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Business model for fresh and Indigenous food roadside stall-type market to promote utilizing community cultural ground of the Khemmarat walking street, Ubon Ratchathani, Thailand

[1,3]Utto, G. and [2,3,*]Utto W.

[1]*International Business Management, Faculty of Management Science, Ubon Ratchathani University, Ubon Ratchathani, Thailand*
[2]*Department of Agro-Industry, Faculty of Agriculture, Ubon Ratchathani University, Ubon Ratchathani, Thailand*
[3]*Indigenous Food Research and Industrial Development Centre, Faculty of Agriculture, Ubon Ratchathani University, Ubon Ratchathani, Thailand*

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Abstract

Community member participation is important to area utilizations of the community cultural ground of the walking street, Khemmarat district, Ubon Ratchathani, Thailand. This research was purposely undertaken to develop a business model for a roadside stall-type market newly established along the alley connecting both the cultural ground and the walking street. The market hypothetically leads its customers to participate in cultural ground activities, subsequently promoting cultural area utilizations. The present research methodologically was conducted using a qualitative approach: purposive sampling, in-depth interviews and focus groups as data collection techniques. Respondents included potential market sellers, regular walking street customers, voluntary groups managing the cultural ground, subdistrict municipality officers, and current walking street entrepreneurs. The business model canvas (BMC model) was utilized as a tool for developing the market business model. The BMC model comprises nine organizational business elements into which the data collected were analyzed and categorized. Target customers are local customers who regularly visit the walking street, especially elderly, housewives, young couples, and disabled persons. The value proposition of the market delivered to the target customers is fresh and Indigenous foods including Mekong fish (both processed and fresh), and snacks. Fresh vegetables in particular are organically grown and certified by the participatory guarantee system (PGS), to serve customer needs for health benefits and affordability. The market is the physical marketing channel, whilst the online channel is also employed, however to a lesser extent. The voluntary group and the subdistrict municipality arranged the market and its essentials including bamboo stalls, electricity and trash cans. The sellers are responsible for the costs of their products and transport. Not only can the marketing activities generate reasonable incomes for all sellers, but they also lead the market customers to participate in the cultural ground events, subsequently increasing participatory extents approximately two-fold. In all, the business model developed for the roadside stall-type market practically can promote the utilization of the community cultural ground of the Khemmarat walking street.

1. Introduction

Khemmarat district, Ubon Ratchathani province, Thailand located on the northeast Thailand-Laos border separated by the Mekong River (Figure 1). Khemmarat and other 10 subdistricts are Buddhist-based, and agricultural communities. Khemmarat is well recognized among the Thais as one of the cities having popular walking streets. The street has been renowned for its cultural attractions and activities. The former include Buddhist temples, arts (Kaewphet and Wanjang, 2019), and the well-preserved ancient wooden buildings, i.e. *c.a.* 150-200 years old, situated along both sides of the walking street, namely Wisit Sri road (Aopaom *et al.*, 2024) (Figure 1). The latter includes contemporary and traditional dances performed on the street by voluntary

*Corresponding author.
Email: *weerawate.u@ubu.ac.th*

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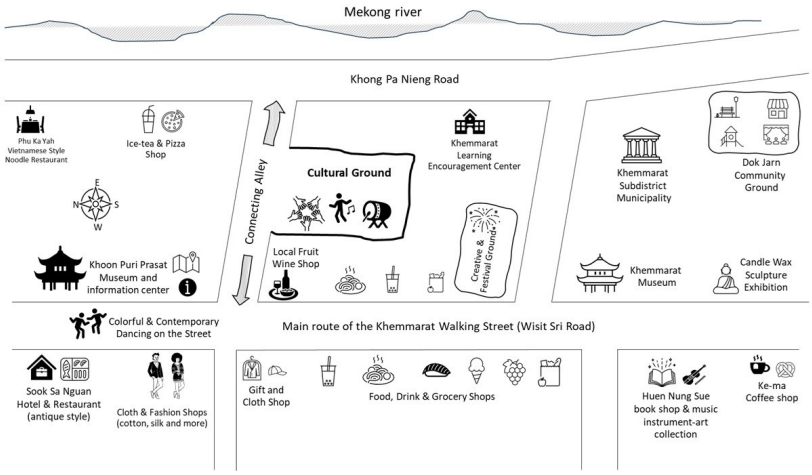

Figure 1. The cultural ground and its alley diagrammatically connecting with the Khemmarat walking street arranged weekly on Saturday on Wisit Sri road.

dancers as well as crafts, arts, cooked foods, and indigo-dyed cotton fabric and fashioned dresses (Chantree and Sripokangkul, 2017) (Figure 1).

The Khemmarat walking street was established in April 2013 by a voluntary group of community members and has been operated weekly on Saturdays since, with collaborations provided by communities and the subdistrict municipality. The walking street has been recognized for its importance functionally in preserving cultures and generating income for local entrepreneurs. The walking street becomes the Saturday routine for the locals. Cultural activities and vibrancies of the walking street have attracted many tourists around Thailand and, other countries, particularly Laos. In addition to the Khemmarat walking street, there are other well-known walking streets in Thailand including Khao San Road, Bangkok (Shaw, 2021) Chai Khong Road, Chiang Khan, Loei (Khopolklang and Kaewsanga, 2020), Tha Pae Road, Chaing Mai (Pongwirithorn and Thipsri, 2016), Wua Lai, Chaing Mai (Misanuch and Tansukanun, 2023), Chana road, Songkla (Boonsawang, 2016), and SrowGround, Burirum (Raungpratyaku *et al.*, 2023). Similarities were noticeable among the Khemmarat and other walking streets. These include cultural shows and exhibitions, hand-made arts, antiques, food stalls as well as costume fashions.

The cultural ground of the Khemmarat walking street is a focus of the present research. It purposely has been designated as a place for supporting youth assertiveness, cultural shows, and informal and community events. The ground is an opened space (*c.a.* 300 m^2) connecting to the walking street via an alley (Figure 1). Information obtained from preliminary works conducted in 2023 acknowledged that activities of the cultural ground however could not sufficiently draw the attention of the locals and tourists to take detours from the main route of the walking street to the ground. Although the events periodically were conducted, the alley and the ground apparently have been recognized by the walking streetgoers as the carpark when no activities were held. Given such drawbacks, improvements of the ground utilizations essentially are required. These could be developed based on the livable community concept which has been practically implemented for community planning and policies. Key components of the concept include equity, social stability and engagement, crime rate, as well as sharing local culture/identity (Ruth and Franklin, 2014; Lukuman *et al.*, 2017). In the context of the present research, sharing the local culture is of interest because it is considered fundamentals of interactions within social relationships and networks (Woolcock, 2001; Joshi and Khare, 2021), which are linkages of individuals and groups functionally providing support to their members (O'Reilly, 1988; Yan and Liu, 2023).

To promote recognizing and accessing the cultural ground, activities in which community members as well as tourists can engage should be created. The community members and the municipality agreed to undertake these in terms of the market newly established along the alley leading to the cultural ground (Figure 1). The market was expected to be a place that could gather people, and thereafter hypothetically would lead them to the cultural ground and would increase area utilizations. The roadside stall-type market is considered a suitable marketing type because the stalls can temporarily be set up and easily moved out when the market is over. The stalls are in various forms including small displaying tables, portable wagons, and wooden make-shift stalls. Business models accordingly are required to manage the market. The models describe approaches adopted by organizations to utilize their own or external resources to create value for customers and to generate organizational incomes (Mičieta *et al.*, 2020; Amoussohoui *et al.*, 2022). The business model developed for the culturally based enterprises could provide benefits not only in terms of business and entrepreneurship aspects but also

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cultural preservations for local heritages, products and services (Zulhazman *et al.*, 2019; Saleh and Ost, 2023; Nava and Mathurin, 2024).

In the present work, the business model was purposely developed for managing the roadside stall-type market to increase community member participation in the cultural ground of the Khemmarat walking street. The model would facilitate marketing plans and preparations that should be consistent with consumer requirements (Osterwalder and Pigneur, 2010; Ochuba *et al.*, 2024). These include products sold, target customer preferences, distribution channels, promotion arrangements, and business networks.

2. Methodology

2.1 Qualitative research and data collection

The present research utilized the qualitative approach i.e. in-depth and focus group interviews as a key methodology to collect data. A purposive sampling strategy was employed to select respondents because the study did not aim to produce a statistically representative sample (Patton, 2002; Merriam and Tisdell, 2016). The respondents were categorized into five groups including (i) ten local small-scale retailers i.e. active in business but never selling in the walking street, (ii) three members of the voluntary group managing the community ground, (iii) five officers of Khemmarat subdistrict municipality, (iv) ten existing walking street entrepreneurs, and (v) ten regular walking street customers. General profiles and information of all respondent groups are shown in Table 1. All respondents were interviewed and participated in focus groups. Their consents were sought prior to conducting the data collection, according to guidelines stated in UBU-REC-98/2567 recorded on the Low-risk database and permitted by the Ubon Ratchathani University Human Ethics Committee. The interviews principally were conducted with either individuals or groups regarding their conveniences at the time. The interviews covered a duration of 30-45 mins, except for regular customers was approximately 5-10 mins. The interview was handled with semi-structural together with an open-ended questionnaire. Field-note and photograph taking as well as voice recording with given consent were employed as the data recording techniques. The reliability, validity as well as successive approximations and analytic explanations of the present qualitative research were developed following strategies acknowledged by Yin (2002), and Rose and Johnson (2020).

2.2 Business model development

In the present work, the BMC model purposely was employed as a tool to develop the business model for the roadside stall-type market in the cultural ground. The BMC model contains a graphical presentation of organizational business elements (Figure 2) underlying creations of values as well as strategies as results of the element modifications (Mičieta *et al.*, 2020; Osterwalder and Pigneur, 2020). The 9 elements of the BMC model are shown in Figure 2. To develop the BMC model, the collected data and findings were analyzed in relation to

Table 1. General profiles and information of 5 respondents groups participated in data collection.

No.	Group descriptions	General profiles and information
1	local small-scale retailers (*10 respondents*)	• having active small-scale businesses mainly fresh produce and rice farming, fishmonger, food vendor • never selling goods or providing services at the walking street • being in networks of cultural ground managing group
2	members of the voluntary group managing the cultural ground (*three respondents*)	• jointly established the cultural ground in 2022 • looking after the ground (tidiness and infrastructure) • initiating and/or collaborating with the subdistrict municipality and cultural groups to arrange activities • operating only on a voluntary basis, with no payments earned • members have regular and full-time careers including government officers, afterschool tutors, and local artists
3	Officers of Khemmarat subdistrict municipality (*five respondents*)	• the mayor of Khemmarat subdistrict municipality and his administration including the deputy mayor, secretary as well as the mayor's personnel assistance • mayoral term of office is 4 year-tenure
4	Regular local walking street entrepreneurs (*10 respondents*)	• weekly selling or providing products and services in the walking street for at least 7 years • local sellers or cultural service providers residing in Khemmarat
5	Regular walking street customers (*20 respondents*)	• visiting walking on a weekly- or fortnightly basis, and regularly using the community ground alley to access the Khemmarat walking street • regular purchasing products or services and participating in cultural activities on the street such as traditional dance or cultural events for at least 3 years

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the model elements. It should be noted that individual elements contain both definitions and key research findings. The model has been extensively utilized as a strategic planning tool to promote business developments including micro-scale enterprises operated in suburban and rural communities (Luthfiana *et al.*, 2022; Mukherjee, 2023). Mukherjee (2023) recently reported that the BMC model was utilized as a fundamental for developing business strategies to promote urban poor women in India to successfully set up and operate their microenterprises in the so-called informal sector in which the entrepreneurs have limited access to bank loans or financial assistance. The business promotions accordingly developed from the BMC model include extending partners, promoting sales, resource planning as well as segmenting customers. Similarly, Simanjuntak (2021) reported that the BMC model was adopted to develop the village tourism services of Siregar Aek Nalas village, North Sumatra, Indonesia. The model implementations caused development in tourism facilities' including road conditions, souvenir shops, historical monuments, and large grave buildings.

3. Results and discussion

3.1 Business Model Canvas

Research respondents majorly agreed and acknowledged their views that the roadside stall-type market was a place where activities could be arranged to draw the attention of the walking street customers, subsequently leading them to the cultural ground. Details of the BMC model and its elements are presented as follows.

3.1.1 Customer segment

The walking street customers are both tourists and local subdistrict residents. The tourists seldom make detours into the alley (Figure 1) because they focus on sightseeing old-style buildings, shopping, watching colorfully contemporary dances, and tasting foods and drinks. Whilst there are both Thai and foreign, especially Laotian tourists, the main tourist group is the Thais residing outside the Khemmarat district. The walking street is publicly open during 16.00-20.00 but the prime time is 18.00-20.00. However, there are local customers who regularly visit the street from 16.30-18.00 to avoid the noisy crowd. These especially are elderly, middle-aged housewives, persons with special needs, and young

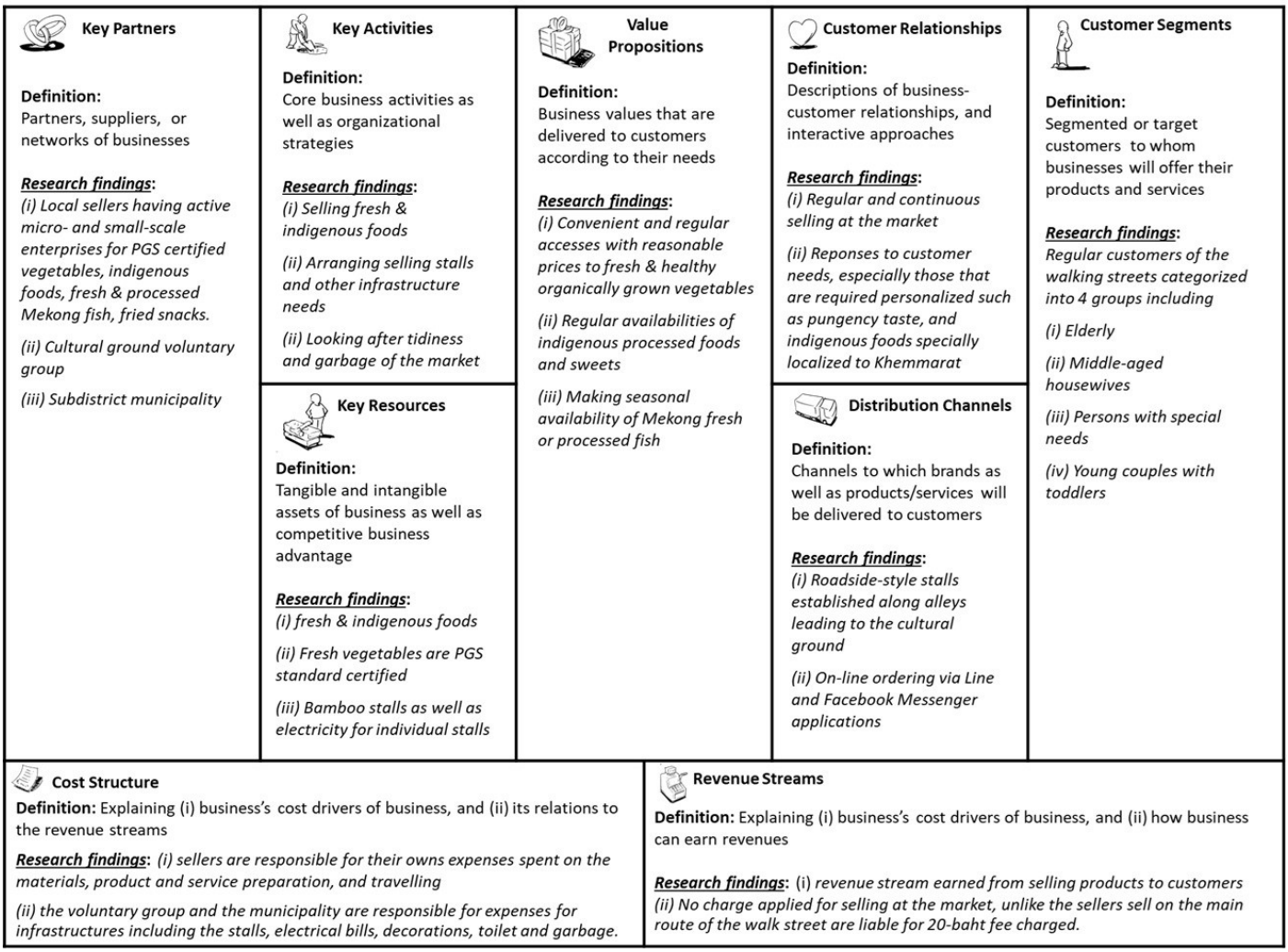

Figure 2. BMC model: A graphical presentation of elements and definitions (modified from Osterwalder, and Pigneur, 2010; Mičieta *et al.*, 2020; Mukherjee, 2003) as well as key research findings for individual elements (*written in italic*).

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couples with toddlers. They often access the walking street via the cultural ground alley connecting another street, namely Khong Pa Nieng Road which is parallel to the walking street, and provides them with a convenient car park (Figure 1). The local customers purchase mainly processed and cooked foods and drinks. They spent in a range of 200-500 THB (1 USD = 32 THB). On some occasions, the customers spent nearly 1,000-3,000 THB for purchasing indigo dye and authentic hand-made cotton fabric cloth or tailored costumes as well as bottled local berry wines. The research information shows that these local customers are considered target groups because of their regular visits as well as buying patterns. The information assists the sellers in knowing their prospective buyers and assists them in preparing products to suit the buyers' preferences.

From the research findings noted, the local customers especially those aforementioned were categorized into the BMC model's '*customer segment*' indicating the target customers. Importance of the local customers to consistency and vitality of the local markets is extensively emphasized in the literature for examples of wet markets in urban China (Zhong *et al.*, 2020), traditional retail markets in South Korea (Yi and Gim, 2018), and local farmer vendors in Canada and New Zealand (Roy, 2022). Once the target customers were designated, the value proposition that would be delivered to the customers accordingly was assessed, together with other elements of the BMC model.

3.1.2 Value proposition

The customers valued the walking street as the place where they could enjoy food, cultural products and social activities. These are parts of the customers' happiness obtained in return after they came to the market. Specific to foods, their sensory quality, and health benefits are considered prime factors affecting the happiness that the customers would perceive (Chowdhury *et al.*, 2023; Reddy, 2023). The target customers acknowledged their health concerns about the foods generally available on the walking street i.e. mostly fried and grilled products, salt and sweet snacks, and sugary drinks. Continuous consumption of these products could pose health risks including obesity and other non-communicable diseases (NCDs) such as diabetes, hypertension and stroke (Godbharle *et al.*, 2024). The customers expressed their interest in purchasing fresh and organically grown vegetables (briefly referenced as organic vegetables) because these were perceived to provide good health benefits. The customers viewed that the commercially available vegetables may cause health risks in the long term because they are chemically laden, attributed to synthesized fertilizers and insecticides. Access to the organic vegetables would allow the customers to manage their stocks to last for 5-7 days, before repurchasing at the Saturday market. The main organic vegetables of preference include salad, Chinese kale, Bok choi, leafy products, lemon grass, kaffir lime leaf, and galanga root.

In contrast to the health benefits, some customers pointed out that prices of organic vegetables are higher than those of commercial vegetables. This is because of the organic agricultural standard certification and its auditing processes embedded with high expenses (Achilleas and Anastasios, 2008). Given the price concerns, organic vegetables accordingly should be affordable for walking street customers. The organic agricultural certification system namely the 'participatory guarantee system' (PGS) is an alternatively cheaper system undertaken on the basis of community-organized and peer-to-peer certification (Jacobi *et al.*, 2023). Because the PGS certifying system is highly dependent on trustworthiness and honesty, small-scale farmers could spend lower costs for quality assurance and subsequently sell their products at competitive prices. In Khemmarat and a nearby subdistrict, namely Pho Sai, there are PGS-certified farmers and they can weekly supply the affordable organic vegetables to the market. In addition to vegetables, fresh or processed Mekong River fish as well as easily consumed Indigenous foods and snacks are of interest among the target customers. Following are examples of the data collected on the values of the market as expected by the customers:

"…if fresh vegetables are sold on the street, it will be handy for me to buy them together with food. I will eat and keep them for a week and come back to buy them next Saturday. However, no one currently sells them on the street…" (KHMCUS007).

"…if I could buy organic vegetables (organically grown and certified), it would be nice. Those sold in the markets we all know have lots of dangerous chemicals from fertilizers and insecticides…" (KHMCUS012).

"…the vegetables are certified by the PGS standard system. The standard audit has been done annually. I got the PGS certification every year. The PGS is relatively cheaper than others such as IFOAM and Organic Thailand. Prices of the PGS certified vegetables should be reasonably affordable for the fresh market like the walking street…" (KHMSEL002).

"…it would be nice if I could buy Indigenous foods such as *som tum* (fresh papaya salad mixed with chillies and condiments) or others and snacks such as crispy fried banana and sweet potato (local varieties) to take home. Also, it will be handy to buy Mekong river fish

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either fresh or processed here on the street…" (KHMCUS002).

The information from the data collection reflects the products in response to customers' buying preferences. These are simplified into fresh and Indigenous foods. The organic vegetables are PGS certified. The information accordingly was categorized into the BMC model's elements of the '*value proposition*' highlighting the value of the markets that will be provided in response to the customer expectations. Similar studies reported that organic vegetables and Indigenous foods are considered value propositions for strategic planning to promote healthy food consumption (Jamal *et al.*, 2024) and local community tourism (Thomas-Francois *et al.*, 2017). The Indigenous foods in particular are cultural products traditionally consumed by the locals. These would maintain linkages between the market and the community cultures.

3.1.3 Key partners, resources, and activities

Potential local small-scale entrepreneurs, who currently are active in fresh and Indigenous food businesses, were contacted through networks of the subdistrict municipality to join the market. The entrepreneurs who participated included two organic agricultural farmers, one Mekong fish seller, one Indigenous food seller, and one fried snack seller. The present number of sellers is considered proper for an initial phase of the market during which the market has not widely been known. The sellers accordingly do not have to aggressively compete to have customers. For the organic vegetables, both sellers agreed to sell similar and different products. Each seller would observe the products of the other and would try to limit repetitions to essentially keep good relationships among them and to provide alternatives to the customers. In addition to the sellers, the voluntary community group and the subdistrict municipality arranged the bamboo stalls along the alley leading to the cultural ground, and light bulbs as well as electricity for each seller's stall. They also are responsible for public relations, especially via continuous announcements during the walking street as well as via social media. For the research information analyzed, all parties involved, their resources utilized as well as activities undertaken are categorized into the BMC model's elements of 'key partners', 'key resources' and 'key activities', respectively.

3.1.4 Customer channels and relationship

The fresh and Indigenous food market established along the alley physically is considered the main marketing channel to engage the customers. Social media also is an alternative but occasionally utilized. Interactions between customers and sellers fundamentally form their relationships. The sellers have agreed to participate in the market every Saturday, with minimal absentia, to maintain the relationships. The regularities and continuities of sellers have effects on customers' decisions to purchase products as well as brand loyalties (Denga *et al.*, 2022). Furthermore, the sellers are willing to respond to customers' orders for example pungency levels of processed foods, Mekong fish varieties of preference (if available during season), and Indigenous fermented vegetables locally grown along Mekong river banks. Appropriate responses to customers' needs could facilitate customer relationships and sales promotions (Osterwalder and Pigneur, 2010). In addition, all sellers are willing to apply the sale promotions to motivate the customers' purchasing intentions. These examples are discounts, free-for-trial, as well as providing health benefit information. Details of the channels and relationships developed between customers and sellers accordingly are categorized into the BMC model's elements of 'customer channels' and 'customer relationship', respectively.

3.1.5 Cost structure and revenue stream

Business and marketing operations essentially require costs for a range of activities for example raw material procurements, travelling expenses, cooking gas, electricity, shop decorations, and advertisement. The sellers are responsible for their expenses spent on the materials, product preparations, and travelling. The voluntary group and the municipality are responsible for infrastructure expenses including stalls, electrical bills, decoration, and garbage. The municipality granted privileges to the sellers on exempts from marketing fees. The privileges were incentives for the sellers to join and continue their businesses in the market. The sellers in turn voluntarily share expenses which are immediately required attended for example changing light bulbs, and stall maintenance, at the time of the market. The revenue stream of the sellers is from selling their products to the customers. The information analyzed on the costs and revenues is categorized straightforwardly to the BMC model's elements of 'cost structure' and 'revenue stream', respectively.

3.2 Business model implementation

The business model obtained from the BMC model (Figure 2) has strategically been implemented into reality since December 2023. The bamboo stalls, i.e. both 60 and 120 cm height-moveable benchtop stalls, were arranged along both sides of the alley connecting the walking street and the cultural ground. As expected, not many target customers shopped at the market in the first week (Saturday 2nd December 2023). Some customers

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acknowledged that they did not get informed about the marketing activities. They found the market when used the alley to access the walking street regularly. All partners of the market jointly discussed practical approaches to reach the customers as well as to create and maintain relationships. The sellers agreed to continue their business in the market in spite of the firstly low returns. They all have experience in doing business in new markets where the margins and public recognition initially are low. To stimulate the market visits, the voluntary community group and the municipality increased their public relations and created activities on the cultural grounds. These examples are music shows performed by local and youth musicians, and handicraft and artefact exhibitions.

Public relations and promotions are essential for increasing public knowledge of the local market's existence (Chiru, 2018). The sale promotions have been created to draw the attention of, especially the local customers. These include discounts, promoting health benefits or cooking recipes. Among promotional events, the Indigenous food shows had high public attention through participating in "seeing, tasting, and shopping" activities. Food samples i.e. papaya salad and stir-fried noodles (Pad Thai, namely in Thai) were freely given to the customers to taste, whilst they were persuaded to support local sellers selling cultural and food products along the alley. In addition, the sale promotions were conducted with locally famous figures including the walking street dancers, local politicians, retired teachers, nurses and government officers, and members of parliament (MPs). The dancers in particular did their shopping before performing dances and collected their items thereafter. Similarly, some sellers occasionally utilized online marketing via Facebook and Line applications to entrepreneurially extend their businesses to the customers who ordered and collected the vegetables during their visits to the market. Such customer-seller interactions are good examples of the so-called gradual development of good relationships and trustworthiness. These essentially underline consumer loyalty and intentions to purchase products, as well as brand management (Shainesh, 2012; Li *et al.*, 2023; Supriyanto *et al.*, 2023).

The voluntary community group provided interesting information on the extent of the community member participation in the cultural ground became increased approximately two-fold after the marketing business model had been implemented. The market customers walked further into the cultural ground to sightsee the art exhibitions, after purchase, and vice versa. The marketing customers became the main audiences of music bands singing shows, and culinary contests held at the cultural ground. In August 2024, the cultural ground was designated as one of the areas surrounding the walking street arena for the Great Mekong Subregion (GMS) Art Fest 2024 to show contemporary art, culture, and music. The ground and its atmosphere became lively and drew attention from people. The information importantly provides evidence of the benefits of the market on the cultural ground area utilization.

In addition, the sellers can earn reasonable incomes as shown from the recorded sale amount data of a vegetable seller (KHMSEL001) (Figure 3). The sale values steadily increased from December 2023 until early February 2024. The increases are attributed to public relations, promotions, festive New Year seasons, and settled weather causing more customers to join the market. However, the values in February 2024 thereafter decreased from 3,500 to 1,500 THB and were in a range of 1,500-2,500 until May 2024. The lower sale values are the result of the summer season during which the availability of vegetables especially salad became relatively limited. The sale values increased again in June 2024 but approximately 30% decreased in July 2024 and apparently stable until September 2024. During July-September, it is a rainy season during which the sale values may become low because of the heavy rain, strong wind, and thunder. This possibly makes the customers reluctant to visit the market. The drastic decrease i.e. lower than 1,000 THB recorded on 21st September 2024 was attributed to the persistent rain for two weeks that caused disease infections in the vegetable production areas. Very limited vegetables accordingly were sold. The financial record demonstrated in Figure 3 evidently supports that incomes earned from selling in the market are the main revenue stream defined in the BMC model. Given the cost structure in a range of 700-1,000 THB, the seller earns profits even though the sale amounts occasionally were lower than 1,000 THB. For other sellers, the sale values were not recorded in detail. However anecdotal and verbally told evidence show

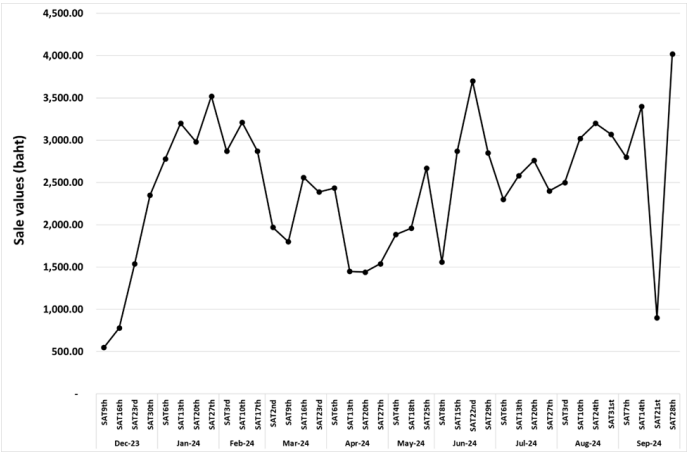

Figure 3. Sale amounts (1 USD = 32 THB) recorded for a fresh vegetable seller during December 2023-September 2024.

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reasonable incomes earned. The Mekong fish seller could weekly sell in a range of 3,000-4,000 THB, meanwhile the snack seller could earn approximately 1,200-2,000 THB a week. The other organic vegetable seller gained weekly incomes in the range of 800-3,000 THB. It should be noted that unit prices of Mekong fish are considered higher than those of other products. These could provide higher returns to the fish sellers. One of most customer preferences is the fresh-cut/frozen Mekong fish steak.

4. Conclusion

The business model for the roadside stall-type market was successfully developed using the BMC model as the tool together with the data qualitatively collected. Fresh and Indigenous food are the main products of which, in particular, the vegetables are organically grown and PGC certified. Implementation of the BMC model could promote the utilizations of the cultural ground connecting to the walking street via the alley in which the market was newly established. Increases in the ground's activity participants are attributed to the market customers. The ground accordingly becomes a designated area for cultural exhibitions and festivals. Not only can the market provide support to the cultural ground participations, it also yields economic benefits as weekly incomes and extended business networks for the sellers. Such research findings apparently highlight applications of the BMC model developed as a practical tool to manage the newly established market and the cultural ground utilizations. The findings also indicate that the research objectives were achieved. The BMC model's individual elements and their combinations accordingly provide strategic business plans for example Indigenous food shows were held to maintain good relationships with the key customers, whilst extending networks of key partners, and potential resources. In addition, the qualitative research methodology adopted was reasonable for undertaking the business model development and implementation. Future works involve promoting start-up entrepreneurs among the youths who would become both sellers and voluntary community group members, as an important approach to maintain the viabilities of the market and the cultural ground.

Conflict of interest

The authors declare no conflict of interest.

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