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Assessing Technology Competency of Small and Medium Accounting Practitioners in Cambodia: A Qualitative Investigation

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This study aims to examine the technology competency of the Small and Medium Practitioners (SMPs) in Cambodia. Using a qualitative approach on SMPs in Cambodia, this study shows that the technology competency of the SMPs are adequate in accommodating the needs of their clients. The level of technology competency among the SMPs however, vary, partly due to the type of clients and the type of services demanded by their clients. Specifically, this study showcases a rather consistent view on the technology competency among the SMPs. The findings show an adequate level of technology competency from the technology capability, as most of their clients relied on either Microsoft Excel or QuickBooks to account for their transactions and the SMPs do not encounter much problem in providing such services. This study also shows that the SMPs are innovative since efforts have been made to store their data using Cloud and provide training to their clients in relation to the use of audit software. Finally, this study shows that the SMPs practice e-business since they have websites which they use to attract current and potential clients. In addition, their willingness to collaborate with other accounting firms provide some confirmation on their e-business practices. Such findings indicate that the SMPs would be able to accommodate the demand of their clients by providing services via technology. The findings of this study contribute to the understanding of accounting bodies in strategising ways to assist the SMPs so that they would be able to serve their clients better and consequently, enhance firm agility.

Key words: *Technology competency, technology capability, firm innovativeness, e-business practices, small medium practices.*

Introduction

The economy of Cambodia has grown rapidly in the past recent years. The country has benefited from the preferential trade treatment and an abundance of low-skilled labour (Asian Development Bank, 2015). Obviously, the Small and Medium Practitioners (SMPs) would also be affected by the rapid economic growth since the demand for their services has increased tremendously. The SMPs play an important role in providing business support particularly to the Small and Medium Enterprises (SMEs), due to the international recognition of SMEs as vital contributors to the economic development of a developing country such as Cambodia (Richardson, 2011). To ensure sustainability of the SMPs, these firms need to plan and strategise accordingly. One of the strategies is technology adoption. The President of Asian Development Bank (ADB) claimed that although Cambodia has been moving towards the era of technology, firms in general are still among the lowest in the region for technology adoption. In other words, firms in Cambodia are slower to adopt new technology compared to other countries in the region, with evidence of less than half of firms have web presence as of 2017, which is far below the world average of 46%. As expected, SMEs have the lowest technology adoption in Cambodia. Arguably, SMPs, being small and medium size firms would also be the same. Therefore, Cambodia has to look into new technologies and greater digital adoption across different sectors (Spiess, 2018).

Throughout the world, technology has been considered as an asset for firms to improve their performance. Often, firms are willing to invest in technology for four main reasons namely, perceived cost savings and income generation benefits, pressure from rivals, suppliers and buyers, organisational readiness and perceived ease of use (Lester & Tran, 2008; Sulaiman, Kamarulzaman & Abdul Ghani, 2010). Almost all firms would use technology to operate their business processes and improve information gathering (Dedrick, Gurbaxani & Kraemer, 2003), which are essential for business agility. These firms would use technology to access external information and financial resources through widespread dissemination of information and create social connections (Morse, Fowler, & Lawrence, 2007). The level of technology adoption however may differ between firms. Larger firms tend to invest more in technology compared to smaller firms since they have more financial resources. In addition, larger firms are more complex which subsequently, require more sophisticated applications such as the Enterprise Resource Planning compared to smaller firms, as the latter would have limited financial resources and awareness on the importance of technology (Thurasamy, Mohamad, Omar & Marimuthu, 2009). Consequently, the different levels of technology adoption among larger firms and smaller firms would lead to different technology competency.

The proliferation of technology has also led to the diversity of work requirements in relation to the competency of the accountants (Tudor, Gheorghe, Oancea & Sova, 2013; Ghani &

Muhammad, 2019). The use of technology in accounting has turned into a daily routine, to the extent that it is no longer possible to perform accounting and financial operations without the use of technology (Thurasamy et al, 2009). Rom and Rodhe (2007) and Damasiotis, Trivellas, Santouridis, Nikolopoulos, Tsifora (2015) noted that the accountants were among the first of professional groups that were affected by this change, since they incorporate technology as an integral part of their everyday work. The role of an accountant has changed and transformed from manual accounting to computerised accounting over a decade (Wessel, 2008; Damasiotis et al., 2015). This implies a significant change in the technology competency required by the accountants in performing their works and has received attentions from the International Federation of Accountants (IFAC) and other non-profit organisations, for accountants to be technology competent in performing their tasks.

This study examines the technology competency of the SMPs in Cambodia. Using a qualitative approach, this study examines technology competency based on three components namely, technical capability, firm innovativeness and e-business practices. The findings of this study would shed some lights on the technology competency among the SMPS in Cambodia. The next section, Section 2 presents the literature review. This is followed by the research methodology in Section 3. Section 4 presents the findings of this study. The last section, Section 5 summarises and concludes this study.

Literature Review

Technology Competency

Studies in the information system literature have provided several definitions of technology competency. From the individual point of view, technology competency can be defined as a collection of knowledge and skills that allow an individual to act effectively in his work within various situations (Ahmed, 2003; Basselier, Benbasat & Reich, 2003). From the organisational point of view, technological competency can be defined as the ability of a firm to organise other resources using their own existing technology resources (Bharadwaj, 2000). Jiao, Chang and Lu (2008) provided a more comprehensive definition of technology competency. They defined technology competency as the formation of enterprise, transfer and deployment of enterprise technology resources and combined with other resources, support and improve other unique functions that are competent at strength and skill. This includes creating the latent potential for maintaining continuous competitive advantage. Technology competency is achieved when firms are able to utilise equipment and technological information efficiently (Lall, 1996). With technological competency, firms can grow faster than the others and of consequence, increase their market share and business performance. This is consistent with a recent report from CGMA's (2019, p.4) competency framework that noted technology skills are essential for finance professionals, from basic

digital literacy through to a deeper expertise in cloud computing, cyber-security, data analytics and digital costing. If finance professionals are to remain relevant, they need to keep pace with advances in technology and be able to manage and guide the finance function in a digital world. As well as being a standalone knowledge area, digital skills permeate throughout the other knowledge areas.

Within the accounting discipline, several studies have also provided the definition of technology competency from the perspective of an accountant. In the early stages of technology development, technology competency refers to the ability of the accountants to use specific software packages (Bean & Medewitz, 1987). Over the decades, a change in the technology competency of the accountants can be seen as the accountants were expected to be aware of the accounting information systems, management information systems, expert systems, computer science and mathematical programming among others (Kaye & Nicholson, 1992; Ghani & Mohammad, 2019). On the other hand, Larres and Oyelere (1999) and Chen, Damtew, Banatte and Mapp (2009) argued that accountants should know how to transfer files, upload and download data, use local area networks, electronic commerce and the World Wide Web among others. Other studies defined technology competency for the accountants include spreadsheets, database management systems, telecommunications, accounting systems, system's development and other information technology topics (Heagy & Gallum, 1994 Carnaghan, 2004). This is in line with IFAC that acknowledged the need for an accountant to be a user, assurance provider and evaluator, manager of an information system and designer of an information system (International Education Standard 2) (IFAC, 2014). IFAC through it's educational standard IEG-11 International Education Guideline on "IT and Accounting Curriculum" noted that technology is important for the accounting profession (IFAC, 2013). Hence, technology competency can be viewed as the technology knowledge and skills of the accountants in providing better service quality to their clients (Awayiga, Onumah & Tsamenyi, 2010; Ghani, Said & Syed Yusuf, 2012; Ku Bahador & Haider, 2012).

Studies in the information system literature have examined the concept of technology competency. However, there seems to be lacking a standard instrument on how to measure technology competency (Meuter, Ostrom, Roundtree & Bitner, 2000; Riemenschneider, Harrison &. Mykytyn, 2003; Thuraisamy et al, 2009). These studies suggested that different measures should be used to measure technology competency, as different firms have different levels of technological adoption. This is because business models that are appropriate for large firms may not be suitable for small firms. Kula and Tatoglu (2003) argued that smaller firms often have less resources compared to larger firms, which deter them to invest in technology. In addition, the type of sectors also influences the type of technology adoption (Sulaiman et al., 2009). For example: what is suitable in the construction sector may not necessarily be suitable to professional service sector. The reason is because this sector faces

different opportunities and challenges compared to the SMEs in the construction sector (Sulaiman et al., 2009). Professional services firms need to adhere to regulations and standards of the various governing professional bodies such as the Kampuchea Institute of Certified Public Accountants and Auditors (KICPAA). In addition, as the technology continues to evolve, new types of technology emerged which brought new challenges and opportunities on the way the accountants perform their tasks (Mgaya & Kitindi, 2008; Che Abdul Rahman, Tengku Abdullah, Agus & Rahmat, 2011).

A body of the information system literature has explained further the concept of technology competency. For example: Bean and Medewitz (1987) categorised technology competency into four categories namely, programming, software, hardware and networking and communication. Basselier et al (2003) on the other hand, provided two main components of technology competency namely, technology related knowledge and technology experience. They referred technology related knowledge as the specific knowledge that an individual has, and technology related experience as the technical knowledge that someone obtained from his previous interaction with technology. Tippins and Sohi (2003) provided similar components of technology competency namely, technology knowledge, technology operation and technology object. Ku Bahador, Haider and Wan Mohd Saman (2012) identified technical skills, organisational skills, conceptual skills and people skills as the components of technology competency. However, all these studies examined technology competency from an individual perspective. From the organisational perspective such as the SMPs, Sulaiman et al (2010) in their study on professional services firms have provided technology competency into three main components. The three main components are technical capability, firm innovativeness and E-Business practices.

Technical Capability

Technical capability refers to the physical infrastructure adequacy and technical knowledge based on information provided by a firm. Firms can increase their technical capability, thus enhancing their ownership advantages by acquiring new technology (García-Muiña & Navas-Lopez, 2007; Ghani & Said, 2011). Often, technical capability cannot be acquired easily as it takes time and varies across sectors. For example: the technical capability in the manufacturing sector would include production engineering and manufacture of capital goods (Eckaus, 1991). On the other hand, the professional services sector may look at technical support and quality of service as their technical capability. The existence of technical capability can assist firms in growing faster and consequently, increase their market share and business performance.

A group of studies in the accounting literature have examined the technical capability related to technology among accountants. These studies were conducted in developed countries such

as Greenstein-Prosch and McKee (2005) and Janvrin, Bierstaker and Lowe (2008) as well as in developing countries such as Ismail and Abidin (2009) and Ku Bahador et al (2012). The findings of these studies were almost similar where they found that accountants have a low level of knowledge for advanced technologies such as Artificial Intelligence and Electronic Data Interchange, although they are proficient in general computer and professional accounting software skills. However, the use of technology and the perceived importance of technology may vary among accountants. For example: Sulaiman et al (2010) in their study on technology capability found significant relationship between technology capability and business performance of the SMPs. That is, the SMPs must have strong technical capability to manage their business by having efficient systems and established technology. Sulaiman et al's study comprised of SMPs of various fields including accounting, legal, engineering and architecture firms.

Firm Innovativeness

One of the pathways for firms to obtain competitive advantage is through firm innovativeness (Hurley & Hult, 1998; Tajeddini, Trueman, & Larsen, 2006). Innovation has become an important factor due to the environmental situation such as volatility and uncertainty (Lin & Chen, 2007; Skerlavaj, Song, & Lee, 2010). Innovation offers firms the flexibility to select various choices in meeting customers' demand which would lead to firm agility. Innovativeness describes the tendency (Lumpkin & Dess, 1996) and ability (Hurley & Hult, 1998; Hult, Hurley, & Knight, 2004) of the firms in introducing innovations. Additionally, Tsai and Yang (2013) suggested that firm innovativeness is likely to encourage it's members to be creative and to experiment with novel ideas and products.

Studies have suggested that firms are regarded as innovative when they are able to create products that are more "revolutionary" (Damanpour, 1991; Story, Boso, & Cadogan, 2014). Innovation blends knowledge consisting appropriate, valued new products or services that allows firms to modify information into new or improved products or services (Calantone, Cavusgil & Zhao, 2002; Sulaiman et al. 2010). Firm innovativeness is often measured at the product and organisational level that can take place when employees practice and support unique business ideas, research and inspired procedures to develop new products or services (Wang & Ahmed, 2004; Dibrell, Fairclough, & Davis, 2015). Innovation focuses on the way a firm searches for opportunities, strategic planning and research and development to become competitive (Lin & Chen, 2007).

A body of the information system literature have suggested that it is easier for SMEs to indulge in innovation since SMEs can make faster decisions due to less bureaucracy and are usually more flexible or accommodating in accepting changes compared to larger firms (Lin & Chen, 2007). Most innovation practices go beyond technical innovation and it may include

innovation in leadership, empowerment, culture, technology, learning, structure and management (Humpreys, McAdam & Leckey, 2005). SMEs need to have interest to innovate in order to gain a competitive advantage and achieve successful firm performance. Sulaiman et al (2010) in their study found a significant relationship between SMP's innovativeness and business performance. The SMEs must be dynamic and creative by introducing innovation from time to time in serving their clients.

E-Business Practices

E-business practices is the conduct of business processes on the internet to generate revenue and attract clients. It is a platform that allows firms to adapt to the needs of customers in order to reduce costs (Watson, Leyland, Berthon & Zinkham, 2002). E-business also allows faster business expansion from the local market to the global market compared to traditional media, which allow firms to expand their access to the market, alleviate their capacity constraints, capitalise on emerging market opportunities and serve as a catalyst for transformation (Volery & Lord, 2000). It provides business opportunities to new audiences and offers the opportunity to fundamentally transform the business approach and delivery, and the competitive landscape. The e-business processes include buying and selling goods and services, servicing customers, processing payments, managing production control, collaborating with business partners, sharing information, among others. It can comprise a range of functions and services ranging from intranet and extranet developments to the provision of e-services over the internet (Sulaiman et al., 2010). E-business has four components namely, the e-business concept, value proposition, sources of revenue, and the required activities, resources, and capabilities.

A body of the information system literature has examined the link between e-business practices and firm performance (Gibbs & Kraemer, 2004; Mohamed, Govindan, Mohd Daud & Chong, 2009; Sulaiman et al., 2010). These studies have suggested that larger firms would have their own portals and online sales and marketing modules whereas smaller firms may just have their own websites. For example: Sulaiman et al (2010) in their study also found that the SMPs were actively involved in online business, capturing a bigger market worldwide. The SMPs have also established an online presence for their business to generate business opportunities. Finally, the SMPs adopted the current technology and trends and were innovative in running the business. In addition, there were SMPs that have utilised new technologies or systems that can support the quality of their products and services.

Research Design

Participants

The SMPs have been chosen as participants in this study. In total, there are 57 accounting and audit firms registered with KICPAA. Out of this 57, 4 are the big 4 firms, leaving a balance of 53 as SMPs. From these SMPs, two accountants that provide accounting and/or audit services to their clients participated in this study. The two accountants are also members of KICPAA and operate their firms in Phnom Penh, Cambodia. In this study, the first accountant is known as Mr A whilst the second accountant is known as Mr B. Both accountants are above 35 years old and have more than at least 10 years of experience in provision of accounting and/or audit services. Both accountants owned or were partners of small accounting and/or audit firms. These accountants were deemed suitable to provide different perspectives on their technology competency. The SMPs were contacted based on personal knowledge and their vast experience in practice.

Research Instrument

This study relies on a qualitative research approach, namely interviews, to achieve it's research objectives. The interviews were held on a semi-structured survey basis in order to have a problem-focused approach, thereby allowing more personalised discussion to be conducted together with the survey. By this way, this study would be able to obtain detailed subjective views and information on the research topic from the participants (Mayring, 2010; Ghani & Muhammad, 2019).

The questionnaire was developed on the basis of this study; it was discussed and refined in a discussion with the team researchers and also with a panel of practitioners experienced in technology development. It consists of four main questions, namely personal questions about the participants, the idiosyncrasies of their firm and their clients, the technology adoption in their firms and their service provision.

Data Collection and Data Analysis

The questionnaires were sent to the participants prior to the interviews in order for them to be better prepared for the discussion process. The first interview was conducted with Mr A, and followed by the second interview with Mr B. The interview with Mr A was conducted in this firm whilst the interview with Mr B was conducted in KICPAA's office in Phnom Penh. Upon completion of the data collection, the interviews were recorded and subsequently transcribed. Further to the transcription, the text results were structured and categorised according to major themes, followed by a specific coding. The coding process resulted in a

category system, which subsequently was used to structure and guide the information data evaluation process.

Findings

The coding analysis that results in a category system provides three main themes of technology competency. The three main themes are technology capability, firm innovativeness and e-business practices. These themes are similar to the themes provided in Sulaiman et al (2010).

Technology Capability

In this study, the participants were asked about their knowledge and skills of the current technologies available to operate their business, and the technologies used to serve their clients. From the interview, the SMPs shared the view that at present, their clients do not require highly sophisticated technology to operate their business and also accommodate their clients. In operating their business, they would use Microsoft Excel and Words to do audit working files, clients' listing and monitoring audit fee and services among others. Such findings indicate the SMPs in Cambodia do have, to a certain extent, technology capability in terms of knowledge and skills on technology. As noted by Mr A:

Currently no, we only use the Microsoft Words. No accounting software yet.

Surprisingly, this study finds that both participants were not aware of the new phenomena in technology, which is Industry Revolution 4.0 (IR4.0). Upon explanation from the researchers, the participants were able to better provide their opinions on the impact of this IR4.0 to the SMPs. Mr B opined:

Based on my opinion, a certain percentage, yes, that's mean the bookkeeping or clerical, but not on certain parts let say analysis, advisory, you know or critical things. First, it will be easy for the company. They do not have to spend more people something like that (bookkeeping and clerical). In Cambodia, we have shortage of accountants, it is difficult to recruit qualified accountant, if you can have that, then would be good for the company. I think we do still need the accountants to control, to make sure the report and everything is correct based on the readings, yes, we still need that. It will not affect the human being, like employees because we are already shortage. But by contrast if we help the company a lot, then more easy and faster.

Mr A provided his comment:

Until now, what I see is that we will go to that, IR 4.0. Why? Because accounting is very systematic. So I think it is not complicated as the information to be systemized. It is easier than other industries to use the technology

To better serve their clients, the participants opined that their clients, that are mostly SMEs, would not require such technology since most of their information are only kept either manually or used common software such as Microsoft Excel and Words. As noted by Mr A:

Our clients do not adopt any sophisticated technology. Just normal technologies such as Microsoft Excel and Words. It is Excel spreadsheet. Our clients normally perform the accounting job using excel. We are trying to get them doing that. They like this because I have many factories, many government factory clients, but internally they have their own maximum spreadsheet only, but for e accounting, they don't really use it (accounting software), I can see. And they have the Chinese version only for themselves. But it's also difficult, but if listed factory, those big factory that is compliant. They will be spending a lot of money on technology.

Mr B, another SMP, has provided the same response. He noted that most clients in any SMPs would use Microsoft Excel in their business. Few of their clients do rely on accounting software such as QuickBooks Pro, an accounting software which has been in existence for the last two decades. In addition, the clients of the accounting firms would normally refer back to their accountants if they have issues relating to the accounting software that they relied on. Mr B provided his opinion:

Oh, the clients. A few clients, they do not use accounting software. They only used Excel. So their financial statement is not so reliable because they do not use any software to prepare. So they just do it in Excel. If we count to the Excel, I think all accounting firms' clients used Excel. Yes, if our clients have problem with QuickBooks, they will come to us.

The participants were also asked on the level of knowledge on the current technologies available. Both participants agreed that the level of knowledge among the SMPs, particularly the small accounting firms are considerably low. Mr A commented:

I see this is good but because of Cambodia SMPs, about the technology, very low. If we use the scale from 1 (very low) to 5 (very high) for the technology adoption, comparing to Big 4, the technology competency of the SMPs, I can say the most is number 3.

Such statement is consistent with opinion of Mr B:

From a scale of 1 to 5, I think around 3. But now the ministry involves they would like all the companies to use the technology, accounting software, IT software. They have to use them, otherwise they (the ministry) will not help them.

The participants are also of the opinion that their level of technology knowledge is adequate for servicing their clients and the need to increase their knowledge depends highly on the demand of their clients. The participants both agreed that it is not a necessity for them to adopt all the technologies available. In addition, this study finds that although there are other technologies available, they have adopted the technology. As noted by Mr B, his firm has used an audit software developed by it's affiliated firm:

For the general file, for the back up something we use the local firm to set up for us. But for the auditing, we use the software from Ecovis. Special from Ecovis. Yes. Using the audit software, we can customize the report according to what the client wants. That is good that we can customize. And still we are not quite familiar with the software. We still keep our training, we do it online. And next year, February they (Ecovis) will come and visit us to check on everything. All the performance. I think the Audit Software service is accepted if you compare to Big 4. The experience that we use before, it is good for us.

Mr A on the other hand has adopted an audit manual issued by National Accounting Council (NAC) of Cambodia. The audit manual imposed developed by The Institute of Chartered Accountants in England and Wales (ICAEW). He opined:

NAC imposed on audit manual. Imposed and audit provider, very detail, I love it so much. Yes and very detail, with example, with sample. If you said you don't have, then you will be penalized. Before we said no understanding, no budget, got no workbook. Now cannot say about that, because they give it all in. I love it so much. It is not from NAC, it is from ICAEW. I believe that from this year onwards, many of us will have it, and work more effectively.

Firm Innovativeness

Firms have often considered technology as an asset to improve their performance. Arguably, almost all firms would use technology to operate their business which are essential for business agility. In this study, the participants were asked about their technology adoption and whether they have innovation practices. Innovation practices in this study include the effort to increase or improve the technologies adopted in their firms, whether they provide training to their employees in relation to technology and whether they provide consultancy to

their clients in relation to technology. This study finds that the SMPs are innovative in employing technology. Mr B commented:

*Some IT recommends us to use cloud rather than the server. But we are learning, how cloud is important. But most of them, they say, the cloud is much better than serve*r.

This study however, finds that the level of innovation differs among SMPs. The different level of innovation depends on the type of transactions and services provided to the clients. Both participants noted that the technology used can be customised accordingly. As noted by Mr B:

Using the audit software, we can customize the report according to what the client wants. That is good that we can customize. And still we are not quite familiar with the software. We still keep our training, we do it online.

Mr B also noted:

Yes. But normally we use QuickBooks, but without the payroll module. For the payroll, we use another system (Microsoft Excel) which is another. We just use (calculate) the payroll figure, in total and records in QuickBooks. Yes. Also for depreciation. They not automatically. They do it in another one, like Microsoft Excel. And then we book the number into the QuickBooks. .

This study also shows that the SMPs realised that budget is a concern among the SMEs that led to the delay on adoption of new technologies. Consequently, this led to the delay of such adoption among the SMPs. Mr A explained:

For QuickBooks, we buy it here the software and the license is from the US directly through online. And even our client, but they are like, in Cambodia, they are not really familiar to use the software. They only go for budget. Yes, they only concerns on budget.

In assisting their clients particularly, the SMEs, the SMPs have made effort to become innovative by assisting and providing training to their clients in relation to technology such as QuickBooks adoption. Mr A noted:

They did come but in Cambodia it is in common to use QuickBooks. I mean, there are few that come and ask how to do that. They even ask not only just approach us to provide training in using their accounting software. We tell them how. We help them because in QuickBooks, there is option to select. If you are servicing so you can tick. Even for the item,

like assembly, if you are the manufacturing, then you select assembly. If you are service, then you select service.

Mr A further noted:

We only provide the service. Installation and setting up. Those hardware, they must have. They have all those thing, we have our IT team to support them and install and we train them. The license they buy by themselves. We don't want to involve. That is not our profit outline. The license for QuickBooks, they get by themselves, we only install and set up the server and then we train them how to use it.

Similarly, Mr B also confirmed on the provision of training on related technology to their clients. As noted by Mr B:

Yes, we do provide training if they needed the training, then we will charge. If they call and ask question how to set up, we don't charge. Yes, if our client have problem with QuickBooks, they will come to us.

E-Business Practices

In this study, e-business practices relate to a firm's initiatives to use the internet as a source of introducing and promoting it's services to potential clients. This also includes the use of the intranet and extranet and provision of services to the clients. This study finds that the SMPs do conduct promotional activities using the internet. This is evidenced by the existence of their website that contains information of their firms as well as their contact numbers and type of services provided. As noted by Mr B:

Yes. We also used internet and intranet. Some IT recommended us to use cloud rather than the server. But we are learning, how cloud is important. But most of them, they say, the cloud is much better than server

Mr B further commented:

So some big companies that they changed from Big 4 to us because they feel comfortable with us. If they have any question, they can ask quickly, they e-mail, they call, so they feel warmly, comfortable to use our service. But for the other firm, they charge for that. You know, most of the clients, especially the medium SMEs, they not understand the contract. First of all, we provide the bookkeeping for them. Sometimes, they ask another question besides the bookkeeping. So, some SMPs they don't do because they said be beside over the contract. Yes, they want to charge extra. But the local company, they don't think that. They

hire us, means that their expectation is to have everything. They don't care our scope, they don't understand that. They just hire one firm to have everything for them. If they have any more question*, they just ask. If they cannot ask, so they said why I hire you? To help us.*

From the interviews, the SMPs also used the internet to communicate with their employees and clients. The use of internet such as emails, Cloud and WhatsApp among others is common among the SMPs as a platform to communicate with their clients. This study also finds that few SMPs tend to collaborate with other firms in order to become innovative. Such collaboration led to the adoption of new technology particularly software related to audit. Mr B opined:

We collaborate with Ecovis and they provide us the audit software. And next year, February they will come and visit us to check on everything. All the performance. I think the Audit Software service is accepted if you compare to Big 4. The experience that we use before, it is good for us.

In addition, the SMPs opined that by this way, they would be able to expand their network and ensure sustainability in the business world. As noted by Mr B:

Yes, expand. And also to expand our network and working in more widely, something like this. We have the auditing, internal audit, we do monthly bookkeeping, monthly tax and we also do tax advisory as well.

Summary and Conclusion

This study examines the technology competency of the Small and Medium Practitioners (SMPs) in Cambodia. The findings in this study indicates that the accountants from the SMPs reveal a rather consistent view on the technology competencies among the SMPs. The findings show an adequate level of technology competency from the technology capability. To a certain extent, they have used an appropriate level of technologies for it's operations and service provision to the clients. However, the level of adoptions is still low as compared to what is adopted by the Big 4 accounting firms. Such findings also indicate that the SMPs would be able to accommodate the demand of their clients by providing services via technology (Greenstein-Prosch & McKee, 2005; Janvrin et al., 2008). Most of their clients relied on either Microsoft Excel or QuickBooks to account for their transactions and the SMPs do not encounter much problem in providing such services (Calantone et al., 2002; Sulaiman et al. 2010). This study also shows that the SMPs are innovative since efforts have been made to store their data using Cloud and provide training to their clients in relation to accounting software. In addition, to enhance the auditing services provision, one of the participants have used an audit software developed by their affiliated overseas firm in

performing an audit job. Finally, this study shows that the SMPs practice e-business since they have websites. In addition, their willingness to collaborate with other accounting firms provide some confirmation on their e-business practices (Watson et al, 2002; Sulaiman et al., 2010). Apart from customer demand, this study also reveals the reason why SMPs in Cambodia are not using the latest technology in service provision, is because of the high cost of developing the technology.

This study is not without limitations. First, the findings in this study are based on interviews with two participants, representing accounting practitioners of SMPs in Cambodia. Perhaps, future studies could increase the number of participants in order to provide more comprehensive findings. Secondly, this study uses the qualitative approach in achieving its objectives. Future studies can be conducted using the quantitative approach in order to provide support to the findings in this study.

This study contributes to existing accounting literature by providing new findings on the SMPs' technology competency and it's adequacy to accommodate their clients. In addition, this study contributes to the understanding of accounting bodies in strategising ways to assist the SMPs so that they would be able to serve their clients better and consequently, enhance audit, tax and accounting quality and firm agility.

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