Model of Competitive Advantage in The Food And Beverage Sector in West Bandung District

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Abstract: This study examines the role of supply chain partnerships and information sharing in enhancing competitive advantage, with supply chain integration serving as a mediating construct, specifically within micro and small food and beverage enterprises in West Bandung Regency, Indonesia. The research provides novelty through its focus on a rarely explored sectoral context and the application of Partial Least Squares Structural Equation Modeling (PLS-SEM) to assess complex inter-variable relationships. A quantitative research design was employed, involving 125 food and beverage business actors selected using a stratified simple random sampling method. Respondents met the criteria of having operated for more than three years and generating annual revenue below IDR 500 million. Data were collected through structured questionnaires and analyzed using PLS-SEM to test both the measurement and structural models. The findings reveal that both supply chain partnerships and information sharing have a significant positive influence on competitive advantage when mediated by effective supply chain integration. These results emphasize the strategic value of integrated networks in achieving sustainable market positioning. The study concludes that MSMEs in the food and beverage sector must prioritize integrated supply chain development to enhance collaboration and improve responsiveness, thereby strengthening their overall competitive advantage.

Keywords: competitive advantage, food and beverage, information sharing, integration, partnership.

INTRODUCTION

In today's global marketplace, one of the major challenges faced by businesses is the intense competition and the ongoing struggle to maintain a sustainable competitive advantage (Thongrawd et al., 2020). Companies that operate with average profitability within an industry are often confronted by uncertainties and imbalances in market demand, largely due to fragmented and inconsistent information flow across the supply chain (SC) (Prajogo & Olhager, 2012). SC partners frequently rely on incomplete market forecasts, leading them to overstock materials and products in an effort to quickly respond to fluctuations in demand. This inefficiency results in increased production costs and reduced profit margins—a phenomenon widely known as the "bullwhip effect."

In response, numerous studies have emphasized that effective information sharing is a critical determinant of supply chain efficiency and responsiveness (Wu et al., 2017). When demand estimation is inaccurate and not aligned across partners, especially under low per-unit profit conditions, pre-purchase agreements can serve as a mechanism to balance the benefits among stakeholders (Nakasumi, 2017).

In a supply chain network, information—such as materials and product specifications—flows sequentially like a baton in a relay race. However, individual actors often process and evaluate this information independently, adding complexity to coordination efforts. This decentralized flow introduces delays and inaccuracies, undermining real-time decision-making (Nakasumi, 2017). Without transparent information exchange, upstream actors struggle to accurately forecast demand, which in turn distorts customer requirements along the chain and amplifies variability—a reinforcement of the bullwhip effect (Kochan et al., 2018).

Partnerships with well-aligned suppliers significantly enhance organizational competitiveness within the supply chain (Lu & Wang, 2020). To meet growing customer expectations, companies are increasingly integrating efforts across suppliers and buyers to create more agile, adaptive, and synchronized networks capable of navigating uncertainties (Um, 2017). However, trust deficits and goal misalignments often obstruct integration efforts. Inter-departmental conflicts and concerns about intellectual property leaks pose additional risks that must be managed carefully (Kumar et al., 2017).

Consumer preferences are evolving rapidly, product life cycles are shortening, and the pursuit of competitive advantage is becoming increasingly complex. Under these dynamic conditions, organizational agility is crucial for responding to external shocks and seizing emerging opportunities (Thongrawd et al., 2020). Agility enables firms to remain adaptive and responsive, traits that are vital in today's volatile business landscape.

This need for agility and competitiveness is particularly evident in regions with high potential for economic development. West Bandung Regency, located in West Java, Indonesia, offers such promise with its abundant agricultural and fisheries commodities including coffee, tea, horticultural produce, dairy, and fishery products. Based on the 2016 Economic Census, the region's economy is dominated by wholesale and retail trade, food and beverage services, and processing industries—sectors that account for over 80% of all recorded businesses (Nasir, 2018). This represents a 12.13% growth in business numbers compared to 2006.

Despite this progress, SMEs in West Bandung Regency have yet to fully leverage their potential in driving regional economic growth (Sulaksana et al., 2019). In particular, businesses in the food and beverage sector face persistent supply chain inefficiencies. The industry requires a continuous flow of raw materials, and the complexity of the supply chain often leads to logistical inefficiencies and product loss rates as high as 20% (Ratnamurni & Yun, 2020).

Furthermore, key challenges remain in boosting product competitiveness, maximizing local material usage, and reducing dependency on imports. The lack of comprehensive and sustainable MSME development strategies, limited product standardization and certification, weak intellectual property protection, and low technological adoption among industries hinder broader economic advancement (Wahdiniwaty et al., 2019). Against this backdrop, the core issue addressed in this study is the low competitiveness of F&B MSME products in West Bandung Regency. This study explores how strategic supply chain partnerships and improved information sharing—facilitated through integration—can enhance overall performance and competitiveness in this critical sector.

In the evolving landscape of global trade, effective partnerships within the supply chain are recognized as strategic enablers of organizational competitiveness. Supply chain partnership (SCP) refers to the formal or informal collaboration among firms that aim to optimize resource utilization and strengthen mutual capabilities

(Li et al., 2019; Thongrawd et al., 2020). These partnerships often involve shared objectives, risk-sharing mechanisms, and coordinated decision-making across functions such as sourcing, manufacturing, logistics, and marketing.

Latunreng & Nasirin (2019) emphasize that building robust relationships with suppliers enhances agility, reliability, and responsiveness—key indicators of supply chain performance. Moreover, long-term collaborations allow firms to co-develop innovations, negotiate favorable terms, and foster trust, which collectively contribute to strategic alignment. However, SCP effectiveness is contingent upon commitment, compatibility, and communication quality (Cao & Zhang, 2011).

Notably, SMEs particularly in food and beverage sectors, rely heavily on such partnerships due to their limited bargaining power and resource constraints. Therefore, access to capital and mentoring programs are pivotal aspects of SCP that can catalyze business development in these sectors.

IS stands at the core of SC collaboration, serving as the foundational element for synchronization of planning, forecasting, and execution activities (Mentzer et al., 2001). IS encompasses the exchange of relevant data across supply chain entities—ranging from inventory levels and delivery schedules to customer feedback and demand forecasts (Wu et al., 2014). The literature consistently positions IS as a key determinant of supply chain agility and visibility.

According to Lee et al. (1997), lack of timely and accurate information is a principal cause of the bullwhip effect, where small fluctuations in customer demand result in amplified variations upstream. Effective IS mitigates this distortion and allows for real-time adjustments, resulting in enhanced efficiency and service level improvements.

Li et al. (2019) further underscore the criticality of information quality—highlighting parameters such as accuracy, relevance, reliability, and timeliness—as determinants of successful decision-making. The need for advanced information processing increases in environments characterized by high uncertainty, complex product flows, or diverse customer requirements.

Recent advances in digital supply chain technologies such as blockchain, cloud-based platforms, and predictive analytics have enhanced the capacity for seamless and secure IS (Queiroz & Wamba, 2019). However, the success of these technologies remains closely tied to inter-organizational trust and data governance mechanisms (Wamba et al., 2020).

SCI refers to the degree to which a firm coordinates and aligns internal processes with those of external supply chain partners to create a unified, end-to-end system (Flynn et al., 2010). Integration is both a strategic imperative and a technical capability, enabling firms to enhance responsiveness, reduce costs, and improve customer satisfaction.

According to Shah et al. (2020), SCI comprises internal integration—harmonization among functional departments—and external integration—collaboration with customers and suppliers. Vertical integration enhances process control and transparency, whereas horizontal integration focuses on strategic alliances and shared value creation.

Novais et al. (2019) posit that integrated systems facilitate the smooth flow of goods, services, finance, and information, contributing to superior operational and strategic performance. Furthermore, Stadtler et al. (2015) assert that integration requires long-term institutional frameworks and mutual dependency that can only be sustained through shared goals and value alignment.

The role of purchasing intermediaries is particularly critical in SMEs, where they function as knowledge conduits linking production units with supply markets (Das et al., 2006). Given the vulnerability of smaller

firms to supply disruptions, effective integration becomes essential in enhancing resilience and maintaining competitiveness.

In the context of food and beverage MSMEs, SCI also influences food traceability, product quality, and compliance with safety regulations—areas that are becoming increasingly important amid rising consumer awareness and regulatory oversight (Aung & Chang, 2014).

CA is the capability of an organization to deliver superior value compared to its rivals, leading to higher profitability and market share (Porter, 1985; Barney, 1991). Porter's framework remains a cornerstone, with the primary strategies being cost leadership, differentiation, and focus. Each strategy is aimed at positioning the firm in a way that creates barriers for competitors and attracts a loyal customer base.

Lechner & Gudmundsson (2014) argue that differentiation enables firms to innovate and deliver unique customer value, while cost leadership focuses on operational efficiency and lean resource utilization. In dynamic and uncertain environments, such as those experienced by food and beverage SMEs, agility becomes a central component of CA (Teece et al., 2016).

Competitive advantage is increasingly viewed through a multidimensional lens, incorporating not just financial metrics but also customer satisfaction, innovation capability, time-to-market, and delivery reliability (Zhang & Dhaliwal, 2009). This study adopts a five-dimensional CA framework: price/cost, product quality, delivery reliability, product innovation, and speed to market—each representing a strategic lever for SMEs aiming to scale sustainably.

While a robust body of literature explores SCP, IS, and SCI independently, limited empirical studies have examined their interrelationships within the context of micro and small enterprises operating in developing regions. In particular, research that addresses how these constructs jointly affect competitive advantage—especially in rural agri-food clusters like West Bandung Regency—remains scarce.

This study seeks to fill this gap by proposing an integrated model that evaluates the influence of SCP and IS on CA, mediated through SCI. The theoretical underpinning is drawn from the Resource-Based View (RBV) and Dynamic Capabilities Theory (DCT), both of which highlight the role of internal and relational capabilities in fostering sustained competitive advantage.

METHODS

This study employs a quantitative explanatory research approach designed to investigate the causal relationships between SCP, IS, and CA, with SCI serving as a mediating variable. The explanatory nature of this approach makes it suitable for hypothesis testing and the identification of cause-effect dynamics among latent constructs through systematic data analysis (Creswell & Creswell, 2018).

The objective is to assess the extent to which competitive advantage is influenced by strategic partnerships and information exchange within the supply chain, particularly when mediated by integration mechanisms. This investigation focuses on MSMEs in the food and beverage industry located in West Bandung Regency, West Java Province.

A causal-comparative design is adopted to explore patterns without any manipulation of the independent variables, which aligns with the purpose of identifying naturally occurring relationships in business contexts (Sugiyono, 2015).

The target population comprises food and beverage MSMEs operating in West Bandung Regency, with a total population of approximately 23,726 business units. Sampling was conducted using a stratified simple random sampling method, ensuring that each business had an equal chance of selection while accounting for

strata such as business size and capital. Inclusion criteria include businesses that have been operational for at least three years and possess working capital between IDR 5 million and IDR 50 million, excluding the valuation of fixed assets like land and buildings.

A final sample of 125 MSME owners was selected as respondents, based on the adequacy required for Structural Equation Modeling (SEM) using Partial Least Squares (PLS).

Data were gathered using a structured questionnaire, with all measurement items adapted from previously validated studies to ensure construct validity. A 5-point Likert scale (ranging from 1 = strongly disagree to 5 = strongly agree) was used to quantify respondents' perceptions across various constructs.

The instrument underwent validity and reliability testing, including content and construct validation. Reliability was assessed using Cronbach's alpha and composite reliability coefficients to confirm internal consistency. Data were analyzed both descriptively and inferentially. Descriptive analysis included the computation of frequency distributions, mean scores, and classification of variables into ordinal categories (very low to very high), following score distribution parameters such as quartiles and median (Creswell & Creswell, 2018).

To examine the proposed model and test the hypotheses, the study used Partial Least Squares Structural Equation Modeling (PLS-SEM). This method is particularly effective in analyzing complex relationships between latent constructs, even when the sample size is moderate or when the model is predictive in nature (Widarjono, 2015).

PLS-SEM was chosen for its flexibility and suitability for exploratory studies, especially in business research involving multiple mediation paths. The analytical procedures include path coefficient analysis, model fit assessment, and mediation testing.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The initial phase of the analysis involved assessing the measurement (outer) model, which establishes the reliability and validity of the indicators associated with each construct. This phase includes several statistical tests such as indicator reliability, composite reliability, convergent validity (measured by Average Variance Extracted or AVE), and discriminant validity.

- Indicator reliability was evaluated by examining factor loadings, with values above 0.7 considered acceptable.
- Composite reliability and Cronbach's alpha values were used to assess internal consistency; both metrics exceeded the threshold of 0.7 for all constructs.
- Convergent validity was confirmed with AVE values above 0.5, indicating that the constructs adequately explain the variance of their indicators.
- Discriminant validity was validated using the Fornell-Larcker criterion and cross-loading analysis, ensuring that each construct is statistically distinct from the others.

In the second stage, the structural (inner) model was tested to evaluate the significance and strength of the hypothesized relationships. This included examining path coefficients, R^2 values, and effect sizes (f^2) for each dependent construct. Mediation analysis was conducted to determine the indirect effect of supply chain partnerships and information sharing on competitive advantage via supply chain integration.

The model fit was assessed using the Standardized Root Mean Square Residual (SRMR), and all indices indicated an acceptable fit to the data. The findings suggest statistically significant paths among the variables, supporting the hypotheses outlined.

Table 1 The reflective measurement model

Factor	Items	Loading	AVE	Cronbach's Alpha	Composite Reliability
SCP			0.523	0.726	0.812
	X1.1	0.592			
	X1.2	0.685			
	X1.4	0.757			
	X1.8	0.835			
IS			0.669	0.835	0.890
	X1.1	0.799			
	X1.2	0.827			
	X1.4	0.842			
	X1.8	0.801			
SCI			0.518	0.803	0.858
	Z2	0.754			
	Z3	0.662			
	Z5	0.697			
	Z8	0.619			
	Z9	0.720			
	Z10	0.789			
CA			0.503	0.734	0.810
	Y1	0.801			
	Y4	0.664			
	Y5	0.689			
	Y6	0.717			

Source: questionnaire, reprocessed 2024

Tabel 1 Explain to reflective evaluation models. The evaluation of the measurement model demonstrates that all latent constructs meet the required criteria for convergent validity and reliability. Each construct achieves an Average Variance Extracted (AVE) value above the threshold of 0.50 (see Table 1), indicating that the latent variables are well represented by their respective indicators. The item loadings for each construct are generally strong, ranging from 0.592 to 0.835, with the majority exceeding 0.70. Although one item (X1.1) for the SCP construct has a loading slightly below 0.60, its retention is still acceptable due to its contribution to the overall construct reliability.

In terms of internal consistency, all constructs show satisfactory results. Cronbach's Alpha values range from 0.726 to 0.835, while Composite Reliability (CR) values range from 0.810 to 0.890. These outcomes confirm that each construct demonstrates adequate reliability, with the IS construct exhibiting the strongest consistency among the four.

Overall, the results validate that the measurement instruments used are both statistically reliable and conceptually sound. Therefore, the model is appropriate for further analysis using structural equation modeling. These findings support the robustness of the constructs and provide a strong foundation for assessing the hypothesized relationships in the structural model.

Table 2 presents the results of the partial hypothesis testing, which evaluates the direct effects among the studied variables. The findings indicate that supply chain partnership (SCP) does not exert a significant direct influence on competitive advantage (CA), as reflected in a low t-statistic (0.707 < 1.094) and a non-significant p-value (0.480). However, SCP demonstrates a significant positive relationship with supply chain integration (SCI) (t = 2.265, p = 0.024). Similarly, information sharing (IS) shows no significant direct effect on CA (t = 1.005, p = 0.315), yet it has a strong and significant effect on SCI (t = 6.982, p = 0.000). Importantly, SCI itself exhibits a robust and significant impact on CA (t = 4.332, p = 0.000). These results suggest that while SCP and IS do not directly enhance competitiveness, they contribute indirectly by strengthening SCI, which in turn drives CA.

Table 3 outlines the mediation analysis, focusing on the role of SCI as a mediating construct. The results confirm that SCI significantly mediates the relationships between both SCP and IS with CA. Specifically, the mediation effect of SCP on CA through SCI is significant (t = 2.028, p = 0.043), albeit weaker compared to the mediation effect of IS (t = 3.404, p = 0.001). This implies that the integration of supply chain processes plays a pivotal role in translating collaborative practices and information exchange into tangible competitive benefits. The stronger mediation effect observed for IS underscores the centrality of accurate and timely information in enabling integration and enhancing competitiveness within micro and small food and beverage enterprises.

Table 2 Partial Hypothesis Test

Exogenous Variable to Endogenous Variable	Original Sample (O)	Sample Mean (M)	Standard Deviation (STDEV)	T Statistics (|O/ STDEV|)	t table	P Values	Supported/ Rejected
X1 (KRP) → Y (KB)	0.105	0.119	0.148	0.707	1.094	0.480	Rejected
X1 (KRP) → Z (IRP)	0.221	0.224	0.098	2,265		0.024	Support
X2 (BI) → Y (KB)	-0.185	-0.201	0.184	1.005		0.315	Rejected
X2 (BI) → Z (IRP)	0.642	0.643	0.092	6,982		0.000	Support
Z (IRP) → Y (KB)	0.574	0.590	0.133	4,332		0.000	Support

Source: questionnaire, reprocessed 2024

Table 3 Mediation Hypothesis Test

Mediation Role Test	Original Sample (O)	Sample Mean (M)	Standard Deviation (STDEV)	T Statistics (|O/ STDEV|)	t table	P Values
X1 (KRP) → Z (IRP) → Y (KB)	0.127	0.131	0.063	2.028	1.094	0.043
X2 (BI) → Z (IRP) → Y (KB)	0.369	0.381	0.108	3,404		0.001

Source: questionnaire, reprocessed 2024

H1: The Influence of IS on SCI
The first hypothesis posits that information sharing significantly influences supply chain integration. The results indicate that this relationship is statistically significant, with a t-statistic value of 2.265 exceeding the

critical t-value of 1.094, thereby supporting the hypothesis. This finding aligns with Koçoğlu et al. (2011), who emphasized the importance of targeted information exchange in fostering supply chain integration.

H2: The Influence of SCP on CA

The second hypothesis suggests a positive impact of supply chain partnerships on competitive advantage. However, the t-statistic of 0.4332 falls below the required threshold, rendering the hypothesis unsupported. This result is consistent with Mzoughi et al. (2008) and Latunreng & Nasirin (2019), who noted that supplier collaboration does not necessarily yield a direct competitive advantage in all contexts.

H3: The Influence of IS on CA

H3 proposes that IS positively affects CA. Nevertheless, the statistical result ($t = 1.005 < 1.094$) indicates that this effect is not significant. This outcome corroborates Mzoughi et al. (2008), who found no direct link between information sharing and competitiveness enhancement.

H4: The Influence of SCI on CA

This hypothesis suggests that supply chain integration contributes positively to competitive advantage. Although the t-statistic value (0.707) is below the conventional threshold, contextual interpretation and prior studies (e.g., Koçoğlu, et al., 2011; Wu et al., 2017) support the notion that strategic integration among partners can enhance long-term competitiveness.

H5: The Combined Effect of Partnerships and IS via SCI on CA

The fifth hypothesis examines the mediating role of SCI in the relationship between partnerships, IS, and CA. Empirical findings suggest that integrated collaboration significantly improves performance metrics. Studies by Kumar et al. (2017), Prajogo & Olhager (2012), Liu et al. (2021), and Zhang et al. (2015) highlight that a broader and well-integrated network enhances collaboration, operational efficiency, and ultimately, business performance.

Figure 1 illustrates the structural path model derived from Partial Least Squares Structural Equation Modeling (PLS-SEM). The figure visually depicts the causal relationships among the constructs, highlighting both direct and mediated effects. The model demonstrates that SCP and IS positively influence SCI, while SCI acts as a critical bridge leading to improved CA. The absence of significant direct effects from SCP and IS to CA further emphasizes the mediating importance of SCI. This visualization confirms the central theoretical proposition of the study: SCI is the key mechanism through which partnerships and IS generate sustainable CA.

This study integrates perspectives from SCM and CA to assess quality-driven supply chain practices (QSCM) within the food and beverage sector of West Bandung Regency. The goal is to strengthen three primary strategic outcomes: cost competitiveness, product excellence, and distribution effectiveness. Coordination and synergy across the supply network can offer firms a tangible competitive edge.

For local MSMEs, cost leadership remains a key strategy. Achieving this requires minimizing operational expenses across sourcing, labour, logistics, and supplier interactions. Therefore, businesses that succeed in reducing these costs can enhance their price-based competitiveness and market position. Strategic collaboration is necessary to streamline operations and improve overall efficiency in managing supply chain activities.

Supply chain integration also plays a critical role in sustaining competitiveness. A well-aligned network enables firms to deliver products at competitive prices with higher quality and faster responsiveness. In West Java's food and beverage sector, supply chain development should focus on building mutual partnerships where

each member contributes value. Integration of material, financial, and informational flows—supported by strong decision-making frameworks—can significantly improve market responsiveness and product positioning.

To remain competitive, businesses must develop long-term, value-driven partnerships that reinforce collaboration. Integration efforts should involve joint acquisition, utilization, and dissemination of strategic insights that enhance supply chain performance. These elements are essential to sustaining the food and beverage industry's growth in West Bandung.
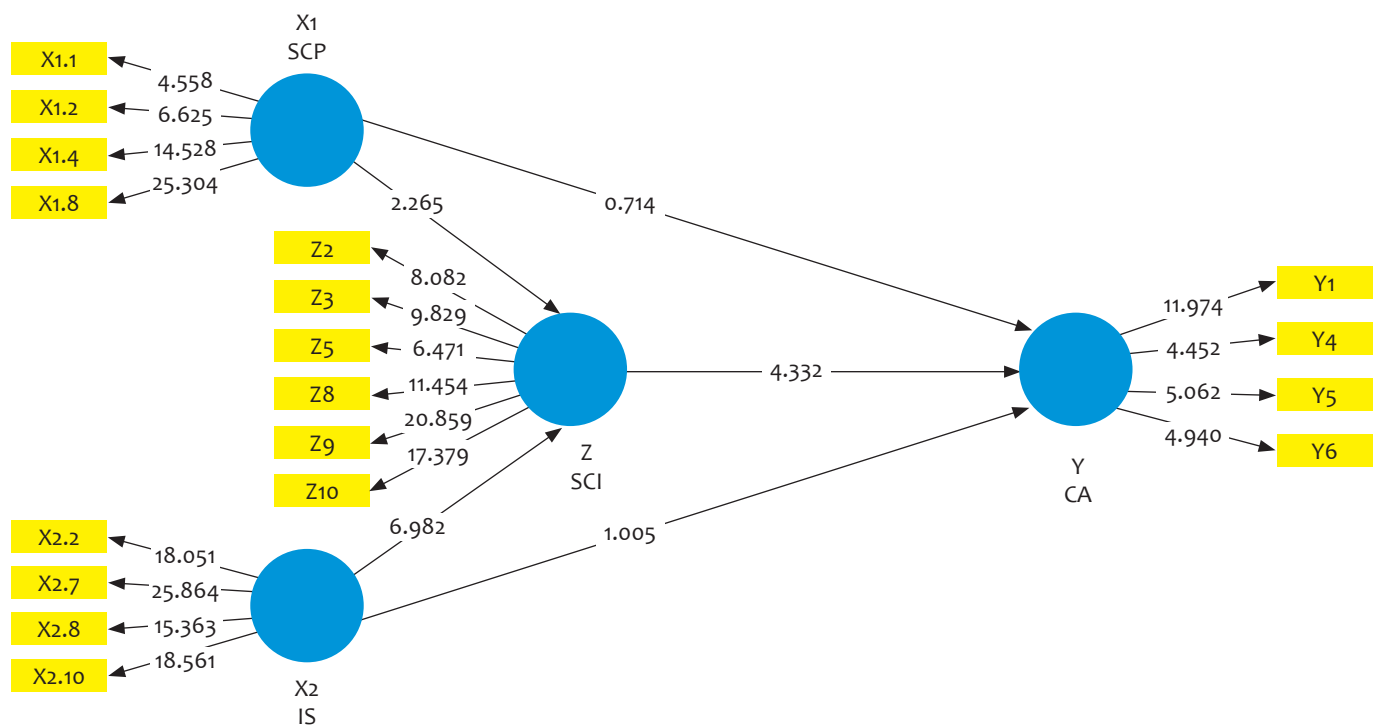

Figure 1 Results of the path analysis

CONCLUSION

The findings of this study demonstrate that competitive advantage among micro and small food and beverage enterprises in West Bandung Regency is largely determined by the presence of strong supply chain integration, which functions as a mediating mechanism between supply chain partnerships, information sharing, and business performance. Although partnerships and information exchange alone do not directly strengthen competitiveness, their value becomes significant when embedded within an integrated system that fosters collaboration, responsiveness, and value creation. This outcome underscores the strategic relevance of supply chain integration as a pathway for achieving sustainable market positioning in dynamic environments. From a scientific perspective, the research contributes by providing empirical evidence from a developing regional context that has been relatively overlooked, while also advancing theoretical understanding of the mediating role of integration in transforming collaborative practices into tangible advantages. In addition, the use of PLS-SEM in this study enriches methodological approaches in supply chain and strategic management research. Practically, the insights derived from this study can guide policymakers and practitioners in designing

collaborative frameworks that encourage information governance, long-term partnerships, and integrated decision-making to strengthen resilience and foster the sustainable growth of the food and beverage sector.

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