increase product value, the sufficiency of the workforce, the ability to access to raw materials, quality/potential of labour skills in production process, high technology in the production process, and innovation development, etc. In term of the *competitive strategies* and *organizational structure*, it is related to the connection with the related business, competitive strategies in pricing and products in order to increase market share, etc. In the light of the ability to build relationships with suppliers, the competitive ability was at a moderate level such as the ability to connect with relevant suppliers, data exchange capabilities, innovation research and development, the strength of supporting industries, and the readiness of the basic structure of the group etc.

2) The comparison of competitive ability in the ASEAN Economic Community market of textile and garment community enterprises in Sakon Nakhon Province reveal that the differences of the period of operating business, the number of members, and the initial funds did not have effects on the competitive ability among the group at a *significance level of 0.05*. However, the relation between the income and the competitive ability is statistical significance with statistical significance at the level of 0.05. The community enterprise that has an average income more than 10,000 Baht have more ability to compete in the ASEAN Economic Community market. The Community enterprises with average monthly income 20,001-30,000 baht, more competitive in the ASEAN Economic Community market than community enterprises with average monthly income 10,000-20,000 baht with statistical significance at the level of 0.05.

Discussion

According to the results of this present study toward competitive ability of *community enterprises in Sakon Nakhon* to compete within ASEAN Economic Community, the discussion is provided in this section.

1) The competitive ability in the ASEAN Economic Community of textile and garment community enterprises in Sakon Nakhon is at a high level. The competitive ability consists of the ability to meet the needs of the market, production/operation, corporate competitive strategies, and establishing relationships with suppliers. It requires the adaptive ability for the current situations in order to bring innovative and creative ideas to present new and valuable products to domestic and international markets and to create new competitive advantages. It is Consistent with the research of Uttama, Thanomphongphan and Buadathip[11]. In their study, it was found that the conditional factor demand is an important factor to increase the competitive ability of entrepreneurs. The factors that affect the level of competitive ability of entrepreneurs in agriculture, production, services, and wholesale and retail business are innovation development factors, the ability to access to funding sources, Competitive prices, the strength of activities or supporting industries, and the growth of export and international markets. It also is relevant to Porter[12] that essential principles about competition in the industry will help the industry succeed, including competitive strategies, competitive advantage, and nation competitive advantage. Porter also purposed the idea about the global trade competition that every country is trying to choose the best strategy to create a competitive advantage for their industry which regards to the opportunities and resources of the business with good quality and productivity. Jentsantikul, N. [13] said that enhancing the competitive ability of community enterprises should create competitive advantages by developing unique products which cannot be substituted and completely irreplaceable by others. The adaptive ability will lead to product innovation that meet the needs of consumers and lead to be able to enter the ASEAN Economic Community. It is relevant to Infahsaeng, A.[14] that the textile and garment industry in Thailand have adapted to join the ASEAN Economic Community by developing production technology, raw materials, and production quality control systems. Designing products to suit the market and Strengthening the brand is a strategy that will drive Thai textile businesses to cope with the current competition. It is Consistent with the research by Erikelpasch, Lejpras & Stephan[15] that conditional factor demand, business operating components, competitive context also have influences on business competitive ability. Baken & Dogan[16] states that the key factors that influence competitive advantage include conditional factor demand which has the highest influence on competitive advantage. Hill and Jones [17] stated that the competitive advantage is caused by four factors: efficiency, quality, innovation, response to customer needs. These four factors allow organizations to build competitive ability and maintain it continuously. It also helps creating different types of products which meet the needs of customers and reducing the operating costs of the organization. Having superior quality can lead to higher efficiency. Innovations can help increase efficiency, quality and customer satisfactory.

2) It was found that the textile and garment community enterprise of Sakon Nakhon Province With different monthly incomes have different ability to compete in the ASEAN Economic Community market. This is because community enterprises with higher incomes increase their capital for operating the business. There is a lot of cash flow to invest in developing their product as well as the production/operation. As the result, competitive strategies to create competitive advantage lead to a greater competitive ability in the ASEAN Economic Community of the textile and garment community enterprises in Sakon Nakhon. It is related to Omanee, A.[18] that the period of business operations is correlated with the success of the group, especially in the group that has a long operating period. It is because the members of the long-operating groups seem the have higher operating abilities that those of the newer groups. The increasing of the income and the reducing of the cost reflect the adaptation of the group. Therefore, the textile and garment community enterprises in Sakon Nakhon Province which have more incomes will have more competitive ability to join ASEAN Economic Community market than the community enterprises with lower incomes. It is relevant to Siriphattrasophon, S. that a large business has readiness with many advantages. Firstly, large businesses will have stronger financial resources and more investment potential. Secondly, the volume of sales for large businesses will be greater, resulting in a wider marketing share. Large businesses can access various data sources as well as recruiting talented staff to work easier than medium or small businesses [3].

Suggestions

1) Suggestions for practical *application*

The results of this research should be used to guide the operation of community enterprise entrepreneurs to create sustainable competitive advantages including planning to increase the potential of community enterprise entrepreneurs and other operators in joining ASEAN markets in the further.

2) Suggestions for further research

2.1) There should be research on the relationship between the competitive ability of entrepreneurs and their potential or readiness to enter the international market in order to increase the potential of the entrepreneurs for entering the global market.

2.2) There should be research on the effect of competitive ability, competitive strategies, and competitive advantages which increase the potential to step into the international market of entrepreneurs in order to improve and enhance the potential of the entrepreneurs in creating competitive advantages and developing the strategies to be suitable for entering international markets.

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