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The Effect of Strategic Supplier Partnership on Competitive Advantage with Supply Chain Flexibility as an Intervening Variable

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A B S T R A C T

Using supply chain flexibility (Z) as an intervening variable, this study seeks to determine how strategic supplier alliances (X) affect competitive advantage (Y).This study employed quantitative research with a descriptive methodology. 61 managers of coffee shops in Cilegon City participated in this study as respondents. Structural Equation Modeling (SEM) with the SmartPLS.3 analysis tool was the method of data analysis employed in this investigation. The findings indicate that: (1) supply chain flexibility has a positive and significant impact on competitive advantage; (2) supply chain flexibility has a positive and significant impact on competitive advantage; (3) supply chain flexibility has a positive and significant impact on competitive advantage; and (4) supply chain flexibility has a positive and significant impact on competitive advantage through strategic supplier partnerships

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INTRODUCTION

Competitive advantage must be created by every business in order to survive in a competitive business environment and avoid financial decline. According to Singagerda et al., (2024), this advantage is obtained by offering greater benefits to customers through lower prices or added value of quality services. A business is considered superior if it is able to consistently earn more profits than its competitors in the same business environment. However, the challenge of achieving this advantage is becoming increasingly difficult with the emergence of new competitors, especially in the rapidly growing coffee shop business in Indonesia.

Based on the results of a Goodstats survey of 440 respondents, there is a high level of interest among the public in visiting coffee shops (37% of respondents visit >2 times a month), which has triggered rapid growth in this business, including in the city of Cilegon, which now has 61 outlets. However, this increasingly fierce competition has not been matched by optimal competitive advantages. This is evident from the large number of customer complaints regarding quality (46%), as well as price and delivery reliability (26% each). Problems with raw material quality and delivery delays risk reducing customer trust and causing financial losses. As a solution, the implementation of strategic supplier partnerships is highly relevant through long-term collaboration with suppliers. This practice emphasizes long-term collaboration and continuous information exchange with suppliers to ensure the availability of quality raw materials in accordance with standards. By building strategic partnerships, coffee shops are expected to improve the effectiveness of raw material procurement and strengthen their competitive position in the market.

Although strategic supplier partnerships are considered crucial, there is a research gap due to the inconsistency of previous results. Research groups such as (Abusaq, 2023; Audrey et al., 2022; Khaddam et al., 2020; Şahin & Bek, 2024; Singagerda et al., 2024)have proven a positive and significant influence on competitive advantage. Conversely, the findings of (Aabidah & Diansari, 2022; Baqleh & Alateeq, 2023; Muis & Isyanto, 2021; Nuraini et al., 2021; Waiyawuththanapoom et al., 2023) show no significant positive effect. To clarify this relationship, this study presents supply chain flexibility as a mediating variable (novelty) to increase responsiveness and competitive advantage in the coffee shop business. Therefore, the researchers are interested in conducting research on "The Effect of Strategic Supplier Partnership on Competitive Advantage with Supply Chain Flexibility as an Intervening Variable."

LITERATURE REVIEW

Competitive Advantage

According to Singagerda et al., (2024), competitive advantage is an advantage over similar competitors in terms of price, product value or quality, and service. It can be obtained by offering greater consumer value, either through lower prices or by providing added value and services that justify higher prices. Competitive advantage can be achieved by improving product quality, service quality, and competitive pricing.

Five indicators that can be used in measuring competitive advantage variables, namely Price (CA1), Quality (CA2), Delivery Dependability (CA3), Product Innovation (CA4), Time to Market (CA5), (Hwihanus et al., 2022; Suryana et al., 2023)

Strategic Supplier Partnership

According to Li et al in Baqleh and Alateeq, (2023), Strategic Supplier Partnership is an effort made by companies to obtain raw material supplies through cooperation with suppliers, taking into account cost effectiveness and efficiency, waiting time, and improvements in quality and productivity.

Five indicators that can be used in measuring strategic supply chain variables, namely Quality Suppliers (SSP1), Long-Term Relationships (SSP2), Joint Problem Solving (SSP3), Continuous Improvement (SSP4), Joint Goal Setting (SSP5), (Audrey et al., 2022)

Supply Chain Flexibility

According to Elrefae and Nuseir (2022), supply chain flexibility is a company's ability to manage its raw material supply chain through collaboration with supply chain partners in its business environment. The scope of flexibility consists of a company's ability to respond to uncertainty, make supply chain plans, production volume, product type, and distribution location quickly, accurately, and efficiently, so that the company can operate optimally.

Four indicators that can be used in measuring supply chain flexibility variables, namely Supplier Flexibility (SCF1), Delivery Flexibility (SCF2), Production Flexibility (SCF3), Inventory Flexibility (SCF4), (Rahman et al., 2024)

Framework

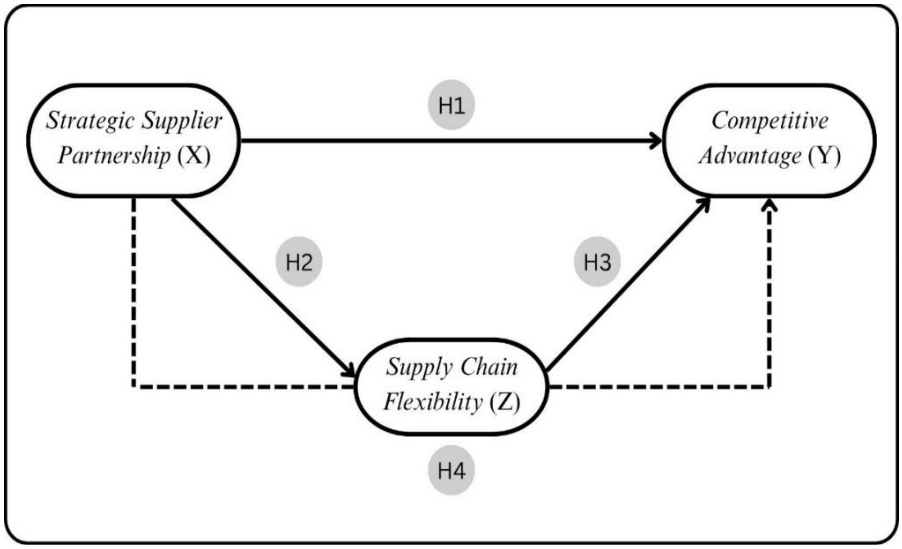
Strategic supplier alliances have a favorable and considerable impact on competitive advantage, according to study by Khaddam et al. (2020), which is based on earlier studies on the subject. Additionally, the research by Audrey et al. (2022), which discovered that strategic supplier agreements have a favorable and significant impact on supply chain flexibility, supports this study.

Supply chain flexibility is positively and significantly impacted by strategic supplier agreements, according to research by Thongrawd et al. (2020). Additionally, according to research by Sufyati et al. (2022), supply chain flexibility significantly and favorably affects competitive advantage. Supply chain flexibility has a favorable and considerable impact on competitive advantage, according to research on the same variable by Lovita et al. (2024).

This finding has been corroborated by a number of other studies, including Elrefae & Nuseir's (2022) study, which demonstrates that supply chain flexibility also significantly and favorably affects competitive advantage. Additionally, strategic supplier collaborations have a beneficial and significant

impact on competitive advantage through supply chain flexibility, according to research by Latunreng & Nasirin (2019).

Based on the above description, the conceptual framework of this study is as shown in Figure 1:



Fiqure 1. Framework

Hypothesis

Strategic Supplier Partnership on Competitive Advantage

According to the findings of a study by Khaddam et al. (2020), strategic supplier relationships significantly and favorably impact competitive advantage. Businesses and suppliers can collaborate on product innovation, pricing negotiations, sustainable raw material supply, and improving product quality by using premium raw materials when strategic supplier alliances are put in place. This is consistent with study by Audrey et al. (2022), which also demonstrates that strategic supplier partnerships significantly and favorably impact competitive advantage.

Based on the above research results, the hypothesis in this study is:

H1 : Strategic supplier partnerships have a positive and significant effect on competitive advantage.

Strategic Supplier Partnership on Supply Chain Flexibility

According to research by Thongrawd et al. (2020), supply chain flexibility is positively and significantly impacted by strategic supplier agreements. Strategic supplier partnerships enable a company to modify the number of orders for raw materials. Additionally, a company that collaborates with suppliers can order raw materials at any moment, making it more adaptable to shifts in demand. This enables a company to have an adaptable supply chain. Additionally, Yang et al. (2022) shown that supply chain flexibility is positively and significantly impacted by strategic supplier agreements.

Based on the results of the above research, the hypothesis in this study is:

H2 : Strategic supplier partnerships have a positive and significant effect on supply chain flexibility.

Supply Chain Flexibility on Competitive Advantage

According to the findings of a study by Sufyati et al. (2022), supply chain flexibility significantly and favorably affects competitive advantage. Supply chain flexibility enables a company to precisely fulfill demand by adjusting the amount of raw material inventory to suppliers. This increased adaptability enables a company to solve inventory issues by making the best use of resources to reliably satisfy varying demands. Additionally, Lovita et al.'s (2024) study on the same variable revealed that supply chain flexibility significantly and favorably affects competitive advantage.

Based on the above research results, the hypothesis in this study is:

H3: Supply chain flexibility has a positive and significant effect on competitive advantage.

Strategic Supplier Partnerships and Competitive Advantage through Supply Chain Flexibility

Supply chain flexibility serves as a mediating factor that bridges the impact of strategic supplier partnerships on competitive advantage, according to research by Thongrawd et al. (2020). Strategic alliances with suppliers guarantee long-term cooperation and supply consistency, allowing businesses to reactively modify distribution volume, variety, and speed. Additionally, according to Latunreng & Nasirin's (2019) research findings, strategic supplier collaborations significantly and favorably impact competitive advantage through supply chain flexibility. In light of the aforementioned research findings, the study's hypothesis is:

H4: Strategic supplier partnerships have a positive and significant effect on competitive advantage through supply chain flexibility.

METHODOLOGY

This study used a descriptive quantitative approach, processing primary data from 61 respondents who completed questionnaires. Cilegon City coffee shop managers participated in this survey as responders. A 1–10 Likert scale served as the basis for the questionnaire.

Data analysis was then performed using Structural Equation Modeling (SEM), and the calculations were performed using SmartPLS version 4 software. The Structural Equation Model analysis calculations consisted of:

1. Outer Model Analysis to test the validity and reliability of the model.
2. Inner Model Analysis to test the coefficient of determination and direct and indirect hypotheses.
3. Testing the mediation effect, whether it is full mediation, partial mediation, or no mediation.
4. Discussing the results of this study by comparing previous studies with the results of this study.

To test the mediation effect, the criteria from Hair et al.,(2019)were used, as shown in the table 1:

Table 1. Mediation Effect

Mediation Effect	Criteria
Indirect-only (full mediation)	The indirect effect is significant, but the direct effect is not significant.
Complimentary (partial mediation)	Both the indirect effect and the direct effect are significant and point in the same direction.
Competitive (partial mediation)	Both the indirect effect and the direct effect are significant and point in opposite directions.
Direct only (no mediation)	The direct effect is significant, but the indirect effect is not significant.
No effect (no mediation)	Neither the direct effect nor the indirect effect is significant.

Source: Hair et al, (2019)

RESULT

Respondent Identity

This study incorporates information gathered from Cilegon City coffee shop managers and owners who completed online and in-person surveys. The characteristics of the respondents who completed the questionnaire are as follows:

Table 2. Respondent Characteristics

Profile	Description	Total	Percentage
Number of Respondents	-	61	100%
Job Status	Owner	6	9,8%
	Manager	55	90,2%
Gender	Male	38	62,3%
	Female	23	37,3%

Source: Primary Data, Processed in 2025

The table indicates that 61 people participated in this study. Six respondents, or 9.8% of the total, owned coffee shops in Cilegon City. 55 responders, or 90.2% of the total, were managers of coffee shops in Cilegon City. In the meantime, the gender distribution of respondents reveals that there are more male respondents—38, or around 62.3% of the sample—than female respondents—23, or roughly 37.3%.

1. Outer Model Convergent Validity Test

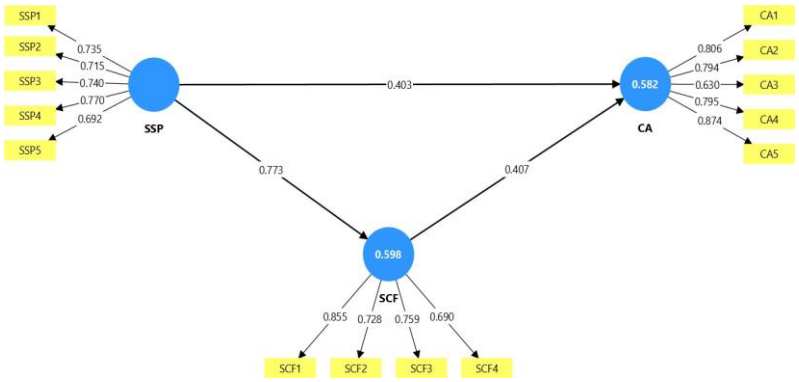
The degree of correlation between the construct and the latent variables, as well as between each measurement item, indicates convergent validity. If the Average Variance Extracted (AVE) value is greater than 0.5 and the outer loading factor value is greater than 0.6, this validity is deemed satisfied. Table 3 displays the outer loading and Average Variance Extracted (AVE) values:

Table 3. Outer Loadings Values and Extracted Average Variance (AVE)

Variabel	Indikator	*Outer Loading* > 0,6	AVE > 0,5	Keterangan
Strategic Supplier Partnership (X)	SSP1	0,735	0,534	Valid
	SSP2	0,715		Valid
	SSP3	0,641		Valid
	SSP4	0,771		Valid
	SSP5	0,692		Valid
Supply Chain Flexibility (Z)	SCF1	0,855	0,579	Valid
	SCF2	0,728		Valid
	SCF3	0,759		Valid
	SCF4	0,691		Valid
Competitive Advantage (Y)	CA1	0,806	0,615	Valid
	CA2	0,794		Valid
	CA3	0,631		Valid
	CA4	0,795		Valid
	CA5	0,874		Valid

Source: Primary Data, Processed in 2025

Every indicator utilized to measure each variable has an outer loading value > 0.6 and an Average Variance Extracted (AVE) value > 0.5, as shown in the table above. As a result, all 14 of the indicators that were employed in this study are deemed valid and satisfy the requirements for convergent validity. In the meantime, figure 2 displays the PLS SEM test results:



Picture 2. PLS SEM Results Image Source: Primary Data, Processed in 2025

Discriminant Validity Test

The degree to which a construct clearly differs from other constructs in the structural model is evaluated using discriminant validity. If each indicator's factor loading value for a build is greater than the cross-loading value for other constructions, the construct is deemed valid. Table 4 displays the cross-loading values that can demonstrate discriminant validity:

Table 4. Cross Loading Value

Indicator	Variable		
	Strategic Supplier Partnership	Supply Chain Flexibility	Competitive Advantage
CA1	0.806	0.628	0.568
CA2	0.794	0.674	0.584
CA3	0.63	0.419	0.458
CA4	0.795	0.494	0.542
CA5	0.874	0.563	0.644
SCF1	0.69	0.855	0.653
SCF2	0.461	0.728	0.68
SCF3	0.596	0.759	0.481
SCF4	0.408	0.69	0.523
SSP1	0.667	0.652	0.735
SSP2	0.451	0.559	0.715
SSP3	0.457	0.431	0.74
SSP4	0.602	0.635	0.77
SSP5	0.361	0.488	0.692

Source: Primary Data, processed in 2025

Table 4 illustrates that, in comparison to the cross loading value on other constructs, every indication displays the largest loading factor value on the target construct. This shows that each indicator can separate itself from other constructs in the model and appropriately reflect its own construct. As a result, it may be said that the study model satisfies the requirements for discriminant validity and can move on to the following phase of analysis.

Reliability Test

Cronbach's alpha and composite reliability values were the two metrics used in this study's reliability testing. If a variable's composite reliability value is greater than 0.7 or its Cronbach's alpha value is greater than 0.6, it is considered reliable or to have a sufficient degree of internal consistency. Table 5 displays the composite reliability and Cronbach's alpha values:

Table 5. Cronbach's Alpha and Composite Reliability Values

Variable	*Cronbach's Alpha*	*Composite Reliability*
Strategic Supplier Partnership	0,785	0,795
Supply Chain Flexibility	0,756	0,773
Competitive Advantage	0,841	0,854

Table 5 shows that every construct in this study had composite reliability > 0.7 and a Cronbach's alpha value > 0.6. It is possible to draw the conclusion that the study's instruments satisfied the reliability standards with a respectable degree of consistency.

2. Inner Model

In order to assess how well independent variables account for changes or fluctuations in dependent variables in a research model, inner model testing is carried out by examining the value of the coefficient of determination (R^2). If a dependent construct's R-Squared (R^2) value is more than 0.1, it is considered to be of good quality; the higher the value, the greater the influence. The following table 6 displays the (R^2) value:

Table 6. Nilai R- Square (R^2)

Variable	R Square
Competitive Advantage	0,582
Supply Chain Flexibility	0,598

Source: Primary Data, Processed in 2025

Table 6 shows that the R-Square (R^2) value for the supply chain flexibility variable is 0.598. This indicates that the strategic supplier partnership variable accounts for 59.8% of the variation in supply chain flexibility, with other factors outside the model influencing the remaining 40.2%. In the meantime, the competitive advantage variable has an R-Square (R^2) value of 0.582, meaning that strategic supplier partnerships, either directly or indirectly through supply chain flexibility, can also account for 58.2% of the variation in competitive advantage. Since both of these values fall into the moderate range, it can be said that the supply chain flexibility and competitive advantage endogenous variables under study are significantly impacted by the strategic supplier partnership variable.

Direct Effect Testing

The t-statistic value, p-value, and path coefficient in the bootstrapping test are indicative of the research hypothesis test. According to the testing criteria, the hypothesis is accepted if, in the T test, the p-value indicates a significance level of 5% or p-value < 0.05 and the t-statistic value > t-table (1.96). In the interim, to see the original sample (O) value is necessary to determine the relationship's direction. The following table 7 displays the direct effect test results:

Table 7. Direct Effect Testing

Hypothesis	Original Sample (O)	Sample Mean	Std. Deviation	T Statistics	P Values
SSP → CA	0,403	0,407	0,174	2,321	0,020
SSP → SCF	0,773	0,783	0,037	20,825	0,000
SCF → CA	0,407	0,412	0,148	2,751	0,006

Source: Primary Data, Processed in 2025

Table 7 provides an explanation for each hypothesis's test results about the direct impact of independent variables on dependent variables:

1. Hypothesis 1 : The analysis's findings demonstrate that strategic supplier partnerships significantly and favorably impact competitive advantage. The original sample (O) value of 0.403, the t-statistic value of 2.321, which is higher than the t-table (1.96), and the p-value of 0.020, which is less than 0.05, all demonstrate this. Therefore, this study's first hypothesis is accepted. H1 ACCEPTED
2. Hypothesis 2 : The analysis's findings demonstrate that supply chain flexibility is positively and significantly impacted by strategic supplier partnerships. This is demonstrated by an original sample (O) value of 0.773, a p-value of 0.000, which is less than 0.05, and a t-statistic value of 20.825, which is significantly higher than the t-table (1.96). As a result, this study's second hypothesis is approved. H2 **ACCEPTED**
3. Hypothesis 3 : The analysis's findings show that supply chain flexibility significantly and favorably affects competitive advantage. The original sample (O) value of 0.407, the t-statistic value of 2.751, which is higher than the t-table (1.96), and the significance value of p-value of 0.006, which is less than 0.05, all support this. Therefore, it may be said that this study's third hypothesis is accepted. H3 **ACCEPTED**

Indirect Effect Testing

Table 8. Specific Indirect Test

Hypothesis	*Original Sample (O)*	*Sample Mean*	*Std. Deviation*	*T Statistics*	*P Values*
SSP → SCF → CA	0,315	0,323	0,119	2,652	0,008

Source: Primary Data, Processed in 2025

4. Hypothesis 4 : According to Table 8, the direct effect test findings indicate an original sample (O) value of 0.315, a significant value (p value) of 0.000, which is less than 0.05, and a t-statistic value of 2.652, which is higher than the t-table (1.96). Therefore, it can be said that hypothesis 4 is accepted and that the relationship between Strategic Supplier Partnership and Competitive Advantage is largely mediated by Supply Chain Flexibility. The previously mentioned criteria must be examined in order to identify the type of mediation in the supply chain flexibility variable. Because both the direct and indirect channels exhibit a strong influence in the same direction, the type of mediating effect in this connection is partial mediation, more specifically complementary (partial mediation). Thus, Supply Chain Flexibility is one way that Strategic Supplier Partnership influences Competitive Advantage both directly and indirectly. H4 ACCEPTED

DISCUSSION

1. The study's findings show that strategic supplier partnerships significantly and favorably impact competitive advantage. This implies that a company's competitive advantage increases with the quality of the Strategic Supplier Partnership it has built with its suppliers. This corroborates the findings of research by Khaddam et al. (2020), which demonstrate that strategic supplier partnerships have a favorable and significant impact on competitive advantage. Additionally, research by Audrey et al. (2022) indicates that strategic supplier partnerships can boost a company's competitiveness.
2. Supply Chain Flexibility is positively and significantly impacted by strategic supplier partnerships. This implies that a company's supply chain flexibility increases with the quality of the Strategic Supplier Partnership it has built with its suppliers. This supports the findings of Thongrawd et al., (2020)who stated that strategic supplier partnerships have a positive and significant effect on supply chain flexibility, and Yang et al., (2022), who found that strategic collaboration with suppliers can improve a company's supply chain flexibility.
3. Competitive advantage is positively and significantly impacted by supply chain flexibility. This implies that a company's supply chain flexibility increases with its level of supply chain flexibility. This corroborates the findings of Lovita et al. (2024), who found that businesses with a high degree of supply chain flexibility typically have a competitive advantage over their rivals, and Sufyati et al. (2022), who found that supply chain flexibility has a positive and significant effect on competitive advantage.
4. The relationship between competitive advantage and strategic supplier partnership is largely mediated by supply chain flexibility. Therefore, Latunreng & Nasirin's (2019) research is supported by the findings of this study.

CONCLUSION

The following conclusions can be made in light of the foregoing explanation of the research findings:

1. Strategic Supplier Partnership has a positive and significant effect on Competitive Advantage in coffee shops in Cilegon City, which means that thestronger and more effective the strategic partnership, the higher the competitive advantage in coffee shops.
2. Strategic Supplier Partnership has a positive and significant effect on Supply Chain Flexibility in coffee shops in Cilegon City, which means that a good strategic partnership with suppliers can increase supply chain flexibility in terms of quantity adjustments, delivery times, and product variety.
3. Supply Chain Flexibility has a positive and significant effect on Competitive Advantage in coffee shops in Cilegon City, which means that the higher the level of supply chain flexibility, the greater the ability of coffee shops to create competitive advantage amid competition.

4. Supply Chain Flexibility partially mediates the relationship between Strategic Supplier Partnership.

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