

## The Effect of External Business Environment on Business Performance of Small and Medium Food Processing Enterprises in Bangkok and Metropolitan Area

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*บทคัดย่อ* – การวิจัยครั้งนี้มีวัตถุประสงค์เพื่อศึกษาสภาพแวดล้อมภายนอกและผลการดำเนินงานของธุรกิจ และเพื่อศึกษาผลกระทบจากสภาพแวดล้อมทางธุรกิจภายนอกที่มีต่อผลการดำเนินงานของวิสาหกิจแปรรูปอาหารขนาดกลางและขนาดย่อมในเขตกรุงเทพมหานครและปริมณฑล กลุ่มตัวอย่างในการศึกษา ได้แก่ ผู้ประกอบการ ผู้จัดการ และหัวหน้าแผนกจำนวน 350 คน การสุ่มตัวอย่างใช้การสุ่มแบบเจาะจงและการสุ่มตามความสะดวก เก็บข้อมูลใช้แบบสอบถาม การวิเคราะห์ข้อมูลใช้สถิติเชิงพรรณนา ได้แก่ ความถี่ ร้อยละ ค่าเฉลี่ย ส่วนเบี่ยงเบนมาตรฐาน และสถิติอนุมาน ได้แก่ การวิเคราะห์สมการถดถอยเชิงเส้นแบบหลายขั้นตอนที่ระดับนัยสำคัญทางสถิติ 0.05 ผลการวิจัย พบว่า สภาพแวดล้อมทางธุรกิจภายนอก ได้แก่ สภาพแวดล้อมทางการเมือง สภาพแวดล้อมทางเศรษฐกิจ สภาพแวดล้อมทางสังคมวัฒนธรรม และสภาพแวดล้อมทางเทคโนโลยี และผลการดำเนินงานธุรกิจในด้านความพึงพอใจของลูกค้าและความพึงพอใจด้านการเงินมีระดับความสำคัญมากและมากที่สุดต่อวิสาหกิจแปรรูปอาหารขนาดกลางและขนาดย่อมในเขตกรุงเทพมหานครและปริมณฑล นอกจากนี้ ผลการวิจัย พบว่า สภาพแวดล้อมทางธุรกิจภายนอก ได้แก่ สภาพแวดล้อมทางการเมือง ( $\beta = 0.247$ ) สภาพแวดล้อมทางเทคโนโลยี ( $\beta = 0.156$ ) และสภาพแวดล้อมทางสังคมวัฒนธรรม ( $\beta = 0.133$ ) มีผลต่อการดำเนินงานธุรกิจอย่างมีนัยสำคัญทางสถิติที่ระดับ 0.05

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*Abstract* — The objectives of this research were studying the external business environment and business performance and studying the effect of external business environment on business performance of small and medium food processing enterprises. The area was scoped to Bangkok and metropolitan area. 350 entrepreneurs consisting of managers and heads of department were selected. The purposive sampling, followed by convenience sampling method, were applied. Questionnaire was employed to collect the data. The descriptive statistics including frequency, percentage, mean and standard deviation and inferential statistics including stepwise multiple linear regression at the statistically significant level as of 0.05 were hired in data analysis. The results discovered that the external business environment regarding the political environment, economics environment, social and cultural environment and technological environment and the business performance in terms of customers' satisfaction and finance satisfaction had high and highest significance towards the small and medium food processing enterprises. In addition, the results revealed that the external business environment including political environment ( $\beta = 0.247$ ), technological environment ( $\beta = 0.156$ ) and social and cultural environment ( $\beta = 0.133$ ) had an effect on business performance at the significant level as of 0.05.

*Keywords - External Business Environment; Business Performance; SMEs; Food Processing Enterprises*

## I. INTRODUCTION

The environmental analysis is very important for the business managers and entrepreneurs in doing their business because it will help enhance the business capability to increase their business performance. The business environment can be divided into two main groups including external and internal environment. The external environment refers to the factors that can affect the organization or the business. Mostly, the external environment is uncontrollable factors. There are four main categories based on PEST model namely, political, economic, social and cultural, and technological environment [1]. Meanwhile, the internal environment refers to the factors inside the organization [2]. Most of the internal factors in the organization are more controllable comparing to the external one because it is dependent on the organization management. The internal environment can moderate the organization to set their appropriate management for their subsidiaries, internal customers and suppliers [3]. However, the external environment is considerably more important for the entrepreneurs and managers because it will stimulate the alertness to monitor the unexpected factors and prepare for business guards.

In addition, the importance of small and medium food processing enterprises of Thailand can affect the country's GDP and the expansion of product exportation from 5.3% to 10.3%, accounted for 1.07 – 1.12 million baht [4,5]. With the current increase of the opportunity of the small and medium food processing enterprises, it is recommended to observe the business environment, especially the uncontrollable factors. In line with significant background, the researchers are interested in studying the effect of external business environment on business performance of small and medium food processing enterprises. The area of Bangkok and metropolitan area had been selected due to the critical contribution of industrial development.

## II. OBJECTIVES

With the study of the effect of external business environment on business performance of small and medium food processing enterprises in Bangkok and metropolitan area, the researchers set the objectives as follows:

1. To study external business environment and business performance of small and medium food processing enterprises in Bangkok and metropolitan area.
2. To study the effect of external business environment (political, economic, social and cultural, and technological environment) on business performance of small and medium food processing enterprises in Bangkok and metropolitan area.

## III. HYPOTHESES

The hypotheses (H) had been written as follows:

H1: External business environment has a positive effect on business performance.

H2: External business environment has a positive effect on customer satisfaction.

H1: External business environment has a positive effect on financial satisfaction.

## IV. CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

The conceptual research can be written as follows:

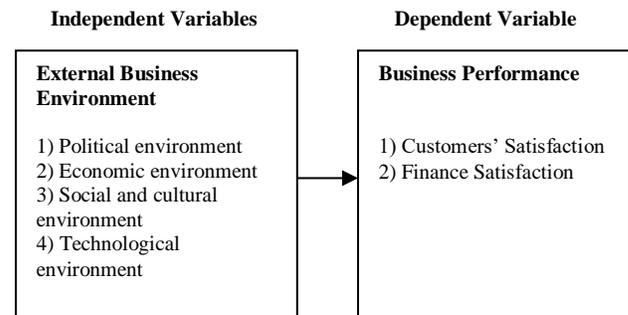


Figure 1. Conceptual framework.

## V. LITERATURE REVIEWS

### A. Small and Medium Food Processing Enterprises

The food processing industry is one of the highly competitive manufacturing industries in Thailand. It is also one of the S-Curve target industries, which plays an important role in economic growth. In line with this, the government and the Department of Industrial Promotion are committed to driving the food sector into the food hub or world food valley. In the past year, the Thai food industry still has the potential of being a producer and exporter. Even though, the recent statistics showed that the total production has shrunk slightly, a total output of 29.8 million tons, the number of outputs compared to other countries, the volume of production in Thailand is still higher. It is believed that the food processing can further grow and develop by depending on technology development and production process improvement, to promote products with reliability and to link researches to increase the quality of products [6]. The food processing industries in Thailand can be divided into three categories, namely, small, medium and large, based on Ministry of Industry [7]. Nevertheless, the small and medium scale aspect takes more significant part because it needs less personnel and capital investment. It also creates employment and are important sources of economic growth and foreign currencies. In Ghana, small and medium enterprises' activities, can reduce the poverty [8]. In Indonesia, SMEs has received a number of attention [9]. However, operating the SMEs has encountered many challenges. For example, SMEs in South Africa's food processing faces with complex, growth challenges and opportunity which the government need to restructure the South Africa's agrifood system [10]. In order to promote the growth of SMEs, the government needs to put effort, for example, in China [11]. Also, the organization should find something new to improve themselves for example

adopting technology [12] and innovation [13] as well as lean practices [14].

### *B. External Business Environment*

External environment is the factor that is beyond the control of the organization. It always change, dynamic, and is impossible to keep track of changes in the environment. The management should focus on critical environmental factors. In general, the external environment is divided into two points including the operating environment and general environment [15]. The operating environment refers to the environment that can affect the business operation; for example, the company's stakeholders, government, communities, competitors, suppliers, raw materials, creditors, workers and beneficiaries. In the meantime, the general environment refers to the factors that do not affect the short-term operation of the organization. But, it affects the long-term decision making, including economic, social, cultural, political, legal, geographic, and international factors. However, the general environment is very important because it can sustain the business. Many researchers have put importance on it and try to study the general environment by using PEST analysis including politics, economics, social and cultural and technological environment [1]. The academicians also extend the concept of PEST by using PESTEL with adding environment and legal [16]. Not only this, there is also SWOT by Albert S Humphrey that has been used to analyze the external environment to see the weakness and strength [17].

### *C. Business Performance*

Business performance is very popular dimension that has been used to study and investigate the success of the business. The business performance refers to the measurement of business performance by focusing on financial and broader operational criteria [18]. The business performance has been measured by many ways including financial and non-financial perspectives including financial performance, customer relations, internal business processes, and learning and growth which it is called "balanced scorecard" [19]. The balanced scorecard has been also linked to the business strategies [20]. Also, Hoque and James [21] has linked balanced scorecard to measure the size and market factors, considering the impact on organizational performance. In SMEs, many small and medium enterprises are unaware of using balanced scorecard, for example, in the West Midlands region of the UK [22], and fail to use it [23]. However, balanced scorecard can be used efficiently if there is a strategic plan [24]. In Thailand, there is also usage of balanced scorecard in small manufacturing enterprises in upper northeast [25].

## VI. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

### *A. Population and Samples*

Population in this study are business owners, managers or head of department in processing food enterprises in Bangkok and Metropolitan area. With sampling computation employing unknown population [26] at the

confident level as of 95%, therefore, the samples were 350 persons.

### *B. Research Tools and Data Collection*

Researchers used close-ended survey questionnaires divided into 3 parts. The first part consisted of check-list questions asking about the personal factors including gender, age, marital status and education level. The second part consisted of rating scale questions (1-5 Likert scale) asking about four sides of external business environment including political, economic, social and cultural and technological environment. The third part consisted of rating scale questions (1-5 Likert scale) asking about business performance, namely, customers' satisfaction and finance satisfaction.

For data collection, the researchers employed convenience sampling method to distribute the questionnaires. After the questionnaires returned, the researchers inspected the completion and correctness.

### *C. Validity and Reliability*

For validity check, the researchers had experts in related fields inspect the accurateness and consistency of contents and questions, and recommend the improvement and edition. For reliability check, the researchers used the Cronbach's alpha coefficient. Its value was 0.856 for external business environment and 0.874 for business performance. The overall of questionnaires had the Cronbach's alpha coefficient as of 0.884. These values were higher than 0.80 [27], this meant that the data derived from this survey questionnaire can be proceeded to have further study.

### *D. Data Analysis*

Researchers analyzed the data derived from samples by using descriptive statistics including frequency, percentage, mean and standard deviation and inferential statistics consisting of multiple regression model analysis to oversee the effect of external business environment (politics, economics, social and cultural and technological environment) on business performance of small and medium food processing enterprises in Bangkok and metropolitan area. The result also described the degree of variable relationship [28]. Herewith, all basic requirements before using the multiple regression model analysis were required and tested [29,30].

## VII. RESULTS

The study of the effect of external business environment on business performance of small and medium food processing enterprises in Bangkok and metropolitan area had been conducted and analyzed by using descriptive and inferential statistics. The details had been portrayed as follows:

### *A. Study of Respondents' General Information, External Business Environment and Business Performance of Food Processing SMEs*

- Study of respondents' general information

From the study, most of the respondents are female (64.3%), aged between 30 – 39 years old (29.0%), married (69.75%) and graduated in lower than Bachelors’ degree (67.3%).

- Study of external business environment

TABLE I. MEAN, STANDARD DEVIATION AND INTERPRETATION OF EXTERNAL BUSINESS ENVIRONMENT

Items	$\bar{x}$	S.D.	Agreeable
<i>Political environment</i>			
Po.Envr1: Policy and regulation supporting business	4.18	0.71	High
Po.Envr2: Tax rates	4.13	0.61	High
Po.Envr3: Policy and standards of products	4.18	0.67	High
Po.Envr4: Support and subsidies from the government	4.25	0.67	Highest
Po.Envr5: Domestic politics certainty	4.13	0.75	High
Overall	4.17	0.49	High
<i>Economic Environment</i>			
Eco.Envr1: Interest rate of bank deposit and loan	4.28	0.68	Highest
Eco.Envr2: Supports and subsidies from bank	4.26	0.70	Highest
Eco.Envr3: Cost of raw input transportation	4.32	0.61	Highest
Eco.Envr4: Energy and fuel situations	4.26	0.61	Highest
Eco.Envr5: Competitors from similar or relevant industries	4.18	0.58	High
Overall	4.26	0.45	Highest
<i>Social and Cultural Environment</i>			
Soc.Envr1: Change of customer’s need	4.33	0.70	Highest
Soc.Envr2: Taste trends and styles from other countries	4.29	0.69	Highest
Soc.Envr3: Change of customer behavior	4.36	0.61	Highest
Overall	4.33	0.52	Highest
<i>Technological Environment</i>			
Tech.Envr1: Technological environment consisting of technology changes	4.23	0.70	Highest
Tech.Envr2: Innovation and new technology creation	4.31	0.59	Highest
Tech.Envr3: Infrastructure and facilities	4.30	0.64	Highest
Overall	4.28	0.52	Highest
Overall of External Business Environment	4.26	0.38	Highest

From the study, it found that the overall of external business environment was rated in the “Highest” level with mean score as of 4.26. When considering into each dimensions, the social and cultural environment, the technological environment and the economics environment was rated in the “Highest” level with mean score as of 4.33,

4.28 and 4.26, respectively. In the meantime, the policy and politics environment was rated in the “high” level with mean score as of 4.17.

- Study of business performance

TABLE II. MEAN, STANDARD DEVIATION AND INTERPRETATION OF BUSINESS PERFORMANCE

Items	$\bar{x}$	S.D.	Agreeable
<i>Customer Satisfaction</i>			
CS1: More satisfaction towards products	4.12	0.68	High
CS2: More satisfaction towards product delivery	4.13	0.65	High
CS3: More number of customers	4.22	0.61	Highest
CS4: More repeat product usage customers	4.17	0.63	High
CS5: Ability to keep customer base	4.11	0.58	High
Overall of customer satisfaction	4.15	0.48	High
<i>Finance Satisfaction</i>			
FS1: Profit increase	3.95	0.66	High
FS2: Asset and resource increase	4.06	0.66	High
FS3: Product cost reduction	4.12	0.66	High
FS4: Efficient budget usage	4.09	0.58	High
FS5: More investment resources	4.06	0.61	High
Overall of finance satisfaction	4.05	0.47	High
Overall of business performance	4.10	0.43	High

From the study, it found that the overall of business performance was rated in the “high” level with the mean score as of 4.10. When considering into each dimension, the customers’ satisfaction and finance satisfaction were rated in the “high” level with mean score as of 4.15 and 4.05, respectively.

**B. Hypothesis Testing**

- Hypothesis 1: External business environment has an effect on business performance.

TABLE III. MULTIPLE REGRESSION ANALYSIS OF THE EFFECT OF EXTERNAL BUSINESS ENVIRONMENT ON BUSINESS PERFORMANCE

External Business Environment	Business Performance			t	Sig.
	B	Std. Error	Beta		
(Constant)	1.826	.223		8.185	.000
Political	.247	.046	.281	5.322	.000
Technological	.156	.045	.189	3.496	.001
Social and Cultural	.133	.049	.161	2.725	.007
R = 0.484; R <sup>2</sup> = 0.235; Adjusted R <sup>2</sup> = 0.228; S.E.E. = 0.380; Durbin-Watson = 1.608; Sig. = 0.000					

From the study, it found that the model has correlation coefficient (r) as of 0.484, meaning that the external business environment has low positive relationship with business performance of small and medium food processing enterprises in Bangkok and Metropolitan area. The R<sup>2</sup> is equal to 0.235, meaning that the model can accurately predict the effect of external business environment on business performance as of 23.5% at the significant level as of 0.05. The equation can be written as follows:

$$Y = 1.826 + .247(\text{Political}) + .156(\text{Technological}) + .133(\text{Social and Cultural})$$

- Hypothesis 2: External business environment has an effect on customer satisfaction.

TABLE IV. MULTIPLE REGRESSION ANALYSIS OF THE EFFECT OF EXTERNAL BUSINESS ENVIRONMENT ON CUSTOMER SATISFACTION

External Business Environment	Customer Performance			t	Sig.
	B	Std. Error	Beta		
(Constant)	1.916	.253		7.562	.000
Political	.236	.053	.243	4.479	.000
Social and Cultural	.180	.056	.196	3.237	.001
Technological	.110	.051	.120	2.173	.030
R = 0.437; R <sup>2</sup> = 0.191; Adjusted R <sup>2</sup> = 0.184; S.E.E. = 0.432; Durbin-Watson = 1.730; Sig. = 0.000					

From the study, it found that the model has correlation coefficient (r) as of 0.437, meaning that the external business environment has low positive relationship with business performance of small and medium food processing enterprises in Bangkok and Metropolitan area. The R<sup>2</sup> is equal to 0.191, meaning that the model can accurately predict the effect of external business environment on customer satisfaction as of 19.1% at the significant level as of 0.05. The equation can be written as follows:

$$Y = 1.916 + .236 (\text{Political}) + .180 (\text{Social and Cultural}) + .110(\text{Technological})$$

- Hypothesis 3: External business environment has an effect on financial satisfaction.

TABLE V. MULTIPLE REGRESSION ANALYSIS OF THE EFFECT OF EXTERNAL BUSINESS ENVIRONMENT ON FINANCIAL SATISFACTION

External Business Environment	Financial Satisfaction			t	Sig.
	B	Std. Error	Beta		
(Constant)	1.823	.242		7.544	.000
Political	.291	.047	.305	6.183	.000
Technological	.238	.044	.264	5.355	.000
R = 0.446; R <sup>2</sup> = 0.199; Adjusted R <sup>2</sup> = 0.194; S.E.E. = 0.421; Durbin-Watson = 1.560; Sig. = 0.000					

From the study, it found that the model has correlation coefficient (r) as of 0.446, meaning that the external

business environment has low positive relationship with financial satisfaction of small and medium food processing enterprises in Bangkok and Metropolitan area. The R<sup>2</sup> is equal to 0.199, meaning that the model can accurately predict the effect of external business environment on financial satisfaction as of 19.9% at the significant level as of 0.05. The equation can be written as follows:

$$Y = 1.823 + .291(\text{Political}) + .238(\text{Technological})$$

### VIII. DISCUSSION, LIMITATION AND RECOMMENDATION

#### A. Discussion of the Study

- *The study of the external business environment and business performance of small and medium food processing enterprises in Bangkok and metropolitan area*

From the study related to the external business environment, it found that the social and cultural environment, the technological environment, the economic environment and the political environment were significant [1] towards managing the small and medium food processing enterprises in Bangkok and metropolitan area. The study also corresponds to the study done by Cheng, Kadir and Bohari [31] addressing that the companies should scan the environment especially about the technology in Thai food SMEs because being able to update with world dynamic can increase the business efficiency. In addition, not only considering into the environment in the domestic scope, the international aspects such as the international economics collaboration such as ASEAN economic community (AEC) must be also considered [5].

- *The effect of external business environment on business performance of small and medium food processing enterprises in Bangkok and metropolitan area*

From the study, it found that the political environment had an effect on business performance in terms of customers' satisfaction and finance. This is due to the management of small and medium food processing enterprises in Bangkok and metropolitan area requires to consider the policy and regulation supporting business, the tax rates such as taxes on raw materials, the policy and standards of products, the support and subsidies from the government such as giving the campaign "Thai buys Thai product" and the domestic politics certainty. The result has been supported by the study of Blackburn [11] mentioning that, in China, the government policies can have an effect on SMEs. Furthermore, this result is related to the study done by Harash, Al-Tamimi and Al-Timimi [32], addressing that SMEs continually have to respond to changes in the legal framework given by the government that occur regularly. In addition, the study indicated that the social and cultural environment has an effect on business performance, especially the terms of change of customer's need and the taste trends and styles from other countries. This is true. The need of people is unlimited and dynamic. If the enterprises desire to increase the customer

satisfaction, they should study about the wants of customers. This situation relates to the study done by Wee et. al. [33], studying about consumer's perception, purchase intention and actual purchase behavior of organic food products, who found that the customers' wants need to be kept studying. Lastly, the study also found that the technological environment has an effect on business performance in terms of both customer satisfaction and financial satisfaction. With the era of technology, it is unavoidable that all businesses will be affected by the technology change, innovation and new technology creation. This is respondent to the study conducted by Jotikasthira and Onputtha [12] who recommends that the technology is needed to take into account for business operation. Also, the entrepreneurs and other related persons need to update knowledge and news related to the technology because it has quickly changed.

### B. Limitation of the Study

This study was limited to the quantitative research studying in the area of processing food enterprises in Bangkok and metropolitan area. Also, the independent variables were limited to the external business environment which includes political, economic, social and culture and technology. In the meantime, the dependent variables were scoped only in the finance and customers satisfaction. The other variables such as internal business environment, business strategies, organizational learning and growth were not included.

### C. Recommendation of the Study

- *For Entrepreneurs*

1) The enterprises should consider the external business environment which includes political, technological and social and cultural in running the business to increase the business performance. In addition, the enterprises should utilize the result of this study to set the appropriate strategies in order to increase the business performance. This may include, for instance, relationship building with customers, government and partners, service innovation or electronic commerce.

2) The enterprises should consider about the political social and cultural, and technological environment in order to increase business performance in terms of customer satisfaction.

3) The enterprises should consider about political and technological environment to increase the business performance in terms of financial satisfaction.

- *For Future Studies*

1) There should be a study that employs the qualitative research method such as in-depth interviews, focus group and so forth in order to obtain the insight of external business environment affecting the business performance.

2) There should be an expansion of the study to other industry in order to compare and deep analysis the external business environment affecting the business performance.

3) There should be a study of other variables such as internal business environment, business strategies, organizational learning and growth in order to cover the significant factors.

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