

Commercialization of Indigenous Products and Its Impact on Inclusive Economic Growth in Selected Rural Communities

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Abstract

Indigenous product commercialization has increasingly been recognized as a viable pathway for promoting inclusive economic growth in rural communities; however, empirical evidence in the Philippine context remains limited. This study examined the extent to which the commercialization of indigenous products contributes to inclusive economic growth in selected rural barangays of Binangonan, Rizal. This study assessed commercialization across five dimensions: product development and innovation, market access and distribution, value addition and packaging, financial and institutional support, and entrepreneurial capacity and training. Inclusive economic growth was measured in terms of income generation, employment creation, household economic participation, community reinvestment, and livelihood sustainability. Using a quantitative descriptive–correlational design, data were collected from 385 indigenous product producers through a validated researcher-developed questionnaire. Statistical analyses included weighted mean, Pearson correlation, t-test, and one-way ANOVA. Results showed high levels of commercialization in market access ($M = 3.34$) and value addition ($M = 3.35$), and high levels of inclusive economic growth in income generation ($M = 3.39$) and employment creation ($M = 3.38$). A very strong positive and statistically significant relationship was found between commercialization and inclusive economic growth ($r = 0.847$, $p < 0.05$). Financial and institutional support emerged as the weakest commercialization dimension ($M = 2.55$), indicating persistent structural constraints. The study concludes that indigenous product commercialization is a powerful driver of inclusive rural development when supported by coherent financial mechanisms, institutional partnerships, and community-based enterprise models.

Keywords: indigenous products, commercialization, inclusive economic growth, rural development, sustainable livelihoods

Introduction

Indigenous products such as handicrafts, traditional textiles, native food items, and herbal goods represent vital expressions of cultural heritage and local knowledge systems. Beyond their cultural value, these products serve as key livelihood assets for rural and indigenous communities, offering potential pathways for poverty reduction, employment generation, and inclusive economic growth (Voichuk, 2021). In recent years, development literature has increasingly emphasized the role of indigenous enterprises in fostering sustainable and inclusive rural development, particularly when cultural preservation is integrated with market participation (Crocetti & Smith, 2023; OECD, 2023).

In the Philippines, indigenous products are commonly produced and traded through informal economic channels, including barangay markets and local fairs. While these channels provide limited income opportunities, they rarely enable producers to scale production, access formal markets, or achieve long-term economic sustainability. Structural constraints—such as weak product innovation, limited access to finance, inadequate institutional support, and insufficient entrepreneurial training—continue to hinder the full economic potential of indigenous enterprises (Mohan & Rawat, 2022; Crawford & Barber, 2024). Consequently, many rural producers remain economically marginalized despite possessing valuable cultural and productive resources.

International empirical studies demonstrate that when indigenous products are effectively commercialized—through value addition, improved market access, institutional support, and entrepreneurial capacity building—they can significantly enhance household incomes, create employment, and promote community-level reinvestment (Onomu, 2024; Gichuki & Njue, 2024). However, in the Philippine context, quantitative studies that systematically examine the relationship between indigenous product commercialization and inclusive economic growth remain scarce. Existing initiatives are often fragmented, short-term, and insufficiently grounded in theory-driven development frameworks.

This study addresses this gap by examining the commercialization of indigenous products and its impact on inclusive economic growth in selected rural communities of Binangonan, Rizal. Guided by Endogenous Growth Theory and the Sustainable Livelihoods Framework, the study aims to (1) determine the level of commercialization of indigenous products, (2) assess the level of inclusive economic growth among indigenous producers and their communities, and (3) analyze the relationship between commercialization and inclusive economic growth. By providing empirical evidence from a Philippine rural context, the study seeks to inform policies and localized commercialization models that integrate cultural preservation with inclusive economic development.

Objectives of the Study

The primary objective of this study is to examine the extent to which the commercialization of indigenous products contributes to inclusive economic growth in selected rural communities of Binangonan, Rizal.

Specifically, the study aims to:

1. Assess the level of commercialization of indigenous products in rural communities across five dimensions:
 - a. product development and innovation;
 - b. market access and distribution;
 - c. value addition and packaging;
 - d. financial and institutional support; and
 - e. entrepreneurial capacity and training.
2. Evaluate the level of inclusive economic growth experienced by indigenous product producers and their communities in terms of:
 - a. income generation among producers;
 - b. employment opportunities created;
 - c. household economic participation; and
 - d. community reinvestment and livelihood sustainability.
3. Examine the relationship between the level of commercialization of indigenous products and the indicators of inclusive economic growth in rural communities.

Methodology

This research used a descriptive-correlational design to explore how far Indigenous goods are commercialized and how that links to inclusive economic growth in the chosen rural barangays of Binangonan, Rizal. The descriptive part first took stock of how much these native products are sold today, then recorded local signs of inclusive growth such as wider income, jobs, and community participation. The correlational part then looked for meaningful links between specific commercialization task design, market reach, added value, local help, and business know-how, as well as those same growth signs.

This study employed a purely quantitative approach, utilizing structured survey questionnaires with closed-ended Likert-scale items to gather numerical data from indigenous product producers. All data were analyzed using statistical tests to identify patterns, relationships, and significant differences across demographic groups. No qualitative data collection methods (such as interviews, focus groups, or open-ended questionnaire items) were employed in this research

Population and Sampling Technique. The scope of this study comprises the individuals and the business enterprises that engage in the production, processing, and marketing of indigenous goods in the rural barangays of Binangonan, Rizal. These individuals include the producers and artisans, micro-entrepreneurs, and cooperative members who have participated in indigenous product activities for no less than 1 year. These individuals qualifying as subjects, are important in understanding the relation of commercialization with inclusive economic development. In this scope, the first stage of sampling employs purposive sampling, which focuses on active and registered community-based organizations, cooperatives, or associations that engage in the commercialization of indigenous products. These organizations must be registered with the Local Government Units (LGU), the Department of Trade and Industry (DTI), or any other relevant registration body that gives credence to their activities and serves the purpose of the study.

In selecting such organizations, stratified random sampling will be used to identify individual respondents within each organization or barangay. The strata will include the demographic components of age, gender, economic role, or occupation (producer, marketer, seller), barangay, and other relevant features. This is intended to better capture the attributes of rural indigenous producers in Binangonan. Determining the sample size will be done in consultation with a statistician who will employ Cochran's formula to guarantee statistical rigor and accuracy. Its application will be based on the actual or projected population of indigenous product producers in the rural barangays of Binangonan, Rizal. This combination of purposive sampling for organizations and stratified sampling for individuals as a single approach guarantees that both institutional legitimacy and individual representativeness are attained, thereby enhancing the credibility and the generalizability of the study's findings.

Respondents of the Study. The participants of this research study comprise people involved in the production, processing, and marketing of indigenous goods from the rural barangays of Binangonan, Rizal. These are the local artisans and micro entrepreneurs who manufacture culturally oriented goods including, but not limited to, handmade crafts, woven textiles, herbal products, native delicacies, and other traditional products based on local wisdom and resources. For the reliability of the data, only the people who have actively participated in the marketing of such products for a minimum period of one year were considered for this study. The criteria in the selection also investigated isolation or affiliation with community-based enterprises. These organizations include cooperatives, livelihood associations, or other development-oriented groups sponsored by local government units (LGUs), the Department of Trade and Industry (DTI), or other formal registering bodies. This criterion helps to ensure that only credible and well-established producers within the indigenous economic ecosystem are included.

Participants were chosen to ensure that all the barangays were represented in the demographics and socio-economic status of the population. This area included and represented all the age groups and gender identities to encompass all income level households and economic roles within the community, for instance, as a producer, a seller, or a marketer, and so on. This type of diversity provides a complete picture of the indigenous commercialization in the rural community and how it is practiced and experienced by different members within different sectors. This respondent profile serves as the starting point for evaluating how far the level of commercialization impacts the inclusive economic growth of Binangonan in the context of sustainable rural development

Research Instrument. For this study, a researcher-made structured survey questionnaire will serve as the primary instrument for quantitative data collection. It is specifically designed to align with the study's Statement of the Problem and conceptual framework, ensuring that each section directly addresses the research variables: demographic profile, commercialization of indigenous products, and inclusive economic growth in rural communities.

Validation of the Instrument. Before full implementation, the researcher-made questionnaire will be validated for content and tested for reliability. For validation, a specific validation protocol will be followed.

A panel of three or more experts in community development, rural entrepreneurship, and research methodology will evaluate the questionnaire. These experts will judge the instrument on its relevance, clarity, and how well each item aligns with the study's objectives, especially concerning measurement regarding the dimensions of indigenous product commercialization and the associated inclusive economic growth.

Each of the experts will be asked to evaluate each item using a 4-point Content Validity Rating Scale (1 = Not Relevant, 2 = Somewhat Relevant, 3 = Quite Relevant, 4 = Highly Relevant). The Item Content Validity Index (I-CVI) will be computed for each item's scores. Criteria for retention or revision of items will be set at I-CVI scores of 0.70 and above. Those items below will be either revised or removed. The Scale Content Validity Index (S-CVI) will also be computed to assess the instrument's overarching content validity. With the result of reliability and validity test is 0.846 which will be considered as valid. After validating the content, the next step will be executing the reliability protocol. There will be a pilot test with a minimum of 30 participants who are comparable to the sample in the main study area, but from outside the region. At this stage, the main focus will be the internal consistency and reliability of each section of the questionnaire. Each subscale will be assessed with Cronbach's Alpha, where a coefficient of 0.70 or higher is deemed acceptable for internal consistency.

Furthermore, both Part II and Part III of the instrument will utilize a 4-point Likert scale, so the central tendency of responses will be analyzed using weighted mean computations. This method will enable the researcher to evaluate the mean agreement level for every item, and thus, determine the overall level of commercialization and inclusive economic growth as perceived by the respondents. Any item or dimension that does not meet the acceptable reliability threshold or consistency criteria from the pilot test will be adjusted as needed. Only after satisfactory results in both validation and reliability phases will the instrument be finalized for main study data collection.

Reliability Analysis. During pilot testing, Cronbach's Alpha will be computed for each set of survey items before actual deployment. An acceptable coefficient value is 0.70 or higher, indicating sufficient internal consistency of the instrument. Results shall be displayed in tables, charts and figures where they are indicated, and described in the light of the study objectives, hypotheses and theoretical background. Particular attention will be paid to the inclusion of demographic comparison results in a way that emphasizes statistical results as well as their applicability for universal versus targeted policy making.

Ethical Considerations. This study focuses on the commercialization of indigenous products and its effects on inclusive economic growth in the rural communities of Binangonan, Rizal, derives from an adherence to ethical obligations throughout the research process. Additional attention is given to the local producers and artisans who, into the crafts and products, blend their cultures and traditions. This research respects the ethical boundaries set by institutional research frameworks, observing primary sensitivity to the rights of Indigenous peoples.

All prospective participants have the study's aims, methods, rewards, and potential risks in the study described to them in detail. They receive an explanation on the voluntary nature of participation, their right

to decline or withdraw at any point, and the usage of their responses. Signed agreements, which formally attest to understanding and willingness to participate, provide the study's informed consent.

To maintain confidentiality and anonymity, personal identifiers such as names, business names, and unique cultural identifiers are omitted from the final report. These data are kept in a safe place and are only available to the researcher. Such information, as distinguished from ordinary data, collected shall not be used for any illicit or commercial endeavors.

In respect to the cultural significance of indigenous products, the study integrates steps to mitigate the possible dangerous effects of indigenous knowledge and traditions. These products are understood to not only represent economic value, but also identity, heritage, and ancestral artistry. The research avoids frameworks, assumptions, and language that disrespect, circumstantially, and culturally appropriate the work without context. Rather, it adopts a respectful tone, acknowledging cultural ownership of the communities in question.

Community members and local leaders are consulted to ensure that no aspect of the study which has the potential to research disrespect, misrepresentation, or distortion of culture is included. The study is first considered for academic rigor, cultural relevance, and out of scope for fieldwork. All instruments and materials pertaining to the research undergo thorough verification.

At the same time, the exploitation of indigenous traditions is actively discouraged through the construction of the aforementioned framework. The study aims to reinforce cultural continuity by empowering local producers through the identification of responsible commercialization pathways that are sustainable and driven by the community. The community-focused approach to heritage preservation and participation through ethical commercialization will be the primary goal of the study's conclusions and resulting strategic interventions and policy recommendations.

This approach enables the study to reinforce and advance the economic development while protecting the cultural integrity of the region by balancing the two. It also reinforces the notion that indigenous knowledge and products can be important avenues of livelihood and crucial components of cultural heritage.

Results

1. Level of Commercialization of Indigenous Products

The findings indicate that indigenous product commercialization in Binangonan is generally moderate to high. Market access and distribution recorded a high mean score ($M = 3.34$), reflecting producers' ability to sell products beyond their barangays through local markets, trade fairs, and online platforms. Value addition and packaging also registered a high mean score ($M = 3.35$), indicating active engagement in product processing, labeling, and packaging improvements.

Product development and innovation obtained a mean score of 3.12, suggesting that producers moderately engage in redesigning products and innovating while retaining cultural elements.

Entrepreneurial capacity and training recorded a mean score of 2.82, reflecting basic but still developing business skills among producers. Financial and institutional support emerged as the weakest dimension ($M = 2.55$), indicating limited access to loans, cooperatives, and formal institutional assistance. This finding aligns with studies highlighting financial exclusion as a major constraint for indigenous enterprises (Bhatia-Kalluri, 2021; Gyimah & Lussier, 2024).

2. Level of Inclusive Economic Growth

Inclusive economic growth indicators showed generally positive outcomes. Income generation among producers recorded a high mean score ($M = 3.39$), indicating improved household income, savings capacity, and purchasing power. Employment opportunities created also registered a high mean score ($M = 3.38$), reflecting job creation within households and communities.

Household economic participation obtained a high mean score ($M = 3.35$), demonstrating strong family involvement in production, decision-making, and enterprise operations. Community reinvestment and livelihood sustainability recorded a lower but still positive mean score ($M = 3.01$), indicating emerging but less institutionalized community-level reinvestment practices (Serrao et al., 2021).

3. Relationship Between Commercialization and Inclusive Economic Growth

Pearson correlation analysis revealed a very strong positive and statistically significant relationship between the level of commercialization of indigenous products and inclusive economic growth ($r = 0.847$, $p < 0.05$). This result indicates that higher levels of commercialization are strongly associated with increased income generation, employment creation, household participation, and community reinvestment.

Discussions

The results provide strong empirical evidence that indigenous product commercialization is a critical driver of inclusive economic growth in rural communities. The very strong correlation between commercialization and inclusive economic growth supports the core premise of Endogenous Growth Theory, which posits that internal factors—such as human capital, innovation, and entrepreneurship—are central drivers of economic development (Romer, 1986; Lucas, 1988). In this study, producers' skills, experience, and entrepreneurial engagement translated directly into improved economic outcomes.

High performance in market access and value addition suggests that producers in Binangonan have leveraged their geographic proximity to urban markets and enhanced product quality to improve competitiveness. These findings align with the Sustainable Livelihoods Framework, which emphasizes the strategic mobilization of physical, social, and human capital to achieve sustainable livelihood outcomes (DFID, 1999; Scoones, 2022). However, the consistently low level of financial and institutional support confirms that structural barriers—rather than cultural resistance—remain the primary constraint to scaling indigenous enterprises (Blue et al., 2025; Kharche et al., 2024).

The strong level of household economic participation highlights the collective orientation of indigenous enterprises. Commercialization operates not merely as an individual entrepreneurial activity but

as a household-based livelihood strategy, distributing economic benefits across family members. This finding supports literature emphasizing that indigenous economic systems often prioritize collective well-being over individual profit maximization (Vunibola et al., 2022; Colbourne et al., 2023). Despite positive outcomes, the relatively lower level of community reinvestment suggests that inclusive growth could be further strengthened through cooperative structures and institutional mechanisms that facilitate collective savings, reinvestment, and long-term community development (OECD, 2023).

Conclusions

This study concludes that the commercialization of indigenous products significantly contributes to inclusive economic growth in rural communities. Indigenous product commercialization enhances income generation, employment creation, and household economic participation while supporting community sustainability. The very strong positive relationship between commercialization and inclusive economic growth establishes indigenous enterprises as viable and impactful components of rural development strategies in the Philippines.

However, limited financial and institutional support remains a critical constraint that restricts the scalability and sustainability of indigenous enterprises. Addressing this gap requires coordinated policy interventions, strengthened cooperative systems, and culturally grounded commercialization frameworks. The findings underscore the need for localized, community-based commercialization models that integrate cultural preservation with economic inclusion, thereby transforming indigenous products into sustainable drivers of rural prosperity.

Recommendations

The researcher offered the following recommendations based on the conclusions and findings:

1. Focus on scaling, innovation, and long-term sustainability, leveraging their experience while addressing challenges unique to rural and Indigenous commerce, such as market access and cultural preservation. Provide advanced training and support specifically for export logistics, navigating international trade regulations, and securing international sustainable/ethical certifications.
2. Conduct intensive workshops on professional photography, e-commerce listing creation, and social media marketing (focused on platforms that target international, high-end buyers). This moves the presentation of their high-quality products from merely acceptable to globally competitive.
3. Facilitate the creation of support businesses owned by other community members (e.g., local supply chains for packaging materials, raw material cultivation, specialized transportation services). This spreads the wealth by diversifying the community's economic activities linked to the core product.
4. Focus on scaling and institutionalizing the commercialization activities that have proven most effective, ensuring maximum, sustained, and widespread impact. Make adherence to strict ethical and environmental sustainability standards a non-negotiable requirement for all commercialization and supply agreements. This protects the environment and cultural integrity, which are the fundamental assets driving successful commercialization.

5. Implement mandatory, subsidized training for producers on basic financial literacy, bookkeeping, and business formalization, and improve the enterprise's creditworthiness, making it easier to qualify for formal financing from banks and government programs.
6. The LGU must act as a guarantor of product authenticity and quality to allow local producers to access premium markets.
7. This comprehensive Community-Owned Cooperative Model with Benefit-Sharing ensures that commercialization acts as a vehicle for wealth creation that is shared broadly, democratically controlled, and anchored in cultural and environmental sustainability.
8. Integrate Indigenous Products with Municipal Tourism Development. Link indigenous commercialization to tourism initiatives at the municipal and barangay levels. Municipal actions: Establish heritage hubs in tourist destinations, include production sites in tourism routes, and develop cultural demonstration programs and agri-cultural experiences. Barangay steps: Creation of barangay hall display sites, training of cultural heritage guides, and transparent revenue-sharing schemes. Safeguards: Community participation in planning, certification of authentic products, benefit-sharing agreements, and carrying capacity limits to avoid over-commercialization and protect cultural integrity.
9. Implement Differentiated Multi-Track Strategy Based on Dimension-Specific Patterns. A two-track coordinated approach should be adopted: (1) Resource-Bridging Track (46% of producers are below college, 45.5% are earning less than Php 20,000) for producers of limited education or poverty or status as single persons, offering financial inclusion schemes (adjustable cooperative loans, government guarantees, microinsurance for entrepreneurs, startup grants), affordable business education (visual guidance, oral education, practical workshops), institutional navigation (community help desks, simplified forms), and household economic strengthening (family cooperative membership, a focus on income smoothing, priority support for single households), and (2) Knowledge-Deepening Track (12.5% of producers 1-3 years, 13.8% under 35) for newer/younger producers with systemized mentor-mentee interaction (master artisans and newcomers), peer learning networks (a monthly meeting, WhatsApp), captured traditional knowledge (video recordings of elder techniques), and multi-year, ongoing participation (for mastering skill, long-term efforts are needed, and this would be greater than a short project cycle). Use both tracks alongside universal interventions at the same time: household enterprise model (spousal co-membership, family production units) and gender-equitable implementation (preserving existing equity where men and women perform as expected without performance differences; gender-balanced leadership; rejecting any external structures that would impact functional equity). Collaborate through an inter-agency committee, ensuring shared monitoring as best possible, and recognize the need for dimension-specific interventions in households for this level of support in order to maintain gender equity.

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