

-RESEARCH ARTICLE-

STRATEGY FOR DEVELOPING THE POTENTIAL OF COMMUNITY ENTERPRISES IN PRODUCT PRODUCTION GROUPS TOWARDS SUSTAINABLE GROWTH

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—Abstract—

Community enterprises are essential for grassroots economies focused on sustainable development. This study aims to investigate strategies for maximising the potential of community enterprises within product production groups to achieve sustainable growth. The research methodology employed a combination of qualitative interviews with experts, focus group discussions, and quantitative data collection through surveys administered to community enterprise operators. The study's findings highlight essential strategies for achieving sustainable growth, which are categorised into distinct elements as follows: 1) In product design and development ($X^- = 4.55$), conducting research within the community enterprise is crucial for driving the design of innovative products. 2) Network building ($X^- = 4.55$) involves collaborating with educational institutions to

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enhance knowledge and skills. 3) Resource efficiency (mean = 4.55), which involves providing personnel with modern communication technology skills and knowledge. 4) This study focuses on gathering and analysing customer feedback ($\bar{X} = 4.53$) to facilitate continuous improvement. There were no significant differences found in the analysis of the values assigned to strategies for developing community enterprises' potential between consumer products classified within the CAC region and those in other categories, at a statistically significant level of 0.05. The analysis of the structural equation model showed that the evaluation criteria were in line with the real-world data, showing a perfect fit with a chi-square probability level of zero. The relative chi-square value of 0.706 and the concordance index of 0.959 support the validity of the model. Additionally, the model has an R^2 of 0.852 and a root mean square error of approximation index value of 0.016.

Keywords: Structural Equation Model, Potential Development, Community Enterprise, Sustainability

BACKGROUND AND IMPORTANCE OF THE PROBLEM

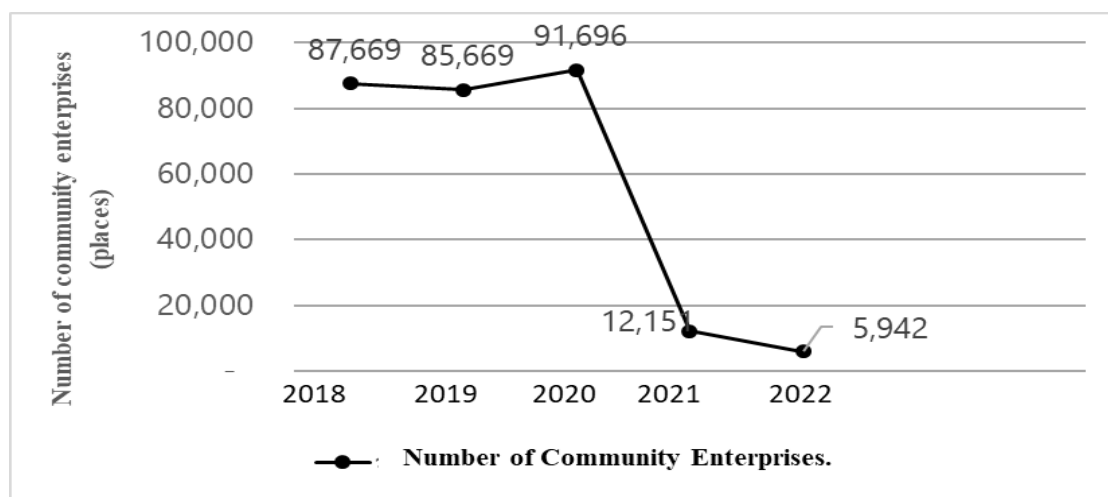


Figure 1: Number of registered community enterprises between 2018-2022.

Source: Community Enterprise Promotion Division, Department of Agricultural Extension, 2023.

The Thai government considers the productivity development of community enterprises as a crucial objective in promoting the sustainable strength of the Thai community economy. Strategy 2 of the 20-year National Strategic Plan (2018-2037) highlights the importance of community enterprise development in improving the grassroots economy and enhancing the quality of life at the community level. It aims to create job opportunities, establish careers, ensure stable incomes, and reduce inequality. Community enterprises in Thailand are currently well-regarded, with numerous emerging and demonstrating resilience and viability. Nevertheless, a substantial number

face difficulties and eventually shut down. Community enterprises face the challenge of business competition (Kara et al., 2014). Hence, it is imperative for them to adjust to changing conditions in order to maintain their competitiveness (Petrick & Echols, 2004).

Figure 1 shows that in 2018, there were 87,669 registered community enterprises. The number decreased to 85,669 in 2019, but increased to 91,696 in 2020. In 2018, the government implemented the community enterprise policy as part of the 20-year national strategic plan. Consequently, there was a notable rise in the number of community enterprise registrations. In 2021, the number of places decreased to 12,151, and further declined to 5,942 in 2022. The assessment of community enterprises' potential from January 1st to March 31st, 2024, shows a total of 68,303 places, as presented in Table 1. Of the total, 60.74 percent are classified as having medium potential, while 13.56 percent have room for improvement, totalling 74.30 percent. Only 25.70 percent are classified as having a good level of potential.

Table 1. Shows community enterprises categorized into three levels based on their assessed potential.

No.	District/ Province	Good		Moderate		Amend		Total
		Quant ity	Percentag e	Quanti ty	Percenta ge	Quantit y	Percentage	
1	DOAE 1, Chainat Province.	1,138	39.69	1,453	50.68	276	2.63	2,867
2	DOAE 1, Ratchaburi Province.	844	27.44	1,680	54.62	552	17.95	3,076
3	DOAE 1, Rayong Province.	1,064	28.53	2,018	54.12	647	17.35	3,729
4	DOAE 1, Khon Kaen Province.	8,288	23.27	22,230	62.42	5,094	14.30	35,612
5	DOAE 1, Songkhla Province.	2,076	30.58	4,149	61.11	564	8.31	6,789
6	DOAE 1, Chiang Mai Province.	4,147	25.55	9,954	51.32	2,132	13.13	16,233
Total		17,557	25.70	41,484	60.74	9,265	13.56	68,306

The researcher is interested in conducting a research study on strategies for developing the potential of community enterprises in product production groups towards sustainable growth, considering the background and importance of these problems. The

objective is to utilise research findings to enhance, advance, and recommend strategies for enhancing the potential and competitive edge of community enterprises in Thailand.

RESEARCH OBJECTIVES

- 1) To study the elements of the strategy for developing the potential of community enterprises in product production groups towards sustainable growth.
- 2) To develop a structural equation model for strategies aimed at developing the potential of community enterprises in product production groups toward sustainable growth.

LITERATURE REVIEW

This study conducts a literature review on concepts and theories related to strategies for enhancing the potential of community enterprises in product production groups towards sustainable growth. This study proposes a framework for identifying strategies to enhance the growth and sustainability of community enterprises in product production groups. The focus of these strategies is on four key elements which are: 1) In-Depth Data, 2) Community Enhancement, 3) Design & Development, and 4) Effective Resources.

Components of In-Depth Data

Consumer behaviour in relation to purchasing community enterprise products is undergoing rapid changes, with logistics services playing a crucial role in improving competitiveness. Community enterprise groups must acquire and utilise knowledge and insights to effectively address consumer needs (Stutz, 2010). Guidelines for promoting entrepreneurial potential in community enterprises should prioritise enhancing group management skills, knowledge, and traits such as responsibility and decision-making courage. Organisations that prioritise knowledge and technology insights experience higher growth rates (Branco & Rodrigues, 2006). The use of digital media technology plays a crucial role in Thai society and marketing strategies, facilitating communication and the presence of businesses (Sananwatananont et al., 2022). Community enterprises should combine diverse knowledge, modern technology, local wisdom, and the sufficiency economy philosophy to foster innovation. The adoption of new management approaches, the strengthening of cultural capital, and the fostering of authentic leadership are crucial mindset changes (Chatty et al., 2022). Community enterprise management should prioritise the development of members' insights and production abilities, which includes accounting practices (Ramani et al., 2010). The effective management of insights is vital for the success and sustainability of community enterprises. This necessitates collaboration among leaders, members, regulatory agencies, and the private sector. Effective supply chain management is crucial for

meeting customer demands, encompassing all stages from product production to delivery ([Rashid et al., 2014](#)).

Components of Network Building (Community Enhancement)

Establishing a network is an essential strategy for community enterprises to foster long-term development and enhance social and economic sustainability within their community ([Dangelico & Pujari, 2010](#)). The formation of robust community enterprise networks is shaped by various significant factors, including:

Coordination, support, and promotion of knowledge exchange, as well as self-reliance and mutual reliance.

Supportive government organizations.

Partnerships with community enterprise product producers.

The establishment of a memorandum of understanding (MOU) with government organisations and the public sector promotes research collaboration and facilitates the generation of innovative ideas for product expansion ([Ambec & Lanoie, 2008](#)). The utilisation of this approach facilitates the creation of products that possess distinct characteristics tailored specifically to individual communities. Building a community enterprise network is essential for driving the sustainable growth of community enterprises.

Components of Product Design and Development (Design & Development) in the Digital Era

The success or failure in the digital era is determined by the capabilities in product design and development. Creating a competitive advantage through the design and development of products allows community enterprises to fulfil consumer needs. The importance of exceeding consumer expectations is paramount due to the rapidly changing consumer landscape ([Gandotra et al., 2017](#)). The study conducted by [Mahardika and Santika \(2021\)](#) found that product development and quality are key factors that contribute to a positive and significant impact on competitive advantage. Therefore, the development of new products is crucial in order to differentiate oneself and outperform competitors. Organisations must prioritise new product development in order to thrive and remain competitive ([Hamid & Abbasi, 2020](#)). The elements of product design and development play a critical role in enhancing community enterprises and ensuring their long-term viability.

Components of Effective Resources

In order to thrive in today's ever-changing economic and global landscape, organisations must prioritise adaptability and efficiency. It emphasises the importance of developing a high-performing, agile, and sustainable organisation to effectively navigate these changes. High-performing organizations have the following characteristics:

Intense customer and market focus. The organisation has implemented strategies for ongoing customer engagement, involving both frontline employees and executives. We have established internal systems, structures, and processes to ensure effective support is provided. Created to facilitate direct communication between employees and customers, as well as line executives, empowering them to address customer needs instead of serving the objectives of a bureaucratic work system.

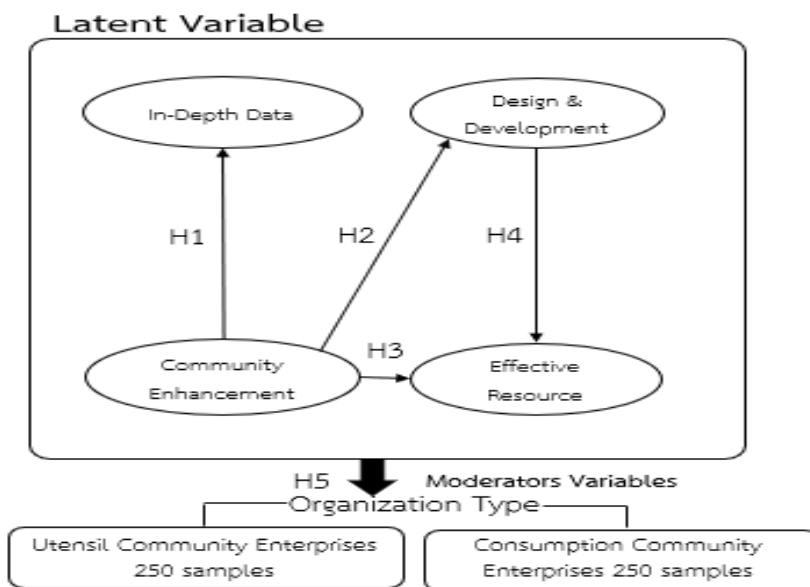


Figure 2: Components of the strategy for developing the potential of community enterprises in product production groups towards sustainable growth.

Highly independent teamwork. The authority is distributed to the operations team and work improvement team, enabling them to adapt work methods to enhance customer service. This greatly enhances the organization's overall efficiency. The organisation will adopt a streamlined structure with a limited number of personnel. Personnel in this type of organisation will have important responsibilities in leading, directing, and developing.

Partnering and operating across boundaries. Employees have the opportunity to learn and collaborate with various teams and experts who specialise in specific skills. These skills can then be applied across the entire organisation.

RESEARCH HYPOTHESIS

Considering the research objectives and the related literature, the researcher has developed the following channel research hypothesis:

H1: *Network-building elements (Community Enhancement) directly influence In-Depth Data elements.*

In order for agricultural product community enterprises to thrive and maintain long-term success, it is crucial to establish effective management practices right from the beginning. Establishing cooperation among leaders and members is essential for leveraging the community's cultural capital and local resources to enhance product production. Effective collaboration with regulatory organisations and the private sector, combined with a well-organized supply chain management system, is crucial for meeting customer demands, from production planning to delivery. Establishing credibility in the excellence of products is crucial for community enterprise groups. Environmental considerations are crucial for upholding the community's reputation. Adapting operations to dynamic economic conditions and evolving customer behaviour is crucial for achieving success. It is crucial to engage stakeholders in order to establish strong relationships. Upon analysis of competitive advantages, it is evident that quick response holds the greatest value, followed by differentiation and cost strategies. The development of new products entails risks but can result in competitive advantages in terms of quality, efficiency, innovation, and responsibility. Social media is important for leveraging business networks and speeding up market entry. This study has implications for both theory and practice.

H2: *Network building elements (Community Enhancement) and product design and development elements (Design & Development).*

The design and development of new product formats are influenced by the development of learning and group activities, as well as the strengthening of networks of cooperation with support agencies. The platform also offers advice and guidance for promoting the potential of community enterprises. One method of establishing networks is through creative product development, which includes pursuing memorandum of understanding (MOU) agreements with diverse organisations in both the government and public sectors. The brainstorming of creative ideas for product development is prompted by this approach. The network-building method begins by fostering a shared commitment within the museum network, utilising social capital in each location to develop distinct products tailored to each community.

H3: *Network-building elements (Community Enhancement) directly influence the elements of Effective Resources.*

Establishing a robust community enterprise network necessitates the coordination, support, and knowledge exchange among community enterprises to enhance resource effectiveness and self-reliance. This involves collaborating with government agencies that offer assistance. The study conducted by [Romli et al. \(2015\)](#) focused on collaborating with partners in various networks, including the community enterprise product producer network, production network, marketing network, learning network, and government agency networks. The community network consists of interconnected relationships that provide mutual support and serve as the foundation for production and essential services. Additionally, external networks facilitate the exchange of products. The inclusion of marketing channels and knowledge development significantly impacts the strength and growth of community enterprises. The guidelines for developing community enterprise network models involve building strong network relationships, establishing a learning network with educational institutions, and creating private and public model community enterprises with potential. The process also includes establishing a marketing network to broaden marketing channels at various levels, such as community, district, provincial, regional, and national. Additionally, it involves fostering participation and knowledge exchange to support the growth of successful enterprises ([Chen, 2024](#)). The organisational culture emphasises learning from the community and utilises local resources effectively through convening groups and meetings to drive business processes and implementing kinship-based human resource management.

H4: *Product design and development components directly influence the Effective Resources components.*

Participatory community product design and development entails using local wisdom and traditional methods to produce community products. Important factors include expertise in product processing and the creation of distinctive community products specific to the local region ([Onwuegbuzie et al., 2009](#)). The study revealed that the design process involved brainstorming ideas and taking into account the requirements of community enterprise groups. The design issues can be summarised in three aspects: In product marketing, there are three main factors to consider: 1) packaging; 2) brand; and 3) displaying brand information.

The evaluation of satisfaction with brand and packaging development revealed that the packaging and presentation were the most satisfactory aspects. By aligning the design of the packaging and brand, business groups can expand their product offerings. The products can be displayed in souvenir shops with appealing packaging that includes brand-specific information, thereby instilling consumer trust in the manufacturing

process. Paulus and Kenworthy (2019) conducted a study on a product development approach consisting of four essential steps: 1) Planning to gather product information, 2) Selecting products for development and promotion, 3) Developing production steps and processes, and 4) Creating packaging and labels. The study conducted by (Carvache-Franco et al., 2022) highlights the significant contribution of research and development personnel in driving product and process innovation. Their expertise, capabilities, and background contribute to the exploration of new applications of knowledge or the fusion of knowledge to fuel innovation.

H5: *The importance of strategies for developing the potential of community enterprises in the product production group towards sustainable growth is significant.*

All types of community enterprises are equally important. The emphasis is on cultivating entrepreneurial potential in order to gain a competitive edge among OTOP product producers. Operational conditions are carefully established with specific criteria, and the administrative structure is thoughtfully designed to allocate work based on individual aptitudes. Sharing knowledge acquired from training with members and providing welfare benefits is crucial. Some of the challenges that arise involve effectively managing groups, building self-confidence in operations, fostering collaboration in network building, acquiring marketing knowledge, and engaging members.

Guidelines for fostering entrepreneurial potential among OTOP product producers involve strengthening group management skills, knowledge, ability, responsibility, determination, and decision-making courage. It is essential to prioritise continuous learning, constantly seeking new knowledge, and consistently improving production planning. It is crucial to highlight the importance of maintaining and improving product quality to meet the expectations and preferences of customers. Incorporate cutting-edge technology into production processes and broaden distribution channels to reach a wider range of customers. Establishing a robust accounting system and discovering external funding sources are crucial for enhancing group operations. Promote member engagement in project development and establish networks for knowledge sharing with other entrepreneurial groups. Maintain regular collaboration with government organisations and the private sector. Management strategies for community enterprises, such as decision-making, passive, corrective, and preventive strategies, to improve their competitive advantage is crucial. Developing an effective business strategy is crucial for maximising operational capabilities and gaining a competitive advantage in community enterprises (Branco & Rodrigues, 2006). Found that high-growth organisations demonstrate substantial employment growth, which is influenced by factors such as organisation size, age, and industry. Smaller organisations, particularly in knowledge and technology-oriented industries, often experience higher rates of growth.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

This research employs a mixed methods approach to generate new knowledge through inductive research. The mixed-methodology research comprises three components: 1) Qualitative research utilizing in-depth interview techniques, 2) Quantitative research involving survey data collection, and 3) Qualitative research utilizing focus group discussions to validate the research model's accuracy.

An in-depth qualitative research study was conducted, involving interviews with a group of nine experts who were carefully selected using purposive sampling. The experts were selected based on specific qualification criteria established by the Executive Committee of the Doctor of Business Administration Programme, Industrial Business Administration Major, Faculty of Business Administration, King Mongkut's University of Technology North Bangkok. The study on "Strategy for Developing the Potential of Community Enterprises in Product Production Groups Towards Sustainable Growth" involved three groups of experts: 1) A group of three entrepreneurs or executives, 2) A group of three government and related organizations representatives, and 3) A group of three academics.

An extensive survey was conducted to gather quantitative data from a diverse group of entrepreneurs involved in community enterprises. The population was classified into different consumer product categories and types, leading to a total of 17,557 cases with positive potential assessment results. The researcher chose a sample size of 500, utilising a multi-stage sampling method. This method classified the entrepreneurs of community enterprises into two distinct types: 1) Those selling or producing consumer products, and 2) Those selling or producing industrial products. The sample selection was carried out using a random probability method, specifically the lottery method.

An in-depth qualitative research study was conducted with the participation of 11 highly qualified experts. These experts were carefully selected through purposive sampling.

RESULTS

The analysis of the strategy for enhancing the potential of community enterprises in product production groups towards sustainable growth yields four main components: 1) In-depth data elements, 2) Network building elements (Community Enhancement), 3) Components of product design and development (Design & Development), and 4) Components of resource efficiency (Effective Resources). The empirical data demonstrate a high level of consistency, with statistical significance observed at the 0.001 level. The p-value of 0.068, CMIN/DF of 1.120, GFI of 0.950, and RMSEA of 0.016 all support this finding. These findings are consistent with the current body of research and empirical evidence and meet the standards established by (Arbuckle, 2016). Figure 3 showcases the outcomes of the refined structural equation model, which

focuses on the strategy for fostering the growth of community enterprises in the product production group in a sustainable manner.

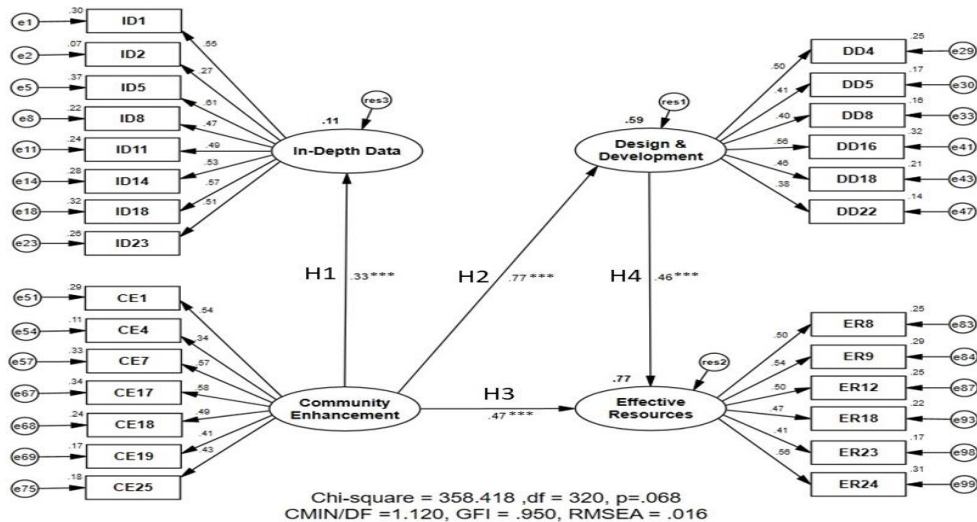


Figure 3: Structural equation model of the strategy for developing the potential of community enterprises in product production groups towards sustainable growth.

Subsequently, in the analysis of the structural equation model, the figure below illustrates the causal relationships among the latent variables. It focuses on the strategy for developing the potential of community enterprises in product production groups towards sustainable growth, based on hypothesis testing.

H1: The Community Enhancement component of network building has a significant direct relationship with the In-Depth Data component at a significance level of 0.05. The Standardized Regression Weight is 0.33, indicating an average level of significance.

H2: The network building component, which includes Community Enhancement and Product Design & Development, shows a positive and statistically significant association at a 0.001 level. The Standardized Regression Weight is 0.77.

H3: The social aspect of network building, specifically Community Enhancement, has a significant direct impact on the Effective Resources component with a coefficient of 0.30 at the 0.001 level. The Standardized Regression Weight is 0.47.

H4: The sub-variables of Product/Service Design & Development exhibit a statistically significant positive coefficient of 0.001. However, the Standardized Regression Weight is 0, indicating a worst-case scenario level of 0.46.

H5: The importance of strategic elements for developing the potential of community enterprises in the product production group for sustainable growth does not show a statistically significant difference based on the type of community enterprise at the 0.05 level.

The results of comparing the importance levels of strategic elements for developing the potential of community enterprises in product production groups towards sustainable growth, classified by type of community enterprise, confirmed the null hypothesis through a difference test of two independent population means by t-test or a similar method. It has been discovered that the significance of strategic elements for the growth and development of community enterprises in product production groups is similar between the two types of community enterprises as classified in the model formulation. The significance level of 0.05 is apparent from the category details provided in [Table 2](#).

Table 2. Comparison of the Importance Levels of Strategies for Developing the Potential of Community Enterprises in the Production Group for Sustainable Growth.

Components of Strategies for Developing the Potential of Community Enterprises in Product Production Groups Towards Sustainable Growth.	Consumer Products/Commodity			Consumer Goods			t-Value	P-Value
	\bar{X}	S.D.	Level of Importance	\bar{X}	S.D.	Level of Importance		
Overall	4.55	0.22	Highest	4.54	0.23	Highest	0.54	0.59
1. Products Design and Development	4.56	0.26	Highest	4.55	0.27	Highest	1.94	0.05
2. Community Enhancement	4.55	0.28	Highest	4.55	0.28	Highest	-0.11	0.91
3. Resource Efficiency	4.55	0.29	Highest	4.57	0.30	Highest	0.32	0.75
4. In-depth Information	4.56	0.27	Highest	4.51	0.32	Highest	-0.50	0.62

*Statistically significant at the 0.05 level

DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

After analysing hypothesis testing, it becomes apparent that the aspects of network-building (Community Enhancement) directly influence the elements of product design and development (Design & Development). The significance level was initially set at 0.123, and the Standardised Regression Weight was found to be 0.77. This can be attributed to the growth of educational and collaborative initiatives, the broadening of marketing strategies, and the enhancement of partnerships with organisations that offer support and aid. They provide guidance and support in enhancing the potential of community enterprises, influencing the design and development of new product formats

to be more diverse. This aligns with the network-building model's impact on the resilience of community enterprises in the pineapple product processing group in Ruam Thai Village, Kui Buri District, Prachuap Khiri Khan Province.

The research results indicate that the network construction model, known as the "2L2CPM Model," is divided into six areas: 1) Leadership (L), 2) Mutual support (L: Lending hand), 3) Creativity in product development (C: Creative), 4) Communication both inside and outside the organization (C: Communication), 5) Participation (P), and 6) Marketing (M). One important aspect of network building involves being creative in product development. Networks significantly contribute to the growth of community enterprises in Rai Khing Subdistrict, Sam Phran District, Nakhon Pathom Province. The research findings also indicate that establishing agreements with different organisations, including the government and public sectors, can result in the generation of innovative ideas for product development. The study found that the networking model starts by fostering commitment within the museum network through social capital in each location, with the aim of developing distinctive products tailored to each community.

The hypothesis testing revealed that Community Enhancement had the greatest overall impact on Effective Resources, with a statistical significance level of 0.001, and a Standardised Regression Weight of 0.82. Establishing a robust community enterprise network that optimises resources necessitates effective coordination, support, and knowledge sharing, while also fostering self-sufficiency among community enterprises. This collaboration should focus on government organisations that offer support and collaborate with partners in the community enterprise product producer network ([Romli et al., 2015](#)).

This aligns with the findings of [Romli et al. \(2015\)](#), which encompass various resources like agricultural products, knowledge, wisdom, local culture, and traditions. The importance of community enterprises and development is evident, given the individuals' extensive knowledge and long-standing involvement in these endeavours. They possess a high level of intelligence and extensive knowledge of farming techniques and preservation methods. It has been observed that the villagers demonstrate great potential, wisdom, and a strong determination to overcome challenges and enhance their quality of life. Additionally, they show a commendable concern for the environment and prioritise its preservation, which is both significant and praiseworthy. Villagers and communities play a crucial role in fostering development in various aspects. The community plays a crucial role in fostering economic growth and supporting various other advancements. The significance of group gatherings and meetings in driving business processes for community enterprises specialising in processed pineapple foods in the lower central region of Thailand (Group 2). Implementing a human resource management strategy that emphasises kinship and fostering an organisational culture

centred around community learning can greatly enhance the utilisation of local resources.

Research Suggestions at the Policy & Operational Levels

Researching strategies for fostering the growth of community enterprises in product production groups can provide valuable insights for the public and private sectors to partner with educational institutions, thereby improving the overall performance of these enterprises. The researcher proposes two strategies to enhance the potential of community enterprises in product production groups, aiming for long-term growth:

Government organisations should prioritise the establishment of policies and plans that support the growth of small and medium-sized enterprises. These initiatives should align with the country's overall policy and specifically address the needs of community enterprise entrepreneurs.

Government and affiliated organisations should enact policies to support community enterprises and products, enhancing the value of local businesses by leveraging the unique identity of the area.

Government sectors and related organisations should take the lead in facilitating discussions, enhancing intricate laws and regulations, and formulating government policy plans to promote the sustainable growth of community enterprises.

Government and affiliated organisations should offer support, financial assistance, and expertise to promote the sustainable development of community enterprises.

Operational Level Suggestions:

Community enterprise operators should focus on product design and development by establishing a research team, testing new products with target customers, and optimizing production processes to reduce costs.

Community enterprise operators should prioritise network building through collaboration with educational institutions for knowledge enhancement, government organisations for product and professional standards, and the creation of specialised training courses.

Community enterprise operators should prioritise resource efficiency through the development of communication technology skills, the establishment of effective communication channels with customers, and innovation to meet the needs of the target group.

Community enterprise operators should prioritise customer feedback analysis, promote internal information exchange, and optimise organisational structure and roles.

Suggestions for Future Research

Local government organisations and related entities must address the issues faced by community enterprises and find solutions to improve standards in developing strategies to unlock their potential. Research should prioritise the development of guidelines for government policies that promote and support community enterprise growth. The emergence of a new strain of COVID-19 has led to significant changes in Thai society, prompting the utilisation of digital technology as a vital tool for pandemic management. Additional research could investigate the efficacy of digital technology in addressing the challenges presented by COVID-19 and its implications for future strategies in responding to pandemics. The pandemic has a direct impact on the growth potential of community enterprises operating under restrictions. Research should focus on developing guidelines for effectively managing the transition of community enterprises into the digital age. These guidelines should enable organisations and personnel to adapt and respond to changes while maintaining operational efficiency. To investigate the success factors of 5-star community enterprises as a model for community enterprise management, research should be conducted. This research aims to support and enhance community enterprises, contribute to national development, and establish a stable and sustainable economic foundation. The objective of this study is to enhance the sustainable well-being of individuals within the community.

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