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INITIATIVE STRATEGY TO BE THE FIRST-CHOICE SURVEYOR TO DO THE SUPERINTENDING JOB IN INDONESIA

STRATEGI INISIATIF UNTUK MENJADI PILIHAN UTAMA SEBAGAI PENYELENGGARA PENGAMATAN DALAM MELAKSANAKAN TUGAS PENGAWASAN DI INDONESIA

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ABSTRACT

Coal remains one of the most strategic energy commodities in global trade, making the role of Testing, Inspection, and Certification (TIC) companies indispensable in every export or domestic shipment. These entities ensure that coal quality and quantity comply with contractual agreements, positioning them as key actors in maintaining trust and transparency across the supply chain. However, this critical role also intensifies competition among TIC companies. This study addresses the gap between customer satisfaction and the company's actual competitive standing. Using a qualitative approach through in-depth interviews with coal producers, traders, and end-users, the research explores the factors influencing surveyor appointment decisions. Analytical tools—including business process mapping, economic and global segment analysis, stakeholder mapping, and SWOT—were used to assess internal and external conditions comprehensively. The findings offer strategic insights for TIC companies to formulate focused, sustainable, and adaptive strategies that enhance competitive advantage and reinforce their credibility within the global coal supply chain.

Keywords: *Coal Industry, Tic Company, Superintending Services, Competitive Strategy, Stakeholder Analysis, Business Process Mapping, Swot Analysis, Qualitative Research*.

ABSTRAK

Batubara tetap menjadi salah satu komoditas energi strategis terpenting dalam perdagangan global, menjadikan peran perusahaan Testing, Inspection, and Certification (TIC) tak tergantikan dalam setiap pengiriman ekspor atau domestik. Entitas ini memastikan kualitas dan kuantitas batubara sesuai dengan perjanjian kontrak, sehingga berperan sebagai aktor kunci dalam menjaga kepercayaan dan transparansi di sepanjang rantai pasok. Namun, peran kritis ini juga memperketat persaingan di antara perusahaan TIC. Studi ini menyoroti kesenjangan antara kepuasan pelanggan dan posisi kompetitif aktual perusahaan. Dengan pendekatan kualitatif melalui wawancara mendalam dengan produsen batu bara, pedagang, dan pengguna akhir, penelitian ini mengeksplorasi faktor-faktor yang memengaruhi keputusan penunjukan surveyor. Alat analitis—termasuk pemetaan proses bisnis, analisis ekonomi dan segmen global, pemetaan pemangku kepentingan, dan SWOT—digunakan untuk mengevaluasi kondisi internal dan eksternal secara komprehensif. Temuan ini memberikan wawasan strategis bagi perusahaan TIC untuk merumuskan strategi yang terfokus, berkelanjutan, dan adaptif guna meningkatkan keunggulan kompetitif dan memperkuat kredibilitas mereka dalam rantai pasok batubara global.

Kata Kunci: Industri Batubara, Perusahaan TIC, Layanan Pengawasan, Strategi Kompetitif, Analisis Pemangku Kepentingan, Pemetaan Proses Bisnis, Analisis SWOT, Penelitian Kualitatif

INTRODUCTION

Coal remains one of the world's most critical energy resources, particularly for countries that continue to rely heavily on thermal power generation. Although global shifts toward renewable energy are accelerating, coal demand persists due to its affordability, high energy density, and widespread availability. Coal is also inherently heterogeneous—differing in type, rank, maceral composition, and calorific value—because its properties are shaped by biochemical and metamorphic processes throughout coalification. As described by Laskowski (2001), variations in organic matter maturity significantly influence

coal quality, and international classifications such as those published by ISO (2018) divide coal into four major ranks: lignite, sub-bituminous, bituminous, and anthracite.

Indonesia, as one of the world's largest coal exporters, relies heavily on the role of Independent Coal Surveyors to ensure that the quality and quantity of coal shipments align with contractual expectations. These Testing, Inspection, and Certification (TIC) companies provide superintending services—including sampling, sample preparation, laboratory analysis, and draft surveying—based on international standards such as ISO, ASTM, and GB. Their accuracy, impartiality, and credibility are essential, as even minor deviations in calorific value or tonnage can result in substantial financial discrepancies.

Quality and quantity disputes are among the most common issues in coal trading and often arise from inconsistent sampling techniques, laboratory variations, or differences in draft survey execution. Due to coal's natural heterogeneity, reproducibility across laboratories is rarely identical, making standardized procedures crucial for minimizing discrepancies and maintaining client trust. Draft Surveys—widely accepted as a commercial weighing method—determine cargo weight based on Archimedes' Principle by comparing a vessel's displacement before and after loading, as outlined in guidance published by the UK P&I Club (2008).

In a highly competitive and trust-sensitive landscape, TIC companies must go beyond operational precision. They must formulate strategic, stakeholder-oriented approaches that strengthen their positioning among miners, traders, and end-users. Achieving the status of first-choice surveyor requires not only technical accuracy but also strong stakeholder alignment, process standardization, and strategic communication.

This study is conducted to explore how a TIC company can build competitive advantage and position itself as the first-choice independent surveyor in Indonesia. For confidentiality purposes, the company name and certain internal details have been anonymized without affecting the integrity of the analysis.

LITERATURE REVIEW

The formulation of an effective business strategy requires an integrated understanding of both the external and internal environments of the firm. The Strategic Management Process by Hitt et al. (2019) provides a comprehensive framework that emphasizes three interconnected stages: analysis, strategy formulation, and performance. The analysis stage assesses external forces—competitors, customers, and industry stakeholders—alongside internal conditions such as resources, capabilities, and core competencies. This dual assessment forms the foundation for subsequent strategic decisions and performance outcomes.

Customer satisfaction is another critical theoretical component underlying competitive strategy. Research consistently shows that satisfaction enhances loyalty, repeat purchases, and long-term firm performance (Curtis, 2009; Kotler & Keller, 2018). When customer expectations are met or exceeded, satisfaction increases, driving improved retention and reducing acquisition costs. Studies by Nurtasha & Syafiqah (2020) and Muhammad & Syafiqah (2020) further confirm that loyal customers contribute significantly to sustainable profitability. This theory is particularly

relevant because PT XYZ's high satisfaction scores do not correspond with its competitive ranking, indicating a strategic gap that warrants deeper analysis.

Understanding business processes also supports the diagnosis of organizational issues. A business process represents a structured sequence of activities that shape how value is created and delivered. Previous studies emphasize that process mapping enhances operational clarity and problem identification (Nurlankyzy, 2019; Maulana, 2023). While earlier research uses business process mapping to evaluate internal workflows, this study adapts the concept to map coal transaction flows from producers to end-users. This adaptation enables clearer stakeholder identification and highlights where decision-making bottlenecks occur within the coal inspection ecosystem.

The Laissez-faire concept is also relevant for interpreting stakeholder dynamics in this industry. Originating from economic theory emphasizing minimal intervention, laissez-faire is also recognized as a leadership approach that grants high autonomy and decentralization (Chaudhry & Eagly as cited in Ahmed Iqbal et al., 2021). In a business context, laissez-faire models often prioritize stakeholders with the greatest economic influence. As Johnson et al. (2008) explain, firms adopting such an approach tend to focus primarily on high-power stakeholders, which aligns with common practices in coal trading where traders often dominate surveyor selection processes.

Customer analysis through the STP (Segmentation, Targeting, Positioning) framework is another key component of understanding firm–customer alignment. Kotler (2018) argues that companies must segment their markets to identify groups they can serve most effectively. In B2B contexts such as TIC services, segmentation includes geographic, demographic, operational, purchasing, and situational variables. Targeting specific profitable segments and positioning services to meet their needs strengthens competitive advantage and enhances customer acquisition and retention.

External analysis frameworks further support strategic decision-making. The PESTLE model identifies political, economic, social, technological, legal, and environmental forces that shape market conditions. At the industry level, Porter's Five Forces—threat of entry, bargaining power of suppliers and buyers, threat of substitutes, and rivalry—help identify competitive pressures (Hitt et al., 2019; Bruijl & Gerard, 2018). Understanding these forces is essential for analyzing competition among TIC companies and explaining why certain surveyors attain first-choice status.

The Business Buying Process offers additional insight into how firms make purchasing decisions in B2B settings. According to Kotler et al. (2018), buying decisions involve multiple roles—users, influencers, buyers, deciders, and gatekeepers—each contributing to the final supplier selection. This model helps explain how miners, traders, and end-users jointly influence the appointment of coal surveyors.

Internal analysis complements external assessments by identifying strengths and weaknesses. Hitt et al. (2019) classify resources into tangible and intangible assets, which combine to form capabilities. Core competencies—capabilities that are valuable, rare, costly to imitate, and nonsubstitutable—are the foundation of sustainable competitive advantage.

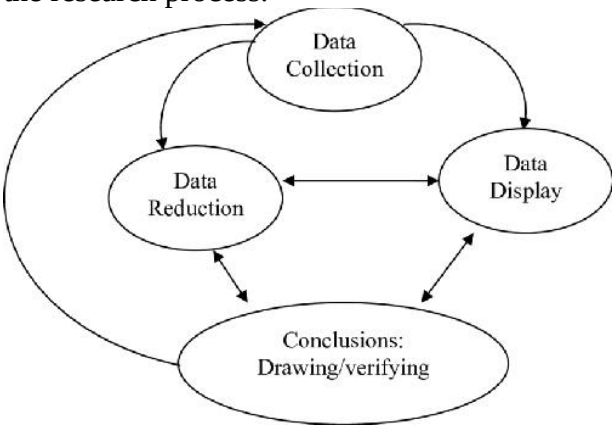
SWOT and TOWS frameworks synthesize these analyses to support strategic formulation. SWOT categorizes internal strengths and weaknesses alongside external opportunities and threats (Ilhomovna, 2021; Schooley, 2023). The TOWS Matrix expands this by generating strategic alternatives that link internal and external factors into actionable plans (Johnson & Scholes, 2017; Wei, 2018). Together, these frameworks guide the development of strategies tailored to the unique dynamics of the coal inspection industry.

METHODOLOGY

This study adopts a qualitative research methodology to explore the strategic issues faced by PT XYZ and to gain an in-depth understanding of the factors influencing surveyor selection in the coal industry. Data collection is conducted through semi-structured interviews, which begin with open-ended guiding questions while allowing the researcher the flexibility to probe deeper into emerging themes during the discussion. This method enables a richer exploration of participant perspectives and ensures that the collected data remain relevant to the research objectives.

Participants are selected using purposive sampling, a non-random technique that intentionally targets individuals who possess the knowledge and experience needed to address the research questions. The selected informants include both internal stakeholders—such as the Director, Marketing Manager, and Operation Manager—and external stakeholders from coal mining companies, coal trading companies, and coal end-users. All external participants were drawn from existing or potential customers of PT XYZ to ensure comprehensive and diverse viewpoints.

The data analysis process follows the interactive model developed by Miles and Huberman (1994), which consists of four interrelated components: data collection, data reduction, data display, and conclusion drawing or verification. After the interviews are conducted, data reduction is performed through selecting and condensing the most relevant information. The reduced data are then organized visually to facilitate the identification of patterns, relationships, and emerging themes. The final step involves drawing conclusions and verifying them to ensure consistency, credibility, and alignment with the evidence gathered throughout the research process.



Source: Miles & Huberman (1994)

To strengthen the analytical foundation, secondary data—including academic journals, research articles, industry reports, and related literature—are also incorporated to complement and reinforce the interpretation of primary data.

Findings & Discussion

1. Business Process

To contextualize PT XYZ's operating environment, the coal business process was first mapped to illustrate how coal flows from miners to traders and ultimately to end-users. Coal transactions commonly follow a

linear structure, and this process reflects differing interests across stakeholders depending on contractual arrangements, especially Incoterms.

Coal Mining Company → Coal Trading Company → End-User

(Example of Coal Business Process)

As Nurlankyzy (2019) states, business processes vary across organizations and must be tailored based on operational realities. In the coal sector, the business process not only reflects commodity flow but also determines which stakeholders hold decision-making authority in appointing surveyors. Because Incoterms dictate where commercial risk is borne, they provide useful insights for stakeholder mapping using the power–interest matrix.

These findings serve as the foundation for the STP analysis and stakeholder mapping in the subsequent sections.

2. **Customer Analysis (STP Analysis)**

Segmenting:

Based on Kotler et al. (2018), segmentation in business markets may consider demographic variables and purchasing behavior. PT XYZ's customer base consists of:

- Coal Miners (upstream producers),
- Coal Traders (intermediaries with dual buyer–shipper roles),
- End-Users (power plants, smelters, cement plants, etc.).

This segmentation reflects distinct functional roles, risk exposures, and decision-making influence in coal transactions.

Purchasing Approach Segmentation:

- Users = Miners & Traders
- Influencers = Miners (recommending surveyor options)
- Buyers = Miners (who pay for the service)
- Deciders = Traders (final assignors of loading-port surveyors)
- Gatekeepers = Administrative/Marketing staff at coal mining companies Interview data confirmed that traders—particularly CIF traders—possess the highest influence, as they bear the risk of discrepancies across loading and discharging ports.

Targeting (Stakeholder Mapping):

Stakeholder mapping using the power–interest matrix shows:

- High Power – High Interest: CIF Traders
- High Power – Low Interest: FOB Traders
- Low Power – High Interest: Coal Miners
- Low Power – Low Interest: End-Users

Consistent with Johnson et al. (2008) and the laissez-faire logic, the company must prioritize stakeholders with the greatest influence—CIF traders—while managing miners and end-users as supporting stakeholders.

Positioning:

Based on the above, PT XYZ positions itself as "an Indonesian TIC company committed to supporting the operational efficiency of coal traders while maintaining full independence and integrity in testing and inspection.

3. **External Environment Analysis**

In analyzing the external environment, the author employs PESTLE Analysis and Porter's Five Forces as the primary analytical frameworks.

PESTLE Analysis

- **Political:** Indonesia's downstreaming policy and smelter

expansion increase coal demand (IEA, 2024). ESDM regulations reinforce the authority of Verifying Surveyors but restrict market flexibility.

- **Economic:** Coal remains a dominant energy source, with high global and domestic demand. Traders prefer surveyors with discharge-port collaboration due to economic efficiency.
- **Social:** Cultural preferences, such as Chinese buyers favoring Mandarin-speaking contacts, influence surveyor selection.
- **Technological:** While coal testing technology evolves slowly, reliable calibration of equipment remains essential.
- **Legal:** ESDM regulations requiring official LHV & LS documentation create barriers for non-appointed verifier surveyors.
- **Environmental:** Despite Indonesia's Net Zero 2060 roadmap, coal dependency remains strong; renewable energy development remains politically driven rather than structurally enforced (Indonesian, 2025).

Porter's Five Forces

- **Threat of New Entrants:** Moderate — regulatory barriers exist but subcontracting allows market penetration.
- **Bargaining Power of Buyers:** High — traders hold decisive authority, cultural preference also heightens buyer power.
- **Bargaining Power of Suppliers:** Low — equipment and manpower availability is wide, switching cost is low.
- **Threat of Substitutes:** Low — coal inspection cannot be substituted due to legal and commercial documentation requirements.
- **Industry Rivalry:** High — many TIC firms offer similar services; competitors with global labs and port partnerships are advantaged.

4. Internal Organization Analysis

Hitt et al. (2019) state in their book that an Internal Organization Analysis can be conducted by assessing a company's resources, capabilities, and core competencies. The following presents the internal organization analysis of PT XYZ.

Resources:

PT XYZ has strong tangible resources (laboratories, equipment, financial stability) and valuable intangible resources such as accreditation as an ESDM-appointed Verifying Surveyor and long-standing industry reputation (Hitt et al., 2019).

Capabilities:

- Operational excellence (fast turnaround, accuracy, minimal complaints),
- Competitive pricing,
- Competent technical personnel,
- Strong coordination and reporting processes.

However, limited Mandarin-speaking staff and weak overseas presence reduce competitiveness in export markets.

Core Competencies:

Based on the Four Criteria of Sustainable Competitive Advantage (Hitt et al., 2019):

- **Valuable:** efficiency, accuracy, competitive pricing.
- **Rare:** accreditation as Verifying Surveyor; cooperative relationships with competitors.
- **Costly-to-Imitate:** strong reputation built over decades.

- **Nonsubstitutable:** not yet present, which may explain the company's inability to become the first-choice surveyor despite strong performance.

5. SWOT Analysis

Strengths:

1. Competitive pricing.
2. Operational excellence and competent manpower.
3. Accredited as Verifying Surveyor by ESDM.
4. Good relationship with other TIC companies.
5. Strong resources and financial capacity.

Weaknesses:

1. Lack of partnerships with TIC companies at discharging ports.
2. Limited overseas presence.
3. Low brand preference.
4. Lack of Mandarin-speaking personnel.

Opportunities:

1. Increasing coal demand and production.
2. Growing smelter industry.
3. Regulatory advantages for Verifying Surveyors.

Threats:

1. Intense competition and new entrants.
2. Trader preference for port-to-port surveyor collaboration.
3. Cultural preferences of Chinese buyers.
4. Competitors with in-house labs and global networks.

6. Business Solution

The TOWS Matrix indicates that PT XYZ must prioritize strengthening both its domestic and international presence through three core initiatives: overseas branding, improved intercultural communication capabilities—particularly Mandarin proficiency—and the reinforcement of its reputation within the domestic smelter industry. Limited global visibility and insufficient engagement with foreign traders have reduced PT XYZ's likelihood of being appointed as the loading-port surveyor. To address this gap, PT XYZ needs to increase its international exposure by participating in industry conferences abroad – such as Coaltrans event – and conducting regular management visits to major importing countries like China & India. Additionally, hiring Mandarin-speaking staff has become a strategic necessity to facilitate effective communication with traders and stakeholders in the smelter industry—many of whom are Chinese-owned—and to support the company's overseas branding activities in China as the biggest Indonesia coal importer.

Domestically, strengthening PT XYZ's reputation is essential to increase appointments for Superintending Services, particularly in the smelter company industry. This can be achieved through mapping the potential client, registering as an e-vendor, participating in tenders, and conducting periodic visits to stakeholders from smelter company. Ensuring alignment with trader interests also requires PT XYZ to secure access at discharging ports, which reinforces the need for collaboration with both overseas and domestic TIC companies. Such partnerships enable PT XYZ to offer port-to-port services, a value proposition increasingly preferred by traders due to its role in minimizing quality and quantity disputes across ports.

Strategically, the most appropriate approach for PT XYZ is the Focused Differentiation Strategy, as the fundamental concern of traders—both domestic and export-oriented—is the mitigation of disputes at the discharging port. Thus, PT XYZ does not need to differentiate across all customer segments, but rather concentrate on high-power stakeholders. For export shipments, differentiation can be achieved by providing port-to-port services through laboratory facilities of overseas partners or by forming international partnerships with local surveyors at discharging ports. For domestic shipments to smelters, differentiation involves becoming an approved vendor through tender processes or partnering with surveyors who already serve smelters at the discharging port. In both cases, Mandarin-speaking capability becomes a critical differentiating asset.

The international cooperative strategy emerges as the most feasible approach compared to establishing an overseas company or laboratory, which would require substantial capital, lengthy bureaucratic procedures, and long-term branding efforts. Through cooperation, PT XYZ and its partners can divide roles at loading and discharging ports while maintaining the independence of the inspection process. In India, collaboration with MNO Pvt Ltd (anonymized company name) is strategically beneficial due to its strong presence in the Indian discharging-port market. In China, although two state-owned TIC companies dominate coal inspections, a partnership with CCD Co., Ltd (anonymized company name) is more advantageous because of its substantial market share and existing operational presence in Indonesia, enabling mutual benefits in both branding and operational matter.

For domestic shipments involving smelters, a cooperative strategy is critical because smelters—many of which are fully or partially owned by Chinese companies—hold significant influence over discharging-port inspections. PT XYZ can enhance its likelihood of being appointed at the loading port by either becoming a vendor directly through smelter tenders or collaborating with TIC companies already appointed by smelters. In this context, cooperation with CCD Co., Ltd offers PT XYZ a strategic opportunity to strengthen its domestic positioning while simultaneously expanding export appointments, due to CCD's extensive relationships with smelter stakeholders in Indonesia and its dominance in China's discharging-port inspection market.

CONCLUSION

The conclusions of this study indicate that the primary reason customers appoint an independent surveyor for Superintending Services is to ensure a sense of security that their coal cargo will not encounter significant quality or quantity disputes at the discharging port. This is reflected in their preference for appointing the same surveyor at both ports or selecting a surveyor at the loading port that maintains strong cooperation with the surveyor at the discharging port. Among all stakeholders, traders hold the most decisive influence in surveyor selection, whereas miners generally follow buyer preferences and end-users show minimal concern regarding the loading-port surveyor. Therefore, trader perspectives are the most relevant in explaining customer behavior.

The most significant drawback associated with PT XYZ, and the main reason customers hesitate to assign Superintending tasks to the company, arises when PT XYZ lacks visibility or involvement at the discharging port. For export shipments, this concern appears when PT XYZ does not have laboratory facilities or cooperative arrangements with TIC companies in the destination country. For domestic shipments to smelters, the drawback emerges when PT XYZ is not a registered vendor or tender winner for discharging-port inspections and does not collaborate with the surveyor appointed by the smelter. In both cases, the absence of a port-to-port or coordinated inspection approach reduces customers' confidence and lowers the likelihood of PT XYZ being appointed.

To increase order volume and secure more Superintending assignments in alignment with its vision of becoming the first-choice surveyor, PT XYZ must strengthen its visibility across both domestic and international markets. The key actions include enhancing overseas branding through international visits and participation in global coal conferences, hiring Mandarin-speaking employees to improve communication with traders and smelter stakeholders, improving the company's domestic reputation—especially among smelter clients—and establishing cooperative and international cooperative arrangements with TIC companies operating at discharging ports.

Based on these findings, the recommended strategic approach for PT XYZ is the adoption of a Focused Differentiation Strategy supported by cooperative and international cooperative strategies. This involves prioritizing the interests of coal trading companies, particularly those operating under CIF terms, expanding global visibility through structured branding initiatives, building cooperative relationships with surveyors at domestic smelter discharging ports and with TIC companies in key export destinations such as China and India, and strengthening communication capabilities through the recruitment of Mandarin-speaking personnel. Collectively, these strategies will help PT XYZ address customer concerns, enhance its competitive positioning, and improve its prospects for becoming the first-choice surveyor in the industry.

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