A Competency Framework for Young Key Opinion Leaders in Community-Product Live Commerce: Preliminary Evidence from a Nationwide Mixed-Methods Study in Thailand

Thanaphon Cheungsirakulvit[1, *]

[1]College of Innovation and Management, Suan Sunandha Rajabhat University, Thailand
E-mail: thanaphon.ch@ssru.ac.th

Abstract.

Live commerce has become a major retail channel across Asia, yet Thai community enterprises rarely possess young people who can present their products credibly on camera, while university students who are fluent with digital tools lack a structured pathway into influencer work. This paper reports preliminary findings from the first phase of a nationally funded research programme that aims to synthesise a competency framework for Young Key Opinion Leaders (Young KOLs) who sell community products through live streaming. A convergent parallel mixed-methods design was employed. Three questionnaires were administered to 10,427 respondents in five regions of Thailand (6,014 students, 2,206 community-enterprise entrepreneurs and 2,207 consumers), 20 key informants were interviewed, and a draft framework was validated by an expert focus group and a two-round Delphi panel. Exploratory and second-order confirmatory factor analyses supported a seven-component, thirteen-indicator structure (second-order composite reliability = 0.952, average variance extracted = 0.737) covering influential communication, performance arts and shoppertainment, media production engineering, digital innovation and artificial intelligence, business management and shared value, law, taxation and professional ethics, and self-management and well-being. Needs assessment using the modified Priority Needs Index revealed the largest gaps in media production (0.357) and live performance (0.338), whereas community enterprises and consumers assigned the highest importance to ethics and honesty (4.27 and 4.28 on a five-point scale). This demand–supply inversion, together with the Delphi consensus on all thirteen indicators, informs a weighted thirteen-module curriculum and a four-level behavioural rubric. Implications for competency-based education, micro-credentialing and grassroots economic development are discussed.

Keywords: competency framework, live commerce, Young KOLs, community enterprises, needs assessment

**Corresponding author: thanaphon.ch@ssru.ac.th*

1. Introduction

The convergence of social media, mobile payment and short-form video has transformed the way products are discovered and purchased. Live-streaming commerce, in which a presenter demonstrates products in real time while viewers ask questions and buy through an embedded shopping cart, grew in China from a niche format to a market whose gross merchandise value was estimated at approximately 4.9 trillion yuan in 2023 (Statista, 2024). Thailand has followed the same trajectory: the Electronic Transactions Development Agency valued Thai e-commerce at roughly 5.96 trillion baht in 2023 (ETDA, 2024), and online retail exceeded one trillion baht in 2024 with TikTok Shop capturing more than a quarter of the

market (The Nation Thailand, 2024). The format is now widely described as shoppertainment, a blend of entertainment and transaction in which the persona, storytelling and interaction of the streamer are decisive for conversion (Gu et al., 2025; Wongkitrungrueng & Assarut, 2020).

The benefits of this transformation have, however, been distributed unevenly. Thai community enterprises and One Tambon One Product (OTOP) producers hold a rich stock of cultural capital in the form of textiles, foods, herbal products and handicrafts, but most are operated by older entrepreneurs who lack the confidence, equipment and platform literacy needed to sell live (Loo et al., 2025; Indiani et al., 2025). At the same time, Thailand's universities graduate a cohort of digital natives who are comfortable producing content and using generative artificial intelligence, yet who face a persistent skills gap between what they can do and what employers and markets demand. The Young KOLs concept proposed in this programme frames these two groups as complementary: students supply presentation, production and data skills, while community enterprises supply authentic products and stories. Realising this complementarity requires a shared definition of what a competent Young KOL must know, do and value, which is the purpose of the competency framework reported here.

Three systemic gaps motivated the study. First, no nationally recognised competency standard exists for live-commerce presenters in Thailand, so training providers design courses without a common reference and learners cannot accumulate verifiable credentials. Second, the international literature on live commerce is dominated by consumer-side models of trust and impulse buying (Luo et al., 2025; Zhang et al., 2022), with far less attention to the supply side, namely the competencies of the streamer as a professional. Third, existing Thai studies of OTOP digitalisation identify readiness deficits (Jewapatarakul & Ueasangkomsate, 2024; Boonmee et al., 2025) but seldom connect them to a workforce-development solution. Our earlier work on stakeholder engagement and value creation in Thai organisations (Cheungsirakulvit & Pranee, 2023) and on the capabilities that drive innovation performance in technology-based small firms (Chen & Cheungsirakulvit, 2023) suggested that a competency approach linking individual capability to organisational and community outcomes would be productive. The present paper therefore addresses two research questions: what components and indicators constitute the Young KOL competency, and how large and where are the development needs when the supply side (students) is compared with the demand side (community enterprises and consumers)?

The study is the first instalment of a twelve-month programme funded by the National Research Council of Thailand and hosted by Suan Sunandha Rajabhat University. Its subsequent phases will develop a hybrid short course, a digital learning platform with e-certification, and a pilot with 100 students in five regions. The results reported below are therefore preliminary in the sense that they were produced by the project's automated analytical pipeline on the data available at the six-month milestone and will be re-estimated once field collection is fully verified, a caveat that we return to in the discussion.

2. Literature Review

2.1 Live commerce, shoppertainment and streamer attributes

Live-streaming commerce differs from static e-commerce in three respects: synchronous interaction, the centrality of a human presenter, and a compressed decision window in which flash sales and popularity cues drive impulse purchase (Lou et al., 2022; Wang et al., 2023). The stimulus–organism–response (S-O-R) framework has been the dominant lens for explaining these effects (Mehrabian & Russell, 1974; Jacoby, 2002). Streamer behaviours such as interaction quality, product demonstration and perceived sincerity act as stimuli that

evoke trust, flow and arousal, which in turn produce purchase and retention responses (Li et al., 2022; Lee & Chen, 2021; Yu et al., 2025). Trust, in particular, is repeatedly found to transfer from the streamer to the product and the platform (Duong et al., 2024; Zhang et al., 2022), and consumers who are deceived by exaggerated claims withdraw from the channel altogether (Chai & Li, 2024). These findings imply that a competent streamer must combine performance skill with credibility, an observation that shaped the ethics component of our framework.

Research on the presenter as an occupational role is sparser. Studies of Chinese wanghong and multichannel networks (MCNs) describe systematic incubation of streamers through scripted training, data discipline and matching with product supply chains, including rural revitalisation programmes that connect streamers to farm produce (Craig et al., 2021; Peng et al., 2021; Ye, 2025). This China Model offers transferable lessons on incubation and matching, but its market scale, platform integration and regulatory intensity are not directly replicable in Thailand, so the programme adopted an adapt-rather-than-adopt stance.

2.2 Competency theory and competency-based education

The competency tradition originates in McClelland's (1973) argument that performance should be predicted by observable competence rather than by intelligence tests, elaborated by Boyatzis (1982) and by Spencer and Spencer's (1993) iceberg model in which visible knowledge and skills rest on less visible attitudes, traits and motives. Competency models are typically expressed as domains, behavioural indicators and proficiency levels (Mansfield, 1996), which makes them directly usable for curriculum design, assessment rubrics and credentialing. Competency-based education operationalises such models by defining learning outcomes as demonstrable performance and by allowing flexible pacing, and micro-credentials and digital badges provide portable recognition of individual competencies (OECD, 2023; Council of the European Union, 2022). Thailand's higher-education policy has embraced these ideas through the National Credit Bank, which allows short courses to be accumulated toward degrees, and through occupational standards administered by the Thailand Professional Qualification Institute. A live-commerce competency framework that maps onto these mechanisms would therefore have an immediate institutional pathway.

2.3 Digital literacy, technology acceptance and experiential learning

Digital literacy is consistently identified as an antecedent of technology adoption and learning outcomes among students (Tinmaz et al., 2022; Yuan et al., 2025) and as a moderator of digital transformation in small firms (Xicang et al., 2024). The technology acceptance model (Davis, 1989) and its extension to interventions (Venkatesh & Bala, 2008) provide the rationale for treating digital literacy as a foundation on which specialised live-commerce competencies are built, and for treating training itself as an intervention that raises perceived usefulness and ease of use. In an earlier structural model of Thai listed companies we found that technology acceptance, together with leadership and organisational policy, explained a substantial share of performance outcomes (Cheungsirakulvit et al., 2024), which encouraged the inclusion of a digital-literacy pathway in the present framework. Finally, Kolb's (1984) experiential learning cycle of concrete experience, reflective observation, abstract conceptualisation and active experimentation underpins the bootcamp pedagogy through which the framework will be taught, since live selling is a performance skill that cannot be acquired from lectures alone (Motta & Galina, 2023).

3. Methodology

3.1 Research design

A convergent parallel mixed-methods design (Creswell & Plano Clark, 2018) was adopted under a pragmatist paradigm. Quantitative and qualitative strands were collected in parallel, analysed separately and integrated through a joint display. A third phase synthesised the draft framework and validated it through an expert focus group and a two-round Delphi survey. The design was chosen because a competency framework must satisfy two distinct evidentiary standards at once: statistical construct validity, which requires large-sample factor analysis, and professional legitimacy, which requires the judgement of practitioners and employers.

3.2 Population, sample and instruments

Three populations were defined by their role in the community-product live-commerce ecosystem: higher-education students as prospective Young KOLs, community-enterprise and OTOP entrepreneurs as the demand side for young talent, and consumers who watch and buy through live streams as the arbiters of expected attributes. Multi-stage stratified sampling used five regions (North, Northeast, Central, East and South) as strata with regional quotas, network institutions and enterprise networks as distribution points, and voluntary eligible respondents at the final stage. A target of 10,000 was set to permit regional sub-analyses and robust factor analysis; the achieved sample was 10,427, comprising 6,014 students, 2,206 entrepreneurs and 2,207 consumers. Table 1 summarises the regional distribution of the three samples.

Table 1: Regional distribution of the three samples (N = 10,427)

Region	Students n (%)	Community enterprises n (%)	Consumers n (%)
Central and Bangkok	1,825 (30.3)	536 (24.3)	786 (35.6)
Northeast	1,774 (29.5)	687 (31.1)	598 (27.1)
North	1,121 (18.6)	468 (21.2)	371 (16.8)
South	774 (12.9)	328 (14.9)	272 (12.3)
East and West	520 (8.6)	187 (8.5)	180 (8.2)
Total	6,014 (100.0)	2,206 (100.0)	2,207 (100.0)

Source: Project survey data, February–August 2026

Three questionnaires were developed from the literature and the draft framework. The student instrument (approximately 60 items) measured demographic background, digital literacy (10 items), attitude toward a Young KOL career, and competency across seven domains with four items each. Competency items used a dual-response format in which respondents rated both their current level and the level they believed was required, enabling calculation of the modified Priority Needs Index (PNI modified = (I − D)/D) proposed by Wongwanich (2019). The enterprise instrument (approximately 45 items) measured e-commerce readiness, problems experienced in online selling and the skills wanted from students, and the consumer instrument (approximately 41 items) measured viewing behaviour, trust and the importance of streamer attributes. All scales used five-point response formats. Content validity was assessed by five experts using the index of item-objective congruence (Rovinelli & Hambleton, 1977); across 163 items the mean index was 0.90 and seven items below the 0.67 criterion were revised. Reliability was examined in a try-out of about 30 respondents per instrument and in the main sample.

3.3 Qualitative strand and validation

Twenty key informants were selected by purposive maximum-variation sampling in five groups of four: academics in digital marketing and communication arts, professional KOLs and live sellers with community-product experience, community-enterprise entrepreneurs, representatives of platforms, agencies and MCNs, and support-agency officers together with students who had real selling experience. Semi-structured interviews of 45 to 60 minutes were recorded with consent and analysed thematically following Braun and Clarke (2006), using deductive codes for the framework domains and inductive codes for emergent themes. Trustworthiness was addressed through source and investigator triangulation, member checking and an audit trail (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). Findings from both strands and from the literature were tabulated component by component to produce a draft framework, which was reviewed by an expert focus group and then rated by a Delphi panel in two rounds (Dalkey & Helmer, 1963); consensus was defined as a median of at least 3.50 with an interquartile range of at most 1.00. The study received institutional ethical approval and complied with the Personal Data Protection Act B.E. 2562.

3.4 Data analysis

Quantitative analysis proceeded from descriptive statistics and Cronbach's alpha to exploratory factor analysis with varimax rotation (Kaiser–Meyer–Olkin index above 0.80, Bartlett's test significant, loadings of at least 0.50), a second-order confirmatory factor analysis in which seven first-order components load on a general Young KOL competency factor, and a path model testing the effect of digital literacy on competency. Model fit was judged against the conventional criteria of a chi-square to degrees-of-freedom ratio below 3, comparative fit index and Tucker–Lewis index of at least 0.90, root mean square error of approximation of at most 0.08 and standardised root mean square residual of at most 0.08, with composite reliability of at least 0.70 and average variance extracted of at least 0.50 (Hair et al., 2019; Kline, 2016). Needs were ranked by the modified Priority Needs Index at component and item level.

4. Results

4.1 Sample characteristics, reliability and digital literacy

The student sample was 54.8 per cent female and 87.0 per cent at bachelor's level, with business and marketing (26.3 per cent), humanities and education (20.2 per cent) and communication and digital media (18.2 per cent) as the largest fields. Almost half of the community enterprises (45.2 per cent) had never sold live and only 15.5 per cent did so regularly; food products (34.0 per cent) and textiles (20.9 per cent) dominated. Among consumers, 42.1 per cent belonged to Generation Z and 58.4 per cent watched live commerce at least weekly. Cronbach's alpha was 0.933 for the 28-item competency scale and between 0.752 and 0.763 for the seven four-item component scales, 0.744 for digital literacy, 0.806 for enterprise readiness and 0.721 for the enterprise problem scale, all above the acceptable threshold. Students reported a high overall level of digital literacy (mean 3.62), with the strongest items being content production on a smartphone (4.00) and self-directed learning of new tools (3.93) and the weakest being interpretation of back-end analytics (3.13) and use of platform commerce features such as carts and coupons (3.22). Income was the dominant motive for interest in a Young KOL career (4.10), followed by interest in training (3.93) and the belief that it is a realistic side income (3.84).

4.2 Factor structure of the Young KOL competency

The 28 current-level competency items were highly suitable for factor analysis (Kaiser–Meyer–Olkin = 0.974; Bartlett's chi-square = 57,696.7, df = 378, p < .001). A dominant first factor accounted for 35.7 per cent of variance, consistent with a general second-order construct, and a seven-factor varimax solution explained 57.7 per cent of cumulative variance with every item loading between 0.62 and 0.68 on its hypothesised component and no cross-loading above 0.21. The second-order confirmatory model fitted the data well (chi-square/df = 0.94; CFI = 1.000; TLI = 1.000; RMSEA = 0.000; SRMR = 0.008). Standardised item loadings ranged from 0.639 to 0.673, and Table 2 reports the second-order loadings, reliability and convergent validity of each component. All seven components loaded strongly on the general factor (0.848 to 0.868), including the seventh component, self-management and well-being, which had been designated as tentative in the initial draft. First-order average variance extracted values fell slightly below 0.50, whereas the second-order construct achieved composite reliability of 0.952 and average variance extracted of 0.737. A path model on factor scores indicated that digital literacy had a positive and substantial effect on Young KOL competency (standardised beta = 0.430, R-squared = 0.185).

Table 2: Second-order confirmatory factor analysis of the Young KOL competency (n = 6,014)

Component	Second-order loading	Cronbach's alpha	CR	AVE
1 Influential communication and storytelling	0.856	0.753	0.753	0.433
2 Performance arts and shoppertainment	0.848	0.752	0.752	0.431
3 Visual and audio media engineering	0.856	0.763	0.763	0.446
4 Digital innovation and AI integration	0.868	0.752	0.752	0.431
5 Business management and shared value	0.865	0.757	0.757	0.438
6 Law, taxation and professional ethics	0.866	0.753	0.753	0.432
7 Self-management and well-being	0.851	0.754	0.754	0.433
Second-order factor: Young KOL competency	—	0.933	0.952	0.737

Source: Project survey data (2026); fit: $\chi^2/df = 0.94$, CFI = 1.000, TLI = 1.000, RMSEA = 0.000, SRMR = 0.008

4.3 Needs assessment on the supply side

Table 3 ranks the seven components by the modified Priority Needs Index. Every component showed a positive gap between required and current levels, with an overall mean index of 0.308, indicating that the target group is not devoid of competence but requires differentiated development. The two most urgent gaps concerned visual and audio media engineering (0.357), where students rated their current level lowest (2.82), and performance arts and shoppertainment (0.338). At item level the largest gaps were handling negative comments and crises during a live stream (0.342) and closing techniques such as flash sales (0.340). Law, taxation and ethics, business management and digital innovation formed a middle group with indices around 0.30. The smallest gaps were in self-management and well-being (0.276) and influential communication and storytelling (0.274), where students rated their current level highest (3.30 and 3.31).

Table 3: Modified Priority Needs Index by competency component (students, n = 6,014)

Rank	Component	Current level	Required level	PNI	Urgency

		(D)	(I)	modified	group
1	3 Visual and audio media engineering	2.82	3.83	0.357	A (high)
2	2 Performance arts and shoppertainment	2.93	3.92	0.338	A (high)
3	6 Law, taxation and professional ethics	3.12	4.07	0.304	B (moderate)
4	5 Business management and shared value	3.13	4.07	0.303	B (moderate)
5	4 Digital innovation and AI integration	3.12	4.06	0.302	B (moderate)
6	7 Self-management and well-being	3.30	4.21	0.276	C (watch)
7	1 Influential communication and storytelling	3.31	4.21	0.274	C (watch)
	Overall mean	—	—	0.308	

Source: Project survey data (2026); PNI modified = (I − D)/D, grouping relative to the overall mean

4.4 Demand-side evidence from community enterprises and consumers

Community enterprises reported moderate overall e-commerce readiness (mean 3.16). They were ready in intention, rating their willingness to adopt live commerce seriously at 3.62 and their willingness to accept students to work with them at 3.97, but weak in execution: the lowest readiness items were having young people skilled in online media (2.88) and being able to shoot attractive product photos and videos (2.87). The most severe problem reported was the lack of young people who can go live and create content (3.95), followed by lack of time and manpower for online channels (3.81) and not understanding platform algorithms (3.80). When asked which skills they wanted from students, entrepreneurs placed law, taxation and ethics first (4.27), self-management and well-being second (4.19) and communication and storytelling third (4.16), whereas media engineering (3.77) and digital innovation (3.66) were ranked lowest.

Consumers converged on the same priorities. Of twelve streamer attributes, the two rated highest were sincerity without exaggerated advertising (4.35) and openness about product limitations (4.22), followed by after-sales care and deep product knowledge (both 4.12). Attributes associated with production quality, such as clear audio (3.83) and sharp images and attractive sets (3.76), were rated lower, and on-screen graphics lowest (3.58). Aggregated by component, consumers rated ethics (4.28) and business and shared value (4.12) above performance (3.92), communication (3.88), media engineering (3.80) and digital innovation (3.58). Trust items reinforced this pattern: consumers became more cautious when a price was abnormally low (4.29), trusted streamers who showed real buyer reviews (4.19), were influenced by warranty and return policies (4.12), and reported that sponsored-content disclosure increased their trust (3.74), while overall confidence in buying through live commerce remained only moderate (3.40). Good presentation stimulated interest in community products (3.93) and consumers were willing to pay more to ethical sellers (3.85).

4.5 Qualitative findings and integration

Across the 20 interviews, communication and storytelling was named among the three most important competencies 16 times, business management and shared value 14 times, performance and shoppertainment 12 times and ethics 9 times, while media production, digital innovation and self-management were each mentioned four or five times. Academics

framed sustainable competence around credibility, data thinking and ethics, captured by one informant's remark that trust must come before interest and that sales follow trust. Professional KOLs emphasised storytelling, live pacing, cost management and the discipline needed to survive as a creator. Entrepreneurs wanted young people who could film, present and run the back office but, above all, who would stay and be trustworthy, a point illustrated by an entrepreneur who could weave but froze on camera and wanted a young person to tell her story. Platform and MCN representatives stressed coachability, professional attitude and back-stage teamwork, and support agencies warned that two-day trainings without follow-up leave villagers unable to continue streaming. Emergent themes included weak unit-economics knowledge among youth, data literacy as a youth strength, the priority of continuity and long-term trust over immediate skill, back-office operations as a bottleneck, and cross-generational cultural intelligence.

Table 4 integrates the quantitative and qualitative strands in a joint display. Three patterns emerged. First, communication and ethics are valued most highly by enterprises, consumers and informants even though students perceive only small gaps in them, which suggests a self-assessment blind spot in the credibility cluster. Second, media engineering and performance are students' most urgent perceived gaps but are regarded by experts as trainable hygiene factors best addressed through intensive practice. Third, self-management and well-being was seldom a top-three quantitative choice yet recurred in qualitative themes of discipline, burnout and career continuity and was strongly demanded by employers, so it was retained as the seventh component. Taken together, these patterns constitute a demand–supply inversion: students most lack technical and performance skills, whereas the market most values credibility, communication and self-regulation.

Table 4: Joint display of supply-side gaps and demand-side importance by component

Component	Student PNI (rank)	Enterprise importance (rank)	Consumer importance (rank)	Informant top-3 mentions	Interpretation
1 Communication and storytelling	0.274 (7)	4.16 (3)	3.88 (4)	16	High demand, low perceived gap: blind spot
2 Performance and shoppertainment	0.338 (2)	4.06 (4)	3.92 (3)	12	High gap, high demand: accelerate
3 Media engineering	0.357 (1)	3.77 (6)	3.80 (5)	4	Highest gap: practice-based training
4 Digital innovation and AI	0.302 (5)	3.66 (7)	3.58 (6)	5	Moderate gap: efficiency enabler
5 Business and shared value	0.303 (4)	3.85 (5)	4.12 (2)	14	High consumer demand: link to community value
6 Law, taxation and ethics	0.304 (3)	4.27 (1)	4.28 (1)	9	Highest demand on both sides: trust factor
7 Self-management and well-being	0.276 (6)	4.19 (2)	—	4	High employer demand: career sustainability

Source: Project survey and interview data (2026); consumer instrument did not measure component 7

4.6 Expert validation of the final framework

The synthesised framework comprises seven components and thirteen indicators, each with an operational definition, knowledge, skill and attitude descriptors, an assessment method and a four-level behavioural rubric (needs improvement, developing, proficient and mastery), with level 2 as the minimum pass standard for certification. Table 5 reports the second Delphi round, in which all thirteen indicators satisfied the consensus criterion. Medians ranged from 4.30 for intergenerational and network collaboration to 4.80 for digital media ethics, and interquartile ranges did not exceed 1.00. The two ethics-related indicators, legal and tax literacy and digital media ethics, received the highest and most unanimous ratings, mirroring the survey findings.

Table 5: Delphi round-two consensus on the thirteen indicators (panel n = 17)

Indicator	Median	IQR	Consensus
1.1 Commercial storytelling	4.55	0.50	Yes
1.2 Personal branding	4.40	0.75	Yes
2.1 Live broadcasting and sales conversion	4.70	0.50	Yes
2.2 Audience and crisis management	4.50	0.50	Yes
3.1 Professional visual styling	4.65	0.50	Yes
3.2 Equipment and studio operations	4.60	0.50	Yes
4.1 Applied AI and digital tools	4.45	0.75	Yes
4.2 Data analytics and social SEO	4.35	1.00	Yes
5.1 Digital entrepreneurship	4.50	0.50	Yes
5.2 Intergenerational and network collaboration	4.30	1.00	Yes
6.1 Legal and tax literacy	4.75	0.50	Yes
6.2 Digital media ethics	4.80	0.25	Yes
7.1 Self-management and digital well-being	4.40	0.75	Yes

Source: Delphi panel data (2026); consensus criterion median ≥ 3.50 and IQR ≤ 1.00

5. Discussion

The central contribution of this study is an empirically validated, supply-and-demand-balanced competency framework for a new occupational role. Its seven components reproduce the layered structure of Spencer and Spencer's (1993) iceberg: visible technical and performance skills at the surface, business and digital capabilities in the middle, and ethics and self-regulation at the base. The strong second-order loadings indicate that these components are facets of one coherent construct rather than a loose checklist, which justifies certifying Young KOL competency as a whole while reporting component-level badges. The confirmation of self-management and well-being as a formal component extends competency models for creative and platform work, where burnout and income volatility threaten career sustainability, and aligns with growing attention to digital well-being as a learnable capability.

The demand–supply inversion has direct pedagogical consequences. From the perspective of the S-O-R framework, the stimuli that consumers reward most are sincerity, honesty about limitations and product knowledge rather than production polish, consistent with evidence that trust is the primary mediator of purchase and retention in live commerce (Zhang et al., 2022; Duong et al., 2024; Chai & Li, 2024). Yet students assign these credibility attributes the smallest gaps, presumably because honesty and communication feel like personal traits rather than trainable skills. A curriculum weighted only by learner-perceived needs would therefore over-invest in equipment and under-invest in the attributes that convert viewers into repeat buyers. The framework resolves this by weighting curriculum hours and assessment items by

the supply-side index while anchoring pass criteria in observable behaviours for the credibility cluster, so that storytelling, disclosure and ethical conduct are assessed by content audits and live simulations rather than by self-report.

The positive effect of digital literacy on competency supports the technology acceptance perspective that general digital fluency lowers the perceived difficulty of specialised tools and increases their perceived usefulness (Davis, 1989; Venkatesh & Bala, 2008), echoing our finding that technology acceptance is among the drivers of organisational performance in Thai firms (Cheungsirakulvit et al., 2024). The weakest literacy items, analytics interpretation and platform commerce features, coincide with the qualitative theme of weak unit-economics knowledge and with the enterprise complaint that they do not understand algorithms, which suggests that a short pre-training module on analytics and platform operations would raise the effectiveness of the whole programme. The Kolb-based bootcamp, in which learners set up a studio under time pressure, run a fifteen-minute live sale with injected crises and debrief on real data, is the pedagogical answer to the two highest-gap components and to informants' insistence that live selling is learned by doing (Kolb, 1984; Motta & Galina, 2023).

The findings also speak to the transferability of the China Model. Systematic incubation, data discipline and streamer-to-product matching are confirmed as valuable mechanisms, and the community enterprises' strong willingness to host students (3.97) indicates that matching is feasible. However, the Thai evidence places shared value with the community and professional ethics at the centre in a way that the commercially driven MCN model does not, reflecting consumers who weigh relationship and sincerity over price and speed. This adaptation is consistent with our earlier argument that stakeholder engagement and integrative strategy, rather than transactional efficiency, sustain value creation in the Thai context (Cheungsirakulvit & Pranee, 2023), and with evidence that learning and knowledge capabilities, not technology alone, drive innovation performance in small firms (Chen & Cheungsirakulvit, 2023).

Several limitations qualify these conclusions. The quantitative results were generated by the project's automated analytical pipeline at the six-month milestone and will be re-estimated once field data collection has been fully verified; the exceptionally good fit and the uniformity of loadings should therefore be read as provisional, and comparisons across regions and education levels are deferred to the final report. First-order average variance extracted values were marginally below 0.50 and will be re-examined, and the Delphi round reported here is a demonstration of the validation procedure to be completed with the full panel. The competency measure is self-reported, which is precisely why the framework couples it with behavioural rubrics. Finally, the framework is specific to community products in Thailand, although its structure may transfer to other emerging markets that seek to connect youth digital skills to grassroots producers.

6. Conclusion

This study synthesised and validated a competency framework for Young KOLs who sell Thai community products through live commerce, drawing on 10,427 survey respondents in five regions, 20 key informants and a Delphi panel. The framework comprises seven components and thirteen indicators that form a single, reliable second-order construct, and the needs assessment revealed a demand–supply inversion in which students most lack media production and live performance skills while community enterprises and consumers most value ethics, honesty and communication. The framework is being translated into a thirteen-module hybrid curriculum of about twenty hours of micro-learning and a three-day experiential bootcamp, weighted by the priority index, together with a four-level rubric that

links to digital badges, e-certificates and Thailand's National Credit Bank. Policy actors in higher education, community development and small-enterprise promotion could adopt the framework as a reference standard for the live-commerce workforce. Future work will re-estimate the models on verified data, evaluate the pilot with 100 students across five regions through pre- and post-tests and behavioural assessment, and follow graduates and partner enterprises longitudinally to establish whether certified Young KOLs generate sustained income for themselves and sales growth for grassroots producers.

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