

# NARRATIVE DESIGN FOR SDG-ORIENTED SOCIAL INNOVATION: THE KOH KRET MODEL

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## Abstract

This study investigates the development and implementation of a community-focused e-commerce platform that functions as a communicative tool and a model for social innovation. The project, conducted within a participatory action research framework with enterprises in Koh Kret, integrated user-centered design and digital storytelling to enhance local cultural artifacts' visibility, credibility, and emotional resonance. Within 60 days of launch, participating entrepreneurs reported a 20–35% increase in income, with 78% of site traffic originating from mobile devices, underscoring the effectiveness of mobile-first design and social media integration. The evaluation results demonstrate considerable user satisfaction with content clarity and identity connection, while digital storytelling has been crucial in shaping purchase decisions and fostering brand loyalty. The collaborative design process of the platform enables entrepreneurs to independently manage and maintain their digital presence, thus making this model sustainable. This research proposes a framework of “narrative design for social innovation”, which integrates communication theory with platform design to enable community-driven digital transformation. Studies suggest that these models can be adapted and enhanced for many cultural contexts, especially when integrated with artificial intelligence, Big Data analytics, and ethical data governance frameworks. This research advances the scholarly discourse on communication for development and offers a replicable paradigm for grassroots digital empowerment.

**Keywords:** Narrative Design, Social Innovation, Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), Community-Based Development, Koh Kret Case Study

## 1. INTRODUCTION

In a digital economy, where information and communication are crucial to business opportunities, there is a gap between people who have access to technology and a significant digital exclusion, especially at the local level in developing countries, which often face constraints in terms of human capital, digital skills and technological infrastructure (van Dijk, 2020). This imbalance results in significant lost economic opportunities related to market access, brand development, and customer network expansion. The advent of diverse digital platforms, including websites, social media, and e-commerce, has fostered novel income-generating trends for small entrepreneurs and community enterprises, enabling them to access customers beyond their localities without dependence on

intermediaries or the substantial expenses associated with establishing a physical storefront (UNCTAD, 2022). In communities rich in cultural capital, including handicrafts, local cuisine, and indigenous knowledge, the utilization of digital platforms for storytelling and the establishment of online identities, digital storytelling.(Shao, H., Peng, Q., Zhou, F., & Wider, W.,2024)has emerged as a crucial instrument for enhancing product value and differentiating in the marketplace (Jenkins, Ford, & Green, 2013).

Consequently, utilizing digital platforms encompasses more than mere online sellinginvolves establishing identity and conveying ideals. Foster community engagement in shaping their economic future (Nicholls & Murdock, 2012), particularly if the platform is developed in partnership with the community and effectively addresses requirements.

Koh Kret cultural potential and market access case study. Koh Kret,Chao Phraya River island, lies in Nonthaburi Province. Traditions such as Mon pottery, local cuisine, and local goods can be transformed into goods and ideas to support the grassroots economy (Tourism Authority of Thailand, 2021). Local business owners require technological tools, product data management systems, and permanent platforms to display goods to overseas consumers if they want to join the digital market (ThanapornPhanphakdi, 2020). Many visitors are drawn to Koh Kret. The absence of local user context-specific tools, such as excessively complicated systems or inadequate continuous training, has caused many community digital usage projects to fail, (Jaipak, B., Bhurichotitham, S., & Inkong, P. ,2025). therefore hindering entrepreneurs from sustainably raising their technology knowledge (Amporn Uthen,2018).In this context, a community-designed participatory communication platform could facilitate digital market access as well as social and economic sustainability.(San, T. S., Vasudevan, A. S. O. K. A. N., Hai, S. T., Fei, Z. H. O. U., Ng, C. P., & Guan, J. S. T. S.,2022).

Many studies discuss the role of digital technology in community development, especially in online marketing and website systems for small entrepreneurs, but most focus on technical design or functional enhancement, ignoring “digital storytelling,”the heart of communication to create identity and relationships between producers and consumers (Alexander, 2011). In addition, community-level online systems sometimes neglect user experience design, which involves developing from the perspective of real users and motivates users to participate and feel ownership of the system (Garrett, 2011). Numerous studies neglect to integrate UX with local tales to develop meaningful solutions that convey community values instead of merely being useful.

This article suggests developing a digital system that combines digital storytelling with user experience and UI principles to promote sustainable social innovation in community environments, particularly in business, culture, and communication. The following fundamental issues will be examined in this study: The research question is: How can digital storytelling be combined with user experience and UI concepts to enhance community-based e-commerce platforms? In terms of local digital transformation, how might interactive design affect the longevity of platforms and the degree to which communities own them? So far, this research has yielded the following working ideas.The study's basic premise is as follows:The emotional attraction of digital storytelling increases the legitimacy of community commodities. Local companies remain on the platform because of community involvement, which benefits users by building brand loyalty. These are necessary for you to grasp the connection between user experience design and narratives for digital platforms that improve society. (Umbreen, J., Abbas, S., Ahmad, Y., Naseem, A., & Mirza, M. Z.,2025).

### **1.1 Research Supporting Note:**

This study was funded by the Thailand Research Fund (TRF) for fiscal year 2024. The TRF supports research that promotes social innovation and sustainable grassroots economic development, especially the use of technology to empower local people.

The goal is to develop a website prototype that promotes a participatory community economy through story design.

## **2.LITERATURE REVIEW**

### **2.1 Communication Narrative Design**

Modern communication studies emphasize narrative design, which uses structured storytelling to promote sender-receiver emotional and cognitive engagement.Storytelling helps communities communicate cultural identities, beliefs, and product origins online. (Shao, H., Guo, Y., Yuan, W., Tee, M., Lu, L., & Zhou, F. A., 2025).By incorporating items into place and character stories, digital storytelling boosts emotional branding and consumer trust (Alexander, 2011). In a competitive digital marketplace, it is about building brand awareness driven by cultural stories that help community-based companies stand out (Pulizzi, 2014).

## 2.2 Local User-Centered Design and Experience/UI

User-centered design (UCD) and UX/UI concepts aim to meet the needs, capabilities, and behaviors of end-users. Effective UX/UI techniques are required to create digital platforms that are user-friendly, accessible, and contextually relevant in low-digital-skills community environments (Nielsen Norman Group, 2020). A study by Chaffey and Ellis-Chadwick (2019) found that mobile-optimized websites with simple and uncluttered layouts increased user engagement, particularly in rural or semi-urban areas.

## 2.3 Collaborative Design and Social Innovation

Social innovation takes a comprehensive and community-focused approach to solving complex social problems. This strategy emphasizes collaborative design by: Integrating stakeholders throughout development to promote shared ownership and local relevance (Mulgan, 2006; Nicholls, 2010).

Co-design ensures innovation is technically possible and socially relevant, promoting sustainability. Connecting users and developers improves engagement and adoption (Sanders & Stappers, 2008).

## 2.4 International Community Website Case Studies

Several international case studies show the power of community-driven digital platforms. Establishing links between users and developers promotes engagement and adoption (Sanders & Stappers, 2008).

## 2.5 Examination of global community website case studies

Multiple case studies globally illustrate the efficacy of community-driven digital platforms. India's "Smart Village" initiatives established a mobile-optimized e-commerce platform featuring customized content aimed at enhancing rural communities' access to digital markets (UNESCAP, 2021).

Concept/Study	Focus Area	Key Insights	Relevance to Current Study
Alexander (2011)	Digital Storytelling	Emphasizes narrative structures in digital media to build emotional engagement and identity expression.	Supports the use of community stories to enhance brand identity and customer trust on digital platforms.
Pulizzi (2014)	Content Marketing	Uses storytelling as a strategic tool to create value, loyalty, and differentiation in digital markets.	Provides a framework for integrating storytelling into community-based e-commerce platforms.
Chaffey & Ellis-Chadwick (2019)	UX/UI Design	Demonstrates how mobile-responsive and intuitive UX design boosts user engagement in digital platforms.	Reinforces the need for clear and simple website design for community users.
Nielsen Norman Group (2020)	User-Centered Design	Advocates design based on user behavior, skills, and constraints.	Guides interface and function decisions to match the local community users' needs.
Mulgan (2006); Nicholls (2010)	Social Innovation	Highlights participatory problem-solving and sustainable community change.	Positions the platform as a co-created social innovation for grassroots empowerment.
Sanders & Stappers (2008)	Co-Design	Involves users in every design stage to build ownership and context-fit solutions.	Validates the participatory design method used in developing the Koh Kret website.
UNESCAP (2021)	Smart Villages in Asia	Uses e-commerce platforms with localized UX for rural development.	Provides a model for adapting digital commerce to low-tech users.
OECD (2020)	Rural Digital Platforms	Showcases cooperative websites as scalable and community-owned markets.	Offers precedent for creating platforms rooted in local governance.

Concept/Study	Focus Area	Key Insights	Relevance to Current Study
Siriporn Siripanya (2023); Uthen (2018)	Thai Community commerce	Combines social media with E- locally-run websites to expand markets and revenues.	Confirms the effectiveness of hybrid digital strategies in Thai rural contexts.

**Table 2.6 The literature review table is systematically**

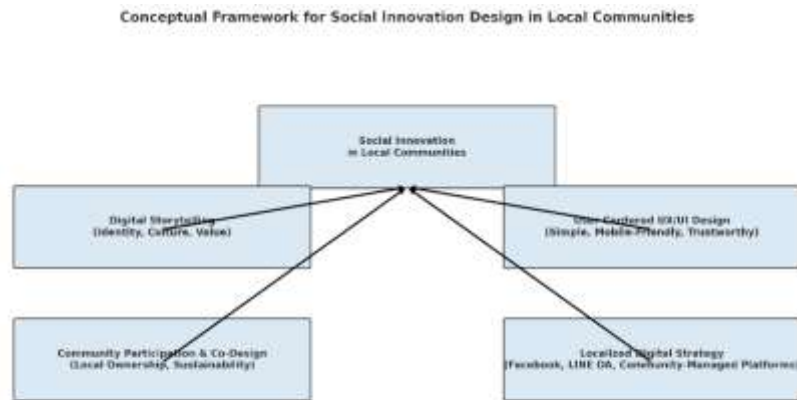
This literature review table systematically compiles data on community-level digital platform design from credible social innovations, encompassing digital storytelling, user experience, and interface design, as well as case study sources sourced from global community websites. Table 1 of the comparative study outlines the literature concepts relevant to the development of community platforms in Koh Kret. Digital media storytelling affects community-level branding, especially for community enterprises, which can share their cultural heritage (Alexander, 2011; Pulizzi, 2014). Digital storytelling links consumers to product values, identities, and backgrounds. Nielsen Norman Group (2020) and Chaffey & Ellis-Chadwick (2019) concluded that user-centered UX/UI design enhances platform accessibility and reduces technology's negative effects on the elderly and low digital skills.

Social innovation scholars Mulgan (2006), Nicholls (2010), and Sanders & Stappers (2008) emphasize collaboratively designed social innovations, where community involvement in the development and maintenance of a technology increases a sense of ownership and makes the system sustainable. Platforms must have user-focused features that interact with social media, use familiar media and languages, and are run by the community. This can be seen as an example of India's "smart village" project (UNESCAP, 2021) and Eastern Europe's collaborative online marketplace (OECD, 2020). Facebook, LINE OA, and self-managed websites enable Thai communities to expand markets, cut costs, and make money (Siriporn Siripanya, 2023; Amporn Uthen, 2018). Products with agricultural, processing, or artisanal components suffer most.

This article's literature table illustrates that "community-level social innovation" requires appealing storytelling, user-centered design, community engagement, and context-appropriate technology to create digital platforms in diverse industries.

## 2.1 Conceptual Framework for Social Innovation Design

The conceptual framework for community-level social innovation design consists of four key elements that are systematically integrated: (1) Digital Storytelling, which uses content that reflects community identity and values through media to create engagement with consumers (Pulizzi, 2014; Siriporn, 2023), (2) User-centered UX/UI design that emphasizes simplicity, user-friendly use, and suitability for the target group's digital skills (Chaffey & Ellis-Chadwick, 2019; Nielsen Norman Group, 2020), (3) Community Participation and Co-Design, which emphasizes the participation of local people at every step to enhance the sense of ownership and sustainability of the innovation (Mulgan, 2006; Sanders & Stappers, 2008), and (4) Localized Digital Strategy, which uses digital tools appropriately to the behaviors and constraints of the community, such as using Facebook, LINE OA, or websites that the community maintains itself (UNESCAP, 2021; Amporn, 2018). This conceptual framework can be used as an important guideline for designing platforms that promote sustainable grassroots economy and create long-term social impact. Finally, we have a localized digital strategy that uses appropriate digital tools to create platforms that promote a sustainable grassroots economy and create sustainable social impact. This conceptual framework can be used as a guideline for innovation models for other communities.



**Figure 2.1** *Conceptual Framework for Social Innovation Design*

### 3. APPROACH

This research created a community-related technology using a participatory action research (PAR) methodology, involving stakeholders including entrepreneurs, researchers, and users. The process was systematically organized from problem analysis and solution proposals, and finally, collaborative evaluation of the development (Kemmis, McTaggart, & Nixon, 2014). We used three research instruments for the evaluation, collecting data from people in Nonthaburi, Pathum Thani, and Bangkok provinces, which included data on online shopping frequency, most popular product categories, and factors influencing product purchases in the community. Five Koh Kret community enterprise entrepreneurs and 100 consumers participated in semi-structured in-depth interviews to collect qualitative data on users' experiences and real needs. Semi-structured interviews and prototype online usability testing were used to assess comprehension, convenience, and user satisfaction in a real sample group using Nielsen Norman Group (2020) principles.



**Figure 3.1** *displays the community's involvement in the design and development of the website.*

Many factors go into website design. Co-creation workshops with the research team and community entrepreneurs, User Journey Mapping to assess user access patterns, and Wireframing to create important menus and content arrangement are examples. The training program on how to use the website will help improve the website's features to better suit the technology and culture of the target audience (Sanders & Stappers, 2008), and the program will be evaluated using a survey that includes 100 online shoppers and five Koh Kret community entrepreneurs who



sell handicrafts, herbs and local wisdom. All research data will be examined both quantitatively and qualitatively to develop a website that meets the needs of consumers.

## 4. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

### 4.1 Overview of the Website and Functional Features

The community e-commerce website developed under this project was designed to enhance market access for local entrepreneurs through digital technology. Its primary goal is to increase product visibility and trustworthiness at a broader scale, especially for herbal products, handicrafts, and items rooted in local wisdom. The platform was built using WordPress integrated with WooCommerce, enabling end-to-end e-commerce functionality, including product listings, order management, and online payments, all tailored to be user-friendly for both customers and community entrepreneurs.

The website is structured with intuitive and labeled navigation, consisting of the following main sections:

- Homepage – features an introduction and highlighted products
- About Us – showcases community stories and enterprise identity
- Shop – displays all products with search and category filters
- How to Order – provides an easy-to-understand purchasing guide
- Contact Us – includes contact information and store location maps

Key Function	Description
Cart System	Allows users to select and manage products before finalizing orders
User Account	Register/log in for order tracking and saving user data
Payment Gateway	Supports bank transfers and COD with automated status notifications
Admin Dashboard	Enables entrepreneurs to add/edit/delete products on their own
Email Notifications	Sends alerts for new orders, status updates, and low stock
Responsive Design	Compatible with desktop, tablet, and mobile screens

*Table 4.1 summarizes the core website functions*

Website Highlights include the application of UX/UI principles for a seamless user experience, the use of compelling product images and digital storytelling to foster emotional connections with customers, and the incorporation of both local dialect and standard Thai language to reflect cultural identity. Most importantly, the platform empowers community members to independently manage the system without reliance on external developers, fostering self-reliance and long-term sustainability.



*Figure 4.1 shows the website window of the Koh Kret Community Enterprise.*

A Content Management System (CMS) based on the WordPress platform and WooCommerce plugin was used to launch an online store on the website built for this project. It was able to track orders, accept online payments,

and display product information. UX/UI design principles were applied to make the system responsive, especially on mobile devices. The combination of product categories and content featuring the community's stories created a true community identity on this community website.

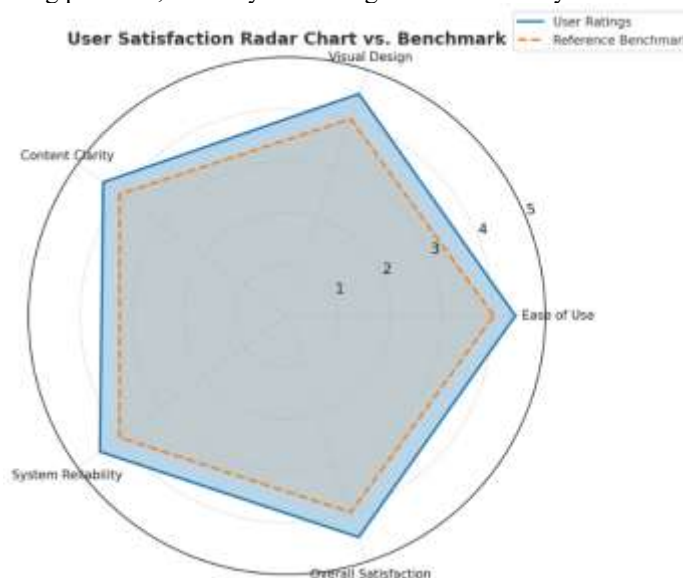
#### 4.2 Results of the Study on Economic Outcomes, Communication, and Social Innovation in Local Communities

This study developed a community-based e-commerce platform through participatory action research to increase digital market access for enterprises in Koh Kret. Interviews with entrepreneurs reported a 20–35% increase in revenue within the first 60 days of launching their websites, attracting over 2,400 unique visitors. Seventy-eight percent of traffic originated from mobile devices, demonstrating that the mobile-first responsive design and innovative integration of Facebook and LINE effectively reached target audiences (Chaffey & Ellis-Chadwick, 2019).



**Diagram 4.2.1** The WooCommerce Dashboard is used to perform the economic evaluation of the website system.

User satisfaction surveys indicate high scores for ease of use, how engaged community enterprise operators feel with the content on the website, and their emotional attachment to the products. Digital storytelling allows the website to showcase the local knowledge and identities of artisan producers through descriptive content, photographs, and culturally relevant language. Customers perceived their involvement as "participating in the community's story" rather than merely "purchasing products," thereby enhancing emotional and symbolic value.



**Figure 4.2.2** Radar diagram comparing website user satisfaction scores with reference benchmark values.

Digital storytelling played a vital role in establishing enduring relationships between consumers and the community, promoting brand loyalty, repeat business, and the perception that the products were culturally significant

and ethically sourced. A transactional website evolved into a platform for identity expression and cultural exchange through the incorporation of a narrative layer.

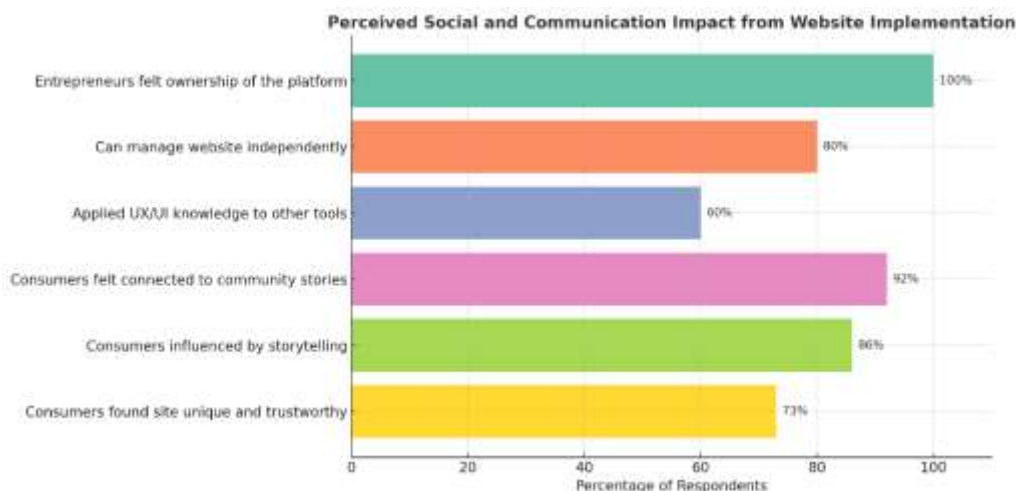
The project facilitated social innovation through the involvement of local firms in all design phases and the provision of self-management tools. This participatory design method resulted in ownership, enhanced digital literacy, and increased platform utilization after the research period. Entrepreneurs demonstrated increased confidence in their content management and UX/UI competencies across various digital platforms.

The website served as both a commercial instrument and a communicative social innovation. The initiative employed digital technology, communication science, and cultural capital to enhance local economies and cultivate sustainable producer-consumer relationships. The findings indicate that other local communities aiming for socially and culturally rooted digital platforms may replicate this concept.

After implementing the community-based e-commerce platform, five community companies and 100 consumers noted social and communication gains. Entrepreneurs felt 100% platform control, and 80% could handle it alone. 60% used their UX/UI talents on Facebook or LINE OA, showing that the program enabled digitally beyond the instrument. 92% of website users are touched by community stories, and 86% are motivated.

Digital storytelling influences customer behavior and emotional resonance. Based on these results, digital solutions need to be designed around user experiences, cultural stories, and local identity, as 73% of consumers trust and differentiate websites from commercial platforms.

Overall, platforms facilitate this social innovation through communication, fostering community content, and emotional connections between consumers and local producers. Co-design and the use of storytelling-driven communication techniques can sustain grassroots economies beyond business, as shown in the graph.



**Figure 4.3 Assessment of Social Empowerment and Digital Storytelling Outcomes from Community Website Use**

To strengthen the analytical foundation, the results of the Koh Kret model can be analyzed in other contexts by comparing them to similar international projects. For example, the India Smart Village project, reported by UNESCAP (2021), developed a mobile-friendly e-commerce platform with customizable content to support rural communities. Similarly, the OECD (2020) emphasized that collaborative digital markets in Eastern Europe enabled local platform governance, which increased trust and participation. These global similarities reinforce the validity of the Koh Kret model, demonstrating that user-focused, community-managed, story-driven platforms are a suitable solution in diverse cultural and technological settings. By positioning the results within a broader global framework, this study supports the transferability and scalability of the proposed social innovation design framework.

## 5. CONCLUSION AND IMPLICATIONS

This study aimed to design a community-based e-commerce platform using participatory action research to demonstrate how digital tools can act as communication tools and catalysts for social innovation. Using digital storytelling strategies and focusing on user-centered website design, and incorporating cultural identity, can increase awareness and trust in community products (Shao, H., Jin, Q., Guo, Y., Zhou, F., Wider, W., & Lu, L., 2025). resulting in 20–35% revenue growth and promoting additional income for local enterprises (Siripanya, 2023). These findings



illustrate the efficacy of platforms that integrate technology with local engagement and input (Sanders & Stappers, 2008; Pulizzi, 2014). When digital literacy is low, co-design can help rural communities manage their digital infrastructure through organized user experiences, content development (Fauzi, M. A., Omer, M. M., Paiman, N., Wider, W., & Ahmad, M. H., 2025), and local platform governance training. AI-driven recommendations, big data analytics, and real-time revenue and engagement dashboards will help improve decision-making based on grassroots data (Chaffey & Ellis-Chadwick, 2019; Nielsen Norman Group, 2020). Scalability and relevance are shown by its linkage with international development frameworks, including the OECD's Local Digital Platform (OECD, 2020), UNESCAP's Smart Villages Case Study (UNESCAP, 2021), and Platform Partnerships Project (Scholz, 2016). Narrative Design for Social Innovation uses collaborative design and strategic storytelling to develop influential digital platforms.

This transforms communication academics from media creators into architects of social systems that collaboratively create cultural economy and digital justice frameworks. Future Thai research and policy should investigate participatory, culturally sensitive, and ethical platform models, particularly under the BCG Economy or Digital Inclusion framework. Future research should focus on ethical data governance, cross-community comparisons, and voice-based AI interfaces for the benefit of aging and rural populations in utilizing technology (Mulgan, 2006; Nicholls, 2010; Wider, W., Jiang, L., Lin, J., Fauzi, M. A., Li, J., & Chan, C. K. 2024).

### **5.1 Examining the relationship between Sustainable Development Goals**

This project, using a normative design approach to social innovation in Koh Kret, demonstrates how digital technology and local culture can promote sustainable development by improving the economic outlook of grassroots organizations. This approach supports SDG 1, zero poverty, and SDG 8, economic growth and decent employment, as the project has increased entrepreneurs' incomes by 20–35%. In line with SDG 9 on promoting industry, innovation, and infrastructure, the website design improves the community's digital infrastructure through a simple UX/UI framework and sustainable development through training that emphasizes community self-management. WordPress and WooCommerce can help businesses become sustainable (Chaffey & Ellis-Chadwick, 2019; Nielsen Norman Group, 2020).

The platform's content design uses community storytelling to achieve cultural goals, in line with SDG 11, promoting regional products such as handicrafts and herbs, emphasizing the need for digital communication to preserve local identity and traditions. Community-based production promotes the use of local resources, careful processing, and environmentally friendly technologies to create a local circular economy that reduces waste and resource consumption. Promote Sustainable Development Goal 12: Sustainable Consumption and Production (UNESCAP, 2021) by co-designing a participatory website involving academics, institutions, communities, and government agencies; promote Sustainable Development Goal 17: Strengthening partnerships for sustainable development, indicating that cross-sector collaboration can foster social innovation (Sanders & Stappers, 2008; Scholz, 2016).

### **5.2 Executive Summary of Research Findings**

This study adds to the existing body of knowledge on community-driven digital innovation by providing new insights in three key areas:

#### **5.2.1 The power of story to effect positive societal change**

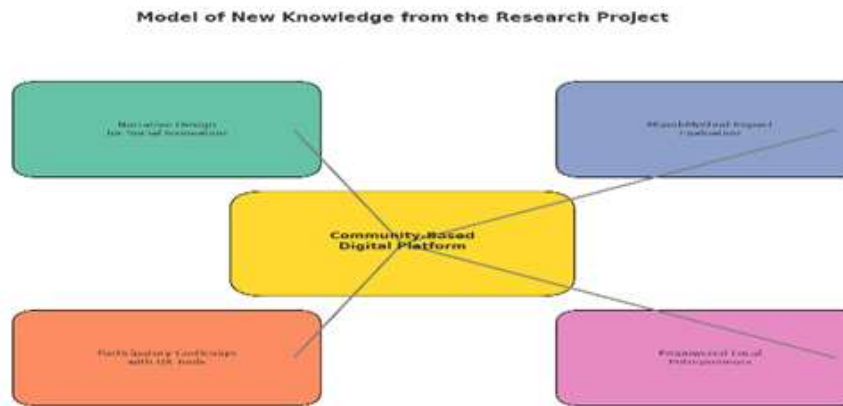
The research demonstrates a cohesive approach to digital storytelling and user experience design (UX) grounded in regional traditions. By reimagining digital tools as platforms for narrative and commerce, this method facilitates the development of meaningful relationships between brands and their target audiences. Public policymaking and community-focused media are only two of the many potential applications of the paradigm.

#### **5.2.2 Methodology for collaborative digital design**

Using a strategy known as "deep participatory research," the study develops a new model for building digital platforms. This model incorporates community-based UX testing tools and digital co-design with nearby businesses. As a result, a new channel of communication can be established to propel social innovation, allowing groups to gain access to, construct, and manage their digital tools.

#### **5.2.3 A combined method for evaluating the monetary and symbolic impacts**

This study demonstrates a systematic approach to examining the effects of communication and economic outcomes by integrating qualitative data (such as user attitude and anecdotes) with quantitative data (such as sales indicators, user behavior, and satisfaction scores). If a development initiative wants to know what people in society and the media value, they can employ this strategy.



**Figure 5.2** illustrates the correlation of newly acquired knowledge derived from the study.

The analysis of the knowledge structure reveals that the three aforementioned components are systematically interconnected, constituting the core of social innovation, specifically the "Community-Based Digital Platform," which represents the primary outcome of this research.

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