

The Influence Of Green Creativity On Sustainable Business Performance Thru Green Competitive Advantage As A Mediating Variable (Study on MSMEs in the Food and Beverage Sector in Bandar Lampung)

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Abstract

This research aims to analyze the influence of Green Creativity on Sustainable Business Performance with Green Competitive Advantage as a mediating variable in the food and beverage SMEs in Bandar Lampung. The background of the research is based on the increasing demand for sustainable business practices in the MSME sector, but there are still limitations in translating green creativity into competitive advantage. The research uses a quantitative approach with a sample of 158 culinary MSME actors who implement environmentally friendly practices. A five-point Likert scale questionnaire was employed for data collection, and the data were subsequently analyzed using Partial Least Squares Structural Equation Modeling (PLS-SEM) version 4.0. The results demonstrate that Green Creativity positively and significantly impacts Sustainable Business Performance as well as Green Competitive Advantage, yielding a path coefficient value of 0.833. Green Competitive Advantage has a significant positive effect on Sustainable Business Performance with a coefficient of 0.398 and partially mediates the effect of Green Creativity on Sustainable Business Performance with an indirect coefficient of 0.331. UMKM actors are advised to optimize environmentally-based creativity and build green competitive advantage to enhance sustainable business performance.



Keywords: Green Creativity, Sustainable Competitive Advantage, Sustainable Business Performance, MSMEs in the Food and Beverage Sector

INTRODUCTION

Green business is an enterprise that uses natural and environmentally friendly materials from the production process to the final product, while also saving energy and reducing pollution (Makki et al., 2020). The success of this practice depends on green creativity, which is the ability to generate unique and innovative ideas oriented toward sustainability, thereby supporting environmental preservation while also becoming a competitive advantage (Pradani, 2023; Chen & Chang, 2013). Research shows that green creativity can enhance green competitive advantage, although SMEs still face challenges related to costs and resource limitations (Setyaningrum et al., 2023; Ramadhani Abanan et al., 2024). SMEs, a vital sector in the Indonesian economy, significantly contribute to job creation and community welfare (Budi & Sundiman, 2021; Suresmiathi & Ariani, 2013).

In Lampung, the number of SMEs increased from 147,556 units in 2020 to 192,234 units in 2022, indicating rapid local entrepreneurial growth (Ministry of Cooperatives and SMEs, 2023). The right green creativity strategy can drive green innovation and enhance the sustainable business performance of MSMEs. The growth of MSMEs in Lampung Province shows an increasing trend each year, with the highest surge in 2022, reflecting the large number of people starting small and medium enterprises, particularly in the food and beverage sector, which is attractive due to its creative and innovative opportunities. Based on data from the Cooperative and MSME Office of Bandar Lampung City, the number of MSMEs reached 59,488 units, with 790 units operating in the culinary sector.

However, the increase in the number of MSMEs has not been in line with environmental management, as the food and beverage industry generates significant plastic and styrofoam waste, while business actors' awareness of sustainability remains low. A pre-survey of 127 culinary SMEs shows the application of green creativity, such as the use of eco-friendly packaging, organic raw materials, waste management, energy efficiency, and sustainable marketing, although the levels and intensities vary, indicating the initial efforts of SMEs to integrate sustainable business principles. All respondents (100%) have been recorded as starting to implement green creativity, although still minimal and in different forms and intensities. The majority of SMEs (64.6%) have been operating for more than one year, while the remaining 35.4% are still relatively new (≤ 1 year).

Is your business starting to implement green creativity (innovative environmentally friendly practices)? 127 answers

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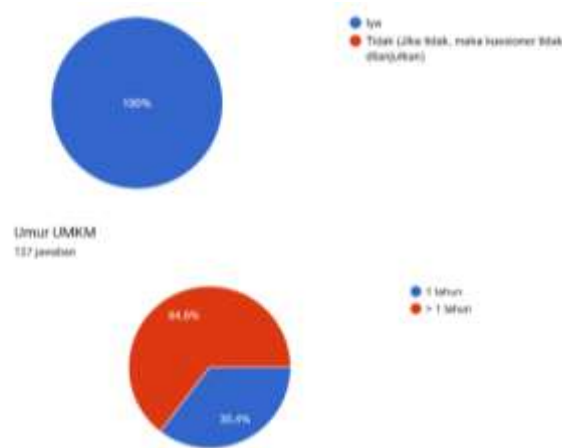


Figure 1. Responses from SMEs that have started implementing green creativity and the age of SMEs

Source: Summary of respondents' answers on Google Form

The pre-survey results show that the most dominant green creativity practices applied by culinary SMEs in Bandar Lampung are the use of biodegradable packaging (85.8%), followed by digital marketing innovation (26.8%), selection of organic/local raw materials (21.3%), low-emission distribution (6.3%), waste management (3.9%), and water conservation (2.4%), while energy efficiency and green operations have not yet been implemented (0%). These findings indicate an initial awareness of environmentally friendly practices, but their implementation is still limited, so green creativity has not yet optimally driven sustainable business performance.

Green competitive advantage becomes the key to bridging green creativity so that it impacts the triple bottom line of economy, society, and environment. Previous studies have emphasized that the transformation of green creativity into green competitive advantage enhances the competitiveness of SMEs. However, most research has been limited to large industrial sectors or metropolitan areas.

Therefore, this study fills the gap by examining the mediating role of green competitive advantage in the context of culinary SMEs in Bandar Lampung, providing practical contributions for business actors and policymakers. For culinary SMEs in Bandar Lampung, it is important to examine how green creativity can be converted into green competitive advantage that impacts the achievement of the triple bottom line (economic, social, and environmental).

Previous studies have shown that green creativity has the potential to build green competitive advantage (Li et al., 2020), but most research still focuses on large industrial sectors or metropolitan areas (Setyaningrum et al., 2023) and tends to only test direct effects without considering the role of mediation. In fact, green creativity often only optimally impacts sustainable business performance when transformed into superior competitive strategies (Zameer et al., 2022). Therefore, there is a research gap regarding the comprehensive testing of the role of green competitive advantage as a mediator in the relationship between green creativity and sustainable business performance, particularly in the context of SMEs in Bandar Lampung, making this research relevant both theoretically and practically.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Business

Modern business is understood as a process of creating, delivering, and capturing value sustainably. Geissdoerfer et al. (2020) assert that business models are not only profit-oriented but also encompass economic, social, and cultural values. However, this concept is still dynamic and does not yet have a single definition (Perić et al., 2017).

In the era of digitalization and sustainability, Palmié et al. (2025) emphasize the integration of digital transformation with sustainability principles, where the ability to adapt to new business models becomes the key to long-term competitive advantage (Evans et al., 2017). The increasing environmental awareness also drives the development of sustainable business models, including in SMEs influenced by internal and external factors (Shakeel et al., 2020; Geissdoerfer et al., 2018). Additionally, innovation can be achieved thru the integration of business model patterns to foster creativity and sustainability (Lüdeke-Freund et al., 2019). The transformation toward sustainable business models also demands changes in mission, governance, and accountability thru value-based and ethical leadership (Bini et al., 2018).

Sustainable Business Performance

Sustainable business performance is the ability of an organization to achieve economic goals while also considering social and environmental aspects in the long term. The Triple Bottom Line concept (John Elkington, 1997) emphasizes three main dimensions: economic, social, and environmental, so that companies not only pursue profit but also take responsibility for their social and ecological impacts. Sustainable practices not only support development and environmental conservation but also strengthen the



company's image and competitive advantage (Almeida & Wasim, 2023; Mahmood & Bashir, 2020).

Company performance reflects the effectiveness of strategies and operations in achieving organizational goals (Goni et al., 2021) and becomes an important factor in competition (Haseeb et al., 2019). Djalic et al. (2021) divide sustainable performance into environmental efficiency related to conservation and management of ecological impacts and economic efficiency reflected in the company's financial achievements over time. Sustainable business practices also demand ethical and value-oriented leadership to support long-term social and environmental missions (Jelmer & Stellingwerf, 2012).

According to Larbi-Siaw et al. (2022), indicators of sustainable business performance include increased market share and net income, reduced costs of sustainable products, providing sustainable value to consumers, improved social image, employee training in environmentally friendly innovation, and transparency in public information. Additionally, the indicators include health and safety assurance, the implementation of environmental sustainability measures for pollution control, prioritization of clean production, environmentally friendly efficiency, and the development of green competencies to manage environmental impact, thereby reflecting the integration of economic, social, and environmental aspects in the company's performance.

Green Creativity

Green creativity is the ability to generate innovative ideas, practices, or processes that consider environmental, social, and economic sustainability (Chen & Chang, 2013). In the context of SMEs, green creativity differentiates environmentally friendly businesses and provides a strategic response to sustainability demands thru responsible innovation (Setyaningrum et al., 2023; Adomako & Nguyen, 2023). These practices include the development of environmentally friendly products, improvements in production processes, and innovative management systems, influenced by leadership, motivation, and experience, although limited by resources and production costs (Li et al., 2020; Song & Yu, 2018).

Based on the research by Adomako and Nguyen (2023), green creativity can be measured thru several indicators as follows: (1) Proposing new ways to achieve environmental goals. (2) Presenting new green ideas to improve environmental performance. (3) Motivating and supporting green ideas to others. (4) Developing adequate plans to implement new green ideas. (5) Reviewing green ideas. (6) Finding creative solutions to environmental problems.

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Green Competitive Advantage

Green Competitive Advantage is a sustainable competitive advantage obtained through environmental strategies and innovations that are difficult to imitate, rooted in the Resource-Based View (RBV) which emphasizes unique and irreplaceable internal resources (Lin & Chen, 2017; Kuo et al., 2022). This advantage is created through the management of costs, quality, green innovation, creativity, technology, and environmental knowledge to create sustainable value (Chang, 2011; Zameer et al., 2022).

In SMEs, green creativity and business independence drive differentiation based on environmentally friendly products, such as green batik or recycled packaging, while also serving as a mediator between green creativity and sustainable business performance, enhancing efficiency, consumer loyalty, and market position (Setyaningrum et al., 2023). Based on Lin & Chen (2017), the indicators of green competitive advantage include (1) the company's ability to have a low-cost advantage in environmental management or eco-friendly innovation, (2) offering better quality eco-friendly products or services, (3) conducting environmental research and development, and (4) managing environmental aspects more effectively than main competitors.

IMPLEMENTATION METHOD**Types of Data**

The research method used in this study is the quantitative method. The population in this study consists of 790 food and beverage SMEs in the city of Bandar Lampung (Department of Cooperatives and SMEs of Bandar Lampung), with a minimum required sample size between 110 and 220 respondents. The Partial Least Square (PLS) method was processed using SmartPLS software and analyzed by the author. The model evaluation process is carried out through two testing phases, namely the External Model and the Internal Model.

DISCUSSION**Outer Model****Table 1. Outer Loading Values**

Variable	Indicator	Outer Loading	Explanation
Green Creativity (X)	X1.1	0,850	Valid
	X1.2	0,839	Valid



Sustainable Business Performance (Y)	X1.3	0,775	Valid
	X1.4	0,858	Valid
	X1.5	0,830	Valid
	X1.6	0,835	Valid
	Y1.1	0,771	Valid
	Y1.2	0,800	Valid
	Y1.3	0,708	Valid
	Y1.4	0,825	Valid
	Y1.5	0,834	Valid
	Y1.6	0,820	Valid
	Y1.7	0,775	Valid
	Y1.8	0,785	Valid
	Y1.9	0,731	Valid
	Y1.10	0,706	Valid
	Y1.11	0,722	Valid
	Y1.12	0,721	Valid
Green Competitive Advantage (Z)	Z1.1	0,786	Valid
	Z1.2	0,865	Valid
	Z1.3	0,881	Valid
	Z1.4	0,817	Valid

Source: Results from Smart PLS and data processed by the author (2026)

Table 1 shows outer loading values of 0.4–0.7, indicating the consistency of the indicators. Convergent validity is also met because the AVE value ≥ 0.5 , thus the construct is able to explain $\geq 50\%$ of the indicator variance (Hair et al., 2021). The AVE results were processed using SmartPLS v3.

Table 2. Average Variance Extracted (AVE) Values

Variable	AVE	Explanation
Green Creativity (X)	0,691	Valid
Green Competitive Advantage (Z)	0,703	Valid
Sustainable Business Performance (Y)	0,590	Valid

Source: Results from Smart PLS and data processed by the author (2026)



Reliability Test**Table 3. Cronbach's Alpha and Composite Reliability Values**

Variable	Cronbach's Alpha	Composite Reliability	Explanation
<i>Green Creativity (X)</i>	0,910	0,931	<i>Reliable</i>
<i>Green Competitive Advantage (Z)</i>	0,859	0,904	<i>Reliable</i>
<i>Sustainable Business Performance (Y)</i>	0,937	0,945	<i>Reliable</i>

Source: Results from Smart PLS and data processed by the author (2026)

Based on Table 3. all variables have a Cronbach's Alpha (CA) and Composite Reliability (CR) value ≥ 0.70 , thus they are declared reliable and meet the minimum testing criteria.

Hypothesis Testing**Table 4. Path Coefficient Values from Bootstrapping**

Variable	Original sample (O)	Sample mean (M)	Standard deviation (STDEV)	T Statistics	P values
<i>Green Creativity (X) -> Sustainable Business Performance (Y)</i>	0,560	0,556	0,070	7,964	0,000
<i>Green Creativity (X) -> Green Competitive Advantage (Z)</i>	0,833	0,830	0,040	20,981	0,000
<i>Green Competitive Advantage (Z) -> Sustainable Business Performance (Y)</i>	0,398	0,403	0,069	5,797	0,000

Source: Results from Smart PLS and data processed by the author (2026)



According to Hair et al. (2022), a hypothesis can be accepted if it has a p-value <0.05. Thru the table above, conclusions can be drawn for each hypothesis as follows:

Table 5. Hypothesis Test Results

Hypothesis	Relationship	Result	Explanation
H1	<i>Green Creativity (X) -> Sustainable Business Performance (Y)</i>	<i>Path coefficient</i> = 0,560 T- Statistics = 7,964 P Value =0,000	Supported
H2	<i>Green Creativity (X) -> Green Competitive Advantage (Z)</i>	<i>Path coefficient</i> = 0,833 T- Statistics = 20,981 P Value =0,000	Supported
H3	<i>Green Competitive Advantage (Z) -> Sustainable Business Performance (Y)</i>	<i>Path coefficient</i> = 0,398 T- Statistics = 5,797 P Value =0,000	Supported

Source: Results from Smart PLS and data processed by the author (2026)

1. H1: Green Creativity has a positive and significant effect on Sustainable Business Performance, with a path coefficient (β) of 0.560 and a p-value < 0.05. This indicates that the higher the application of Green Creativity, the better the Sustainable Business Performance. Therefore, H1 is supported.
2. H2: Green Creativity has a positive and significant effect on Green Competitive Advantage, with a path coefficient (β) of 0.833 and a p-value < 0.05. This finding indicates that the increase in Green Creativity strongly drives the creation of environmentally-based competitive advantage. Therefore, H2 is supported.
3. H3: Green Competitive Advantage has a positive and significant effect on Sustainable Business Performance, with a path coefficient (β) of 0.398 and a p-value < 0.05. This means that the higher the environmentally-based competitive



advantage, the better the Sustainable Business Performance. Therefore, H3 is supported. Thus, H3 is supported.

Inner Model

Table 6. R-Square Value

Variable	R-square	R-square adjusted
Green Competitive Advantage (Z)	0,694	0,692
Sustainable Business Performance (Y)	0,843	0,841

Source: Results from Smart PLS and data processed by the author (2026)

The R-square value for Green Competitive Advantage (Z) is 0.694 (adjusted 0.692), while the Sustainable Business Performance (Y) is 0.843 (adjusted 0.841). Referring to the criteria of Hair et al. (2021), an R-square of 0.694 is classified as moderate, indicating that Green Creativity explains 69.4% of the variation in Green Competitive Advantage. Meanwhile, an R-square of 0.843 is classified as substantial, meaning that Green Creativity and Green Competitive Advantage simultaneously explain 84.3% of the variation in Sustainable Business Performance. Thus, the structural model has strong predictive ability.

Mediation Test

Table 7. Specific Indirect Effect Values

Variable	Original sample (O)	Sample mean (M)	Standard deviation (STDEV)	T Statistics	P values
Green Creativity (X) -> Green Competitive Advantage (Z) -> Sustainable Business Performance (Y)	0,331	0,335	0,062	5,320	0,000

Source: Results from Smart PLS and data processed by the author (2026)

- H4: The mediation test results show that Green Competitive Advantage mediates the effect of Green Creativity on Sustainable Business Performance with an indirect



coefficient of 0.331 and a p-value < 0.05, thus H4 is accepted. The direct effect of Green Creativity on Sustainable Business Performance is also significant ($\beta = 0.560$; $p < 0.05$). Because both the direct and indirect effects are significant and in the same direction (positive), partial (complementary) mediation occurs, meaning that Green Creativity affects Sustainable Business Performance both directly and thru Green Competitive Advantage.

DISCUSSION

The Influence of Green Creativity on Sustainable Business Performance

Based on the research results on MSMEs in the food and beverage sector in Bandar Lampung, green creativity has been proven to have a positive and significant impact on sustainable business performance, with a path coefficient value of 0.560 supporting the research hypothesis.

Descriptive analysis shows that the highest indicator is the ability to manage environmental impact (4.35), followed by prioritizing clean production processes (4.33) and pollution control (4.28), while reducing production costs has the lowest value (3.78), indicating that some SMEs still face short-term cost efficiency barriers.

The application of green creativity encourages an increase in market share (4.18), net income (4.15), and the social image of SMEs (4.05), reflecting appreciation. consumers toward environmentally friendly products and the successful integration of economic, social, and environmental dimensions according to the Triple Bottom Line concept (John Elkington, 1997). These findings are consistent with previous studies that demonstrate the positive impact of green creativity on sustainable business performance, both in SMEs and other organizations, including Alfadel and Nalband (2023) in Saudi Arabia, Ayu Widhiastuti and Muafi (2022) on batik SMEs in Sleman, and Yulaeli et al. (2024) in traditional markets in Jakarta.

Green creativity serves as the main driver in creating sustainable business solutions, opening opportunities for product and business model innovation, and strengthening competitive advantage. Thus, the implementation of green creativity in SMEs requires a structured strategy and integrated environmental awareness in operations to enhance sustainable business performance.

The Influence of Green Creativity on Green Competitive Advantage

Based on research on MSMEs in the food and beverage sector in Bandar Lampung, green creativity has been proven to have a positive and significant impact on green



competitive advantage, with a path coefficient value of 0.833 supporting the research hypothesis. Descriptive analysis shows that the highest indicator is the ability to find new ways to make the business more environmentally friendly (4.29), such as the use of biodegradable packaging, organic and local raw materials, and the utilization of digital platforms for marketing.

The lowest indicator is the promotion of environmentally friendly ideas to employees or business partners (3.88), indicating the need for improved dissemination of knowledge and internal collaboration. Green creativity not only provides ecological benefits but also enhances the quality of eco-friendly products and services (4.11), creates differentiation, and intangible assets in the form of knowledge and skills that are difficult for competitors to imitate. These findings are consistent with previous research that highlights the role of green creativity as a key antecedent of green competitive advantage across various sectors, including manufacturing, hospitality, and the green industry (Baah et al., 2024; Salama et al., 2024; Zameer et al., 2020; Zhang, 2024).

Thus, the development of green creativity in SMEs requires a comprehensive strategy to foster a culture of sustainable innovation, enhance internal collaboration, and integrate environmental creativity as part of a competitive strategy to achieve sustainable competitive advantage.

The Influence of Green Competitive Advantage on Sustainable Business Performance

The research results show that green competitive advantage has a positive and significant impact on the sustainable business performance of food and beverage SMEs in Bandar Lampung, with a path coefficient of 0.833. Environmental-based competitive advantages, such as the quality of eco-friendly products (4.11) and the ability to manage environmental impacts (4.05), are the main drivers of improvements in economic, social, and environmental performance.

High-quality products and good environmental management not only enhance market share, revenue, and social image but also operational efficiency and regulatory compliance. However, cost barriers in implementing environmentally friendly practices (3.79) still pose a challenge for SMEs with limited resources, especially regarding investments in organic raw materials, green technology, and waste management.

These findings are consistent with previous studies that affirm the role of green competitive advantage as a driver of sustainable performance, both in SMEs and large companies, thru the differentiation of eco-friendly products, green reputation, and effective

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environmental impact management (Bintara et al., 2023; Yusriza et al., 2020; Haseeb et al., 2019; Ermitajani Judi & Darmawan, 2022).

Based on the Resource-Based View (RBV) perspective, green competitive advantage is an intangible resource that is rare, valuable, and difficult to imitate, enabling SMEs to create sustainable added value. To optimize its utilization, support in the form of incentives, training, and access to green financing from the government can help SMEs overcome cost constraints in implementing environmentally friendly practices.

The Role of Green Competitive Advantage as a Mediator of the Influence of Green Creativity on Sustainable Business Performance

The research results show that green competitive advantage acts as a positive and significant partial mediator in the relationship between green creativity and the sustainable business performance of food and beverage SMEs in Bandar Lampung, with a path coefficient of 0.331. These findings indicate that the influence of green creativity on sustainable business performance is not only direct but also strengthened thru the creation of environmentally-based competitive advantages that are difficult for competitors to imitate. The green competitive advantage formed from green creativity has a positive impact on the economic dimension (increased sales and profitability), social dimension (positive image and consumer loyalty), and environmental dimension (reduction of negative impact on the ecosystem).

These findings are in line with previous studies that emphasize the crucial role of green competitive advantage as a mechanism that translates green innovation into sustainable business performance, both in SMEs and large companies and the service sector (Romadhon et al., 2025; Sudirman et al., 2024; Novitasari & Agustia, 2023; Baquero, 2024). Thus, SMEs need to focus not only on green creativity practices but also on the development and maintenance of sustainable green competitive advantage to strengthen market position, attract environmentally conscious consumers, enhance loyalty, and comprehensively drive sustainable business performance.

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

This study shows that Green Creativity has a positive and significant impact on the Sustainable Business Performance of food and beverage SMEs in Bandar Lampung, where sustainability-oriented innovative ideas enhance economic, social, and environmental performance. Green Creativity also significantly drives Green Competitive Advantage, creating high-value differentiation that is difficult for competitors to imitate and

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strengthening sustainable competitiveness. Furthermore, Green Competitive Advantage positively affects Sustainable Business Performance and partially mediates the relationship between Green Creativity and business performance, so green creativity enhances performance both directly and by strengthening environmentally-based competitive advantage.

Based on the research findings, several recommendations for food and beverage SMEs in Bandar Lampung are: enhancing the promotion and implementation of eco-friendly ideas to employees and partners to maximize the contribution of Green Creativity; improving the cost efficiency of eco-friendly practices to strengthen Green Competitive Advantage; and optimizing operational efficiency based on green practices to enhance environmental performance and support business sustainability. For future research, it is recommended to focus on one dimension of Green Creativity for a deeper understanding, add moderating variables such as government support or access to financing, and use a mixed-method approach to comprehensively explore the processes, strategies, and challenges of implementing eco-friendly practices.

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