

A Strategic Framework for Enhancing the Competitiveness of Herbal Product Community Enterprises in Thailand

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Abstract: - One objective of the research was to formulate a strategic framework to enhance the competitive capacity of community enterprises, with a focus on Thai herbal products. This research study employed a mixed-methods approach. The research gathered data through target-sector interviews and the distribution of questionnaires to 300 study participants. The results of the study suggest that community enterprises should adopt five strategic policy approaches: 1) improving operational skills, 2) promoting innovation preparedness, 3) gaining access to secure markets, 4) partnering with other players, and 5) policy leadership on the protection of the environment. Quantitative multivariate regression analysis for hypothesis testing showed that the internal ability of community enterprises had the most significant positive effect on their competitiveness ($\beta = 0.30$, $p < 0.001$). This was followed by their readiness to innovate ($\beta = 0.21$, $p < 0.001$) and their market access ($\beta = 0.17$, $p < 0.001$). This strategic framework helps develop community networks and businesses by creating an integrated system and promoting the long-term growth of Thai herbal product community enterprises.

Key-Words: - Herbal Product, Community Enterprise, Strategic Framework, Internal Capabilities, Innovation Readiness, Market Access, Competitiveness

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1 Introduction

Herbal product community companies constitute a vital economic sector that bolsters the advancement of the Thai grassroots economy. These firms use traditional knowledge, local resources, and cultural heritage in their products to serve both domestic and international markets [1]. Community enterprises enhance the economy and are pivotal in strengthening communities, generating employment, and preserving local knowledge [2]. Many firms primarily operate in rural regions and are founded and overseen by local stakeholders, embodying the community's identity and collective values [3]. Notwithstanding the cultural importance and commercial prospects of community enterprises, most herbal product enterprises continue to encounter substantial structural and operational challenges that impede their long-term competitiveness [4]. Prevalent challenges encompass insufficient scientific research and

product development, deficiencies in branding and strategic planning capabilities, and a lack of substantial policy or institutional backing and promotion [5]. Such limits significantly affect commercial organizations, restricting their capacity to expand and distribute items broadly in the market or to adapt to evolving market demands [6].

Contemporary customers exhibit a growing preference for certified herbal products from reputable companies that incorporate innovative concepts, so placing community entrepreneurs at a competitive disadvantage. Prior research has explored several facets of community enterprise management; however, most existing evidence has focused on isolated variables and fails to capture all dimensions that accurately reflect the reality of community enterprises in Thailand. Moreover, prior research focused exclusively on a specific subset of stakeholders, potentially rendering the findings inapplicable to the broader population. This study employed concepts and theories of internal

capabilities, strategic policies, and internal and external environmental analysis, integrating semi-structured interviews with quantitative analysis. The objective was to yield results that enhance and support all stakeholders by supplying empirical data on the potential of community enterprises in internal capabilities, innovation, and expanded market access, using a strategic policy framework aligned with the operations of innovative community enterprises to establish sustainable competitive advantages.

2 Literature Review and Hypothesis

Thai herbal product community enterprises continue to grow through community integration, leveraging local wisdom, materials, and uniqueness to develop and create added value for both domestic and international markets, leveraging key factors such as internal capabilities, innovation readiness, market access, and competitiveness. Internal capabilities, derived from a resource-based viewpoint (RBV) and SWOT analysis, stem from valuable, inimitable, and irreplaceable resources, such as local wisdom, human capital, and leadership [7]. SWOT analysis, which integrates internal and external factors, further contributes to the concrete realization of the RBV [8]. Figure 1 shows that the literature review supports the hypothesis:

H₁₁: *The internal capabilities of Thai herbal product community enterprise groups have a significant positive impact on competitiveness*

Innovation readiness analyzes the competitiveness of SME herbal community enterprises, requiring strategic management to gain a competitive advantage [9], which aligns with Porter's view that competition, bargaining power of customers and suppliers, threats from new competitors, and threats from substitute products all influence enterprise capabilities [10]. Thai herbal community enterprises face constraints in entering new markets due to weak branding and limited government certification policies [11], [12]. Therefore, innovation readiness, including human resources, technological advancement, and strong government support, is an essential factor affecting competitiveness [13]. Figure 1 shows the hypotheses derived from the research:

H₁₂: *The innovation readiness of Thai herbal product community enterprise groups has a significant positive impact on competitiveness.*

Community enterprise market access is a key factor for sustainable, long-term growth, as it is the enterprise's ability to introduce products or services to reach the target market effectively [14], [15]. In addition to geographical, financial, regulatory, and

informational constraints that directly affect market access, branding, networking, standardized product production, and the use of digital media and social media to promote products must be considered [16]. Community enterprises must operate within the strategic policy framework, which guides community enterprise operations and covers all stakeholders to encourage and support increased competitiveness, investment, and infrastructure improvements to access market insights [17]. Figure 1 leads to the hypothesis that:

H₁₃: *The market access of Thai herbal product community enterprise groups has a significant positive impact on competitiveness.*

Competitiveness represents the ability to operate successfully. The success of Thai herbal community enterprises relies on innovatively utilizing local resources to develop products that generate income, fostering sustainable management of community enterprises [18], [19]. Still, most research also considers success in other aspects, such as internal capabilities. Technological advancement [20], [21], network or stakeholder collaboration [22], [23], supply and demand, logistics system, organizational policy or marketing strategy [24], [25], from these various internal and external factors do not provide a comprehensive strategic model for studying Thai herbal product community enterprises. To fill such gaps, integrating internal capability factors, innovation readiness, and market access linked to competitiveness will help create a key strategic model for Thai herbal product community enterprises.

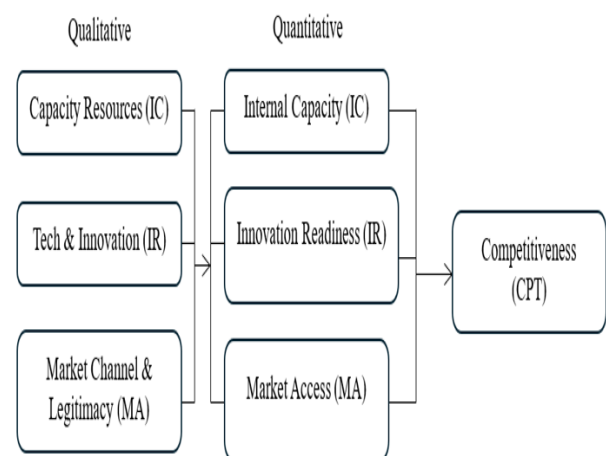


Fig. 1: Conceptual Framework

Source: Authors' conceptual framework, 2024

3 Research Methodology

This study, which developed a strategic framework for herbal product community enterprises in Thailand, utilized a mixed-methods, exploratory design to enhance their competitiveness both domestically and internationally. The qualitative phase utilized in-depth interviews with 15 key informants, including community enterprise leaders, academics, herbal experts, and government officials, using a semi-structured questionnaire, including community enterprise SWOT analysis, strategic planning, and community participation to enhance competitiveness, perceptions of competitor pressure, and identification of factors that make enterprises stand out and have a competitive advantage. A synthesis of this was used in the quantitative phase to survey the opinions of 300 participants sampled from 4 regions to test the strategic framework and its construct validity ($KMO > 0.68$, $p < 0.001$; $AVE > 0.50$) and reliability (Cronbach's α , total reliability > 0.70), confirming the robustness and internal consistency of the instrument.

Table 1 describes the proportionate distribution of respondents by region in Thailand. The sample size was distributed proportionately to the total population (community enterprise members), 8,145 for regional representation. Respondents from the Northeastern region were proportionally the most numerous, in line with its greater population size; the Southern region was least represented. This weighted distribution technique contributes to the representativeness of the sample and the external validity of study results.

The construct validity results for the measurement model are given in Table 2. The Kaiser–Meyer–Olkin (KMO) values are between 0.687 and 0.721, which is greater than the recommended threshold value (0.60), suggesting adequate sampling appropriateness for factor analysis. Significance values of Bartlett's Test of Sphericity are found to be significant ($p < 0.001$) for all constructs, indicating adequacy of inter-item correlations. And the AVE values of all variables are greater than 0.50, which indicates good convergent validity. These results serve as evidence that the measurement model satisfies the desired levels of validity.

The reliability of measurement constructs is presented in Table 3. Cronbach's alpha values range from 0.785 to 0.851, and composite reliability values range from 0.759 to 0.859, all over the minimum suggested threshold of 0.70. These results demonstrate good internal consistency of the items within each factor and support that the measurement

instrument used to measure the proposed strategic framework is reliable.

Table 1. Proportionate Sample Size

S/N	Herbal community enterprises region	Population	Sample population (Community Enterprise Members): CEM	Proportionate sample
1	Northern	2,036	CEM	75
2	Northeastern	2,444	CEM	90
3	Central	1,900	CEM	70
4	Southern	1,765	CEM	65
		8,145		300

Source: Authors' computation, 2024

The construct validity results of the measurement model are summarized in Table 2.

Table 2. Result of the Validity Test

S/N	Variables	No. of Item	KMO	Bartlett's Test of Sphericity	Sig.	Average Variance Extracted	Remark
1	Internal Capabilities	4	0.721	112.452	0.000	0.554	Confirmed
2	Innovation Readiness	4	0.687	108.731	0.000	0.541	Confirmed
3	Market Access	4	0.702	121.367	0.000	0.573	Confirmed
4	Competitiveness	4	0.695	116.298	0.000	0.558	Confirmed

Source: Authors' computation, 2024

The reliability statistics of the measurement constructs are shown in Table 3.

Table 3. Reliability Statistics Result

S/N	Variables	No. of Item	Cronbach's Alpha	Composite Reliability	Remark
1	Internal Capabilities	4	0.785	0.812	Confirmed
2	Innovation Readiness	4	0.826	0.759	Confirmed
3	Market Access	4	0.792	0.763	Confirmed
4	Competitiveness	4	0.851	0.859	Confirmed

Source: Authors' computation, 2024

The main goal of this quantitative study is to determine how internal and strategic support factors affect the competitiveness of herbal product community enterprises in Thailand. For this purpose, the study sets internal capability, innovation readiness, and market access as independent variables, while the competitiveness of herbal product community enterprises is the dependent variable

Making a Model for Multiple Linear Regression

The study found that internal capability, innovation readiness, and market access influence the competitiveness of herbal product community enterprises in Thailand. A multiple linear regression model was used to examine the factors affecting the

relevant variables, as shown in Equation (5): competitiveness (Y) is modeled as a function of internal capability (X1), innovation readiness (X2), and market access (X3).

$$Y = f(X1, X2, X3) \quad (5)$$

where Y represents competitiveness, X1 denotes internal capability (IC), X2 denotes innovation readiness (IR), and X3 denotes market access (MA). The related hypotheses are formulated as regression specifications in Equations (1) - (3), as follows:

(1) $H_{11}: CPT = \alpha_0 + \beta_1 IC + \mu_i$ - Internal capability (IC) has a significant effect on competitiveness.

(2) $H_{12}: CPT = \alpha_0 + \beta_2 IR + \mu_i$ - Innovation readiness (IR) has a significant effect on competitiveness.

(3) $H_{13}: CPT = \alpha_0 + \beta_3 MA + \mu_i$ - Market Access (MA) significantly affects competitiveness.

An efficient multiple linear regression model was evaluated using t-statistics, p-values, beta coefficients, adjusted R² values, and F-values. The results suggest a strategic policy framework that can help Thai herbal product community enterprises achieve sustainable growth.

4 Results

A study of the strategic framework for promoting the competitiveness of herbal product community enterprises in Thailand. Based on the qualitative analysis of in-depth interviews, three main themes were identified, each corresponding to a quantitative variable in the model. Theme 1, capacity bottlenecks include a lack of digital skills, weak branding, and leadership transitions. Quantitative findings ($\beta = 0.30$) indicated that internal competence was the most influential factor in competitiveness. Theme 2, innovation constraints, covers low youth participation, limited technology access, and insufficient research and development support; these moderately affected competitiveness ($\beta = 0.21$) in the statistical results. Theme 3, market access restrictions, involves reliance on traditional channels and limited marketing capabilities, which, while less influential than the first two variables ($\beta = 0.17$), remain important for competitive advantage and are supported by quantitative evidence of a positive impact on market access. Integrating data from both approaches revealed clear consistency between the qualitative aspects and the statistical influence of each variable, reflecting the strength of mixed-methods research in explaining the dynamics of competitiveness of Thai herbal product community enterprises.

To test the statistical significance and predictive strength of the variables in creating a strategic policy framework developed from qualitative data and used to generate research variables for quantitative data, multiple regression analysis was used to examine the impact of predictors, or independent variables, including internal capabilities, innovation readiness, and market access, on the competitiveness, or dependent variables, of community enterprise groups in herbal product production. The research results can be summarized in Table 4 and Table 5.

Table 4. Multiple Regression Results: Predictors of Competitiveness (CPT)

Predictor Variable	B (Unstd.)	SE	β (Std.)	t	p	95% CI (β)	VIF
Internal Capabilities (IC)	0.43	0.071	0.30	5.81	<.001	[0.205, 0.415]	1.73
Innovation Readiness (IR)	0.28	0.064	0.21	4.51	<.001	[0.124, 0.316]	1.59
Market Access (MA)	0.20	0.053	0.17	3.91	<.001	[0.090, 0.270]	1.44

a. *Dependent Variable: Competitiveness of the herbal product community enterprise*

b. *Predictors: (Constants), Internal Capabilities, Innovation Readiness, Market Access*

Source: Authors' computation, 2024

Table 5. Mixed-Methods Joint Display: Integration of Qualitative and Quantitative Results

Qualitative Themes (In-depth/FGDs)	Quantitative Indicators (CFA items)	Regression Results (β , p)	Interpretation (Integration)
1. Strengthening Production Capacity	IC1-IC4 ($\lambda = .67-.83$)	$\beta(IC) = .30, p < .001$	Internal capabilities greatly enhance CPT.
2. Readiness to Adopt Technology	IR1-IR4 ($\lambda = .65-.81$)	$\beta(IR) = .21, p < .001$	Innovation readiness contributes moderately to CPT.
3. Expanding Market Channels	MA1-MA4 ($\lambda = .63-.80$)	$\beta(MA) = .17, p < .001$	Market access plays a supporting role in CPT.
4. Competitiveness Outcomes	CPT1-CPT4 ($\lambda = .69-.84$)	Adj.R ² = .27; F (3,296) = 36.48, p < .001	The integrated model explained 27% of the variance in CPT.

Source: Authors' computation, 2024

Table 4 presents the results of a multiple regression analysis, clearly indicating that internal capability (IC), innovation readiness (IR), and market access (MA) were the factors driving the competitiveness of Thai herbal product community enterprises ($p < .001$ for all predictors). The study found that internal capability had the strongest influence on competitiveness ($\beta = 0.30$, $t = 5.81$, 95% CI (β) [0.205, 0.415]), indicating that internal resources, whether production management and human capital, are unique and challenging to imitate from a resource strategy perspective, and contribute to promoting the competitiveness of community enterprises. Next was innovation readiness ($\beta = 0.21$, $t = 4.51$, 95% CI (β) [0.124, 0.316]), indicating the competitiveness of utilizing technology in product

development, which is supported by government agencies that are important for community enterprises to maintain their competitiveness. The effect of market access was also statistically significant but much smaller ($\beta = 0.17$, $t = 3.91$, 95% CI (β) [0.090, 0.270]). The small effect size aligns with the qualitative findings on structural barriers, including a lack of branding power, weak digital literacy among members, and unequal access to contemporary marketing facilities. The positive effect of market access occurs under the same contextual barrier conditions, although to a lesser extent than internal capabilities and innovation readiness. The VIF value (1.44–1.73) suggests no multilinear relationship, indicating that internal capabilities, innovation readiness, and market access are strategic elements and supporting factors that affect the competitiveness of dynamic community enterprises.

Table 5 presents the results of a combined qualitative and quantitative analysis of the factors promoting and supporting the competitiveness (CPT) of Thai herbal product community enterprises. It was found that strong production capacity, measured by IC1–IC4 ($\lambda = .67-.83$), showed a significant positive impact on competitiveness ($\beta = 0.30$, $p < .001$), indicating that efficient resource utilization and production, including human capital, were important factors promoting the competitiveness of community enterprises. Meanwhile, innovation readiness through technology adoption, measured by IR1–IR4 ($\lambda = .65-.81$), had a moderate but significant positive impact ($\beta = 0.21$, $p < .001$). In other words, the dynamic capability concept of community enterprises, which adopts process innovation and new technologies to respond to product-market changes, is important for their competitiveness and market access, enabling them to expand their marketing channels. The latter variable, as measured by the MA1–MA4 values ($\lambda = .63-.80$), although its effect was smaller ($\beta = 0.17$, $p < .001$), significantly contributed to support for community enterprises, albeit to a lesser extent. Thus, market access plays an important role in expanding the customer base and building distribution networks. The overall results show explanatory power, with an adjusted R^2 of .27 ($F(3, 296) = 36.48$, $p < .001$), indicating that the integrated framework explains 27% of the variance in competitiveness. The adjusted R^2 value of 0.27 is in line with typical empirical results in social science research, especially in studies of diverse community enterprises, where structural dynamics can be captured only partially by individual-level predictors. The remaining 73% of

the unexplained variance can be explained by two strategic dimensions: stakeholder collaboration and sustainable policy support. These dimensions are essential during the qualitative phase, but the quantitative models do not use them because they are multi-level and systematic. This methodological arrangement supports the idea of creating a more comprehensive strategic framework that incorporates both qualitative insights and individual-level quantitative predictors, thereby helping explain the comparatively low R^2 value.

5 Discussion of Findings

This mixed-methods quantitative and qualitative study identified factors that positively affect the competitiveness of Thai herbal product community enterprises, providing comprehensive insights into three key issues. The quantitative research confirmed that internal capacity (IC), innovation readiness (IR), and market access (MA) have a significant positive impact on the competitiveness of Thai herbal product community enterprises as follows. First, internal capacity has the highest impact, indicating the importance of internal resource management, such as production management and unique and difficult-to-imitate human capital, that influences the enhancement of competitiveness. This is consistent with [26] and [27], which argue that strategic management, by developing human capital through leadership training, is a sustainable way to enhance the competitive advantage of internal resources. The final strategic framework leverages strengths from both qualitative and quantitative data. Firm competitiveness, at the individual level, is predicted using three statistically validated quantitative constructs: internal capability, market access, and innovation readiness. In addition, two qualitative constructs—stakeholder engagement and sustainable policy support—strengthen institutional and systemic facets. These qualitative constructs were not included in the quantitative model, allowing community enterprises to develop broader strategic directions beyond quantitative analysis alone. By combining all five constructs, this framework integrates quantitative research and qualitative insights to support both macro- and microstructural operations.

However, the qualitative and empirical research findings also revealed significant challenges for community enterprises, including limited branding capabilities, low digital skills among community enterprise members, and the impact of uneven leadership transitions, indicating inequality in

internal organizational capabilities. Second, innovation readiness has a moderate but significant positive effect on competitiveness. This suggests that adopting process innovations and modern technologies to respond to market changes has enhanced the capabilities of community enterprises. However, in-depth qualitative data on many herbal product community enterprises still face challenges due to limited research and development, and product distribution. They also face difficulties in engaging the younger generation in community enterprise innovation activities. This aligns with [28], [29], and [30], who suggest that community enterprises need technological innovation, the use of diverse platforms, and collaboration with third parties such as government agencies and educational institutions to promote technology use and leverage various online channels to achieve widespread recognition of local products. Third, although market access has minimal impact, it still significantly contributes to the competitiveness of community enterprises. Quantitative findings demonstrate that market access facilitates the growth of distribution channels both domestically and internationally, enhancing the development of business networks. Qualitative findings reveal that community firms face specific constraints, including reliance on conventional packaging, inadequate digital marketing skills among members, and limited approaches to developing distinctive local brands.

Both qualitative and quantitative data indicate that herbal product community companies face significant financial constraints, including restrictions on the commercialization of indigenous knowledge and the overexploitation of local resources. Furthermore, support from external agencies remains inconsistent. Therefore, fostering collaboration among relevant stakeholders and establishing a sustainable, collaborative policy framework is a serious undertaking. As [31], [32], and [33] point out, integrating key strategic frameworks among public and private sector stakeholders has significantly and positively impacted the competitiveness of herbal product community enterprises in multiple dimensions.

As shown in Figure 2, this mixed-methods study identified five strategic frameworks essential for sustaining the competitiveness of herbal product community enterprises: (1) enhancing internal capacity; (2) cultivating innovation readiness; (3) broadening market access; (4) encouraging stakeholder collaboration; and (5) advocating sustainable policies. Although qualitative data analysis led to a five-component policy plan framework, of these, organizational capability,

innovation readiness, and market access were converted into quantitative variables for statistical testing. Stakeholder collaboration and sustainable policy support, identified exclusively in qualitative data, were excluded from the quantitative model because their complexity and multidimensionality make reliable measurement at the individual level in cross-sectional data collection infeasible. This illustrates the methodological issues that required the removal of two theoretically significant components from the regression analysis and prevented the quantitative model from explaining competitiveness more than 27% of the time.

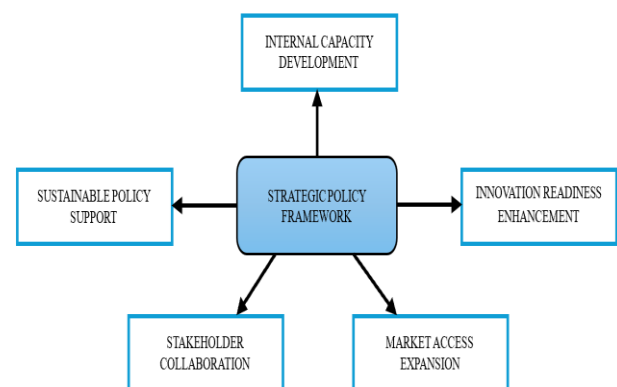


Fig. 2: Strategic Policy Framework of Thai Herbal Product Community Enterprises

Source: Authors' strategic policy framework, 2024

6 Conclusion and Implications

This study demonstrates the significance of three key factors in the competitiveness of Thai herbal product community enterprises: 1) internal capabilities derived from efficient resource management, human capital development through investment in individual potential to enhance knowledge and skills, focusing on empowering community enterprise members with expertise, adaptability to change, and improved performance; 2) community enterprise innovation readiness, which enables members to generate new ideas and processes, applying them to create innovative products and services that are successful and beneficial, and create a competitive advantage; and 3) market access. Although market access for community enterprises has a lesser impact than the previous two factors, it remains crucial for launching new products or services, expanding networks, and selecting appropriate distribution channels. These key factors are intended to enhance

competitive advantage and ensure sustainable growth for the organization and society.

A significant issue in managing Thai herbal product community enterprises, from a qualitative perspective, is the inadequate digital capabilities of their members, which lead to insufficient branding initiatives. This is compounded by a lack of continuity in support from external agencies or stakeholders, and by the lack of timeliness in the succession of community enterprise leadership. Although the study highlights some of the competitive advantages of community enterprises, in reality, they still face strategic management barriers that limit their ability to commercialize local wisdom and maximize the effective and sustainable use of local resources. This study aims to synthesize innovation and market access factors into a strategic framework to promote and support the resource management and dynamics of community enterprises in Thai herbal products. The findings indicate successful strategies focused on five critical priorities: enhancing internal capacity; promoting innovation readiness; broadening market access; nurturing stakeholder collaboration; and formulating sustainable policies, as well as coordinating community enterprises with external stakeholders, including government, private agencies, and educational institutions. This strategy ensures that community enterprises are promoted and supported in terms of their potential and competitiveness, enabling Thai herbal product community enterprises to build and develop sustainable communities through effective utilization of local resources and wisdom, resulting in long-term economic and social benefits.

7 Recommendations for community enterprises

Based on both qualitative and quantitative research, a five-point strategic framework is proposed to enhance the competitiveness of herbal product community enterprises in Thailand: 1) promote and support community enterprise leaders in leadership training and enhance their knowledge of community enterprise management and sustainable local wisdom conservation to create a competitive advantage, a key internal capability factor for community enterprise development; 2) promote cooperation and participation of stakeholders in both public and private sectors, including educational institutions, in building innovation readiness for community enterprises; 3) enhance digital marketing skills to expand market access and

produce products that meet certified standards; 4) establish a community herbal product learning center with the cooperation of relevant stakeholders; and 5) formulate policies, strategies, and goals that cover all aspects of sustainability, such as preserving local wisdom and passing it on from generation to generation, to ensure that the strategic framework is implemented in line with the national strategic development goals.

8 Strategic Policy Recommendations

First, the government should work with schools, community enterprise groups, stakeholder businesses, and the general public to help develop the enterprise members' skills in production and modern technologies to support business operations, including ways to find new customers and create new ideas for improved operations. This means that community enterprises should receive assistance in developing new products and in building a comprehensive network of community enterprises in the market, using digital platforms to encourage community enterprises that produce herbal products to formulate strategic policies for sustainable business operations.

Second, developing long-term human capital expertise is a crucial starting point for community enterprise management. The government should support and promote policies that encourage young people to start businesses. One way to do this is by using the Community Enterprise Strategy Policy Framework to disseminate local ideas and wisdom to the younger generation. This involves engaging older generations to share their knowledge with the younger generation and integrating community entrepreneurship into school curricula. These plans will facilitate leadership transitions and support community enterprises that produce herbal products, passing on local wisdom and community enterprise management from generation to generation.

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Conflict of Interest

The author has no conflict of interest, declaring that it is relevant to the content of this article.

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