



## Improve micro, small, and medium enterprises' competitiveness based on relational capital and innovative behaviour

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### ABSTRACT

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In Indonesia, the role of Micro, Small and Medium Enterprises (MSMEs) in improving the nation's economy cannot be doubted. This study seeks to examine the impact of innovative behaviour on enhancing competitiveness, the impact of relational capital on enhancing competitiveness, and the function of relational capital in amplifying the influence of innovative behaviour on strengthening competitiveness. The study was conducted on MSMEs Bags and Shoes in Tanggulangin Sidoarjo, Indonesia, in 2022. Data was taken by distributing questionnaires to 84 MSME Actors Bags and Suitcases Tanggulangin Sidoarjo, who are members of the Cooperative and analyzed by *Structural Equation Model \_ Partial Least Square (SEM-PLS) analysis*. The results of the analysis prove that innovative behavior has a direct effect on strengthening competitiveness, and relational capital has a direct effect on strengthening competitiveness but does not increase the magnitude of the influence of innovative behavior on strengthening competitiveness. Theoretically, the research results are useful for the development of strategic management science while being practically useful for MSME actors in managing their business activities. Therefore, high awareness is needed for MSME players to improve the quality of their services to customers in order to build better relational relationships while not ignoring the importance of innovation.

**Contribution/Originality:** The contribution of Micro, Small and Medium Enterprises in this study strengthens competitiveness based on relationship capital and innovative behavior in MSMEs making bags and suitcases in Tanggulangin Sidoarjo by facing an increasingly open and cooperative market, thereby contributing to the role of social capital in the sustainability of MSMEs.

## 1. INTRODUCTION

In Indonesia, the role of Micro, Small and Medium Enterprises (MSMEs) in improving the nation's economy cannot be doubted. Based on data from the Central Statistics Agency (CSA) in 2020, the number of MSMEs in Indonesia reached 56.5 million units and was able to absorb more than 99.45% of the workforce. The products offered by MSMEs also vary, ranging from household products to electronics, and have local to international marketing areas. Until now, the contribution of MSME income to the acquisition of national Gross Domestic Product (GDP) has reached 30%, so it can become one of the solutions to poverty reduction in Indonesia. This fact is the reason for the need for strategies to maintain the survival of MSMEs.

An analytical approach called Recourse-Based View (RBV) emphasizes the role of the company's strategic resources to gain a level of competitiveness (Barney, 1991). The RBV approach says that in the long run, the company's existence can be maintained if it can create sustainable competitiveness by owning or controlling strategic assets, both tangible and intangible. At the level of economics, the RBV concept has never been rejected from a theoretical or practical point of view. Even in its development, RBV has become the dominant paradigm, or at least rose to organizational theory from a strategic perspective. (Acedo, Barroso, & Galan, 2006), and has been adopted by many business enterprises to create competitiveness (Shakina & Barajas, 2014).

Creating competitiveness for MSMEs is very specific to each business group, depending on the resources owned, both physical and non-physical (Fatoki, 2011). The characteristics of Micro and Small Business groups, most of which have limited capital and limited ability to manage businesses, demand business assistance. This is not the case for the Medium Enterprises group, most of which are independent. The Indonesian MSME Tax Consultant Service Bureau in Pajaknesia lists a number of characteristics of medium enterprises that are currently not owned by MSMEs, including: 1) having good business management because departments have a clear division of tasks; 2) having a healthy financial administration system; 3) offering social security to their employees; and 4) taking care of business legality. This advantage can be used as a basis for determining the company's strategic resources in order to create competitiveness.

The ability of business groups to identify strategic resources is very important in creating competitiveness. Sigalas (2015) argues that the most effective achievement of competitive power is to use superior competence or corporate capabilities. Furthermore, superior competence also provides opportunities for the company to generate and act on knowledge of competitors' actions and reactions, which will help it build competitive strategies. Thus, it can be concluded that competitiveness will be realized if companies are able to identify knowledge-based resources that are unique, difficult to replace, and difficult to replicate by competitors (Barney, 1991). This research identifies the work behavior of innovation and relational capital as knowledge-based assets that are believed to be able to increase the competitiveness of MSMEs.

The ability of MSMEs to build competitiveness is related to the ability of individuals involved in them to have innovative behavior (De Jong & Den Hartog, 2010). Individuals need to be directed to produce new things that are more useful at all levels of the organization. Concrete examples of innovation work behavior include mobilizing individuals to have high creativity in product design and marketing techniques (Kleysen & Street, 2001). Thus, each individual can be more adaptive and have the opportunity to make changes towards better performance. It can also discover new knowledge, new skills, and behaviors. Empirical studies prove that innovative behavior for MSME actors is still very low, where it is characterized by a state of hesitation in deciding new things and mixed emotions in the decision making of family owners (Hu, Hughes, & Hughes, 2023). Our findings have significant ramifications for developing theories and improving the application of emotional sentiments that family businesses and family management-based MSMEs might share. Such conditions need to be corrected immediately because initiation work behavior is an important area of company innovation, both as a necessary tool to compete and as a determinant of competitiveness (Wang, Fang, & Zhang, 2022).

The benefits of innovative behavior in growing competitiveness will be easily achieved if the company has a good relationship with the surrounding environment, commonly referred to as sufficient relational capital (Bontis & Fitz-enz, 2002). Included in the category of relational capital are market relations, power relations, and cooperation between companies and the public, bank financial institutions and non-bank financial institutions, private and government institutions, etc. The importance of relational capital for MSMEs is more than just an information tool that plays an important role in MSME management (AlQershi, Mokhtar, & Abas, 2020). This ability needs to be preserved and developed in a corporate culture so that emotional closeness occurs. It is necessary to create a climate of dependence between the company and the external environment so that a cooperative and collaborative cooperation system is formed (Torres, Espinosa, Dornberger, & Acosta, 2017).

Ramírez-Solis, Llonch-Andreu, and Malpica-Romero (2022) give an explanation for the function of MSMEs as engines of monetary increase and process creation. Therefore, we want to better recognize the elements that pressure innovation in MSMEs. This condition does not occur in MSMEs Tas and Suitcases Tanggulangin Sidoarjo. The Covid-19 pandemic, which has proven to reduce people's ability to meet their basic needs, has a direct effect on the decline in sales turnover of bags and luggage. Data obtained through the INTAKO Cooperative as the center of administration and sales of administration and sales of Tanggulangin Bag and Luggage MSME products shows a decrease in sales turnover by 80% from the pre-pandemic era to the pandemic era. That is why, after the pandemic, innovation sports have turned out to be more crucial than ever as a powerhouse of competitiveness, providing an explanation for the position of MSMEs as engines of monetary boom and process creation. Therefore, we want to better understand the elements that force innovation in MSMEs.

This research is interesting to do because the existence of MSMEs Bags and Suitcases is the main livelihood of the Tanggulangin sub-district community, and the characteristics of the Tanggulangin Community need to be improved. Studies of literature and empirical evidence on the need for relational capital and innovation performance behavior in improving competitiveness gave rise to hypotheses that:

1. Innovative work behavior increasing competitiveness.
2. Relational capital has an effect on increasing competitiveness.
3. Relational capital increases the influence of innovative behavior on increasing competitiveness.

## 2. LITERATURE REVIEW

### 2.1. Innovative Behavior

Innovative behavior is the process of individuals recognizing problems, generating new ideas, promoting ideas and working so that those ideas can be applied to achieve organizational goals (Janssen, 2004; Yuan & Woodman, 2010). Other definitions are explained by De Jong and Den Hartog (2010) that innovative behavior is the behavior of individuals who aim to initiate and introduce new ideas, products, processes, and procedures to be useful to the organization. Örnek and Ayas (2015) convey innovative behavior as individual actions in the form of creating, processing, and implementing new ideas related to procedures, products, technology, and work processes aimed at increasing organizational effectiveness and success.

Based on a number of those understandings, it may be concluded that modern conduct is an individual's movement in developing new ideas, promoting or introducing them, and implementing these ideas in their organizations to improve organizational effectiveness and progress. Aspects of innovative behavior according to Janssen (2004), include:

#### 2.1.1. Generate Ideas

The system of producing new thoughts starts with the creation of work-associated problems. Then the individual creates new ideas as a solution to the problem. Nonconformities, discounts, and changes in organizations often trigger the formation of new ideas.

#### 2.1.2. Promote Ideas

After generating ideas, individuals should introduce and promote the new ideas to superiors. In addition, in the promotion process, individuals seek strong support from existing resources, such as superiors and co-workers, so that the new idea is implemented in the organization.

#### 2.1.3. Bringing Ideas to Life

Individuals develop prototypes on an ongoing basis, actualize products and services from new ideas that have been generated and promoted, and create new models to provide different value inside and outside the organization.

## 2.2. Relational Capital

Reed, Lubatkin, and Srinivasan (2006) argue that Intellectual Capital is the most effective supply of aggressive benefit and delivered cost for groups due to the fact it's miles tough to copy and replace, while bodily capital is a widely wide-spread aid that is straightforward to copy, substitute, and may be without difficulty bought at the open market. Mention and Bontis (2013) state that Intellectual Capital is capable of offering new assets for an employer to compete and win the competition, even though it is on occasion tough to understand. Human capital is identified as a key factor of Intellectual Capital, Social capital is identified as the infrastructure that encourages human assets to create and make use of understanding; and relational capital refers to an employer's capacity to have interaction with diverse outside stakeholders (which include customers, suppliers, competitors, ternates, and enterprise associations) in addition to the understanding protected in those relationships. RC is a key component of reputation-building and impacts customer loyalty. Empirical evidence shows that stakeholder loyalty is critical to organizational performance.

This detail is part of highbrow capital that offers an actual price. Customer capital, or relational capital, is a harmonious dating or affiliation community owned with the aid of using the agency with enterprise partners, each from the agency's inner surroundings and from the agency's outside surroundings, including suppliers, glad customers, agency members of the family with the government, and the encircling network that may grow the price of the agency (Dumay, 2012). Relational capital is a harmonious courting or affiliation community owned by the corporation with its partners (Dumay, 2012; Kamukama, 2013). Both from dependable providers who're qualified, come from dependable clients and are glad with the offerings of the corporation concerned, and come from the corporation's dating with the authorities and with the encompassing community.

## 2.3. Increased Competitiveness

Competitiveness is the ability of companies and industries to be able to compete and survive against similar business competition in order to produce high opinions by optimizing existing resources (Matos & Vairinhos, 2017; Skudiene, Augutytė-Kvedaravičiene, DemeSko, & Suchockis, 2018). Competition that occurs is an indication that there is more than one company in a certain place, which means that the company must be able to compete and survive in competition so as to produce quality products, even though there are many similar products.

According to the Council of Competitiveness, Washington DC, the excessive stage of competitiveness of small and medium-sized businesses may be maintained via the success of 4 kinds of capabilities, namely: a) The company's capacity to boom marketplace share, earnings, and value-delivered boom in a sustainable manner. b) The company's capacity to get right of entry to and manipulate its diverse assets and capabilities. c) The company's strategic capacity to evaluate its level of competitiveness as compared to different firms. d) The company's capacity to constantly create an aggressive advantage.

## 3. THEORETICAL FOUNDATIONS AND MODEL

### 3.1. Research Design

This is a survey research study where data was collected by distributing questionnaires to 84 MSME business actors or business owners of Tanggulangin bags and suitcases, Sidoarjo who are registered as members of the INTAKO Cooperative. The conceptual framework of the research is presented in Figure 1, namely:

Figure 1 explains that strengthening the competitiveness of MSMEs can be achieved through innovative work behavior and relational capital. On the other hand, relational capital functions as a reinforcement of the relationship between initiative work behavior and increasing competitiveness. Table 1 also explains that several research variables were analyzed in this study, namely:

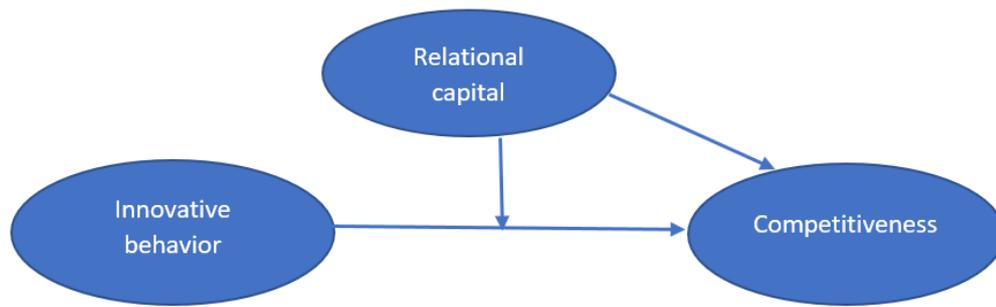


Figure 1. Conceptual framework.

Table 1. Research instrument indicators for each variable.

Variable	Operational definition	Indicators
Competitiveness	the company's ability to compete by optimizing its resources	1. Innovation 2. Business environment Technology
Innovative behavior	The process of individuals recognizing problems, generating new ideas, promoting ideas, and implementing them in the organization	1. Generate ideas 2. Promote the idea Realize the idea
Relational capital	It is a harmonious dating among the agency and commercial enterprise partners, each from the inner surroundings and from the external	1. Relationship 2. Satisfaction Business collaboration

### 3.2. Dissertation on Research Results

Recapitulation of research data processed from the results of filling out questionnaires by 84 respondents is presented in Table 2 to 4:

Table 2. Description of MSME competitiveness variables.

No	Statement item	Strongly disagree	Don't agree	N	Agree	Strongly agree	Average
1	We have products that are ready to compete with similar products on the market	0	2	10	34	38	4.29
2	We never had trouble getting raw materials	0	5	15	27	37	4.14
3	We have employees with adequate skill levels	0	6	9	31	38	4.20
4	We do not experience difficulties in terms of financing (Working capital)	0	6	17	29	32	4.04
5	Innovation is very important in business development	0	3	11	35	35	4.21
6	Innovation is very important in business development	0	7	13	26	46	4.61

Table 2 explains that MSMEs' capacity for social media marketing determines how competitive they are. The statement item about this obtained an average value of 4.61, meaning that it strongly agrees. On the other hand, although still in the 'good' category with an average value of 4.04, the capital adequacy indicator is considered to be at least able to measure competitiveness. This result also proves that respondents have been able or hope to be able to do marketing on social media well.

**Table 3.** Variable description innovative behavior.

No	Statement item	Strongly disagree	Don't agree	N	Agree	Strongly agree	Average
1	I have the opportunity to put forward new ideas for doing business in business forums	0	2	20	34	18	3.45
2	I like doing new things related to work	0	5	20	27	32	4.02
3	I am willing to accept and adapt to new ideas	0	6	19	31	28	3.96
4	I have expertise in supporting work	0	6	17	29	32	4.04
5	I have high motivation to finish the job before the deadline	0	3	16	35	30	4.10
6	I always fight for new ideas fiercely	0	7	13	25	39	4.14

According to Table 3 MSME actors' tenacity in pushing for the immediate realization of new ideas is what largely determines innovative behavior. This statement received an average score of 4.14 points, reflecting respondents' understanding that ideas alone are not enough to ensure business continuity. The existing idea must be fought for earnestly in order to be realized. On the other hand, the statement that respondents have the opportunity to express their new ideas in front of leaders or in forums gets the lowest average score of 3.45 points. This might suggest that MSME actors do not fully own an open organizational culture.

**Table 4.** Relational capital variable description.

No	Statement items	Strongly disagree	Don't agree	N	Agree	Strongly agree	Average
1	I always maintain communication with internal and external parties of the company	0	2	19	20	43	4.24
2	The company is responsible for the quality of service it provides to customers	0	5	20	27	32	4.02
3	We always maintain the company's reputation so that it looks good in the eyes of the public	0	7	13	20	44	4.20
4	The company environment is very influential on my creativity	0	2	15	23	44	4.30
5	The company provides good service to the community	0	3	16	35	30	4.10
6	We collaborate with other parties in planning business development	0	2	19	20	43	4.14

Table 4 explains that relational capital is most formed by the surrounding environment. The statement of environmental impact on work creativity received the highest average score, which was as much as 4.30 points. Meanwhile, the statement that the company is responsible for service quality gets the lowest point at 4.02 points. This value gives meaning to the need for coaching on the quality of service to MSME actors. To maintain a good relationship between the two, awareness that the company's environment has a significant impact on business success is necessary. Thus, the role of the surrounding environment in maintaining business sustainability can be realized.

**Table 5.** Significance value of structural model.

Indicator	Original sample (o) / Path coefficient	T statistics ( O/ STDEV )	P values	Information
IB -> CO	0.051	0.783	0.047	Significant
RC -> CO	0.809	19.085	0.000	Significant
Moderating effect_IB*RC -> CO	0.024	0.419	0.143	Not significant

Note: IB (Innovative behavior); CO (Competitive organisation); RC (Relational capital).

## 4. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

### 4.1. Data Analysis

Table 5 describes the value of functional relationships between variables in order to determine the magnitude of the role of one variable in forming other variables. IB and RC variables contributed directly and positively to CO by 5.1% and 80.9%, respectively. The strong direct influence between RC and CO was not able to strengthen the magnitude of IB's influence on CO. The moderation value of this variable is only 2.4%, with a significance level of 0.143 greater than 0.05 as the threshold for the level of significance.

### 4.2. Discussion

This research proves that innovative behavior has a significant effect on increasing the competitiveness of MSMEs Bag and Suitcase Craftsmen Tanggulangin Sidoarjo. Craftsmen must be able to produce bright new ideas to solve MSME problems and increase competitiveness. The ideas that have been generated need to be continuously fought for so that they can be implemented well and evaluated for sustainability (De Jong & Den Hartog, 2010; Janssen, 2004). For instance, it is evident from the findings of a survey that researchers conducted prior to the distribution of the questionnaire that the majority of artisan bag and suitcase designs are less modern and rough. This will certainly have an impact on the difficulty of sales because it is not in accordance with consumer tastes, so there needs to be an improvement solution (Khalil, 2014). Not to forget, all ideas that have been planned should be implemented on time.

In order to build competitiveness, MSME actors in Tanggulangin Sidoarjo Bags and Suitcases must have a good social network (Davidsson & Honig, 2003). The importance of this relational relationship is discussed in detail in Management Science and Accounting as one of the knowledge-based capitals that can be used as a differentiator between one company and another. Some mutually beneficial cooperation can be built through cooperation, ultimately increasing sales turnover (Kiptot & Franzel, 2014). This ability to build cooperation is unique and difficult for competitors to replicate, making it a competitive advantage (Bontis & Serenko, 2009). So great is the influence of the company's ability to build relational relationships that it is unable to moderate the influence of innovative behavior on increasing competitiveness.

## 5. CONCLUSION

The research conducted at the Tanggulangin Sidoarjo Bag and Suitcase Craftsman MSMEs produced several conclusions, namely:

1. Innovative conduct has a fantastic impact on growing the competitiveness of MSMEs.
2. Relational capital has a fantastic impact on growing the competitiveness of MSMEs.
3. Relational capital does not increase the magnitude of the influence of innovative behavior on increasing the competitiveness of MSMEs.

## 6. IMPLICATION

The results of this study prove how important relational relationships are, which in this study are categorized as intangible capital for increasing competitiveness. MSME actors can use the results of this research as a basis for thinking that the role of the surrounding community, customers, and even the government is very valuable for the development of MSMEs. Therefore, high awareness is needed for MSME players to improve the quality of their services to customers in order to build better relational relationships while not ignoring the importance of innovation.

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