



# Research Gap Analysis of Sustainable Competitiveness in Small and Medium Enterprises (SMEs) through Community Empowerment: A Systematic Review

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## A B S T R A C T

The purpose of this article is to conduct a search for previous articles that will be used to find research gaps and look for internal and external factors. This research gap will be used as a basis for determining further research, namely related to sustainable competitiveness involving the community. For this purpose, an article search was conducted through the Scopus database for the last decade, namely from 2015 to 2024. The number of articles that met the required criteria was 48 articles and were used for the review results in this article. To see the relationship between the discussion of keywords in this article, the Vos Viewer tool was used. The Vos Viewer results show that there is no direct relationship between SMEs and community empowerment. In addition, the tourism sector has a role and close relationship with community empowerment compared to the industrial sector and internal and external factors were also found to have a role in sustainable competitiveness, 9 internal factors and 6 external factors were found that often appear. This article also provides recommendations related to research that may be carried out in the future.

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## 1. INTRODUCTION

Small and Medium Enterprises (SMEs) play an important role in the global economy, particularly in driving economic growth, creating jobs, and reducing social inequalities. In many developing countries, SMEs play an important role and serve as drivers of local economies, providing products and services that contribute significantly to national income (BPS, 2023a). Judging from the number of small and medium businesses, 27.99% of the largest business fields are retail trade,

repairs and car and motorbike maintenance, while the industrial sector, especially the processing industry, only accounts for 11.95% (BPS, 2023b).

According to the Industrial Law of Indonesia Number 3 of 2014, as stated in Article 1 number 2, the definition of industry is a type of processing activity of raw materials and/or industrial resources utilized to generate a product with added value and advantages. SMEs themselves are a type of business that is designed to assist the people's

economy, and developing the people's economy faces structural challenges. Even if the role of this structure is extremely important in effecting changes in the structural scope of the economy. To make changes to the financial structure, process stages are required which include allocation and empowerment of resources, institutional strengthening, empowerment of technology, and human resources (Barenlitbang, 2016).

In this structural change, human resource empowerment emerges as an important part of supporting change in SMEs. The meaning of empowerment itself is a step that changes human resources who were previously not empowered to become more empowered (Wahyuni, 2018) and human resource empowerment which is the focus of this article is the community in society, where the community here this is the primary development factor (Bahua, 2015). Some of the obstacles in an Industry or Small and Medium Enterprises that most often arise are a lack of human resources followed by high capital costs and a lack of expertise (Álvarez Jaramillo et al., 2019)(Songling et al., 2018). Discussions about community empowerment are often carried out in the tourism sector, based on several articles that discuss the role of communities in society. Several of these articles also state that society or communities are one part of stakeholders, play a role in fostering community autonomy and also have a dominant role in developing tourist villages (Hutagalung et al., 2022)(Safari et al., 2023)(Foley et al., 2018)(Weng & Peng, 2014). However, community involvement in SMEs other than the tourism sector is still rarely discussed.

Literature regarding the relationship between sustainable competitiveness and community empowerment in the context of SMEs is still limited and scattered. Many studies that focus on aspects of sustainable competitiveness of SMEs and community empowerment are carried out separately. Research that specifically identifies research positions and the relationship between these two aspects has not yet been widely discussed. Sustainability itself for SMEs is a synergistic effect where SMEs can develop and work collaboratively to provide systemic benefits for the common good (Moore & Manring, 2009). Sustainable competitiveness can be a top priority in an organization, to achieve sustainable competitiveness strategic steps are also needed to

achieve the desired goals of an organization. Every company in every industry undoubtedly has unique challenges, but they all have the same objective, which is to be able to endure in the age of industrial revolution and technological disruption (Yandri et al., 2023). Therefore, it requires all forms of strategies that can be done so that they can be used to deal with all forms of situations that will be faced in the future.

However, many small businesses have not or are less able to achieve the mission of an organization. Sustainable competitiveness is a value built for customers by an organization or company that aims to meet product needs by market desires and the company's ability to respond to customer complaints about quality, market reach, and innovations made to goods or products (Tanny, Felicia Jesslyn; Putri, 2017).

This article has several objectives, including: providing a deeper understanding of the position of research on sustainable competitiveness which involves the role of society, finding key internal and external factors that play the most role in achieving sustainable competitiveness, and providing recommendations for further research agendas. This was done as a first step towards future research by finding the relationship between sustainable competitiveness and community involvement in SMEs. This is significant since SMEs are a sector that contributes significantly to the economy and creates jobs for the local community surrounding the SMEs location.

## 2. LITERATURE REVIEW

This paper is conducted to review several articles related to sustainable competitiveness in SMEs by involving the role of the community. Article searches were conducted through electronic database searches over the last 10 years.

For the competitiveness of an organization or company, the most important thing is to look at the environment, which consists of the external and internal environment (Romansyah, 2016). This article will identify the internal and external factors often raised and discussed in research. Meanwhile, in the context of empowerment itself, it is a process where people, communities, and organizations have the freedom to participate in the development

process and can make decisions that can affect their lives and have power over their lives(Suharto, 2005).To make people or communities who were previously not empowered become empowered.

### 3. RESEARCH METHOD

The method used in this research is a systematic review that searches electronic databases. Systematic reviews start from planning, determining research questions, determining keywords, searching for articles in electronic databases, analyzing data visualization with VOSviewer, and compiling review results.

#### Research Questions

- RQ1: What is the current research gap between sustainable competitiveness keywords and community empowerment?
- RQ2: What are the sectors in which communities are heavily involved?
- RQ3: What are the key factors that are important to achieve sustainable competitiveness in SMEs?

#### Search for information sources

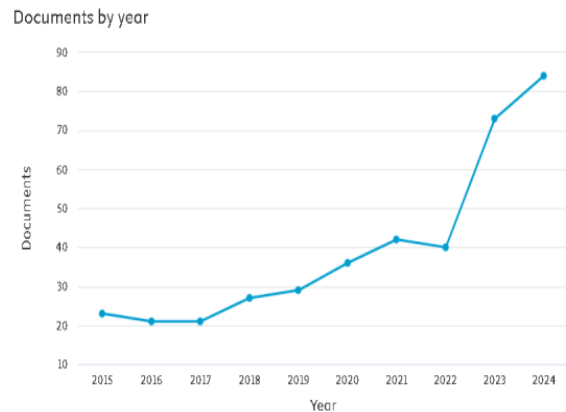
The electronic database used in the article search is the Scopus database. With the following search criteria:

1. The articles used have a period of 10 years, namely 2015-2024
2. The discussion of sustainable competitiveness in the article is only related to SMEs.
3. The articles used are research articles not review articles
4. Information on important success elements for SMEs implementing sustainable competitiveness may be found in articles.

The search began by determining the main keywords, namely sustainable competitiveness of SMEs and community empowerment. The search used the database in Scopus with the search string Title-Abstract-Keyword.

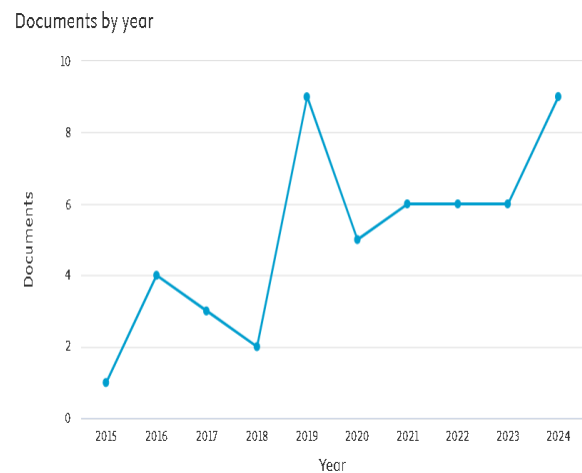
For the keyword sustainable competitiveness of SMEs with a period range of 2015-2024 which was accessed on December 23 2024. 396 SMEs

sustainable competitiveness articles were obtained [Figure 1](#).



**Figure 1.** Articles with keywords sustainable competitiveness of SMEs

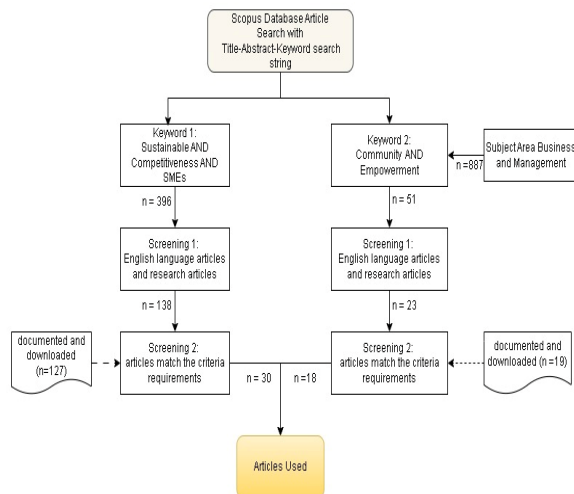
For the keyword community empowerment with a period range of 2015-2024. 51 items were found from the search results; the number of these articles each year is shown in [Figure 2](#).



**Figure 2.** Articles with the keyword community empowerment

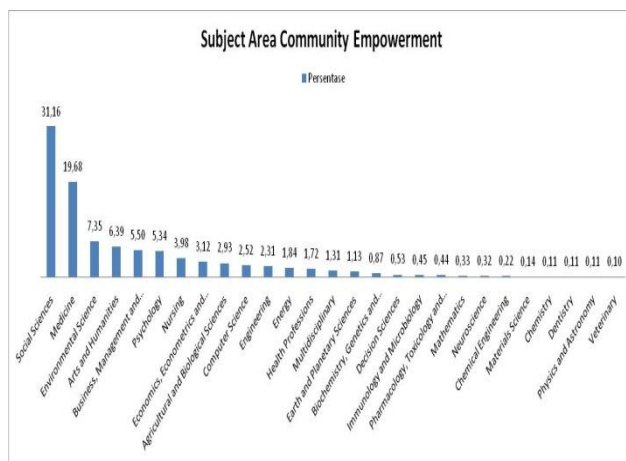
#### Study Selection

This paper was conducted using article data published in a 10-year period from 2015 to 2024. The process of searching for articles and filtering the use of articles can be seen in [Figure 3](#). The articles used were 48 articles after going through a screening process according to the requirements criteria.



**Figure 3.** Article screening

The Scopus database yielded 27 research area subjects for the term "community empowerment," as shown in Figure 4.



**Figure 4.** Subject area keywords community empowerment

Based on Figure 4 above, there are 27 subject areas included in the discussion related to community empowerment. Which entered the top 10 Subject Areas in a row: Social Sciences (31.16%), Medicine (19.68%), Environmental Science (7.35%), Arts and Humanities (6.39%), Business, Management and Accounting (5.50%), Psychology (5.34%), Nursing (3.98%), Economics, Econometrics and Finance (3.12%), Agricultural and Biological Sciences (2.93%) and Computer Sciences (2.52%).

#### 4. RESULT AND DISCUSSION Keyword Mapping Visualization

To see the GAP or gap in the research article, this paper analyzes it using Vos Viewer. Vos Viewer is a tool that offers a text-mining function that is used to visualize networks originating from bibliographic database output sourced from published articles and researchers so that it can be used for the process of interpreting relationships between relationships or networks (van Eck & Waltman, 2014)(Tupan, 2016). The results of the mapping in the discussion of this article can be seen in Figure 5.

Vos Viewer results are obtained from mapping output based on bibliographic data and using the "Co-occurrence" type of analysis and the units analyzed are "Keywords" with the "fullcounting" measurement method. For Minimum Number of Occurrences (MNO), researchers use a value of 5, which means the keyword appears at least five times. The results of the mapping emerged and divided into 11 clusters where there are 5 large spheres that are quite prominent in the keyword analysis network related to empowerment, sustainable development, sustainability, competitiveness, SMEs.

Based on the results of the Vos Viewer visualization, several network analyses are obtained:

1. Keyword results that rarely appear or are not connected in the network, namely:
  - Keyword "NGO" (Non-Governmental Organization), This has an empowerment link but is rarely connected to other clusters.
  - Keyword "Elderly Population": this has relevance to the discussion of elderly communities but does not have much connection to SMEs or sustainability
  - Keyword "SDGs" (Sustainable Development Goals: this keyword has relevance to sustainability. However, it does not show many direct connections in the map.
2. Unexplored Cluster Network, namely:
  - Cluster Sustainability  
In this cluster, the sustainability aspects of governance and management show that there is no in-depth discussion, although these words appear in the network.
  - Cluster Empowerment  
In this cluster, specific elements such as women empowerment and elderly population seem to be less integrated with



other concepts such as SMEs and competitiveness.

- Cluster Competitiveness in the competitiveness cluster is still possible and needs a lot of exploration in relation to community empowerment, because the direct connection is very limited.

3. The main gaps in the relationship between Keywords on the network, namely

- There is no direct connection between community empowerment and SMEs, suggesting that community empowerment has not been explicitly incorporated into strategies for small and medium enterprises. The visible connections show that community empowerment is more

connected to clusters such as tourism development and community-based activities, while SMEs are in a separate cluster that focuses more on sustainable development and competitiveness.

- Competitiveness is less connected to empowerment and sustainability, which means there is room for exploration of how the competitiveness of SMEs can be influenced by sustainability and community empowerment factors within the community.
- tourism development seems to focus on empowerment but does not link itself to the sustainable competitiveness aspect of SMEs.

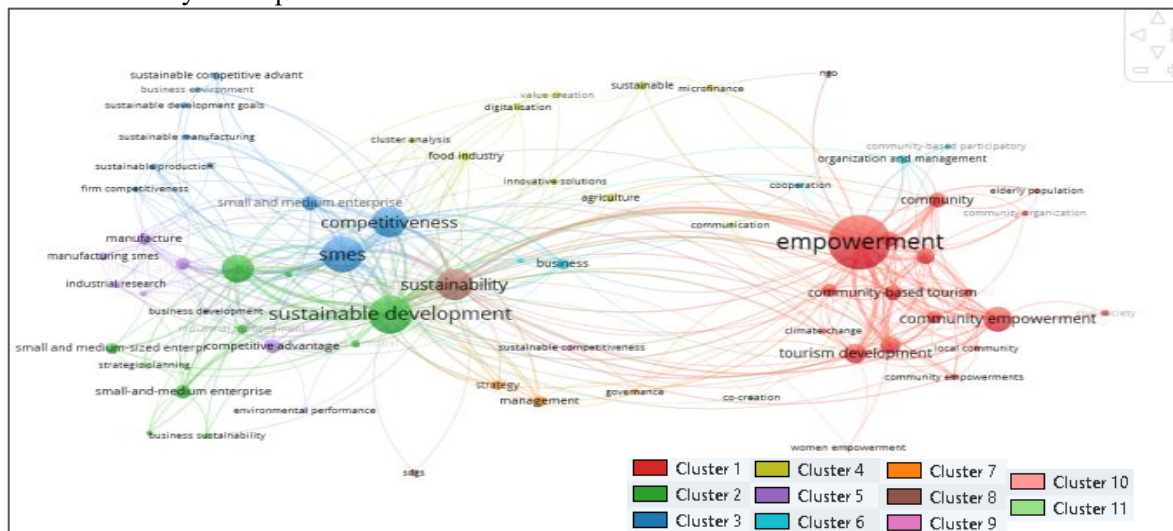


Figure 5. Vos viewer

For the analysis of the density of the discussion can be seen from the results of the “overlay” which can be seen in Figure 6. Where the results displayed in the figure if an issue or topic is

discussed the higher it will be more visible yellow while on the contrary if the issue or topic is discussed less often, the color will be faded. (Fuddin et al., 2023).

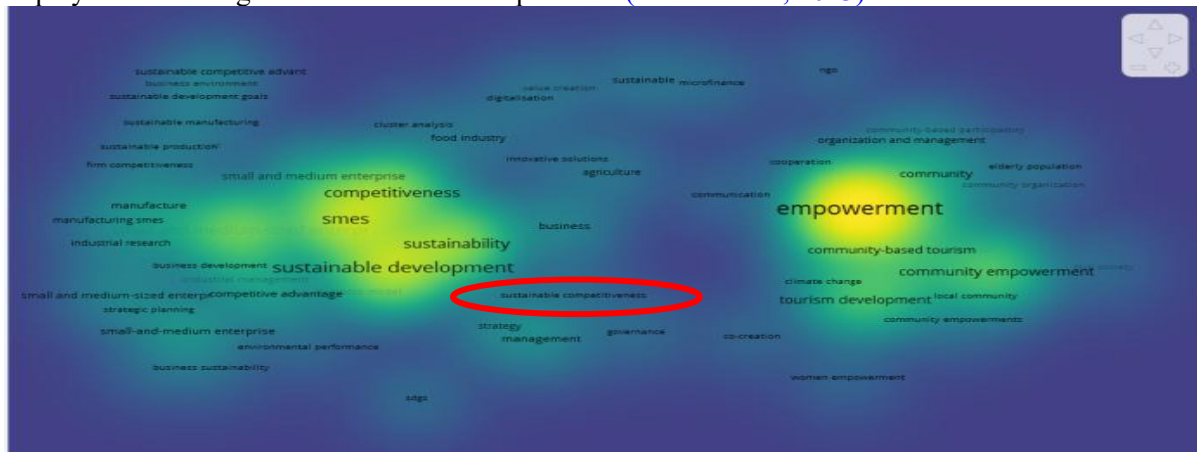


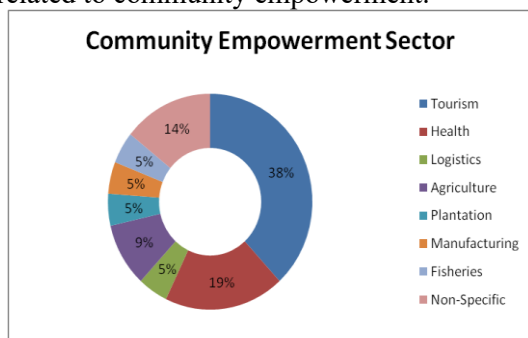
Figure 6. Visual density results

According to the visual results, discussions about sustainable competitiveness are still hardly ever brought up as a problem or research topic because the colors are hardly noticeable. This serves as the foundation for further research on these topics or issues. Therefore, there are a number of research implications based on Figure 6, which highlights focus areas for future investigation into the relationship between SMEs and community empowerment. Additionally, there is still room for investigation into sustainable development practices in relation to bolstering SMEs with community empowerment through tourism.

### Community Empowerment Sector

The next literature search was carried out by looking for articles with keywords related to community empowerment. From the search results, it was found that discussions of community empowerment were grouped into 8 sectors. 7 sectors were specifically mentioned and 1 sector was not specifically mentioned. The percentage for each sector can be seen in Figure 7.

Based on Figure 7, it can be seen that the most discussed sector related to community empowerment is the tourism sector, which is 38%, the second most in the health sector at 19%, the agricultural sector at 9% and 13% did not specifically explain the sector in question. This non-specific discussion is only discussed globally related to community empowerment.



Source: self-elaboration

Figure 7. Community empowerment sector graphic

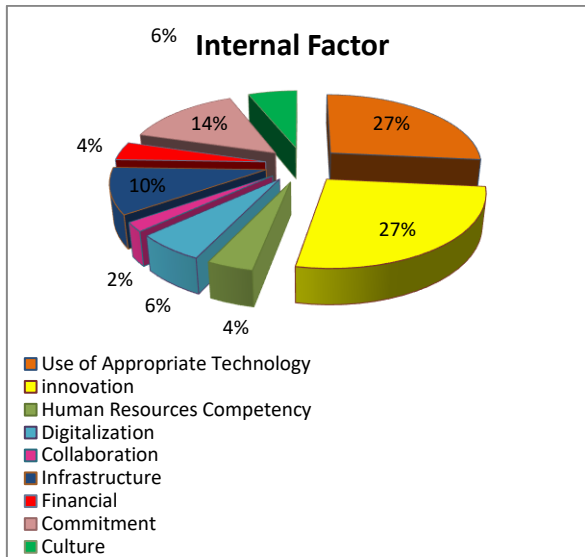
From the results obtained, it is identified that in the tourism sector community empowerment is a very important part. This is by previous researchers who stated and proved that community empowerment is a strong indicator in the concept of developing tourist villages (Utama et al., 2021)(Safari et al., 2023). The community-based tourism sector is now receiving considerable

attention due to its enormous impact in terms of strengthening local community empowerment and increasing social responsibility in a sustainable manner (Hutagalung et al., 2022). In empowerment tourism, local communities have become the main actors, both in the management and development of the tourism sector (Lubowiecki-vikuk & Sousa, 2021). For sectors that can still be explored and researched further in relation to community empowerment, namely: logistics, agriculture, plantations, manufacturing, and fisheries. Of course, there are still other sectors that might be developed involving the community. Community or community empowerment is intended to build a democratic and independent society, there are three stages of the empowerment implementation process, namely (Bahua, 2015): The process of giving strength and skills to people or communities, the process of each individual being encouraged to gain knowledge and have the ability to make decisions in deliberation, and finally the process of providing space for communities or people to express themselves with their respective abilities.

### Key Factors for Sustainable Competitiveness of SMEs

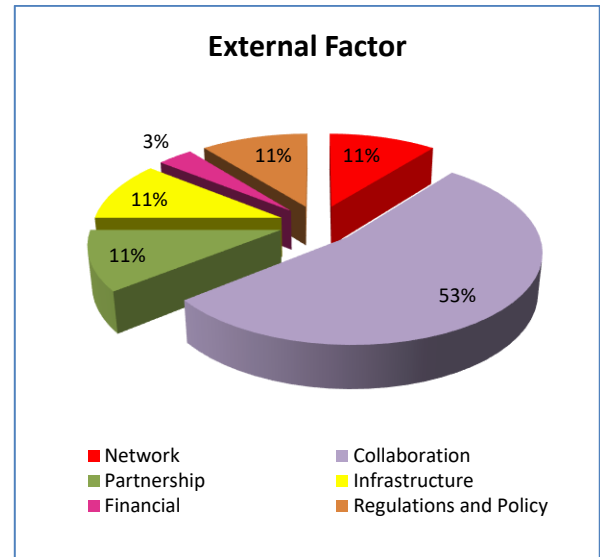
Key factors are factors that influence in some way to achieve success such as in business, career, profession and so on. From the results of the literature review, the key factors in achieving sustainability competitiveness can be seen in Table 1. Sustainability competitiveness in SMEs can be successful with several key factors. From the results presented in Table 1, there are several determining keywords that often appear in internal and external factors. The percentage of keyword occurrence can be seen in Figure 8 and Figure 9.

The use of appropriate technology, creativity, and strong dedication are the internal elements that most often appear in the key success factors of SMEs in achieving sustainable competitiveness. As for external factors, the keywords that appear most often in supporting the creation of sustainable competitiveness that is very prominent is the need for collaboration from various parties and stakeholders.



Source: self-elaboration

**Figure 8.** Key internal factors the success of sustainable competitiveness



Source: self-elaboration

**Figure 9.** Key external factors the success of sustainable competitiveness

**Table 1.** Determining success factors

Sector	Internal or External	Key Success Factors	Ref
Accommodation	Internal	Technology Sustainability, Executive Support, Resources and Organizational Capacity	(Islam, 2024)
	External	Regulations that support sustainability, Support from local communities for sustainable practices.	
Accommodation	Internal	Flexibility, technological innovation, new knowledge and developing resources	(Rienda & Ruiz-fern, 2024)
	External	Strong network with business associations or partners	
Agriculture	Internal	Use of information and data, Use of digital technology platforms, Internal stakeholder engagement, Data-driven decision making	(Figurek & Thrassou, 2023)
	External	Stakeholder and institutional involvement	
Agriculture	Internal	Human Resources Competency Improvement, Operational Digitalization	(Lubowiecki-vikuk & Sousa, 2022)
	External	Financial Stability, Supportive Infrastructure, Conducive Policy Environment, Adaptation to Changes in the External Environment, Collaboration with Financial Institutions	
Construction	Internal	Internal Capacity	(Johnet al., 2023)
	External	Government Policy and Support, Market and Customer Demand, Competitive Business Environment	
Food	Internal	Management Commitment, Efficient Technology Adoption, Innovation and Adaptation, Effective monitoring system	(Pinedo-López et al., 2024)
	External	Stakeholder Engagement, Access to Funding, Alignment with SDGs	
Food Processing	Internal	Leadership Involvement, Balance of Interests, CSR Awareness and Consistency, Adequate Infrastructure and Technology, Appropriate Performance Measurement System	(T. T. Le, 2023)
	External	Relationships with Customers and Stakeholders	
Food Processing	Internal	product quality, innovation, and competitive prices, development of tourism areas, government support and technology. Support from business partners, training programs, and access to funding	(Novia et al., 2024)
	External	technology. Support from business partners, training programs, and access to funding	
Food, Health and	Internal	Characteristics of Technology Receivers, Appropriate Technology	

Sector	Internal or External	Key Success Factors	Ref
Beauty	External	Characteristics of Technology Providers, Collaboration Between Stakeholders	(Khongmalai & Distanont, 2022)
Handicrafts and creative industries	Internal	Utilization of Appropriate Technology, Innovation Capabilities, Human Resource Competence, Utilization of Digital Data, more transparent performance evaluation and management	(Machmud et al., 2022)
	External	Collaboration with Business Partners	
Industrial	Internal	Innovation as Competitive Core, Commitment to Continuous Improvement, Effective Resource Management, Appropriate Use of Technology, Capacity for Adaptation, Deep Understanding of the Market	(Advincula et al., 2022)
	External	Collaboration and Collective Knowledge	
Information and Communication Technology (ICT)	Internal	Employee knowledge and skills, Value Proposition Differentiation, Efficient cost structure, Adaptability, Personal Approach to Customers	(Koprivnjak, 2020)
	External	Collaboration with strategic partners	
logistics	Internal	Trust as a Foundation, Balance between Trust and Control, Development of Shared Culture and Values, Focus on Creating Shared Value, Flexibility in Collaboration	(Chen, 2024)
	External	Close Collaboration	
Manufacturing	Internal	Technology infrastructure, Management support, Employee involvement, Stakeholder support	(Aboelmaged, 2018)
	External	Support from stakeholders, Environmental regulations	
Manufacturing	Internal	Intangible Assets, Flexibility, Speed and Quality of Innovation. Human Resource Management, CSR Implementation.	(Thanh et al., 2021)
	External	External Support	
Manufacturing	Internal	Social and Environmental Innovation, Effective Risk Management, Commitment, Continuous Evaluation	(Krishnan & Ahmad, 2019)
	External	Strategic Partnership, Collaboration in Network	
Manufacturing	Internal	Investment in Green Intellectual Capital (GIC), Absorptive Capacity (AC), Commitment to Green Innovation (GI), Implementation of NRBV Approach, Visionary Leadership	(Sohu et al., 2024)
	External	Environmental Regulatory Support, Strengthening Collaboration	
Non specific	Internal	Investment in Research and R&D Systems, Effective Human Resource Management, Corporate Investment Capacity, Focus on Product and Process Innovation	(Odei & Novak, 2020)
	External	Access to Intellectual Assets, Strategic Partnerships	
Non specific	Internal	Availability of competent and trained human resources, Leadership that supports sustainability and innovation, Knowledge Infrastructure, Organizational Culture, Use of Technology, Evaluation and Feedback	(J. Le & Garc, 2022)
	External	External Collaboration	
Non specific	Internal	Continuous Education and Training, Financial Capacity and Infrastructure, Continuous Measurement and Evaluation	(Oktavia et al., 2024)
	External	Effective Government Support, Collaboration with External Institutions,	
Non specific	Internal	Use of Technology, Operational Flexibility, Market Understanding, Effective Resource Management, Commitment to Sustainability, Training and Development	(Halima et al., 2022)
	External	Collaboration and Networking	



Sector	Internal or External	Key Success Factors	Ref
Non specific	Internal	Management Commitment, Internal Competency Training and Development, Use of Data and Analytics from social media to understand market trends, Flexibility and Adaptability, Feedback Monitoring, Adopting new strategies	(Korcsmáros & Csinger, 2022)
Non specific	Internal	Trust as a Foundation, Balance between Trust and Control, Development of Shared Culture and Values, Focus on Creating Shared Value, Flexibility in Collaboration	(Antoldi & Cerrato, 2020)
Non specific	External	Close Collaboration	(Timilsina et al., 2016)
	Internal	flexibility, managerial competence, innovation	
Non-Specific	External	understanding of the business environment	(Songling et al., 2018)
	Internal	Internal Resource Management	
Non-Specific	External	Government Support, Connections with Government Agencies and Politics	(Avram et al., 2019)
	Internal	availability of quality data on production activities and economic results from the past, integrating technology, involvement of various parties	
Non-Specific	External	involvement of various parties	(Kahouli et al., 2023)
	Internal	Proper human resource management, continuous innovation, and increased investment in ICT	
Service	Internal	Managerial Capacity. Funding and Financial Resources, Technology Infrastructure	(Armas et al., 2024)
	External	Accessibility and Infrastructure, Partnerships and Collaboration	
Textile	Internal	Adoption of TLBMC (Triple Layered Business Model Canvas) Model, Management Commitment, Ability to continuously innovate in design, Use of Appropriate Technology	(Hurriyati et al., 2023)
	External	Collaboration with Stakeholders, Increasing consumer awareness of environmentally friendly products	
Tourism	Internal	The Right Investment Approach, Focus on High Value Niche Markets, Adaptability to Crisis, Optimization of Resources, Innovation and Technology,	(Santos et al., 2022)
	External	Collaboration with Stakeholders	

There were three common factors that emerged in both the internal and external factors. These are: collaboration, infrastructure, and finance. These three factors have an interrelated relationship between internal and external factors. For future research, the collaboration factor can be an important point of attention in developing the competitiveness of SMEs, one of which is the discussion discussed in this article, namely the development of SMEs competitiveness by involving the community. In the discussion of the key factors of the accommodation sector (Table 1), the involvement of local communities is a determinant in external factors, although not directly, local communities are supporters of sustainability practices. Community empowerment is more focused on the role of central and local governments than local

communities directly. (Panjaitan et al., 2021). Communities currently have limited involvement in decision-making and often lose control over local resources (Zhao et al., 2022). This community empowerment will have a positive effect if the community is active in aspects such as planning, management and evaluation (Azwar et al., 2023).

However, another highlight and weakness of SMEs that is often encountered is the lack of managerial skills which makes them less able to achieve their vision. Therefore, support from the government is still needed both financially and non-financially which will also increase economic growth and sustainability (Songling et al., 2018).

## 5. CONCLUSION

The results of identification carried out from the Systematic Review related to research on sustainable competitiveness of SMEs through community empowerment were obtained:

The number of articles over the past 10 years based on the Scopus database related to the keywords of sustainable competitiveness of SMEs searched based on the search string, namely: there are 396 documents from the keyword sustainable competitiveness and 51 documents from the keyword community empowerment. The relationship between keywords related to the sector that has a very large relationship with community empowerment is the tourism sector. Subject articles related to community empowerment are very large in the field of social science while for business and management only 5.5%. The discussion of the relationship between the competitiveness of SMEs sustainability and community empowerment has also not seen a direct connection in the VosViewer visual mapping. The determinants of the success of the implementation of sustainable competitiveness in SMEs are influenced by internal and external factors. Internal factors that often arise include: the use of appropriate technology, innovation, resource competence, digitalization, collaboration, infrastructure, finance, commitment, and culture. External factors that often appear in the discussion of articles include: networks or connections, cooperative relationships, finance, collaboration, regulations, and policies.

For future research, there are several recommendations that can be raised in a study including: Linking community empowerment with SMEs directly, for example through case studies or collaboration models in small and medium industries. Explore further the relationship between competitiveness and community empowerment, especially in the context of sustainability.

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