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Factors Affecting the Development of Business Plans for Community consulting services

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Abstract.

The objectives of this study were to: (1) examine the factors affecting the development of business plans for community-based consulting services, (2) assess the level of community entrepreneurs' perceptions regarding factors related to personnel, resources, operational processes, participation, and policy support, and (3) propose guidelines for developing effective and sustainable business plans for community-based consulting services.

This study employed a quantitative research approach. The sample consisted of 115 community entrepreneurs. Data were collected using a structured questionnaire validated for content validity and reliability. Descriptive statistics, including percentage, mean, and standard deviation, were used, along with inferential statistics to examine the influence of the identified factors.

The results indicated that all five factors significantly influenced business plan development at a high level. Among these, personnel and resources were identified as the most influential, followed by operational processes, community participation, and government policy support. These findings suggest that effective development of business plans for community-based consulting services should emphasize capacity building for entrepreneurs, appropriate resource allocation, structured operational processes, and integrated collaboration among stakeholders to enhance the sustainability and competitiveness of community enterprises in the long term.

Keywords: Business plan; Community enterprise; Consulting services; Participation; Sustainability

1. Introduction

Community-based enterprises play a crucial role in strengthening grassroots economies, generating income, and improving the quality of life of local communities (Putnam, 2000; Scarborough, 2016). In Thailand, community enterprises and small-scale local businesses have been promoted as important mechanisms for sustainable economic development. However, many community entrepreneurs still lack systematic knowledge and skills in business planning, resulting in unclear business directions, inefficient resource utilization, and limited competitiveness (Kotler & Keller, 2016).

A business plan is an essential managerial tool that helps entrepreneurs define visions, objectives, strategies, and operational guidelines (Kotler & Keller, 2016; Scarborough, 2016). It enables systematic analysis of internal and external environments, assessment of opportunities and risks, and effective decision-making. Moreover, business plans are often required for accessing financial support, government assistance, and external partnerships

(Osterwalder & Pigneur, 2010). Despite their importance, the development of effective business plans among community enterprises remains constrained by various factors, including limited human resources, insufficient funding, lack of appropriate processes, weak stakeholder participation, and inconsistent policy support (Barney, 1991; Putnam, 2000; Waiwutthanaphumi et al., 2023).

Previous studies have addressed factors influencing entrepreneurial capability and enterprise development. For example, research by Natawat (2023) at Suan Sunandha Rajabhat University found that strategic management, internal environment, and marketing strategies significantly affect the development of entrepreneurs' capabilities in the herb-based cosmetics sector. Studies on community enterprises highlight that social pressure, economic incentives, and sustainable practices influence entrepreneurial transitions and community enterprise sustainability. Pranee (2023) indicated that social and environmental incentives and resource management significantly affect the development of community enterprises toward circular economy models.

Recent research by Waiwutthanaphumi et al. (2023) emphasizes the role of marketing mix elements and service management factors—such as service quality, personnel competence, operational processes, pricing, and accessibility—in shaping the success of service-oriented enterprises. These findings suggest that integrating technical business knowledge with service and marketing considerations is critical for developing effective business plans for community-based consulting services.

Business consulting services for communities have emerged as an important mechanism for transferring knowledge, enhancing entrepreneurial capabilities, and supporting the implementation of business plans (Scarborough, 2016; Waiwutthanaphumi et al., 2023). Understanding the factors influencing the development of business plans for community-based consulting services is essential for designing effective consulting systems responsive to local contexts. Accordingly, this study investigates key factors affecting business plan development for community-based consulting services in Thailand, contributing both academic insights and practical implications for sustainable community enterprise development.

1. Research Objective

1.1 To examine the factors influencing the development of business plans for community consulting services.

1.2 To analyze the challenges and provide recommendations for the effective development of business plans for community consulting services.

2. Literature review

2.1 Community-Based Enterprises and Business Planning

Community-based enterprises (CBEs) strengthen local economies, generate income, and improve community well-being (Putnam, 2000; Scarborough, 2016). In Thailand, CBEs are promoted as tools for sustainable development. However, many entrepreneurs lack systematic knowledge and skills in business planning, leading to unclear strategies, inefficient resource use, and limited competitiveness (Kotler & Keller, 2016). Business plans provide a structured approach to define vision, objectives, strategies, and operations, and are essential for accessing financial support, partnerships, and policy assistance (Osterwalder & Pigneur, 2010).

2.2 Factors Affecting Business Plan Development

Personnel (Human Capital): Entrepreneurial knowledge, skills, and competencies are critical for developing and implementing effective business plans. Capacity building and training enhance decision-making and operational efficiency (Barney, 1991; Natawat, 2023).

Resources: Adequate financial, material, and informational resources are essential for competitive advantage and business feasibility. Resource limitations hinder systematic planning and scalability of CBEs (Barney, 1991; Waiwutthanaphumi et al., 2023).

Operational Processes: Structured procedures, workflows, and systematic consulting methods improve the implementation and effectiveness of business plans (Osterwalder & Pigneur, 2010; Natawat, 2023).

Community Participation (Social Capital): Engagement of local stakeholders ensures business plans align with community needs. Networks, trust, and collaboration enhance plan relevance and acceptance (Putnam, 2000; Prachayapipat, 2023).

Policy Support: Government policies and institutional backing provide incentives, training, and market access. Consistent policy support facilitates sustainable business development (Putnam, 2000; Waiwutthanaphumi et al., 2023).

2.3 Integrating Factors for Sustainable Business Plans

Effective business plan development requires integration of personnel, resources, operational processes, community participation, and policy support. Prior studies show that combining technical business knowledge with service management, marketing, and stakeholder engagement enhances plan feasibility, adoption, and sustainability (Waiwutthanaphumi et al., 2023; Natawat, 2023; Pranee, 2023). A holistic approach ensures both short-term operational success and long-term sustainability of community-based consulting services.

2.4 Conceptual Framework

This study proposes a framework linking five factors—personnel, resources, operational processes, community participation, and policy support—to business plan development for CBEs. The framework integrates strategic management, resource-based theory, social capital, and service management perspectives, guiding the empirical investigation of effective and sustainable business planning.

3. Methodology

This study employed a quantitative research design, suitable for examining relationships and influences among variables in a structured manner (Creswell, 2014). The population consisted of community entrepreneurs, and a purposive sample of 115 entrepreneurs was selected, consisting of prior studies on community-based business research (Scarborough, 2016).

The research instrument was a structured questionnaire divided into two sections:

General information of respondents,

Opinions regarding factors affecting business plan development across five dimensions—personnel, resources, operational processes, participation, and policy support—derived from

strategic management, social capital, and service management concepts (Barney, 1991; Putnam, 2000; Waiwutthanaphumi et al., 2023), and

Additional suggestions.

The questionnaire was validated for content by experts and tested for reliability using Cronbach's alpha, meeting acceptable thresholds recommended in social science research (Hair et al., 2019). Data was analyzed using descriptive statistics (frequency, percentage, mean, standard deviation) and inferential statistics to examine the influence of the identified factors.

4. Results

The findings of this study indicate that all five factors—personnel, resources, operational processes, community participation, and policy support—significantly influenced the development of business plans for community-based consulting services at a high level.

Personnel and Resources: Personnel and resources emerged as the most influential factors. Entrepreneurs' knowledge, skills, and competencies directly affect decision-making, operational efficiency, and strategic planning, while adequate financial, material, and informational resources determine the feasibility and sustainability of business plans. This aligns with resource-based theory, which emphasizes the role of human and organizational resources as critical determinants of competitive advantage (Barney, 1991; Scarborough, 2016).

Operational Processes: Structured operational processes and systematic consulting methods were identified as crucial for translating strategic plans into actionable outcomes. Clear workflows and standardized procedures enhance coordination, reduce redundancies, and improve the efficiency of business plan implementation (Osterwalder & Pigneur, 2010; Natawat, 2023).

Community Participation: Active involvement of community stakeholders strengthens the alignment of business plans with local needs and social contexts. Social capital theory underscores the importance of trust, collaboration, and networks in achieving sustainable outcomes (Putnam, 2000; Prachayapipat, 2023).

Policy Support: Government support, including policies, training programs, and access to resources, was found to facilitate sustainable business plan development. Inconsistent or insufficient policy support may hinder implementation, while effective policy frameworks provide incentives and legitimacy for community-based consulting initiatives (Waiwutthanaphumi et al., 2023).

Overall Findings: The integration of internal capabilities (personnel and resources), structured processes, stakeholder participation, and external support mechanisms (policy) provides a comprehensive approach for developing effective and sustainable business plans in community-based consulting services. These results suggest that multi-dimensional strategies are necessary to enhance both operational efficiency and long-term sustainability of community enterprises.

5. Conclusion

This study concludes that personnel, resources, operational processes, community participation, and policy support play a significant role in the development of business plans for community-based consulting services. The findings highlight the necessity of integrating internal capabilities with external support to achieve sustainable enterprise development.

Personnel and Competency Development: Entrepreneurial knowledge and skills are fundamental for effective business planning and strategic decision-making.

Resource Availability: Adequate allocation of financial, material, and informational resources ensures feasibility and sustainability of business plans.

Operational Processes: Structured and systematic consulting processes enhance the implementation and effectiveness of business plans.

Community Participation: Engagement of local stakeholders ensures plans are relevant, accepted, and aligned with community needs.

Policy Support: Government policies and institutional mechanisms provide essential incentives, legitimacy, and sustainability.

Recommendations:

Develop and enhance entrepreneurial competencies through training, mentoring, and capacity-building programs.

Ensure sufficient resources are available and optimally allocated to support business plan implementation.

Establish clear and standardized operational processes to guide systematic planning and execution.

Encourage active stakeholder participation to improve alignment and acceptance of business plans.

Strengthening policy frameworks and institutional support to facilitate long-term sustainability and scalability of community-based consulting services.

Implications for Future Research:

Future studies could adopt qualitative or mixed method approaches to gain deeper insights into behavioral and contextual factors affecting business plan development in diverse community settings. Additionally, examining longitudinal impacts of interventions such as training, resource allocation, and policy support could provide valuable evidence for designing sustainable business planning frameworks.

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