



# Impact Analysis Of Partnership Between Small Retailers And The Sampoerna Retail Community Distribution Company In Sukoharjo Regency

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## ABSTRACT

This study aims to analyze the impact of a strategic partnership between small retailers (MSMEs) and the Sampoerna Retail Community (SRC) distribution company in Sukoharjo Regency. This partnership serves as a strategy for empowering MSMEs through coaching, mentoring, and digitalization of store operations. The study used a descriptive qualitative approach with data collection techniques through in-depth interviews, observation, and documentation of three SRC partner grocery store owners. The results show that the partnership has a positive impact on store modernization, operational efficiency through the "AYO TOKO" digital application, increased sales, and consumer loyalty. However, this partnership also poses challenges such as demands for standard adjustments and dependence on the SRC distribution system. These findings reinforce the theory of strategic partnerships, where collaboration between entities can create mutual competitive advantages. This study recommends the importance of strengthening the adaptive capacity of small retailers and the need for two-way participation in the formulation of partnership policies to ensure sustainability and fairness in business relationships.

## INTRODUCTION

Small retailers (MSMEs) are businesses run by individuals, households, or small-scale businesses. MSMEs are a crucial aspect of developing a country's economy. These businesses help the government address existing economic disparities. In addition to increasing annual GDP, these businesses also provide jobs for Indonesians (Sudartono et al. 2022) In their book, they state that MSMEs can contribute to annual GDP growth.

MSMEs play a crucial role in supporting economic growth. They contribute to labor absorption and are a sector that can distribute development outcomes. As a business sector favored by Bank Indonesia and capable of driving economic growth, MSMEs must continue to

exist and receive government support for their growth, as well as fostering an awareness of MSMEs in the community through funding assistance, streamlined business permit processing, mentoring, and training that are constructive and encourage the future progress of MSMEs. MSMEs are expected to benefit national resources, including utilizing labor in accordance with the interests of the people and achieving maximum economic growth (Negeri, Syarif, and Riau 2025).

Small retailers, including GROCERY STORES, as a form of Micro, Small, and Medium Enterprises (MSMEs), play a vital role in the local economy. By offering a diverse range of products, from food to daily necessities, grocery stores not only meet community needs but also create jobs. Furthermore, grocery stores (MSMEs) have demonstrated a significant contribution to the economy through employment creation. Approximately 25 million MSMEs in Indonesia contribute significantly to the economy. MSMEs account for approximately 90% of all companies in Indonesia, providing employment opportunities, absorbing more than 90% of the total workforce in Indonesia. Their contribution to GDP exceeds 20% of total national income. As a vital pillar of the Indonesian economy, according to the Ministry of Cooperatives and MSMEs, the number of MSMEs has reached 64.2 million, contributing to GDP (Novitasari 2022).

Convenience stores, as part of MSMEs, make a significant contribution to the economy by creating jobs and driving local economic growth. MSMEs serve as a link between producers and consumers, distributing products at affordable prices and of good quality. The presence of small retailers (convenience stores) helps circulate money within the community, strengthening purchasing power. Through the taxes they pay, they also support infrastructure development and public services. Thus, small retailers (convenience stores) not only maintain the sustainability of the local economy but also contribute to overall economic stability. MSMEs are at the forefront of economic development due to their ability to absorb labor and distribute development outcomes, as well as their significant contribution to Gross Domestic Product (GDP) (Yolanda 2024).

Therefore, to increase the contribution of grocery stores to the economy, PT Sampoerna Tbk is implementing a partnership program, coaching, and mentoring. This partnership program provides coaching and support to the community, enabling them to continuously strive to improve the competitiveness of MSMEs. The Sampoerna Retail Community (SRC) is a partnership program between distribution companies and small retailers (MSMEs) for collaborative growth (Syarif 2023)

MSMEs are not left alone but are provided with training, mentoring, and education to compete in the market, empowering the community and boosting the economy. Several programs offered by PT Sampoerna to SRC (Sampoerna Retail Community) members address governance, sales management, marketing, store organization, and business development procedures to compete with modern stores (rizki cahaya 2023).

The purpose of this study is to explore the impact of the partnership between the Sampoerna Retail Community (SRC) and small retailers on improving business performance and competitiveness. This study aims to analyze how the SRC partnership program impacts aspects such as product access, governance, sales management, marketing, and business development to enable it to compete with modern stores.

## LITERATURE REVIEW

Micro, Small, and Medium Enterprises (MSMEs) are a crucial pillar of the Indonesian economy. More than 90% of Indonesian businesses are in this sector, contributing significantly to national GDP and absorbing significant employment (Novitasari 2022). Grocery stores, as a form of small retail business, are a concrete representation of MSMEs, deeply embedded in local economic dynamics. The role of grocery stores is not only to provide basic necessities for the community but also as microeconomic distribution hubs that support the circulation of money at the community level (Negeri et al. 2025)

As competition from modern stores increases, MSMEs face challenges to survive and remain competitive. One emerging approach to addressing this challenge is strategic partnerships. (Dyer and Singh 1998) define strategic partnerships as a form of long-term cooperation based on collaborative resources and competencies to achieve mutual competitive advantage. In the context of grocery stores, strategic partnerships are implemented through synergies between large companies and MSMEs with the aim of improving business management quality, distribution efficiency, and digital technology adoption (Suherlan et al. 2020). The Sampoerna Retail Community (SRC) is one example of a partnership that has been widely implemented in Indonesia. This program promotes mentoring grocery stores through training, visual merchandising assistance (the "Neat, Clean, and Bright" concept), and digital ordering through the AYO TOKO app. Research by (Posroha and Ardansyah 2023) shows that the SRC program improves store appearance and shopping experience, which impacts customer loyalty. Furthermore, (Asih 2024) found that digitizing the stock recording and ordering process through the app speeds up store operations and reduces the risk of stockouts.

This partnership also introduces incentive systems such as a points-based loyalty program. (Hendrawan and Anggraeni 2020) stated that loyalty programs designed with reward systems can increase partner satisfaction and strengthen engagement within the distribution ecosystem. In the case of SRC, points or coins that can be exchanged for goods or cash encourage small retailers to remain active in the system, while also increasing business motivation. A study by (Mujiyanto et al. 2023) also confirms that store loyalty to suppliers can be built through efficient digital services and attractive incentives, especially in the era of digital transformation for MSMEs. However, the dynamics of partnerships are not always balanced. Despite offering many benefits, relationships between large companies and MSMEs have the potential to create dependency. This is evident in the company's dominance in setting store standards, operational systems, and the direction of business transformation. (Muhammad Rifat et al. 2023) in their research criticized the potential for inequality in MSME partnerships, where strategic decisions are largely dictated by large distributors. (Rosabeth Moss Kanter 1994) suggested that healthy partnerships should enable small partners to grow independently, rather than simply become followers in a unilaterally controlled ecosystem.

Based on this literature review, it is clear that strategic partnerships such as SRC have a positive impact on the transformation of grocery stores, from physical aspects to digitalization and increased competitiveness. However, the success of these partnerships also depends heavily on the active involvement of small retailers, open dialogue, and a sustainable empowerment approach to avoid creating unequal relationships. This literature provides an important basis for analyzing the impact of SRC partnerships in Sukoharjo Regency more empirically and contextually.

## **METHODS**

A research method is essentially a scientific way to obtain data for a specific purpose and purpose. This study employed a qualitative research method. Qualitative research guides researchers to explore and record the situation being studied comprehensively, broadly, and in-depth. Qualitative research is also scientific research built on theories developed from previous research and controlled by empirical evidence (Syarif 2023).

This type of research employed a descriptive qualitative approach. Descriptive qualitative analysis involves analyzing and presenting facts systematically so they can be more easily understood and summarized. The descriptive method aims to describe and explain the conditions at the grocery store (Syarif 2023). This method was used to describe what had occurred to obtain all the facts related to the impact of the distribution company (Sampoerna Retail Community) on grocery stores in Sukoharjo Regency.

Data processing using a descriptive qualitative method is an approach that focuses on an in-depth understanding of the phenomenon being studied. The data processing process begins

with data collection through interviews, observations, and document analysis, which is then processed to describe the experiences, perspectives, and meanings provided by respondents. The data obtained is organized in a clear narrative format, without grouping specific themes. This approach provides a rich picture of the experiences and meanings given by individuals, thus helping readers understand the complexity of the situations studied. The validity of the data in this study was ensured through triangulation of sources and techniques, where information was collected from various sources, such as small retailers and Sampoerna Retail Community employees, as well as through various data collection methods such as in-depth interviews and observations. This aims to ensure the consistency and validity of the research findings.

Therefore, this research will be conducted in several grocery stores participating in the Sampoerna Retail Community in Sukoharjo Regency. The informants in this study are grocery store owners in Sukoharjo Regency who are partners with the Sampoerna Retail Community (SRC). The sampling technique used in this study was purposive sampling, or selecting informants based on specific considerations. This method can be used when the research tends to be specific, with population elements having specific criteria to be sampled, so it is hoped that it can answer the research questions. The author took a sample of three grocery store owners who are partners with the Sampoerna Retail Community (SRC).

## RESULTS

Based on interviews with three informants: the store owners of SRC Cahaya, SRC Sumber Rahayu, and SRC Darsih, it was discovered that the partnership with the Sampoerna Retail Community (SRC) provides significant benefits for small retailers in Sukoharjo Regency. The store owners experienced positive impacts in terms of store layout, operational efficiency, and ease of day-to-day business management.

The owner of SRC Cahaya stated that one of the most tangible benefits after joining the partnership was the visual improvement of the store. He emphasized that his store now appears tidier, cleaner, and brighter, in line with the RBT (Neat, Clean, Bright) concept implemented by SRC. This transformation creates a more comfortable shopping environment for consumers and contributes to increased sales. These findings align with research by (Posroha and Ardansyah 2023), which found that store modernization through the SRC program positively impacts customer comfort, which in turn increases customer loyalty. A neater layout and more complete inventory also support more efficient store management.

A similar sentiment was expressed by the owner of SRC Sumber Rahayu, who found the ordering process easier through SRC's "AYO TOKO" digital app. With the app, she can order items directly from home without having to go to the wholesale market, and the items are delivered directly to her store. This efficiency saves time and ensures consistent store stock availability. This finding aligns with research by (Asih 2024) in the JPPI journal, which showed that the use of digital applications significantly improves operational efficiency and reduces the risk of stockouts. This technological support is further reinforced by a study by (Hermawan et al. 2025), which states that a web-based information system can assist grocery stores in managing restocks and tracking inventory in real time.

Meanwhile, SRC owner Darsih highlighted the benefits of SRC's partnership loyalty program. She explained that every purchase of a certain amount earns points (coins) that can be exchanged for merchandise or cashed out. This program provides a tangible incentive and encourages store owners to continue transacting within the SRC ecosystem. This aligns with research by (Hendrawan and Anggraeni 2020), which showed that points-based loyalty programs can increase partner satisfaction and play a crucial role in strengthening relationships between stores and service providers. Furthermore, a distribution system that delivers goods directly to stores simplifies operations and efficiently maintains stock availability. Research by (Mujiyanto et al. 2023) also confirms that the quality of digital platforms and integrated service systems are

crucial factors in building store loyalty toward suppliers in the context of MSME digital transformation. The impact of this partnership is also felt in increased sales. All three informants stated that since partnering with SRC, their store's sales volume has increased significantly. The owner of SRC Cahaya acknowledged that both sales and profits have increased. A similar sentiment was expressed by the owner of SRC Sumber Rahayu, who stated that her store is now busier with customers and that turnover has increased. The owner of SRC Darsih also confirmed that the increased number of customers has had a direct impact on the store's profits. This finding is consistent with the research results of (Yacob, Sari, and Mulyana 2016) that strategic alliances and competitive strategies positively impact the performance of minimarket retail businesses in Jakarta and Bandung, both in terms of turnover and profitability.

The partnership with SRC has also had a significant impact on the store's operational system. The most prominent change is in the layout of the merchandise. The owner of SRC Cahaya explained that items that were previously hung are now neatly arranged on shelves, making the store look more modern and organized. The process of shopping for store needs has also become more efficient because it can be done digitally through an app, eliminating the need to close the store to restock items. This was also felt by the owner of SRC Sumber Rahayu, who previously did not use a computer to support store operations. After joining SRC, he began adopting digital technologies such as computers and apps, which have accelerated service and increased work efficiency. The layout of goods in his store is now grouped by product type, making it easier for customers to access. The owner of SRC Darsih added that one of the rules of the partnership is a prohibition on hanging merchandise. All products are required to be placed on shelves to create a neat and attractive store appearance. This operational standard encourages store owners to manage their business space more professionally.

However, despite the numerous benefits, this partnership also presents a number of challenges for store owners. All three informants stated that they are required to continuously improve the quality of their businesses and keep up with developments. The owner of SRC Cahaya stated that SRC's specific standards motivate him to continuously improve and become better than before. Meanwhile, the owner of SRC Sumber Rahayu emphasized the importance of continuous learning and adaptation, especially to keep up with other modern stores. He sees these demands as a driving force to improve the store's competency and service. The owner of SRC Darsih shared similar sentiments, recognizing that to remain afloat in the partnership and compete healthily amidst increasingly fierce retail competition, he must be able to adapt to the rules and system developments established by a major partner like SRC.

Overall, the research findings indicate that the partnership with SRC has driven significant transformation in various aspects of the grocery store business. In addition to providing direct benefits in the form of increased sales and operational efficiency, this partnership has also fostered a more adaptive, professional, and competitive entrepreneurial mindset among small retail MSMEs.

## **DISCUSSION**

Based on research findings, the partnership between small retailers and the Sampoerna Retail Community (SRC) distribution company in Sukoharjo Regency has demonstrated a significant impact on the transformation of grocery stores. Field findings obtained through interviews and observations indicate that this partnership not only helps improve operational efficiency but also significantly contributes to small-scale economic growth.

Within the framework of strategic partnership theory, as proposed by (Dyer and Singh 1998), collaboration between two organizations can create a competitive advantage that would be difficult to achieve independently. Strategic partnerships are not only based on short-term transactional business relationships but also represent a form of long-term cooperation focused on the exchange of resources, competencies, and innovation. In this case, SRC plays a role not

only as a distribution product provider but also as a transformational partner, introducing business management training, digital applications such as "AYO TOKO," and establishing more modern store operational standards. The research findings reveal consistent patterns of transformation across partner stores. The majority of informants reported that after joining SRC, their stores experienced significant physical changes, such as becoming tidier, cleaner, brighter, and more systematically organized. This indicates a transfer of operational capabilities from SRC to small retailers. This partnership also actively encourages the use of technology in business management. Through digital and computerized applications, shop owners can order goods, record inventory, and provide customer service more efficiently and in an integrated manner. This supports the argument of (Bititci et al. 2004), who stated that technology-based partnerships create shared value and strengthen integration within business networks.

The increase in turnover and number of customers reported by nearly all informants indicates that the partnership with SRC has had a direct positive impact on the economic performance of small businesses—with significantly increased sales volume and profits, plus a loyalty program offering points or coins redeemable for goods or cash provides additional motivation for shop owners to continue their active participation. However, this study also found a significant degree of dependency: operations, digital shopping systems, and store standards were entirely determined by SRC, leaving business control heavily reliant on the larger partner. This finding aligns with the literature on resource dependency in supplier-retailer relationships, as identified by (Martinelli 2019) in the context of the jewelry sector: dependency can be a critical factor, although loyalty can be formed through power and trust structures.

Furthermore, an empirical analysis of Indonesian retailers by (Syifa Humaira, Nurwanda Putri, and Heikal 2025) showed that promotions and ease of use of loyalty programs significantly influence consumer participation in the program (e.g., points systems), which has the potential to systematically increase customer retention and purchase volume. Theoretically and empirically, strong partnership relationships built through customer loyalty and under the control of large partners do bring financial benefits, but they also strengthen small businesses' dependence on the policies and infrastructure of modern partners like SRC

Another challenge that emerged was the demand to continuously improve, learn, and adapt to the standards and technological developments set by the SRC. All informants recognized that they must adapt to keep up with other modern stores. This situation created a positive impetus for most retailers to continue growing, but also put pressure on internal capacity, especially for stores with limited human and technological resources. This situation aligns with the ideas of learning partnership theory, which positions partnerships as a means of increasing local capacity. As (Rosabeth Moss Kanter 1994) argued, sustainable partnerships should enable small partners to grow independently and not simply become executors of larger parties' policies. The findings of this study also strongly relate to several previous studies. This research corroborates the results of (Sedianingsihb and A 2019), which showed that SRC partnerships can increase the attractiveness of traditional stores through modernizing displays and improving service systems. However, this study goes beyond these findings by highlighting how partnerships also impact overall operational processes, through digitalization, application systems, and loyalty programs. This research also supports the views of (Bititci et al. 2004) on the importance of technology integration in partnerships. The "AYO TOKO" application and the implementation of a computerized system indicate that SRC acts not only as a distributor of goods, but also as a provider of digital infrastructure that encourages the broader improvement of small partners' capabilities.

Conversely, this research also provides a critical contribution to the study by (Muhammad Rifat et al. 2023), which highlighted the imbalance in relationships within MSME partnerships. While most shop owners acknowledged the perceived benefits, concerns remained about the dominance of SRC in determining standards and direction for business development. These findings emphasize that strategic partnerships can develop into unequal relationships if there is

no space for dialogue, participation, and negotiation from both parties. Furthermore, this research extends this research by demonstrating that partnership success is also determined by the business owner's internal motivation for sustainable growth, rather than solely relying on external intervention.

Theoretically, this research enriches the literature on strategic partnerships in the small business sector, particularly in the context of grocery stores as MSMEs. The results show that the synergy between distribution, digitalization, and training can create a more adaptive, efficient, and competitive business culture. Practically, these findings provide important input for large companies like SRC to focus not only on market expansion but also on sustainable empowerment of small partners. This can be achieved through tiered training, active partner involvement in policy evaluation, and creating flexible space for local adaptation. Meanwhile, small retailers are also required to continuously improve their internal capacity, so they can optimally utilize partnerships without losing their independence and business identity.

## **CONCLUSION**

This research shows that strategic partnerships between small retailers and the Sampoerna Retail Community (SRC) in Sukoharjo Regency have a significant impact on business transformation. Four key patterns were identified: modernization of store governance, technology integration, improved economic performance, and encouragement of continuous adaptation. These four patterns indicate that these partnerships not only directly improve business performance but also drive cultural change among retail MSMEs.

From the perspective of strategic partnership theory, these partnerships demonstrate a complementary relationship: the SRC provides modern infrastructure and distribution systems, while the small stores provide local market access and flexible community services. However, asymmetrical relationship dynamics remain, particularly in terms of operational control and business development direction, which are largely determined by the large partner.

These findings support and extend previous research on MSME partnerships and provide theoretical and practical contributions to the development of more equitable and sustainable partnership models.

## **LIMITATION**

It is for sure that your research will have some limitations and it is normal. However, it is critically important for you to be striving to minimize the range of scope of limitations throughout the research process. Also, you need to provide the acknowledgement of your research limitations in conclusions chapter honestly. It is always better to identify and acknowledge shortcomings of your work, rather than to leave them pointed out to your by your dissertation assessor. While discussing your research limitations, don't just provide the list and description of shortcomings of your work. It is also important for you to explain how these limitations have impacted your research findings.

Your research may have multiple limitations, but you need to discuss only those limitations that directly relate to your research problems. For example, if conducting a meta-analysis of the secondary data has not been stated as your research objective, no need to mention it as your research limitation.

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