



Exploring The Business Environment: Discovering Creativity and Innovation at Niels Coffee

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Abstrak

Penelitian ini mengeksplorasi bagaimana kreativitas dan inovasi berkontribusi terhadap perkembangan Niels Coffee, serta bagaimana bisnis tersebut merespons peluang dan tantangan dalam lingkungan bisnisnya. Niels Coffee, yang didirikan di Makassar pada tahun 2020, beroperasi dalam industri kedai kopi yang kompetitif, di mana perubahan preferensi pelanggan, persaingan, perkembangan teknologi, dan kondisi pasar menuntut adaptasi yang berkelanjutan. Penelitian ini menggunakan metode kualitatif dengan desain studi kasus deskriptif. Data dikumpulkan melalui wawancara semiterstruktur dengan pemilik Niels Coffee, observasi nonpartisipan, dan dokumentasi. Data dianalisis menggunakan analisis tematik. Temuan penelitian menunjukkan bahwa kreativitas dan inovasi diterapkan dalam berbagai aspek bisnis, meliputi pengembangan produk, pemasaran digital, layanan yang berorientasi pada pelanggan, manajemen operasional, dan adaptasi bisnis. Inovasi produk mencakup Bakmie Ayam, Kopi Kalcer, dan Oriental Chicken Porridge, sementara pemasaran digital melibatkan konten media sosial, kolaborasi dengan KOL, Instagram Ads, dan promosi interaktif. Penelitian ini juga menemukan bahwa Niels Coffee menghadapi tantangan terkait pandemi COVID-19, lokasi, kepercayaan pelanggan, kompetensi sumber daya manusia, persaingan, serta pola pelanggan yang bersifat musiman. Sebagai respons terhadap tantangan tersebut, bisnis ini menerapkan berbagai strategi, seperti beroperasi melalui gerai sementara (pop-up store), menjaga kualitas produk, mengganti pemasok bila diperlukan, meningkatkan sistem rekrutmen dan operasional, memperbarui produk dan konten media sosial, serta memperluas aktivitas pemasaran digital. Secara keseluruhan, temuan ini menunjukkan bahwa kreativitas dan inovasi memainkan peran penting dalam memungkinkan Niels Coffee beradaptasi dengan tantangan bisnis, merespons perubahan kebutuhan pelanggan, mempertahankan daya saing, dan menciptakan nilai bagi para pelanggannya.

Kata kunci: Kreativitas, Inovasi, Kewirausahaan, Lingkungan Bisnis

Abstract

This study explores how creativity and innovation contribute to the development of Niels Coffee and how the business responds to opportunities and challenges in its business environment. Niels Coffee, established in Makassar in 2020, operates in a competitive coffee shop industry where changing customer preferences, competition, technological developments, and market conditions require continuous adaptation. This study employed a qualitative method with a descriptive case study design. Data were collected through semi-structured interviews with the owner of Niels Coffee, non-participant observation, and documentation. The data were analyzed using thematic analysis. The findings indicate that creativity and innovation are applied in various aspects of the business, including product development, digital marketing, customer-oriented services, operational management, and business adaptation. Product innovations include Bakmie Ayam, Kopi Kalcer, and Oriental Chicken Porridge, while digital marketing involves social media content, KOL collaborations, Instagram Ads, and interactive promotions. The study also found that Niels Coffee faced challenges related to the COVID-19 pandemic, location, customer trust, human resource competence, competition, and seasonal customer patterns. In response, the business adopted strategies such as operating through a pop-up store, maintaining product quality, changing suppliers when necessary, improving recruitment and operational systems, updating products and social media content, and expanding digital marketing activities. Overall, the findings demonstrate that creativity and innovation play an important role in enabling Niels Coffee to adapt to business challenges, respond to changing customer needs, maintain competitiveness, and create value for its customers.

Keywords: Creativity, Innovation, Entrepreneurship, Business Environment

1. Introduction

Entrepreneurship is a process of discovering, evaluating, and exploiting opportunities to create value through new products, services, or business activities (Davidsson, 2021). In this process, creativity and innovation are important

because entrepreneurs need to develop new ideas and apply them to respond to market needs and business challenges. Creativity refers to the generation of novel and useful ideas, while innovation involves the implementation of these ideas to create value (Hughes et al., 2021). Therefore, creativity and innovation are not only related to the creation of new products but also to the development of services, marketing strategies, business processes, and ways of responding to changing customer needs.

The importance of creativity and innovation becomes more evident in a dynamic business environment. Businesses face various challenges, including competition, changing customer preferences, technological developments, and fluctuations in market conditions. To remain competitive, entrepreneurs need to recognize opportunities and adapt their resources and strategies accordingly. Teece (2020) explains that dynamic capabilities involve the ability of organizations to sense opportunities and threats, seize opportunities, and transform their resources in response to changes in the business environment. Thus, the ability to generate and implement new ideas can help businesses maintain their competitiveness and respond to changes in the market.

Niels Coffee provides a relevant context for examining the application of creativity and innovation in a real business environment. Established in Makassar in 2020, Niels Coffee initially operated on Jl. Gunung Batu Putih before relocating to the CPI area and later establishing its current location on Jl. Mappanyuki No. 57, Makassar. The business offers coffee and non-coffee beverages as well as various food products, including Bakmi Ayam as one of its signature dishes. With its modern-natural café concept and target customers consisting mainly of students and office workers, Niels Coffee operates in a competitive market where customer preferences and purchasing patterns may change over time.

The development of Niels Coffee also reflects the need for continuous adaptation to business opportunities and challenges. Changes in location, customer demand, market conditions, and sales patterns require the business to make adjustments in its operations and strategies (Aslam et al., 2020). In this context, creativity and innovation can be observed through different aspects of the business, such as product development, marketing activities, the use of digital technology, customer service, and business processes. Understanding these practices is important because it provides insight into how a business recognizes opportunities, addresses challenges, and creates value for its customers.

However, understanding creativity and innovation in a business cannot be limited to examining the products or strategies that are visible to customers. It is also important to explore the experiences, decisions, and practices behind the development and implementation of these ideas (Garbuio & Lin, 2021). Therefore, a qualitative approach is appropriate for gaining an in-depth understanding of how creativity and innovation are applied within the business context. Through a qualitative exploration of Niels Coffee, this study seeks to understand how the business has developed and how creativity and innovation have been used to identify opportunities, address challenges, and respond to changes in its business environment.

2. Method

This study used a qualitative method with a descriptive case study design to look into how the business environment affects creativity and innovation at Niels Coffee. A case study was chosen because it provided a detailed look at a particular business situation and the experiences of the people who worked there.

The study took place at Niels Coffee, which is on Jl. Mappanyuki No.57, on August 26, 2026. The research site was chosen on purpose because Niels Coffee is a coffee business that always uses creative and innovative methods to stay competitive in the local coffee market. The main person who provided information was the owner of Niels Coffee. He was chosen on purpose because he knows a lot about how the business works, how new ideas are developed, and how important decisions are made.

This research used two types of data: primary data, gathered through in-depth interviews and direct observation of daily operations, and secondary data, drawn from menus, promotional materials, social media content, and photographs related to the history, products, and innovation efforts of Niels Coffee.

Data were collected through three methods: interview, observation, and documentation.

1. Interview

The study used semi-structured interviews with the owner of Niels Coffee to get detailed information about the business environment, creativity, and how they come up with new ideas. According to Esterberg (as cited in Sugiyono, 2021), an interview was when two people met to share information and talk about ideas by asking and answering questions about a particular subject. The interviews were audio-recorded and transcribed for analysis.

2. Observation

Observation was a way of gathering data by looking directly at the things being studied (Sugiyono, 2020). Niels Coffee was chosen because of its unique way of doing business and the kind of customers it serves. The study involved non-participant observation, which allowed the researcher to watch and record everyday business operations, employee and customer interactions, and creative and innovative practices at Niels Coffee without taking part in any of the activities. Observation findings were recorded in field notes.

3. Documentation

Documentation was used to gather supporting information, such as menus, price lists, promotional items, social media posts, photos, and other related business papers. These documents helped to back up and check the information gathered from interviews and observations, which made the research results more trustworthy.

The researcher served as the primary instrument in the study, supported by an interview guide, observation checklist, voice recorder, camera, and field notes. Data were analyzed using thematic analysis following Braun and Clarke's (2006) six-phase framework: familiarizing with the data, generating initial codes, searching for themes, reviewing themes, defining and naming themes, and producing the report. This approach enabled the identification of key themes related to the influence of the business environment on creativity and innovation at Niels Coffee.

3. Result and Discussion

3.1. Operations, Organizational Structure, etc.

3.1.1. Daily Operational Management

3.1.1.1. Raw Material Preparation and Budgeting

Extract 1 (DES, 26/8/2026)

"Pertama bahan-bahan itu kita harus budget-kan dulu. Berapa yang kita butuhkan kurang lebih

mungkin range selama 2 minggu... Kalau barang-barang kayak mesin kopi, peralatan-peralatannya... itu harus di-budgeting dulu di awal memang." (First, we have to budget for the materials. Approximately how much we need, maybe for a range of two weeks... For items like coffee machines and other equipment... those really have to be budgeted for at the beginning.)

Based on the interview above, it can be understood that raw materials at Niels Coffee are procured in a regular cycle, approximately every two weeks. In addition to materials, the informant also explained that equipment such as coffee machines and other supporting tools was budgeted for at the beginning of the business. The study explains that the planned and continuous management of financial resources is one of the foundations of a business resilience framework that helps businesses withstand operational pressures and crises (Aldianto et al., 2021).

This practice indicates that budgeting at Niels Coffee is not limited to the initial establishment of the business but is also applied to routine operational needs. The distinction between budgeting consumable materials and long-term equipment also shows that the informant considers different types of business resources when planning expenditures. Such planning can help the business maintain the availability of necessary materials and equipment while reducing the possibility of operational disruption caused by unplanned spending.

3.1.1.2. Cafe Operating Hours

Extract 2 (DES, 26/8/2026)

"Kalau Niels kopi sendiri buka dari jam 7 pagi sampai jam 10 malam. Setiap harinya. Kecuali hari Sabtu di tutup, tutupnya jam 11 malam." (Niels Coffee itself opens from 7 in the morning until 10 at night. Every day. Except on Saturdays, it closes—its closing time is 11 at night.)

The extract explains that Niels Coffee has relatively long operating hours, opening from 7:00 a.m. to 10:00 p.m. on regular days. Meanwhile, on Saturdays, the cafe closes at 11:00 p.m. This is a strategy implemented by Niels Coffee to maximize accessibility for customers, ranging from those who wish to visit in the morning to those who wish to come at night.

The operating schedule also allows Niels Coffee to serve customers with different routines and purposes. Morning operating hours support customers who need breakfast or coffee before starting their activities, while the evening schedule provides opportunities for customers who want to work, study, gather, or relax after their daily activities. Therefore, operating hours function not only as a schedule for serving customers but also as part of the business's effort to accommodate different customer needs.

3.1.1.3. Supply Chain Management

Extract 3 (DES, 26/8/2026)

"...Kalau bahan baku kopi pasti kita dapat dari roastery... buffering stock itu kalau kita di sini minimal sisa 2 kilo kita harus order lagi." (...We definitely get coffee materials from a roastery... Here, when at least two kilograms remain, we have to order again.)

It can be seen from the interview extract above that coffee beans are obtained from a roastery and procured using a minimum buffer stock of two kilograms. When the available quantity of coffee beans reaches this limit, Niels Coffee places another order. This concept emphasizes the importance of determining a specific inventory threshold so that procurement can be carried out on time before the stock is depleted (Heizer, Render, & Munson, 2017).

The use of a minimum stock level demonstrates that Niels Coffee has a simple but specific mechanism for controlling its coffee inventory. Instead of waiting until the supply is completely depleted, the business begins the ordering process when the stock reaches the predetermined threshold. This approach is particularly relevant for a coffee shop because the availability of coffee beans is directly related to the continuity of its main beverage products and daily operations.

3.1.1.4. Supplier Quality Control

Extract 4 (DES, 26/8/2026)

"...dari roastery A kita coba du lu, biasa ada dikasih sample dulu... Jadi dari perubahan kualitas itu kita cari alternatif lain ke roastery B..." (...we first try one from Roastery A, usually they give us a sample first... when the quality changes, we look for another alternative, Roastery B...)

This can be seen from the sampling process conducted before a roastery is selected as the cafe's regular supplier. Niels Coffee will also seek an alternative supplier if the quality of the raw materials declines. Niels Coffee does not rigidly depend on a single supplier but continues to consider other suppliers so that the quality of the raw materials can be maintained.

The supplier selection process therefore involves both initial testing and continuous quality monitoring. The use of samples before establishing a supplier relationship provides an opportunity for Niels Coffee to evaluate the quality of the materials before relying on them for regular production. The willingness to change suppliers when quality decreases also shows that product quality is prioritized over maintaining dependence on a particular supplier.

3.1.2. Organizational Structure and Division of Duties

3.1.2.1. Centralized Organizational Structure

Extract 5 (DES, 26/8/2026)

"...kalau struktur organisasi sebenarnya eh masih saya sendiri ya yang handle sih sebenarnya, gitu. Dan kalau untuk pemasaran kami ada tim sendiri khususnya..." (...Regarding the organizational structure, actually, uh, I still handle it myself, that is how it is. As for marketing, we have our own dedicated team...)

The interview findings reveal that Niels Coffee still applies a simple and centralized organizational structure, with most managerial functions still handled directly by the informant as the owner. Aldianto et al. (2021) emphasize the importance of rapid decision-making and agile leadership in supporting business resilience.

The centralized structure also allows the owner to maintain direct control over important business decisions and operational activities. At the same time, the existence of a separate marketing team indicates that some functions have already been delegated to specific personnel. Thus, the organizational structure combines direct owner involvement with limited functional specialization within the business.

3.1.2.2. Role of the Owner

Extract 6 (DES, 26/8/2026)

"...Kalau saya sekarang lebih ke quality control. Sama apa ya, kontrol operasional saja supaya berjalan dengan lancar." (...As for me, I am now more focused on quality control. And, what is it, just supervising the operations so that everything runs smoothly.)

As illustrated in the quotation above, the role of the informant as the owner of Niels Coffee is to conduct quality control and supervise operational activities. This indicates that Niels Coffee does not yet have a dedicated operational manager, so this supervisory function is still carried out directly by the owner.

The owner's direct involvement suggests that quality and operational control remain closely connected to the business owner. This arrangement can make it easier for the owner to identify operational problems and respond to them directly. However, it also means that the owner's role remains important in ensuring that daily activities meet the expected standards.

3.1.2.3. Division of Staff Duties

Extract 7 (DES, 26/8/2026)

"Lima dapur. Lima di front... Dari situ bisa pembagian tugas, pembagian shift. Off, itu bisa diatur dari situ." (Five in the kitchen. Five at the front... From there, the duties and shifts can be divided. Days off can also be arranged from there.)

The interview extract above shows the number of Niels Coffee personnel, namely five kitchen staff and five front-of-house staff. This number enables Niels Coffee to divide duties, arrange shifts and schedule days off for employees. The clear number of staff and division of teams also allow for more flexible work scheduling and provide a foundation for a more organized operational system.

The division between kitchen and front-of-house staff also reflects the different operational functions required in a coffee shop. Kitchen staff can focus on food preparation and related activities, while front-of-house staff can focus on customer service and other customer-facing tasks. This division helps clarify responsibilities and makes shift arrangements easier to manage according to the operational needs of the cafe.

3.2. Overview of Monthly/Annual Profit

3.2.1. Financial Condition at the First Location (During the COVID-19 Pandemic)

Extract 8 (DES, 26/8/2026)

"Kalau dari omset... di tempat pertama... jauh di bawah... Apalagi... masa covid... Balik modal? Okey, tapi... keuntungan yang besar... belum..." (Regarding revenue, at the first location... far below expectations... during the COVID period... Breaking even? Okay, but... obtaining a large profit... not yet...)

The revenue generated at the first location was relatively low and far below expectations. Although the business was able to reach its break-even point, Niels Coffee had not yet earned a substantial profit. This condition was inseparable from the external factor of the COVID-19 pandemic, which occurred during the early establishment of the business.

The finding indicates that the early financial condition of Niels Coffee was strongly influenced by circumstances beyond the direct control of the business. The combination of an unsuitable initial location and the reduced economic and social activity during the pandemic created difficulties for generating sufficient revenue. Nevertheless, reaching the break-even point suggests that the business was still able to cover its basic operational costs and continue its activities during this difficult period.

3.2.2. Financial Development at the New Location (Jl. Mappanyuki)

Extract 9 (DES, 26/8/2026)

"... Pada saat berpindah ke tempat yang baru ini syukurnya omsetnya juga bertambah dan

keuntungan juga bertambah." (*...*When we moved to this new place, thankfully, the revenue increased and the profit also increased.)

It can be seen from the interview extract that the relocation to the new location was followed by an increase in revenue and profit. Although the informant did not specify the amount of the increase, the statement indicates that the financial condition of Niels Coffee at the new location was better than at the first location. Jamlean et al. (2022) state that business location influences consumer decisions and business performance development because a strategic location can improve accessibility, visibility, and opportunities for customer visits.

The comparison between the first and new locations shows that business location was an important part of Niels Coffee's development process. The increase in revenue and profit after relocation provides an indication that the new location offered more suitable conditions for the business. However, because no specific financial figures were provided by the informant, the finding is interpreted in terms of the reported direction of change rather than a numerical comparison.

3.3. Business Ideas - Creativity and Innovation

3.3.1. Origins and Inspiration of the Business Idea

3.3.1.1. Inspiration from College Habits

Extract 10 (DES, 26/8/2026)

"...Pada saat saya sedang mengerjakan tugas saya suka nongkrong di kafe dari sore sampai malam. Jadi kayak kenapa saya ndak buat satu tempat usaha seperti begini?..." (...When I was working on assignments, I liked spending time at a cafe from the afternoon until the evening. So, I thought, why do I not create a business place like this?...)

It can be seen above that the Niels Coffee business idea emerged from the owner's experience as a frequent cafe customer during his university years, particularly when completing assignments. This experience was

subsequently transformed into a business opportunity. This is consistent with recent entrepreneurship research stating that opportunity recognition is strongly influenced by the cognitive abilities and contextual experiences of prospective entrepreneurs, rather than being based solely on formal market analysis (Azam, Hussain, Muhamad, & Azam, 2024).

The finding demonstrates that the business idea was connected to a real activity experienced by the owner rather than being developed only from an abstract business concept. His experience as a cafe customer helped him identify the potential of a cafe as a place for studying, working, and spending time. This personal experience then became an initial source of inspiration for developing Niels Coffee.

3.3.1.2. Social Mission: Creating Employment Opportunities

Extract 11 (DES, 26/8/2026)

"...Jadi terciptalah lapangan kerja. Terciptanya usaha ini plus dengan lapangan kerja yang kita berikan." (...So, employment opportunities were created. The establishment of this business also created the employment opportunities that we provide.)

The informant's explanation above indicates that the motivation for establishing Niels Coffee was not solely oriented toward personal profit but also included a social dimension through the creation of employment opportunities for the surrounding community. This reflects an entrepreneurial character oriented toward social value creation, as shown by the staffing structure discussed in Section A.2, in which Niels Coffee employs ten staff members divided between the kitchen and front-of-house divisions.

The creation of employment opportunities also demonstrates that the business has an impact beyond the provision of products and services to customers. As the business developed, its operational activities required staff members with different responsibilities. Therefore, business development simultaneously created opportunities for people to participate in the workforce and contribute to the operation of Niels Coffee.

3.3.1.3. Leadership Vision and Uniqueness

Extract 12 (DES, 26/8/2026)

"...Niels sendiri itu artinya kayak pemimpin... kita punya satu tujuan... memimpin satu usaha... Bukan Cuma kopi tapi ada ciri khas yang kita bisa berikan ke pelanggan..." (...Niels itself means something like a leader... we have one goal... to lead a business... It is not only coffee; there is also a distinctive characteristic that we can offer to customers...)

The interview quotation shows that the name 'Niels' was originally taken from the name of the business owner. This meaning was then considered consistent with the owner's vision of building and leading a business while introducing Niels Coffee to the public through distinctive characteristics. This is consistent with research findings showing that an authentic brand personality with a strong character can positively contribute to customer satisfaction. Thus, a brand does not merely function as a label but also represents the business owner's values, expectations, and objectives (Mutsikiwa & Eniola, 2024).

The idea of having distinctive characteristics can also be observed in the way Niels Coffee develops products and communicates its identity to customers. The business is not positioned only as a place that sells coffee but also provides other products and experiences. This approach supports the owner's intention to create a business with characteristics that customers can recognize.

3.3.2. Product Creativity and Innovation

3.3.2.1. Following Market Trends

Extract 13 (DES, 26/8/2026)

"Jadi kalau di produk kita mengikuti tren juga. Jangan sampai banyak tren-tren di luar kita ndak ikuti, kita ndak

update, akhirnya orang berpindah apa eh customer berpindah... Jadi kita juga berinovasi di situ." (So, for our products, we also follow trends. We should not fail to follow or keep up with the many trends outside, because eventually people—um, customers—will move elsewhere... So, we also innovate in that area.)

The extract explains that product innovation at Niels Coffee is driven by an awareness that the business may lose customers if it does not follow developments in market trends. By following trends and adjusting its products, Niels Coffee can remain attractive to customers and compete with similar businesses. This is consistent with research on coffee shop businesses in Indonesia showing that market orientation can enhance its ability to innovate. Businesses that continuously observe and respond to customer needs will be better able to develop their products sustainably (Setiawan et al., 2020).

Following market trends does not necessarily mean replacing all existing products. Rather, it provides a basis for Niels Coffee to identify which aspects of its products may need to be updated according to changing customer interests. In this way, innovation becomes a continuous process that connects market observation with product development.

3.3.2.2. Innovation in the Main Food Menu (Chicken Noodles)

Extract 14 (DES, 26/8/2026)

"Tapi kalau di Niels sendiri, keunikannya itu satu, kita ini buat satu produk yaitu bakmi. Bakmi. Bakmi ayam... Itu jadi itu salah satu menu favoritnya kami di sini. Setiap customer yang datang carinya mau bakmi ayam satu..." (But at Niels itself, one of our unique features is that we created a product, namely noodles. Noodles. Chicken noodles... That has become one of our favorite menu items here. Every customer who comes asks for chicken noodles...)

Based on the interview above, the popularity of chicken noodles shows that Niels Coffee has developed products beyond its main coffee menu. This menu item is one of the distinctive features that differentiates Niels Coffee from other cafes. This strategy is consistent with research showing that unique products with consistent quality can improve customer satisfaction and a business's competitive advantage, allowing the business to compete on factors other than price (Mutsikiwa & Eniola, 2024).

The chicken noodle menu also illustrates how food products can become part of a coffee shop's identity. Although coffee remains an important part of the business, the presence of a popular food item provides customers with another reason to visit Niels Coffee. This broadens the business offering and allows the cafe to serve customers who may come not only for beverages but also for meals.

3.3.2.3. Affordable Coffee Innovation (Kopi Culture)

Extract 15 (DES, 26/8/2026)

"...kopi culture... cukup terjangkau... harga 13.000... Satu orang Rp15.000 sudah bisa minum kopi plus bayar parkir." (...Kopi Culture... quite affordable... For 13,000 rupiah... With 15,000 rupiah per person, you can have coffee and pay for parking.)

The statement shows that Niels Coffee offers affordable products through the 'Kopi Culture' concept. This strategy is aimed primarily at university students and young people who consider price when selecting a place to spend time. Therefore, affordability has become one of the main characteristics of Niels Coffee as a gathering place for young people.

The affordable pricing strategy also complements the function of Niels Coffee as a place for customers to spend time rather than simply purchase a single beverage. By offering a relatively accessible price, the business can accommodate customers who may want to visit regularly while still maintaining its identity as a coffee shop. Thus, price becomes part of the value offered to the target customer group.

3.3.2.4. Morning Menu Innovation (Oriental Chicken Porridge)

Extract 16 (DES, 26/8/2026)

"...membuka jam 7 pagi... Kita memberikan satu menu baru, bubur ayam... bubur oriental ada hint jahenya sedikit..." (...opening at 7 in the morning... we introduced a new menu item, chicken porridge... oriental porridge with a slight hint of ginger...)

The quotation shows that the development of the oriental chicken porridge menu was based on direct observation of customer's needs in the morning, which differ from customer preferences during the afternoon or evening. This time-based innovation reflects the informant's sensitivity in understanding consumer behaviour and an effort to maximize potential revenue throughout operating hours.

The addition of a morning menu also shows that product innovation at Niels Coffee is connected to its operating schedule. Since the cafe opens at 7:00 a.m., providing a menu suitable for breakfast allows the business to make better use of its early operating hours. This illustrates how product development can be adjusted to the timing and habits of customers.

3.3.3. Creativity in Digital Marketing and Promotion

3.3.3.1. Social Media Content Strategy

Extract 17 (DES, 26/8/2026)

"Kalau strategi sih sebenarnya kita mainkan di konten sih. Media sosial... kita ikut tren apa sih sebenarnya ini, di media sosial kontennya seperti apa. Itu yang bikin kita tetap apa ya ditahu sama kustomer..." (As for the strategy, we basically focus on content. Social media... we follow the trends, what kind of content is currently used on social media. That is what keeps us, um, known by customers...)

Referring to the informant's statement, the strategic focus on managing content that follows social media trends shows that Niels Coffee applies trend-based marketing. During the observation, the researchers examined the Instagram and TikTok accounts belonging to Niels Coffee and found that they were managed professionally.

The combination of interview and observation findings indicates that social media is not treated merely as an additional communication channel. It is used as part of the business's effort to maintain visibility and recognition among customers. Following current content trends also allows Niels Coffee to communicate in a form that is familiar to social media users and to keep the business visible in a competitive market.

3.3.3.2. Involvement of Baristas as Content Creators

Extract 18 (DES, 26/8/2026)

"...barista-barista di sini... jadi content creator juga... mereka biasa take video sendiri..." (...our baristas here can also become content creators... they sometimes record a video themselves...)

Based on the interview extract, in addition to the dedicated social media team, baristas also contribute ideas and help create videos. This shows that Niels Coffee involves baristas in marketing activities by utilizing their creativity and experience as staff members who interact directly with customers. Through this approach, content production can continue without placing an excessive burden on the marketing team.

The involvement of baristas also creates a connection between daily operational activities and promotional content. Because baristas interact directly with products and customers, they can contribute content based on their everyday experiences at the cafe. This makes content creation a shared activity among employees rather than a responsibility limited to the marketing team.

3.3.3.3. Collaboration with KOLs (Key Opinion Leaders) and Instagram Ads

Extract 19 (DES, 26/8/2026)

"...kita ada panggil KOL... Dan juga kita pakai Instagram ads... dari situ kontennya kita tersebar..." (...we invite KOLs... And we also use Instagram Ads... That way, our content is distributed...)

The interview findings show that Niels Coffee combines organic promotion with paid promotion through KOLs and Instagram Ads. This strategy is used to reach more people, including social media users who do not yet follow the Niels Coffee account. The use of KOLs also helps Niels Coffee introduce its products through reviews that feel more relatable to prospective customers. This is consistent with the study by De Veirman, Cauberghe, and Hudders (2017), which shows that influencers whose followers correspond with the target market can increase audience interest and positive attitudes toward a brand.

The use of these two promotional approaches also provides different ways to expand audience reach. KOL collaboration can introduce the business through another person's audience, while Instagram Ads allows the business to distribute content through a paid promotional channel. Together, these activities support Niels Coffee's effort to reach people beyond its existing customer base.

3.3.3.4. Interactive Promotion

Extract 20 (DES, 26/8/2026)

"...promo Agustus jadi diskon semua menu 10%... harus follow Instagramnya Niels dan buat di story, tag Niels... Dan juga ada promo di grabfood." (...an August promotion with a 10% discount on all menu items... customers have to follow the Niels Instagram account, post a story, and tag Niels... There is also a promotion on GrabFood.)

Based on the extract, Niels Coffee uses special promotions to attract customers. However, these promotions have several requirements, such as following the Niels Coffee Instagram account, creating a story, and tagging the Niels Coffee account. Therefore, the promotions do not focus solely on direct sales but also help increase recognition of Niels Coffee across social media and digital platforms.

The interactive requirements encourage customers to participate in the promotional process and simultaneously generate additional social media exposure. Customers who upload stories and tag the business can indirectly contribute to the visibility of Niels Coffee among their own social networks. Thus, the promotion combines a sales incentive with a form of customer-generated online exposure.

3.4. Challenges and Obstacles in Establishing and Developing the Business

3.4.1. Difficult Period during the COVID-19 Pandemic

Extract 21 (DES, 26/8/2026)

"Iya, hampir gagal... di tempat pertama... kendala di tempat... masa covid juga... masalah di

tempat, masalah waktu covid..." (Yes, we almost failed... at our first location... the actual problem was the location... during COVID... a problem with the location... the problem of COVID...)

The informant's statement above shows that Niels Coffee experienced a very difficult period. At that time, the business faced problems at its first location on Jalan Gunung Batu Putih while the COVID-19 pandemic was also taking place. This condition made it increasingly difficult for the business to survive because Niels Coffee had to address problems with its location while also experiencing reduced community activity due to the pandemic.

The experience indicates that the difficulties faced by Niels Coffee were caused by the interaction of internal business conditions and external circumstances. The location problem required the business to reconsider where and how it operated, while the pandemic created additional uncertainty. This situation eventually became an important turning point that encouraged the business to develop alternative ways to maintain continuity.

3.4.2. The Challenge of Building and Maintaining Trust

Extract 22 (DES, 26/8/2026)

"Tantangan terbesar... Bangun trust... Bagaimana caranya kita narik pelanggan... dan... maintain

pelanggan." (The biggest challenge is building trust... How do we attract customers... and... maintain them.)

The extract shows that the challenge of building customer trust is not limited to attracting new customers but also includes the ability to maintain customer loyalty continuously. The informant distinguishes between attracting customers and retaining them as two different challenges and emphasizes that retaining customers is more difficult. Retaining existing customers is as important as attracting new customers for the continuity of a coffee-shop business (Pesoa, Kristyanto, & Dewa, 2020).

This challenge is connected with several practices found in Niels Coffee, particularly maintaining product quality, introducing new products, and conducting promotional activities. These efforts can be understood as attempts to give customers reasons to return after their first visit. Therefore, customer trust is not built through a single promotional activity but through repeated experiences with the products, services, and overall business.

3.4.3. Internal Obstacle (Human Resource Competence)

Extract 23 (DES, 26/8/2026)

"Paling SDM... staf itu ada yang tidak kompeten... Sehingga itu yang menghambat operasional."

(The main issue is probably human resources... there are staff members who are not competent... that is what hinders operations.)

As illustrated in the quotation above, the informant explained that Niels Coffee had employed staff members who lacked competence, making this condition one of the obstacles to business operations. Therefore, the issue of staff competence cannot be viewed merely as an individual problem but as a managerial issue that has the potential to disrupt overall operational efficiency and service quality.

The finding also explains why recruitment criteria, division of duties, and operational systems later became important strategies for Niels Coffee. When staff members do not have the expected competence, other employees and the owner may need to provide additional supervision or adjustment. Consequently, human resource competence is directly related to the ability of the business to maintain smooth daily operations.

3.4.4. External Factors Affecting the Business

Extract 24 (DES, 26/8/2026)

"...bermunculannya kompetitor... pasti merubah kebiasaan customer..." (...the emergence of competitors... definitely changes customer habits...)

It can be seen from the interview extract that the emergence of new competitors is identified as an external factor with the potential to change customer habits and loyalty. This requires Niels Coffee to continue innovating so that it remains relevant amid competition, as discussed in the product innovation and marketing strategies in Section C. Therefore, continuous innovation is necessary for a business to maintain its competitiveness (Setiawan et al., 2020).

The presence of competitors means that customers have more alternatives when choosing where to eat, drink, study, work, or spend their time. As a result, Niels Coffee needs to maintain characteristics that can distinguish it from other businesses while continuing to respond to changing customer preferences. This condition helps explain the business's emphasis on menu updates, affordable products, social media content, and promotional activities.

Extract 25 (DES, 26/8/2026)

"...paling ramai... lewat bulan 7... sampai akhir tahun... lebaran naik... libur sekolah turun lagi... Siklusnya, musiman." (...The busiest period usually begins after the seventh month... until the end of the year... it increases again during Eid... during the school holidays, it decreases again... The cycle is seasonal.)

Based on the interview findings above, the seasonal pattern described by the informant shows that the number of customer visits to Niels Coffee is influenced by the calendar of community social activities, such as Ramadan, Eid al-Fitr, and school holiday periods. This condition shows that the number of customers is not constant but increases and decreases according to changes in social activities and community consumption habits.

This seasonal pattern indicates that Niels Coffee operates in a market where customer traffic can vary according to particular periods. Such changes may affect daily sales and operational needs, including staffing and inventory preparation. Understanding these patterns is therefore useful for anticipating periods of higher and lower customer activity and adjusting business activities accordingly.

3.5. Strategies for Addressing Problems: Creativity and Innovation in Facing Problems

3.5.1. Strategies for Addressing the Location Crisis and Pandemic during the Early Business Period

3.5.1.1. Adaptation through a Pop-Up Store Concept

Extract 26 (DES, 26/8/2026)

"...cari tempat yang kecil-kecil saja dulu... ada di CPI... cuma pop up saja... Di situ yang bikin... kita bertahan sampai hari ini..." (...look for a small place first... there was one at CPI... only a pop-up... That is what enabled us to survive until today...)

Based on the interview extract, the decision to shift to a small-scale pop-up store format at CPI was a form of adaptation implemented at a lower cost. This measure was taken so that Niels Coffee could continue operating and maintain the continuity of its business after facing a crisis and limited resources. The informant explained that the pop-up store helped Niels Coffee survive and continue operating to the present day.

The pop-up concept demonstrates how the business responded to a difficult situation by adjusting its operational scale rather than stopping completely. The smaller format provided an alternative way to continue business activities while facing limitations associated with the previous location and pandemic conditions. This experience also became an important example of adaptation in the Niels Coffee business journey.

3.5.1.2. The Principle of 'Surviving' amid Uncertainty

Extract 27 (DES, 26/8/2026)

"Bertahan... Jalankan dulu selagi bisa dijalankan... kalau memang disuruh diam... bertahan saja... Jangan sampai salah picca..." (Survive... Keep operating as long as it is possible... if we are told to stay still... just survive... Do not make the wrong move...)

The interview findings show that the principle of 'surviving' expressed by the informant reflects a cautious attitude toward uncertainty and the various regulations that applied during the pandemic. The business continued to operate as long as circumstances and regulations permitted, but the informant was also willing to exercise restraint when the situation required it. This attitude shows that the informant prioritized the long-term continuity of the business rather than forcing operations to continue under risky conditions.

The principle of survival was therefore accompanied by careful decision-making. Instead of taking actions that could create additional problems, the business adjusted its activities according to the circumstances. This approach is also reflected in the later decision to use a smaller pop-up format, demonstrating that survival involved practical adaptation rather than simply maintaining the original business model.

3.5.2. Strategies for Maintaining Customer Trust and Product Quality

3.5.2.1. Consistency of Taste Standards as the Main Priority

Extract 28 (DES, 26/8/2026)

"Pertama kita harus jaga kualitas. Kualitas produk itu nomor satu... Dengan begitu kita harus jaga kualitasnya terus menerus." (First, we have to maintain quality. Product quality is number one... Therefore, we have to maintain the quality continuously.)

The statement above shows that quality consistency is important not only for creating a positive impression on costumers on one occasion but also for maintaining customer trust over the long term. This strategy directly responds to the challenge of retaining customers, as the informant, who owns Niels Coffee, stated that attracting new customers is easier than retaining existing ones. This is consistent with research on coffee-shop businesses showing that product quality and customer satisfaction can influence customer trust and loyalty. Pesoa et al. (2020) explains that quality improvement must be pursued continuously rather than only at certain times.

The emphasis on consistency also means that quality is treated as an ongoing operational responsibility. It is not enough for a product to be good only when it is first introduced; customers need to receive a similar level of quality during repeated visits. This explains the connection between quality control, supplier monitoring, and customer retention in the Niels Coffee business.

3.5.2.2. Supply Chain Flexibility

Extract 29 (DES, 26/8/2026)

"...perubahan kualitas itu kita cari alternatif lain ke roastery B... kualitasnya menurun..." (...when there is a change in quality, we look for another alternative, Roastery B... its quality is declining...)

This measure is a deliberate strategy for maintaining product standards and customer trust. If the quality of raw materials from the primary supplier begins to decline, Niels Coffee seeks an alternative supplier capable of providing materials of more consistent quality. Therefore, flexibility in selecting and replacing suppliers is an important part of maintaining the taste of the products so that it remains consistent with customer expectations.

Supplier flexibility is closely connected to the business's commitment to consistent quality. Rather than allowing changes in raw-material quality to affect the final product, Niels Coffee prepares an alternative supplier as a response. This demonstrates that maintaining customer trust involves not only direct customer service but also decisions made behind the scenes in the supply chain.

3.5.3. Strategies for Addressing Human Resource Obstacles

3.5.3.1. Stricter Criteria and Transparency from the Beginning of Recruitment

Extract 30 (DES, 26/8/2026)

"Makanya kalau kita rekrut karyawan emang harus diperjelas dari awal. Jangan sampai pertengahan jalan eh ternyata tidak kompeten..." (That is why, when we recruit employees, everything really has to be clarified from the beginning. We should not discover halfway through that they are not competent...)

The finding in this extract shows that the informant learned from his experience of dealing with staff competence problems. Therefore, work criteria and expectations need to be explained more clearly from the beginning of the recruitment process. Therefore, the recruitment process does not merely serve to meet workforce needs but also functions as an initial stage for ensuring compatibility between employees' abilities and job requirements.

This strategy represents a shift from responding to employee problems after recruitment toward preventing such problems through clearer recruitment practices. By explaining expectations and requirements from the beginning, the business can provide applicants with a clearer understanding of the responsibilities associated with the position.

This can also help the business organize its workforce according to the operational needs of each division.

3.5.3.2. Building an Orderly Operational System and Shift Arrangement

Extract 31 (DES, 26/8/2026)

"Pelajaran yang paling berharga. Atur SDM baik-baik. Bangun sistem operasional supaya semuanya bisa berjalan... tertata dengan baik." (The most valuable lesson is to manage human resources properly. Build an operational system so that everything can run... in an orderly manner.)

Based on the interview above, the informant explicitly described the development of an operational system as 'the most valuable lesson.' The statement also emphasizes the importance of a clear division of shifts and demonstrates a change in the informant's mindset from spontaneous and unstructured management toward a more systematic and organized form of management.

The development of an orderly system is also related to the division of staff into kitchen and front-of-house teams. Clear responsibilities and shift arrangements can help employees understand what they are expected to do and when they are expected to work. Therefore, the operational system becomes a mechanism for connecting human resource management with the continuity of daily business activities.

3.5.4. Creativity and Innovation in Facing Market Saturation and Competition

3.5.4.1. Maintaining Brand Relevance through Menu and Content Updates

Extract 32 (DES, 26/8/2026)

"...harus up to date produknya... Dan juga di media sosial kita ikut tren... Itu yang bikin kita tetap... ditahu sama kostumer..." (...keep the products up to date... And on social media, we follow the trends... That is what keeps us... known by customers...)

The extract shows that Niels Coffee updates its products and social media content simultaneously in an effort to maintain brand relevance amid increasingly intense competition. The informant's statement regarding the importance of offering products that are not monotonous shows that menu innovation is needed to prevent customer boredom and give customers reasons to make repeat visits. This strategy is Niels Coffee's response to increasing competitive pressure and helps keep the brand recognized, relevant, and close to its customers.

The simultaneous attention to products and social media demonstrates that innovation at Niels Coffee occurs in both the product and communication dimensions. Updating the menu gives customers new experiences, while updating content helps communicate those developments to the market. These two activities therefore support the broader effort to maintain customer attention in a competitive coffee-shop environment.

3.5.4.2. Expanding Market Reach through Active Digital Marketing Campaigns

Extract 33 (DES, 26/8/2026)

"...kita ada panggil KOL... Dan juga kita pakai Instagram ads. Ads. Yes. Jadi dari situ kontennya kita tersebar ke ini pengguna media sosial..." (...we invite KOLs... And we also use Instagram Ads. Ads. Yes. That way, our content is distributed to, um, social media users...)

The interview extract shows that the use of Key Opinion Leaders (KOLs) and paid advertisements through Instagram is explicitly positioned by the informant as a competitive strategy for expanding market reach. This strategy not only aims to increase brand visibility but also strengthens the competitiveness of Niels Coffee in reaching a broader and more diverse range of prospective customers.

The strategy also complements the business's organic social media content activities. While regular content helps maintain communication with existing followers, KOL collaborations and paid advertisements provide additional channels for reaching people outside the existing audience. In this way, digital marketing becomes an important

part of the business's response to competition and the need to continuously attract customers.

3.6. Lessons Learned from the Niels Coffee Business Journey for Developing an Entrepreneurial Spirit

The Niels Coffee business journey provides several important lessons for developing an entrepreneurial spirit, including the importance of effective human resource management, a structured operational system, perseverance, risk-taking, and consistent quality. Clear recruitment criteria, division of duties, and shift arrangements help the business operate without relying entirely on the owner's supervision.

These lessons are also reflected in the difficulties experienced by Niels Coffee during its early development. The experience of nearly failing because of location problems and the COVID-19 pandemic demonstrates the importance of adapting, learning from failure, and maintaining a never-give-up mentality. The decision to move to a smaller pop-up format shows how the business responded to limitations by changing its operational approach rather than stopping completely. Furthermore, the owner's decision to establish the business based on his university experience reflects the courage to take risks, supported by proper planning, entrepreneurial competence, and mental readiness (Ngo & Vu, 2025).

Niels Coffee also prioritizes operational processes and product quality by maintaining consistent standards and replacing suppliers when raw-material quality declines. This process- and quality-oriented approach supports business performance and helps maintain customer trust and loyalty through consistent products and services (Djakasaputra et al., 2021). These experiences show that entrepreneurial development involves not only generating business ideas but also learning how to manage people, respond to challenges, maintain quality, and adapt business practices according to changing conditions.

4. Conclusion

Based on the findings, Niels Coffee applies creativity and innovation as important parts of its business development. Creativity can be seen in the concept of the coffee shop as a place for studying, working, and gathering, as well as in its product variations such as Bakmie Ayam, Kopi Culture, and Bubur Ayam. These products provide different choices for customers and help Niels Coffee create its own identity in the competitive coffee shop industry. Innovation is also reflected in the way Niels Coffee develops its products, services, marketing, and business operations. The business uses social media platforms such as Instagram and TikTok, Instagram Ads, collaborations with KOLs, and promotional activities to reach customers. In addition, opening the coffee shop in the morning provides an alternative for customers who want to study, work, or have breakfast. These efforts show that Niels Coffee continues to adapt its business strategies to changing customer needs and market conditions. The study also found that Niels Coffee has experienced several challenges, including competition, human resource issues, the COVID-19 pandemic, changes in location, and maintaining product quality and customer trust. However, the business has responded to these challenges through adaptation and continuous improvement. Therefore, creativity and innovation have played an important role in helping Niels Coffee maintain its business, respond to changes, and create value for its customers.

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