

Enhancing Performance through Best HRM Practices, Organizational Learning, Market Orientation for Value-Added Products and Strategic Management Planning Capability of Semi-Processed Foods from Animals and Plants in Thailand: An Empirical Study

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Abstract

The purpose of this paper is to investigate the relationship between best HRM practices, organizational learning, market orientation for value-added products and strategic management planning capability. A survey was used as a research instrument and was given to the owner / managers of community enterprises in Thailand. The model is tested using the data collected from 628 semi-processed foods from animals and plants firms in Thailand. The results indicate that best HRM practices have positive influence on organizational learning, market orientation for value-added products and strategic management planning capability. Organizational learning, market orientation for value-added products have a positive effect on strategic management planning capability, but with strategic management planning capability have positive influence on performance. Thus, contributions and suggestions are also provided for further research.

Keywords: Organizational Learning, Market Orientation for Value-Added Product, Strategic Management Planning Capability, Semi-Processed Foods from Animals and Plants

1. Introduction

In recent years, the rapid advancement of technology has been accelerating a global transformation of the competitive environment. This technological revolution signals the dawn of a new era. Scholars have argued that firms should seek to identify latent needs to innovate, develop opportunities, and find new means of delivering value beyond merely espousing the values and practicing the behaviors associated with the best human resource management (HRM) practices. In this age of organizational learning-based economies, qualified human resources are the key to business success. In order to improve the quality of human capital, the importance of best HRM practices cannot be ignored. The increasing interest around best HRM has caused a significant body of empirical research to emerge, examining the impact of different best HRM practices on organizational performance.

To address this best HRM practices gap from the practitioner's point of view, a research study was undertaken. Our current research effort is an extension of the research study of the best HRM practices, organizational learning, market orientation for value-added products and strategic management planning capability and their links to performance which consist of customer satisfaction, market share and profitability. However, there have been relatively few empirical studies relating to these concepts. This will be discussed in greater depth in the review of the theoretical literature.

The purpose of this research is to examine the relationships between best HRM practices and performance which consists of customer satisfaction, market share and profitability by using organizational learning, market orientation for value-added products and strategic management planning capability as mediators. In this study, the key research questions for the paper are as follows: Firstly, how does best HRM practices affect organizational learning and influence the market orientation for value-added products? Secondly, how do best HRM practices affect strategic management planning capability? Thirdly, how does organizational learning and market orientation for value-added products affect the strategic management planning capability? Fourthly, how does strategic management planning capability affect the performance which consists of customer satisfaction, market share and profitability?

This article is organized as follows. In the next section, we review the relevant literature and develop the research statement. Then, we detail the methodology used to design the empirical study. The contributions to best HRM practice are presented. Practice and future research opportunities are suggested, and the literature is listed.

2. Literature Review and Hypothesis Development

Clearly, some of the major factors that influence a company’s decision to adopt human resource management practices as a source of competitive advantage can help to explain the growth and sustainability of the firm (Mayson & Barret, 2006). In particular, each of the factors explored is subject to managerial influence and is an essential element of strategic business plans in our interdisciplinary conceptual framework. The conceptual and theoretical structure is shown in Fig. 1.

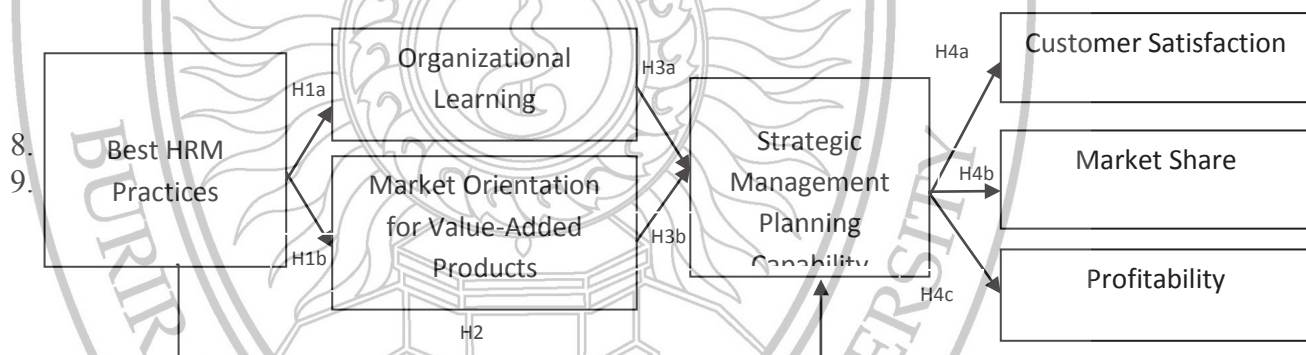


Figure 1. Conceptual Model of the Relationship between Enhancing Performance through Best HRM Practices, Organizational Learning, Market Orientation for Value-Added Products and Strategic Management Planning Capability

2.1 Best Human Resource Management Practices

Best HRM practices refers to five factors including appraisal, staffing, training and development, work flow, as well as rewards and compensation. The strategic relevance of best HRM practices is highlighted by the fact that they intervene on organizational learning, market orientation for value-added products and strategic management planning capability, in addition to their effect on performance which consists of customer satisfaction, market share and profitability.

Many studies have indicated that best human resource management practices play a critical role in facilitating organizational learning, market orientation for value-added products and strategic management planning capability (Lin & Kuo, 2007; Kang

et al., 2007; Minbaeva, 2005; Jaw & Liu, 2003) and enhance its performance (Michie & Sheehan, 2001; Ahmad & Schroeder, 2002; Guest et al., 2003). Therefore, we posit the hypothesis as below:

H1a: The greater the best human resource management practices are, the more likely that firms will achieve higher organizational learning.

H1b: The greater the best human resource management practices are, the more likely that firms will achieve higher market orientation for value-added products.

H2: The greater the best human resource management practices are, the more likely that firms will achieve higher strategic management planning capability.

2.2 Organizational Learning

Organizational learning refers to the process by which organizations acquire and develop knowledge. This learning process consists of four primary elements: knowledge acquisition, information distribution, information interpretation and organizational memory (Huber, 1991). Firms engaged in organizational learning gained the ability to be flexible, to quickly reconfigure its architecture and reallocate their resources to deal with an emerging opportunity or threat (Slater & Narver, 1995). The basic tenet of the organizational learning is that with the accumulation of experience. Thus, on this basis it can be deduced that organizational learning can lead to enhanced strategic management planning capability. Therefore, we posit the hypothesis as below:

H3a: The greater the organizational learning is, the more likely that firms will achieve higher strategic management planning capability.

2.3 Market Orientation for Value-Added Products

Market orientation for value-added products refers to the operationalization of the marketing concept and so reflects the extent to which a firm's actions are consistent with the marketing concept (Kohli & Jaworski, 1990). Market orientation for value-added products is an action orientation toward taking risks and relates to a forward looking outlook where firms actively seek out and exploit opportunities to introduce new products, anticipate change and generate first-mover advantages that shape market direction (Matsuno et al., 2002). Therefore, we posit the hypothesis as below:

H3b: The greater the market orientation for value-added products is, the more likely that firms will achieve higher strategic management planning capability.

2.4 Strategic Management Planning Capability

Strategic management planning capability refers to capability generating information, promoting long-range thinking, generating new ideas and by providing structured means for identifying and evaluating strategic alternatives (Schwenk & Shrader, 1993). Effective strategic management planning capability will provide a channel and forum for communication, knowledge sharing and will create contexts capable to influence the content and quality of strategic decisions (Grant, 2003). As supported in previous research by Lumpkin and Dess (1996), a proactive firm seizes new opportunities through effective planning processes such as scanning the

environment to seek opportunities and taking pre-emptive action in response to perceived opportunity. Therefore, we posit the hypothesis as below:

H4a: The greater the strategic management planning capability is, the more likely that firms will achieve higher customer satisfaction.

H4b: The greater the strategic management planning capability is, the more likely that firms will achieve higher market share.

H4c: The greater the strategic management planning capability is, the more likely that firms will achieve higher profitability.

2.5 Performance

It is generally accepted that performance is a multi-dimensional construct (Venkatraman and Ramanujam 1987). Lee and Lee (2007) find that performance measures strongly influence the behavior of managers and employees. Performance has been defined as the outcome of a firm's activities in organizational performance. Thus, performance is separated into three sets of measures including customer satisfaction, market share and profitability.

3. Research Methodology

3.1 Population and Sample

The sample frame for this research is semi-processed foods from animals and plants firms in Thailand that have recently participated in best HRM practices. As a sampling base, all firms that had been involved in any form of best HRM practices publicized in 2014 were included. The population of the study is 628 firms. The questionnaire is filled out by chief executive officers (CEOs) representing our key informants since they receive information from a wide range of departments and, therefore, are a very valuable source for evaluating aspects of organizations.

3.2 Data Collection

A mail survey is used for data collection. To accomplish our research objectives, collected data from Department of Export Promotion Ministry of Commerce Royal Thai Government. This research adopted semi-processed foods from animals and plants business in Thailand as the demonstrative examples. These industries are characterized by rapid best HRM practices, which provide an excellent research context to examine best HRM practices and performance. The questionnaire was filled out by CEOs who have been shown in previous research to be knowledgeable key informants about knowledge concerning best HRM practices (Mavondo, Chimhanzi & Stewart, 2005). With regard to the questionnaire mailing, 30 surveys were undeliverable because some firms were no longer in business or had moved to unknown locations. Deducting the undeliverable from the original 628 mailed, the valid mailing was 125 surveys, from which 130 responses were received. Of the surveys completed and returned, only 125 were usable. The effective response rate was approximately 20.9%. According to Aaker, Kumar and Day (2001), the response rate for a mail survey, without an appropriate follow-up procedure, is less than 20%. Thus, the response rate of this study is considered acceptable.

3.3 Test of Non-Response Bias

To check for non-response bias a comparison was made between respondents from the first half of the first mail out and those from the second half of the second mail

out and also between respondents from the first and second mail out. The potential for non-response bias was assessed by using Armstrong and Overton's (1977) procedure.

3.4 Measurements

Apart from human resource managers rating of human resource management practices (the independent variable), and performance consist of customer satisfaction, market share and profitability (the dependent variables), other variables such as organizational learning, market orientation for value-added products and strategic management planning capability as mediator variable are controlled. We adopt the five-point Likert scale from 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree).

3.5 Validity and Reliability Tests

Reliability and validity tests were conducted on constructs with multivariate measures. Cronbach's α reliability estimates were applied to measure the internal consistency of these multivariate scales (Nunnally, 1978). In addition, the item-to-total correlations for each measure were at least 0.61. Based on Kerlinger (1999), measures with item-to-total correlations larger than 0.6 are believed to have high-criterion validity. Meanwhile, following Campbell and Fiske's (1959) criteria we test for construct validity and convergent and discriminant validity. Furthermore, discriminant validity, proposed by Aldawni and Palvai (2002) and Campbell and Fiske (1959), is conducted by counting the number of times an item correlates higher with items in other factors than with items in its own factor. The results confirm adequate discriminant validity. Table 1 shows the results for both factor loadings and Cronbach alpha for multiple-item scales used in this study.

Table 1
Results of Measure Validation

Items	Factor Loadings	Cronbach Alpha
Best HRM Practices	0.67-0.87	0.81
Organizational Learning	0.68-0.85	0.76
Market Orientation for Value-Added Products	0.74-0.86	0.75
Strategic Management Planning Capability	0.58-0.82	0.75
Customer Satisfaction	0.43-0.93	0.73
Market Share	0.71-0.82	0.77
Profitability	0.67-0.94	0.78

3.6 Statistics

The Ordinary Least Squares (OLS) regression analysis is used to test the hypothesized relationships and estimate factors affecting a firm's performance. Because both dependent and independent variables in this study were neither nominal data nor categorical data, OLS is an appropriate method for examining the hypothesized relationships (Aulakh, Kotabe and Teegen, 2000). In the study, the model of the aforementioned relationships is shown as follows.

$$\text{Equation 1: OL} = \beta_{001} + \beta_1 BHP + \beta_2 FA + \beta_3 FS + \epsilon$$

$$\text{Equation 2: MOV} = \beta_{002} + \beta_4 BHP + \beta_5 FA + \beta_6 FS + \epsilon$$

$$\text{Equation 3: SMC} = \beta_{003} + \beta_7 OL + \beta_8 MOV + \beta_9 FA + \beta_{10} FS + \epsilon$$

$$\text{Equation 4: SMC} = \beta_{004} + \beta_{11} OL + \beta_{12} MOV + \beta_{13} FA + \beta_{14} FS + \epsilon$$

$$\text{Equation 5: CS} = \beta_{005} + \beta_{15} \text{SMC} + \beta_{16} \text{FA} + \beta_{17} \text{FS} + \epsilon$$

$$\text{Equation 6: MS} = \beta_{006} + \beta_{18} \text{SMC} + \beta_{19} \text{FA} + \beta_{20} \text{FS} + \epsilon$$

$$\text{Equation 7: PT} = \beta_{007} + \beta_{21} \text{SMC} + \beta_{22} \text{FA} + \beta_{23} \text{FS} + \epsilon$$

Where; BHP= Best HRM Practices, OL =Organizational Learning, MOV= Market Orientation for Value-Added Products, SMC = Strategic Management Planning Capability,CS = Customer Satisfaction,MS = Market Share,PT =Profitability, FA = Firm age,FS = Firm size

4. Results and Discussion

The descriptive statistics and correlation matrix for all variables are shown in Table 2. The results of OLS regression according to four hypotheses are estimated as shown in Tables 3 to 7.

*Table 2
Descriptive Statistics and Correlation Matrix*

Variables	BHP	OL	MOV	SMC	CS	MS	PT	FA	FS
Mean	4.27	4.11	4.28	4.11	4.23	4.20	4.14	19	583
Std.	0.45	0.41	0.46	0.39	0.41	0.38	0.39	2	58
BHP	1.00								
OL	0.41**	1.00							
MOV	0.96**	0.41**	1.00						
SMC	0.73**	0.62**	0.70**	1.00					
CS	0.68**	0.60**	0.72**	0.76**	1.00				
MS	0.80**	0.68**	0.79**	0.79**	0.87**	1.00			
PT	0.63**	0.86**	0.62**	0.75**	0.82**	0.88**	1.00		
FA	-0.04	-0.01	-0.07	-0.07	-0.12	-0.09	-0.05	1.00	
FS	0.20*	0.12	0.22*	0.11	0.09	0.17	0.13	-0.03	1.00

Note: *p< .10, **p < .05, ***p < .01

Table 2 shows the descriptive statistics and correlation matrix for all variables. With respect to potential problems relating to multicollinearity, variance inflation factors (VIF) were used to provide information on the extent to which non-orthogonality among independent variables inflates standard errors. The VIFs range from 1.002 to 1.206 , well below the cut-off value of 10 recommended by Neter, Wasserman and Kutner (1985), meaning that the independent variables are not

correlated with each other. Therefore, there are no substantial multicollinearity problems encountered in this study.

Table 3
OLS Regression for Dependent Variable for Organizational Learning

Independent variables	Dependent Variables
	Organizational Learning
	Equation1
Best HRM Practices	0.40*** (0.08)
Firm Age	0.00 (0.20)
Firm size	0.08 (0.15)
Adjusted R ²	0.15

Note: Beta coefficients with standard errors are in parenthesis, * $p < .10$, ** $p < .05$, *** $p < .01$

Tables 3 to 7 present the results of OLS regression of the relationships between best HRM practices and performance via organizational learning, market orientation for value-added products and strategic management planning capability as a mediator. The first set of research hypotheses focused on the relationships between best HRM practices and organizational learning (Hypothesis 1a) is showed in Table 3. The findings indicate that best HRM practices (H1a: $b=0.40$, $p < 0.00$) have a positive and significant effect on organizational learning. Thus, hypotheses 1a is supported. Central to the best HRM practices is the fundamental value it holds toward organizational learning (Theriou&Chatzoglou 2008). The finding that best HRM practices has a direct influence on the organizational learning is not surprising. Adjusted R² in table 3 is too low because the data contain an inherently higher amount of unexplainable variability.

Table 4
OLS Regression for Dependent Variable for Market Orientation for Value-Added Products

Independent variables	Dependent Variables
	Market Orientation for Value-Added Products
	Equation2
Best HRM Practices	0.95*** (0.26)
Firm Age	-0.89 (0.63)
Firm size	0.05 (0.05)
Adjusted R ²	0.92

Note: Beta coefficients with standard errors are in parenthesis, * $p < .10$, ** $p < .05$, *** $p < .01$

The second set of the hypotheses concentrated on the relationships between best HRM practices and market orientation for value-added products (Hypothesis 1b) as shown in Table 4. The evidence indicates that best HRM practices (H1b: $b = 0.95, p < 0.00$) has a positive and significant effect on market orientation for value-added products. Therefore, Hypothesis 1b is supported. The finding about the main effect of best HRM practices on market orientation for value-added products and extends research by Mavondo, Chimhanzi, Stewart (2005), who found the relationship between human resource practices and market orientation. For the control variables, there are no impacts on the Best HRM Practices of all p values are greater than 0.05.

Table 5
OLS Regression for Dependent Variable for Strategic Management Planning Capability

Independent variables	Dependent Variables
	Strategic Management Planning Capability Equation3
Best HRM Practices	0.69*** (0.07)
Firm Age	-0.14 (0.16)
Firm size	-0.02 (0.12)
Adjusted R ²	0.46

Note: Beta coefficients with standard errors are in parenthesis, * $p < .10$, ** $p < .05$, *** $p < .01$

The third set of research hypotheses states that best HRM Practices is expected to positively drive strategic management planning capability (Hypothesis 2) as shown in Table 5. Best HRM Practices exert a strong influence on strategic management planning capability (H2: $b = 0.69, p < 0.00$). Therefore, best HRM Practices are necessary superior strategic management planning capability. Thus, Hypothesis 2 is supported.

Table 6
OLS Regression for Dependent Variable for Strategic Management Planning Capability

Independent variables	Dependent Variables
	Strategic Management Planning Capability Equation4
Organizational Learning	0.43*** (0.06)
Market Orientation for Value-Added Products	0.49*** (0.06)
Firm Age	-0.10

	(0.14)
Firm size	-0.06 (0.10)
Adjusted R ²	0.59

Note: Beta coefficients with standard errors are in parenthesis,

* $p < .10$, ** $p < .05$, *** $p < .01$

The fourth set of research hypotheses states that relationship organizational learning and market orientation for value-added products are expected to positively drive strategic management planning capability (Hypothesis 3a-3b) are show in Table 6. Relationship organizational learning and market orientation for value-added products have a significant positive effect on strategic management planning capability (H3a: $b=0.43$, $p < 0.00$, H3b: $b=0.49$, $p < 0.00$). Therefore, organizational learning and market orientation for value-added products are necessary superior strategic management planning capabilities. However, the history of strategic planning as a formalized and rigid process is expected to hinder performance in a volatile environment. Evolved, informal and more integrative planning actually positively contributes to market orientation effectiveness by ensuring top management emphasis on organizational learning and market orientation for value-added products, and has a positive impact on the level of an organization's strategic management planning capability, interdepartmental connectedness and appropriate reward systems (Kirca et al., 2005). Therefore, Hypotheses 3a is supported.

Table 7

OLS Regression for Dependent Variable for Customer Satisfaction, Market Share and Profitability

Independent variables	Dependent Variables		
	Customer Satisfaction	Market Share	Profitability
	Equation		
	5	6	7
Strategic Management Planning Capability	0.70*** (0.06)	0.74*** (0.06)	0.74*** (0.06)
Firm Age	-0.16 (0.16)	-0.08 (0.15)	-0.01 (0.15)
Firm size	0.01 (0.11)	0.12 (0.10)	0.07 (0.11)
Adjusted R ²	0.49	0.56	0.55

Note: Beta coefficients with standard errors are in parenthesis, * $p < .10$, ** $p < .05$, *** $p < .01$

Finally, the tests of the hypotheses which state that strategic management planning capability is expected to positively drive performance as measured by customer satisfaction, market share and profitability (Hypothesis 4a-4c) are shown in Table 7. Strategic management planning capability has a significant positive effect on performance consisting of customer satisfaction, market share and profitability (H4a: $b=0.70$, $p < 0.00$; H4b: $b=0.74$, $p < 0.00$; H4c: $b=0.74$, $p < 0.00$). Therefore, strategic

management planning capability is necessary for a superior performance as measured by customer satisfaction, market share and profitability. To that extent, empirical evidence points to the coexistence of formal and informal strategic management planning in most large firms (Grant, 2003). Therefore, Hypotheses 4a-4c are supported.

For the control variables consisting of firm age and firm size, there are no impacts on the best HRM practices and performance which consists of customer satisfaction, market share and profitability by using organizational learning, market orientation for value-added products and strategic management planning capability as a mediator of all p values are greater than 0.05.

5. Contributions

5.1 Theoretical Contributions

The purpose of the study was to empirically test several hypotheses advanced in the literature. Specifically, it aims to examine the relationships between best HRM practices and performance consisting of customer satisfaction, market share and profitability. In this framework, organizational learning, market orientation for value-added products and strategic management planning capability are used as mediators.

5.2 Managerial Contributions

In short, the research presents three main managerial implications. First, it helps practitioners to be aware of the existence of the critical factors of best HRM practices, organizational learning, market orientation for value-added products and strategic management planning capability. Second, the research enables practitioners to realize the nature of the critical success factors so that they can investigate their current situations of best HRM practices for improvement. Third, the prioritization helps practitioners understand the relative importance of the best HRM practices on performance.

6. Conclusion

A statistical analytical model for assessing the relationship between the best HRM practices on performance was developed on the basis of various hypotheses. Thailand semi-processed foods from animals and plants industries were selected for data checking by conducting a questionnaire survey and evaluation in this study. Therefore, to survive, enterprises must emphasize best HRM practices. Note that enterprises must fully understand the market conditions and carefully evaluate the best HRM practices and plan to obtain higher performance.

7. Limitations and Directions for Future Research

The results of this study should be considered in the context of the limitations inherent in cross sectional designs. Future research introducing multiple respondents as well as objective measures is suggested. Finally, this study is based on a snapshot in time and results should not as yet be considered as indicative of time consistent company behaviors. A longitudinal perspective should be adopted as part of future research in order to address this limitation. It is also considered useful for future research to expand on our understanding of best HRM practices, organizational learning, market orientation for value-added products and strategic management planning capability factors simultaneously.

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