

Fostering Business Sustainability: A Growth Strategy for a Rural Tofu Micro-Enterprise

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Abstract: This study aims to formulate a viable growth strategy to foster business sustainability for rural micro-enterprises, presenting a case study of the "Sumber Rezeki" tofu business in Belu, Indonesia. Employing a qualitative approach, this research utilizes a Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, and Threats (SWOT) analysis to comprehensively evaluate the enterprise's internal and external strategic factors. The analysis reveals that the business is strategically positioned in Quadrant I of the SWOT matrix, where its significant internal strengths (score: 4.0) and favorable external opportunities (score: 4.0) strongly outweigh its weaknesses (score: 2.0) and threats (score: 2.75). This favorable position indicates that a progressive growth strategy is highly recommended. The findings suggest that by leveraging its core strengths to capitalize on market opportunities, the enterprise can achieve enhanced growth and ensure long-term sustainability. This research contributes practical insights for the subject enterprise and provides a strategic framework applicable to other traditional micro-enterprises operating in similar rural economic landscapes.

Keywords: Business Sustainability, Growth Strategy, Rural Entrepreneurship, SWOT Analysis, Micro-Enterprise

1. Introduction

Micro, Small, and Medium Enterprises (MSMEs) are widely recognized as fundamental pillars of economic development, particularly in emerging economies like Indonesia. They are crucial drivers of employment, poverty alleviation, and local economic resilience, often acting as the backbone of rural communities (Acs et al., 2017). Within this landscape, the traditional food sector holds a unique position, not only contributing to food security by providing affordable staple foods but also preserving cultural heritage (Simatupang & Schwab, 2021). The sustainability and strategic growth of these rural food enterprises are therefore critical for fostering inclusive development. However, their path to sustainability is frequently obstructed by a confluence of internal limitations and external pressures that threaten their long-term viability and competitiveness (Haris, 2022).

The contemporary business environment presents significant challenges for traditional MSMEs. Externally, they face intense competition from larger, technologically advanced corporations that leverage economies of scale to dominate the market (Porter, 2008). Internally, these enterprises often grapple with operational inefficiencies, limited access to finance, inconsistent product quality, and high vulnerability to market volatility, which manifests as fluctuating sales revenue (Mak-Mensah & Osei-Tutu, 2021). This instability destabilizes business planning and severely hampers growth prospects. Consequently, many rural enterprises remain locked in a cycle of subsistence, unable to transition into a growth-oriented phase. This situation highlights a critical gap: the need for context-specific, actionable strategic frameworks that can guide these enterprises toward sustainable growth (Setyawan, 2019).

The "Sumber Rezeki" tofu business, a rural micro-enterprise established in 2016 in Belu, Indonesia, serves as a compelling case study for these challenges. As a producer of a traditional staple food, it is integral to its local community, yet it exhibits the classic symptoms of strategic vulnerability, including unstable sales performance. The data presented in Table 1 illustrates this volatility.

Table 1: Sales Data for Sumber Rezeki Tofu (January - May 2021)

No	Month	Sales (Tofu Boards)	No	Month	Sales (Tofu Boards)
1	January	11.260	4	April	11.260
2	February	10.180	5	May	10.290
3	March	11.210			

Source: Sumber Rezeki Business, 2021

The fluctuating sales figures underscore the urgent need for a strategic intervention. To move beyond mere survival, the enterprise must develop a robust strategy grounded in a thorough understanding of its operational landscape. The Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, and Threats (SWOT) analysis is a foundational strategic management tool proven effective for diagnosing an organization's internal conditions and external environment to inform strategy formulation (Creswell, 2018; Huda et al., 2025). By systematically evaluating these factors, an enterprise can identify areas for leverage and mitigate potential risks.

While extensive literature exists on corporate strategy, research focusing on tailored growth strategies for individual micro-enterprises in remote rural settings remains less developed. This study aims to address this gap by developing a practical and sustainable growth strategy for the "Sumber Rezeki" tofu business. The primary objectives are: (1) To conduct a comprehensive SWOT analysis to identify the key internal and external factors impacting the enterprise; and (2) To formulate a data-driven, actionable strategic framework to enhance its competitiveness and ensure long-term business sustainability. This research seeks to provide valuable insights for the subject firm and a replicable model for similar traditional enterprises facing sustainability challenges.

2. Literature Review and Hypothesis Development

This section reviews the core theoretical concepts that underpin this study: business sustainability within the context of Micro, Small, and Medium Enterprises (MSMEs), the role of strategic management in fostering growth, and the application of SWOT analysis as a diagnostic tool for strategy formulation. Based on this review, a conceptual framework is developed to guide the research.

2.1. Business Sustainability for Rural Micro-Enterprises

Business sustainability, in its broadest sense, refers to an organization's ability to endure and create value over the long term, balancing economic viability, social responsibility, and environmental stewardship (Acs et al., 2017). For rural micro-enterprises, this concept transcends mere profitability. It encompasses economic resilience against market shocks, the ability to provide stable local employment, and the continuation of community-centric business practices (Simatupang & Schwab, 2021). These enterprises are often deeply embedded in their local social fabric, making their sustainability crucial for the overall well-being of the community. However, achieving this sustainability is a significant challenge, as these firms must navigate a landscape of limited resources and intense market pressures, necessitating a deliberate and well-formulated strategy for growth and survival (Haris, 2022).

2.2. Strategic Management and the Resource-Based View

Strategic management provides the tools for an enterprise to align its internal capabilities with its external environment to achieve its objectives. A foundational theory in this field is the Resource-Based View (RBV), which posits that a firm's competitive advantage derives from its unique bundle of valuable, rare, inimitable, and non-substitutable (VRIN) resources and capabilities (Barney, 1991). This internal focus suggests that long-term success is not just about reacting to external markets, but about cultivating and deploying internal strengths. For a rural micro-enterprise, these strengths might not be conventional assets like capital but could include local knowledge, strong community relationships, unique production processes, or a trusted brand reputation (Huda et al., 2025). A growth strategy, therefore, should be designed to leverage these unique internal resources to exploit opportunities and neutralize threats present in the external environment (Setyawan, 2019).

2.3. SWOT Analysis as a Tool for Strategic Formulation

To operationalize the principles of the RBV and formulate a viable strategy, a systematic diagnostic tool is required. The Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, and Threats (SWOT) analysis serves this purpose by providing a structured framework for auditing an organization's internal and external environments (Creswell, 2018).

2.3.1. Internal Analysis (Strengths and Weaknesses)

This corresponds directly to the RBV, involving an inventory of the enterprise's resources and capabilities. Strengths are the unique resources that provide a competitive edge, while weaknesses are the resource gaps or limitations that hinder performance.

2.3.2. External Analysis (Opportunities and Threats)

This involves scanning the external environment for factors that can impact the business. Opportunities are favorable external conditions that the firm can exploit for growth, whereas threats are unfavorable conditions that could jeopardize its sustainability (Porter, 2008).

By mapping these factors, a SWOT matrix (as illustrated generically in Table 2) facilitates the development of four categories of strategic alternatives: SO (using strengths to seize opportunities), WO (overcoming weaknesses to seize opportunities), ST (using strengths to mitigate threats), and WT (minimizing weaknesses and avoiding threats). This process ensures that the formulated strategy is grounded in the reality of the firm's condition and its operating context.

Table 2: Generic SWOT Matrix for Strategy Formulation

<i>Internal/External Factors</i>	Strengths (S) Internal positive factors	Weaknesses (W) Internal negative factors
Opportunities (O) External positive factors	SO Strategies: Leverage strengths to maximize opportunities.	WO Strategies: Overcome weaknesses by taking advantage of opportunities.
Threats (T) External negative factors	ST Strategies: Leverage strengths to minimize threats.	WT Strategies: Minimize weaknesses and avoid threats.

Source: Moy, 2021

2.4. Conceptual Framework and Research Propositions

Based on the synthesis of literature on business sustainability, the Resource-Based View, and strategic management, this study proposes the conceptual framework depicted in Figure 1. The framework posits that the formulation of a sustainable growth strategy for a rural micro-enterprise is the result of a systematic alignment between its internal factors (resources and capabilities) and its external environment (market dynamics). The SWOT analysis acts as the analytical mechanism to facilitate this alignment.

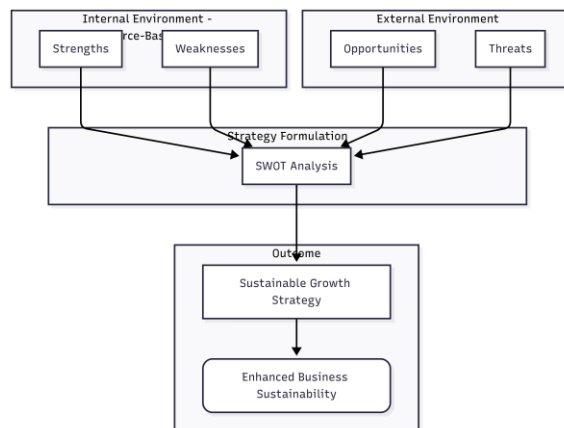


Figure 1: Conceptual Framework for Fostering Business Sustainability

Figure 1 illustrates the process where internal and external factors are analyzed via SWOT to create a strategy that enhances sustainability.

Source: Moy, 2021

This framework leads to the following research propositions that will guide the inquiry of this case study:

- **Proposition 1:** The ability of a rural micro-enterprise to achieve sustainable growth is positively dependent on its capacity to leverage its unique internal strengths to capitalize on external opportunities.
- **Proposition 2:** The long-term sustainability of a rural micro-enterprise is contingent upon the formulation of proactive strategies that utilize its core strengths to mitigate external threats and overcome internal weaknesses.

- **Proposition 3:** A growth strategy developed through the systematic alignment of internal and external factors via SWOT analysis will lead to enhanced and more resilient business sustainability for a rural micro-enterprise.

3. Research Methods

This study adopts a qualitative, single-case study design. A case study approach is exceptionally well-suited for this research as it enables a deep and holistic investigation of a contemporary phenomenon within its real-world context (Yin, 2018). Given the objective of formulating a tailored growth strategy, an in-depth exploration of a single entity the "Sumber Rezeki" tofu business allows for a rich and nuanced understanding of its specific operational dynamics, internal resources, and external challenges. This approach prioritizes depth over breadth, providing the detailed insights necessary for developing a contextually relevant strategic framework, which aligns with the research propositions outlined in the previous chapter (Creswell, 2018).

3.1. Case Selection and Participants

The "Sumber Rezeki" tofu business was selected for this study using purposive sampling. This non-probability sampling technique involves selecting a case based on its specific characteristics relevant to the research questions (Patton, 2015). "Sumber Rezeki" was chosen because it is a representative example of a traditional, rural micro-enterprise in Indonesia facing classic sustainability challenges, such as market competition and operational stability.

The primary data for this study were collected from key informants who possess deep knowledge of the enterprise's operations and strategic position. The participants included:

- The owner of the enterprise, who served as the primary informant regarding business history, vision, decision-making processes, and financial aspects.
- Two long-term employees, who provided insights into the daily production processes, operational strengths, and weaknesses.
- One key distributor (local trader), who offered a perspective on market demand, customer feedback, and competitive dynamics.

This selection of participants ensures a multi-faceted view of the business, enabling comprehensive data collection for the SWOT analysis.

3.2. Data Collection Methods

To ensure the trustworthiness and richness of the findings, data were collected using multiple methods to facilitate triangulation (Creswell, 2018). The data collection took place from November to December 2021. The methods included:

- **Semi-Structured Interviews:** In-depth, face-to-face interviews were conducted with the owner, employees, and the distributor. An interview guide was used to ensure all key topics were covered (e.g., perceived strengths, weaknesses, market opportunities, threats), while also allowing flexibility for emergent themes to be explored.
- **Direct Observation:** The researcher conducted non-participant observation of the daily operations, including the tofu production process, interactions with suppliers, and sales transactions with distributors. This method provided direct, contextual data on operational efficiencies and challenges that might not have been articulated in interviews.
- **Document Analysis:** Relevant business documents were collected and analyzed. This included historical sales records (as presented in Table 1), purchase logs for raw materials (soybeans, etc.), and any available financial statements. These documents served to verify and supplement information gathered from interviews and observations.

3.3. Data Analysis Techniques

The data were analyzed using a systematic, multi-step approach aligned with the SWOT framework to address the research propositions.

4.1.1. Data Transcription and Coding

All interview recordings were transcribed verbatim. The transcripts and detailed field notes from observations were then subjected to thematic analysis. The data were coded and categorized based on themes corresponding to the four SWOT components. For example, statements related to "strong local customer loyalty" were coded as a strength, while "rising soybean prices" were coded as a threat.

4.1.2. SWOT Matrix Construction

The coded data were synthesized and populated into a detailed SWOT matrix. This matrix visually organized the key findings, listing the specific, evidence-backed strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats identified for the "Sumber Rezeki" enterprise.

4.1.3. Strategic Alternative Generation

The completed SWOT matrix was used as the foundation for strategy formulation. By cross-referencing the identified factors, a set of strategic alternatives was systematically generated, corresponding to the four strategic postures:

- SO (Strengths-Opportunities) Strategies: How to use core strengths to seize key opportunities.
- WO (Weaknesses-Opportunities) Strategies: How to overcome weaknesses by taking advantage of opportunities.
- ST (Strengths-Threats) Strategies: How to leverage strengths to mitigate or avoid external threats.
- WT (Weaknesses-Threats) Strategies: Defensive strategies to minimize weaknesses and avoid threats.

4.1.4. Strategy Selection and Framework Development

Finally, the generated strategic alternatives were evaluated based on their feasibility, potential impact, and alignment with the owner's vision. The most viable strategies were then integrated into a coherent and actionable growth framework for the "Sumber Rezeki" business.

4. Result and Discussion

4.1. Result

This section presents the findings of the study, beginning with the identification of key strategic factors from the SWOT analysis, followed by an assessment of the enterprise's strategic position. It culminates in the formulation of a sustainable growth strategy. The discussion integrates these findings with the theoretical concepts of the Resource-Based View (RBV) and business sustainability to provide a rich interpretation of the results. The research instruments used for data collection were validated and demonstrated high reliability, with all Cronbach's Alpha values exceeding 0.79, ensuring the trustworthiness of the data.

4.1.1. Identification of Key Strategic Factors

The analysis of data from interviews, observations, and documentation revealed a distinct profile of internal and external factors influencing the "Sumber Rezeki" enterprise. These factors form the foundational inputs for the SWOT matrix.

Internal Factors (Strengths and Weaknesses) The internal analysis, grounded in the Resource-Based View (RBV), identified several key resources and capabilities, as well as significant limitations.

Strengths: The enterprise possesses several valuable, context-specific strengths that are central to its current operations:

- **Operational Experience and Product Quality:** The business has significant experience in processing raw materials into high-quality tofu. This tacit knowledge is a core capability that is difficult for new entrants to imitate.
- **Strong Customer and Community Relations:** The enterprise maintains excellent relationships with its customers and the local community, fostering a high degree of trust and loyalty. This social capital is a critical intangible resource.
- **Production Continuity:** The business has a proven ability to maintain a consistent production schedule, ensuring a reliable supply for its distributors.

Weaknesses: Despite its strengths, the enterprise is constrained by several internal weaknesses that hinder its growth potential:

- **Limited Financial Capital:** The business operates with limited capital, which restricts its ability to invest in modern equipment or scale up operations to fend off competition.
- **Managerial and Human Capital Gaps:** The research identified low levels of formal education among staff and limited managerial capacity, which can impede strategic planning and adaptation.
- **Inadequate Profit Margins:** The current profit levels are considered insufficient, limiting the potential for reinvestment into the business.

External Factors (Opportunities and Threats) The external environment presents both promising opportunities for growth and significant threats to the enterprise's sustainability.

Opportunities: The market and broader environment offer several avenues for strategic advancement:

- **High Consumer Trust and Demand:** There is strong, established trust from consumers regarding the quality of the product, coupled with high purchasing power for this staple food.
- **Stable Raw Material Supply:** The continuity of the raw material (soybean) supply is considered secure, providing a stable foundation for production.
- **Supportive Distribution Network:** Local traders and sellers actively assist in marketing the product, effectively extending the enterprise's market reach at a low cost.

Threats: The enterprise faces several external threats that could undermine its position:

- **Emergence of Modern Competitors:** The entry of new, modern tofu factories poses a significant competitive threat.
- **Fluctuating Input Costs:** The business is vulnerable to fluctuations in the price of raw materials, which can compress its already thin profit margins.
- **Increasing Bargaining Power of Buyers:** A potential increase in the bargaining power of buyers or distributors could further pressure a reduction in prices and profits.

4.1.2. *Strategic Positioning of the Enterprise*

To quantify the enterprise's strategic position, a weighted analysis of the internal (IFAS) and external (EFAS) factors was conducted. The total weighted scores for each dimension were calculated as follows:

- Total Strength Score: 4.0
- Total Weakness Score: 2.0
- Total Opportunity Score: 4.0
- Total Threat Score: 2.75 (rounded from 2.747664)

These scores were used to determine the enterprise's position on the SWOT coordinate plane. The coordinates were calculated as (Total Strength - Total Weakness; Total Opportunity - Total Threat), resulting in a final coordinate of (2.0, 1.25). This firmly places the "Sumber Rezeki" enterprise in Quadrant I (Growth/Aggressive). This finding indicates a highly favorable strategic position, where the business possesses significant internal strengths that can be leveraged to capitalize on substantial external opportunities. This empirically supports Proposition 1, confirming that the enterprise's ability to grow is positively dependent on leveraging its internal strengths to exploit external opportunities.

4.1.3. *Formulation of a Sustainable Growth Strategy*

Based on the Quadrant I positioning, a progressive growth strategy is recommended. The following strategic framework, derived from the detailed SWOT matrix analysis (Table 3), is proposed to foster long-term business sustainability.

Table 3: SWOT Matrix and Strategic Alternatives for Sumber Rezeki

<i>Strengths (S) 1. Experience & Quality 2. Customer Relations 3. Production Continuity</i>	<i>Weaknesses (W) 1. Limited Capital 2. Low Managerial Capacity 3. Inadequate Profit</i>	
Opportunities (O) 1. Consumer Trust 2. Distributor Support 3. Stable Supply	SO Strategies (Growth-Oriented) - Leverage product quality to deepen consumer trust and expand market reach through distributor support (S1, S2, O1, O2). - Ensure production continuity to meet growing demand from loyal customers (S3, O1).	WO Strategies (Capability-Building) - Utilize strong distributor relationships to increase sales volume, thereby improving profits for reinvestment in managerial training (W2, W3, O2).
Threats (T) 1. New Competitors 2. Price Fluctuations 3. Buyer Power	ST Strategies (Resilience-Building) - Solidify strong customer relationships to create a loyal base that is less susceptible to new competitors (S2, T1). - Use production experience to maintain efficiency and buffer against raw material price fluctuations (S1, S3, T2).	WT Strategies (Defensive) - Seek micro-financing or form a cooperative to address capital limitations required to compete effectively (W1, T1). - Improve promotion efforts to defend market share against new entrants (W3, T1).

Source: Moy, 2021

4.2. Discussion

The findings reveal that while "Sumber Rezeki" is in a strong position, its sustainability is not guaranteed without proactive strategic action. The formulated strategy provides a roadmap to not only grow but also build resilience, supporting Propositions 2 and 3.

4.2.1. Theoretical Implications

This study provides a clear empirical illustration of the Resource-Based View (RBV) within a micro-enterprise context. It demonstrates that intangible assets like customer relationships and tacit operational knowledge are potent sources of competitive advantage, even in the absence of significant financial capital. Furthermore, it validates the use of the SWOT framework as a practical tool for translating theoretical concepts (like RBV) into actionable strategy for small, rural businesses, a context often underrepresented in mainstream strategy literature.

4.2.2. Managerial Implications

For the owner of "Sumber Rezeki," the message is clear: the path to sustainability lies in a dual approach. First, the enterprise must deepen its core strengths. This involves actively nurturing customer relationships and consistently marketing its superior product quality as a key differentiator. Second, it must address its critical weaknesses. The most pressing need is to improve its financial and managerial capacity. The owner should explore micro-finance options, government MSME support programs, or local cooperatives to secure capital. Simultaneously, investing in basic financial literacy and business management training is essential for making informed decisions to navigate future threats and opportunities. By implementing the strategies outlined in Table 3, the enterprise can move from a position of passive strength to one of active, sustainable growth.

5. Conclusion

This study set out to formulate a sustainable growth strategy for the "Sumber Rezeki" tofu micro-enterprise, a representative case of a traditional rural business in Belu, Indonesia. The research concludes that the enterprise possesses a strong strategic position, characterized by significant internal strengths and substantial external opportunities. The quantitative SWOT analysis placed the business firmly in Quadrant I, with coordinates at (2.0, 1.25), indicating that a progressive, growth-oriented strategy is the most viable path forward. The core findings

revealed that the enterprise's primary strengths such as deep operational experience, high product quality, and strong customer relationships are its most valuable assets for capitalizing on market opportunities like consumer trust and a supportive distribution network. Based on these findings, a multi-faceted strategy was formulated, emphasizing the need to leverage these strengths to deepen market penetration while simultaneously addressing critical weaknesses like limited capital and managerial capacity to build long-term resilience.

The contributions of this study are twofold. Theoretically, it provides a clear empirical application of the Resource-Based View (RBV) to a micro-enterprise, demonstrating how intangible assets like social capital and tacit knowledge can serve as a foundation for competitive advantage in a rural context. Practically, the research yields a set of actionable strategic recommendations for the owner of "Sumber Rezeki." Key recommendations include maintaining product quality to sustain consumer trust, fostering good relationships with customers to ensure loyalty, and enhancing promotion to improve competitiveness.

However, this study has several limitations that open avenues for future research. First, as a single case study, the findings are context-specific, and their generalizability is limited. Future research could conduct comparative case studies across different rural enterprises or sectors to identify broader strategic patterns. Second, the SWOT analysis provides a static snapshot in time (November – December 2021); the business environment is dynamic, and therefore, longitudinal studies would be beneficial to track strategy implementation and its impact on sustainability over time. Lastly, this study's focus was on strategy formulation; further research could investigate the barriers and enablers of strategy implementation within the context of rural micro-enterprises.

In closing, fostering the sustainability of micro-enterprises like "Sumber Rezeki" is more than an academic exercise; it is a vital component of local economic development. Their success sustains livelihoods, ensures community food security, and preserves the vitality of the rural economy. By adopting proactive strategies that blend traditional strengths with modern managerial acumen, these enterprises can transition from merely surviving to thriving, securing their contribution to the community for years to come.

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Informed Consent

The authors have obtained informed consent from all participants.

Conflict of Interest

The authors declare that there is no conflict of interest.

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