

Integration of Local Cultural Knowledge in the Community Products Design and Development

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Abstract

This article studies the current state of community product design and development, focusing on the integration of local cultural knowledge in community products through the framework of cultural capital and wisdom across eight categories. A qualitative method involved in-depth interviews with 30 individuals, including 15 entrepreneurs and 15 cultural experts selected from five target communities. The findings reveal the context of local cultural knowledge available in the communities, and the integration of local cultural knowledge being integrated into the community product development processes. It is also found that despite the presence of diverse local cultures, these cultural resources are underutilized in product design and development due to a lack of knowledge and awareness regarding the significance of product identity.

Keywords: *Community Products, Local Cultural Knowledge, Knowledge Integration, Community Product Design, Community Product Development.*

Introduction

Community products, as produced by villagers within their respective communities, are emblematic of local resources and traditional practices harnessed in their production processes. These products serve as tangible reflections of the community's cultural identity and contribute significantly to the socio-economic well-being of its inhabitants. The creation and sale of community products not only generate income for residents but also serve as a foundation for fostering self-reliance and augmenting the quality of life within the community. Moreover, promoting community well-being through the production and consumption of these products serves as a means to mitigate socioeconomic disparities and establish a foundation for enduring economic stability (Srichan & Kenaphoom, 2022). In recognition of the important role of community products in grassroots economic development, Thai governmental sectors prioritize economic growth and equitable income distribution to address chronic poverty within communities. The inception of initiatives such as the One Tambon (District) One Product Project (OTOP) underscores this commitment by aiming to enhance the quality of community products through the integration of local wisdom, cultural heritage, and indigenous resources (Soicjit, 2022).

The community product design concept of OTOP focuses on empowering rural communities by optimizing local potential, promoting independence, creativity, and innovation, and developing human resources (Susanti et al., 2022). This initiative involves collaborative product development, identifying consumer groups, and utilizing local culture to innovate new products (Sensang, Jomvong, Santianotai, & Chattinnawat, 2022). Furthermore, the design of OTOP exhibition centers aims to showcase local lifestyles, promote economic growth, and create unique cultural tourism areas (Umpawan, 2018). To further support OTOP initiatives, the Thai government encourages e-commerce platforms to facilitate the sale of OTOP products, emphasizing social influence, ease of use, and product reliability in online purchasing decisions (Cooharojanone et al., 2017).

The concept of community products is deeply intertwined with cultural knowledge. Community products are items or services that are produced within a community, often leveraging local resources, skills, and traditions. Cultural capital, on the other hand, refers to the non-economic resources that enable social

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mobility, such as education, intellect, style of speech, and, more pertinently, local knowledge, traditions, and practices. The Department of Industrial Promotion (2016), under the Ministry of Industry of Thailand, has supported community entrepreneurs—the foundation of the country's economy—by encouraging the use of local traditional wisdom to create added value. The cultural ways are divided into eight categories: food, dress, housing, traditions, language, occupations, beliefs, and local arts. The cultural heritage of these communities can be put to use through cultural activities and local organizations, enhancing identity, attracting economic capital, and promoting local pride. This contributes to the creation of unique community products (Lenovský & Kurajda, 2022). Local identity selection is crucial for community product development to address the lack of creativity, beauty, and unique identity in product design, enhancing market competitiveness and sustaining community occupations (Kunasri et al, 2017).

The importance of this research lies in its comprehensive analysis of the current state of community product design and development through a qualitative approach. This study provides valuable insights into the integration of local cultural knowledge into product design and development processes, as well as the actual cultural information available in communities. These findings will contribute to the organization of local cultural knowledge for the future use in the community product development. There is a need for a centralized source of cultural knowledge, such as a digital repository, to pool cultural knowledge and make it accessible to community entrepreneurs. This repository can classify knowledge to provide targeted information and inspiration for creating unique and culturally valuable products. It also helps community entrepreneurs effectively leverage their cultural heritage, leading to the creation of outstanding products that resonate with both local and global markets, driving economic development, promoting cultural conservation, and fostering community pride.

Research Objectives

This research aims for investigating the answers to the following questions:

- What are the local cultural knowledge available for community products development?
- Are the local cultural knowledge being integrated into the community product development processes?

Literature Review

Cultural Capital

Cultural capital refers to the non-financial assets possessed by individuals or groups, which are rooted in cultural resources such as education, knowledge, skills, values, and norms. Coined by sociologist Pierre Bourdieu, cultural capital encompasses both embodied forms (internalized cultural knowledge and skills) and objectified forms (cultural goods and artifacts). This concept suggests that cultural resources can confer social advantages and contribute to social mobility. Cultural capital can manifest in various ways, including language proficiency, educational attainment, aesthetic tastes, cultural practices, and social networks. Access to and possession of cultural capital can influence individuals' opportunities for success and advancement in society, as well as their ability to navigate cultural fields and institutions. Moreover, cultural capital plays a crucial role in shaping identity, social interactions, and participation in cultural and economic activities within communities.

Cultural capital serves as a pivotal resource aimed at incentivizing producers to incorporate cultural elements, such as narratives and cultural content, into their products. This strategic utilization of cultural capital not only distinguishes products in the market but also enhances their value and marketability (Mankong, 2017). Research findings indicate that the creation of value for products significantly influences the competitive potential of community enterprises (Singmat et al., 2016). Moreover, studies on the identity of community products underscore the importance of imbuing products with a unique identity derived from generational wisdom or distinctive narratives. This identity may stem from various sources, including

traditional practices passed down through generations or unique origin stories. Communities must actively seek to highlight and leverage their product identity as a selling point to stimulate interest and enhance product value, thereby fostering income generation (Chamnian, 2021). Consumer research further corroborates the significance of originality and local uniqueness in community products. Consumers exhibit a preference for products that embody original values and manifest in innovative forms. The incorporation of local uniqueness into products has been shown to attract attention and confer value upon them (Siriroj & Jinda, 2021).

However, a critical challenge facing community products lies in the limited promotion and utilization of cultural capital and the creation of product identities. Many existing products lack distinctiveness and suffer from constrained distribution channels, hindering their market penetration and competitiveness (Kunasri et al., 2017; Srisopha, 2010). Addressing these issues requires concerted efforts to harness cultural capital effectively and enhance product identity, thereby unlocking the full potential of community products in the market.

Local Cultural Knowledge

Local cultural knowledge refers to the accumulated wisdom, traditions, practices, and beliefs that are specific to a particular community or region. This knowledge is passed down through generations and is often deeply rooted in the community's history, environment, and way of life. It includes various aspects such as food preparation, traditional medicine, craft techniques, agricultural practices, language, and rituals. Local cultural knowledge plays a crucial role in maintaining the cultural identity of a community and can also be a valuable resource for sustainable development.

Cultural capital and local cultural knowledge are interconnected concepts that both play essential roles in shaping and preserving the identity, practices, and values of a community. Cultural capital is a broader concept that includes various forms of cultural assets, while local cultural knowledge is a more specific subset of cultural capital, focusing on the traditions and practices of a particular community (Scott & Marshall, 2009). As a crucial element of cultural capital, local cultural knowledge is essential for social inclusion, as it allows individuals to participate fully in the life of their community (Brennan, 2019). This participation fosters a sense of belonging and shared identity among community members. Moreover, as an integral part of cultural heritage, local cultural knowledge contributes significantly to the identity and values of a community (Sieber, 2021). Thus, previous studies have highlighted the importance of local cultural knowledge, which encompasses the following key aspects:

Community Identity: Local cultural knowledge is integral to a community's identity, reflecting its unique history, customs, and social norms. It shapes how community members perceive themselves and their place in the world (Brennan, 2019). For example, traditional silk weaving not only serves as a key economic activity but also symbolizes the community's deep connection to its cultural heritage. The community's identity is also reflected in the vibrant patterns of Mudmee cloth, which are unique to the region.

Tradition and Heritage: This includes the traditional practices and rituals that have been passed down through generations, such as agricultural methods, crafts, and culinary practices (Khamung, 2015). For instance, the tradition of Khao Lam, a dessert made from sticky rice cooked in bamboo, is a staple in local ceremonies. Similarly, the use of herbal remedies reflects the community's long-standing knowledge of natural medicine and spiritual practices.

Adaptation and Resilience: Local cultural knowledge is dynamic and evolves with the community's experiences (Congreterel & Pinton, 2020). It allows communities to adapt to changes in their environment and societal conditions, ensuring resilience and sustainability. For instance, a community may develop new products or services that are rooted in traditional knowledge but adapted for contemporary markets, thereby ensuring that their cultural heritage remains relevant and vibrant.

Social Interaction: It fosters social interaction and cohesion among community members, as shared knowledge and practices create bonds and a sense of belonging. This interaction often occurs through storytelling, festivals, and communal activities (Rutagand, 2024). For example, the Heet Sip-Song (Twelve Months traditions), which include merit-making ceremonies like Boon Kathin and Boon Bang Fai, bring the community together, reinforcing social ties and cultural continuity.

Local cultural knowledge is not only a repository of the past but also a guiding force for the future, helping communities navigate contemporary challenges while staying rooted in their heritage. This knowledge is particularly valuable in the development of community products, where it can be harnessed to create goods that are not only economically viable but also culturally significant. By incorporating traditional practices, materials, and designs, community products can reflect the unique identity and values of a community, making them more appealing to both local and global markets. For instance, traditional weaving techniques or herbal remedies can be transformed into products that resonate with consumers seeking authenticity and a connection to cultural heritage.

Moreover, the dynamic nature of local cultural knowledge allows communities to innovate and adapt their products to changing market demands while maintaining their cultural integrity. This adaptability ensures that community products remain relevant and competitive, contributing to the community's economic sustainability. Involving community members in the product development process empowers them, giving them agency over how their cultural knowledge is used and shared. This not only enhances the quality and authenticity of the products but also fosters a sense of ownership and pride within the community. Ultimately, integrating local cultural knowledge into community product development helps preserve cultural heritage, promotes economic resilience, and strengthens social cohesion, making it a vital strategy for sustainable community development.

Framework of Cultural Knowledge in the Community

The Department of Industrial Promotion, under the Ministry of Industry, Thailand, has supported community entrepreneurs—the foundation of the country's economy—by encouraging the use of local traditional knowledge to create added value. This initiative, launched in 2016, aimed to apply traditional culture to develop marketable products. The framework of cultural knowledge is divided into eight categories:

Food: Utilizing traditional recipes, local ingredients, and unique culinary techniques to create products that reflect the community's heritage and appeal to modern consumers.

Dress: Incorporating traditional textiles, clothing designs, and accessories to produce fashion items that preserve cultural identity while meeting contemporary fashion trends.

Housing: Drawing on traditional architectural styles, construction methods, and local materials to create housing solutions that are both culturally significant and functionally modern.

Traditions: Infusing products with elements of local rituals, festivals, and ceremonies to enhance their cultural value and attractiveness.

Language: Using local dialects, proverbs, and stories in product branding and marketing to convey cultural richness and uniqueness.

Occupations: Leveraging traditional crafts and skills to produce artisanal goods that stand out in the market for their authenticity and quality.

Beliefs: Incorporating symbols, motifs, and narratives from local religious and spiritual practices to create products that resonate with cultural and emotional significance.

Local Arts: Integrating traditional music, dance, visual arts, and other forms of artistic expression into product design and promotion to highlight cultural heritage.

By following these eight cultural pathways, community entrepreneurs can develop products that not only preserve and promote their cultural heritage but also meet market demands, thereby supporting sustainable local economic development.

Community Product Components

In marketing, the concept of a product is often dissected into three levels: core product, actual product, and augmented product—a framework used to understand the value and various components of a product that contribute to the overall consumer experience (Schmidt, 2010; Eightception, 2021).

Core Product: The core product refers to the fundamental value or benefit that consumers receive from using the product. It represents the essential aspect of what the product is designed to address or satisfy in terms of consumer needs or problems.

Example in the community product context: Herbal soap produced by the community from natural herbs such as turmeric, tamarind, or aloe vera provides the basic benefits of cleansing and nourishing the skin according to the properties of each herb.

Actual Product: The actual product is what the consumer can see and touch, including packaging design, shape, size, scent, color, and brand name.

Example in the community product context: The herbal soap may feature packaging designed to reflect local culture, such as using Saa paper or eco-friendly packaging, selecting colors that represent the herbs used, like yellow for turmeric, or using a brand name that embodies the community's identity.

Augmented Product: The augmented product includes additional services or features that add value to the product and differentiate the community product item.

Example in the community product context: The herbal soap might come with expert advice on using herbs or skincare from community members, a guarantee of product quality and safety, or a gift package set with various scents and sizes, accompanied by descriptions of each herb's story.

From interviews with sample areas and surveys of community product data, it was found that community products generally have two main components: the Product, with the Actual Product, and the Augmented Product, often combined in the packaging. Therefore, this research describes the components of community products in two parts: products and packages.

Research Method

This research used a qualitative method, aiming to study the current state of community product design and development in order to identify the integration of local cultural knowledge into the processes. The study was specifically scoped to Khon Kaen Province, which has had the largest number of community entrepreneurs in the Northeast of Thailand. The representative areas for the study were determined to be five villages that were part of the OTOP Village Project for Tourism in Khon Kaen Province. These villages were selected because they met the necessary criteria: 1) the villages had community products, and 2) the villages maintained cultural traditions. These communities met the criteria for being established as tourism villages. Additionally, this research selected representative products used in the study, covering five types of community products, with details as follows: (See Table 1)

Table 1: The Selected Community Products and Community for This Study

Product Types	Community Product	Community (Village)
Food	Isan sausage	C1: Nong Hee
Household items, decorations, souvenirs	Rakkaew woven; Bamboo crafts	C2: Sam Phak Nam
Beverages	Herbal liquor	C3: Kham Muang
Textiles and clothes	Mudmee silk	C4: Muang Phia
Non-food herbal	Silk protein serum	C5: Lao Nuea

Key informants were selected using a criterion-based selection method, dividing them into two groups: entrepreneurs and community cultural experts in the area. The qualifications of the key informants are specified as follows:

Group 1: Entrepreneurs or product owners must own products in the community and/or individuals involved in designing, creating, and producing community products.

Group 2: The community cultural knowledge group must consist of individuals who have extensive knowledge related to the culture in the area and are accepted by the community as experts in the local culture.

The research tool used was a semi-structured interview question. The interview form was divided into two sets according to the group of informants to align with their expertise and to obtain complete information for the study's purpose.

Interview form 1 for the entrepreneurs: The questions were related to the current state of product development, product design concepts, product selling points from the perspective of entrepreneurs, problems with product development, and other relevant topics.

Interview form 2 for the community cultural experts: The questions focused on the community's distinctive cultural expressions, such as food, clothing, housing, customs, language, occupations, beliefs, local art, and other cultural aspects.

In-depth interviews were conducted with 30 individuals, including 15 entrepreneurs and 15 cultural experts from the 5 villages. Each interview lasted approximately 30 to 90 minutes. The researcher coded and transcribed the recorded files using word processing software to ensure the accuracy of the data. The data were then analyzed in two parts: the current state of community product design and development, and the cultural information available in the community that can be further utilized in the development of community products.

The findings in this article focus on the analysis of interview results related to the cultural knowledge available in communities that can be for community products, and cultural knowledge integration in the product design and development processes. The analysis was based on the framework of cultural knowledge in the community as specified by the Department of Industrial Promotion (2016), which consists of eight categories: food, dress, housing, traditions, language, occupations, beliefs, local arts.

Findings and Discussions

Local Cultural Knowledge in the Community

The study of local cultural knowledge in five communities focused on exploring the culture that can be used as a unique identity for community products. The study revealed that each community has unique cultural knowledge as follows: (Table 2)

Table 2: Local Cultural Knowledge/Sources Founded in The Studied Community

Community	Local Cultural Knowledge								
	Food	Dress	Housing	Traditions	Language	Occupations	Beliefs	Local arts	Other
C1	-Fermented fish	None	None	-Twelve months custom (Heet Sib-Song)	None	-Farming -Fishing -Basketry, reed mat weaving	-Ancient hospital (Arogayasala)	-Music band	-Temple (Wat Ku Kaew Samakkhi) -Natural resource (Kaeng Kut Phan)
C2	-Wild food -Wild fruit -Mushroom	None	None	-Twelve months custom (Heet Sib-Song)	None	-Rice, corn cropping	-Ancestral spirit forest (Don Pu Ta)	None	-Temple (Wat Pa Cham Phak Nam)
C3	-Grilled chicken -Glutinous rice roasted in bamboo joints (Khao Lam)	None	None	-Twelve months custom (Heet Sib-Song)	None	-Sugar cane, cassava cropping -Framing	-Ritual and healing wisdom -Ancestral spirit forest (Don Pu Ta)	None	-Ancient city (Dong Muang Am)
C4	None	-Mudmee (silk, cotton)	None	-Twelve months custom (Heet Sib-Song)	None	-Farming -Salt making -Textile productions	- Archaeology (Non Chao Pu Fa Ramngum)	None	-Ancient city (Ban Muang Phia) - Bo Kathin
C5	None	-Mudmee (silk, cotton)	None	-Twelve months custom (Heet Sib-Song)	None	-Farming -Textile productions	None	None	None

Community 1: Nong Hee Village

This community has had long-time expertise in processing food products. The famous product is Isaan sausage. The results of interviews regarding cultural knowledge in the community revealed important cultural information of the community as follows.

Food: Fermented fish is a local food that can be made by every household in the community because farming is the main occupation and it is close to the main source of water for the village, Kaeng Kut Phan, making it available for raw materials to make fermented fish. The production of fermented fish, a staple in the community, can be highlighted as a unique selling point. The product can be marketed as being made with traditional methods passed down through generations, using locally sourced ingredients from Kaeng Kut Phan. Emphasizing this local heritage in marketing materials, packaging, and branding can create a strong identity that resonates with consumers looking for authentic, traditional products.

Traditions: Heet Sib-Song is a custom that has always been practiced in the community, especially the custom of Bun Kum Khao Yai or Bun Khun Lan, which aims for merit making in the between the second to third month of the year. Incorporating elements of the Heet Sib-Song custom into the branding of Isaan sausage

can strengthen its cultural identity. For example, packaging could feature designs inspired by the Bun Kum Khao Yai festival, or promotional campaigns could tie into the timing of these traditional events. This association with local customs not only enriches the product's story but also aligns it with cultural practices that are meaningful to the community.

Occupations: The main occupations of the people in the community are farming and fishing. The additional occupations of the housewives are basketry and weaving reed mats, which have been passed down since ancestors. The skills of basketry and weaving reed mats practiced by the village housewives can be incorporated into the product's packaging. For instance, Isaan sausages could be sold in baskets or reed mat wraps made by local artisans, thereby not only creating a distinctive product presentation but also supporting local craftsmanship.

Beliefs: Arogayasala is an ancient hospital that is more than 800 years old, located in the village. There is a belief in the community that it is the center of disease treatment since ancient times. Currently, it is a source of historical learning, and is becoming a source of learning about medicinal plants and the treatment of traditional medicine. The historical significance of Arogayasala as a center for traditional medicine could be used to build a narrative around the health benefits of the food products. This could include promoting the use of natural, locally sourced ingredients and the traditional knowledge of herbal remedies, appealing to consumers who value health and wellness.

Other: Wat Ku Kaew Samakkhi, an important cultural site, is a significant temple of the community and plays a vital role in the local religion and culture. The temple provides activities for tourists, covering a total area of 960,000 square meters. There is a boat trip that lasts about an hour, allowing visitors to observe the way of life of local farmers. During the journey, local guides provide lectures about each area the boat passes through, sharing insights into the local people's history and way of life. The proximity to Wat Ku Kaew Samakkhi and Kaeng Kut Phan can be used to promote the product's authenticity. For example, product labels could include images or symbols associated with these sites, or tourism-related promotions could highlight the connection between the product and the cultural or natural landmarks of the area.

Community 2: Sam Phak Nam Village

This community is renowned for its expertise in creating household items, decorations, and souvenirs through Rakkaew woven bamboo crafts. Below is an overview of the cultural elements and occupational highlights associated with this group:

Occupation: The primary occupation of the majority of villagers remains farming, which is integral to the economic stability and sustenance of the community. Another significant agricultural activity that contributes to the villagers' livelihoods is corn cultivation. In developing a product identity, the integration of Rakkaew woven bamboo techniques into product design is recommended. For example, woven bamboo can be utilized as packaging material or as a decorative element within the products. Furthermore, it is essential to emphasize the connection to agriculture by underscoring the importance of farming and corn cultivation in branding strategies.

Food: This village is renowned for its wild food, wild fruits, and mushrooms, largely due to its proximity to Phu Pha Man National Park in Khon Kaen Province. Sam Phak Nam village is also recognized for its effective natural resource management, led by community organizations. The lush green landscape of the village reflects a deep awareness of forest preservation and the harmonious coexistence of people and nature. The community's reliance on natural resources, particularly in gathering wild fruits and mushrooms from the surrounding forest, highlights a profound relationship with the environment. To create a product identity, this cultural knowledge can be leveraged by emphasizing the use of locally sourced, wild ingredients in food products, thereby aligning the products with the community's commitment to sustainability and environmental stewardship.

Traditions: Heet Sip-Song, lasting custom in the community include important merit-making activities such as Boon Khum Khao Yai, Boon Khun Lan, Boon Bang Fai, Boon Kathin, and various forest rituals.

Communities can incorporate traditional patterns and designs inspired by these festivals into their product packaging. For example, design packaging that reflects the visual style of Boon Khum Khao Yai. Additionally, they can launch special products or promotional campaigns timed with these traditional events to enhance cultural relevance.

Beliefs: Ancestor spirit forest (Don Pu Ta), a sacred place where the community worships their ancestors, strengthening spiritual beliefs and cultural continuity. Integrate symbols or imagery related to the Ancestor Spirit Forest into product designs to convey a sense of heritage and spirituality. Additionally, Narrative Branding or Develop a story around the spiritual significance of Don Pu Ta to create a deeper connection with consumers interested in cultural and spiritual authenticity.

Other: Wat Pa Cham Phak Nam, a local temple that serves as the religious and cultural center of the community. It plays an important role in the spiritual life of the villagers and in community activities. This can be leveraged to create a product identity by incorporating images or symbols related to Wat Pa Cham Phak Nam on the product label or packaging. Doing so will strengthen the connection between the product and the local culture and create a bond with the community by highlighting the temple's role in community life and its influence on the product's authenticity in marketing materials.

Community 3: Kham Muang Village

This community primarily engages in cultivating medicinal plants and processing them into various products such as essential oils, lotions, and health herbal drinks. The unique cultural knowledge within the community is as follows:

Food: Khao Suan Kwang grilled chicken is a dish known for its distinctive taste and unique cooking method, specific to the area. Another local favorite is Khao Lam, sticky rice cooked in bamboo, a traditional Thai dessert popular within the community. To create a product identity, these culinary traditions can be highlighted by emphasizing the unique cooking methods and local ingredients used, thereby associating the products with the rich gastronomic heritage of the community.

Traditions: Heet Sib-Song comprises 12 merit-making traditions observed throughout the year, reflecting the cultural and spiritual practices of the community. Notably, grand celebrations are held for events like the Khao Suan Kwang grilled chicken festival and the Bun Kum Khao Yai tradition. Additionally, villagers participate in Sai Bun Road, where they offer food to monks along the village route on Buddhist holy mornings. These customs can be incorporated into the product identity by aligning product launches or packaging designs with the themes of these festivals, thus enhancing cultural relevance and connection with the community.

Occupations: Villagers engage in a variety of occupations, benefiting from the area's prosperity, notably due to its proximity to the Khon Kaen Zoo, which boosts tourism. Some villagers continue traditional occupations such as sugarcane and cassava cultivation, while rice farming remains a staple supporting the livelihood of many. Another popular and unique profession within the community is selling Khao Suan Kwang grilled chicken. Incorporating elements of these traditional occupations into product identity, such as emphasizing the agricultural roots and local culinary expertise, can create a brand that resonates with the authenticity and livelihood of the community.

Belief: Wisdom, rituals, and healing constitute the traditional knowledge and practices of the community. These beliefs encompass rituals and remedies passed down from generation to generation, including the use of herbs combined with magical spells inherited from ancestors. Another belief is in the ancestral spirit forest (Don Pu Ta), a sacred place where the community venerates their ancestors, fostering spiritual connection and cultural continuity. This cultural knowledge can be integrated into product identity by using symbols or narratives related to these beliefs in branding, thereby appealing to consumers seeking products with a strong cultural and spiritual foundation.

Other: Dong Mueang Am Ancient City is an important archaeological and cultural site that showcases the area's historical heritage. This ancient city's rich history and cultural significance can be used to create a product identity that reflects the community's deep connection to its past. Incorporating imagery or stories related to Dong Mueang Am in product packaging or marketing can help establish a brand that is deeply rooted in the historical and cultural identity of the community.

Community 4: Muang Phia Village

Dress: Muang Phia Village is renowned for its silk weaving. Upon entering the village, one discovers that every household engages in weaving and operates businesses dedicated to producing and selling silk and cotton. The attire of the community members, particularly the elderly, remains traditional, characterized by garments crafted from silk and cotton that they sew themselves. These clothes reflect the cultural identity and heritage of the community, meticulously woven by the silk weavers of Ban Muang Phia. To create a product identity, this rich tradition of silk weaving can be emphasized by incorporating traditional patterns and materials into the design of clothing or textile products, thereby highlighting the community's expertise in weaving and its deep cultural roots.

Traditions: Hit Sib-Song refers to the 12 significant merit-making traditions observed throughout the year. Specifically, the tradition includes the annual Thousand Rice Balls Parade held every April, as well as the revered tradition of gilding Luang Pho Yai at Ban Mueang Phia, which holds deep significance and belief within the community. These traditions can be leveraged to develop a product identity by aligning product launches with these cultural events or by incorporating motifs and symbols from these traditions into product packaging, thereby enhancing the cultural relevance and appeal of the products.

Occupations: Most villagers in Mueang Phia are engaged in agriculture, cultivating crops essential for their livelihoods. Additionally, salt farming is a traditional occupation in the community, utilizing local resources. Housewives and elderly community members predominantly engage in weaving silk, Mudmee cloth, and producing Mudmee cotton. The Ban Muang Phia Silk Weaving Group specializes in these crafts, employing sophisticated traditional weaving techniques handed down through generations. The unique craftsmanship and traditional methods used in these occupations can be emphasized in the branding of products, creating a distinct identity that reflects the authenticity and cultural heritage of the community.

Belief: The community has strong beliefs and faith in Non-Chao Pu Fa Ram Ngam, a place of both archaeological and religious significance. Although it has physically changed from its original form, it remains an important site for studying the history and culture of the local area, serving as a center for religious ceremonies and cultural gatherings such as praying for rain and bountiful farmland. To create a product identity, the spiritual significance of Non-Chao Pu Fa Ram Ngam can be highlighted by incorporating related symbols or narratives into product branding, thereby fostering a deeper connection with consumers who value cultural and spiritual authenticity.

Other: Bo Kathin was the location of a community during the Dvaravati period, featuring an oval circular earthen moat approximately 1.5 to 2 kilometers in diameter. This town plan is still clearly visible today. The moat has been turned into ponds with various names given by the villagers, such as Big Lotus Pond, Little Pond, Chok Pond, Stone Pond, and Monkey Poop Pond. In addition, the general area is rich with antiques, including Sema leaves, Shivalinga stands, pottery, Buddha statues, and various ornaments. One informant shared.

"...A long time ago, there were people who set up a Kathina troupe and then carried a dancing procession past this way to offer it to the temple on the other side, which had to cross a rice field. But an unexpected event occurred: a storm blew and destroyed the Kathina pile. This is why the villagers call this area Thung Kathin or Bo Kathin..."

To create a product identity, these historical and archaeological elements can be incorporated into the branding and packaging design, emphasizing the rich historical context and cultural significance of the area, which can appeal to consumers interested in products that are deeply rooted in history and tradition.

Community 5: Lao Nuea Village

Dress: Lao Nuea Village is famous for its silk weaving tradition. There is a long history of growing mulberries, raising silkworms, and weaving as a profession. This village received the Outstanding Sufficiency Village Award in 2019. The village's cultural heritage is evident in the occupations of many households, especially among housewives and the elderly who continue to weave and do businesses related to silk and cotton to continue the cultural heritage of this community. They produce and sell silk and cotton to preserve the cultural heritage of the community. Community members, particularly the elderly, prefer to dress in silk or cotton in their everyday lives and wear beautiful silk garments for important merit-making ceremonies. To create a product identity, these traditional textiles and the unique designs of the village can be used to develop a brand that emphasizes the authenticity, craftsmanship, and cultural continuity of the community's weaving traditions.

Traditions: Hit Sib-Song" refers to the 12 significant merit-making traditions that are observed throughout the year. The village does not have any official festivals, but the villagers observe regular annual traditions. Religious and traditional activities are usually held at their village temple, Wat Song Sila. These traditions can be incorporated into product identity by aligning product releases with these significant events or by integrating traditional motifs and symbols from these ceremonies into the design and marketing of products, enhancing the cultural connection and relevance of the offerings.

Occupations: Most of the villagers in the northern area work in agriculture. Housewives and elderly members of the community are involved in weaving silk, Mudmee cloth, and producing Mudmee cotton. The Ban Lao Silk Weaving Group specializes in these crafts, employing complex traditional weaving techniques that have been passed down through generations. By highlighting the intricate craftsmanship and the use of traditional methods in these occupations, a strong product identity can be created that showcases the village's dedication to preserving cultural heritage and producing high-quality, authentic textiles.

To effectively integrate local cultural knowledge into community product, it is essential to utilize local skills and craftsmanship, such as traditional weaving techniques or materials like bamboo and silk, to create a distinctive product identity that reflects the community's heritage. Highlighting unique local foods or ingredients, emphasizing traditional preparation methods, and aligning product launches with significant local traditions and festivals can enhance authenticity and cultural relevance. Incorporating symbols, imagery, or narratives related to the community's spiritual beliefs fosters a deeper connection with consumers who value cultural and spiritual authenticity. Additionally, using the history and significance of local cultural sites in marketing efforts can enhance the product's depth and uniqueness.

The results of the above study show that each community has its own unique culture, whether in the form of beliefs, traditions, or important religious and spiritual places. However, this cultural richness has not yet been effectively incorporated into the development of community product identities. This diverse array of cultural elements provides a rich foundation that can be leveraged to enhance the uniqueness and marketability of community products. By incorporating these aspects of local heritage into product development, communities can foster greater cultural pride, stimulate economic growth, and preserve their traditions for future generations. As can be seen in a previous study by Zhang & Wen (2020), integrating local cultural elements into product design enhances uniqueness, marketability, cultural pride, economic growth, and tradition preservation for community products. In the context of research on the local architectural culture of Macao, this study focuses on the cultural elements and the designer's cognition in the design development of cultural and creative products, thereby improving the success rate of these products. In addition, Phukamchanoad's (2022) study emphasizes the importance of community culture in contributing to the success of community products. Using a case study of community tourism products, such as fresh coconut water ice cream at Khlong Lat Mayom Floating Market, the study demonstrates how cultural identity is successfully applied through local stories and folk tales. This approach promotes

sustainable economic development by incorporating cultural elements and offering negotiable prices. Consistent with a previous study by Tuamsuk, Phabu, and Vongprasert (2013), successful OTOP businesses systematically apply their knowledge while relying on social processes within the family system. This knowledge encompasses culture and wisdom, community issues, and environmental factors. There is an exchange of knowledge and collaborative learning, integrating traditional identity and intellect with new insights from external organizations, including academic institutions and environmental conditions, which contribute to the success of OTOP businesses.

Integration of Local Cultural Knowledge in Community Product

The results of in-depth interviews with entrepreneurs from all five communities revealed that the establishment of community product development groups stemmed from collaborations among community members and government agencies during the initial phases of their formation. Key findings from the interviews include insights into the current state of community product design and development, the concept of product design, and the selling points as perceived by entrepreneurs. Additionally, the interviews shed light on challenges related to product development. The study's results can be summarized as follows:

Potential of Production

The study revealed that most entrepreneurs utilize local raw materials and employ manual labor in their production processes. Products are offered in various formats, adapting to changing customer needs and trends over time. However, production challenges persist, including the absence of standardized certifications from relevant agencies for some products. Entrepreneurs lack regular training in production techniques and access to modern production equipment. Management practices rely on self-management within community groups, lacking structured production oversight. Furthermore, local wisdom is underutilized in production compared to its potential. One of the entrepreneurs was quoted as saying:

“...We received training on product manufacturing and group setup only at the outset. Government officials visited to assess our community's capabilities: which agricultural products could be processed, or which occupational groups we could establish. After initial management assistance, we've taken charge ourselves...”

The results of this study are consistent with the development of local products towards premium OTOP by the herbal community enterprise group of Chirinang et al. (2023). It was presented that one of the problems in producing community products is human resource management. Communities lack labor to operate, and most do not have systematic planning. Most members view the group only as an additional career or source of supplementary income. Entrepreneur groups lack wisdom inheritance, skill transfer, and the application of modern techniques and methods. This problem is also consistent with the findings of Monpho & Unaramlert (2018), who identified labor issues in community enterprise groups. The new generation is often uninterested in continuing these traditional practices, opting instead to work in factories or leave the village to work in the city. Therefore, community entrepreneurs should focus on transferring and preserving wisdom and skills.

Community Product Design Concept

The results of the study on community product design concepts found that most entrepreneurs initiated projects using locally available raw materials to develop products. According to the concept of the OTOP project, communities must use local wisdom or local raw materials to create products (Community Development Department, 2017). Examples include rattan, herbal plants, and local silkworms. An exception to this condition is the home food processing group in Nong Hee, which specializes in producing Isan sausages without using local ingredients. Although the area focuses on agriculture rather than pig farming, the origin of sausage production by this professional group stems from village merit-making traditions where Isaan sausages are often made for these events and regular consumption. Their delicious taste has earned widespread praise, spreading through word of mouth, resulting in sales in nearby villages.

This success eventually led to the founding of the Ban Nong Hee food product processing group. One entrepreneur recounted the founding of the group as follows:

“...In the beginning, Ban Nong Hee had a reed mat weaving group and a basket weaving group that existed with support from the government sector. Over time, these projects received periodic visits. However, as more villages began similar initiatives, competition increased. At that point, the community leader proposed exploring Isaan sausage production as an alternative income source. This suggestion led to the establishment of the Ban Nong Hee Food Processing Group...”

When interviewed about the concept of designing community products based on Traditional Craftsmanship and Techniques, Indigenous Materials and Resources, Cultural Symbols and Motifs, Local Traditions and Customs, and Narratives and Oral Histories, it was found that most communities applied their cultural heritage by using local materials and traditional wisdom. For example, Production techniques included weaving techniques passed down from ancestors, food preservation techniques, basket weaving techniques, etc. However, communities did not incorporate Cultural Symbols and Motifs into their products, such as integrating community cultural patterns into product design or packaging, nor did they utilize Local Traditions, Customs, Narratives, and Oral Histories to inform product patterns or designs.

Applications of Cultural Knowledge for Community Product Development

The results of the interview regarding the applications of community culture into the development of community products found that, in addition to using community raw materials, entrepreneurs do not prioritize creating product identity or applying cultural elements in product design. Furthermore, the packaging does not incorporate any aspects of community culture.

The results of interviews with entrepreneurs regarding the aforementioned issues revealed that most entrepreneurs were knowledgeable about the community culture in their area. One entrepreneur vividly described his community band:

“...Nong Heevaroesin Music Band is a renowned retro dance group in our village. It originated as a Mor Lam Rueng Tor Kloen band, which is a traditional performance style in the northeastern region. As interest in traditional Morlam storytelling waned, the band members pivoted to practicing and performing period dances instead. The band comprises approximately 30 members, primarily local villagers who are passionate about and dedicated to folk arts. Their performance style seamlessly blends dance and folk singing, aimed at entertaining and engaging the audience. The Nong Heevaroesin Music Band actively participates in various festivals and traditional events both within the village and nearby areas...”

Another entrepreneur also highlighted cultural landmarks in his community.

“...Wat Ku Kaew Samakkehi is a pivotal temple within our community, playing a crucial role in local religion and culture. It actively promotes Dhamma practice, education, and community development through religious activities like ordination ceremonies, prayers, and various merit-making events. Additionally, it serves as a hub for cultural activities such as traditional local festivals, almsgiving to monks, and other festivities that foster unity among community members...”

From this information, it is evident that the community possesses a rich cultural heritage that could potentially be leveraged to create a unique identity or selling point for community products. However, currently, these cultural elements are not being effectively applied. The results of this study are consistent with studies on developing the potential of community entrepreneurs. According to the creative economy concept of Monpho & Unaromlert (2018), most community entrepreneurs still design and produce products in the same way, resulting in a lack of creativity, beauty, and unique identity. Similarly, Thongkaew, Sodphiban, & Saributr (2015) found that community entrepreneurs often maintain traditional production methods, leading to products that lack creativity and uniqueness. This hinders innovation in product design and development. Moreover, this lack of creativity and uniqueness in product design is also observed among

community entrepreneurs in the Kota Pelangi community in the Pancoran District of South Jakarta (Widiastuti, Asiah, & David, 2020).

Recommendations

The community's failure to integrate its cultural knowledge into product development may lead to several consequences. Firstly, there might be a lack of understanding and acceptance of the products within the community itself. Secondly, this oversight could potentially result in missed opportunities for income generation and hinder sustainable local development. There are several prominent considerations from the findings:

Integration of cultural knowledge in community product development: Encourage community product development groups to actively incorporate local cultural elements into their product designs. This can include traditional motifs, craftsmanship techniques, or narratives that reflect the community's identity. Provide training and workshops on how to effectively integrate cultural knowledge into product development processes.

Capacity building and education: Offer continuous training and capacity-building programs for entrepreneurs on product standards, modern production techniques, and marketing strategies. Emphasize the importance of preserving and promoting local wisdom and cultural heritage through product development.

Promotion of cultural identity: Develop marketing strategies that highlight the cultural significance of community products. This can include storytelling about the origins, traditional practices involved, and the cultural stories behind each product. Collaborate with local cultural institutions, such as temples or museums, to organize events that showcase community products alongside cultural performances or exhibitions.

Digital documentation and archiving: Establish a digital platform or database to systematically document and archive community cultural knowledge. This can include traditional practices, stories, rituals, craftsmanship techniques, and historical information. Ensure the platform is accessible and user-friendly for community members, researchers, educators, and the public to contribute to and access information.

Create online platforms or e-commerce websites dedicated to showcasing and selling community products that embody cultural knowledge. Include multimedia content such as stories behind the products, artisan profiles, and educational resources about cultural traditions to engage consumers and promote cultural appreciation.

Conclusion

In conclusion, the study highlights the significant potential of leveraging cultural heritage to enhance the uniqueness and marketability of community products. Despite the rich cultural resources available, current community product development practices are often limited by traditional methods that lack creativity and fail to integrate these valuable cultural elements effectively. Consistent with previous research, the need for innovative approaches to product design that incorporate local wisdom and cultural capital is underscored. Addressing these gaps can enable community entrepreneurs to create distinctive products that not only preserve and promote local culture but also drive economic development and foster community pride. The development of a centralized platform for cultural knowledge can play a pivotal role in this transformation, providing accessible resources and inspiration for community entrepreneurs to innovate and thrive in both local and global markets.

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