

FACTORS AFFECTING HUMAN RESOURCE DIVERSITY ORIENTATION STRATEGY: AN EMPIRICAL EVIDENCE FROM ELECTRONIC BUSINESSES IN THAILAND

ปัจจัยที่ส่งผลกระทบต่อกลยุทธ์การมุ่งเน้นความหลากหลายของทรัพยากรมนุษย์:
การศึกษาเชิงประจักษ์จากธุรกิจอิเล็กทรอนิกส์ในประเทศไทย

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Abstract

The phenomenon of globalization leads to an increase in workforce diversity in many businesses. Human resource diversity orientation strategy plays a pivotal role in determining business success. Therefore, the purpose of this research was to investigate the factors affecting human resource diversity orientation strategy. The internal environment contained long-term business vision, human capital orientation and organizational experience value. The external environment consisted of technological uncertainty and environmental pressure that were proposed as antecedents. Data were collected from 137 electronic businesses in Thailand. The hypotheses were tested using the multiple regression analysis. The findings indicate that technological uncertainty, organizational experience value, environmental pressure and long-term business vision had a positive influence on human resource diversity orientation strategy. This research provides a better understanding of diversity strategy for practitioners and researchers under the notion of human resource management. Additionally, the findings suggested possible directions for businesses to increase an effective management towards diversity.

Keywords: Human Resource Diversity Orientation Strategy, Electronic businesses

บทคัดย่อ

จากปรากฏการณ์กระแสของโลกาภิวัตน์นำไปสู่การเพิ่มขึ้นในความหลากหลายของแรงงานของธุรกิจ กลยุทธ์การมุ่งเน้นความหลากหลายของทรัพยากรมนุษย์จึงมีบทบาทสำคัญต่อความสำเร็จของธุรกิจ ดังนั้น การศึกษานี้มีวัตถุประสงค์ในการศึกษาปัจจัยที่ส่งผลกระทบต่อกลยุทธ์การมุ่งเน้นความหลากหลายของทรัพยากรมนุษย์ โดยปัจจัยที่ส่งผลกระทบ ได้แก่ สภาพแวดล้อมภายใน ประกอบไปด้วยวิสัยทัศน์ระยะยาวของธุรกิจ การมุ่งเน้นทุนมนุษย์ และคุณค่าของประสบการณ์ธุรกิจ และสภาพแวดล้อมภายนอก ประกอบไปด้วยความไม่แน่นอนของเทคโนโลยีและความกดดันของสภาพแวดล้อม โดยเก็บข้อมูลจากธุรกิจอิเล็กทรอนิกส์ในประเทศไทยจำนวน 137 แห่ง ผลการทดสอบสมมติฐานโดยใช้การวิเคราะห์ถดถอยพบว่า ความไม่แน่นอนของเทคโนโลยี คุณค่าของประสบการณ์ธุรกิจ ความกดดันของสภาพแวดล้อม และวิสัยทัศน์ระยะยาวของธุรกิจมีผลกระทบเชิงบวกต่อกลยุทธ์การมุ่งเน้นความหลากหลายของทรัพยากรมนุษย์ ผลการศึกษาจะทำให้เกิดความเข้าใจเพิ่มมากขึ้นในเรื่องกลยุทธ์ความหลากหลายของทรัพยากรมนุษย์ ต่อผู้บริหารและนักวิจัย และเป็นแนวทางในการเพิ่มประสิทธิภาพในการจัดการความหลากหลายของทรัพยากรมนุษย์ต่อไป

คำสำคัญ: กลยุทธ์การมุ่งเน้นความหลากหลายของทรัพยากรมนุษย์ ธุรกิจอิเล็กทรอนิกส์

Introduction

The rapid changes due to globalization have an impact on economy, communication, and information technology. Therefore, it is important that a business develops itself in order to obtain an effective operation to fight against its competitors (Tieng et al., 2016). Such changes bring about extensive labor mobility and human resource diversity in an organization. Therefore, human resource is then identified differently in knowledge, ability and skills (Senichev, 2013). An organization with a high level of flexibility will be able to cope with challenges related to its business milestone. Human resource functions as a key factor that leads an organization to move forward and to deal with uncertainty (Yang & Konrad, 2011). Moreover, working within a workplace, people cannot avoid different types of reaction. Therefore, diversity management has become

a key strategy which leads an organization to obtain success (D' Netto et al., 2014).

Human resource diversity orientation strategy is a tool used to deal with changes of labor by developing employee's competency, supporting knowledge exchange and encouraging teamwork. It not only involves managing people for operation of a firm following its strategic management plans, but it also functions as crucial factor that generates the organization's success under uncertain and constantly changing environment (Agars & Kottke, 2005).

Contingency theory suggests that there is no best way to manage an organization. Each management strategy is suitable for different situations. The efficiency of an organization depends on its ability to adapt itself to fit the changing situation (Sausser, Reilly & Shenhar, 2009). Thus, an organization needs to study both internal and external environments that

have an effect on it. Chances and obstacles need to be investigated so as to determine what strategies should be used to gain a competitive advantage under uncertain situations. Therefore, this study on internal environment factors namely long-term business vision, human capital orientation and organizational experience value, and external environment factors pertaining to technological uncertainty and environmental pressure was investigated because it could affect diversity strategy formulation. The purpose of this research was to highlight the factors affecting human resource diversity orientation strategy. Two main reasons why selecting electronic business in Thailand were its fast growth rate and its high employment rate. Additionally, it is a kind of business that needs

a diversity of skillful labor. Diversity of skillful and talented labor is the most important factor that leads an organization to obtain effectiveness (Rasiah, 2003).

Research Objective

The main objective of this research was to investigate the relationship between human resource diversity orientation strategy and its antecedents of the electronic businesses in Thailand.

Literature review

Based on the previous review, the conceptual model was proposed as presented in Figure 1. All hypotheses were tested to be positive.

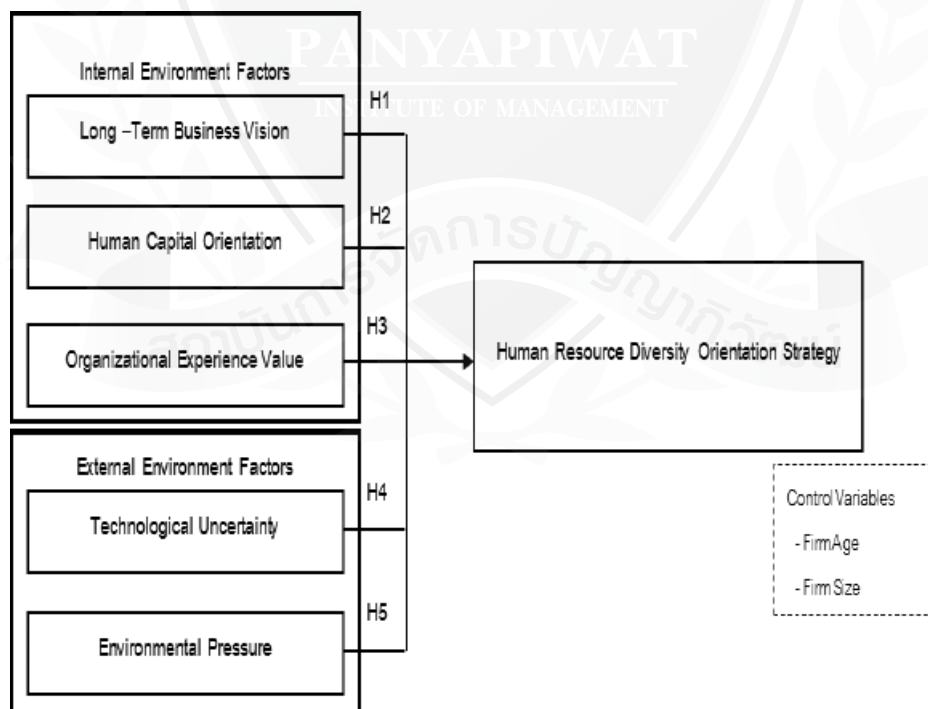


Figure 1 Conceptual Model

Human Resource Diversity Orientation Strategy (HRDOS)

Human resource diversity strategy is a critical human resource management strategy which responds to the changing labor. Human resource diversity strategy deals specifically with the firms operation, long-term planning, strategic planning, and survival in environments with uncertain and turbulent changes (Agars & Kottke, 2005).

This research defines human resource diversity orientation strategy as the potential of a firm in managing the difference of employees. It involves the facets of capability, knowledge and skill to integrate these competencies to be the potential of a firm through learning process, participation in organizations, and development of communication among several groups within an organization for the creation of a competitive advantage. There are five components relating to human resource diversity orientation strategy including knowledge exchange orientation, employee competency integration, idea-challenging encouragement, intra-organizational learning capability, and teamwork value enhancement. The objectives of human resource diversity orientation strategy are identified into development in acknowledging capability, acceptance, and value diversity in workplace. Moreover, this objective includes perceiving multiculturalism through organizational intervention for quality, modification of organizational culture, and leadership practices (Soni, 2000). Furthermore, human resource diversity orientation strategy deals with the allocation of the values

of cultural differences towards enhancing organizational and economic performance (Glastra, Schedler & Kats, 2002).

Antecedents of Human Resource Diversity Orientation Strategy

Long-Term Business Vision (LBV)

Long-term business vision refers to the direction of a long-term business approach to create the way and the method of achievement, effective operation, an implementation, and a consistency with future trends (Revilla & Rodríguez, 2011).

Previous studies have found that a long-term vision is the key point of a firm to reach a competitive position in the future. It leads to strategy formulation and organizational implementation. In addition, a long-term vision pertaining to diverse workforce is able to foster business to gain future success by generating a strategy that fits with a clear direction and goals. It also determines and describes what actions are possible and preferable for the business. With this capability, businesses can increase their workforce condition in order to harmonize and handle changes for both of internal and external environments (Calantone, Cavusgil & Zhao, 2002). To be summarized, this research proposes the following hypothesis:

H1: LBV has a positive effect on human resource diversity orientation strategy.

Human Capital Orientation (HCO)

Human capital orientation is defined under the umbrella of the organizational approach. It emphasizes the importance of human

capital as a valuable asset through knowledge, capability, and skill or expertise, which aligns to the organization's mission and strategic goal (Ployhart & Moliterno, 2011).

The prior studies have suggested that in firms, human capital is the fundamental source of productivity and competitive advantage. Furthermore, it is a source of strategic renewal whether it is from brainstorming and developing or improving personal skills (Bontis & Fitz-Enz, 2002). As a result, this research proposes the following hypothesis:

H2: HCO has a positive effect on human resource diversity orientation strategy.

Organizational Experience Value (OEV)

Organizational experience value refers to the collective expertise, knowledge, and experience from the past. It provides more values of operation and integrate with the present capability of a firm to reach sustainability (Kuckertz & Wagner, 2010).

Experience is necessary for learning development and decision making. The professional in business operation arises from expertise, knowledge from past experience, a variety of experience, and a wide range of deep experience. Several firms need to continue to learn and use their experience to evaluate the internal and external environments that may affect their implementation (Kim & Miner, 2007). In brief, firm's experience relates to a market context and the environment. It can be used to adapt a new strategic creation towards the business success (Cho & Padmanabhan, 2005). Thus, the hypothesis is posited as:

H3: OEV has a positive effect on human resource diversity orientation strategy.

Technological Uncertainty (TU)

Technological uncertainty is defined as the changes of technology that reveal hard prediction of the future results. It relates to the turbulence and dynamics of the surrounding environment (Stock & Tatikonda, 2008).

There are a number of studies about the perception of uncertain technology for estimating the environment. Businesses need data for making strategic decisions, and keeping this data in developing technology. It plays a crucial role in business competition (SubbaNarasimha, Ahmad & Mallya, 2003). Additionally, a competitive business obtains new ideas to select alternative technology from customers' ideas and recommendations. It affects cultural development and firm process. Consequently, a business has to continue following the technology changes in the growth of its technology enterprise compared to the external organization. Besides, a firm needs to adopt new types of work process pertaining to improving new technologies and solving technical problems (Bresnahan, Erik & Lorin, 2002). Thus, the hypothesis is posited as:

H4: TU has a positive effect on human resource diversity orientation strategy.

Environmental Pressure (EP)

Environmental pressure refers to the changing environment that affects business operation. It causes influences from customers, competitors, market and consumer styles. These are the driving forces for business which lead to the change of operational formats following the

environmental changes (González-Benito & González-Benito, 2010). The previous literature has revealed that the high competition of an industry will be under pressure caused by environment. It results mainly in the implementation of operations from customers, and competitors. Additionally, the complexity of environment affects the diversity of a group decision-making to formulate any strategies (Benschop, 2001). Hence, the hypothesis is posited as follows:

H5: EP has a positive effect on human resource diversity orientation strategy.

Research Methodology

A total number of 773 electronic businesses in Thailand were targeted as the population of this study. The data were obtained from the online database of the Department of International Trade Promotion, Ministry of Commerce, Thailand, accessed on February 14, 2016. They were chosen to participate in this study because electronic businesses were important for Thai economy and domestic employment. The electronic business in Thailand represents a large amount of the country's foreign direct investment (FDI), one of the most interesting sectors for foreign investors. Moreover, these businesses were categorized as both fast-growing and concentrated workforce. More importantly, it is necessary for business to obtain diversity skill development (Rasiah, 2003). The key informants were the managing directors or managing partners. The data were gathered by mail questionnaire. Each variable

was measured by a five-point Likert scale, ranging from 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree). A total of 137 questionnaires were returned and usable. The response rate of this sample was approximately 20.33 percent.

The non-response bias was examined. The t-test statistics was employed by comparing between early and late responses of the group mean by using the firm characteristics (Armstrong & Overton, 1977). The result revealed that there were no significant differences between two groups. Thus, it indicated that this research was without nonresponse bias problem.

The factor loadings of each item of all variables were between 0.617 and 0.915 which indicated the acceptable construct validity. Moreover, Cronbach's alpha coefficients of each item of all variables were between 0.715 and 0.952. It could be concluded that the internal consistency of the entire scale was existed (Nunnally & Bernstein, 1994).

The multiple regression analysis was selected to examine the hypothesized relationships. The equation of relationships is presented as:

$$HRDOS = \alpha_1 + \beta_1 LBV + \beta_2 HCO + \beta_3 OEV + \beta_4 TU + \beta_5 EU + \beta_6 FA + \beta_7 FS + \varepsilon_1$$

Results and Discussion

Table 1 presents the descriptive statistic and correlation matrix of human resource diversity orientation strategy on its antecedents. All of these correlations are less than 0.80 (Hair et al., 2010). Consequently, it can be concluded that the multicollinearity is not problematic.

Table 1 Descriptive Statistics and Correlation Matrix

Variables	HRDOS	LBV	HCO	OEV	TU	EP
Mean	3.97	4.19	3.72	3.96	4.10	4.15
S.D.	0.58	0.58	0.74	0.59	0.66	0.65
HRDOS	1					
LBV	.571**	1				
HCO	.381***	.402***	1			
OEV	.457***	.222***	.206***	1		
TU	.771***	.548***	.367***	.362***	1	
EP	.622***	.410***	.222***	.511***	.579***	1
FA	.011	.013	.142	-.068	.018	-.024
FS	.097	.045	.061	.164	.099	.092

p < 0.01

The results of regression analysis of the relationships among human resource diversity orientation strategy and its antecedents are presented in Table 2. First, the analysis shows that long-term business vision has a positive influence on human resource diversity orientation strategy ($\beta_1 = 0.102$, $p < 0.05$). The finding is consistent with Schermerhorn (2005) who mentions that long-term business vision is the future to generate or achieve improvement upon the present state of any affairs. Moreover, long-term business vision with particular reference to team direction, objectives and goals, leads to team effectiveness (Carmen, María de la Luz & Salustiano, 2006). In addition, long-term business vision of leaders guides and directs the creation of new ideas that help improve their work and lead to the formulation and implementation

of a strategy (Calantone, Cavusgil & Zhao, 2002). **Thus, hypothesis 1 is supported.**

Second, human capital orientation has no significant influence on human resource diversity orientation strategy ($\beta_2 = 0.035$, $p > 0.10$). It is consistent with the findings of Carpenter, Sanders & Gregersen (2001) which state that high quality human capital is one of the key factors that affects organizational performance. However, the electronic businesses do not emphasize the development of employee's skill and expertise. Furthermore, employee's competencies are not in accordance with the international standards (Sunthonkanokpong, Jitgarun & Chaokumnerd, 2011). From this reason, it is possible to post that the firm does not pay attention to the development of human resource. Human capital orientation does not play a significant role in

human resource diversity orientation strategy.

Thus, hypothesis 2 is not supported.

Third, organizational experience value has a positive influence on human resource diversity orientation strategy ($\beta_3 = 0.122$, $p < 0.05$). It is consistent with Majocchi, Bacchiocchi & Mayrhofer (2005) who argue that experience can reduce uncertainty and increase credibility in a global market. Furthermore, it can increase knowledge from collective experience to create opportunities for both domestic and overseas markets. Then, it increases knowledge, information and

experience of business leading to formulation strategy (Kim & Miner, 2007). In addition, a business can apply experience in creating a network and a relationship to obtain credit and commitment. Additionally, the higher experience of a firm will increase high quality of an employee performance. It also responds to an increase in customer requirements. Therefore, an increased level of experience leads to value and effectiveness (Patanakul & Milosevic, 2008). **Thus, hypothesis 3 is supported.**

Table 2 Results of Regression Analysis

Independent Variables	Dependent Variable
	HRDOS
Long-Term Business Vision (LBV: H1)	0.102** (0.049)
Human Capital Orientation (HCO: H2)	0.035 (0.044)
Organizational Experience Value (OEV: H3)	0.122** (0.047)
Technological Uncertainty (TU: H4)	0.696*** (0.054)
Environmental Pressure (EP: H5)	0.111** (0.053)
Firm Age (FA)	0.052 (0.083)
Firm Size (FS)	-0.024 (0.083)
Adjusted R ²	0.790
Maximum VIF	1.904

*** $p < 0.01$, ** $p < 0.05$, Beta coefficients with standard errors in parenthesis

Fourth, technological uncertainty has a significant influence on human resource diversity orientation strategy ($\beta_4 = 0.696$, $p < 0.01$). The result is consistent with Li (2012) who indicates that technological uncertainty causes effects of doing business. Therefore, it is beneficial for practitioners and entrepreneurs in understanding and guiding firms to adopt product development process, new ideas and new types of working process pertaining to improving training with new technology and teamwork to solve technical problems. Likewise, the businesses which perceive more technology uncertainty tend to utilize environmental scanning. Besides, the perceived uncertainty leads to an examination of a wider set of factors and a broader set of information sources such as information support which provides strategy implementation (Ngamkroeckjoti & Speece, 2008). **Thus, hypothesis 4 is supported.**

Finally, environmental pressure has a positive influence on human resource diversity orientation strategy ($\beta_5 = 0.111$, $p < 0.05$). It is consistent with Sharma (2000) who mentions that the environmental pressure is the factor affected from production environment change, competitor, technology, and market. Moreover, Mar Fuentes-Fuentes, Albacete-Sáez & Lloréns-Montes (2004) state that leaders who perceive degrees and change uncertainty will make a decision to create a strategy that supports the dynamic environment. It leads them to come up with approaches in strategic creation for teamwork consistent with dynamic change. Likewise, firms provide a suitable approach that can be used

to change their business for getting a better performance consistent with the environmental context. **Thus, hypothesis 5 is supported.**

Contributions

This research provided an understanding of the relationships between human resource diversity orientation strategy and its antecedents. Moreover, it also described the theories associated with how an organization improved its appropriate strategy that fit between the internal and external environment. Additionally, the results provided some managerial implications for practitioners. Managing directors and executives can develop and improve their strategic alignment from both internal and external business environments. It is important to note that technological uncertainty was strongly related to human resource diversity orientation strategy. Due to high-tech industry, technological uncertainty increased the learning of a firm in applying technology that could generate sustainable competitiveness over its competitors. Thus, an organization should pay attention to and put emphasis on learning about technological uncertainty which can be adapted to suit work operation. Moreover, managing directors and executives would better understand how their firms could create strategy and encourage their firms to operate quickly and effectively.

Summary and Conclusion

The purpose of this research was to investigate the factors affecting human resource diversity

orientation strategy. The sample consisted of 137 electronic businesses in Thailand. The multiple regression analysis results showed that technological uncertainty, organizational experience value, environmental pressure and long-term business vision had a positive influence on human resource diversity orientation strategy. Therefore, further research should pay attention to other moderating variables to examine the relationships among organizational flexibility,

cultural change, and collaborative culture since they function as the alternative moderating variables of human resource diversity orientation strategy framework. In addition, a future study may consider a larger sector, different population, and a service sector. This is because a further investigation on the service sector may reveal a high level of diversity of workforce which enhances the generalizability of the study.

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