

## Enhancing business performance through Maslahah relationship marketing: The mediating role of entrepreneurial orientation

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**Abstract:** This study examines the mediating role of Maslahah Relationship Marketing (MRM), an Islamic value-based marketing approach, in the relationship between Entrepreneurial Orientation (EO) and Business Performance (BP) within the Indonesian manufacturing sector. Grounded in Resource Advantage Theory (RAT), MRM is conceptualized as a multidimensional construct comprising rational trust, consistent commitment, effective communication, holistic competence, and holistic empathy. Data were collected from 240 respondents across various managerial levels at PT Perkebunan Nusantara I Regional 3 in Central Java, Indonesia, using a stratified random sampling method, with a sample size of 181 respondents. Partial Least Squares Structural Equation Modeling (PLS-SEM) was employed to test the proposed model. Results indicate that EO, through proactiveness and innovativeness, positively influences MRM components, which in turn significantly enhance BP. This study contributes to the literature by introducing MRM as a novel framework that integrates Islamic values into relationship marketing, offering practical implications for fostering sustainable business relationships in Muslim-majority markets.

**Keywords:** Business performance, Entrepreneurial orientation, Islamic marketing, Maslahah relationship marketing, Resource advantage theory.

### 1. Introduction

In today's hyper-competitive global markets, firms must adopt innovative strategies to achieve sustainable business performance (BP), particularly in emerging economies like Indonesia, where economic and cultural dynamics significantly influence organizational success. Entrepreneurial Orientation (EO), defined as a firm's strategic posture encompassing proactiveness, innovativeness, and risk-taking, has been widely recognized as a catalyst for enhancing BP [1-3]. Proactiveness reflects a firm's ability to anticipate market trends and act swiftly, innovativeness drives the creation of novel products or processes, and risk-taking enables bold decision-making in uncertain environments. Despite its theoretical appeal, empirical studies on the EO-BP relationship reveal inconsistent findings. For instance, Monteiro, et al. [4] and Jeong, et al. [5] report a positive correlation, whereas Ngo [6] and Suder, et al. [7] find insignificant or negative effects, suggesting the presence of mediating or moderating mechanisms that warrant further exploration.

BP management plays a crucial role in evaluating a company's overall operations and formulating strategies to achieve objectives more effectively [8]. BP has been defined from various perspectives: as a metric for assessing the achievements of business activities that benefit the company [9] as the organization's ability to meet stakeholder demands and ensure its sustainability [10] and as a comparison between actual results and expected outcomes [11]. These definitions underscore the

multifaceted nature of business performance, encompassing efficiency, effectiveness, and value creation. Scholars have identified several key factors influencing firm performance, including organizational learning [12] learning agility [13] strategic planning [14] and the utilization of social media [15]. These factors illustrate how both internal capabilities and external strategies shape business performance.

An effective way to boost performance is through strong EO, characterized by a proactive stance, innovation, and opportunity-driven approaches that foster value creation and competitive advantage [16]. EO is widely recognized as a key driver that enables firms to seize new opportunities and maintain competitiveness in rapidly evolving markets [17]. Conceptually, EO refers to a firm's entrepreneurial activities, defined by its tendency to take calculated risks, innovate, and pursue proactive strategies under the direction of its leadership [18].

Schumpeter [19] theory of entrepreneurship introduced the notion of creative destruction, emphasizing the entrepreneur's role in driving innovation and economic transformation by introducing new products, processes, and markets that replace outdated ones. Meanwhile, Gartner [20] posits that businesses are founded by visionary individuals with attributes such as creative talent, a willingness to confront challenges, and effective management capabilities [21]. Within the EO framework, innovation reflects the firm's tendency to embrace new ideas and creative processes that yield novel products or services [22]. Proactiveness involves scanning environmental shifts to exploit emerging technological or market opportunities [23] while risk-taking entails the willingness to explore the unknown despite uncertain outcomes [24]. Hence, entrepreneurship is not merely about taking risks but also demands appropriate knowledge, skills, and capabilities [25].

Prior research on the EO-business performance nexus has produced mixed results. While several studies confirm a significant and positive relationship [5, 7, 22, 25, 26] others report non-significant findings [6, 7, 27]. This inconsistency underlines the need for further investigation, particularly by introducing Relationship Marketing (RM) as a mediating variable, which is enhanced with Islamic values of Maslahah to promote shared prosperity. Research gaps include the underexplored interplay between EO and networks [28] limited studies on internal organizational moderators [29, 30] and a dominant focus on small businesses during the pandemic [25].

To bridge these gaps, this study proposes RM as a mediating variable between EO and business performance. RM serves as a competitive strategy that fosters customer retention through sustained, trust-based interactions, ultimately leading to stronger relationships, improved profitability, and enhanced performance [31]. However, RM is not without its flaws. Over time, relational dynamics may deteriorate, resulting in opportunism, reduced productivity, poor collaboration, and the emergence of toxic behaviors such as hostility, distortion, distrust, and information withholding [32]. The theoretical foundation of this study rests on the Resource Advantage Theory [33] which was later refined into Market-Based Assets by Srivastava, et al. [34] with network assets being one of its critical elements, leading to the emergence of RM. To address the research gaps, this study introduces RM enhanced with Maslahah as a mediator that aims to boost business performance and promote shared well-being. By integrating Maslahah, RM is designed to influence economic decision-making positively, ensuring long-term beneficial choices that avoid potential harm. To mitigate these weaknesses, this study integrates RM with the Islamic principle of Maslahah, actions or behaviors that yield benefits and prevent harm, both in worldly and spiritual contexts [35, 36]. This integration gives rise to Maslahah Relationship Marketing (MRM), an ethical and sustainable approach that serves as the study's key novelty. MRM is envisioned as a strategic framework that can address inconsistencies in previous EO-performance research.

The empirical context of this study focuses on PT Perkebunan Nusantara I Regional 3 in Central Java, specifically on the marketing of ground coffee and brewed tea products. These products have been distributed through employee cooperatives, company outlets, and sales teams; yet, the firm has consistently failed to meet its sales targets over the past five years. This failure is suspected to stem from the insufficient application of EO. Hence, MRM is proposed as a strategic solution to retain

existing customers and explore new markets through long-term, value-based relationships rooted in Maslahah, with the ultimate goal of achieving shared prosperity.

In response to the identified research gap concerning the impact of EO dimensions on BP and the real-world performance gap at PT Perkebunan Nusantara I Regional 3, this study formulates the following research question: “How can a Maslahah-based Relationship Marketing model, rooted in Entrepreneurial Orientation, be developed to enhance business performance?” This study aims to explore a novel conceptual framework that addresses previous limitations and bridges the gap between EO and business performance through MRM. Ultimately, the MRM concept is expected to refine the Resource Advantage Theory by incorporating Islamic values that emphasize harmonious relationships among humans, between humans and nature, and between humans and the Divine.

## 2. Literature Review and Hypothesis

### 2.1. The Effect of Proactive Behavior on Rational Trust

Proactive behavior, which reflects a firm's ability to actively identify and exploit opportunities, enhances partners' rational trust through open communication and prompt responsiveness to market changes [37-39]. Thus, the hypothesis proposed is:

*H<sub>1</sub>: Proactive Behavior, as part of Entrepreneurial Orientation, positively effects Rational Trust within the framework of Maslahah Relationship Marketing.*

### 2.2. The Effect of Proactive Behavior on Consistent Commitment

Proactive behavior fosters consistent commitment by engaging partners in innovation, information sharing, and rapid responses to market dynamics, thereby creating stable and mutually beneficial relationships [40-42]. Thus, the hypothesis proposed is:

*H<sub>2</sub>: Proactive Behavior, as part of Entrepreneurial Orientation, positively effects Consistent Commitment within the framework of Maslahah Relationship Marketing.*

### 2.3. The Effect of Proactive Behavior on Effective Communication

Proactive behavior facilitates open and responsive communication, which is essential for coordination and shared understanding in business relationships [37, 40, 41]. Thus, the hypothesis proposed is:

*H<sub>3</sub>: Proactive Behavior within Entrepreneurial Orientation positively effects Effective Communication in marketing partnerships between firms and their partners.*

### 2.4. The Effect of Proactive Behavior on Holistic Competence

Proactive behavior enhances marketing capabilities such as market research and product development, which are key components of holistic competence in business relationships [37, 43]. Thus, the hypothesis proposed is:

*H<sub>4</sub>: Proactive Behavior positively effects Holistic Competence in marketing partnerships between firms and their partners.*

### 2.5. The Effect of Proactive Behavior on Holistic Empathy

Proactive behavior encourages firms to deeply understand their partners' needs, fostering responsive and mutually beneficial relationships [40, 41, 43]. Thus, the hypothesis proposed is:

*H<sub>5</sub>: Proactive Behavior within Entrepreneurial Orientation positively effects Holistic Empathy in marketing partnerships between firms and their partners.*

### 2.6. The Effect of Innovativeness on Rational Trust

Innovativeness boosts rational trust through demonstrable competence and the firm's ability to adapt to market changes [44-46]. Thus, the hypothesis proposed is:

*H<sub>6</sub>: Innovativeness within Entrepreneurial Orientation positively effects Rational Trust in marketing partnerships between firms and their partners.*

#### *2.7. The Effect of Innovativeness on Consistent Commitment*

Innovative behavior creates sustained value, encouraging consistent commitment from partners through trust and loyalty [47, 48]. Thus, the hypothesis proposed is:

*H<sub>7</sub>: Innovativeness positively effects Consistent Commitment between firms and their business partners.*

#### *2.8. The Effect of Creativity on Effective Communication*

Innovativeness promotes open and responsive communication by fostering new ideas and aligning goals with partners [49-51]. Thus, the hypothesis proposed is:

*H<sub>8</sub>: Innovativeness positively effects Effective Communication in marketing collaborations between firms and their partners.*

#### *2.9. The Effect of Innovativeness on Holistic Competence*

Innovativeness enhances relational capabilities through value creation and cross-functional collaboration, thereby strengthening holistic competence [52-54]. Thus, the hypothesis proposed is:

*H<sub>9</sub>: Innovativeness positively effects Holistic Competence.*

#### *2.10. The Effect of Innovativeness on Holistic Empathy*

Innovative behavior enables firms to deeply understand partners' needs, fostering emotionally and socially relevant relationships [55, 56]. Thus, the hypothesis proposed is:

*H<sub>10</sub>: Innovativeness positively effects Holistic Empathy in marketing partnerships between firms and business partners.*

#### *2.11. The Effect of Maslahah Relationship Marketing on Business Performance*

Rational trust improves the effectiveness of collaboration and innovation, leading to enhanced financial and operational performance [57-59]. Thus, the hypothesis proposed is:

*H<sub>11</sub>: Rational Trust positively effects Business Performance in cooperative relationships between firms and business partners.*

#### *2.12. The Effect of Consistent Commitment on Business Performance*

Consistent commitment improves coordination, reduces conflict, and enhances operational efficiency, thereby supporting market and financial performance [60-62]. Thus, the hypothesis proposed is:

*H<sub>12</sub>: Consistent Commitment positively effects Business Performance.*

#### *2.13. The Effect of Effective Communication on Business Performance*

Effective communication enhances efficiency, decision-making, and partner satisfaction, all of which contribute to better business performance [63, 64]. Thus, the hypothesis proposed is:

*H<sub>13</sub>: Effective Communication positively effects Business Performance.*

#### *2.14. The Effect of Holistic Competence on Business Performance*

Holistic competence maximizes cooperative outcomes, accelerates market growth, and strengthens competitive positioning [53, 65, 66]. Thus, the hypothesis proposed is:

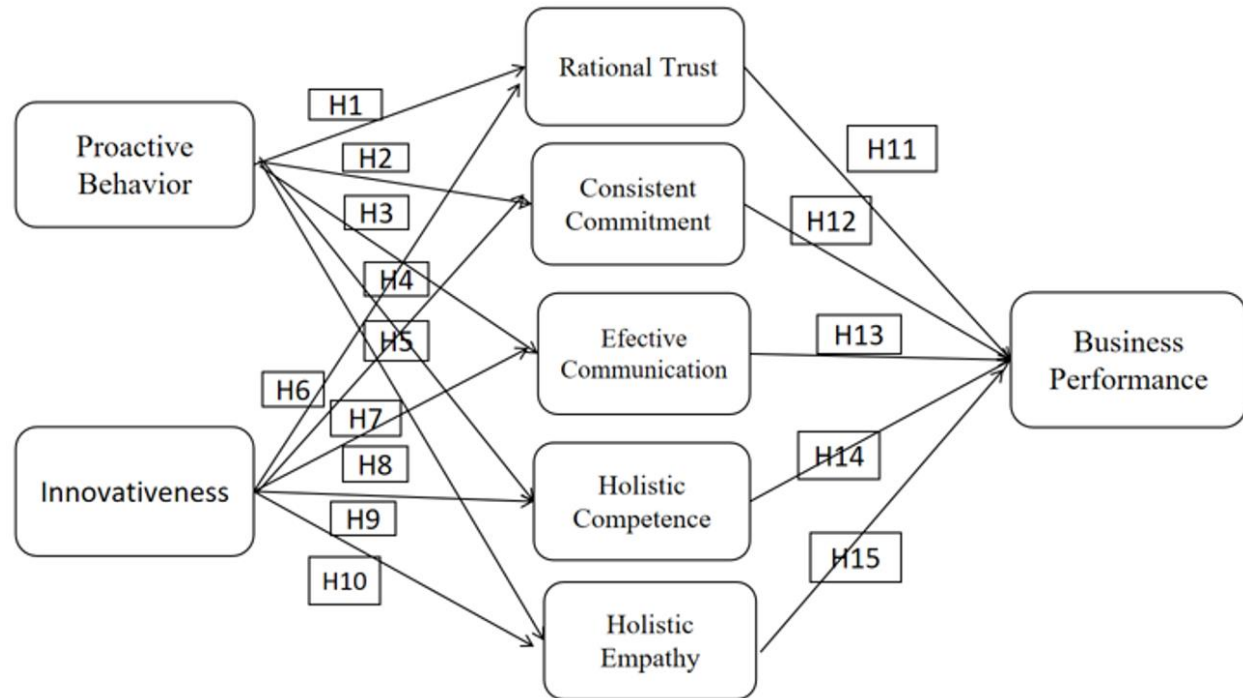
*H<sub>14</sub>: Holistic Competence positively effects Business Performance.*

### 2.15. The Effect of Holistic Empathy on Business Performance

Holistic empathy strengthens trust, commitment, and collaboration, thereby enhancing sales performance and business relationships [11, 67, 68]. Thus, the hypothesis proposed is:

*H<sub>15</sub>: Holistic Empathy positively effects Business Performance.*

The empirical model of Maslahah Relationship Marketing can be presented in Figure 1. as follows:



**Figure 1.**  
Empirical Model.

## 3. Methods

### 3.1. Research Approach

The type of research used in this study is explanatory research. According to Sekaran and Bougie [69] explanatory research is a research method that aims to explain the position of the variables being studied and the influence between one variable and another. Following the explanatory nature of science or the type of scientific explanation that will be produced, this study is classified as causal research. Causal research is research that seeks explanations in the form of cause-and-effect relationships between several concepts, variables, or strategies developed in management. In order to test the hypotheses, this study uses a descriptive research technique and survey measures to gather information on manufacturing enterprises. As a result, the study can effectively answer the research questions. Conducting a literature study to find relevant subjects is the first stage in this method. After looking over what has already been done in the field, an investigation framework is established. After that, the survey was utilized in conjunction with structural equation modelling to create and validate the SEM.

### 3.2. Population, Sample, and Sampling Technique

The population in this study is all employees of PTPN 1 Regional 3 Central Java. The sampling technique used is Purposive Sampling, meaning that the sample selected for this study has specific characteristics, including: all managerial-level employees, grades III and IV, with more than three years of service, and who oversee several operational staff members. As a result, a sample of 181 respondents

was obtained, distributed across several cities/regions. The data collection period ran from January to June 2025. It was determined that a total of one thousand questionnaires were issued. On the other hand, for the subsequent analysis, only replies from respondents showed that they had utilized at least one variation of the form and had completed the questionnaire items. Twenty-five questionnaires that were considered to be legitimate were handed in. For both the creation of the questionnaire and the collection of the data, the researcher used Google Forms. The information obtained from Google Forms was saved in Google Drive. With the circumstances of the research, it was not feasible to conduct face-to-face interaction; thus, the data collection was carried out via Google Forms used WhatsApp application. As a result of the fact that each questionnaire and invitation to take part in the survey was sent out without any identifying information, the identity of the respondents was kept confidential.

### 3.3. Measures

Cross-sectional data is used to verify the theoretical model that has been provided. For the purpose of gathering the data, approaches that were based on a survey of the target population were used. An evaluation of the indicators was carried out using a Likert scale with ten points for each category. Ten anchors are on the scale, with one signifying strongly disagreeing and five representing strongly agreeing. The scale ranges from one to five. For this investigation, a Likert scale with five points was used since it is less time-consuming and enables respondents to maintain a neutral stance by selecting the “neither agree nor disagree” option. In addition, a Likert scale with ten points was used in this research since other studies have proved the advantages of using this methodology [70-72].

### 3.4. Data Analysis

In a recent study, the Smart PLS program was applied for the purpose of doing data analysis utilizing PLS-SEM [73]. As a result of its technologically sophisticated estimates and widespread usage in the field [74]. Furthermore, the research made an effort to forecast and characterize the constructs; hence, PLS is a more suitable analysis method, as demonstrated by Hair Jr, et al. [75]. The PLS-SEM is a useful instrument for using the structural model in order to describe and evaluate structures. In addition, the versatile instrument is used in the process of model formation when different hypotheses are being investigated. It is also possible to utilize the tool to achieve particular findings after resolving concerns about the sample size and the normalcy of the data. According to the recommendations made in the PLS-SEM literature, the research examined the findings using a method that consisted of two steps [76]. The first part of the PLS-SEM approach consisted of analyzing the measurement in order to assess inter-item reliability, convergent validity, and internal consistency reliability. The second step consisted of examining the structural model to test the hypotheses [77].

## 4. Result and Discussion

### 4.1. The Validity Test

Table 1 shows the convergent validity. The reliability and validity of indicators, as well as conceptions, are important factors to consider. The reliability test results, obtained using Cronbach's Alpha, Composite Reliability, and Average Variance Extracted, are shown in Table 1. The test results for dependability are shown in Table 1. The study found that the figures exceeded 0.7, representing the highest levels documented. The data gathered was analyzed using Cronbach's Alpha, and the conclusion drawn is based on the recommendations provided by certain researchers [78, 79]. The composite dependence values range over 0.7, which is the highest reported number for composite reliance. Researchers contend that an appropriate criterion for a Critical Composite (CR) is a minimum of 0.7. Based on the data in the table above, researchers can confidently determine that the CR requirement has been satisfied. The CR condition has been satisfied based on the evidence. Composite dependability may serve as a substitute for Cronbach's Alpha because of its slightly higher value. However, the disparity between the two is not substantial [80].

The average variance obtained (AVE) is tested to determine validity convergence. In Table 1, the AVE numbers. The findings surpass the previously reported greatest levels by a significant margin. If the AVE is less than 0.5, it cannot be deemed adequate [81]. All four aspects of convergent validity have been satisfied since the acceptability criterion has been attained. The data shown in the Table constitutes the foundation for these conclusions. Convergent validity, the heterotrait-monotonic correlation ratio, and discriminant validity hypotheses are the three ways that hypotheses may be tested [80].

**Table 1.**  
Convergent Validity.

Variables	Indicators	Convergent Validity	
		Loadings (> 0.7)	AVE (> 0.5)
Proactive Behavior	PB1	0.902	0.843
	PB2	0.927	
	PB3	0.926	
Innovativeness	I1	0.938	0.797
	I2	0.851	
	I3	0.887	
Rational Trust	RT1	0.800	0.751
	RT2	0.887	
	RT3	0.909	
Consistent Commitment	CC1	0.782	0.731
	CC2	0.867	
	CC3	0.912	
Effective Communication	EC1	0.845	0.788
	EC2	0.934	
	EC3	0.882	
Holistic Competence	HC1	0.826	0.772
	HC2	0.889	
	HC3	0.919	
Holistic Empathy	HE1	0.922	0.775
	HE2	0.927	
	HE3	0.785	
Business Performance	BP1	0.895	0.770
	BP2	0.902	
	BP3	0.788	
	BP4	0.920	

Source: The Processed Secondary Data (2025)

#### 4.1.1. Hypothesis Test

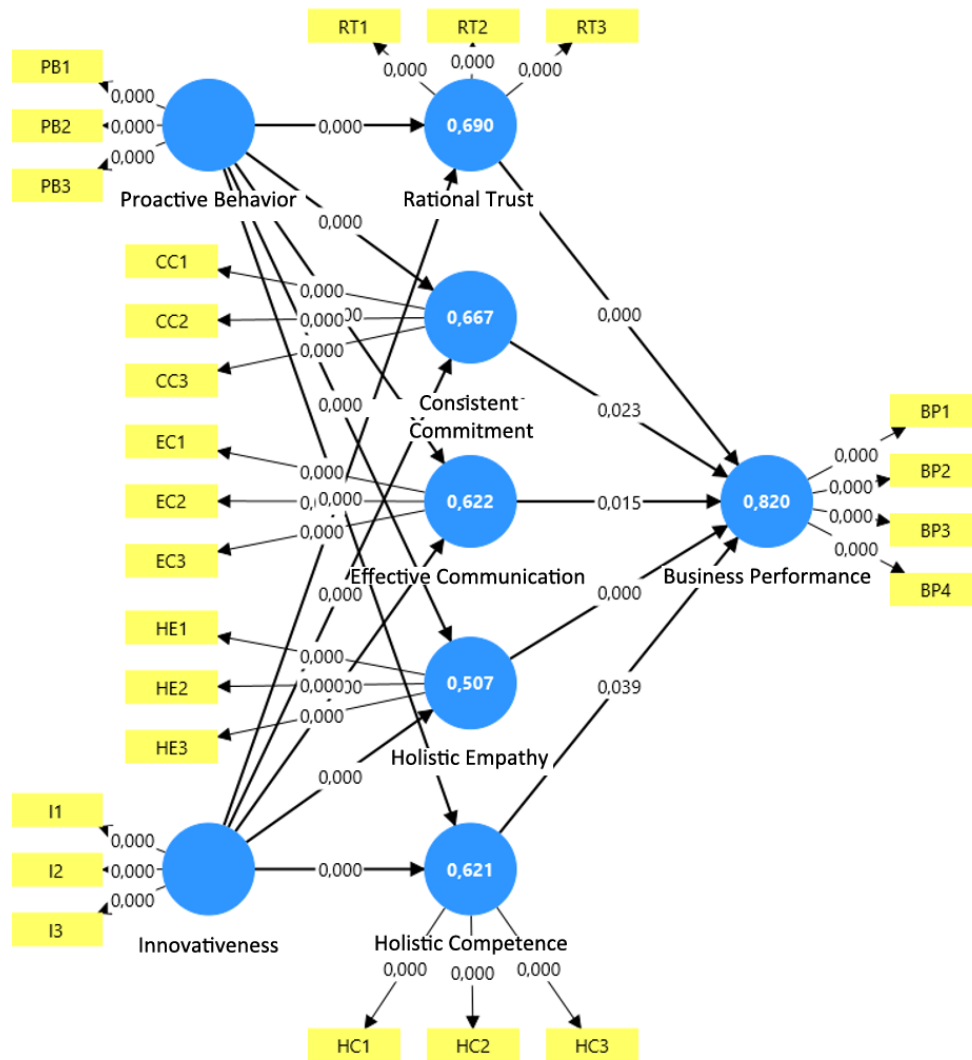
This table shows the hypothesis test

**Table 2.**  
Hypothesis test.

Hypothesys	Relationships	$\beta$	t	p	Descriptions
H1	Proactive Behavior $\rightarrow$ Rational Trust	0.504	7.297	0.000	Accepted
H2	Proactive Behavior $\rightarrow$ Consistent Commitment	0.514	7.437	0.000	Accepted
H3	Proactive Behavior $\rightarrow$ Effective Communication	0.497	6.379	0.000	Accepted
H4	Proactive Behavior $\rightarrow$ Holistic Competence	0.500	6.907	0.000	Accepted
H5	Proactive Behavior $\rightarrow$ Holistic Empathy	0.343	4.288	0.000	Accepted
H6	Innovativeness $\rightarrow$ Rational Trust	0.346	4.747	0.000	Accepted
H7	Innovativeness $\rightarrow$ Consistent Commitment	0.333	4.122	0.000	Accepted
H8	Innovativeness $\rightarrow$ Effective Communication	0.330	4.614	0.000	Accepted
H9	Innovativeness $\rightarrow$ Holistic Competence	0.408	4.644	0.000	Accepted
H10	Innovativeness $\rightarrow$ Holistic Empathy	0.346	4.747	0.000	Accepted
H11	Rational Trust $\rightarrow$ Business Performance	0.507	3.636	0.000	Accepted
H12	Consistent Commitment $\rightarrow$ Business Performance	0.290	2.276	0.023	Accepted
H13	Effective Communication $\rightarrow$ Business Performance	0.192	2.422	0.015	Accepted
H14	Holistic Competence $\rightarrow$ Business Performance	0.219	2.069	0.039	Accepted
H15	Holistic Empathy $\rightarrow$ Business Performance	0.219	4.088	0.000	Accepted

**Source:** The Processed Secondary Data (2025).





**Figure 2.**  
Estimated Path Coefficients.  
**Source:** The Processed Secondary Data (2025)

The following is a discussion of the results of hypothesis testing, focusing on the relationship between variables, key findings, practical implications, and support from previous literature. The discussion is organized systematically for each hypothesis, with an emphasis on the context of PT Perkebunan Nusantara (PTPN) I Regional 3 Central Java.

Proactive Behavior has a positive and significant influence on Rational Trust ( $\beta = 0.504$ ,  $t = 7.297$ ,  $p = 0.000$ ). In long-term business collaborations, rational trust is cultivated through deliberate, reliable interactions and logical assessments of a partner's credibility, capabilities, and consistency. Such trust is not built overnight but accrues gradually as partners observe competent, trustworthy behavior. The proactive dimension of EO reflects a firm's forward-looking initiative, actively identifying future opportunities and nurturing partner relationships. Empirical evidence suggests that proactivity enhances a firm's market-facing capabilities; proactive EO significantly boosts marketing activities such as market research, new product development, and pricing strategy. Proactive behavior, which reflects a firm's ability to actively identify and exploit opportunities, enhances partners' rational trust through

open communication and prompt responsiveness to market changes [37-39]. These results are consistent with van Houwelingen and van Dijke [39] who emphasize that trust is built through consistent and credible interactions, and Rashidi-Sabet and Bolton [38] who link proactivity with long-term relational capital.

Proactive Behavior has a positive and significant effect on Consistent Commitment ( $\beta = 0.514$ ,  $t = 7.437$ ,  $p = 0.000$ ). Consistent commitment in relationship marketing denotes a partner's steadfast, ongoing dedication to the collaboration, built through positive experiences, mutual assurance, and shared objectives over time. A firm's proactive behavior, such as early involvement of partners in innovation, transparent information sharing, and rapid response to market shifts, can foster partner confidence and certainty. In dynamic environments, proactivity creates a sense of security and solidarity; for instance, when firms proactively address crises or market changes, they reinforce partners' sense of stability and loyalty. Overall, a proactive orientation signals long-term concern for the relationship, which is expected to translate into more stable partner commitment [40-42]. The Consistent Commitment indicator includes loyalty to long-term cooperation, active involvement, and consistency in difficult conditions. Proactivity fosters partner commitment through collaboration and quick responses to market changes, in line with Shashishekar, et al. [42] and Bodlaj, et al. [40]. The ability to anticipate market changes remains a weakness that needs improvement.

Proactive Behavior has a positive and significant effect on Effective Communication ( $\beta = 0.497$ ,  $t = 6.379$ ,  $p = 0.000$ ). Entrepreneurial proactivity also facilitates effective communication between firms and their partners. By anticipating partner needs and environmental changes, proactive firms tend to establish open, timely channels for information flow. In practice, such firms invest in inter-departmental coordination and customer-relationship management processes that enhance responsiveness. Conversely, effective communication is a foundation for jointly understanding market dynamics and aligning strategies; without it, innovations and marketing capabilities cannot be fully leveraged. Thus, a strong proactive orientation is expected to stimulate clear, responsive communication in the partnership [37, 40, 41]. Effective Communication indicators include clarity, information transparency, and responsiveness. Proactivity facilitates open and responsive communication, supporting the findings of dos Santos and Vieira Marinho [37] and Petzold, et al. [41]. Weaknesses in the ability to anticipate market changes indicate the need for improved proactive communication.

Proactive Behavior has a positive and significant effect on Holistic Competence ( $\beta = 0.500$ ,  $t = 6.907$ ,  $p = 0.000$ ). Holistic competence in a partnership refers to a firm's integrated functional abilities – including innovation, market management, product development, and strategic adaptation – that create high-value cooperation. A proactive firm, by definition, continually builds and extends such capabilities. Proactiveness in EO enhances core marketing capabilities like market research and product development, which are constituents of holistic competence. Proactivity thus reinforces a firm's overall relational competency by strengthening these diverse skills [37, 43]. Indicators of Holistic Competence include knowledge and skills, adaptation and flexibility, and strategic thinking. Proactivity supports the development of holistic competence, consistent with dos Santos and Vieira Marinho [37] and Al Mamun and Fazal [43]. Weaknesses in the ability to anticipate market changes indicate the need for strategic training.

Proactive Behavior has a positive and significant effect on Holistic Empathy ( $\beta = 0.343$ ,  $t = 4.288$ ,  $p = 0.000$ ). Holistic empathy in the relationship-marketing context means a firm deeply understands and responds to its partner's overall needs, expectations, and constraints. A proactive orientation drives a firm to actively gather information about customer and partner preferences, anticipate market shifts, and engage partners openly. This approach inherently builds empathic understanding, as the firm considers partners' perspectives when innovating and communicating. Such mutual understanding fosters trust and cooperative outcomes [40, 41, 43]. Indicators of Holistic Empathy include the willingness to understand conditions, concern for mutual success, and responsiveness to feedback.

Proactivity fosters a deep understanding of partners, supporting Al Mamun and Fazal [43] and Bodlaj, et al. [40]. Weaknesses in the ability to anticipate market changes remain a challenge.

Innovativeness has a positive and significant effect on Rational Trust ( $\beta = 0.346$ ,  $t = 4.747$ ,  $p = 0.000$ ). Innovativeness the degree to which a firm introduces novel products, processes, or ideas can signal competence and future orientation, which underpins rational trust. Innovative behavior demonstrates a commitment to continual improvement and creating shared value. Empirical evidence supports this [44-46]. The indicators of Innovativeness include the development of new ideas, products, and processes. Innovation enhances rational trust through competence and adaptation, consistent with Geng, et al. [44] and Sichtmann and Diamantopoulos [46]. The indicator for new product development has the lowest mean value, indicating a need for product innovation at PTPN I Regional 3.

Innovativeness has a positive and significant effect on Consistent Commitment ( $\beta = 0.333$ ,  $t = 4.122$ ,  $p = 0.000$ ). Beyond single transactions, a firm's innovativeness contributes to long-term collaboration. An innovative firm is seen as adaptable and forward-thinking, creating sustainable value that partners want to preserve. Collaborative innovation (for example, joint development of new solutions) tends to strengthen partner loyalty: previous studies note that co-created innovations improve customer experiences and trust over time. Therefore, partners are more likely to remain committed when the firm continues to innovate [47, 48]. Innovation creates added value that supports partner commitment, consistent with Mahr, et al. [48] and Hur, et al. [47]. Weaknesses in new product development need to be addressed.

Innovativeness has a positive and significant effect on Effective Communication ( $\beta = 0.330$ ,  $t = 4.614$ ,  $p = 0.000$ ). Innovativeness also promotes effective communication. Organizations that innovate often implement processes (such as enhanced CRM systems) to share and integrate new knowledge quickly. For instance, research has shown that innovative internal processes foster better cross-functional and external communication by creating open channels for idea exchange. Indeed, Fu [82] argues that effective communication is a prerequisite for innovation, as it enables the dissemination of dispersed knowledge into new ideas. Consequently, a firm's innovativeness is expected to correlate with more open, responsive communication patterns in partnerships [49-51]. Innovation promotes responsive and relevant communication, supporting Tuominen, et al. [51] and Rîp and Nicolescu [50]. Weaknesses in new product development indicate the need for innovation in the communication process.

Innovativeness has a positive and significant effect on Holistic Competence ( $\beta = 0.408$ ,  $t = 4.644$ ,  $p = 0.000$ ). Holistic competence likewise benefits from innovativeness. Innovative firms tend to devise creative cross-functional solutions, enhance interdepartmental collaboration, and engage in co-creation with partners – all of which expand relational competence. Recent studies Lin, et al. [52]; Sellappan and Shanmugam [53] and Yu [54] suggest that firms with a strong innovation orientation develop higher organizational competence in managing market dynamics. In turn, this higher competence allows them to make better use of market knowledge and partner resources. Innovation enhances holistic competence through collaboration and adaptation, consistent with Yu [54] and Sellappan and Shanmugam [53]. Weaknesses in new product development need to be addressed.

Innovativeness has a positive and significant effect on Holistic Empathy ( $\beta = 0.346$ ,  $t = 4.747$ ,  $p = 0.000$ ). Finally, innovativeness can deepen holistic empathy. Innovative approaches often require understanding partner constraints, values, and emotional context. For example, emerging research on AI in relationship marketing suggests that interactive technologies (e.g. AI chatbots with “artificial empathy”) allow firms to better capture and respond to customer emotions and needs. In practice, when a firm focuses on innovation driven by customer and partner insights, it tends to develop solutions that resonate emotionally and socially with partners. As a result, the innovation process itself becomes reflective of an empathic orientation towards partners [55, 56]. Innovation oriented toward partner needs enhances holistic empathy, supporting Chaturvedi and Dasgupta [55] and Tuominen, et al. [56]. Weaknesses in new product development highlight the need for innovation that is relevant to partners.

Rational Trust has a positive and significant effect on Business Performance ( $\beta = 0.507$ ,  $t = 3.636$ ,  $p = 0.000$ ). In a partnership, rational trust based on reasoned confidence in a partner's abilities and reliability underlies successful joint performance. Interorganizational research finds that higher trust significantly enhances firm outcomes. For instance, Oláh, et al. [58] show that greater inter-organizational trust leads to better financial performance for companies. Trust reduces uncertainty and transaction costs, enabling more ambitious joint projects and innovation, which ultimately yield higher business results [57–59]. Business Performance indicators include sales, profitability, asset growth, and market share. Rational Trust enhances collaboration effectiveness, consistent with Oláh, et al. [58] and Karhapää, et al. [57]. The partner's professional reputation indicator has the lowest mean value, indicating the need for partner branding strategies.

Consistent Commitment has a positive and significant effect on Business Performance ( $\beta = 0.290$ ,  $t = 2.276$ ,  $p = 0.023$ ). Consistent commitment, the enduring willingness of partners to invest in the relationship, also drives performance. Stable commitment improves coordination, reduces conflict, and aligns resources toward shared goals. Prior work indicates that committed relationships enhance operational efficiency and market effectiveness. For example, in emerging markets strong, reliable commitment to relationship-marketing practices has been linked to superior market and financial performance [60–62]. Consistent commitment enhances efficiency and loyalty, supporting Badrinarayanan and Ramachandran [60] and Rebiazina, et al. [61]. Indicators of loyalty toward long-term cooperation need to be improved.

Effective Communication has a positive and significant effect on Business Performance ( $\beta = 0.192$ ,  $t = 2.422$ ,  $p = 0.015$ ). Effective communication is a well-established driver of organizational performance. When firms communicate clearly and promptly both internally and with their partners, they reduce errors, accelerate decision-making, and better meet customer needs. Empirical studies confirm this: one organizational study found that effective communication correlates with higher employee satisfaction, market share growth, and shareholder returns. Open, honest information sharing also builds trust and partner loyalty, which further supports performance goals [63, 64]. Effective communication enhances efficiency and partner satisfaction, consistent with Zulkeifli, et al. [64] and Brandt, et al. [63]. The responsiveness indicator has the lowest mean value, indicating the need for improvement.

Holistic Competence has a positive and significant effect on Business Performance ( $\beta = 0.219$ ,  $t = 2.069$ ,  $p = 0.039$ ). Holistic competence in relationships creates high-quality collaboration and superior business outcomes. Firms with high relational competence can extract maximum value from partnerships – for example, by accelerating innovation, expanding markets faster, and leveraging shared knowledge. Recent findings indicate that companies demonstrating strong capability integration achieve better cooperative results and competitive standing [53, 65, 66]. Holistic competence improves efficiency and competitive position, in line with Apreku-Djan, et al. [65] and Yahaya and Segbenya [66]. Knowledge and skill indicators need to be improved.

Holistic Empathy has a positive and significant effect on Business Performance ( $\beta = 0.219$ ,  $t = 4.088$ ,  $p = 0.000$ ). Finally, holistic empathy contributes to performance by strengthening the relational foundation of the partnership. A firm that fully understands its partner's context and needs can better support them and co-develop solutions, which fosters deep trust and joint innovation. In B2B contexts, empathic relationships have been associated with improved governance and information sharing, enabling more effective co-innovation and problem-solving. These positive dynamics translate into stronger long-term outcomes [11, 67, 68]. Holistic empathy enhances trust and relationship quality, supporting Obafemi, et al. [11] and Schwepker Jr and Dimitriou [67]. The indicator of willingness to understand conditions has the lowest mean value.

## 5. Conclusion and Implications

Conclusion all hypotheses (H1–H15) were supported, confirming the positive impact of Proactive Behavior and Innovativeness on MRM components, which in turn enhance Business Performance. The

model shows strong predictive power ( $R\text{-Square} > 0.5$ ), with Business Performance having the highest (0.820). Several weaknesses were noted, especially in anticipatory capabilities, product innovation, and relational trust.

Theoretical implications are that the study reinforces the Resource Advantage Theory [33] and Market-Based Assets [34] by integrating Maslahah values into MRM. MRM is presented as a novel, value-based approach suitable for Islamic business contexts. Practical implications are for PTPN I Regional 3: Enhance market anticipation, product innovation, and communication through training, CRM tech, and partner involvement. For Business Partners: Foster collaborative marketing and information sharing. For Future Research: Apply this model in other industries or include moderating variables like market environment.

Limitations are that some indicators had low mean values, indicating implementation challenges. Certain references require further verification. This study is limited to B2B in the plantation sector; generalization to other industries needs further validation. Despite offering insightful findings, this study presents several limitations that open avenues for future agenda. First, the presence of low mean values in certain indicators suggests operational or perceptual challenges in practical implementation. Future studies could employ longitudinal designs or mixed-method approaches to delve deeper into the root causes of these weak indicators—particularly by engaging in field observations or qualitative interviews to capture underlying contextual barriers and behavioral dynamics. Such depth would enrich understanding and improve the applicability of constructs like Proactive Behavior, Holistic Empathy, or Consistent Commitment across different organizational tiers. Second, require further empirical verification, upcoming research should seek to either replicate or extend these findings using larger, more diverse datasets. Meta-analytical techniques or cross-cultural validations may also be employed to assess the robustness and generalizability of the referenced theoretical underpinnings. Lastly, as this study is confined to the B2B context within the plantation sector, its findings may not be fully generalizable across industries. Future research should aim to validate the Maslahah Relationship Marketing (MRM) framework in varied sectors such as manufacturing, services, digital platforms, or non-profit organizations. Sectoral comparisons could yield nuanced insights into how entrepreneurial orientation and Islamic value-based relational strategies manifest differently across contexts. Moreover, integrating industry-specific moderators like regulatory environment, digital maturity, or consumer religiosity may sharpen theoretical contribution and practical relevance.

### Transparency:

The authors confirm that the manuscript is an honest, accurate, and transparent account of the study; that no vital features of the study have been omitted; and that any discrepancies from the study as planned have been explained. This study followed all ethical practices during writing.

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