Causal factors of Becoming an Innovative Organization and Business Performance of Service-Sector Small and Medium-Sized Enterprises (SMEs) in the Accommodation Industry in Thailand

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Abstract

This study aims to examine the levels of causal factors influencing the development of innovative organizations and business performance of small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) in the service sector, with a particular focus on the accommodation industry in Thailand. It also investigates the relationships and causal influences among service quality, digital transformation, strategic management, innovative organizations, and business performance, and proposes a structural model explaining these relationships. The sample consisted of 380 entrepreneurs and supervisory-level employees aged 20 years and above, working in accommodation-sector SMEs and registered with the Thai Small and Medium Enterprise Entrepreneurs Association. Data were analyzed using statistical software at a significance level of 0.05. Statistical techniques included descriptive statistics, confirmatory factor analysis (CFA), and model fit analysis to assess the consistency between the proposed model and empirical data. The findings indicate that service quality, digital transformation, strategic management, innovative organization, and business performance were all perceived at a high level. Service quality, digital transformation, and strategic management demonstrated strong correlations and significant causal effects on innovative organizations (0.90) and business performance (0.96). The proposed A-com Model effectively explained 90% of the variance in innovative organizations and 96% of business performance, with satisfactory goodness-of-fit indices. This study contributes to a deeper understanding of the key drivers of innovation and performance in accommodation-sector SMEs. The findings offer a useful theoretical and practical framework for future research and can support policymakers and relevant agencies in developing innovation-driven strategies. Additionally, SMEs can apply the results for organizational self-assessment, strategic planning, and enhancing competitiveness, sustainability, and adaptability in the digital and post-COVID-19 era.

Keywords: Innovative Organization, Business Performance, Small and Medium-sized Enterprises (SMEs), Service Sector, Accommodation Industry in Thailand

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Introduction

In the era of rapid changes in the business world driven by technology, consumer behavior, and intense competition, business organizations must possess the ability to adapt for survival and sustainable growth. This is especially true in the service sector, where customer expectations are constantly evolving. One of the key strategies enabling organizations to respond effectively to these changing contexts is becoming an innovative organization, which is capable of developing new ideas, methods, or services to enhance competitiveness. Innovation in services not only improves operational efficiency but also creates unique customer experiences that help organizations gain a sustainable competitive advantage (Lee and Kim, 2023; Zhang, 2024). In the context of Thailand, small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) play a vital role in the national economy, particularly in the service sector, which includes various industries such as the accommodation business. According to the Office of Small and Medium Enterprises Promotion (OSMEP), SMEs account for more than 99% of all enterprises in Thailand and contribute over 35% to the country's GDP (OSMEP, 2024). The accommodation industry holds high potential for generating tourism revenue and contributes significantly to employment and income distribution in local areas, especially as tourism rebounds in the post-COVID era (Tourism Authority of Thailand, 2023). However, SMEs in the accommodation sector often face limitations in resources, technology adoption, and innovation capabilities. Many struggle to keep pace with technological changes, digital transformation, and evolving customer expectations (Chaiyasit and Rattanawong, 2024). Unlike large corporations, SMEs typically lack formal structures and strategic innovation management, which can hinder long-term performance (Nguyen and Siripongdee, 2023). Therefore, it is essential to understand the causal factors that influence the development of innovative organizations in order to strengthen their business performance and sustainability. Although some research has addressed organizational innovation components and their impact on performance, most studies focus on large-scale enterprises or manufacturing sectors (Phan et al., 2023; Wang and Li, 2024). Research specifically targeting Thai SMEs in the accommodation service sector remains limited and lacks comprehensive structural analysis to clearly identify causal relationships among key factors. As such, this study aims to fill the research gap by investigating the causal factors of becoming an innovative organization and how these factors influence the business performance of service-sector SMEs in Thailand's accommodation industry. The findings are expected to provide both theoretical contributions and practical implications for SME development policies and strategies.

Research Objectives

1. To examine the levels of causal factors contributing to innovative organizations and the business performance of service-sector SMEs in the accommodation industry in Thailand.

2. To investigate the influence of causal factors on innovative organizations and the business performance of service-sector SMEs in the accommodation industry in Thailand.

3. To develop a model of becoming an innovative organization and business performance for service-sector SMEs in the accommodation industry in Thailand.

Conceptual Framework

Based on the literature review, the researcher has developed the conceptual framework for this study as follows:

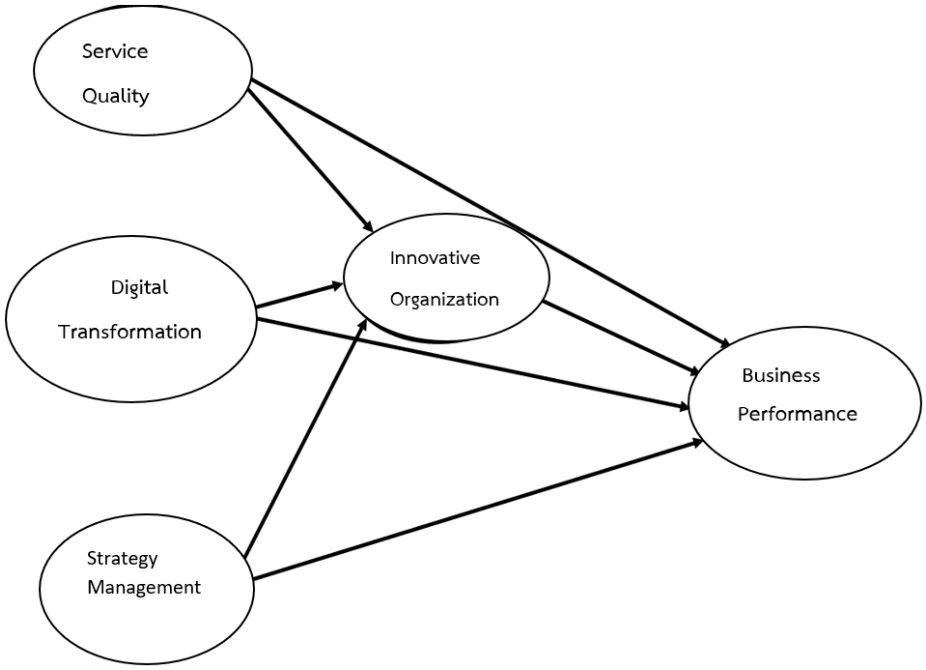

Figure 1 Conceptual Framework

Scope of the Research

To achieve the objectives of the study on Causal Factors of Becoming an Innovative Organization and Business Performance of Small and Medium-sized Enterprises (SMEs) in the Service Sector, Specifically the Accommodation Industry in Thailand, the researcher has defined the scope of the research as follows:

1. Content Scope

1.1 Service Quality based on the concept by Yang et al., (2024), comprising 5 dimensions: (1) Equitable Service (2) Timely Service (3) Ample Service (4) Continuous Service (5) Progressive Service

1.2 Digital Transformation, adopting the theory by Xhixho et al., (2025), consisting of 4 dimensions: (1) Customer Experience (2) Business Model (3) Technology (4) Organisation Structure and Processes

1.3 Strategic Management, using the concept and theory of Robinson et al., (2021), including 5 dimensions: (1) Mission Determination (2) Organizational Environment Analysis (3) Defining the Objectives of the Strategic Plan (4) Organizational Strategy Formulation (5) Implementation of Strategy

1.4 Innovative Organization, based on the theory of Putera et al., (2022), consisting of 3 dimensions: (1) Strategy and Vision (2) Organizational Structure (3) Organization Culture

1.5 Business Performance according to the concept of Al Sawalqa et al., (2011), comprising 2 components: (1) Financial Performance (2) Non-financial Performance

2. Geographic Scope

The researcher has limited the geographic scope of this study to Small and Medium-sized Enterprises (SMEs) in the service sector, specifically the accommodation industry, in Thailand.

Research Methodology

Research Design

This study employed a quantitative research design with a cause-and-effect approach.

Population and Sample

Population

The population for this research consists of entrepreneurs operating SMEs in the service sector, specifically in the accommodation industry, or employees holding supervisory-level positions and above, aged 20 years or older, working in SMEs in the accommodation sector who are members of the Thai Small and Medium Enterprise Association. The total population consists of 846 establishments (Office of Small and Medium Enterprises Promotion (OSMEP), 2024).

Sample

The sample group for this study includes entrepreneurs running SMEs in the service sector in accommodation or employees holding supervisory-level positions and above, aged 20 years or older, working in SMEs in accommodation, and members of the Thai Small and Medium Enterprise Association. The researcher has determined the sample size to be 380 individuals, based on 20 times

the number of observed variables in the model (19 x 20). The sampling method used is proportional stratified random sampling to obtain a representative number of samples from each organization. Then, the researcher distributed questionnaires using purposive sampling to select respondents who are suitable to answer the questionnaire.

Research Instruments

This study is quantitative research. The data collection instrument used in this study was a questionnaire developed by the researcher based on the review of relevant concepts, theories, and previous studies. The questionnaire consists of one set divided into six parts. The questions used to measure all variables were derived from the literature review to ensure relevance and alignment with the research objectives. The questionnaire is divided into six parts as follows: Part 1: Questions regarding the personal information of respondents, Part 2: Questions about Service Quality, Part 3: Questions about Digital Transformation, Part 4: Questions about Strategic Management, Part 5: Questions about Innovative Organization, Part 6: Questions about Business Performance Each question is measured using a rating scale with a 5-point Likert scale: 1 = Least, 2 = Low, 3 = Moderate, 4 = High, 5 = Highest

As for instrument validation**,** the researcher submitted the questionnaire to three experts for content validity evaluation. The validity was assessed using the Index of Item Objective Congruence (IOC) to measure the agreement between each item and the research objectives as well as specific definitions (Hambleton, 1984). The IOC value was 0.78, indicating good content validity. Besides, to test the reliability of the questionnaire, the researcher conducted a try-out with 30 employees whose job characteristics were similar to the sample group but were not part of the actual sample. The data collected were analyzed using Cronbach's alpha coefficient (α). The reliability coefficient was found to be 0.95, indicating the questionnaire was highly reliable and suitable for use in this study.

Data Collection

The questionnaire was distributed to the respondents by the researcher.

Data Analysis

1. Descriptive Statistics: The researcher used descriptive statistics to describe the characteristics and distribution of data for various variables based on demographic factors. Measurements included percentage (%), mean, and standard deviation (SD). Basic statistics and hypothesis testing for skewness and kurtosis were also performed using the Z-test to determine whether the distribution significantly differed from zero. If the observed variable is normally distributed, skewness (SK) equals 0 (SK = 0), indicating a normal curve. If the distribution is left-skewed, SK < 0, indicating most scores are high. If the distribution is right-skewed, SK > 0, indicating most scores are low. A kurtosis (KU) value of 3 indicates a mesokurtic (normal) distribution with a

medium peak.KU > 3 indicates a leptokurtic distribution with a high peak. KU < 3 indicates a platykurtic distribution with a flat, low peak (Hambleton, 1984).

2. Correlation Analysis: Correlation analysis was performed to determine whether linear relationships exist between variables, identifying the direction (positive or negative) and strength of the relationships. This analysis provided foundational information to develop the causal model of becoming an innovative organization among SMEs in the accommodation service sector in Thailand. The strength of correlation was interpreted using the correlation coefficient (r), where values close to -1 or 1 indicate a strong relationship, and values near 0 indicate little or no relationship. The general interpretation criteria of the correlation coefficient followed U-on (2007)

3. Structural Equation Modeling (SEM): The researcher examined the fit between the proposed model and the empirical data (Assessment of Model Fit). The indices used to evaluate the model fit included Chi-Square (χ^2),χ^2/df ratio, Comparative Fit Index (CFI), Goodness-of-Fit Index (GFI), Adjusted Goodness-of-Fit Index (AGFI), Root Mean Square Error of Approximation (RMSEA), and Standardized Root Mean Square Residual (SRMR). The criteria for assessing the model's fit with the empirical data follow the guidelines for model fit evaluation as explained by Angsurochoti et al. (2011).

Findings

The researcher divided the presentation of the findings into five main sections: (1) General information of the questionnaire respondents (2) Average scores of the variables: Service Quality, Digital Transformation, Strategic Management, Innovative Organization, and Business Performance (3) Results of the path analysis of the variables in the model (4) Assessment of the fit between the research model and the empirical data (5) Model development (6) Results of the focus group discussion The details of the summary are as follows:

1. General Information of the Respondents

The respondents in this study were 380 entrepreneurs from small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) in the manufacturing sector. Most were male, numbering 202 persons, representing 53.20%, and females totaled 178 persons, representing 46.80%. Regarding age, the largest group was between 40–49 years old, with 117 persons (30.70%), followed by those aged 30–39 years old with 112 persons (29.50%), under 30 years old with 96 persons (25.30%), and 50 years old and above with 55 persons (14.50%). In terms of education, most held a bachelor's degree, numbering 253 persons (66.70%), followed by master's degree holders at 89 persons (23.30%), doctoral degree or higher holders at 25 persons (6.70%), and those below bachelor's degree at 13 persons (3.30%). Regarding work experience in their current position, 151 persons (39.70%) had 5–15

years of experience, 131 persons (34.50%) had less than 5 years, and 98 persons (25.80%) had 15 years or more.

2. Mean Scores of Variables: Service Quality, Digital Transformation, Strategic Management, Innovative Organization, and Business Performance

2.1 Service Quality: Overall, respondents expressed a moderate level of opinion regarding service quality.

2.2 Digital Transformation: Overall, respondents had a high level of opinion regarding digital transformation.

2.3 Strategic Management: Overall, respondents showed a high level of opinion regarding strategic management.

2.4 Innovative Organization: Overall, respondents had a high level of opinion regarding innovative organizations.

2.5 Business Performance: Overall, respondents expressed a high level of opinion regarding business performance.

3. Results of the Path Analysis of Variables in the Model

Business performance was most strongly influenced by digital transformation, with a total effect of 0.89, all of which was a direct effect. Next was service quality, with a total effect of 0.58 (direct effect of 0.25 and indirect effect of 0.33). Strategic management had a total effect of 0.55 (direct effect of 0.19 and indirect effect of 0.36). Organizational innovation had a total effect of 0.49 (direct effect of 0.32 and indirect effect of 0.17). Additionally, the innovative organization variable was most strongly influenced by strategic management with an effect size of 0.41, followed by service quality with an effect size of 0.38, and digital transformation with an effect size of 0.19, all of which were direct effects. These effects were statistically significant at the 0.05 level.

4. Results of the Model Fit Assessment with Empirical Data

The analysis of the fit indices for the causal factor model of becoming an innovative organization and business performance of SMEs in the service sector, specifically lodging businesses in Thailand, indicated that the fit indices were consistent with the empirical data. Therefore, it can be concluded that the structural equation model is appropriate and fits well with the empirical data, as illustrated in Figure 2.

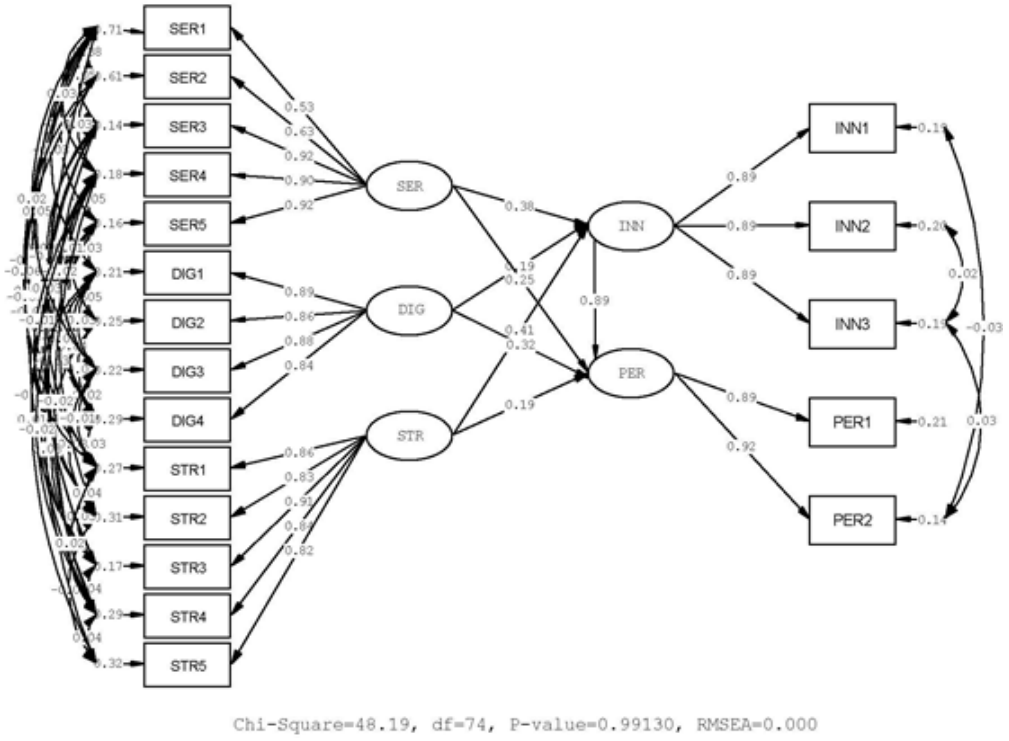

Figure 2 Structural Equation Relationship Model

The researcher developed the model by using Exploratory Factor Analysis (EFA) to address Research Objective 3, which was to construct a causal factor model of becoming an innovative organization and business performance for small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) in the service sector, specifically accommodation businesses in Thailand. The newly adjusted model is called the A-com Model (Model for SME Accommodation). The model adjustment revealed the following components: Service Quality consists of 3 components: equitable and timely service, comprehensive service, and consistent service Digital Transformation consists of 4 components: customer experience, business model, technology, organizational structure, and processes. Strategic Management consists of 4 components: clear mission setting, strategic planning process, strategic objective setting, and strategy implementation. Innovative Organization consists of 3 components: organizational culture structure, strategic forecasting, and shared vision. Business Performance consists of 2 components: financial performance and non-financial performance. The overall model fit indices after model development showed good fit with empirical data, with all six indices meeting the acceptance criteria: χ^2 = 14.86, df = 44, P = 0.99999, CFI = 1.00, GFI = 1.00, AGFI = 0.98, SRMR = 0.0056. The path analysis results indicated that business performance was most strongly influenced by the innovative organization, with a total effect of 0.80, all of which was direct influence. Following this were strategic management (total effect = 0.44; direct effect = 0.15; indirect effect = 0.29), service quality (total effect = 0.43; direct effect = 0.11; indirect effect = 0.32), and digital transformation

(total effect = 0.28; direct effect = 0.11; indirect effect = 0.17). All effects were statistically significant at the 0.05 level. Additionally, the innovative organization was influenced by service quality, strategic management, and digital transformation, all of which were direct effects with effect sizes of 0.40, 0.36, and 0.21, respectively, and were statistically significant at the 0.05 level. The causal factor relationship model of becoming an innovative organization and business performance for SMEs in the service sector, accommodation type in Thailand, based on the developed A-com Model, is illustrated in Table 1 and in Figure 2

Table 1 The Influence of Variables in the Causal Model of Becoming an Innovative Organization and Business Performance of Service-Sector SMEs in the Accommodation Industry in Thailand (Direct, Indirect, and Total Effects) Based on the A-COM Model

Reason	INN			PER		
	TE	IE	DE	TE	IE	DE
SER	0.40	-	0.40	0.43	0.32	0.11
	(0.12	-	(0.12)	(0.11)	(0.11)	(0.11)
DIG	0.21	-	0.21	0.28	0.17	0.11
	(0.13)	-	(0.13)	(0.14)	(011)	(0.13)
STR	0.36	-	0.36	0.44	0.29	0.15
	(0.08)	-	(0.08)	(0.09)	(0.09)	(0.10)
INN	-	-	-	0.80	-	0.80
	-	-	-	(0.17)	-	(0.17)

χ^2 = 14.86, df = 44, P = 0.99999, CFI = 1.00, GFI= 1.00, AGFI = 0.98, SRMR = 0.0056

Reliability	NSER1	NSER2	NSER3	NDIG1	NDIG2	NDIG3	NDIG4	NSTR1	NSTR2
Variable	0.30	0.78	0.88	0.75	0.74	0.77	0.73	0.83	0.76
Reliability	NSTR3	NSTR4	NINN1	NINN2	NINN3	NPER1	NPER2		
Variable	0.74	0.66	0.87	0.78	0.73	0.77	0.87		

Structural Equation of Variables	INN	PER
R^2	0.90	0.96

Correlation Matrix of Latent Variables

Latent Variable	SER	DIG	STR	INN	PER
SER	1.00				
DIG	1.00**	1.00			
STR	0.90**	0.96**	1.00		
INN	0.94**	0.97**	0.94**	1.00	
PER	0.93**	0.96**	0.91**	0.98**	1.00

Note ** p < 0.05

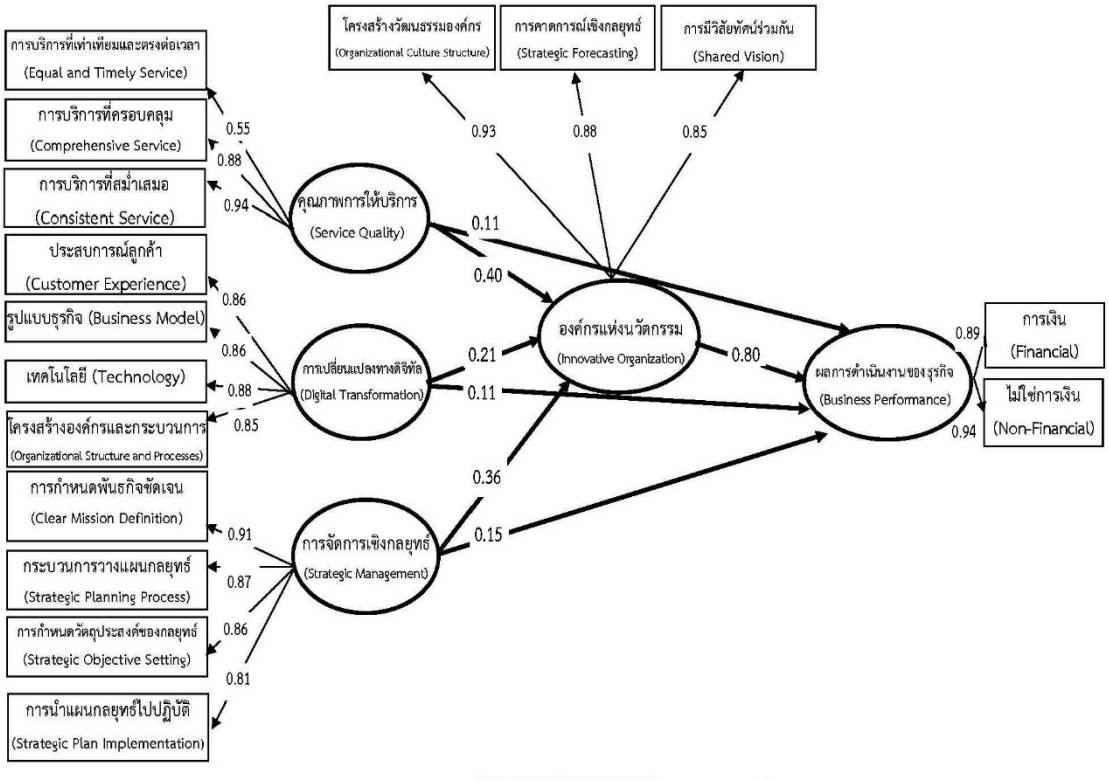

Figure 3 The relationship model developed from the results of the factor analysis

Discussion

The findings from the study on the causal factors of becoming an innovative organization and business performance of small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) in the accommodation service sector in Thailand are consistent with the research of Phan et al. (2022). They examined the impact of income distribution on the performance of commercial banks in Vietnam, using data from banks listed on the stock exchanges in Ho Chi Minh City and Hanoi between 2010 and 2020. Their analysis using the GMM regression model showed that factors affecting business performance included income distribution, credit activity size, and efficiency in physical management, indicating that effective management (part of good service quality) plays a crucial role in promoting performance and fostering innovation in the financial system. This aligns with Habib et al. (2022), who proposed the Open Data Roadmap (ODR) framework to assess the potential of cities in utilizing open data to enhance the quality of public services. Their focus was on measuring the dynamic capabilities of public agencies in handling open data. Similarly, Kurniawan et al. (2021) studied innovative work behavior among public sector employees in Indonesia, showing that employee quality influences overall organizational quality. Using Structural Equation Modeling (SEM) to analyze relationships between leadership, employee engagement, and innovative work behavior, they found that transformational leadership and high employee engagement significantly promote innovative

behaviors. The findings also correspond with Lee (2019), who introduced a patient-centered service design model emphasizing patient involvement in service processes, leading to co-creation of value and higher quality services. Rana et al. (2024) found that digital technology development enables Micro, Small, and Medium Enterprises (MSMEs) to improve operational efficiency by expanding markets and increasing sales. The digital premier capabilities and digital knowledge of entrepreneurs were key factors for business success. Butt et al. (2023) emphasized the importance of digital transformation in the banking sector for competitiveness in both domestic and international markets. Their study on the impact of investments in Information and Communication Technology (ICT) on banking performance worldwide and in Southeast Europe (SEE), using panel data and fixed effects models, showed that ICT investments significantly reduce operating expenses (OPEX) and enhance profitability, reflecting digital technology as a critical factor in improving efficiency and competitiveness. Furthermore, Zhu et al. (2024) investigated the role of digital technology in MSME growth, focusing on equity crowdfunding as a new financing channel. Their study analyzed the effects of financial resources and crowdfunding on MSME performance using SEM via Smart PLS software. Consistent with Saleh et al. (2002), who analyzed globalization and the economic crisis in Europe, their findings highlighted that the size and activities of modern organizations are impacted by the rapid changes in environmental flexibility. This necessitates new management approaches and strategies suited to these conditions. Project management is recognized as a vital tool for effective human, material, and financial resource management and as a standard for sustainable strategy development and implementation in the medium and long term. Their research also stressed the importance of forecasting and organizing activities to address competitive pressures within the global economic and political system.

Suggestion

1. Expand the sample group to include other service industries, such as the restaurant business, health tourism, or logistics services. Since each type of business has unique characteristics regarding customers, service delivery, and technology use, diverse studies will help enhance the clarity and comprehensiveness of the analytical models and may uncover new factors that specifically affect each business type

2. Conduct comparative studies between businesses in different regions of the country, such as the North, South, or between major and secondary tourist cities. This would help understand how local geographic and cultural contexts influence the development of innovative organizations and business performance, as in many cases, innovation concepts or technology adoption may be limited by infrastructure or entrepreneur attitudes in each area.

3. Investigate deeper into latent variables or sub-dimensions of the "innovative organization," such as internal motivation systems, knowledge management processes, or collaboration patterns between employees and management. These mechanisms may directly affect innovation creation but have not yet been thoroughly analyzed in the current research.

4. Conduct longitudinal studies to assess the long-term impact of innovations and strategies implemented in organizations. Measuring business performance over different time periods—before, during, and after strategy changes—would help clarify causal relationships and outcomes more clearly, while reducing limitations associated with the cross-sectional design used in this study.

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