

## Relationship Management, Location, and Distribution Optimization as Determinants of Manikka MSMEs' Sustainability in East Kalimantan

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**Submit Article :**

Submission: September 13, 2025

Revision: November 26, 2025

Accepted: November 28, 2025

Published: December 8, 2025

**Keywords :**

Relationship Management, Business Location, Distribution Optimization, MSME Sustainability, Digital Transformation.

**Abstract**

Penelitian ini menganalisis pengaruh manajemen hubungan, lokasi usaha, dan optimisasi distribusi terhadap keberlanjutan Manikka Kaltim sebagai UMKM berbasis kerajinan di Kalimantan Timur. Penelitian ini dilatarbelakangi oleh berbagai tantangan UMKM kreatif lokal, seperti keterbatasan sumber daya, ketergantungan pada pemasok tunggal, serta lokasi usaha yang kurang strategis. Pendekatan kualitatif deskriptif digunakan dengan analisis Porter's Five Forces, melalui pengumpulan data berupa wawancara, observasi, dan dokumentasi. Hasil penelitian menunjukkan bahwa Manikka Kaltim berada dalam lingkungan persaingan yang tinggi dengan daya tawar pembeli yang kuat, keterbatasan pemasok, dan meningkatnya ancaman produk substitusi. Manajemen hubungan yang berkelanjutan dengan pemasok dan pelanggan, didukung oleh strategi distribusi berbasis digital, terbukti meningkatkan daya saing. Selain itu, pemilihan lokasi usaha yang strategis serta integrasi pemasaran daring dan luring berperan penting dalam memperluas jangkauan pasar. Penelitian ini menyimpulkan bahwa keberlanjutan Manikka Kaltim ditentukan oleh sinergi antara manajemen hubungan, lokasi usaha yang strategis, dan sistem distribusi yang adaptif.

**Abstract**

This study investigates the influence of relationship management, business location, and distribution optimization on the sustainability of Manikka Kaltim, a craft-based MSME in East Kalimantan. The research addresses challenges faced by local creative MSMEs, including limited resources, dependence on single suppliers and low market visibility. A qualitative descriptive approach was employed using Porter's Five Forces Analysis, with data collected through interviews, observations, and documentation. The findings show that Manikka Kaltim operates in a highly competitive environment marked by strong buyer bargaining power, limited supplier options, and growing substitute threats. Sustainable supplier and customer relationships, supported by digital distribution strategies, were found to enhance competitiveness, while strategic location selection and integrated online-offline marketing expanded market reach. The study concludes that the sustainability of Manikka Kaltim depends on the synergy between relationship management, strategic location, and adaptive distribution system.

### INTRODUCTION

The Retail business in Indonesia plays a crucial role in the national economy, as it serves as the primary driver of economic activity, spurring growth in other sectors by increasing consumption while supporting efficient product distribution to end consumers (Sudarma, 2023). Retail is not limited to the sale of everyday consumer goods but also encompasses local and creative products, such as handicrafts, fashion, and regional specialties. According to (Levy & Weitz, 2012), retail focuses on selling goods or services to end consumers through various channels, including physical stores and digital platforms.

The development of marketing in Indonesia has grown rapidly. Human resources in urban areas develop much faster than in rural regions due to the influence of digital technology in the traditional retail sector. Meanwhile, HR in rural areas still face several challenges, such as limited technology understanding, lack of facilities to develop traditional retail, and insufficient training related to digital marketing (Surahman, 2023). This shows that while digitalization accelerates the transformation of modern retail such as supermarkets, minimarkets, and e-commerce traditional retail in rural areas continues to struggle with adaptation barriers. Therefore, the gap in human resource capability between urban and rural regions plays a significant role in determining how fast retail modernization



can progress across Indonesia. The digitalization phenomenon is accelerating the transformation of Indonesian retail, particularly after the COVID-19 pandemic, where e-commerce platforms and social media have become the primary channels for product distribution.

In addition to driving economic growth, the retail sector also has high social relevance. Retail plays a role in creating jobs, strengthening the presence of MSMEs, and preserving local cultural products through the sale of handmade products and regional crafts. (Lantu 2022) emphasized that the Indonesian craft industry has the potential for global competitiveness, but requires support from innovation, branding, and broader market access to compete with foreign products.

Despite the rapid growth of MSMEs and the increasing attention given to the retail and creative economy sectors, existing academic studies on MSME sustainability remain conceptually fragmented. Many previous studies have examined MSMEs from a partial perspective, concentrating mainly on technological aspects and customer-related outcomes. Previous studies focus on digitalization and customer behavior but rarely integrate relationship management, location, and distribution in MSMEs (Dellyana et al., 2023a; Kurniasari, 2023). These studies predominantly emphasize digital innovation, e-commerce adoption, and changes in consumer purchasing behavior as key drivers of MSME performance, while paying limited attention to how relationship, spatial, and logistical factors jointly shape long-term sustainability.

In addition, research that specifically addresses relationship management and customer relationship management (CRM) in MSMEs often treats these variables as standalone managerial practices. Studies by (Setyawan & Mudhofar, 2022) as well as (Maduri et al., 2023), for example, highlight the importance of maintaining relationship with customer and partners, yet do not sufficiently link relationship management to strategic business location decision or distribution system optimization. As a result, the interaction between relational strategies, physical location constraints, and distribution channels remains underexplored, particularly in the context of craft-based MSMEs that rely heavily on local resources, artisan networks, and limited market access.

This lack of integration is especially relevant for MSMEs operation in regional and rural contexts, such as those in East Kalimantan, where businesses commonly face structural challenges including limited skilled labor, capital constraints, dependency on specific suppliers, and non-strategic business locations. Without an integrated analytical framework, existing studies provide only partial explanations of MSME sustainability and fail to capture the complexity of how internal and external factors interact in real business environment. Consequently, empirical evidence that comprehensively explains the combined role of relationship management, business location, and distribution systems in supporting MSME sustainability remains scarce.

Retail marketing encompasses the activity of selling goods or services directly to end consumers Levy & Weitz, (2018). In MSMEs, retail strategy relies not only on physical location but also on understanding consumer behavior, managing distribution, and creating added value for products. Kotler & Keller, (2016) emphasized that integrating offline and online channels is key to survival in a competitive market. Limited capital, managerial capabilities, and suboptimal promotions often pose obstacles, as seen in the case of Toko Manikka Kaltim's, which faced a less strategic location and fluctuating sales(D. Sari, 2021). Previous research also demonstrates the importance of marketing innovation and the use of digital marketing to strengthen the competitiveness of (D. M. Sari & Nugroho, 2021).

Human resource management plays a crucial role in the craft industry because product quality is highly dependent on workforce skills. (Dessler, 2019) explains that human resource management encompasses training, development, and employee motivation. Challenges arise when artisans work from home, as at the Manikka Kaltim's Shop, making product supervision and standardization difficult. (Putri & Hadi, 2022) found that a lack of training and supervision in craft MSMEs leads to quality inconsistencies. Business owners' efforts to provide basic training reflect the application of human resource development principles. (Rahman, 2023) also emphasizes the importance of standard operating procedures and quality control to maintain production consistency and efficiency.

Raw material availability is crucial for smooth production. (Chopra & Meindl, 2021) emphasize that an efficient supply chain must maintain timely material flow and optimal costs. At Toko Manikka Kaltim's, delays in rattan raw materials frequently occurred due to suppliers being located in remote areas and dependent on a single supplier group, resulting in unstable production. To address this, the business owner collaborated with Bank Indonesia and BAZNAS Kaltim's to ensure more secure raw material availability. Other research indicates that supply chain flexibility and supplier diversification are crucial factors in increasing the production resilience of MSMEs (Jamaludin 2023;Isa & Mangifera, 2024)

Previous research has shown that retail strategy, human resource management, and supply chain management play a critical role in the performance and sustainability of MSMEs (Chopra & Meindl, 2021; Dessler, 2019; Kotler & Keller, 2016). However, studies analyzing the interrelationship between these three aspects simultaneously, particularly in craft MSMEs with home-based artisans, are still limited (Isa & Mangifera, 2024; Jamaludin et al., 2023). Furthermore, although institutional support is recognized as important, empirical studies as Bank Indonesia or BAZNAS in strengthening the supply chain of local MSMEs are still relatively few. Therefore this study contributes by offering an integrated perspective on the interaction of these three aspects in supporting production sustainability at the Manikka Kaltim's Store

This study aims to analyze how these three factors interact to support MSME sustainability, focusing on Manikka Kaltim's as a local handicraft-based MSME in East Kalimantan. By integrating relationship management, location, and distribution within a single analytical framework, this study seeks to contribute to the literature by offering a more holistic understanding of MSME sustainability and providing practical insight for strengthening the competitiveness of craft-based MSMEs in regional economies.

## METHOD

Porter's Five Forces Analysis is a model developed by Michael E. Porter (1979) to understand the level of competition and attractiveness of an industry. This model is used by companies to assess how external forces affect their ability to generate profits and determine appropriate competitive strategies. Through this approach, companies can identify opportunities and threats emerging from their industry environment. This approach was chosen because it allows researchers to describe in detail the forces and threats that affect a business's competitive position. Porter's model serves as an analytical framework to assess five key aspects: the threat of new entrants, supplier power, buyer power, the threat of substitute products, and the level of competition among similar businesses.

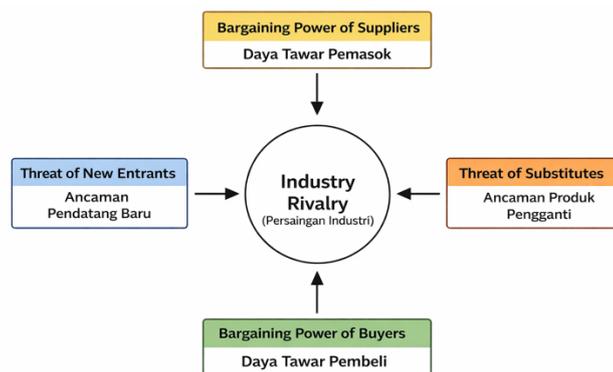


Figure 1. Porter's Five Forces Analysis of Manikka Kaltim MSMEs

This study adopts a qualitative descriptive research design to comprehensively explore the competitive environment, operational constraints, and sustainability strategies of Manikka Kaltim as a craft-based MSME. A qualitative approach was deliberately chosen because the research aims to understand processes, experiences, and strategic responses within a real business context, which cannot

be adequately captured through quantitative measurement alone. Qualitative inquiry enables in-depth exploration of managerial decision-making, production dynamics, and relational interactions with suppliers and customers, which are central to MSME sustainability. This approach prioritizes contextual depth and detailed understanding over statistical generalization, making it appropriate for examining complex organizational conditions within small business settings.

The analytical framework of Porter's Five Forces was employed to assess external competitive pressures affecting Manikka Kaltim. Although originally developed for industry-level analysis, this framework has been increasingly applied in MSME research due to the high exposure of small businesses to external forces such as supplier dependence, buyer bargaining power, market rivalry, substitute products, and barriers to entry. For MSMEs, these forces are often more pronounced because of limited resources and bargaining positions. In this study, Porter's Five Forces provides a structured lens to interpret how external competition shapes strategic behavior and sustainability at the firm level, rather than for macro-industry comparison.

Participants were selected using purposive sampling based on their direct involvement in strategic, administrative, and production activities. The study involved six informants, consisting of the business owner and spouse as second-generation managers, two administrative staff responsible for digital marketing and online sales, and artisans specializing in rattan and bead production. This sample size was considered adequate for qualitative research, as the focus was on obtaining rich and relevant information rather than representativeness. Data collection continued until data saturation was achieved, indicated by the repetition of themes and the absence of new insights during subsequent interviews. Data were collected through two rounds of semi-structured, in-depth interviews, supported by direct observations and documentation.

Data analysis followed a systematic qualitative procedure involving data reduction, data display, and conclusion drawing. Interview transcripts and observation notes were transcribed and manually coded using an open coding process, after which similar codes were grouped into categories aligned with the five dimensions of Porter's Five Forces. The analysis was supported by Microsoft Word and Excel to organize codes and themes. To ensure credibility and reliability, source and method triangulation were applied by cross-checking data from interviews, observations, and documentation. Ethical considerations were explicitly addressed: all participants were informed about the research objectives, provided verbal consent prior to participation, and were assured of confidentiality and anonymity. The study received ethical approval from the academic institution, and all collected data were used solely for academic purposes.

## RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The results of the Porter's Five Forces analysis indicate that Manikka Kaltim operates under increasing competitive pressure, particularly from the threat of new entrants. This pressure is evident in the emergence of other Dayak craft retailers, such as Rosida Souvenir Manik-Manik Khas Dayak Kaltim, as well as the rapid growth of sellers utilizing online marketplaces and social media platforms. Participants emphasized that digital platforms have significantly lowered entry barriers, enabling competitors to reach wider markets with lower operational costs. As stated by the business owner, *"Currently, many Dayak handicraft sellers offer similar products, especially through online marketplaces. Anyone can sell without having a physical store, which increases competition"* (Owner). Field observations further confirmed that competing craft products are actively promoted through Instagram and e-commerce platforms, intensifying rivalry for consumer attention.

In addition to entry threats, strong pressures also arise from suppliers, buyers, and substitute products. Supplier bargaining power is relatively high due to Manikka Kaltim's dependence on artisan groups for rattan and bead raw materials, which limits flexibility in pricing and production schedules. An artisan explained, *"Delays in raw material supply directly cause delays in production"* (Artisan), although

institutional support from BAZNAS partially mitigates this risk. The threat of substitute products is substantial, as consumers frequently compare handmade crafts with lower-priced imported accessories and mass-produced fashion items, contributing to strong buyer bargaining power. As noted by an administrator, “Consumers often compare our products with cheaper modern accessories before deciding to buy” (Admin). A structured summary of these findings is presented in Table 1 to enhance interpretive clarity.

Tabel 1. Summary of Porter’s Five Forces Anlysis at Manikka Kaltim

Five Forces Component	Competitive Pressure	Key Evidence
Threat of New Entrants	High	Growth of Dayak Craft shops & online sellers
Supplier Power	Moderate - High	Dependence on limited artisan groups
Buyer Power	High	Price comparison & easy access to alternatives
Threat of Substitutes	High	Imported & mass market accessories
Competitive Rivalry	High	Similar products & digital competition

The analysis indicates that buyer bargaining power and the threat of substitute products are high, as consumers have access to numerous alternative products at different price and quality levels. This finding is consistent with (Levy & Weitz, 2018), who argue that retail consumer behavior is strongly influenced by product variety and competitive intensity. Therefore, Manikka Kaltim needs to strengthen customer loyalty through differentiation, value-based branding, and relationship-oriented marketing strategies.

The findings also show a high dependence on specific artisan groups as suppliers, which limits flexibility in production and price negotiations. This condition aligns with (Lestari, 2022), who highlights supplier dependency as a source of supply chain vulnerability, and is further supported (Chopra & Meindl, 2021), who emphasize supply chain resilience as a key factor for MSME sustainability. Consequently, diversifying suppliers and strengthening long-term supplier relationships are recommended to reduce production risks. From a location and distribution perspective, store relocation has reduced physical visibility, increasing reliance on online channels for sales and promotion. This finding supports (Kotler & Keller, 2016) argument that integrating offline and online channels is essential for maintaining retail competitiveness, and is reinforced by (Dellyana et al., 2023) and (Rogers, 2020) regarding the effectiveness of digital platforms in expanding market reach. Therefore, optimizing digital distribution and social media promotion is a strategic necessity for Manikka Kaltim.

Furthermore, the study reveals that business sustainability is influenced by the ability to manage relationships with suppliers, customers, and supporting institutions. This finding aligns with (Setyawan & Mudhofar, 2022), who emphasize structured relationship management as a driver of operational efficiency and competitiveness in MSMEs. Thus, building long-term collaborative relationships based on trust and innovation is crucial for strengthening supply chain sustainability.

Finally, evidence shows that strategic location selection combined with digital promotion improves market access and distribution efficiency. This is consistent with (Khatimah et al., 2023) and (Bening et al., 2023), who highlight the role of location intelligence and integrated sales channels in improving MSME performance, as well as (Akanmu & Mustapa, 2022), who emphasize the integration of accessibility, logistics, and digital innovation for retail sustainability. Therefore, strengthening digital-based distribution systems and aligning them with strategic location decisions are essential for enhancing Manikka Kaltim’s competitiveness.

## CONCLUSION

This The results of this study confirm that the sustainability of Manikka Kaltim’s MSMEs is influenced not only by internal efficiency but also by the firm’s ability to integrate relationship management, strategic business location, and adaptive distribution systems. In a competitive retail environment characterized by high product substitution, effective relationship management plays a key

role in maintaining customer loyalty and strengthening competitive advantage (Setyawan & Mudhofar, 2022; Sinaga & al., 2023).

Business location also emerges as a strategic factor influencing MSME performance. Visibility and accessibility significantly affect consumer purchasing decisions, particularly when supported by effective digital promotion strategies (Maharika & al., 2022). Non-strategic locations may reduce customer flow and revenue, reinforcing the importance of aligning physical location with consumer behavior and market characteristics (Fajaria & al., 2021).

From a distribution perspective, integrating supply chain management and digital technology contributes to operational efficiency and market expansion. Effective SCM implementation enhances cost efficiency, distribution speed, and supplier relationships (Ahmad & Fitria, 2021), while local partnership-based distribution patterns improve market reach and product competitiveness (Muhfiatun & Nugraha, 2020). Digital adoption further strengthens market access and business identity (Misrofingah & al., 2024; Rahmanida & al., 2023).

Based on these findings, Manikka Kaltim is recommended to implement basic CRM tools, optimize digital visibility through platforms such as Google Maps and social media, and diversify its supplier base to reduce supply chain risks (Ghofar & Zawawi, 2023). This study is limited by its single case study design; therefore, future research should apply multi-case or quantitative approaches to validate these findings across different MSME sectors and regions (Akanmu & Mustapa, 2022).

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