

## COMMUNITY EMPOWERMENT AND ESG IMPLEMENTATION AT NUVENS PRIMA RETAIL AS AN E-CIGARETTE RETAIL OPERATOR

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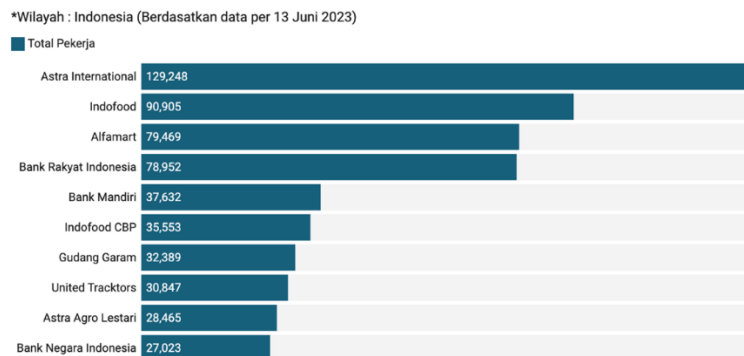
**Abstract** - Community empowerment in Indonesia is one way for a brand to improve community welfare which is included in CASR programs and improve its image and reputation. Nuvens Prima Retail is an E-Cigarette Retail Operator that carries out community empowerment and implements ESG (environmental, social, governance) as the company's main concern in running a business with a long-term development strategy. The purpose of this research is to determine community empowerment and ESG implementation. The research method is descriptive qualitative with a case study approach. Primary data collection, interviews with key informant and informants from Nuvens Prima retail who know community empowerment and ESG Implementation in Indonesia. Secondary data form documentation and literature studies. The results of this research are that Nuvens Prima Retail runs a business with the principle of responsibility towards society and the environment by collaborating with waste managers in the form of managing electronic waste for recycling. Promotion of more environmentally friendly practices and reduced waste footprint as environmental protection. Empowering local communities, improving working conditions and equal employment opportunities as a social responsibility. Maintaining high ethical standards, transparency as improving corporate governance.

**Keywords** – Community Empowerment, ESG Implementation, Communication, Retail, CSR.

### INTRODUCTION

According to the Director General of Pollution and Environmental Damage Control, KLHK (Sigit Reliantoro), companies in Indonesia recommend implementing Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) and Environmental, Social Governance (ESG). Through business operations that do not damage the environment and use environmentally friendly energy resources and implement ESG to support sustainable business growth, because companies in Indonesia play a role in realizing environmental economic transformation through the actualization of the economic value of carbon to control Green House Gas (GHG) emissions in development., National and economic stimulation (Mahadi, 2024).

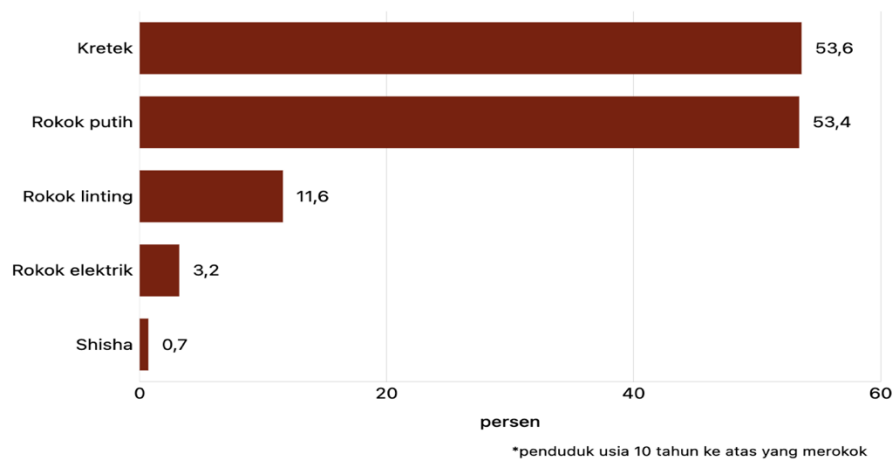
Public insight into corporate social responsibility (CSR) is still minimal. Generally, people know CSR as donations given by companies to the community. Corporate social responsibility is responsibility for all impacts arising from the business they conduct. There are positive impacts, namely economic impacts, such as the availability of jobs, economic effects on society, tax payments, and so on. Negative impacts, starting from the safety of product users, the social effects of product presence, as well as environmental impacts caused by industrial activities, such as environmental pollution (Abdurakhman, 2019). One type of company that has responsibility is the cigarette industry company, which is one type of company that manages and utilizes natural resources and contributes to driving the national economy by absorbing a workforce of 5.98 million people and contributing in the form of an excise tax on tobacco products of IDR 218 trillion in 2022 (Deny, 2023). The following are the 10 companies with the largest number of workers. The seventh position is occupied by an Indonesian cigarette company.



**Figure 1.** 10 Companies with the Largest Number of Employees  
Source: Putri, 2023

Based on data from the World Population Review, Indonesia is listed as one of the 10 countries with the highest percentage of smokers in the world in 2022, reaching 38.2% of the total population and in eighth position (Nasrandi, 2024).

1. Nauru: 48,3%
2. Myanmar: 44,4%
3. Kiribati: 39,7%
4. Papua New Guinea: 39,6%
5. Serbia: 39,5%
6. Bulgaria: 39,5%
7. Timor Leste: 38,7%
8. Indonesia: 38,2%
9. Kroasia: 37%
10. Solomon Islands: 36,9%



**Figure 2.** Proportion of types of cigarettes smoked by Indonesian people (2023)  
Source: Muhamad, 2024

According to a survey by the Ministry of Health (Kemenkes), in 2023 there will be 22.46% of the Indonesian population aged 10 years and over who smoke every day, and 4.56% smoke occasionally. In this group of smokers, the majority consume clove cigarettes (53.6%) and white cigarettes (53.4%). Meanwhile, small portion consumed hand-rolled cigarettes (11.6%), electronic cigarettes (3.2%), and shisha (0.7%). The Ministry of Health noted that the average Indonesian smoker consumes 12 cigarettes per day (Muhamad, 2024). The cigarette industry has touted that the use of e-cigarettes is safe and not dangerous for consumers. Teens who frequently vape may face increased exposure to harmful metals, such as lead and uranium, which have the potential to negatively affect brain and organ development. Previous studies have shown that some harmful metals found in e-cigarette aerosols and liquids are particularly risky during the developmental stage, causing cognitive impairment, behavioral problems, respiratory problems, cancer, and heart disease in children (Rokom, 2024).

The development of e-cigarette users in Indonesia has reached almost 4 million people, plus people who have tried and switched to e-cigarettes. Electronic cigarettes are in the processed tobacco products sector (Rhamandaty, 2024). The results of the study, published in the Journal of the American College of Cardiology, showed switching to vaping returned smokers' scores to closer to healthy scores, less harmful than tobacco cigarettes:

- Healthy non-smokers scored 7.7%
- Smokers score 5.5%
- Switching to e-cigarette nicotine scored 6.7% (Gallagher, 2019).

Alternative tobacco products are considered to have very minimal impact on the surrounding air and the community around the user. The reason is, this product is said to not produce smoke, which is widely known as a source of air pollution (Sumiyati, 2022). Dr. Colin Mendelsohn, Chair of the Australian Tobacco Harm Reduction Association, said that vaping is effective as an aid to quit smoking. For example, in Australia, New Zealand and England. The British government implemented a “swap to stop” program to help smokers quit smoking with free vape kits. The New Zealand government considers vaping to have a

lower risk. Vaping as a smoking cessation therapy is 50-100 percent more effective than other nicotine replacement programs such as using candy. Containing nicotine without burning or smoking, vaping can reduce harmful substances from smoke but can provide the sensation of smoking.

Elgin Seah, Senior Manager of RELX International, said that vape manufacturers never claim that their products are healthy. However, a vape is relatively better because it does not go through a combustion process, so there is no tar and combustion residue. The composition of the RELX product consists of polypropylene glycol or a compound commonly used in making bread, vegetable glycerin or a sugar alcohol product commonly used in making cakes, flavoring agents, and nicotine. RELX International itself is a multinational e-cigarette company that markets and distributes products under the RELX vape brand. RELX operates in more than 10 countries, namely Indonesia, New Zealand, Australia, Philippines, Italy, Spain, England, Netherlands, Germany and Switzerland. RELX entered Indonesia in 2019, and now has 550 stores in 70 cities. RELX also markets its products in collaboration with retail networks and sells via e-commerce. (Liputan6dotcom, 2023).

Based on the pros and cons that occur with e-cigarettes, companies are still required to carry out social responsibilities as stated in Law Number 40 of 2007 concerning Limited Liability Companies. The aim of the research is to determine community empowerment and the implementation of ESG at Nuvens Prima Retail as an E-Cigarette Retail Operator. Previous research conducted by Muthiah and Yudo Anggoro entitled Implementation of ESG as a Strategy for Business Sustainability in a Public Listed Tobacco Company in Indonesia shows that Sampoerna's ESG strategy is comprehensive and focuses on stakeholders. Sampoerna has not implemented or created its own Sustainability or ESG Index and Roadmap that its parent company has implemented. The difference between this research is the e-cigarette company chosen by the researcher and the theoretical scheme used. The second research is about Corporate Social Responsibility in Improving Community Welfare by Ratih Probosiswi, which discusses CSR from PT HM Sampoerna, which shows that CSR builds a positive image and increases profits after implementing CSR, which helps the community in various fields in improving community welfare. The difference with this research is the company that the researcher took and its CSR was discussed.

The novelty of this research is regarding electronic cigarettes, which have become pros and cons in society as a substitute for conventional cigarettes and are registered as nicotine products, which are quite popular with the Indonesian people, according to the attached data, which electronic cigarette users continue to increase. Seeing the social responsibility carried out by PT Nuvens Prima Retail through community empowerment and the implementation of ESG so that it is right on target and improves its brand image and positive reputation.

## LITERATURE REVIEW

A public relations strategy will help create a company's reputation, so that it will support the achievement of company targets in the marketing aspect, target market share. For this reason, a good public relations strategy must translate into the desired company position. The message conveyed to community groups who are marketing targets must be appropriate to the issue and atmosphere (Darmawan et al., 2019 in Christina, 2020). "image: the impression, the feeling, the conception which the public has of a company; a consciously created impression of an object, person or organization" (Sari & Nursyamsiah, 2017 in Christina, 2020). Image comes from the public or people who have felt the impact and therefore have their own views on the company. (Limanto et al., 2021).

Corporate Social Responsibility is an action or company activity that is carried out as a disclosure of the company's sense of responsibility to the environment and the community around the company. CSR is an activity of corporate responsibility to the community as a result of the impact of its business activities (Utomo, 2019 in Jonathan & Setiawan, 2022). The CSR activities can be viewed through annual reports or corporate sustainability reports covering three aspects of economic, environmental and social so-called triple bottom line reporting (Darwin, 2006 in Fernando et al., 2018). The Law No. 40 of 2007 regulates CSR practice in Indonesia. It states company's obligation to carry out social and environmental responsibility activities. In addition to requiring CSR activities, the Act stipulates that the Public Limited Company is required to disclose all implementation of social and environmental responsibilities which they have done in the annual report (Fernando et al., 2018).

Implementing CSR provides benefits to companies in terms of:

- 1) forming a positive image of society so that companies can grow and be sustainable;
- 2) companies can more easily gain access to capital;
- 3) the company can maintain quality human resources; and
- 4) companies can improve decision making on critical matters and make risk management easier (Ambadar, 2008 in Probosiwi, 2016).

According to Aksari (2013) there are five objectives for implementing CSR, namely:

- (1) CSR is carried out as an effort to minimize social risks,
- (2) then CSR is carried out to build harmonious relationships with society,
- (3) CSR can play an active role in improving society by involving the company in the community around the company,
- (4) CSR develops the company's business and can build trust in the community and business partners,
- (5) CSR can increase community expectations so that the company can pursue the right social and economic targets.

Community empowerment is a program that is pursued with the aim of forming the attitudes and behavior of independent individuals and communities. Community empowerment is one of the programs that the government continues to strive for to improve the quality of life of the community. In the book *Autonomous Regional Development Planning and Community Empowerment (2005)* by I Nyoman Sumaryadi, Robinson explains that empowerment is a personal and social process. As well as liberation of personal abilities, competence, creativity and freedom of action. Community empowerment is a development process in which the community takes the initiative to start a process of social activities to improve their own situation and conditions. (Gischa, 2020).

Empowerment was present in the mid-17th century and was understood as investing with authority or granting authority. Community empowerment is considered important to be carried out in an effort to empower, especially groups and individuals who appear weak and vulnerable to poverty, so that they have the strength and ability to escape various kinds of life problems, adversity and backwardness. By empowering the community, it is hoped that the group will experience progress in life, be independent, and be able to fulfill all life's needs (Haris, 2014 in Octaviani et al., 2022).

Community empowerment is a very important and strategic CSR approach in improving the socio-economic conditions of society (Raharjo, 2015). Therefore, with implementation that focuses on empowerment, community empowerment becomes one of the media, tools and ways to create change in society through corporate social responsibility programs in community empowerment (Rahmadani et al., 2018).

ESG reflects an important shift in the business paradigm, where companies not only pursue financial gain, but also take responsibility for the impact of their business operations on the environment, society and good corporate governance. Awareness of these aspects has changed the way companies integrate social and environmental responsibility into their business plans (Armando & Maria, 2022 in Haludin et al., 2024).

The company's CSR concept at least has a triple bottom line concept, namely improving the welfare of society (people), preserving the environment (planet), and paying attention to company income (profit). If the company applies this concept, sustainable development will occur. On the other hand, if the company does not have this concept then damage will occur (Mukhtar et al., 2012 in Marwah, 2018).

According to Hill Canton and Sukatendel quoted by Soemirat and Ardianto, image is a message, impression, feeling, public self-image of the company. Image is expressed as a form of a person's view of a company, a person, a committee, or an activity (Soemirat & Ardianto, 2003 in Septyana, 2019). Image Theory, according to Frank Jefkins, states that the impression, picture or impression is accurate (according to reality) or a figure of the existence of various personnel policies or services of an organization or company (Amanda, 2020).

## **METHODS**

The research method used in this research is qualitative descriptive research. This research method aims to describe people's behavior, field events, and certain activities in detail and in depth. What is meant by descriptive research is research to describe variables relating to the problem being studied without questioning the relationship between variables. (Revias & Susanto, 2020 in Christina & Fransisca, 2024). Data collection used was interviews, observation and literature study. Interviews were conducted with informants from PT Nuvens Prima Retail, namely the Marketing Communication Manager & Director. Secondary data was obtained from websites and previous similar research in the form of references to previous research that supports the information needed to complete this research. According to Miles and Huberman, qualitative data analysis is carried out interactively through data reduction, data display and verification processes. Meanwhile, according to Spradley, it is carried out sequentially, through a process of domain, taxonomic, component and cultural theme analysis (Sugiyono, 2009: 147 in Christina, 2020).

## RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

PT. Nuvens Prima Retail, which was founded in 2020, is part of PT. Awandaya Group and operates in the retail sector. This company specializes in managing and operating premium outlets throughout Indonesia. As part of the Awandaya Group, Nuvens Prima Retail focuses on the retail sector, offering RELX products with a reach covering Jakarta, Bandung, Surabaya, Tangerang, Bali and other areas. RELX is an electronic cigarette that applies to a closed system. RELX uses NPOD, no need to refill e-liquid, burning only nicotine and smoother nicotine delivery. Reporting from Sonora, Public Health England data states that e-cigarettes are 95 percent less harmful to health than conventional cigarettes. This condition is what drives RELX to improve the lives of smokers who find it difficult to quit smoking, and to design products that enable them to adopt better alternatives (Sudiyana, 2022).

The results of an interview with the Director of PT Nuvens Prima Retail (Hilda Y Jong) regarding the strategy for maintaining a good image and reputation by Nuvens is starting with maintaining product quality so that it is of high quality, which is the main foundation, including ensuring that the products provided meet or exceed customer expectations. Second, maintaining superior customer service by providing customer service and creating loyal customers, handling complaints and problems quickly and professionally is also something that is always prioritized. Third, honest communication. If there is a problem or error, it is important to admit and correct it transparently. From maintaining quality, superior service, being communicative in replying to every complaint, criticism and suggestion in maintaining trust, as well as providing attractive incentives or loyalty programs encouraging customers to provide positive testimonials and reviews. This was explained in an interview with Marketing Communication PT Nuvens (Dewi Novyanti). Reporting from Kontan, RELX products with the composition polyethylene glycol or compounds commonly used in making bread, vegetable glycerin or sugar alcohol products commonly used in making cakes, flavoring agents and nicotine, are produced at manufacturing facilities with product inspection and quality control processes strict (Hutauruk, 2023). The composition and production shows that Nuvens really maintains and pays attention to the quality of RELX products. From the results of the interview with the Director, Nuvens innovates and adapts to market and technological changes so as not to be left behind compared to more dynamic competitors. Supported by marketing communications, they carry out consistent branding and marketing by developing a consistent and strong branding strategy which reflects the company's values. Marketing campaigns should be designed to build brand awareness and emphasize the quality and superiority of the product. The branding currently carried out strictly follows applicable regulations and norms. Reporting from Inews, RELX launched WAKA SOLO, a disposable e-cigarette with high standards to meet consumer demand (Inews, 2023). This innovation makes RELX's branding even stronger with quality above standards and listening to its consumers.

Nuvens also carries out and pays attention to employee development. Invest in employee training and development to ensure they have the skills necessary to deliver the best results. Nuvens continues to follow regulations, always paying attention to that all company's activities always comply with applicable rules and regulations. This compliance is important to avoid legal and reputation problems that could damage the Company's image. RELX, through Nuvens, follows regulations in Indonesia for selling and carrying out activities in public. As reported by tribunnews, RELX Indonesia and Konvo, which are the official representatives of the e-cigarette user community, signed a collaboration to encourage the government to immediately issue new regulations for e-cigarettes and other tobacco processing products in Indonesia (Arifin, 2022).

Nuvens embraces the belief that companies are not only responsible for achieving internal financial profits, but also have social and environmental responsibility by engaging in CSR activities that have a positive impact on society. Not only does it improve the company's image, but it shows the company's commitment to the environment and social welfare. The philosophy and objectives of CSR at Nuvens include the company running business with integrity, respecting human rights and contributing positively to society, as well as ensuring that the company's operations support environmental and social sustainability and also striving to provide real benefits for the community and surrounding environment. Nuvens tries to be present as a partner for the community, which not only supports large activities but also small activities as a form of community empowerment. In the last 2 years, from 2023-2024, we have regularly held open blood donation activities for internal people, the community around Daan Mogot, West Jakarta, which is the Head Office, to take part in this activity and this event also collaborates with other companies in the F&B, beauty and health sectors to participate, such as Jakarta Hospital, Elle Skincare, Ramoe, Familymart, and provide greater benefits for activity participants. Nuvens wants to continue to contribute to Public Health with blood donations aimed at saving lives by increasing the number of blood donations and raising awareness about blood donation. Blood donation activities in collaboration with PMI

to educate Nuvens internally and the surrounding community about the importance and benefits of blood donation. Community Empowerment is carried out by campus hiring, which has been carried out twice in Jakarta and Bandung to absorb workers, Mercu Buana University and Pasundan University Bandung to provide services to students who are looking for work. Apart from that, building the Awandaya Young Partners (MIMA) program, whose aim is to support a community of young people who want and wish to have the opportunity to become businesses; through the MIMA platform, they will get training and also the opportunity to start their business.

ESG implementation carried out in the business environment from the results of interviews includes environment in the form of products marketed in business which also help in reducing air pollution in the surrounding environment. We also apply strict standards in opening our stores so as not to disturb the surrounding environment. Apart from that, there is a collect pods program for waste management. Social takes the form of participating as a sponsor in community activities in Indonesia, including sports (Tennis, Golf, etc.) as well as hobby communities (automotive, fashion, etc.). Governance consists of always carrying out detailed reports as well as anti-corruption policies and strict internal audits. We also always follow the regulations implemented by the government in the fields we work in, such as not opening shops in areas around hospitals, schools, family entertainment venues and so on. Reporting from Infobanknews, RELX carries out independent ESG assessments every year on large suppliers, conducts audits through third parties on suppliers to evaluate compliance with the Code of Ethics to meet the requirements of the SA8000 standard, collaborates with waste management, Fleet Packaging, waste implementing electronic waste management collaboration in the form of Waste Collecting Pilot Indonesia 2023 namely collecting cartridges, devices and single-use RELX products for recycling. RELX was ranked first in ESG by S&P Global in the global e-cigarette industry for considering environmental and social sustainability in every operation (Nisaputra, 2023).

The positive impact felt by CSR on empowering society and communities and ESG is that Nuvens is known as a company that is active in social activities in today's office environment. Reputation increases as a company because it often invites other brands/companies to collaborate, it becomes easier to invite brands/companies to collaborate, because there is already a very good previous portfolio. Carrying out CSR and ESG, which is a company's social responsibility, requires high costs. It is hoped that it can improve the company's image and reputation in the eyes of consumers, increase customer satisfaction and loyalty, and motivate employees to be loyal to the company. Nuvens minimizes the risk of stakeholder dissatisfaction if priorities do not match expectations.

## CONCLUSION AND DISCUSSION

From image theory, Nuvens has the impression of having quality that is above standard or the best and that electronic cigarettes are always innovating. This can be seen from the results of interviews and literature studies conducted by researchers. PT Nuvens Prima Retail, as the manager and branding of RELX electronic cigarettes, carries out community empowerment through CSR, such as routine blood donation activities with brand collaboration to support activities, campus hiring, supporting young people in business through the MIMA program. This is done as a marketing strategy activity as well as public relations in branding, improving the reputation and image of the company. This is to fulfill corporate social responsibility in accordance with regulations set by the government in running a company that does not only think about profit, but cares about and develops its surroundings. ESG implementation is carried out in the form of waste management, reducing air pollution, actively participating as a sponsor to support activities in the community such as sports, detailed reports and conducting routine internal audits as a form of corporate responsibility towards the environment, society and good corporate governance.

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