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The Role of Supply Chain Management Practices on Competitive Advantage and Performance of Agroindustry SMEs

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Abstract - Effective supply chain management (SCM) has become a potentially valuable way to secure competitive advantage and improve organizational performance because competition is no longer between organizations but between supply chains. This study examines the relationship between the influence of SCM practices on competitive advantage and organizational performance. The data for this study were collected from 165 employees in one of the MSMEs in the Agroindustry in Indonesia. Survey data were analyzed using partial least squares structural equation modeling (PLS-SEM). The results suggest that higher levels of SCM practices can lead to increased competitive advantage and improved organizational performance. Also, competitive advantage can have a direct positive impact on organizational performance. This study also confirms the mediating effect of competitive advantage on the relationship between SCM practices and organizational performance.

Keywords: *Competitive advantage, organizational performance, supply chain management practices*

I. INTRODUCTION

The era of the industrial revolution 4.0 has made almost all business organizations begin to realize that it is not enough to increase efficiency in an organization, but also that their entire supply chain must be made competitive. The understanding and practice of supply chain management (SCM) have become an important prerequisite to remaining competitive in global competition and at the same time to increasing profits (Kuo, 2016; Muafi et al., 2020). The Council of Logistics Management (CLM) (Goldsby & Stank, 2000) defines SCM as a strategically coordinating system of traditional business functions and tactics across these business functions within a given organization and across businesses in the supply chain to improve the long-term performance of each organization and the supply chain as a whole. SCM has been defined to explicitly recognize the strategic nature of coordination between trading partners and to explain the objectives of SCM: to improve individual organizational performance, and to improve organizational performance throughout the supply chain (Hong et al., 2019; Soares et al., 2017). The goal of SCM is to integrate information and material flows smoothly throughout the supply chain as an effective competitive advantage (Al-Hafidh, 2018; Li et al., 2006). The concept of SCM has received wide attention from many academics, consultants, and business managers (Schoenherr et al., 2014). Many organizations have begun to recognize that SCM is the key to building a sustainable competitive advantage for their products and/or services in an increasingly crowded marketplace. However, despite the increased attention paid to SCM, the literature has not been able to offer much about SCM practices in MSMEs, let alone Agro-industry MSMEs. Much of the current theoretical/empirical research on SCM only focuses on the upstream or downstream side of the supply chain, or aspects/perspectives of SCM (Matriadi et al., 2019). Topics such as supplier selection, supplier engagement, and manufacturing performance, the influence of supplier alliances on organizations, success factors in strategic supplier alliances, supplier management orientation, and supplier/buyer performance are among the examples (Jali, 2017). Therefore, this study aims to empirically examine a framework that identifies the relationship between SCM practices, competitive advantage, and organizational performance. SCM practices are defined as a set of activities

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undertaken by an organization to promote the effective management of its supply chain. SCM practice is proposed to be a multi-dimensional concept, including the downstream and upstream sides of the supply chain. Operational measures for construction were developed and tested empirically, using data collected from respondents through a survey questionnaire. Structural equation modeling was used to test the hypothesized relationships. It is hoped that the current research, will help researchers better understand the scope and activities associated with SCM and enable researchers to examine the antecedents and consequences of SCM practices. Furthermore, by offering a validated instrument to measure SCM practices, and by providing empirical evidence of the impact of SCM practices on an organization's competitive advantage and its performance, it is hoped that this research will offer a useful guide to measuring and implementing SCM Practices in an organization, particularly agro-industry MSME organizations to facilitate further research in this area.

II. LITERATURE REVIEW AND HYPOTHESES DEVELOPMENT

SCM Practices

SCM practices have been defined as a set of activities carried out within an organization to promote the effective management of its supply chain. Tan et al. (2002) identified six aspects of SCM practice through factor analysis: supply chain integration, information sharing, supply chain characteristics, customer service management, geographical proximity, and JIT capabilities. Chen & Paulraj (2004) used supplier base reduction, long-term relationships, communication, cross-functional teams, and supplier involvement to measure buyer-supplier relationships. Thus the literature describes SCM practices from different perspectives with a common goal of ultimately improving organizational performance. In reviewing and consolidating the literature, five different dimensions, including strategic supplier partnerships, customer relations, level of information sharing, quality of information sharing, and delays, were selected. to measure SCM practices. The five constructs include upstream (strategic supplier partnerships) and downstream (customer relations) sides of the supply chain, information flows across the supply chain (level of information sharing and quality of information sharing), and internal supply chain processes (delays) (Li et al., 2006).

Competitive Advantage

Competitive advantage is the extent to which an organization can create a defensible position over its competitors (Lo, 2016). It consists of capabilities that enable an organization to differentiate itself from its competitors and is the result of critical management decisions. The empirical literature has been fairly consistent in identifying price/cost, quality, delivery, and flexibility as important competitive capabilities. In addition, recent research has included time-based competition as an important competitive priority. Several studies have identified time as the next source of competitive advantage (Ofori et al., 2015; Talaja et al., 2017). Based on the previous literature, Saber et al. (2014) describes a research framework for competitive capability and define the following five dimensions: competitive pricing, premium pricing, value-to-customer quality, reliable delivery, and product innovation. This dimension is also described by (Li et al., 2006). Based on the description above, the dimensions of competitive advantage construction used in this research study are price/cost, quality, delivery dependence, product innovation, and time to market.

Organizational Performance

Organizational performance refers to how well an organization achieves its market-oriented goals as well as its financial goals (Choi et al., 2018; Khan et al., 2018; Para-González et al., 2018). The short-term goals of SCM are: mainly to increase productivity and reduce inventory and cycle times, while the long-term goals are to increase market share and profits for all supply chain members (Li et al., 2006). Financial metrics have served as a tool for comparing organizations and evaluating organizational behavior over time. Any organization's initiatives, including supply chain management, should ultimately lead to improved organizational performance. Some previous studies have measured organizational performance using financial and market criteria, including return on investment (ROI), market share, the profit margin on sales, ROI growth, sales growth, market share growth, and overall competitive position (Jing, Fenwick Feng and Avery, 2008; Khan et al., 2018; Mills & Smith, 2011; Ullah, 2019). In line with the above literature, the same items will be adopted to measure organizational performance in this study.

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In connection with this research, the following hypotheses were developed:

H1: SCM practices have a significant effect on competitive advantage.

H2: SCM practices have a significant effect on organizational performance.

H3: Competitive advantage has a significant effect on organizational performance.

H4: Competitive advantage mediates the relationship between the influence of SCM practices on organizational performance.

For more details, this research model can be described simply through the following scheme:

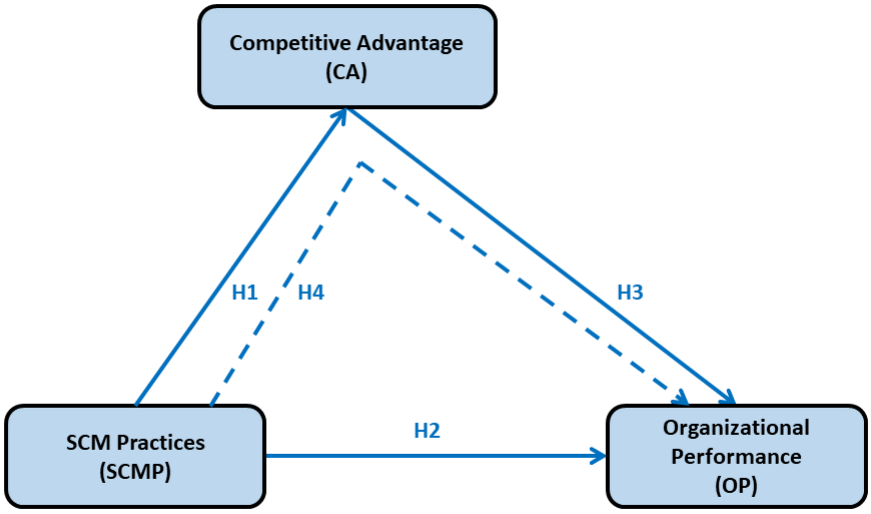

Figure 1. The proposed mediation model

III. RESEARCH METHOD

A quantitative approach and survey methodology were used to collect employee data. For this study, 245 sets of questionnaires were given and 165 sets of returned and valid ones were given. So, as many as 67.3% of employees were involved in this study as respondents. Employees were asked to voluntarily fill out a questionnaire containing statements about demographics, SCM practices, competitive advantage, and organizational performance. The questionnaire contains the names of the respondents on the back which is only used for identification and matching purposes. Complete confidentiality is guaranteed where the names of the respondents are only owned by the researcher. All study constructs were measured on a five-point Likert scale. All measurement items were adapted from previous research after studying the evolution of the variables discussed. The instrument that measures SCM practice was developed by Li et al. (2006). The instrument that measures competitive advantage and organizational performance was adopted by Zhang (2001).

The questionnaire is designed to be closed except for questions/statements regarding the identity of the respondents in the form of a semi-open questionnaire. Each item of closed questions/statements is given five answer options,

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namely: strongly agree score (5), agree on the score (4), neutral score (3), disagree score (2) and strongly disagree score (1). The method for processing data is PLS and uses the SmartPLS software version 3.0 as the tool.

IV. RESULT AND DISCUSSIONS

A total of 165 employees participated, consisting of men (61.2%) and women (38.8%). Respondents have different age groups, ranging from under the age of 29 years (54%%), 30-49 years (41.8%), and over 50 years (4.2%). Their length of employment also varies, 34% of them are under 5 years, 50% have worked between 5-10 years, and the remaining 16% have worked more than 10 years. The highest education of respondents is the majority of senior high school (High School/College) level, which is 75%, and the remaining 25% are undergraduates.

The measurement model testing phase includes testing convergent validity and discriminant validity. Meanwhile, to test construct reliability, Cronbach's alpha and composite reliability were used. The results of the PLS analysis can be used to test research hypotheses if all indicators in the PLS model have met the requirements of convergent validity, discriminant validity, and reliability testing. A convergent validity test is done by looking at the loading factor value of each indicator to the construct. In most references, a factor weight of 0.7 or more is considered to have strong enough validation to explain latent constructs (Chin, 1998; Ghozali, 2014; Hair et al., 2010). In this study, the minimum accepted loading factor is 0.7 and provided that the AVE value of each construct is > 0.5 (Ghozali, 2014). After going through the processing of SmartPLS 3.0. all indicators have loading factor values above 0.7 and AVE values above 0.5. The fit or valid model of this study can be seen in Figure 2. Thus, the convergent validity of this research model has met the requirements (Purwanto et al., 2019, 2020; Purwanto, Asbari, & Santoso, 2021b, 2021a; Purwanto, Asbari, Santoso, et al., 2021). The value of loadings, Cronbach's alpha, composite reliability, and AVE for each construct can be seen in Table 1.

Discriminant validity is carried out to ensure that each concept of each latent variable is different from other latent variables. The model has good discriminant validity if the AVE squared value of each exogenous construct (the value on the diagonal) exceeds the correlation between the construct and other constructs (the value below the diagonal) (Ghozali, 2014). The results of the discriminant validity test are using the AVE quadratic value, namely by looking at the Fornell-Larcker Criterion Value obtained as shown in Table 3. The discriminant validity test results in table 3 show that all constructs have the AVE square root value above the correlation value with the other latent constructs (via the Fornell-Larcker criteria). Likewise, the cross-loading value of all items from one indicator is greater than the other indicator items as mentioned in Table 3, so it can be concluded that the model has met discriminant validity (Fornell & Larcker, 1981).

Furthermore, a collinearity evaluation is carried out to determine whether there is a collinearity problem in the model. To find the collinearity, we need the VIF collinearity statistic for each construct. If the VIF is more than 5, then the model has collinearity (Hair et al., 2014). As shown in Table 4, all VIF scores are less than 5, ie the results of the collinearity structural model reveal VIF values below 2. This shows that this research model does not have multicollinearity problems.

Construct reliability can be assessed from the value of Cronbach's alpha and composite reliability of each construct. The recommended value of composite reliability and Cronbach's alpha is more than 0.7 (Ghozali, 2014). The reliability test results in table 1 show that all constructs have composite reliability and Cronbach's alpha values greater than 0.7 (> 0.7). In conclusion, all constructs have met the required reliability (Purwanto et al., 2019, 2020; Purwanto, Asbari, & Santoso, 2021b; Purwanto, Asbari, Santoso, et al., 2021).

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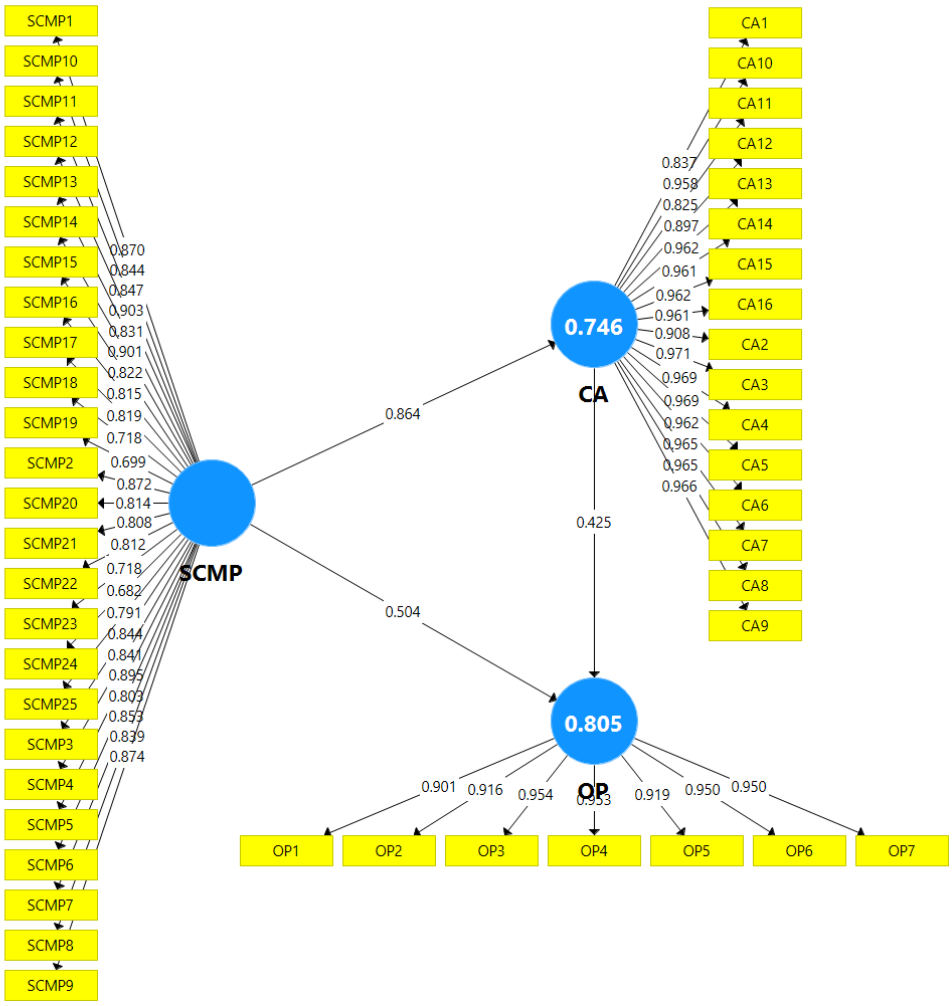

Figure 2. Valid Research Model
Source: SmartPLS 3.0 Processing Results (2022)

Table 1. Items Loadings, Cronbach's Alpha, Composite Reliability, and Average Variance Extracted (AVE)

Variables	Cronbach's Alpha	Rho_A	Composite Reliability	AVE
CA	0,991	0,992	0,992	0,885
OP	0,976	0,976	0,980	0,875
SCMP	0,980	0,981	0,981	0,677

Source: SmartPLS 3.0 Processing Results (2022)

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Table 2. Discriminant Validity

Variables	CA	OP	SCMP
CA	0,941		
OP	0,860	0,935	
SCMP	0,864	0,871	0,823

Source: SmartPLS 3.0 Processing Results (2022)

Table 3. Collinearity (VIF)

Variables	CA	OP	SCMP
CA		3,938	
OP			
SCMP	1,000	3,938	

Source: SmartPLS 3.0 Processing Results (2022)

Table 4. *R Square* Value

Variables	R Square	R Square Adjusted
CA	0,746	0,745
OP	0,805	0,803

Source: SmartPLS 3.0 Processing Results (2022)

Table 5. Hypotheses Testing

Hypotheses	Relationship	Original Sample (O)	Sample Mean (M)	Standard Deviation (STDEV)	T Statistics (|O/STDEV|)	P Values	Decision
H1	SCMP -> CA	0,864	0,864	0,018	47,331	0,000	Supported
H2	SCMP -> OP	0,504	0,505	0,074	6,828	0,000	Supported
H3	CA -> OP	0,425	0,425	0,074	5,721	0,000	Supported
H4	SCMP -> CA -> OP	0,367	0,367	0,064	5,761	0,000	Supported

Source: SmartPLS 3.0 Processing Results (2022)

Hypothesis testing in PLS is also known as inner model testing. This test includes a test of the significance of direct and indirect effects as well as measuring the magnitude of the effect of exogenous variables on endogenous variables. To determine the effect of SCM practices on organizational performance and the mediation of competitive advantage, a direct and indirect effect test is needed. The effect test was carried out using the t-statistical test in the partial least squared (PLS) analysis model using the SmartPLS 3.0 software. With the bootstrapping technique, the R Square value and significance test values were obtained in Table 4 and Table 5. The result is that all hypotheses (H1, H2, H3, H4) are supported.

Based on Table 4 above, the value of R Square's competitive advantage (CA) is 0.745 which means that the competitive advantage (CA) variable can be explained by the SCM practices (SCMP) variable of 74.5%, while the remaining 25.5% is explained by other variables not discussed in this research. This means that the substance of influence in the relationship model in this research model is fairly strong (Chin, 1998). Meanwhile, the R Square value of organizational performance (OP) is 0.803, which means that organizational performance (OP) variables can be explained by SCM practices (SCMP) and competitive advantage (CA) variables of 80.3%, while the remaining 19.7% is explained by other variables which were not discussed in this study. This means that the substance of the influence in the relationship model in this research model is fairly strong (Chin, 1998). Meanwhile, Table 5 shows the t-statistics and p-values that show the influence between the research variables that have been mentioned.

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SCM practices not only have an impact on the organization's overall performance, but also the competitive advantage of an organization. SCM practices can increase an organization's competitive advantage through price/cost, quality, delivery dependability, time to market, and product innovation. Previous studies have shown that various components of SCM practice (such as strategic supplier partnerships) impact various aspects of competitive advantage (such as price/cost). For example, strategic supplier partnerships can improve supplier performance, reduce time to market, and increase levels of customer responsiveness and satisfaction (Matriadi et al., 2019; Zhu et al., 2018). Good supply chain integration enables organizations to make reliable deliveries and get products to market quickly. Next, organizations that have a competitive advantage generally show that an organization can have advantages over their competitors, namely: lower prices, higher quality, higher reliability, and shorter delivery. This capability, in turn, will improve the organization's overall performance capabilities. Competitive advantage can lead to high levels of economic performance, customer satisfaction and loyalty, and relationship effectiveness. An organization that can offer high-quality products can charge a premium price and thereby increase its profit margin on sales and return on investment (Asbari et al., 2021a, 2021b). An organization that has a quick reach to the market can be first in the market and thus gain market share and higher volume sales. Therefore, a positive relationship between competitive advantage and organizational performance can be proposed.

V. CONCLUSION

This study provides an empirical justification for the framework that identifies the relationship between the influence of SCM practices on competitive advantage and organizational performance. At the same time confirming the mediating effect of competitive advantage in the relationship between SCM practices and organizational performance. This study has answered at least three research questions: (1) whether organizations with high levels of SCM practices have high levels of organizational performance; (2) whether organizations with a high level of SCM practice have a high level of competitive advantage as well; (3) does an organization with a high level of competitive advantage have a high level of organizational performance as well? (4) Does an organization with a competitive advantage level strengthen the influence of SCM practices on organizational performance? To investigate this issue comprehensively, a valid and reliable instrument has been used to assess SCM practices developed in one of the Agroindustry MSMEs in Indonesia. This instrument was tested using rigorous statistical tests including convergent validity, discriminant validity, reliability, and construct validation. This study provides empirical evidence to support the conceptual and prescriptive statements in the literature about the impact of SCM practices. Suggestions for further research, because this study only involves the perspective of employees. Future research is recommended to use the perspective of a broader industry organization, not only in manufacturing, but also in services and telecommunications.

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