

Abstract

The major aim of this research are to develop a model to increase the trading and investment capacity of SMEs entrepreneurs in Thai local communities to prepare for AEC by studying the potential and opportunities in trading and investment for SMEs entrepreneurs in Thai local communities as well as studying the role of the public and private sector in business development. This study is based on the SMEs entrepreneurs in Thai local communities under the supervision of Business Service Center region 6.

This research and development project is a field research and a mixed method of quantitative and qualitative research which includes descriptive study and survey of the attitudes on the business problems, the opinions on the changes after entering AEC of Thailand, and the demand of SMEs entrepreneurs in Thai local communities. Qualitative study includes focus group discussion of SMEs entrepreneurs in Thai local communities, in-depth interview of 3 group of key informants includes SMEs entrepreneurs ,public officials from business service center region 6 involved in policy implementation as well as in-depth interview of academicians and experts on AEC and SMEs. The data analysis applied in this study is descriptive statistics and content analysis and Participatory Action Research (PAR)

The findings show that the potential and opportunities of the trading and investment in preparing for AEC of SMEs' entrepreneurs in Thai local communities are the strengthens of entrepreneurs' production determination and the skills from local folk wisdom while the weaknesses are the lack of local and international marketing knowledge and the lack of capital as well as the administrative skills. The opportunities of SMEs in Thai local communities is the government supporting policy for SMEs for Thai local communities and the limitation is the strong competition and the cultural and social difference of each country. The major problems for SMEs operations are 1) the lack of international marketing knowledge, 2) the lack of knowledge in production and quality control, 3) the lack of human resources for international marketing , management, and foreign languages such as English, 4) the lack of capital, 5) the lack of latest production technology as well as the knowledge in product development.

The major roles of the public sector in the development of SMEs for Thai local communities in preparing for AEC are 1) the focus of public sector policy on the economic and political stability, 2) the specification of the related ministries' policies (policy) for the support of the trading and investment potential and opportunities for the preparedness for AEC: such as international investments under ministry of commerce, energy and environment under the ministry of science and technology, as well as fiscal and monetary policy, and 3) the development of Thai economic infrastructure, transportation. The major roles of the private sector are in administration, marketing, workers' skills development and the networking of the entrepreneurs in industrial, trading and banking associations with the support from the government.

The model for the development of trading and investment capacity of SMEs entrepreneurs for Thai local communities in preparing for AEC are 1) the internal and external economic and social drive, 2) the development of organization strategies, new opportunity and marketing strategies for investment locally and in ASEAN neighboring countries, 3) the development of strategies related to production, technology, and innovation in order to increase the capacity to international standard level and proper environmental management as well as the involvement of local communities in the development of marketing, accounting and finance, and human resources, 3) the building of cooperation among private sector networks such as the chamber of commerce and associations in order to create the networks for local and international markets in ASEAN.