

The impact of interpersonal trust development on maintaining business sustainability: A case study of Aceh Gayo coffee from Sumatera, Indonesia

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CITATION

Wolor CW, Datu Eranza DR, Rababah MA, et al. (2024). The impact of interpersonal trust development on maintaining business sustainability: A case study of Aceh Gayo coffee from Sumatera, Indonesia. *Journal of Infrastructure, Policy and Development*. 8(6): 3947. <https://doi.org/10.24294/jipd.v8i6.3947>

ARTICLE INFO

Received: 2 January 2024

Accepted: 18 February 2024

Available online: 21 June 2024

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Abstract: It has long been acknowledged that interpersonal trust is the foundation of business partnerships. Interpersonal trust is frequently required in circumstances involving interdependence among parties, wherein each party is cognizant of the other's vulnerabilities, the potential consequences of their actions, and the favorable anticipations of others. This study aims to examine and understand the impact of the development of interpersonal trust on the long-term sustainability of the Gayo Aceh coffee business, which has been operational since 1908. The unit of analysis in this study is the stakeholders of the Gayo Aceh coffee industry, including farmers, collectors, sellers, and distributors. This study utilizes a qualitative technique, specifically employing a case study design, for both data collection and analysis. To collect data, we utilized observations and semi-structured interviews. The findings of the research indicate that the establishment of interpersonal trust among producers, collectors, sellers, and distributors has had a discernible influence on the current sustainability of the coffee industry in Aceh Gayo.

Keywords: interpersonal trust development; competency; sustainability; coffee; small entrepreneur

1. Introduction

Trust is important in helping people to coexist and work together, especially in maintaining healthy relationships in business (Mohammed and Kamalanabhan, 2019). The concept of trust can refer to a variety of contexts, including trust in interpersonal relationships, trust in an ideology or value, and trust in a religious context (Colquitt et al., 2019). In personal relationships, trust includes the belief that another person will act in a good, honest, and reliable manner. This trust builds the basis of security and comfort in relationships between individuals (Luthans, 2009). Consequently, the relationship between a person's social identity and how we relate to other people can be explained by the fact that interpersonal trust is founded more on shared participation in a significant group than on individual opportunities for mutual benefit. (Ellena et al., 2021). The development of interpersonal trust results in the expression of feelings, and it serves as an inherent drive for all parties involved to actively participate in the exchange of information (Mohammed and Kamalanabhan, 2019).

According to the social exchange theory, high levels of interpersonal trust are indicative of the ease with which an individual recognizes the positive attitudes of

others (such as support and approval). Therefore, in exchange, this individual has a tendency to engage in activities that are advantageous to the other party (for example, supplying information and sharing knowledge) (Li and Hsu, 2017). This kind of trust between individuals is an essential component of social cohesiveness because it has an effect on cooperative behavior, lessens the likelihood of conflict, and enhances the performance of both groups and the economy (Malik et al., 2021). In a similar vein, the beliefs that are held by Chinese society are distinguished by their exclusive nature. Others who have a personal relationship with themselves are the only ones that people trust, whereas others who are not known to them are not trusted (Xie and Li, 2021).

There are a number of scholars that contend that interpersonal trust, which is an essential component of relationship capital, can contribute to the enhancement of the density of organizational networks, which in turn can result in increased levels of knowledge sharing. Research conducted in the past has demonstrated that trust between individuals is an essential component in the formation of intra-organizational information exchange (Hsu and Chang, 2014). When it comes to interpersonal trust, situations that frequently arise entail interdependence between persons. This interdependence is characterized by individuals being aware of their own vulnerabilities, the risks associated with their activities, and the positive expectations that others have of them. In addition, the study proved that trust between individuals is a factor in the formation of societal relationships. The reduction of an individual's fear of being exploited by others is one of the methods by which interpersonal trust facilitates collaboration (Yuan et al., 2022). Furthermore, the existing data unequivocally indicates that trust is a vital element for achieving successful teamwork. The research findings indicate that trust between individuals fosters increased collaboration inside businesses (Bulińska-Stangrecka and Bagieńska, 2019).

From a practical standpoint, trust between individuals has been seen as the foundation of commercial partnerships for a very long time. In many corporate networks, it seems to be difficult to establish trust between individuals or between groups of people. As a result of the elusive nature of trust and the fear of sharing information in the context of potential conflicts between individual and communal interests, it is feasible for the success of business networks, including business modeling techniques, to be inhibited. This is a possibility (Hakanen et al., 2016). According to Massey, trust between individuals is a significant factor in field studies such as economics, sociology, psychology, and management, as well as marketing (Massey et al., 2019). The selection of suppliers, their commitment, and the intents of customers to remain loyal are all influenced by interpersonal trust in the context of interfirm exchange interactions (Massey et al., 2019). Prior to discussing methods for maintaining trust, it is crucial to possess a comprehensive comprehension of the mechanism by which trust is formed among individuals inside business networks (Hakanen et al., 2016).

In the context of Hofstede's paradigm, which is referred to as "Cultural Dimensions Theory," the dimensions of trust are the conceptual framework that is utilized to comprehend the cultural variations that exist between countries. The Power Distance Index, Individualism vs Collectivism, Masculinity versus Femininity, Uncertainty Avoidance Index, Long-Term Orientation versus Short-Term Normative Orientation, and Indulgence versus Restraint are only few of the cultural variables that

are included in this model (Hofstede, 2011). The correlation between Hofstede's trust dimensions and business sustainability is intricate and can be impacted by additional factors such as governmental legislation, corporate practices, and economic variables. However, understanding culture through Hofstede's dimensions can provide valuable insight for designing business strategies that are in line with a society's cultural values and support business sustainability (Hofstede et al., 2010).

The present study was carried out in the Gayo Highlands, an area situated in the central region of Aceh, Indonesia. The Gayo Highlands are the origin of an Arabica coffee variety that the International Fair Trade Organization certified as Fair Trade Compliant on May 27, 2010. This certification is regarded as one of the most prestigious commodities. Gayo coffee, cultivated since 1908, has become renowned as one of the finest organic coffees globally due to the establishment of coffee farms (Leba, 2018).

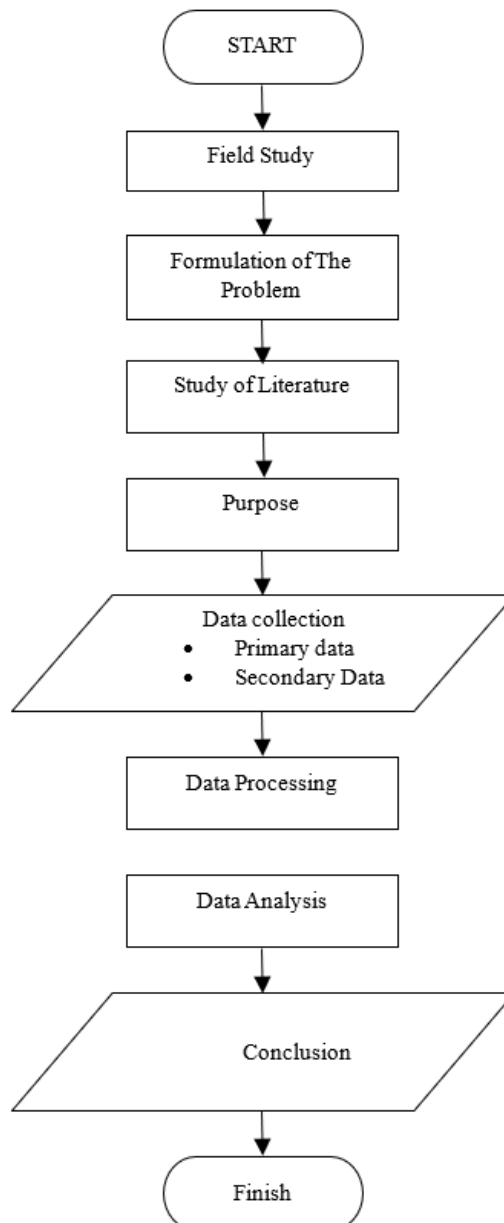


Figure 1. Research flowchart.

The objective of this study is to enhance our comprehension of the initial stages of interpersonal trust formation in business networks, which has not been extensively examined at a broader network level. The findings of this research may help us enhance our comprehension of strategies to foster trust and mitigate uncertainty, hence facilitating knowledge exchange among individuals within an organization. In addition to that, this article offers business networks some ideas and practical assistance regarding the nature of the process of trust development between individuals. In order to achieve this goal, the following research questions were formulated: a) How does interpersonal trust play an important role in the sustainability of the Gayo Aceh coffee business? b) How does the interpersonal trust that exists in the Gayo Aceh Coffee Plantation environment influence the competence of entrepreneurs? To answer the research question, the author presents a flowchart in **Figure 1** to provide a clear picture of the research stages from start to finish.

2. Literature review

2.1. Trust

It is possible to define trust as beliefs about the trustworthiness of other people, and consequently, as beliefs about the ability and motivation of other people to achieve one's own aims and objectives (Malik et al., 2021). Robbins (2019) further explained that trust is a person's belief in the honesty, integrity and ability of another person or group to fulfill the desired expectations or needs. Furthermore, trust can be characterized in a variety of ways, such as through reputation, preference in recommendation systems, and the likelihood of being a normal node while conducting network security research (Liu et al., 2014). The findings of a number of studies indicate that trust not only facilitates social functioning and individual action, but it also leads to positive outcomes such as improved work attitudes, improved conflict resolution, increased communication, and enhanced job performance. These are just some of the positive outcomes that may be achieved through trust (Gupta et al., 2016).

2.2. Interpersonal trust

Interpersonal trust is the psychological state of voluntarily exposing oneself to a situation where one is defenseless or susceptible, based on a strong belief in the positive intentions and actions of another individual (Li et al., 2019). Interpersonal trust is "the degree to which a person is confident in, and willing to act on, the words, actions, and decisions of others" (Bakiev, 2013). The concept of interpersonal trust evolves over time as a result of interactions that take place inside groups; it does not imply blindly trusting other people in general (Tsai and Hung, 2019). In social interactions, trust between individuals is necessary for avoiding conflict and is also important for maintaining relationships (Taormina and Sun, 2015).

Interpersonal trust consists of two dimensions, namely cognitive-based interpersonal trust and affective-based trust. Competence, responsibility, dependability, and dependability are all examples of cognitive-based trust in organizational contexts. Affective-based trust pertains to the emotional connection among colleagues (Bakiev, 2013). A member of the community is said to have

cognitive trust if they have a set of rational beliefs that other members of the community are competent, benevolent, have integrity, and can be depended upon in particular circumstances. Affective trust, in contrast, pertains to an individual's emotional views that encompass a sense of caring for the well-being of society and a genuine concern for other members. "Reciprocated interpersonal care and concern" is the foundation upon which affective trust is built (Tsai and Hung, 2019).

2.3. Competency

The concept of competence was first introduced in early Roman practice to describe the attributes of a "good Roman soldier". The competency approach has been found to be effective for competitive advantage, innovation and effectiveness (Sengupta et al., 2013). Currently, the approach employed in human resource management is centered around identifying, defining, and measuring individual variations in specific job-related qualities, notably the competencies necessary for effective job performance (Vakola et al., 2007). Competency according to Dessler (2016) is a combination of knowledge, skills, abilities, attitudes, and behavior that enables an individual to effectively accomplish a task or attain specific objectives within a given context or professional domain.

While competency development may begin with a clear link to organizational objectives, it is likely that organizational objectives will also impact details such as the level of proficiency associated with the competency (Campion et al., 2011). Within the realm of organizations and their workforce, "competency development" pertains to the endeavors undertaken to uphold or enhance functional and learning competencies (De Vos et al., 2011). Competency models encompass the compilation of information, abilities, talents, and other attributes necessary for effective performance in the job market (Campion et al., 2011).

2.4. Business sustainability

The term "business sustainability" refers to the management of environmental, social, and financial challenges by businesses in order to guarantee success that is responsible, ethical, and sustainable (Bansal and DesJardine, 2014). The incorporation of sustainability into business models and the resolution or mitigation of environmental, social, and economic concerns through the strategic management of company resources are elements that are included in this procedure. When it comes to business, sustainability often focuses on two primary categories: the influence of company on society and the impact of business on the environment (Evans et al., 2017). To have a positive impact on at least one of these areas is the objective of a business plan that is developed with sustainability in mind. When used in a more general meaning, the term "sustainability" refers to the capacity to sustain or continue a process continually over an extended period of time. When applied to the realm of business, this endeavor aims to forestall the exhaustion of natural or physical resources, promote a healthy society and workforce, and ensure the continued financial viability of the enterprise over the course of time (Dyllick and Muff, 2013). Because of this, the environmental, social, and economic aspects of business sustainability are included in the dimensions of business sustainability. It is essential for businesses to take into

consideration a wide range of issues when making decisions about their operations in order to ensure long-term profitability and beneficial benefits on both society and the environment. In the future, one of the most important aspects that will determine the competitiveness and continuation of a company sector is sustainability (Searcy, 2016).

2.5. Trust and business sustainability

Trust plays a crucial role in supporting sustainable business development. Trust is the main foundation in building strong and positive relationships with related parties such as customers, employees, suppliers, investors and the community (Dyllick and Muff, 2013). Companies that consistently fulfill their commitments and establish a reputation as dependable and trustworthy organizations are more inclined to maintain consumer loyalty in the long run. Satisfied and loyal customers are more likely to support a business through repeat purchases and positive recommendations, which contributes to sustainability (Evans et al., 2017). Trust is also important in creating a positive work environment. When employees trust their leaders and believe in the company's values and commitment to their well-being, they tend to be more engaged, motivated, and loyal. This will contribute to the stability and continuity of business operations. Overall, businesses that prioritize building and maintaining trust with their stakeholders are better positioned to overcome challenges, adapt to changing market conditions, and form the basis for long-term success. (Tsai and Hung, 2019).

Specifically, this research focuses on the coffee industry, which is one of the most popular agricultural export commodities in the world. In fact, Indonesian coffee exports to foreign countries in 2022 will reach USD 1.15 billion. The main destinations for Indonesian coffee exports include the United States, Egypt, Japan, Spain and Malaysia. According to estimates from the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA), global coffee production is projected to exceed 170 million bags, each weighing 60 kg, during the 2022/2023 timeframe. This number increased by 2.8% from the previous period (year-on-year/yoy) when it was recorded that 165.37 million bags of coffee were produced in 2021/2022. Indonesia is projected to be in the top 3 of the third largest coffee producing countries in the world, where currently Brazil occupies first position and Vietnam occupies second position. (Muhamad, 2023). This of course conditions trust and sustainability of relationships in the coffee business.

3. Methodology

This study used a qualitative methodology to facilitate researchers' comprehension of individuals' thoughts, behaviors, and verbal expressions (Idrus and Priyono, 2014). In this particular situation, qualitative methodologies are deemed suitable due to their capacity to delve into the subjective interpretations and collective understandings associated with an individual or societal issue (Creswell and Poth, 2012). The chosen research design is an explanatory/exploratory case study, which serves the purpose of collecting data on an individual, social context, occurrence, or collective entity. This approach facilitates the researcher's comprehension of the distinct processes and functions associated with the subject of investigation (Kurniadi, 2011), in this case the Gayo Aceh coffee entrepreneur. Case studies align with research aims and aim to explore and elucidate phenomena within a specific rural setting. They

seek to understand and provide answers to research questions by examining the existing life context (Simons, 2009; Yin, 2014).

3.1. Research sample

Within the framework of qualitative research, the significance of sample size was lessened due to the fact that the comprehensive and detailed character of the research was properly handled by a single or a few examples that reflected the qualitative genre (Alam, 2021). The choice of an acceptable sample size depends on various criteria, such as the amount of available data, the diversity of participants, the scope of research questions, the data collection methods used, and the specific sampling strategy adopted (Moser and Korstjens, 2018). The participants were chosen based on the researcher's assessment of their ability to provide the most intriguing and thorough data that matched the researcher's goals.

In qualitative research, the significance of sample size is diminished since the depth and richness of the research is overshadowed by certain qualities exclusive to the qualitative genre (Alam, 2021). However, there have been suggested general guidelines for determining the sample size in qualitative research that is characterized by a specific paradigm (**Table 1**). There is at least one participant for the case study (Njie and Asimiran, 2014; Palinkas et al., 2013). The unit of analysis in this research is stakeholders of the Gayo Aceh coffee business include farmers, collectors, sellers and distributors. The study included a total of 8 individuals, as indicated in **Table 2**.

Table 1. Rules of thumb for qualitative sample size.

Basic Study Type	Rule of Thumb
Ethnography	Between 30 and 50 interviews
Case Study	There is a minimum of one, but there is potential for more.
Phenomenology	There are six contestants.
Grounded Theory	Between 30 and 50 interviews
Focus Groups	Each stratum of interest should consist of seven to ten groups or more.

Source: Njie and Asimiran, 2014; Palinkas et al., 2013.

The researcher undertook the process of participant selection upon entering the field. During the investigation, the researcher intentionally chose particular persons who were considered appropriate for supplying pertinent information. The selection of participants depended on the responses individuals gave to the screening questions that were asked. Accurately selecting or sorting participants according to certain criteria is essential for the intended aim. The participant selection in this study utilized a purposive sampling strategy, wherein individuals were intentionally chosen based on preset targets and criteria set by the researcher. This approach ensured that the data collected was aligned with the specific phenomenon under investigation. The process of determining the location in Gayo, Aceh, Indonesia was conducted with a purposive approach, focusing primarily on a limited number of training sites that have expertise in coffee growing. The study ethics application was approved by the university's study ethics office on October 31, 2023. This finding provides evidence that the participants in the study provided written consent, engaged in voluntary participation, had their anonymity protected, and were safeguarded from potential harm. The investigation

was conducted from September to December in 2023.

Table 2. Participant data.

No. Participant	Age	Sex	Level of Education	Work Experience (Years)	
1)	Part 1	32	W	High School	10
2)	Part 2	35	W	High School	13
3)	Part 3	37	M	Under Graduate	17
4)	Part 4	31	M	High School	11
5)	Part 5	26	W	High School	5
6)	Part 6	38	M	Diploma	15
7)	Part 7	40	W	Under Graduate	20
8)	Part 8	35	W	High School	12

*Part: Participant.

3.2. Data collection and analysis

The data collection techniques utilized in this study involved participant observation and one-on-one interviews conducted in person. Participatory observation is a method of gathering data that entails actively engaging in and closely observing the actions of collectives or individuals. The main goal of the qualitative research interview is to clarify the importance of the main subject in the participants’ real-life experiences. The main goal of the interview was to understand the meaning and importance of the participants’ spoken words (Moser and Korstjens, 2018).

To explain the importance of experiential training in improving the skills of prospective coffee shop entrepreneurs, the researchers conducted a series of observations and interviews. Research problems are addressed using interviews and observations. Field observations were carried out, specifically focusing on the training experience process for each participant. Meanwhile, interviews were conducted with Gayo Aceh coffee entrepreneurs. The list of sources can be seen in **Table 2**. The researcher prepared an interview question guide to help the researcher focus on answering the research questions, namely: a) How does interpersonal trust play an important role in the sustainability of the Gayo Aceh coffee business? b) What is the influence of interpersonal trust in the Gayo Aceh Coffee Plantation environment on entrepreneurial competence? Here is a guide to interview questions:

- a) Are you a coffee shop entrepreneur?
- b) How long has your business been?
- c) How has your coffee business survived the changing times?
- d) How do you have interpersonal trust in suppliers, distributors, collectors, etc. amidst changing times?
- e) How does interpersonal trust affect your competence regarding the coffee business?

In order to collect primary data, researchers conducted in-person, detailed interviews (refer to **Table 3**) to obtain a deep understanding of the transformative process that occurred inside the community of the village. The purpose of these interviews was to investigate the socio-economic characteristics of the population, the current tactics for making a living, the community’s willingness and attitude towards

involvement, and the improvement of community skills through various societal factors. The researcher utilized a blend of open-ended and closed-ended questions during the interview, which lasted for over an hour. The entirety of the interview was meticulously recorded and subsequently transcribed to facilitate content analysis (**Table 4**).

Table 3. Data collection methods.

	Definition	Aim
Participants observations	Involvement with and monitoring of individuals or groups of individuals	Engaging in extensive and personal interactions with individuals in one’s immediate environment to get a deep understanding of their behaviors and customs.
Face-to-face in-depth Interviews	A dialogue occurs where the researcher poses inquiries and the participants provide their answers either in person, by telephone, or through mail correspondences, accordingly.	To extract the experiences, perceptions, thoughts, and feelings held by the individual.

Source: Njie and Asimiran, 2014; Palinkas et al., 2013.

Table 4. Qualitative data analysis.

	Case Study
Transcripts mainly from Reading, notes, and memos	Face-to-face, comprehensive interviews, together with diverse insights After reviewing the transcripts and assigning initial codes
Ordering	The description is composed of categories and subcategories.
Findings	A concise summary of the key discoveries.

Source: Njie and Asimiran, 2014; Palinkas et al., 2013.

In addition, the researchers chose to stay at a motel near Gayo Coffee Plantation, which made it easier to perform participatory observation. The present study involved a team of four researchers who conducted observations on the process of experiential learning among a group of young entrepreneurs in the coffee shop industry. Subsequently, interviews were administered in accordance with the established standards to address the study inquiries. Subsequently, the researchers employed the triangulation approach to examine and interpret the collected research data. Triangulation refers to the practice of validating data by cross-referencing information obtained from several sources, employing diverse methodologies, and conducting assessments at different points in time. There are three unique methods that are included in the process of method triangulation. Data source triangulation, inter-researcher triangulation, technological triangulation, and theoretical triangulation are the methodologies that fall under this category to be discussed (Creswell and Poth, 2012; Idrus and Priyono, 2014; Miles and Huberman, 2014; Sugiyono, 2013).

The current study utilized triangulation as a methodological approach, notably emphasizing the triangulation of data sources and temporal dimensions. The process of triangulating sources involves the examination of data from multiple sources that maintain a degree of interconnectedness. The researchers employed a triangulation approach to gather data, utilizing many sources of information. This was done through interviews with various individuals, including informants such as coffee entrepreneurs, coffee farmers, collectors, distributors, suppliers. The triangulation approach is employed through a variety of methods in order to uncover the data emanating from the data source. Researchers employed technical triangulation by cross-referencing

information and data gathered from interviews, observations, and written sources such as papers or books. Throughout the analytic phase, the researcher thoroughly scrutinized the interview data to identify the main themes and categories that correspond to the research topic. The subsequent part provides an exposition of the findings derived from this investigation.

4. Results and discussion

The production of Arabica coffee in Gayo, Aceh, Indonesia, which has been produced since 1908, is the largest in all of Asia. Fair Trade Certification was awarded to this Arabica coffee variety on May 27, 2010, making it one of the most prestigious commodities to receive this certification from the International Fair Trade Organization. It is also considered to be one of the greatest organic coffees in the world (Leba, 2018).

Despite being limited in scope, the data sources provided a diverse range of valuable and captivating discoveries. These findings refer to the research questions: a) How does interpersonal trust play an important role in the sustainability of the Gayo Aceh coffee business? b) How does the interpersonal trust that exists in the Gayo Aceh Coffee Plantation environment influence the competence of coffee entrepreneurs?

4.1. The impact of interpersonal trust on the sustainability of the coffee business

The results of interviews with participants (P1 & P3) show that they have trusted each other for a long time in terms of the coffee business. The resulting trust is developed to reduce perceptions of uncertainty (Hsu and Chang, 2014). The results of interviews with other participants (P2 & P6) show that interpersonal trust arises automatically as the business progresses. One of them is honesty in the quality of the coffee produced and how much is produced. Based on the previous theory, trust in interpersonal relationships does not arise spontaneously from a prominent social identity. Instead, it is the outcome of a process of creating meaning, in which individuals engage in reflection and personal development, especially in the context of their relationships with others. The findings align with the theory (Ellena et al., 2021).

Other participants (P5 & P7) said that Gayo coffee farmers must ensure that the coffee they produce is truly high quality, this will also have an impact on trust in collectors, distributors and consumers who enjoy coffee. What is paid attention to is from the coffee plants that are maintained to the coffee beans that have been dried and ready to be sent to collectors (**Figure 2**). This is in line with previous theory that high trust in fellow business partners and a high sense of trustworthiness towards fellow business partners indicate a high level of reciprocity in terms of trustworthiness (Rotenberg and Boulton, 2013). This observed rise in interpersonal trust might be interpreted in several manners, including as a sign of a heightened sense of common fate and social unity (Wollebæk et al., 2021).

Robust interpersonal trust can significantly enhance the sustainability of the coffee industry by fostering greater collaboration across the coffee supply chain, thereby bolstering the long-term viability of the coffee business (Ashnai et al., 2016).

Moreover, fostering robust interpersonal trust can facilitate the advancement of openness and impartiality in the connection between coffee producers and consumers, thereby enhancing the social and economic viability of coffee enterprises (Lei et al., 2019). Transparent communication, fair trade practices and ethical sourcing contribute to a positive industry image and long-term success. Lastly, collaborative relationships and trust between various actors in the supply chain contribute to smooth operations, reduced waste, and increased overall sustainability (Guinot et al., 2014). In terms of the dimension of trust, according to Hofstede, Indonesia has a tendency to emphasize togetherness and groups, tends to be quite flexible towards uncertainty, and there is a balance between the values of masculinity and femininity.

Concretely, the coffee produced has even been used by the world's largest coffee company, Starbucks, both in Europe and the United States. According to Anthony McEvoy, Chairman of PT Sari Coffee Indonesia, Sumatran coffee beans are the best quality coffee used by Starbucks, and are even used for espresso in their outlets in several countries (Azizah, 2022). This shows that the quality of Indonesian coffee has been recognized globally and is used by leading coffee brands. This is a real form of interpersonal trust relationship with all stakeholders in improving business sustainability.



Figure 2. Dried coffee beans.

4.2. The impact of interpersonal trust on the competence of coffee entrepreneurs

The results of interviews with participants (P4 & P8) explained that the trust that arises in each other helps increase competence in the coffee sector starting from selecting quality beans, cupping, brewing, to packaging. Not only that, other participants (P7 & P2) explained that competence arises from long-standing trust, being able to quickly identify poor quality coffee because there is a transfer of knowledge between each other. The findings of this interview align with prior theoretical evidence that suggests a positive correlation between team members' awareness of their interdependence and their inclination to exchange information and engage in mutual teaching (Bulińska-Stangrecka and Bagińska, 2019). Although it is essential for the exchange of information, interpersonal trust also plays a role in the facilitation of innovation. This is because it increases the possibility that individuals will comprehend and accept the new ideas that members provide (Li and Hsu, 2017).

Trust between individuals is considered to be an essential component in the process of knowledge generation and sharing, which is essential for the growth of a business (Hakanen et al., 2016).

5. Conclusion

The utilization of trust as a mediating element within the framework of sustainable business growth demonstrates the conviction that trust-based relationships can serve as intermediaries or connectors between other factors and the sustainability of an organization. High trust can increase collaboration and involvement between a company and its stakeholders, such as consumers, business partners and local communities. This can facilitate the exchange of information and resources necessary for sustainable business development. In a business environment based on trust, the parties involved tend to be more open to innovation and collaboration. This can encourage the adoption of sustainable practices and improve operational efficiency, ultimately supporting business sustainability. The research results show that interpersonal trust between farmers, collectors, distributors, and consumers has led to the survival of the Gayo coffee business to this day.

In theory, this research has the potential to offer a comprehensive comprehension of the business landscape at the regional level and the influence of interpersonal factors on the long-term viability of Aceh Gayo coffee industry. This model can provide a framework for understanding complex dynamics within organizations and guide future research in this area.

Practically, this research has an impact on local government policy makers to maintain a beautiful environment, maintaining good quality coffee beans and aiding in digitalization so that the coffee business can survive in the current digital era.

To enhance interpersonal trust in sustaining the Aceh Gayo coffee business, it is crucial to bolster face-to-face contact, encompassing both verbal and non-verbal aspects, among the various stakeholders involved, including farmers, entrepreneurs, and local government officials. This will lead to increased positive cooperation between all parties who support the sustainability of the Aceh Gayo coffee business. Second, understanding and appreciating the culture of drinking coffee in rebuilding community coexistence, which can help strengthen interpersonal relationships between Aceh Gayo coffee business players, making it easier in various aspects of business, from production to marketing.

6. Limitations and future research

This research is limited in scope as it exclusively examines the Gayo area in Aceh and involves a relatively small number of participants. Future research is expected to be enhanced quantitatively and conducted in numerous coffee-producing villages. Researchers interested in coffee growing villages should endeavor to find other elements that contribute to the maintenance of company viability. Exploring and discerning more variables will unveil several novel viewpoints and understandings within the industry.

Author contributions: Conceptualization, CWW and DRDE; methodology, AN and WCH; software, CWW; validation, MAR, DRDE and AN; formal analysis, CWW and MAR; investigation, CWW; resources, AN; data curation, WCH; writing—original draft preparation, MAR and DRDE; writing—review and editing, DRDE and MAR; visualization, WCH; supervision, CWW; project administration, CWW and WCH; funding acquisition, CWW and WCH. All authors have read and agreed to the published version of the manuscript.

Conflict of interest: The authors declare no conflict of interest

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