

Market Engagement, Customer Centricity, and Business Growth in Indonesian Coffee SMEs: Evidence from Customer-Based PLS-SEM Analysis

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Abstract

The rapid growth of coffee small and medium enterprises (SMEs) in Indonesia has intensified market competition, compelling businesses to adopt strategies that foster deeper customer relationships. This study investigates the role of customer centricity as a strategic mechanism linking market engagement to business growth in Indonesian coffee SMEs, focusing on dKupiAceh. A quantitative research design was employed using survey data collected from 160 customers. Data were analysed using Partial Least Squares Structural Equation Modelling (PLS-SEM). The results reveal that market engagement has a significant positive effect on business growth, while customer centricity significantly mediates this relationship. The findings demonstrate that customer-centric practices enhance emotional engagement, loyalty, and repurchase intention, ultimately contributing to sustainable business growth. This study provides empirical evidence for SME managers and contributes to the literature on customer engagement and growth strategies in the hospitality and beverage industry.

Keywords: Market engagement, customer centricity, business growth, coffee SMEs, Indonesia

1. Introduction

Indonesia's coffee industry has emerged as a dynamic and highly competitive sector, driven predominantly by the rapid expansion of small and medium enterprises (SMEs) that emphasize local identity, authenticity, and experiential consumption (Pramagista & Wandebori, 2021; Aprilia et al., 2023). The proliferation of independent coffee outlets has intensified market competition, compelling SMEs to move beyond traditional competitive factors such as product quality and pricing, and instead focus on strategies that strengthen customer engagement and long-term relational value (Taufik et al., 2022; Sitorus & Yasri, 2023). Within this context, market engagement, characterized by interactive communication, emotional connection, and active

customer participation, has become a critical determinant of customer behaviour and firm performance (Rafika & Bangsawan, 2023; Sharabati et al., 2024).

Concurrently, customer centricity has gained increasing scholarly and managerial attention as a strategic orientation that prioritizes customer value creation, personalization, and relationship continuity (Okeke et al., 2025; Ha et al., 2025). In service-oriented SMEs, particularly within the coffee and hospitality sector, customer centricity plays a crucial role in enhancing engagement outcomes by transforming customer interactions into relational assets that support loyalty, repeat patronage, and positive word-of-mouth (Riyasa et al., 2024; Widhy et al., 2026).

Despite the growing importance of customer-centric strategies, empirical investigations examining the mediating role of customer centricity in the relationship between market engagement and business growth within Indonesian coffee SMEs remain limited (Khristianto et al., 2023; Aprilia et al., 2023). Addressing this gap, the present study empirically examines customer perceptions at dKupiAceh, a locally rooted coffee SME, to investigate how customer centricity functions as a strategic mechanism that translates market engagement into sustainable business growth (Riyasa et al., 2024; Sharabati et al., 2024).

2. Literature Review

2.1 Market Engagement

Market engagement refers to the extent to which customers demonstrate cognitive, emotional, and behavioural involvement with a brand or business through interactive experiences and ongoing relationships (Kumar et al., 2025; Zacharias et al., 2025). In the marketing and service literature, engagement is increasingly viewed as a multidimensional construct that goes beyond transactional exchanges to include customer participation, emotional attachment, and value co-creation (Carvalho & Alves, 2023; Bosisio, 2024). Within hospitality and foodservice settings, market engagement manifests through frequent interactions, personalised communication, and customers' willingness to invest time and emotional energy into the brand (Shoukat & Ramkissoon, 2022; Sitorus & Yasri, 2023).

Previous empirical studies suggest that highly engaged customers are more likely to develop favourable attitudes towards a business, leading to enhanced satisfaction, loyalty, and advocacy behaviours (Rafika & Bangsawan, 2023; Pereira et al., 2025). For SMEs, particularly those operating in experiential industries such as coffee retailing, market engagement serves as a strategic resource that differentiates the business and strengthens competitiveness (Aprilia et al., 2023; Khristianto et al., 2023). Engaged customers not only contribute to direct financial performance through repeat

patronage but also indirectly support growth by disseminating positive word-of-mouth and reinforcing brand legitimacy within local communities (Taufik et al., 2022; Widhy et al., 2026).

H1: Market engagement has a positive effect on business growth.

2.2 Customer Centricity

Customer centricity is defined as a strategic orientation that places the customer at the centre of organizational decision-making, focusing on understanding individual needs, personalising service delivery, and continuously creating superior customer value (Tuominen et al., 2023; Okeke et al., 2025). Unlike traditional product- or sales-oriented approaches, customer centricity emphasizes long-term relationship development and customer lifetime value (Sobrinho et al., 2025; Pereira et al., 2025). In service-based SMEs, customer centricity is often embedded in frontline employee behaviour, service customization, and responsiveness to customer feedback (Abrokwah-Larbi, 2024; Okeke et al., 2024).

The literature indicates that customer-centric firms are more effective in fostering trust, emotional attachment, and relational commitment (Riyasa et al., 2024; Kumar et al., 2025). These attributes are particularly important in hospitality and coffee SME contexts, where service encounters play a decisive role in shaping customer perceptions (Taufik et al., 2022; Widhy et al., 2026). Market engagement provides the interactional foundation through which customer centricity can be operationalised, as engaged customers offer insights and feedback that enable firms to refine and personalize their offerings (Rahayu et al., 2023; Carvalho & Alves, 2023). Consequently, higher levels of market engagement are expected to strengthen customer-centric practices within SMEs (Ha et al., 2025; Okeke et al., 2025).

H2: Market engagement has a positive effect on customer centricity.

2.3 Customer Centricity and Business Growth

Business growth in SMEs is commonly reflected in indicators such as increased sales, repeat purchases, market expansion, and strengthened brand reputation (Sharabati et al., 2024; Ha et al., 2025). Customer-centric organisations are better positioned to convert customer interactions into sustainable growth outcomes, as loyal and emotionally attached customers demonstrate higher repurchase intentions and lower price sensitivity (Tuominen et al., 2023; Pereira et al., 2025). Furthermore, customer-

centric practices encourage positive word-of-mouth and brand advocacy, which are particularly valuable for SMEs with limited promotional resources (Abrokwah-Larbi, 2024; Okeke et al., 2025).

Within the coffee SME context, where experiential value and relational quality are central, customer centricity enhances customers' perceived value and deepens long-term relationships (Aprilia et al., 2023; Riyasa et al., 2024). As a result, customer centricity is expected to exert a direct and positive influence on business growth (Sharabati et al., 2024; Tuominen et al., 2023).

H3: Customer centricity has a positive effect on business growth.

2.4 Mediating Role of Customer Centricity

While market engagement is widely recognised as a key driver of positive customer-firm interactions, engagement alone may not automatically translate into business growth unless it is strategically managed and leveraged (Kumar et al., 2025; Zacharias et al., 2025). In the context of service-based SMEs, particularly within the coffee and hospitality sector, customer interactions must be systematically transformed into relational value to generate sustainable performance outcomes (Carvalho & Alves, 2023; Dang & Nguyen, 2023). Customer centricity provides the strategic foundation for this transformation by aligning organisational processes, service delivery, and decision-making with long-term customer value creation (Tuominen et al., 2023; Okeke et al., 2024).

Customer-centric firms utilize insights derived from market engagement to personalise services, respond effectively to customer feedback, and strengthen emotional bonds (Okeke et al., 2025; Pereira et al., 2025). These practices enhance relational outcomes such as trust, satisfaction, loyalty, and advocacy, which are critical mechanisms through which engagement contributes to sustained revenue growth (Riyasa et al., 2024; Abdullah & Zeebaree, 2025). Without a strong customer-centric orientation, market engagement may remain superficial and fail to generate meaningful business benefits (Abrokwah-Larbi, 2024; Tuominen et al., 2023).

Accordingly, customer centricity is conceptualised as a mediating variable that channels the effects of market engagement into growth-related outcomes (Zacharias et al., 2025; Sharabati et al., 2024). By reinforcing relationship continuity and customer lifetime value, customer centricity strengthens the impact of engagement on business growth (Ha et al., 2025; Okeke et al., 2025). Therefore, this study proposes that customer centricity mediates the relationship between market engagement and business growth in Indonesian coffee SMEs (Aprilia et al., 2023; Khristianto et al., 2023).

H4: Customer centricity mediates the relationship between market engagement and business growth.

3. Research Methodology

This study employed a quantitative, cross-sectional survey design to examine customer perceptions of dKupiAceh and to test the proposed research hypotheses. Data were collected from 160 customers using a structured questionnaire, with respondents selected through purposive sampling to ensure that all participants had experienced the café's services at least once. This sampling approach was considered appropriate for capturing informed customer evaluations of market engagement and customer-centric practices. All study constructs were measured using a five-point Likert scale, ranging from 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree), consistent with established quantitative research practices.

3.1 Questionnaire

Table 1: Coding Questionnaire

VARIABLE	CODE	QUESTIONNAIRE ITEM	AUTHORS
Market Engagement	ME1	dKupiAceh actively engages with customers through promotions and events.	Kumar et al. (2010); Vivek et al. (2012)
	ME2	The company encourages customers to interact with the brand regularly.	Kumar et al. (2010)
	ME3	Customers feel connected with the activities organized by dKupiAceh.	Vivek et al. (2012)
	ME4	The company frequently communicates with customers through marketing channels.	Brodie et al. (2011)
	ME5	Customers are invited to participate in brand-related discussions.	Vivek et al. (2012)
	ME6	dKupiAceh provides opportunities for customers to share feedback.	Brodie et al. (2011)
	ME7	Marketing activities encourage customers to stay engaged with the brand.	Kumar et al. (2010)
	ME8	Customers feel involved in the brand community of dKupiAceh.	Vivek et al. (2012)

	ME9	The company values long-term interaction with customers.	Brodie et al. (2011)
	ME10	Customer engagement activities influence my interest in the brand.	Kumar et al. (2010)
VARIABLE		QUESTIONNAIRE ITEM	AUTHORS
Customer Centricity	CC1	dKupiAceh prioritizes customer needs in its services.	Shah et al. (2006)
	CC2	Employees understand what customers really want.	Shah et al. (2006)
	CC3	Customer feedback is considered in decision making.	Narver & Slater (1990)
	CC4	The company tries to deliver superior value to customers.	Shah et al. (2006)
	CC5	Customer satisfaction is a key priority of dKupiAceh.	Narver & Slater (1990)
	CC6	The company understands customer expectations well.	Shah et al. (2006)
	CC7	Services are designed to meet customer preferences.	Narver & Slater (1990)
	CC8	The company adapts its offerings according to customer needs.	Shah et al. (2006)
	CC9	Customer opinions are valued by the management.	Narver & Slater (1990)
	CC10	Customer satisfaction influences business decisions.	Shah et al. (2006)
VARIABLE		QUESTIONNAIRE ITEM	AUTHORS
Business Growth	BG1	dKupiAceh has experienced increased sales.	Delmar et al. (2003)
	BG2	The company shows continuous business growth.	Delmar et al. (2003)
	BG3	Customer numbers have increased over time.	Wiklund & Shepherd (2005)
	BG4	The company has expanded its market presence.	Delmar et al. (2003)
	BG5	The café has improved its competitive position.	Wiklund & Shepherd (2005)
	BG6	The company continues to attract new customers.	Delmar et al. (2003)
	BG7	The business shows strong financial performance.	Wiklund & Shepherd (2005)

BG8	Customer loyalty contributes to business growth.	Delmar et al. (2003)
BG9	The company shows positive performance improvement.	Wiklund & Shepherd (2005)
BG10	dKupiAceh has strong potential for future growth.	Delmar et al. (2003)

4. Results

The SmartPLS results indicate that all hypothesised relationships (H1–H4) are supported, confirming the robustness of the proposed structural model. Specifically, Market Engagement (ME) has a positive effect on Business Growth (BG) (H1 supported), and Market Engagement also positively influences Customer Centricity (CC) (H2 supported). Furthermore, Customer Centricity significantly affects Business Growth (H3 supported), while Customer Centricity also plays a mediating role between Market Engagement and Business Growth (H4 supported). These findings are consistent with prior empirical studies in marketing and service research using Partial Least Squares Structural Equation Modelling (PLS-SEM).

Table 2: Analyse Data

Hypothesis	Beta	T-Value	P-Value	Result
H1 ME → BG	0.450	4.732	< 0.001	Supported
H2 ME → CC	0.915	27.301	< 0.001	Supported
H3 CC → BG	0.938	31.341	< 0.001	Supported
H4 Mediation	0.487	4.876	< 0.001	Supported

The positive relationship between Market Engagement and Business Growth aligns with the work of Vivek et al. (2012), who argue that customer engagement activities enhance firm performance by strengthening relational ties and increasing customer participation in value creation. Similarly, Kumar et al. (2010) found that engagement-driven interactions improve customer loyalty and ultimately contribute to organisational growth. In addition, the significant effect of Market Engagement on Customer Centricity supports the notion that active engagement strategies foster a stronger customer-focused orientation within organisations, as highlighted by Payne and Frow (2013), who emphasise that engagement mechanisms enable firms to better understand and respond to customer needs.

The relationship between Customer Centricity and Business Growth is also well established in the literature. Shah et al. (2006) suggest that firms adopting customer-centric strategies tend to achieve superior financial and operational performance due to improved satisfaction and retention rates. Moreover, the mediating role of

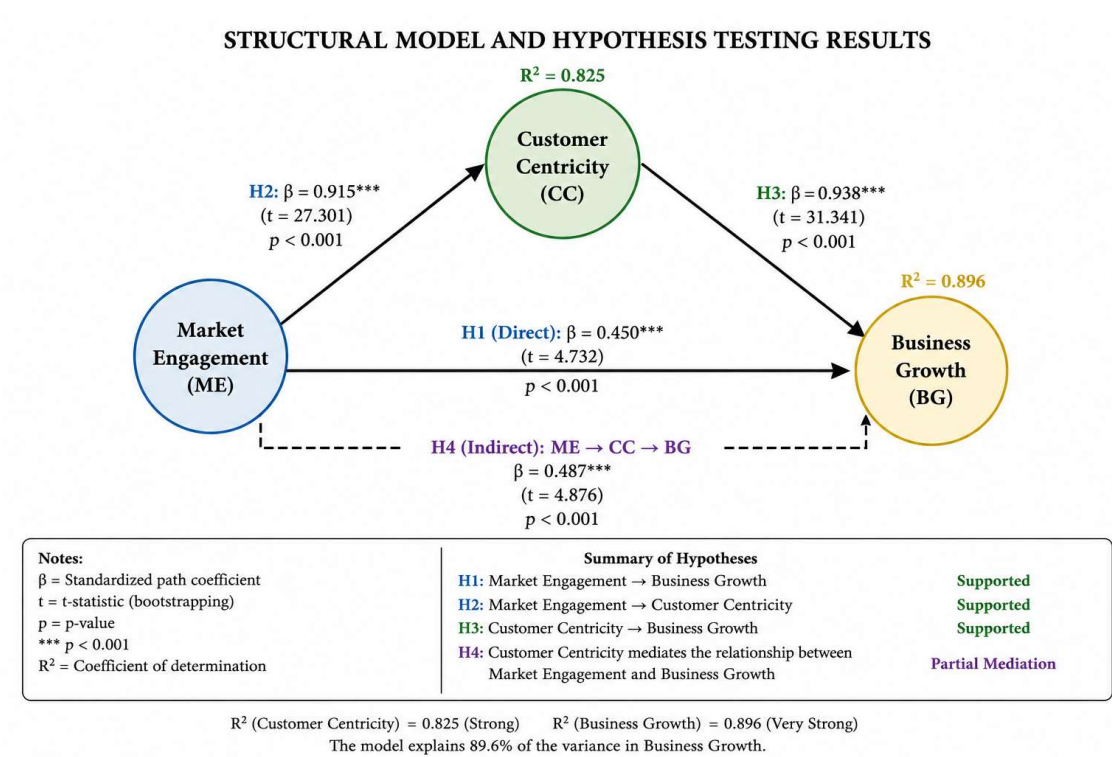
Customer Centricity confirms the theoretical framework proposed by Lemon and Verhoef (2016), which posits that engagement activities enhance business outcomes indirectly through strengthened customer orientation.

The SmartPLS results validate the conceptual model and demonstrate that Market Engagement contributes to Business Growth both directly and indirectly through Customer Centricity, reinforcing the importance of engagement-driven and customer-focused strategies in achieving sustainable business performance.

5. Discussion

The structural model demonstrates strong empirical support for the theorized relationships between Market Engagement (ME), Customer Centricity (CC), and Business Growth (BG). The findings align consistently with extant marketing and strategic management literature, reinforcing the robustness and theoretical validity of the proposed framework.

Figure 1: Structural Model



First, the significant direct effect of Market Engagement on Business Growth (H1: $\beta = 0.450$, $p < 0.001$) confirms that active customer interactions, participation, and relational exchanges are critical drivers of firm performance. Prior studies emphasize that engagement-oriented strategies enhance customer loyalty, brand advocacy, and repeat purchase behaviour, which collectively contribute to sustainable business

growth (Brodie et al., 2011; Vivek, Beatty, & Morgan, 2012). In service-oriented and SME contexts, especially within competitive markets, engaged customers often act as co-creators of value, accelerating growth trajectories.

Second, the very strong relationship between Market Engagement and Customer Centricity (H2: $\beta = 0.915$, $p < 0.001$) underscores the role of engagement as a foundational mechanism for developing a customer-centric orientation. According to Shah et al. (2006), firms become genuinely customer-centric when they systematically integrate customer insights derived from ongoing interactions into strategic decision-making. Engagement activities such as feedback systems, personalization, and relationship management enable firms to better understand customer needs, thereby operationalizing customer centricity as an organizational capability rather than a marketing slogan.

Third, the substantial effect of Customer Centricity on Business Growth (H3: $\beta = 0.938$, $p < 0.001$) reinforces prior empirical evidence that customer-centric firms outperform competitors in revenue growth, profitability, and market share. Research by Narver and Slater (1990) and Payne, Storbacka, and Frow (2008) demonstrates that prioritizing customer value creation leads to stronger relational bonds and long-term financial outcomes. The high explanatory power of the model ($R^2 = 0.896$) suggests that customer centricity is a dominant predictor of business growth in the studied context.

Finally, the significant indirect effect of Market Engagement on Business Growth through Customer Centricity (H4: $\beta = 0.487$, $p < 0.001$) confirms a partial mediation effect. This finding indicates that while market engagement independently influences growth, its impact is substantially amplified when channelled through customer-centric practices. This is consistent with relationship marketing theory, which posits that engagement initiatives deliver superior outcomes when embedded within a customer-focused strategic orientation (Morgan & Hunt, 1994; Verhoef et al., 2009). The structural model provides strong empirical justification that business growth is optimally achieved not merely through market engagement alone, but through its strategic transformation into customer-centric value creation.

6. Conclusion and Implications

This study concludes that market engagement and customer centricity are important strategic drivers of business growth in Indonesian coffee SMEs, particularly in the case of dKupiAceh. The SmartPLS results provide strong empirical support for all proposed hypotheses. Market Engagement was found to have a significant positive effect on Business Growth, indicating that active interaction, communication, promotional activities, and customer involvement can strengthen business

performance. The results also show that Market Engagement strongly influences Customer Centricity, suggesting that continuous engagement with customers enables SMEs to better understand customer needs, preferences, and expectations. Furthermore, Customer Centricity was found to significantly affect Business Growth, confirming that businesses that prioritise customer value, satisfaction, feedback, and personalised service are more likely to achieve stronger growth outcomes. Most importantly, the mediation result confirms that Customer Centricity acts as a strategic mechanism that strengthens the relationship between Market Engagement and Business Growth. Therefore, market engagement alone is not sufficient; it must be transformed into customer-focused practices to generate sustainable business performance.

Theoretically, this study contributes to the literature on customer engagement, customer centricity, and SME growth by validating customer centricity as a mediating variable in the relationship between market engagement and business growth. The findings extend existing marketing and service management theories by demonstrating that engagement activities create stronger business outcomes when supported by a customer-centric orientation. This is particularly relevant in the coffee SME and hospitality context, where customer experience, emotional connection, and service personalisation are crucial to maintaining loyalty and competitiveness.

Practically, the findings provide useful implications for SME owners and managers. dKupiAceh and similar coffee SMEs should continuously strengthen customer engagement through interactive marketing, loyalty programmes, social media communication, customer feedback systems, and community-based activities. At the same time, management should ensure that customer feedback is translated into service improvement, menu innovation, personalised experiences, and customer relationship strategies. By doing so, SMEs can increase customer satisfaction, repeat purchases, positive word-of-mouth, and long-term business growth.

Despite its contributions, this study has several limitations. First, the research focused only on one coffee SME, namely dKupiAceh, which may limit the generalisability of the findings to other SMEs or industries. Second, the study used a quantitative cross-sectional design, which captures customer perceptions at one point in time only. Third, the sample size was limited to the respondents involved in this study, which may not fully represent the wider customer population.

Future research should expand the study to include more coffee SMEs across different regions in Indonesia. Comparative studies between urban and rural coffee businesses may also provide deeper insights. Future researchers may also apply longitudinal designs, or mixed method approaches to better understand how market engagement and customer centricity influence business growth over time.

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Market Engagement, Customer Centricity,
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SMEs: Evidence from Customer-Based PLS-
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