

REBORNS Model: A Constructivist Grounded Theory of Community Market Transformation Through Trade Fair and Creative Economy Integration

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Abstract

Traditional Thai community markets possess distinctive cultural and ecological assets yet consistently fail to convert them into competitive value under intensifying modern retail and digital-commerce pressures. This study pursued three objectives: to examine the structural obstacles constraining these markets; to construct a grounded theory integrating trade fair operational discipline and creative economy principles as a transformation mechanism; and to develop the REBORNS Model, extending the Natural Resource-Based View to informal market contexts. Adopting a Constructivist Grounded Theory approach, data were generated from 30 key informants across three groups (trade fair and event specialists, community vendors, and consumers) through four methods: in-depth interviews, focus group discussions, participant observation, and documentary analysis, with interviews structured around engagement history, structural challenges, and development pathways. Data were analysed through three-level coding with constant comparison until theoretical saturation. Three findings emerged in line with the objectives. First, competitive vulnerability stems not from an absence of assets but from systemic deficits in value communication and management capacity that render embedded assets competitively invisible. Second, integrating trade fair discipline with creative economy principles provides a replicable pathway from transactional selling to experiential commerce. Third, these patterns culminate in the REBORNS Model, the study's principal contribution to knowledge: a seven-dimension framework comprising Resource-Embedded Cultural Identity, Ecological Place Embeddedness, Business-Fair Vendor Readiness, Organic Community Social Capital, Regenerative Ecological Stock, New-market Organisational Readiness, and Self-Management Capability, the last functioning as a cross-cutting moderator governing the remaining six. The model offers actionable guidance for policymakers, market operators, and community development practitioners seeking to elevate traditional markets sustainably.

Keywords: REBORNS model; community market transformation; natural resource-based view; self-management capability; trade fair integration

Introduction

Traditional community markets are the predominant form of grassroots retail in Thailand and across Southeast Asia, functioning at once as livelihood systems, repositories of intergenerational cultural knowledge, and generators of community trust (Chambers & Conway, 1992; Yasmeen, 2006). Yet digital commerce, modern retail expansion, and rising consumer sophistication are rapidly eroding their competitive viability (UNCTAD, 2024; Jewapatarakul & Ueasangkomsate, 2024). The theoretically significant problem is not this pressure itself but the paradox it exposes: these markets hold genuinely distinctive cultural and ecological assets, yet consistently fail to convert them into competitive value (Zhang & Li, 2022). The gap this study addresses is, therefore, the absence of any framework explaining how that conversion can be achieved in informal, grassroots settings.

Existing scholarship explains the problem only in parts. Resource-based and place-based theories identify why embedded assets are valuable but not how informal vendors activate them; social capital and organisational readiness research explains the enabling conditions but not the individual capacities that determine whether those conditions translate into action (Williams et al., 2022; Hamdani et al., 2024); and trade fair scholarship demonstrates transferable, place-bound relational disciplines that have never been connected to community market research, despite the structural parallels between the two contexts. As the following section details, no existing framework synthesises these streams into a grounded theory of informal market transformation.

This study addresses that gap through Charmaz's (2014) Constructivist Grounded Theory, an inductive, participant-centred approach suited to phenomena that existing frameworks insufficiently theorise. Drawing on fieldwork with 30 key informants across three structurally distinct stakeholder groups.

Research Objectives

1. to examine the structural obstacles constraining Thai community markets
2. to construct a grounded theory integrating trade fair discipline and creative economy principles as a transformation mechanism
3. to develop the REBORNS Model, a seven-dimension framework extending the Natural Resource-Based View to informal market contexts, with Self-Management Capability as an inductively derived cross-cutting moderator.

Literature Review

Community Markets, Social Capital, and the Architecture of Structural Constraint

Community markets are multi-functional livelihood systems that embed cultural practices, ecological knowledge, and social identity within daily economic exchange (Chambers & Conway, 1992; Cohen, 2001; Yasmeen, 2006). Zhang and Li (2022) show that cultural resource embeddedness constitutes a measurable competitive advantage in informal markets, yet one that remains unrealised when vendors lack the capacity to communicate it. Across Southeast Asia, this latent potential is eroding under digital commerce penetration, modern retail expansion, and shifting consumer expectations (UNCTAD, 2022, 2024). While Putnam's (2000) bonding and bridging distinction and Porter and Kramer's (2011) community capital analysis reveal strong internal cohesion, Williams et al. (2022) demonstrate that bonding-dominant capital can calcify into insularity that resists the external knowledge transformation requires. Rich embedded assets thus coexist with chronic deficits in relational breadth and governance capacity, yet the literature offers no theory of how those assets might be strategically activated.

The Natural Resource-Based View: Strategic Embeddedness and Its Boundaries

The Resource-Based View (Barney, 1991) framed sustained competitive advantage as a function of resources that are valuable, rare, inimitable, and non-substitutable. Hart's (1995) Natural Resource-Based View (NRBV) extended this logic by foregrounding environmental embeddedness: capabilities rooted in ecological and place-specific conditions resist replication by competitors lacking that contextual grounding. Hart and Dowell (2011) confirmed such embedded capabilities as durable competitive assets, while Andersen (2023) identified regenerative ecological resources as an underexplored source of advantage in community-based economies, calling explicitly for NRBV extensions beyond its corporate origins. Three limitations prevent direct application to informal markets: NRBV presupposes formal governance, defined ownership rights, and capital market access; it offers no theory of how tacit embedded knowledge is externalised into communicated market value; and it operates at the organisational level without theorising the individual-level capacities that determine whether activation occurs. These gaps, namely governance context, activation mechanism, and micro-level moderation, define the theoretical space the REBORNS Model occupies.

Creative Economy, Experiential Commerce, and the Transfer Logic of Trade Fair Discipline

UNCTAD's Creative Economy Outlook series (2022, 2024) documents a sustained global shift in which cultural identity, artisanal knowledge, and place-specific heritage have become primary inputs to competitive value, a shift especially pronounced across Southeast Asia. Pine and Gilmore's (1999) experiential commerce theory supplies the operational vocabulary: as value

progresses from commodities toward experiences, the advantage of embedded cultural assets grows proportionally, provided vendors can stage them. Trade fair scholarship supplies the staging disciplines. Blythe (2010) shows that vendors adopting relational and experiential orientations achieve superior buyer engagement and brand recall; Tanner and Chonko (1995) identify the distinguishing competencies of high-performing exhibitors; UFI (2023) confirms these advantages across product categories globally. This study advances the claim that such competencies are transferable: trade fairs and community markets share the architecture of place-bound, face-to-face, relational commerce, and this structural homology makes trade fair discipline applicable to grassroots settings when the organisational and individual enabling conditions are present.

Organisational Readiness and Self-Regulatory Capacity: The Dual Architecture of Change

Weiner's (2009) organisational readiness theory holds that change capacity emerges from the alignment of motivational, capability, and structural readiness, and Holt et al. (2007) show that the absence of any single condition produces resistance regardless of intervention quality. In informal market contexts, Hamdani et al. (2024) find that organisations typically exhibit motivational readiness while lacking structural readiness, generating high initial enthusiasm followed by institutional decay. Self-regulatory theory bridges the individual gap: emotion regulation (Gross, 2015) determines behavioural persistence; experiential learning (Kolb, 1984) mediates between change exposure and transformation; and psychological resilience (Luthans, 2002) identifies recovery capacity as a micro-foundation of effectiveness. No existing framework synthesises NRBV, experiential commerce and trade fair discipline, organisational readiness, and psychological self-regulation into a grounded theory of informal community market transformation, the precise knowledge gap the REBORNS Model addresses.

Synthesising the Theoretical Streams: Sensitising Concepts for the REBORNS Framework

The four streams reviewed above are individually illuminating but collectively incomplete. Resource-based scholarship explains why embedded assets are valuable but not how they are activated; creative economy and trade fair scholarship explain the activation mechanism but not the conditions that enable it; social capital and organisational readiness scholarship explain those conditions but not the individual capacity that governs whether they translate into action. Consistent with Charmaz's (2014) Constructivist Grounded Theory, these streams were treated not as a deductive framework imposed in advance but as sensitising concepts that oriented data collection and analysis while remaining open to revision and extension by the data. The seven dimensions of the REBORNS Model were subsequently developed inductively through three-level coding, with each dimension grounded in informant accounts and refined against the theoretical orientation summarised in Table 1.

Table 1 Sensitising Concepts Linking the Literature to the REBORNS Dimensions

Layer	Dimension	Sensitising Concept	Gap Addressed
Causal	REI	NRBV embeddedness and cultural resource value (Barney, 1991; Hart, 1995; Zhang & Li, 2022)	Culturally embedded assets becoming a communicated premium
Causal	EPE	Place and ecological embeddedness within NRBV (Hart, 1995; Hart & Dowell, 2011)	Converting place conditions into vendor-level propositions
Contextual	OSC	Bonding and bridging and community capital (Putnam, 2000; Porter & Kramer, 2011; Williams et al., 2022)	Extending bonding into bridging networks for external knowledge
Contextual	RES	Regenerative ecological resources (Hart, 1995; Andersen, 2023)	Activating ecological stock as a renewable advantage
Action	BVR	Transferable trade fair competencies (Blythe, 2010; Tanner & Chonko, 1995; UFI, 2023)	Transferring exhibition discipline to community vendors
Action	NOR	Organisational readiness alignment (Weiner, 2009; Holt et al., 2007; Hamdani et al., 2024)	Structural readiness deficits and the enthusiasm-then-decay pattern
Moderator	SMC	Emotion regulation, experiential learning, resilience (Kolb, 1984; Luthans, 2002; Gross, 2015)	Individual moderation of whether structural strategies succeed

In sum, this study is scoped to the qualitative, theory-generating phase of a larger research programme. Its purpose is to construct, rather than to statistically validate, a grounded theory of informal community market transformation; the resulting REBORNS Model is offered as a substantive theory whose dimensional structure and moderating logic provide the foundation for subsequent quantitative testing.

Research Methodology

Research Design and Sampling Strategy

This study adopts Charmaz's (2014) Constructivist Grounded Theory (CGT) for two deliberate reasons. First, its premise that meaning is co-constructed between researcher and participant fits a study concerned with how vendors interpret and respond to competitive pressures within their socio-cultural contexts. Second, because no existing framework theorises informal market transformation through trade fair and creative economy integration, an inductive, theory-generating design is more defensible than any deductive alternative, and it yields a framework structured enough to anchor the subsequent quantitative phase of the research programme.

Sampling proceeded in two sequential but overlapping phases. An initial phase of purposive sampling with maximum variation (Patton, 2015) established structural diversity across market type, geographic location, and operational scale. A subsequent phase of theoretical sampling then guided data collection as initial coding generated emerging categories: further informants were sought specifically to develop, challenge, or saturate those categories. This transition is a defining feature of CGT (Charmaz, 2014), and it continued until no new properties, dimensional variations, or relational patterns were identified, the condition of theoretical saturation operationalised in Table 2.

Research Participants

The three-group design was chosen to triangulate not only data sources but interpretive frameworks, capturing the full stakeholder ecology of community market transformation from three epistemically distinct positions (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). Thirty key informants participated, ten in each group. Group A comprised MICE professionals, trade fair specialists, and event management academics (minimum ten years' experience), providing the institutional perspective. Group B comprised community vendors and market operators (minimum five years' experience), providing the practitioner perspective. Group C comprised consumers, domestic and international tourists, and community members with sustained market engagement, providing the demand-side perspective. Equal representation across these positions ensures that no single vantage point dominates the emerging theory.

Table 2 Summary of Key Informants (N = 30)

Group	Informant Type	N	Minimum Qualifications	Primary Collection Method
A	MICE, trade fair, and event specialists (KI-01 to KI-10)	10	Managing directors, organisers, academics; 10+ years	In-depth interviews
B	Community vendors and market operators (KI-11 to KI-20)	10	Owners, community representatives, vendors; 5+ years	Interviews; participant observation
C	Consumers, tourists, and community members (KI-21 to KI-30)	10	Regular customers, tourists, engaged community members	Interviews; focus groups

Data Collection

Data were generated through four integrated methods deployed concurrently. In-depth semi-structured interviews (60 to 90 minutes, audio-recorded with consent, transcribed verbatim) were the primary source; guides were organised around three thematic domains (engagement history, structural challenges, and development pathways) and piloted with two informants and validated by three independent experts. Focus group discussions were conducted with two groups of eight participants each. Participant observation spanned six market sites over fourteen

cumulative days, with the researcher as observer-as-participant (Gold, 1958). Documentary analysis of academic literature, government reports, and operational materials provided sensitising concepts and a triangulation corpus.

Data Analysis

Data were analysed through Charmaz's (2014) three-level coding protocol, applied iteratively alongside collection. Initial coding generated gerund-form codes line by line; focused coding collapsed these into seven theoretical dimensions through constant comparison; theoretical coding examined the structural and relational logic among dimensions, specifically the moderating position of Self-Management Capability. Analytical memo-writing served as the audit trail, with data managed in NVivo 12. Theoretical saturation was assessed iteratively from Interview 22 onwards through structured, category-by-category review: a dimension was judged saturated when continued data collection within it yielded no new properties, dimensional variations, or relational patterns. The differential saturation points reflect varying conceptual complexity, as reported in Table 3.

Table 3 Theoretical Saturation by REBORNS Dimension

Code	Dimension	Saturation Point	Basis for Saturation Judgement
REI	Resource-Embedded Cultural Identity	Interview 22	No new properties, variations, or patterns in subsequent data
EPE	Ecological Place Embeddedness	Interview 22	No new properties, variations, or patterns in subsequent data
BVR	Business-Fair Vendor Readiness	Interview 22	No new properties, variations, or patterns in subsequent data
OSC	Organic Community Social Capital	Interview 22	No new properties, variations, or patterns in subsequent data
RES	Regenerative Ecological Stock	Interview 22	No new properties, variations, or patterns in subsequent data
NOR	New-market Organisational Readiness	Interview 25	Governance variations across market types required added theoretical sampling
SMC	Self-Management Capability	Interview 28	Cross-cutting function and high individual variation required extended sampling

Trustworthiness, Ethical Considerations, and Researcher Reflexivity

Trustworthiness was established through four strategies (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). Credibility was achieved through methodological triangulation across four sources and informant triangulation across three groups. Confirmability was maintained through negative case analysis. Dependability was supported through member checking with eight key informants (three from Group A, three

from Group B, and two from Group C), whose corrections were treated as analytically productive data. Transferability is addressed through thick description, enabling readers to assess the model's applicability beyond its originating Thai contexts.

Research Results

The REBORNS Model: An Emergent Theoretical System

Systematic analysis through Charmaz's (2014) three-level coding produced the REBORNS Model, a seven-dimension framework whose architecture emerged inductively. Theoretical coding revealed four functional layers: causal conditions (REI and EPE), the foundational strategic inputs; contextual conditions (OSC and RES), the relational and ecological environment; action strategies (BVR and NOR), the active conversion mechanisms; and a cross-cutting moderator (SMC), operating at the individual level. The findings below accumulate across these layers; their structure is summarised in Table 5, and the full conceptual framework is presented as Figure 1 in the New Knowledge section.

Structural Obstacles: When Embedded Assets Become Competitively Invisible

The first finding reframes the problem: competitive vulnerability arises not from an absence of assets but from a systematic failure to activate the assets vendors already possess. Across fourteen of thirty informants, vendors held cultural assets, namely heritage recipes, indigenous agricultural knowledge, and place-specific artisanal traditions, that satisfy Barney's (1991) VRIN criteria. Yet they generate no premium, because the externalisation chain from tacit knowledge to communicated value is severed at the articulation stage.

“We have recipes from our grandmothers, ingredients you cannot find anywhere else. But when a tourist asks what is special about this market, the vendors just smile and point at the food. We have the story, but we do not know how to tell it.” (KI-16, community vendor)

Documented across fourteen informants, this is the behavioural signature of what the study terms embedded asset paralysis, a condition classical NRBV cannot name because it presupposes an activation infrastructure that informal markets structurally lack. A second, analytically independent obstacle emerged from Group C and observation at four of six sites: the physical quality of the market environment is a threshold condition below which product quality becomes irrelevant to revisitation and premium pricing.

“The food was good, but I would not come back. The walkway was uneven, the bathrooms were not maintained, and there was nowhere to sit and rest. After thirty minutes I just wanted to leave.” (KI-23, consumer-tourist)

Observation confirmed that at physically deficient zones, visitor dwell time averaged less than half that at adequate zones within the same market, independent of product quality. EPE thus functions as a necessary antecedent to value communication.

The Transformation Mechanism: Trade Fair Discipline as Transferable Operational Logic

Trade fairs and community markets share a structural logic the literature has not acknowledged: both are place-bound, face-to-face, relational commerce environments. This homology makes the transfer of trade fair discipline analytically defensible rather than aspirational. *“In a trade fair, every booth is trained to do the same things: greet the buyer, frame the product story, demonstrate the use, close the engagement. In a community market, the vendor is selling but not presenting. The skills that make a fair booth competitive are simply absent.” (KI-01, MICE specialist)*

Coding of Group A and B data identified three properties of BVR that define transferable trade fair discipline: narrative product framing, sensory demonstration practice, and adaptive pitch calibration. Three Group B informants with prior MICE-adjacent training exhibited markedly higher levels of all three, evidence that the discipline is not only transferable but effective in grassroots settings. The creative economy framework (UNCTAD, 2022, 2024) supplies the value architecture within which these disciplines become purposive: REI and EPE are the substantive content that BVR is designed to stage.

Contextual Conditions and Governance: The Environment That Enables or Prevents Change

The contextual layer reveals two conditions. The first is a paradox: markets exhibit simultaneously excessive bonding capital and deficient bridging capital.

“We help each other every day. If one vendor's stall is empty, the others bring customers over. The trust here is real. But when we need a designer, an event organiser, someone from outside who can help us upgrade, we do not know who to call.” (KI-14, community vendor)

This gives empirical form to the organisational trap of bonding-dominant capital (Williams et al., 2022). The second condition compounds it: many markets possess genuine regenerative ecological assets whose value is unrealised for want of certification and communication infrastructure.

“Our vegetables are grown without chemicals, the way our parents grew them. But we have no certificate, no label that proves it. So at the checkout, we sell at the same price as the chemical produce next to us.” (KI-19, organic farmer-vendor)

RES activation requires the institutional linkages that OSC's bridging deficit prevents, a circular dependency constituting a social-ecological trap. Governance determines whether these conditions can be resolved; across five of six sites, person-dependent, non-systemic governance was a structural constant.

“When the chairperson is here, the market runs. When she is in Bangkok for a week, decisions wait. We have no rulebook, no data on how the market is performing, no system that continues without her.” (KI-17, market operator)

A productive exception at the one site with a rotating committee structure and written guidelines showed higher BVR scores and stronger bridging activity, confirming that NOR improvement produces downstream effects.

Self-Management Capability: The Moderator That Determines Whether Structure Becomes Performance

SMC was the most theoretically unexpected dimension, and its moderating claim is evidenced across five dimensions. On REI, vendors with higher emotional regulation (Gross, 2015) sustained confident narrative presentation under pressure; on EPE, those with stronger reflective practice (Schon, 1983) reconfigured stalls to compensate for deficiencies. On BVR, the effect was captured in an unsolicited field comparison.

“Two vendors started the same week, with similar products and similar booths. One reads her customers, adjusts her pitch, stays calm when sales are slow. The other gives up by midday when nothing sells. Same market, same conditions, completely different outcomes.” (KI-21, repeat consumer)

On OSC, vendors with higher adaptive learning (Kolb, 1984) persisted through failed bridging attempts; on NOR, those with higher resilience (Luthans, 2002) sustained governance reform through resistance. SMC is therefore theoretically necessary rather than supplementary: without it, the model would overpredict the success of structural interventions among low-regulation vendors and underpredict the performance of resourceful individuals in deficient environments.

Table 4 Representative Coding Pathway: From Field Evidence to REBORNS Dimensions

Code	Dimension	Focused Code	Representative Initial Codes	Theoretical Anchors
REI	Resource-Embedded Cultural Identity	Obscuring cultural value propositions	Possessing generational assets but not articulating them; silent on origins; lacking narrative signage	Hart (1995); Barney (1991); Zhang & Li (2022)
EPE	Ecological Place Embeddedness	Degrading spatial experience quality	Hazardous walkways; substandard sanitation; no seating anchors; premature departure	Carmona (2019); Project for Public Spaces (2020)
BVR	Business-Fair Vendor Readiness	Resisting conversion to experiential commerce	Passive transactional habits; underusing sensory framing and proactive demonstration	Blythe (2010); Pine & Gilmore (1999); Tanner & Chonko (1995)
OSC	Organic Community	Over-relying on bonding,	Kinship mutual aid; no external	Putnam (2000); Porter

	Social Capital	stagnating in bridging	professional linkages; insular decisions	& Kramer (2011); Williams et al. (2022)
RES	Regenerative Ecological Stock	Underactivating latent ecological capital	Organic produce without verification; unlabelled eco innovations; missed green premiums	Hart & Dowell (2011); Andersen (2023); Elkington (1997)
NOR	New-market Organisational Readiness	Stagnating under person-dependent governance	Centralised charismatic leadership; no written standards; no performance monitoring	Weiner (2009); Holt et al. (2007); Hamdani et al. (2024)
SMC	Self-Management Capability	Varying in adaptation and emotional self-regulation	Managing low-sales stress; adaptive learning; lacking reflection, premature abandonment	Gross (2015); Kolb (1984); Luthans (2002); Schon (1983)

Table 5 Structural Architecture and Key Findings of the REBORNS Model

Layer	Dim.	Key Empirical Finding	Structural Relationship
Causal	REI	Embedded asset paralysis: VRIN-qualifying assets yield no premium because tacit knowledge is never articulated	Supplies content that BVR stages; moderated by SMC
Causal	EPE	Physical environment is a threshold condition; dwell time halves at deficient zones	Necessary antecedent to value communication; moderated by SMC
Contextual	OSC	Excess bonding with deficient bridging capital isolates the community from expertise	Gates access needed to activate BVR, RES, and NOR
Contextual	RES	Regenerative assets unrealised for want of certification infrastructure	Activation depends on OSC bridging (social-ecological trap)
Action	BVR	Trade fair discipline is transferable and effective in grassroots settings	Converts REI and EPE into experience premiums; moderated by SMC
Action	NOR	Person-dependent governance constrains continuity; systemic governance yields cross-dimensional gains	Enabling condition for BVR, OSC, RES; moderated by SMC
Moderator	SMC	Individual self-regulatory capacity determines whether strategies become performance	Moderates the other six dimensions

Discussion

Theoretical Contributions of the REBORNS Model

The REBORNS Model exerts productive pressure on four established frameworks, each contribution best read as a critical extension of existing theory. First, it extends the NRBV into informal contexts. NRBV (Hart, 1995; Barney, 1991) assumes a governance infrastructure absent

in grassroots settings; the concept of embedded asset paralysis names VRIN-qualifying resources coexisting with activation incapacity, answering Andersen's (2023) call and supplying the mechanism Zhang and Li (2022) left unexplained.

Second, the model bridges two literatures that developed in isolation. The structural homology argument licenses the transfer of trade fair discipline (Blythe, 2010; Tanner & Chonko, 1995) into grassroots settings, yielding a context-independent principle of experiential commerce discipline operationalised through BVR that gives Pine and Gilmore's (1999) theory and UNCTAD's (2022, 2024) outlook the specificity neither previously offered for informal markets.

Third, and most disruptively, Self-Management Capability challenges the structural-deterministic logic shared by resource-based theory, organisational readiness theory (Weiner, 2009), and social capital models (Putnam, 2000). The data show identical conditions producing divergent outcomes according to individual capacities (Gross, 2015; Kolb, 1984; Schon, 1983; Luthans, 2002), establishing a structural-moderational model in which macro conditions set the boundaries while individual capacity determines where within them performance lands.

Fourth, the model articulates a structural interdependence between OSC and RES that neither social capital theory nor ecological economics has named: RES activation requires institutional linkages that OSC's bonding-dominant configuration cannot generate, while OSC bridging requires the incentives RES certification would provide. This extends Williams et al. (2022) into a social-ecological register. The practical implications of these contributions are developed in the Suggestions section; the present discussion concerns their theoretical significance alone.

Limitations and Boundary Conditions

Three limitations bound the model's claims. First, all fieldwork was conducted in Thai community markets; replication in other ASEAN settings would establish regional generalisability. Second, as a qualitative theory-generation study, the model specifies the direction and nature of relationships but not their relative predictive weight, which awaits estimation through structural equation modelling. Third, the cross-sectional design captures a single moment of post-pandemic recovery intersecting with accelerating digital commerce penetration.

New Knowledge from the Research

The new knowledge generated by this study lies not in any single finding but in the integration of four previously disconnected paradigms into one explanatory framework. Rather than re-arguing the theoretical contributions analysed above, this section presents that synthesis in consolidated form: the conceptual framework is visualised in Figure 1 and its four knowledge levels are summarised in Table 6.

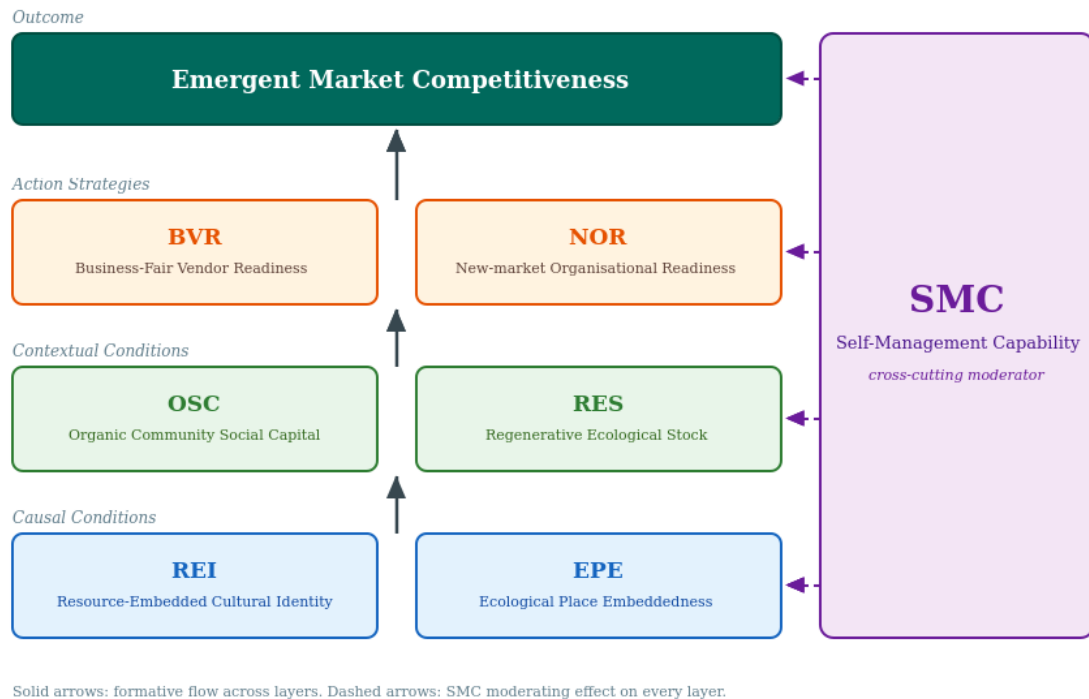


Figure 1 Research Conceptual Framework (REBORNS Model)

Structurally, seven dimensions are arranged in four functional layers. A causal layer (REI, EPE) supplies the strategic inputs; a contextual layer (OSC, RES) defines the enabling environment; an action layer (BVR, NOR) converts inputs into value; and these converge on Emergent Market Competitiveness. A single cross-cutting band, SMC, runs alongside all three layers, moderating every dimension.

Table 6 The Four Levels of New Knowledge Generated by the REBORNS Model

Level	Framework Extended	Novel Construct or Mechanism	New Knowledge Claim
Macro resource theory	NRBV (Hart, 1995; Barney, 1991)	Embedded asset paralysis	NRBV's resource-activation logic holds in informal, non-corporate contexts
Individual psychology	Resource-based and readiness theory (Weiner, 2009)	SMC as a cross-cutting moderator (Gross, 2015; Kolb, 1984; Schon, 1983; Luthans, 2002)	Psychological micro-foundations are constitutive of macro-structural outcomes
Operational mechanism	Trade fair and creative economy (Blythe, 2010; Tanner & Chonko, 1995; UFI, 2023; UNCTAD, 2024)	BVR as the transfer vehicle	Trade fair discipline and creative economy logic are mutually constitutive in grassroots commerce (Pine & Gilmore, 1999)

Level	Framework Extended	Novel Construct or Mechanism	New Knowledge Claim
Methodological	Constructivist Grounded Theory (Charmaz, 2014)	Seven inductively derived, SEM-ready dimensions	A coherent pathway from qualitative theory generation to quantitative validation

Read together, these four levels yield the study's central proposition: the competitive transformation of informal markets is neither purely structural nor purely individual, but emerges from the interaction between macro-structural conditions and individual self-regulatory capacity, a synthesis no single existing framework could produce alone.

Conclusion

This study set out to explain why traditional community markets, despite holding genuinely distinctive cultural and ecological assets, struggle to convert them into competitive value, and how that conversion might be achieved. Its central contribution is the REBORNS Model, a grounded theory that integrates the Natural Resource-Based View, social capital, creative economy thinking, trade fair discipline, and self-regulatory psychology into a single seven-dimension framework, and that identifies Self-Management Capability as the individual-level moderator determining whether structural strategies succeed. The model's distinctive claim is that the competitive transformation of informal markets is neither purely structural nor purely individual, but emerges from the interaction between the two.

The broader significance of this claim extends beyond market management. For community development, it implies that interventions strengthening infrastructure and governance while neglecting the psychological capacities of the people who must enact them will produce institutions that perform under favourable conditions and falter under pressure. For policy, it suggests that support programmes should be sequenced rather than uniform: physical and relational foundations first, presentational discipline second, and resilience-building throughout. Read this way, the REBORNS Model is less a static description of market structure than a diagnostic logic for deciding where, and in what order, scarce development resources should be directed.

As a qualitative theory-generation study, the model now stands ready for quantitative validation. Should subsequent structural equation modelling confirm its dimensional relationships, the REBORNS Model offers a transferable foundation for elevating the cultural and ecological wealth of grassroots markets, across Thailand and comparable economies, into durable and sustainable competitive advantage.

Suggestions

1. Suggestions for Applying the Research Results

Application of the REBORNS Model calls for differentiated action across three groups of stakeholders.

Policy recommendations (government and development agencies). Agencies should adopt the REBORNS Model as a diagnostic and planning guideline when formulating assistance and funding programmes for community markets, directing resources according to each market's dimensional profile rather than applying uniform support. Priority should be given to physical infrastructure (EPE), namely walkability, sanitation, and spatial comfort, as a precondition for any marketing investment, and to brokering bridging connections (OSC) between vendor communities, external professionals, and organic certification bodies (RES). Given SMC's moderating role, resilience and adaptive-learning components should be embedded as structural, not optional, elements of all publicly funded enterprise training.

Vendors and entrepreneurs. Vendors should use the model in marketing planning, beginning by externalising their cultural heritage into communicable brand narratives (REI) rather than leaving it implicit. In product and booth management, they should adopt the three trade fair presentational disciplines (narrative product framing, sensory demonstration, and adaptive pitch calibration), supported by digital-payment readiness, in order to migrate from transactional selling toward experiential commerce (BVR). Deliberate cultivation of self-regulatory practices (SMC) helps sustain this performance through periods of low sales and competitive pressure.

Other stakeholders. Market operators should replace person-dependent governance with systemic structures (NOR), including written standards, rotating committees, and performance monitoring. Training institutions and MICE organisations are well placed to deliver the exhibition-style vendor training the model specifies, while certification bodies can accelerate RES activation by extending accessible organic and eco-labelling pathways to grassroots producers.

2. Suggestions for Future Research

First, because the REBORNS Model was generated qualitatively, its dimensional relationships and the moderating effect of SMC should be validated quantitatively, ideally through variance-based structural equation modelling on a larger, nationwide sample, in order to estimate predictive weight and effect sizes. Second, longitudinal research should track the development of vendors' Self-Management Capability over time, examining how psychological resilience relates to financial performance through economic disruption. Third, comparative replication in other ASEAN settings would test the model's regional generalisability and distinguish its culturally universal dimensions from contextually specific ones.

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