



Benchmarking Busan Market Practices for an Indonesian Vendor Empowerment Program

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Abstract

Traditional markets in Indonesia continue to struggle with a rundown image and weakening competitiveness. This international community service (PkM) initiative aimed to identify the best practices used in managing Yong Ho Gol Mok Market in Busan, South Korea, with an eye toward what could realistically be adapted in Indonesia. The activity occurred during a UNISBA delegation visit to Tongmyong University for the INOBIST-3rd ICoBAC 2026 conference. The team relied on participatory observation, informal interviews, and visual documentation through a benchmarking approach. Five practices worth adapting were identified: hygienic product display, price transparency, visitor-friendly service, basic infrastructure support, and steady funding from local government. Based on these findings, the initiative outlined a contextual empowerment program for Indonesian vendors that covers training in product arrangement, price standardization, service improvement, and proposals for collaboration across stakeholders. This study is intended as an early reference point for future traditional market empowerment programs grounded in international benchmarking.

Keywords: *Vendor empowerment, Traditional Market, Benchmarking, Yong Ho Gol Mok Market, International Community Service*

INTRODUCTION

Traditional markets are a backbone of the people's economy, sustaining the livelihoods of millions of small- and medium-scale vendors across Indonesia. However, their standing is eroded under pressure from modern retail expansion, shifting shopping habits, and long-running problems such as poor cleanliness, weak governance, and low service standards ([Ministry of Administrative and Bureaucratic Reform of the Republic of Indonesia, 2015](#)). Both central and regional governments in Indonesia have pursued various physical, managerial, economic, and socio-cultural revitalization programs to lift the competitiveness of traditional markets, including the revitalization of 5,000 traditional markets and the modernization of more than a dozen markets across several cities ([Ministry of Administrative and Bureaucratic Reform of the Republic of Indonesia, 2015](#); [WartaTransparansi, 2026](#); [Republika, 2026](#)). Even so, results vary considerably from one region to another, and these programs often stop at physical upgrades without a matching push to build vendor capacity and shift behavior across the board ([Merdeka.com, 2026](#)).

The persistence of this gap is not unique to any one city. [Kusnindar et al. \(2022\)](#) studied vendor readiness for digital tools in a West Java traditional market and found that infrastructure alone rarely converts into higher sales unless it is paired with digital and managerial literacy training that vendors can actually absorb. Similarly, [Kembang & Kalbuadi \(2024\)](#) documented a marketing skills training program for traditional market vendors and reported that trading habits change only when training is sustained through repeated mentoring rather than a single workshop.

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[Ningrum and Sujarwo \(2017\)](#) reached a similar conclusion in their study of a community learning post for traditional market vendors in Wonogiri, arguing that vendor empowerment succeeds only when it is built around vendors' own learning needs rather than imposed from above. [Soetomo \(2013\)](#) frames this as a matter of principle: community empowerment that is not owned by the community it targets tends to fade once the funding or the project team leaves. These findings, drawn largely from Indonesian community service and applied research, describe a persistent structural weakness: physical revitalization keeps outrunning the human capacity side of the equation.

South Korea, on the other hand, has decades of experience revitalizing its jaesaejang (재래시장, traditional markets) through consistent national policy dating back to the early 2000s. This includes the traditional market facility modernization scheme (전통시장 시설현대화 사업) and the culture tourism market program (문화관광형시장), both aimed at strengthening market image, building local storytelling, and connecting markets with nearby tourist destinations ([Kim & Ryu, 2016](#); [Ko, H., 2026](#)). [Kwon and Gong \(2023\)](#), analyzing the identity of culture tourism designated markets in Korea, argue that a market's revitalization succeeds when its physical redesign is anchored in a story that is authentically the market's own, rather than a generic makeover copied from elsewhere. [Yoon \(2024\)](#) similarly stresses that the most durable Korean revitalization cases combine physical renewal with structured, ongoing support for merchant organizations, echoing the emphasis that [Kwon and Gong \(2023\)](#) place on identity and story.

One of the markets targeted by this program is Yong Ho Gol Mok Market (용호골목시장) in the Nam-gu district of Busan. Established in 1975 as a midsized neighborhood market (golmok sijang), it now houses approximately 113–116 stalls selling agricultural produce, seafood, livestock products, processed foods, clothing, footwear, and household goods. It is equipped with public restrooms and a parking area ([Small Enterprise and Market Service, 2024](#); [Busan Ilbo, 2026](#)). Older sources on the market describe it as a long-standing neighborhood fixture that grew alongside the surrounding Yongho-dong apartment blocks, giving it deep roots in the daily life of local residents rather than functioning primarily as a tourist attraction ([Busan Grand Culture Encyclopedia, n.d.](#)). In 2026, the market was chosen as one of the pilot sites for the culture tourism market program run by South Korea's Ministry of SMEs and Startups, and it became a stop on a direct visit by the Mayor of Busan, who came to monitor the facility modernization program and hear out vendors' concerns firsthand ([Busan Ilbo, 2026](#); [Localsegye, 2025](#)).



Figure 1. Yong Ho Gol Mok Market

A delegation of UNISBA students and lecturers conducted a field visit to Yong Ho Gol Mok Market as part of the INOBIST-3rd ICoBAC 2026 activities at Tongmyong University, Busan, South Korea, on July 7, 2026, forming part of a broader program to build cross-cultural and economic insight. The visit offered a rare chance to observe firsthand how a traditional market has managed to hold its ground against the pressures of modern retail and online shopping while also allowing direct interaction with local vendors, including sellers of fresh vegetables, clothing and socks, and ready-to-eat side dishes (*banchan*).



Figure 2. Vendors at the Yong Ho Gol Mok Market

International benchmarking of this kind is based on a long-standing idea in management literature: benchmarking is not about copying a high-performing organization wholesale, but about systematically identifying what makes it work and asking which parts can be reworked for a different setting (Camp, 1989). Bogan and English (1994) sharpen this point by distinguishing between imitation, which reproduces a practice without regard for context, and innovative

adaptation, which reworks a practice to fit a different institutional environment. This distinction matters here because Yong Ho Gol Mok Market operates within a national funding and governance architecture, the culture tourism market program, that Indonesian traditional markets do not share; therefore, any workable adaptation has to strip a given practice down to its underlying principle before it can be rebuilt for an Indonesian setting. In contrast to [Alam et al.'s \(2024\)](#) analysis of how creative economy-based micro, small, and medium enterprises sharpen the competitiveness of a modern night market in Jakarta, the present activity treats vendor-level practice, not just physical facilities, as a more portable unit of comparison across very different market types and national contexts.

This concern is not limited to Indonesia and South Korea. Governance research on traditional and informal markets in the Global South reaches a strikingly similar conclusion. [Davies et al. \(2022\)](#) reviewed the governance of traditional markets and rural urban food systems across sub-Saharan Africa and found that markets best able to withstand competitive pressure are those where local government, vendor associations, and everyday users share responsibility for upkeep and rule making, rather than markets managed unilaterally by a local authority. [Purnomo et al. \(2018\)](#), studying four traditional vegetable markets in Malang, East Java, describe how such markets build flexibility and competitiveness without heavy state support by segmenting customers, adjusting operating hours, and, crucially, leaning on social capital and trust networks among vendors to reduce transaction costs. Their finding that social capital, rather than infrastructure spending, is often what keeps a traditional market competitive gives this activity an additional reason to look closely at the everyday, low-cost practices observed at Yong Ho Gol Mok Market, rather than only at its national-level funding advantage.

Building on this background, the international PkM activity set out to: (1) identify the best practices in managing Yong Ho Gol Mok Market that the delegation observed directly; (2) analyze the gap between these practices and the general condition of traditional markets in Indonesia; and (3) draft a vendor empowerment program design for Indonesia's traditional markets that contextually adapts these practices, working toward cleaner, friendlier, and more competitive markets. In pursuing these aims, the activity is also meant to contribute, in a modest way, to the growing body of applied community service research on how international benchmarking can be translated into locally owned empowerment programs, an area that remains comparatively underexplored in the Indonesian traditional market literature despite the volume of physical revitalization studies already available ([Cahya et al., 2025](#)).

METHOD

This international community service (PkM) activity was conducted through field observation, informal interviews, visual documentation, and a focus group discussion (FGD), following a qualitative benchmarking design consistent with [Camp's \(1989\)](#) and [Bogan and English's \(1994\)](#) approaches to identifying and adapting best practices. The lecturers' work centered on participatory observation and international benchmarking, followed by the design of a contextual vendor empowerment program. All of these activities were incorporated into the international academic delegation visit of UNISBA, which examined how public facilities are managed abroad.



Figure 3. FGD on Mapping Market Conditions

The activity involved a delegation of UNISBA lecturers and students from the Management Study Program, Faculty of Economics and Business, together with academic partners at Tongmyong University, Busan, as part of the INOBIST-3rd ICoBAC 2026 conference program. The field site was Yong Ho Gol Mok Market, Nam-gu, Busan, visited on July 7, 2026. The delegation comprised 3 lecturers and 4 students from the Management Study Program, and the market visit lasted approximately 2 hours. Informal conversation partners included vendors selling fresh vegetables, clothing and socks, and ready-to-eat side dishes (banchan), selected opportunistically based on their willingness to interact with the delegation rather than through formal sampling.

Four data collection techniques were used. First, participatory observation allowed the team to walk through the market corridor, observe product arrangement, signage, and infrastructure, and observe vendor–customer interactions as they naturally occurred. Second, informal interviews, conducted in short conversational exchanges with the help of gestures and simple translation, captured the vendors' own accounts of their trade and their impressions of the delegation. Third, visual documentation, in the form of photographs of product displays, price boards, vendor interactions, and market infrastructure, served as a record that the team cross-checked during analysis to avoid relying on memory alone. Fourth, a focus group discussion was held among delegation members to map market conditions collectively, compare individual observations, and begin drafting the list of best practices before the team left Busan.

The team analyzed field notes, interview summaries, and photographs using a simple thematic approach: individual observations were first listed, then grouped into recurring themes during the FGD, and finally checked against secondary sources on Yong Ho Gol Mok Market and on traditional market management in both South Korea and Indonesia to see whether the patterns observed in the field matched what the wider literature described. This cross-checking step allows the paper to describe five best practices with reasonable confidence, even though the underlying fieldwork was limited to a single short visit.

Because the activity involved informal conversations with vendors rather than a formal survey, the team treated each exchange as voluntary and low pressure: vendors were free to decline interaction, and no personal information beyond general trade descriptions (for example, "a vegetable seller" or "a banchan vendor") is reported in this paper. Photographs used for documentation focused on products, signage, and market infrastructure rather than on identifiable individuals, consistent with standard practice for observational community service fieldwork. Given the interaction's cross-border and cross-language nature, the team was also careful not to over-interpret the vendors' warmth and hospitality as an unqualified endorsement of the delegation's presence, a caution that is reflected in how the resulting best practices are framed as the team's own observations rather than as vendors' formal evaluations of their market.

Verbal consent was obtained from the vendors before any photograph was taken, and the vendors were informed that the images might be used for academic reporting purposes. No formal institutional ethics review was required for this observational community service activity, consistent with UNISBA's standard practice for short-term field visits; however, the team avoided

close-up facial photography and confirms that no image in this paper allows an individual vendor to be identified.

The method has clear boundaries as a benchmarking exercise built around one site visit rather than a structured multimarket study. It cannot establish causal claims about why Yong Ho Gol Mok Market performs as it does, nor can it rule out that factors outside the team's observation window, such as municipal budget allocations or long-standing cultural norms around customer service, also shape what was seen. This constraint echoes [Ayduğ et al.'s \(2020\)](#) observation that benchmarking tends to work best as a structured, repeatable process rather than a single observational visit, a caution this paper treats as a boundary condition on its findings rather than a flaw to be concealed. These limitations are addressed further in the Discussion section, and they are the reason for framing the proposed empowerment program in the Result section as preliminary rather than final.

The proposed empowerment program is framed as a general reference model for Indonesia's mid-tier traditional markets rather than as a design tailored to one named market. One of the needs assessment steps recommended in the Discussion section is identifying and profiling a specific pilot market.

RESULTS

Profile of the Yong Ho Gol Mok Market

Yong Ho Gol Mok Market is located at 5, Yongho-ro 177beon-gil, Nam-gu, Busan, and has been officially registered as a traditional market (전통시장) since September 2009, 34 years after it first opened in 1975. It operates daily with approximately 113–116 stalls selling agricultural produce, seafood, livestock products, processed foods, clothing, footwear, and household goods, alongside public restrooms and a parking area ([Small Enterprise and Market Service, 2024](#)). The market takes the form of a covered arcade linking the surrounding residential neighborhood and apartment blocks, keeping foot traffic fairly steady throughout the day ([Busan Ilbo, 2026](#)).

In 2026, Yong Ho Gol Mok Market was designated as one of the pilot sites for the culture tourism market program (문화관광형시장) run by South Korea's Ministry of SMEs and Startups (중소벤처기업부). The head of the local vendors' association described a lengthy process to prepare a competitive program proposal, which involved presentation training and putting together supporting documents ranging from 200 to 300 pages. This effort eventually paved the way for a renovated market canopy, upgraded floors and shop signage, a culinary tour and stamp tour program linking the market to the nearby Oryukdo and Igidae attractions, social media promotion, and expanded sales reach through nationwide delivery across Korea ([Busan Ilbo, 2026](#)). Toward the end of 2025, the Mayor of Busan paid the market a direct visit to check on the 2026 facility modernization program and to hear vendors' complaints and suggestions in person ([Localsegye, 2025](#)).

This market's profile makes for a useful point of comparison, given how closely it resembles Indonesia's mid-tier traditional markets: a scale running into the hundreds of stalls, a location embedded within a dense residential area, and sustainability challenges brought on by changing shopping habits.

Observed Best Practices

Drawing on participatory observation and visual documentation gathered during the visit, the team identified five best practices in market management.

1. Tidy, hygienic product arrangement and packaging.
Fresh produce, such as vegetables and fruit is placed in color-coded plastic containers

sorted by commodity type, while ready-to-eat side dishes (banchan) are packed in tightly sealed plastic wrapping to keep things clean and prevent contamination. Processed items, such as kimchi and pickles, come in vacuum sealed, ready-to-sell bags, reflecting a food safety standard that is simple but consistently applied across every stall. As the literature on informal market food safety suggests, this type of consistent, low-cost display standard is often what separates markets that retain shopper confidence from those that do not (Sheehama & Singh, 2025).



Figure 4. Product arrangement and packaging

2. Price transparency through handwritten labels.
Every vegetable and fruit stall displays an easy-to-read, handwritten price board (typically per-unit prices in Korean won), allowing buyers to compare prices without having to ask. This reduces price misunderstandings between vendors and buyers, including foreign visitors who may face language barriers.



Figure 5. Price Transparency

3. Warmness and openness of vendors toward visitors, including foreign tourists
The UNISBA delegation, visibly marked as international visitors by the hijabs several members wore, was warmly welcomed by the market's older vendors, who made an effort to communicate despite the language gap and even shared stories about their years in trade. This kind of openness reinforces the market's image as an inclusive public space that welcomes tourists, and it echoes Purnomo et al.'s (2018) description of social capital

functioning as a competitive asset in its own right, not merely a pleasant extra.



Figure 6. Openness of Vendors toward Foreign Tourists

4. Adequate basic infrastructure

The arcade roof shielding the market corridor from the weather, sufficient lighting both inside and outside the stalls, uniform and easily recognizable shop signage, public restrooms, and a parking area were all consistently observed to support a comfortable shopping experience.



Figure 7. Adequate Infrastructure

5. Sustainability through structured municipal mentoring and funding.

The culture tourism market program goes beyond physical assistance, equipping the vendors' association leader with presentation and proposal writing skills and drawing vendors into the decision-making process through direct hearings with the city government (Busan Ilbo, 2026; Localsegye, 2025). This approach shows that a market's revitalization success rests on building human capacity, not on physical improvements alone, and it aligns closely with what Davies et al. (2022) describe as a condition for durable market governance as shared responsibility between local government and market users.

Gaps with Traditional Indonesian Market Conditions

Set against the practices seen at Yong Ho Gol Mok Market, Indonesia's traditional markets still face some gaps, as summarized in Table 1.

Table 1. Comparison between Yong Ho Gol Mok Market Practices and General Conditions in Traditional Markets in Indonesia

Dimension	Yong Ho Gol Mok Market (Busan)	General Conditions in Traditional Indonesian Markets
Product display and hygiene	Color-coded containers, sealed packaging, and vacuum-sealed goods	Fresh and processed goods are often uncovered, raising the risk of contamination (Kompasiana, 2023)
Price information	Handwritten, per-unit price boards at each stall	Informal bargaining dominates; price labeling is rarely and consistently applied
Vendor-visitor interaction	Vendors trained to warmly serve non-Korean-speaking visitors	Friendly service and hospitality training rarely included in revitalization programs
Physical infrastructure	Arcade roof, uniform signage, restrooms, parking, and consistent lighting	Improving but uneven; several cities have added wastewater treatment, poultry centers, and vendor zoning (WartaTransparansi, 2026 ; Republika, 2026).
Institutional support	Structured mentoring, proposal writing training, and direct hearings with the city government	Support often stops after physical construction; vendors report limited follow-up on complaints (Repositori Institusi UIN Sayyid Ali Rahmatullah Tulungagung, n.d.)

First, product arrangement and packaging are often not hygienic, with fresh and processed goods commonly displayed uncovered, which raises the risk of contamination ([Kompasiana, 2023](#)). Second, price labeling is still rarely applied consistently, leaving informal bargaining as the dominant practice, something that can work against tourists and consumers unfamiliar with the local market. Third, while various revitalization programs have targeted physical upgrades such as wastewater treatment installations, poultry cutting centers, and vendor zoning ([WartaTransparansi, 2026](#); [Republika, 2026](#)), building vendor capacity and shifting behavior across the board, including training in friendly service and personal hygiene, has not always been treated as a core part of these programs. Both [Kusnindar et al. \(2022\)](#) and [Kembang & Kalbuadi \(2024\)](#) report the same pattern of physical assistance outpacing capacity building assistance in the West Java markets they studied. Fourth, sustaining support after physical revitalization remains a challenge, as reflected in findings that vendors are often left dissatisfied with how their complaints and suggestions are followed up after a revitalization program wraps up ([Repositori Institusi UIN Sayyid Ali Rahmatullah Tulungagung, n.d.](#)).

These gaps are not simply a matter of physical shortfall; they also reflect a narrower view of what constitutes a competitive market. [Alam et al. \(2024\)](#) studied a modern night market built around a creative economy concept in Jakarta and found that vendors who received training in product curation, branding, and customer experience, and not simply access to a renovated venue, reported the strongest gains in repeat customers and revenue. Applied to Indonesia's traditional markets more broadly, this suggests that the hygienic display and price transparency observed at Yong Ho Gol Mok Market function much like a curated retail experience: they are, in effect, low-cost branding decisions that traditional market vendors could adopt without the scale of investment required by a creative economy night market.

These gaps point to a clear conclusion: adapting Yong Ho Gol Mok Market's practices to Indonesia needs to focus not only on physical aspects but also on building vendor capacity and shifting vendor behavior, in keeping with the community empowerment principles of enabling, empowering, and protecting on an ongoing basis ([Sulistiyan, 2004](#); [Suharto, 2010](#); [Soetomo, 2013](#)).

Proposed traditional market vendor empowerment program

Building on the identified best practices and the identified gaps, the team put forward five empowerment program proposals as a contextual adaptation, rather than a direct copy, of Yong Ho Gol Mok Market's practices:

1. Training in product arrangement and basic food safety, covering packaging techniques for fresh and processed goods using containers and wrapping that are affordable and easy to obtain for small-scale vendors. In line with [Sheehama and Singh's \(2025\)](#) finding that knowledge alone does not guarantee safe practice, this training should be paired with simple, repeated reinforcement (e.g., periodic spot checks by the vendors' association itself) rather than delivered as a single session.
2. Standardizing written price labels at every stall as a first step toward price transparency, which could be launched in partnership with vendors' associations and the local government.
3. Training in visitor-friendly service, including basic foreign language greetings for vendors in markets with tourism potential, as a soft skill boost tied to language competence and cross-cultural communication.
4. Advocating for basic infrastructure improvements (roofing, lighting, shop signage, restrooms, and parking) through collaboration with the local government, building on the existing traditional market revitalization schemes in several Indonesian cities.
5. Setting up an ongoing, cross-stakeholder mentoring scheme (involving academics, local government, and vendors' associations) that does not stop at physical improvements but continues to build managerial capacity and regular evaluation, following the approach used by South Korea's culture tourism market program and consistent with what [Davies et al. \(2022\)](#) identify as the shared responsibility model behind DMG elsewhere in the Global South.

This program design is preliminary and calls for further steps, including a needs assessment of target traditional markets in Indonesia, training module development, piloting in a small number of markets, and field testing before full implementation. Where relevant, the team also draws on existing Indonesian community service models for market vendor training, such as marketing skills workshops ([Kembang & Kalbuadi, 2024](#)) and community-based learning posts for vendors ([Ningrum & Sujarwo, 2017](#)), as templates that this program's training components could adapt rather than reinvent from scratch.

Sequencing and Stakeholders' Roles in the Proposed Program

Because the five proposals above touch different actors and require different lead times, the team also worked out a rough sequencing logic rather than treating them as five independent, parallel tracks. Price label standardization and basic product arrangement training (proposals 1 and 2) are comparatively low cost and can be piloted within a single market in a matter of weeks, since they mainly depend on vendors' willingness to adopt a simple new habit rather than on external funding. Visitor-friendly service training (proposal 3) can be run in parallel, ideally timed to precede any tourism-linked market promotion so that the service experience matches the marketing message. By contrast, infrastructure advocacy (proposal 4) depends on local government budget cycles and is unlikely to move quickly. The team recommends that vendors'

associations begin documenting infrastructure needs early, even before funding is secured, so that a ready proposal exists whenever a relevant municipal program opens. The fifth proposal, the cross-stakeholder mentoring scheme, is the connective tissue that keeps the first four from stalling once initial enthusiasm fades. The team recommends that this mentoring scheme be established from the outset rather than added as an afterthought once physical or training components are already underway, drawing on [Yoon's \(2024\)](#) observation that Korean markets sustain revitalization gains mainly through structured, ongoing merchant organization support.

The responsibility for these five components is not expected to be shared by any single actor. Universities such as UNISBA are positioned to contribute to needs assessment, training module design, and monitoring and evaluation expertise, continuing the kind of applied, community-facing research role illustrated by [Adiani's \(2026\)](#) university-led tutoring program and [Saraswati et al.'s \(2026\)](#) capacity building work with small businesses in Thailand. The local government carries primary responsibility for infrastructure advocacy and for formalizing any mentoring scheme to ensure that it survives changes in market management. Meanwhile, vendors' associations are the actors best placed to sustain day-to-day adherence to hygiene and pricing standards once training ends, echoing the emphasis that [Davies et al. \(2022\)](#) and [Purnomo et al. \(2018\)](#) place on vendor-level social capital as the glue that holds a market's competitiveness together over time.

DISCUSSION

The findings from this activity carry weight beyond the five practices themselves because they sit inside a wider, ongoing conversation about what actually makes traditional market revitalization stick, both in Indonesia and in Korea.

The findings from Yong Ho Gol Mok Market, Busan, South Korea, echo a pattern that keeps surfacing in the Indonesian literature on traditional market revitalization: physical upgrades alone rarely translate into lasting competitiveness. [Cahya et al. \(2025\)](#), [Arifin et al. \(2025\)](#), and [Wibawa et al. \(2024\)](#) each trace weak revitalization outcomes to a shortfall in vendor participation and capacity building rather than to the physical condition of the market itself. Together with what this activity observed in Busan, these studies point to the same conclusion: hygienic display, price labels, and a friendly atmosphere at Yong Ho Gol Mok Market work not because they are modern fixtures, but because they sit on top of a governance culture that treats vendors as partners rather than passive recipients of a renovation project.

The Korean side of the comparison tells a similar story. In an analysis of the Iksan Jungang traditional market, [Lee \(2017\)](#) found that markets recovered from decline through a mix of localized marketing, branding, and signage improvements rather than through infrastructure spending alone. [Chae and Ha \(2021\)](#) add a complementary perspective, showing that a structured capacity-building program for traditional marketplace merchants in Korea measurably improved vendors' leadership, health knowledge, and sense of community capacity within 12 weeks, a reminder that a market's human side is as trainable as its physical layout. [Kwon and Gong's \(2023\)](#) analysis of culture tourism market identity, and [Yoon's \(2024\)](#) review of Korean revitalization methods, both add that this human capacity work has to be anchored in a market's own local identity rather than a generic template, a nuance that this activity's proposed program tries to respect by framing its recommendations as a contextual adaptation rather than a transplant. South Korea's continued rollout of the K-Tourism Market initiative across 11 more traditional markets, including Haeundae Market in Busan, further suggests that the culture tourism market model observed at Yong Ho Gol Mok Market is not an isolated success but part of a deliberate, ongoing national strategy to rebrand traditional markets as cultural destinations ([Travel and Tour World, 2026](#)). This scale of consistency, sustained through multiple rounds of the same policy design over two decades, is arguably what Indonesian revitalization programs have struggled to replicate, given

how often they restart with each change in local leadership or budget cycle.

Beyond Korea and Indonesia, the broader comparative literature on traditional and informal markets in the Global South reinforces the central claim of this activity. Based on a review of market governance across sub-Saharan Africa, [Davies et al. \(2022\)](#) argue that markets that distribute responsibility for upkeep and rule making across local government, vendor associations, and everyday users tend to withstand competitive pressure better than markets managed unilaterally by a local authority. [Purnomo et al. \(2018\)](#), studying Indonesian vegetable markets in Malang, describe vendors building competitiveness through social capital and trust networks even in the absence of heavy state support, a finding that helps explain why Yong Ho Gol Mok Market's warmth toward visitors functions as more than a pleasant courtesy: it is, in effect, a competitiveness strategy that costs little to build but is easy to lose. Working in a very different setting in Namibia, [Sheehama and Singh \(2025\)](#) add an important caution to the training heavy recommendations in this paper's proposed program: their finding that food handlers' hygiene knowledge did not reliably predict safe practice suggests that training programs for Indonesian vendors will need to address attitudes and daily incentives, not just technical know-how, if the hygienic display practice observed in Busan is to be adapted successfully.

This activity also speaks to how international benchmarking can work as a form of applied learning rather than just a sightseeing add-on to an academic conference. [Camp's \(1989\)](#) original conception of benchmarking as a disciplined search for industry best practices and [Bogan and English's \(1994\)](#) later emphasis on innovative adaptation over direct imitation hold up well against what the UNISBA delegation did in Busan: observe, document, and then rework what was seen into something workable for a different regulatory and cultural setting. [Ayduğ et al.'s \(2020\)](#) caution that benchmarking works best as a repeatable, structured process, which is a fair challenge to this activity's single-visit design, and it is one reason the proposed program treats its recommendations as a starting inventory rather than a finished model. This is consistent with more recent findings on international service learning, where structured community engagement abroad sharpens students' civic awareness and cross-cultural competence alongside their academic learning ([Camus et al., 2026](#); [Kaliappen, 2024](#)). Framed this way, the Yong Ho Gol Mok Market visit did double duty: it produced a benchmarking case study for Indonesian market policy while also giving the student delegates a live lesson in how the traders, local government, and academic institutions of another country work together on a shared problem. This double function also echoes what recent Community Service Insight (CSI) publications have modeled for cross-border community engagement projects: [Bhandari \(2026\)](#), studying homestay tourism sustainability in rural Nepal, and [Saraswati et al. \(2026\)](#), describing a community-based capacity building program for small businesses in Thailand that similarly paired environmental responsibility training with digital marketing skills, both demonstrate that a short, structured community service engagement abroad can still generate a usable, locally adaptable set of recommendations, provided the findings are explicitly checked against context. [Adiani's \(2026\)](#) account of a university-led tutoring program in an Indonesian urban community adds a further parallel: interventions led by an academic delegation gain traction only when the receiving community is treated as a partner in shaping the program's direction, not merely as its beneficiary, which is the same principle that this paper applies to traditional Indonesian market vendors.

Theoretical and Practical Implications

Theoretically, the findings of this activity add a small but concrete data point to the ongoing conversation about how benchmarking theory travels across very different governance systems. [Camp \(1989\)](#) and [Bogan and English \(1994\)](#) developed their framework primarily with industrial and corporate settings in mind, where the benchmarking and benchmarked organizations typically

operate under comparable regulatory and resource conditions. Traditional markets in Indonesia and South Korea do not share that comparability: Yong Ho Gol Mok Market benefits from a national policy architecture, the culture tourism market program, which has no direct Indonesian equivalent. This activity suggests that benchmarking theory still holds up in this asymmetric setting, provided the unit of comparison is shifted from whole programs to discrete, transferable practices, an adjustment that is consistent with [Bogan and English's \(1994\)](#) own distinction between imitation and innovative adaptation, but that has not been extensively tested in the specific context of traditional market research in the Global South.

Practically, the findings suggest that Indonesian universities, local governments, and vendors' associations do not need to wait for a Korean national program to make progress. Several of the practices identified in this paper, in particular, price labeling, product arrangement training, and basic hospitality training, require modest budgets and could be piloted through existing community service or extension programs already run by Indonesian universities, similar to the marketing skills and digital literacy training programs documented by [Kembang & Kalbuadi \(2024\)](#) and [Kusnindar et al. \(2022\)](#). The infrastructure and institutional mentoring components (Proposals 4 and 5) are more resource intensive and will likely depend on local government budget cycles. However, the Busan case suggests that a well-documented, vendor-endorsed proposal, such as the Yong Ho Gol Mok Market vendors' association prepared for its own culture tourism application, can be an effective way for vendors' associations to make the case for investment once a relevant funding window opens.

Positioning within Southeast Asian and Global Literature

[Alam et al.'s \(2024\)](#) study of a creative economy night market in Jakarta suggests that Indonesia's market competitiveness literature is beginning to converge on a similar message from two very different directions: a modern, purpose-built night market and a decades-old traditional market in Busan both appear to gain more from curated vendor-level practice than from venue upgrades alone. This convergence is worth taking seriously precisely because the two settings are otherwise so different in scale, funding, and target customer base. A finding that holds across both a creative economy night market and a mid-sized neighborhood market abroad is less likely to be an artifact of one particular market's circumstances. Simultaneously, [Davies et al.'s \(2022\)](#) sub-Saharan African evidence and [Purnomo et al.'s \(2018\)](#) Malang findings caution against assuming that any single governance template, Korean or otherwise, will transfer cleanly; what appears to travel well across these very different contexts is not a specific program design but a shared emphasis on distributed responsibility and vendor level social capital as the ingredients that keep a market competitive once initial funding or novelty fades. Taken together, these three bodies of work, Indonesian creative economy retail, Global South market governance, and Korean traditional market revitalization, position the Yong Ho Gol Mok Market case not as an isolated success story but as one data point within a broader, cross-regional pattern that Indonesian traditional market policy could draw on more deliberately than it currently does.

Limitations and Directions for Future Research

That said, the conclusions of this activity should be read as a starting point rather than a finished answer. The observations are based on a single market visited over a short window, using participatory observation and informal conversation rather than a structured survey of vendors or a formal comparison against multiple Indonesian markets. In Busan, what is interpreted as vendor openness or infrastructure adequacy may also reflect factors that this activity could not fully account for, such as differences in municipal budgets, land tenure arrangements, or long-standing cultural norms around customer service.

A further limitation worth naming explicitly concerns language and translation. Because most informal interviews were conducted through gestures and simple translation rather than in a shared fluent language, some of the nuance in vendors' own accounts of their trade, particularly around motivation and satisfaction with the culture tourism market program, may not have been fully captured; this is a plausible source of overly positive impressions that a structured, professionally translated survey would help correct. The single site design is also a limitation for generalizability: Yong Ho Gol Mok Market's status as a pilot site for a national tourism-linked funding scheme may make it a best case rather than a typical case among Korean traditional markets. Therefore, the gap analysis in Table 1 should be read as a comparison against a strong exemplar rather than an average one.

Turning the five practices identified here into a program that actually works in an Indonesian market will depend on the kind of needs assessment, piloting, and monitoring called for in the proposed program design, along with genuine buy-in from local government and vendor associations from the outset, echoing the empowering protecting sequence that [Sulistiyan \(2004\)](#) and [Suharto \(2010\)](#) describe as the backbone of durable community empowerment work. Future research and community service activities could usefully build on this activity in three directions: a structured, professionally translated survey of Yong Ho Gol Mok Market vendors to verify the impressions reported here; a comparative multimarket design covering several traditional Korean markets at different stages of the culture tourism market program, so that pilot site effects can be separated from more generalizable practices; and, on the Indonesian side, a before and after pilot of the five-part empowerment program proposed in this paper at one target market, with vendor level outcomes tracked over at least one full trading cycle rather than assessed immediately after the intervention.

One further reflexivity point is worth flagging: the observations reported here were made by an academic delegation whose members were themselves an unusual and highly visible presence at the market, a group of foreign visitors, several in hijab, moving through the market together with cameras. It is plausible that this visibility shaped how openly and warmly vendors chose to engage in ways that a lone researcher or a local shopper would not have experienced in quite the same way. This does not invalidate the observations, but it does mean that the warmth described as a best practice in this paper should be understood as vendors' response to a distinctive, delegation scale visit rather than necessarily their everyday baseline behavior toward ordinary customers, a distinction that a future structured study could help disentangle by comparing delegation-based observation against more low-profile, individual fieldwork at the same site.

This international community service activity aimed to identify best practices at Yong Ho Gol Mok Market in Busan, compare them with the general condition of Indonesian traditional markets, and translate the resulting gaps into a preliminary vendor empowerment program design. During the visit, five practices stood out: hygienic product display and packaging, price transparency through handwritten labels, vendors' warmth toward visitors, adequate basic infrastructure, and sustained institutional mentoring and funding. None of these practices, taken on their own, is exotic or expensive to replicate; what makes them work together in Busan is a governance culture that treats vendors as partners in a shared, ongoing revitalization effort rather than as recipients of a one-time construction project, a pattern that recurs across both the Indonesian and international literature reviewed in this paper.

For Indonesian traditional markets, the practical implication is not that Yong Ho Gol Mok Market should be copied wholesale but that its underlying principles, consistent hygiene standards, transparent pricing, trained hospitality, adequate infrastructure, and durable institutional support can be adapted through a five-part training and advocacy program built around local vendors' associations and local government. Because this activity's evidence base rests on a single short visit,

the proposed program is deliberately framed as a starting inventory rather than a finished model. Before any wider rollout is attempted, its next steps should include a structured needs assessment of target markets, development and testing of training modules, and a small-scale pilot. Future community service and research activities are encouraged to empirically test these proposals, ideally comparing vendor outcomes before and after a pilot program, so that the preliminary adaptation logic proposed here can be refined into a more rigorously validated empowerment model for Indonesia's traditional markets.

More broadly, this activity is offered as one contribution to a still thin body of Southeast Asian and cross-regional community service scholarship on market and small business competitiveness. Alongside Bhandari's (2026) work on homestay tourism sustainability in Nepal and Saraswati et al.'s (2026) capacity building program for small businesses in Thailand, this paper suggests that short, well-documented international community service engagements can generate practical, locally adaptable recommendations even without the resources of a large-scale funded research project. Future CSI published activities that replicate this benchmarking approach in other ASEAN cities or that extend Alam et al.'s (2024) creative economy lens to traditional rather than purpose-built markets would help test whether the patterns identified here in Busan hold up across a wider set of Southeast and East Asian comparison cases.

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