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Strategic Development of SMEs for Local Economic Sustainability Using the Quantitative Strategic Planning Matrix

Aslam Jumain
Universitas Bosowa, Indonesia

*Corresponding Author
Jl. Urip Sumoharjo Km. 4, Sinrijala, Kec. Panakkukang, Kota Makassar, Sulawesi Selatan 90231, Indonesia
e-mail: aslamjumain@universitasbosowa.ac.id

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Abstract: Small and medium enterprises (SMEs) play a crucial role in sustaining local economies by generating employment, fostering innovation, and strengthening community resilience. However, their strategic development often lacks structured, data-informed approaches that integrate competitiveness and sustainability. This study develops a hybrid analytical framework combining the SWOT–TOWS Matrix, the Internal–External (IE) Matrix, and the Quantitative Strategic Planning Matrix (QSPM) to identify and prioritize strategic alternatives for sustainable enterprise growth. Using SMES Tompobulu, a coffee-processing business in South Sulawesi, Indonesia, as a case study, the research evaluates internal strengths and weaknesses alongside external opportunities and threats to determine the most effective strategic direction. The analysis positions the enterprise in the Grow and Build quadrant of the IE Matrix (Internal Factor Evaluation = 3.05; External Factor Evaluation = 2.80), indicating a strong internal capacity and moderately favorable external environment. Among two alternative strategies, direct export expansion achieved a higher Total Attractiveness Score (2.94) compared to local market penetration (2.64). The findings demonstrate that integrating classical strategic tools with sustainability criteria enhances decision accuracy, competitiveness, and long-term resilience. This study contributes methodologically by adapting QSPM for sustainability-oriented strategy evaluation and empirically by illustrating how SMEs can align export readiness, innovation, and environmental stewardship to achieve sustainable competitiveness. The framework offers practical implications for policymakers and enterprise support institutions to design place-sensitive interventions that reinforce SMEs transformation and inclusive local growth.

Keywords: local economic sustainability, small and medium enterprises, strategic development

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INTRODUCTION

Local economic sustainability is increasingly recognized as a foundation of inclusive development and regional resilience, emphasizing production systems that sustain livelihoods while preserving social cohesion and environmental integrity (Duxbury et al., 2023; Ferreira et al., 2024; Modrzyński & Voss, 2025). Within this framework, small and medium enterprises (SMEs) function as the backbone of local economies by generating employment, circulating income, and strengthening territorial value chains (Isensee et al., 2024; Manzoor et al., 2021;

Surya et al., 2021). Beyond their economic contribution, SMEs play an essential role in community-based sustainability transitions by embedding cultural values, using local resources, and maintaining adaptive relations with their surrounding environments (Vujanović & Pavlović, 2023; Yu, 2024). Thus, enhancing SMEs sustainability is a critical pathway toward achieving global goals such as SDG 8 (decent work and growth), SDG 9 (industry and innovation), and SDG 12 (responsible consumption and production).

Prior research on place-based enterprise systems has shown that local firms can achieve sustainable competitiveness when economic and social objectives are integrated within strategic management practices (Duxbury et al., 2023; Huggins & Thompson, 2012; Shrivastava & Kennelly, 2013). Recent studies have explored how SMEs can adapt to sustainability trends through innovation, digital transformation, and eco-certification (Baranova et al., 2020; Ferreira et al., 2024; Wang et al., 2021). However, strategic planning in SMEs remains underdeveloped compared to large corporations, particularly in linking strategic analysis tools to sustainability indicators and managerial decisions (Ariharti et al., 2017; Banelienė, 2021). These models are typically used to improve marketing or operations rather than to align firms with broader sustainability or resilience outcomes (Bosco et al., 2023; Jones et al., 2023).

Although previous studies have emphasized the relevance of classical strategic tools for SMEs performance, few have systematically combined them within an integrated sustainability framework. Existing applications of SWOT–TOWS or IE Matrix tend to stop at qualitative recommendations and rarely extend into quantitative prioritization using the Quantitative Strategic Planning Matrix (QSPM) (Compan et al., 2024; David & David, 2017; Modrzyński & Voss, 2025). Moreover, sustainability variables such as training, environmental practices, and social inclusion are seldom incorporated into strategic weighting systems. This study fills that methodological gap by demonstrating how QSPM can be adapted to evaluate strategies not only by financial attractiveness but also by sustainability value creation, thereby bridging conventional management analysis with sustainable development perspectives (Al-Qahtani et al., 2022; Saryazdi & Poursarrajian, 2021).

In developing economies, SMEs continue to face systemic challenges including limited access to finance, weak innovation capacity, and dependency on intermediaries in export chains (Bhuiyan et al., 2024; Jiang & Ruan, 2023). These barriers undermine competitiveness and reduce the resilience of local economies, particularly in the post-pandemic era when global markets increasingly demand certified, sustainable, and traceable products (Hoekman & Taş, 2020; Vu & Yamada, 2022). Recent scholarship stresses that integrating sustainability into core strategy is not optional but essential for SMEs to access global supply chains and ethical markets (Ferreira et al., 2024; Isensee et al., 2024; Modrzyński & Voss, 2025). Therefore, developing structured, evidence-based strategic frameworks that incorporate sustainability and competitiveness simultaneously has become an urgent priority for local enterprise systems and policymakers alike.

This study aims to develop a sustainability-oriented strategic framework for small and medium enterprises (SMEs) that enhances competitiveness and long-term local economic resilience. Using SME Tompobulu, a coffee-processing enterprise in South Sulawesi, Indonesia, as a case study, the research identifies key internal and external factors, evaluates strategic alternatives, and determines the most effective pathway for sustainable growth. The findings contribute to SME strategic management literature by presenting a data-driven and replicable approach that aligns business decisions with sustainable development objectives.

METHOD

This study applied a descriptive-analytical approach to develop strategic alternatives for a small-scale coffee processing enterprise in Tompobulu Subdistrict, Bantaeng Regency, South Sulawesi. The research integrated quantitative and qualitative methods through three analytical tools: the Quantitative Strategic Planning Matrix (QSPM), the Internal–External (IE) Matrix, and the SWOT–TOWS Matrix (David & David, 2017; Johnson, 2023). This approach enabled systematic identification of internal capabilities and external challenges to support realistic strategic planning.

Primary data were collected through semi-structured interviews and field observations involving the enterprise owner, employees, coffee farmers, and officials from the Bantaeng Cooperative and SMEs Office. The interviews were structured according to the 7P marketing framework product, price, place, promotion, people, process, and physical evidence (Lane Keller & Kotler, 2022). Secondary data were obtained from institutional reports, previous studies, and SME-related publications. Data triangulation ensured the reliability and validity of results (Creswell, 1999).

The analysis began with identifying internal and external factors, categorized as strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats (Johnson, 2023). Each factor was weighted (0.00–1.00) based on importance, and rated (1–4) according to performance, generating total weighted scores for the Internal Factor Evaluation (IFE) and External Factor Evaluation (EFE) matrices. These served as the foundation for further analysis. To determine the most feasible strategy, the Quantitative Strategic Planning Matrix (QSPM) was applied. The Total Attractiveness Score (TAS) was computed using the following formula:

$$TAS = \sum (W_i \times AS_i) \quad (1)$$

where W_i represents the factor weight and AS_i is the attractiveness score (1–4). The strategy with the higher TAS is considered more attractive for implementation.

The Internal–External (IE) Matrix was employed to align internal strengths with external environmental conditions in determining strategic directions (Zhang, 2022). To complement this quantitative evaluation, the SWOT–TOWS framework was applied to derive actionable strategies by systematically matching internal and external factors (Johnson, 2023). This approach identifies four strategic orientations: proactive strategies that leverage strengths to exploit opportunities (SO), defensive strategies that use strengths to counter threats (ST), improvement strategies that minimize weaknesses while pursuing opportunities (WO), and survival strategies that mitigate weaknesses against external threats (WT).

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Research Results

This research aims to formulate a strategic development plan for a small-scale coffee processing center in Tompobulu Subdistrict, Bantaeng Regency. The analysis employed a combination of tools: the Quantitative Strategic Planning Matrix (QSPM), the Internal–External (IE) Matrix, and the SWOT–TOWS Matrix. These frameworks were applied to identify internal capabilities and external conditions and to formulate strategies that are data-driven, realistic, and aligned with the competitive context of the coffee sector in South Sulawesi.

Internal factors were categorized into strengths and weaknesses, while external factors were defined as opportunities and threats, as summarized in Table 1.

Table 1. Internal and External Strategic Factors

Code	Strengths	Code	Weaknesses
S1	Varied products: Arabica, Robusta, Liberica	W1	Coffee price fluctuations during peak harvest
S2	Packaging adapted to market preferences	W2	Harvest practices below quality standards
S3	Strategic location near production centers	W3	Weather-dependent processing
S4	Modern dry & wet processing technology	W4	Uneven HR capacity: low discipline & high turnover
S5	Trained & specialized workforce	W5	Export still reliant on third parties
S6	Integrated promotion via cafés and souvenir shops		
Code	**Opportunities**	**Code**	**Threats**
O1	Rising demand for specialty coffee	T1	Global coffee price dependency
O2	Export potential to Japan, Korea, Pakistan	T2	Competition from external & international coffee brands
O3	Government support through UPT and training	T3	Climate change impacts on harvest season
O4	Coffee as part of lifestyle and café trends	T4	Consumer economic fluctuations reducing purchasing power
O5	Growth of tourism and souvenir market in South Sulawesi		

Source: Author's data analysis (2025)

Based on the internal–external analysis and 7P marketing review, two core strategies were identified. The first focuses on strengthening the local and regional market through product differentiation, attractive packaging, and consumer education. This strategy aims to build brand identity and increase customer loyalty, especially within the growing tourism and café culture in South Sulawesi. The second strategy targets direct export market expansion by removing intermediary dependence. This approach emphasizes improving product quality, acquiring certifications, and building export partnerships. Although this strategy demands more investment and preparation, it provides a significant opportunity for sustainable long-term growth and profitability.

To evaluate both strategies quantitatively, the QSPM method was applied. The results are presented in Table 2.

Table 2. Quantitative Strategic Planning Matrix (QSPM)

Strategic Factor	Weight	AS-A	TAS-A	AS-B	TAS-B
S1: Product variation	0.07	3	0.21	2	0.14
S2: Packaging adaptation	0.05	3	0.15	2	0.10
S3: Strategic location	0.08	3	0.24	2	0.16
S4: Modern processing technology	0.07	2	0.14	3	0.21
S5: Trained and specialized workforce	0.06	2	0.12	3	0.18
S6: Café & souvenir shop promotion	0.05	3	0.15	1	0.05
W1–W5 (Internal Weaknesses Combined)	0.22	—	0.32	—	0.62
O1–O5 (External Opportunities Combined)	0.28	—	0.63	—	0.68

Strategic Factor	Weight	AS-A	TAS-A	AS-B	TAS-B
T1–T4 (External Threats Combined)	0.10	—	0.33	—	0.40
Total	1.00		2.64		2.94

Source: Author's data analysis (2025)

The analysis reveals that Strategy B (Direct Export Expansion) achieved a higher Total Attractiveness Score (TAS = 2.94) compared to Strategy A (Local Market Penetration) with a TAS of 2.64. This indicates that direct export expansion is quantitatively more attractive and sustainable for long-term growth, while local market strengthening remains important for short-term capacity readiness.

To further validate strategic positioning, the Internal–External (IE) Matrix was developed, as shown in Table 3.

Table 3. IE Matrix

IFE \ EFE	Low (1.0–1.99)	Medium (2.0–2.99)	High (3.0–4.0)
High (3.0–4.0)	Grow & Build (I)	**Grow & Build (II)**	Grow & Build (III)
Medium (2.0–2.99)	Hold & Maintain (IV)	Hold & Maintain (V)	Hold & Maintain (VI)
Low (1.0–1.99)	Harvest/Divest (VII)	Harvest/Divest (VIII)	Harvest/Divest (IX)

Source: Author's data analysis (2025)

With an IFE score of 3.05 and an EFE score of 2.80, the SMEs Tompobulu coffee processing center is positioned in Quadrant II (Grow and Build), indicating strong internal resources and moderate-to-favorable external conditions. Recommended strategies include market penetration, product development, forward integration, and direct export initiatives.

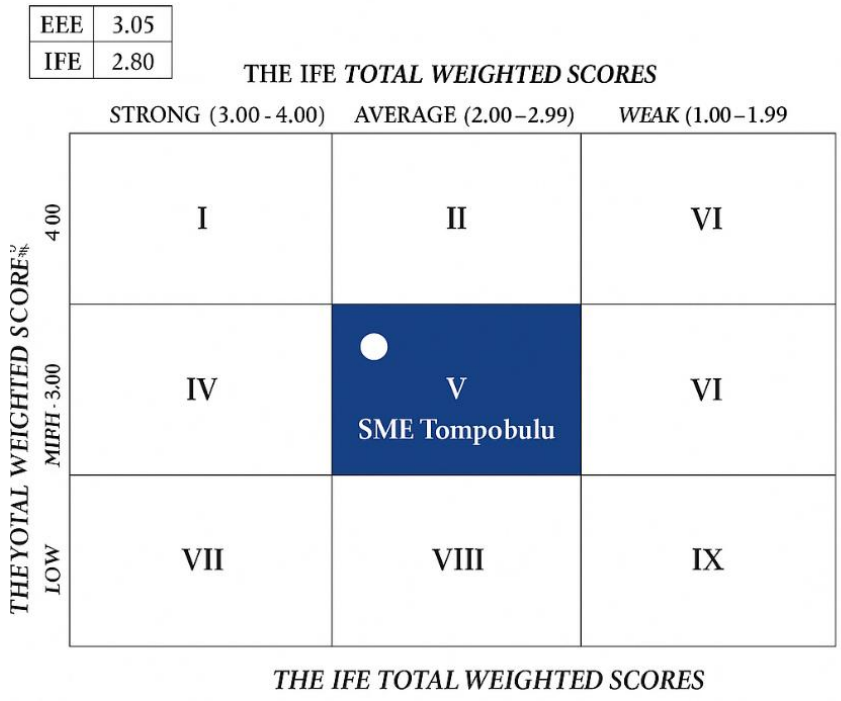

Figure 1. IE Matrix (Internal–External Matrix of SMEs Tompobulu)
Source: Author's data analysis (2025)

To refine strategic formulation, the SWOT analysis was conducted to generate actionable strategies by combining internal and external factors. The results are summarized in Table 4.

Table 4. SWOT Strategy Matrix

	Opportunities (O)	**Threats (T)**
Strengths (S)	SO: Use location & technology to produce export-grade coffee; tailor packaging for tourism market.	ST: Use strong branding to counter competitors; train workforce to adapt to climate issues.
Weaknesses (W)	WO: Build in-house export units with government support; stabilize prices through education.	WT: Invest in solar dryers; strengthen workforce discipline and post-harvest technology.

Source: Author's data analysis (2025)

Each strategy derived from the SWOT Matrix was then translated into actionable alternatives through the TOWS framework. The SO Strategies focus on leveraging strengths to seize opportunities, such as designing tourist-oriented packaging and enhancing product quality through government training programs. The WO Strategies involve overcoming internal weaknesses by utilizing opportunities for instance, building a dedicated export division and standardizing harvest procedures supported by public incentives. The ST Strategies employ internal strengths to mitigate threats, including establishing a "Local Premium Coffee" brand to face competitors and adopting adaptive processing techniques to handle climate variability. Lastly, the WT Strategies emphasize risk reduction through defensive actions such as constructing solar dryers and diversifying into instant coffee products to ensure resilience during low-production seasons.

Discussion

The results show that SME Tompobulu occupies the *Grow and Build* position within the Internal–External Matrix (IFE = 3.05; EFE = 2.80), indicating strong internal competencies supported by moderately favorable external conditions. This position reflects the enterprise's operational efficiency, human-resource specialization, and technological readiness, while external enablers such as government facilitation, increasing coffee demand, and export potential provide momentum for strategic expansion. Consistent with strategic management theory, firms in this quadrant are advised to pursue intensive strategies such as market penetration, product development, and forward integration to sustain growth (David & David, 2017).

Quantitative prioritization further validates these directions, as the direct export expansion strategy achieved the highest attractiveness score (TAS = 2.94) compared to local market penetration (TAS = 2.64), emphasizing the greater long-term viability of outward-oriented strategies. This finding aligns with recent studies that highlight how export diversification and innovation-driven orientation strengthen SME competitiveness and resilience under resource constraints (Bhuiyan et al., 2024; Bosco et al., 2023; Jamwal et al., 2025). Furthermore, structured, data-driven evaluation frameworks enable small firms to allocate resources effectively and align strategic decisions with sustainability goals (Ariharti et al., 2017; Banelienė, 2021; Surya et al., 2021). Integrating managerial judgment with quantitative assessment thus offers a replicable and transparent decision-support mechanism that enhances adaptability, strategic clarity, and long-term sustainability for SMEs in developing regions (Baranova et al., 2020; Durrani et al., 2024).

This study's novelty lies in integrating classical strategic tools within a local sustainability framework, creating a hybrid analytical pathway rarely applied in micro and small enterprise research. Unlike previous studies that used such models separately for operational or marketing purposes (Ariharti et al., 2017; Bosco et al., 2023), this research develops a coherent, data-driven decision system linking internal diagnostics, external mapping, and quantitative prioritization. The findings contribute to strategic entrepreneurship and sustainability-oriented business strategy by demonstrating how opportunity recognition and innovation can coexist with long-term resource stewardship (Abdullahi et al., 2018; Atiq & Karataş-Özkan, 2013; Keyhani, 2022). The case of SME Tompobulu shows that export orientation can harmonize with sustainability by ensuring that global value creation generates local social and economic benefits, a synergy also found in place-based cooperative enterprises (Barrachina et al., 2021; Duxbury et al., 2023; Okkonen & Lehtonen, 2016). Moreover, embedding social and environmental weighting into strategic prioritization enhances decision-making relevance to the Sustainable Development Goals (Ferreira et al., 2024; Jones et al., 2023; Modrzyński & Voss, 2025; Omowole et al., 2024).

Practically, the results highlight that SMEs can strengthen competitiveness and sustainability simultaneously through structured, data-driven planning frameworks. The structured analytical approach provides a replicable mechanism to identify key success factors, allocate limited resources efficiently, and integrate sustainability indicators into strategic evaluation (Ali et al., 2020; Banelienė, 2021; Surya et al., 2021; Vecchio et al., 2020). For SMEs Tompobulu, this means prioritizing export readiness, quality improvement, and innovation while collaborating with local institutions UPT, cooperatives, and tourism networks to enhance brand visibility and market access (Broadhurst, 2018; Doyle, 2013).

At the policy level, the findings advocate for place-sensitive SMEs ecosystems that combine finance, capability building, and procurement reform. Evidence suggests that integrated interventions yield more enduring impacts than fragmented programs (Hoekman & Taş, 2020; Israel & Kazungu, 2019; Manzoor et al., 2021). Furthermore, public procurement and ethical purchasing programs can create stable demand for local enterprises, translating strategic planning into measurable economic growth (Barraket et al., 2022; Vu & Yamada, 2022). Institutional support for certification, financing, and export facilitation thus becomes essential for equitable SMEs participation in higher-value markets.

Theoretically, this study bridges strategic management, entrepreneurial capability, and place-based sustainability, validating that sustainable competitiveness arises when firms integrate internal strength, adaptive capability, and local embeddedness (Keyhani, 2022; Shrivastava & Kennelly, 2013). It demonstrates that multi-model strategic analysis can function as a methodological framework for balancing economic, social, and environmental objectives, extending the quantitative strategic planning paradigm into a holistic, sustainability-conscious system for SMEs in emerging economies. Moreover, linking QSPM with sustainability indicators contributes to integrated strategy research by showing how analytical matrices can be adapted for small-enterprise sustainability assessment a domain rarely explored in prior studies (Al-Qahtani et al., 2022; Franqueira & Sampaio, 2015; Saryazdi & Poursarrajian, 2021). This hybridization provides a valuable bridge between quantitative prioritization and qualitative, place-based evaluation, enabling practical application in low-data, high-impact decision environments.

CONCLUSIONS

This study concludes that the strategic development of SME Tompobulu can effectively enhance local economic sustainability through a structured, sustainability-oriented planning framework that integrates competitiveness, innovation, and resource efficiency. The analysis positions the enterprise in the Grow and Build quadrant (IFE = 3.05; EFE = 2.80), indicating robust internal capacity and a moderately favorable external environment. Among the evaluated alternatives, the direct export expansion strategy demonstrated the highest Total Attractiveness Score (TAS = 2.94), suggesting that export-oriented growth offers the most promising path for long-term competitiveness, value creation, and resilience. The integration of quantitative and qualitative analyses validates that SMEs can utilize structured decision tools to enhance strategic clarity, performance alignment, and sustainability outcomes simultaneously.

Beyond its empirical insights, this research contributes theoretically by demonstrating that quantitative strategic planning can be adapted to include environmental and social dimensions, bridging strategic management and local sustainability theory. Practically, it offers a replicable model for SMEs in developing regions to align competitiveness with inclusivity through data-driven strategy formulation. Policymakers and development agencies are encouraged to support such place-sensitive enterprises through access to finance, certification, and export facilitation. Future studies may expand this approach by incorporating longitudinal assessments and comparative cross-sectoral analyses to further validate the adaptability of integrated strategic frameworks for sustainable SMEs transformation.

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