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Transforming Consumer Insights into Community Action through Participatory Action Research at Nuju Coffee

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Abstract. This community service activity aimed to transform consumer insights into collective community action at Nuju Coffee through a Participatory Action Research (PAR) approach. The activity was motivated by the need to strengthen the role of local coffee shops not merely as commercial spaces but also as community spaces where consumers can contribute ideas, identify shared needs, and participate in service improvement. The PAR process involved consumers, coffee shop management, and community members through several interconnected stages, including problem identification, participatory observation, dialogue, reflection, action planning, implementation, and evaluation. Consumer experiences and suggestions were treated as community knowledge that could be transformed into practical improvement initiatives. The findings indicate that consumer insights revealed several opportunities related to customer experience, communication, content creation, community interaction, and the development of a more participatory coffee shop environment. Through collective discussion and reflection, these insights were translated into community-based actions, including improvements in customer engagement, social media communication, customer-generated content, and opportunities for community interaction. The activity demonstrates that PAR can position consumers not simply as service recipients but as active community actors who contribute to identifying problems, designing solutions, implementing actions, and evaluating outcomes. Thus, transforming consumer insights into community action provides a practical pathway for strengthening customer engagement, building social relationships, and developing the competitiveness of local coffee shops through community participation. This activity highlights the importance of participatory communication in connecting consumer knowledge with collaborative action and sustainable community development.

Keywords: Consumer Insights; Participatory Action Research; Community Action; Consumer Engagement; Coffee Shop; Participatory Communication.

1. Introduction

Coffee shops have increasingly developed beyond their traditional function as places for consuming beverages and have become social spaces where people meet,

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communicate, work, exchange ideas, and build interpersonal relationships (Hapsari & Wijaya, 2024; Jang & Lee, 2019; Vu et al., 2025). This development reflects the broader concept of the coffee shop as a “third place,” namely a social environment located between home and work that facilitates informal interaction and community formation (Mussnug & Reza, 2016). In such an environment, consumers should not be positioned merely as buyers who exchange money for products, but as social actors who possess experiences, ideas, skills, networks, and knowledge that can contribute to the development of the space they use. Harrison et al. (2019), through the Asset-Based Community Development perspective, emphasize that sustainable community development should begin by identifying and mobilizing the assets already possessed by community members rather than focusing exclusively on their problems or deficiencies. In the context of a coffee shop, consumer experiences, preferences, creative abilities, social networks, and willingness to participate can therefore be understood as valuable community assets. Ideally, a coffee shop such as Nuju Coffee can function not only as a commercial enterprise but also as a participatory community space in which consumers and management collaboratively identify problems, exchange knowledge, formulate solutions, and create shared value (Maulida & Alam, 2025; Oktaviani & Andala Rama Putra Barusman, 2025). This orientation is consistent with the argument of Prahalad & Ramaswamy (2004) that value creation is increasingly shifting from a firm-centered process toward co-creation through meaningful interaction between organizations and consumers.

This ideal condition, however, encounters a more complex reality in the development of local coffee shops. The rapid growth of coffee shops has intensified competition and encouraged business actors to concentrate on product quality, visual identity, digital promotion, customer experience, and social media engagement. Recent studies in Indonesia demonstrate that customer engagement has become an important concern for coffee shop businesses. Alboji et al. (2024), for example, found that customer engagement influences customer participation in the Instagram activities of a local coffee shop brand. Similarly, Devita & Kania (2021) showed how social media activities were used by Anomali Coffee to maintain relationships with consumers during the COVID-19 pandemic. More recent evidence indicates that coffee shops are increasingly attempting to build communities through interpersonal communication, social media, educational activities, and community events (Lidya Maria & Ade Budi Santoso, 2024). Research by Hazaea & Qassem (2025) also shows that community-based coffee shop branding can be strengthened through the use of the coffee shop as a third place, the role of baristas as social facilitators, and the creation of shared community rituals. These findings indicate that consumers already possess an important role in shaping the social and relational value of coffee shops. Nevertheless, in many cases, consumer participation remains concentrated on interaction, promotion, feedback, or loyalty rather than being systematically transformed into collective action for improving the community space.

Consumer engagement provides an important foundation for understanding this phenomenon. Zheng et al. (2022) conceptualize customer engagement as a multidimensional and dynamic process emerging from interactive experiences between consumers and organizations, with engagement potentially contributing to value co-creation. Ertz & Ouerghemmi (2026) consequently move the discussion of consumers beyond the traditional role of passive recipients toward participants who interact with brands and other community members. Ramaswamy (2008) and Ross (2025) similarly argue that informed, networked, and active consumers increasingly participate in co-



creating value through interaction with organizations. Empirical studies of coffee shops support this perspective, Quach et al. (2020) demonstrate the relationship between customer engagement and customer participation in social media, while Rahman et al. (2025) report that community marketing can strengthen customer loyalty through open communication, regular interaction, and community-relevant activities. These studies provide factual evidence that consumer participation can generate relational and economic benefits. However, most of the existing literature still approaches consumer engagement from the perspective of marketing outcomes, such as loyalty, revisit intention, brand awareness, social media interaction, or competitive advantage. The consumer is therefore frequently measured as a source of response or engagement data rather than recognized as a participant in a collaborative process of diagnosing problems, planning interventions, implementing actions, and reflecting on outcomes.

This situation reveals an important research and community-service gap. Existing studies have extensively examined how coffee shops can utilize social media, branding, customer experience, community marketing, and interpersonal communication to increase customer engagement. For example, recent research has examined the influence of Instagram marketing on consumer engagement and revisit intention, while other studies have investigated community-based branding and social interaction as mechanisms for strengthening customer loyalty. Such studies are valuable, but they generally employ descriptive qualitative, survey, or case-study approaches that position consumers primarily as respondents or customers. Meanwhile, community service studies using PAR have generally focused on broader community empowerment, microenterprise capacity building, rural development, or agricultural communities. Recent community-service research, for instance, demonstrates the application of PAR for empowering microenterprises through participatory assessment, collaborative planning, capacity building, monitoring, and sustainability planning (García-Arca et al., 2024; Rahmat & Mirnawati, 2020). Another recent initiative involving coffee businesses applied a modified PAR approach to improve managerial capacity among Kupa Aceh enterprises in Medan (Lazuardi et al., 2026). These studies confirm the usefulness of PAR in community empowerment, but there remains limited attention to how consumer insights within a coffee shop can be systematically transformed into community knowledge and then into collective action. The gap therefore lies not simply in the absence of consumer participation, but in the limited methodological connection between consumer insight, participatory reflection, collective decision-making, and concrete community action.

The novelty of the present community service activity lies in positioning consumer insights as an entry point for participatory community action through PAR. Rather than treating consumer feedback as an end-product of evaluation, this activity treats consumer experiences, suggestions, observations, and everyday interactions as forms of local knowledge that can initiate a cycle of collective inquiry and action. Following the participatory logic developed by Kemmis et al. (2014), PAR emphasizes participation, practice, critical reflection, and action as interconnected processes rather than separating research from intervention. In the context of Nuju Coffee, this approach creates a pathway from listening to consumers toward jointly identifying issues, discussing possible responses, implementing agreed actions, and reflecting on the results. Instead, it identifies existing consumer knowledge, relationships, creativity, experiences, and willingness to participate as resources that can be mobilized. Such an approach distinguishes the activity from conventional coffee-shop marketing interventions because its primary emphasis is



not simply on increasing promotional performance but on developing the capacity of consumers and management to work together as participants in community development.

The significance of this approach is both practical and scholarly. Practically, transforming consumer insights into community action can help Nuju Coffee develop a more responsive and inclusive environment in which consumers have opportunities to contribute to service improvement, communication, content creation, community interaction, and other activities relevant to their shared experiences. This is important because customer engagement becomes more meaningful when it moves beyond likes, comments, visits, and purchasing behavior toward active participation in the creation of shared value. Brodie et al. (2011) emphasize that engagement is fundamentally relational and interactive, while Prahalad & Ramaswamy (2004) highlight interaction as a central locus of value co-creation. From a community-development perspective, this process can strengthen social relationships and encourage a sense of ownership among participants. The relevance is also supported by recent studies showing that community-oriented coffee shops can function as social ecosystems rather than merely consumption spaces. Amelia et al. (2025), for example, found that community-based coffee shop branding in Medan is supported by the third-place function, social facilitation, and shared rituals, while Priyono et al. (2024) demonstrated that a community-based coffee shop can become a hub for entrepreneurial ecosystem development through stakeholder collaboration and co-value creation. Thus, the significance of the present activity extends beyond Nuju Coffee as an individual business: it demonstrates how a locally situated commercial space can become a platform for participation, relationship building, and collaborative problem-solving.

Based on this background, the community service activity aimed to transform consumer insights into community action at Nuju Coffee through a Participatory Action Research approach. More specifically, the activity sought to identify consumer experiences, expectations, suggestions, and existing community assets; facilitate dialogue between consumers and coffee shop management; collectively formulate priority issues and potential solutions; translate shared insights into practical participatory actions; and reflect on the changes generated through the intervention. The activity was designed not merely to provide recommendations to the coffee shop but to involve relevant participants in the process of understanding problems, designing responses, implementing actions, and learning from the results. In this way, PAR becomes both a methodological framework and an empowerment mechanism that connects knowledge production with practical community action. The expected contribution of the activity is a participatory model showing how a local coffee shop can mobilize consumer knowledge as a community asset and transform it into collaborative action. By connecting consumer engagement theory, value co-creation, asset-based community development, and PAR, this activity seeks to contribute a practical perspective to community service scholarship: consumers can become community actors when their insights are not merely collected, but listened to, deliberated upon, acted upon, and reflected upon collectively.

2. Methods

This community service activity employed a Participatory Action Research (PAR) approach to transform consumer insights into collective action at Nuju Coffee. PAR was selected because it enables community members to participate actively in identifying problems, generating knowledge, planning interventions, implementing actions, and



reflecting on the outcomes. Following the participatory principles proposed by Kemmis et al. (2014), the activity positioned consumers and coffee shop management as active participants rather than merely as research subjects or recipients of an intervention. The activity was conducted through a cyclical process consisting of identification, participatory planning, action, observation, reflection, and follow-up action. The PAR cycle was designed to ensure that consumer experiences and suggestions were not simply collected as feedback but were collectively interpreted and translated into practical actions (Feekery, 2024; Omodan & Dastile, 2023). In this context, Nuju Coffee functioned as both the setting and the community space in which interaction, dialogue, and collaborative problem-solving took place.

The participants were selected purposively based on their direct involvement with Nuju Coffee and their potential contribution to the participatory process. They consisted of Nuju Coffee management, employees, and consumers who regularly interacted with the coffee shop, particularly those who demonstrated willingness to share experiences, suggestions, and ideas for improvement. The activity emphasized inclusiveness by involving participants with different forms of engagement, including consumers who visited for social interaction, study or work, product consumption, and participation in coffee-shop activities. Data and community insights were collected through participatory observation, informal interviews, group discussions, and documentation. Participatory observation was used to understand patterns of interaction, customer experience, communication practices, and the use of the coffee shop as a social space. Informal interviews and group discussions provided opportunities for participants to articulate their expectations, perceived problems, ideas, and potential solutions. Documentation included photographs, activity records, participant responses, and evidence of actions implemented during the program.

The implementation consisted of several interconnected stages. The first stage was participatory problem identification, in which the community service team explored consumer experiences and identified issues related to customer interaction, communication, community activities, and the utilization of consumer-generated ideas. The second stage was participatory reflection and priority setting, where the identified issues were discussed with participants to determine which problems were considered important and feasible to address collectively. The third stage was action planning, during which participants and the Nuju Coffee team formulated practical activities based on the agreed priorities. The fourth stage was collective action, involving the implementation of selected initiatives through collaboration between consumers, management, employees, and the community service team. The fifth stage was observation and reflection, in which the implementation process and participant responses were reviewed to identify achievements, challenges, and opportunities for improvement. This cyclical structure reflects the PAR principle that research and action should continuously inform one another rather than operate as separate stages (Kemmis et al., 2014).

The analysis of the activity followed a participatory qualitative analysis process. Information obtained from observations, interviews, discussions, and documentation was organized according to several thematic dimensions: consumer needs and experiences, community assets, communication opportunities, participation, collective action, and perceived changes. The community service team compared information obtained from different participants and methods to identify recurring themes and areas of agreement or disagreement. Rather than interpreting consumer responses solely from the perspective



of the service provider, the findings were discussed with participants through reflection sessions. This process allowed participants to validate the interpretation of their experiences and contribute additional explanations or recommendations. The analysis therefore functioned simultaneously as a learning process, enabling participants to recognize that their individual experiences could represent broader community concerns and that their knowledge could become a resource for collective problem-solving. This approach is consistent with the participatory orientation of PAR, in which knowledge is produced through interaction between researchers and community members and is subsequently used to inform action (Kemmis et al., 2014).

The effectiveness of the community service activity was assessed through participation, implementation, and reflective outcomes rather than through commercial indicators alone. Participation was assessed by observing the extent to which consumers and Nuju Coffee stakeholders contributed ideas, participated in discussions, and became involved in the implementation of agreed actions. Implementation was assessed by documenting whether the collectively identified ideas were translated into concrete activities and whether participants were able to assume active roles during the process. Reflective outcomes were assessed through participant feedback, discussions, observations of changes in interaction, and collective evaluation sessions conducted after the actions. The final stage involved identifying lessons learned and developing recommendations for continued community participation at Nuju Coffee. Through these indicators, the activity sought to determine whether consumer insights had successfully moved beyond the level of individual opinions toward shared knowledge, collaborative decision-making, and community action.

3. Results and Discussion

3.1. *Consumer Insights as Community Knowledge*

The first stage of the community service activity demonstrated that consumers at Nuju Coffee possessed valuable knowledge that could be utilized as a community asset. Through participatory observation, informal conversations, interviews, and group discussions, the community service team identified a range of consumer experiences concerning the use of the coffee shop, interaction with staff and other visitors, communication practices, social media content, and opportunities for community activities. These insights showed that consumers did not perceive Nuju Coffee merely as a place to purchase coffee but also as a space for meeting, working, studying, socializing, and participating in informal community interactions. This finding reinforces Mussnug & Reza (2016), in which commercial spaces can develop social functions by facilitating regular interaction and interpersonal relationships. More importantly, the PAR process revealed that consumer experiences represented more than individual preferences. When discussed collectively, individual comments and experiences became shared knowledge that could help identify issues and opportunities within the coffee shop environment. This finding is consistent with Brodie et al. (2011), who conceptualize customer engagement as a dynamic process emerging through interaction between consumers and organizations. In the context of Nuju Coffee, however, the significance of consumer engagement extended beyond marketing interaction because consumer knowledge became a starting point for collective reflection and action. The activity therefore shifted the position of consumers from passive recipients of products and services toward participants who could contribute knowledge to the development of their shared social environment.



Table 1 Categorization of Consumer Insights and Potential Community Assets at Nuju Coffee

Consumer Insight Area	Observed/Discussed Issues	Potential Community Asset
Customer experience	Comfort, service interaction, atmosphere, and daily use of the space	Consumer experience and practical knowledge
Communication	Interaction between consumers, employees, and management	Communication networks
Digital engagement	Social media ideas, content preferences, and customer-generated stories	Consumer creativity and digital skills
Community interaction	Opportunities for gathering, discussion, and collaborative activities	Social relationships and networks
Participation	Willingness to provide ideas and become involved in activities	Human resources and community participation
Improvement opportunities	Suggestions concerning activities, communication, and engagement	Collective problem-solving capacity

Source: Author's field observations, participant interviews, and participatory discussions at Nuju Coffee (2026).

Table 1 support the asset-based perspective proposed by Lloyd (2021), which emphasizes that community development can begin by recognizing existing capacities, relationships, and resources. In this case, consumers themselves became an important source of social and knowledge-based assets. This is particularly important because conventional customer-feedback mechanisms frequently place consumers in a reactive position: customers provide complaints or suggestions, while the business decides what should be done. The PAR process at Nuju Coffee created a different relationship by encouraging consumers and management to interpret the issues together. Consumer insights were therefore not treated as isolated complaints or marketing data but as knowledge that could stimulate collective learning. This distinction is important in community service because the success of an intervention should not be measured only by whether a business receives better feedback, but also by whether community members gain opportunities to participate in defining and addressing the issues that affect their shared environment.

3.2. Participatory Reflection and Co-Design of Community Action

The second stage of the activity transformed consumer insights into collectively discussed priorities and potential actions. Rather than immediately imposing solutions, the community service team facilitated dialogue between consumers and Nuju Coffee management to examine which issues were considered relevant, feasible, and beneficial for the wider community. This process enabled participants to move from the question of “what do consumers want?” toward the broader question of “what can we do together?” The distinction is important because PAR is fundamentally concerned with connecting knowledge production to action. Participatory action research involves cycles of planning, acting, observing, and reflecting, in which participants become involved in changing



practices rather than merely describing them. At Nuju Coffee, participatory reflection created a space in which participants could compare individual experiences, identify common concerns, and discuss possible responses. Ideas concerning customer interaction, digital communication, customer-generated content, community activities, and the use of the coffee shop as a shared social space were subsequently discussed as potential areas for collective action. The process also encouraged management to view consumer suggestions not simply as demands but as opportunities for collaborative improvement.

This stage demonstrates the practical application of the value co-creation perspective. In conventional business communication, value is frequently assumed to be created by the organization and delivered to customers. In a participatory environment, however, value can emerge through interaction and collaboration. At Nuju Coffee, consumers contributed experiential knowledge, ideas, creativity, and social connections, while management contributed organizational resources, decision-making authority, facilities, and operational knowledge. The interaction between these different resources created opportunities for jointly designed activities.

This process also demonstrates why PAR is particularly relevant for community service in a coffee-shop setting. If consumer insights had only been collected through a conventional survey, the activity might have generated a list of preferences but would not necessarily have created collective ownership of the solutions. Through discussion and reflection, participants were encouraged to understand the connection between their individual experiences and the broader social environment of Nuju Coffee. In this sense, participation itself became part of the intervention. Consumers were not simply asked what should be improved; they were invited to consider how they could contribute to improvement. Engagement is relational, interactive, and multidimensional. It also extends the conventional marketing interpretation of engagement by demonstrating that interaction can be directed toward community-oriented outcomes rather than solely toward customer loyalty or commercial performance.

3.3. From Consumer Insights to Community Action

The most important outcome of the activity was the movement of consumer insights from the level of discussion toward practical community action. The PAR cycle enabled participants to identify issues, discuss alternatives, agree on feasible responses, and participate in implementing selected actions. The resulting activities emphasized stronger interaction between consumers and management, opportunities for consumer participation, improved communication, customer-generated ideas and content, and the development of activities capable of strengthening the social function of Nuju Coffee. The intervention therefore did not position the coffee shop as the sole actor responsible for solving identified problems. Instead, responsibility was distributed among participants according to their capacities and interests. Consumers could contribute ideas, experiences, networks, creative content, and participation, while management could provide facilities, coordination, operational support, and opportunities for implementation. This collaborative arrangement reflects the central principle of PAR that sustainable change is more likely when those affected by a problem participate in developing and implementing its solution.

Table 2 Participatory Process from Consumer Insights to Community Action at Nuju Coffee



Stage	Process at Nuju Coffee	Emerging Outcome
Consumer insight	Consumers shared experiences, needs, ideas, and suggestions	Local knowledge was identified
Participatory reflection	Consumers and management discussed common issues	Shared understanding emerged
Action planning	Participants selected feasible areas for improvement	Collective priorities were formulated
Community action	Participants collaborated in implementing agreed activities	Consumer participation became visible
Observation	Activities and interactions were monitored	Practical responses were identified
Reflection	Participants evaluated experiences and challenges	Lessons learned were generated
Follow-up	Recommendations were developed collaboratively	Possibility of continued participation

Source: Compiled by the authors based on participatory observations, consumer interviews, and group discussions at Nuju Coffee (2026).

Table 2 suggest that the principal contribution of the intervention was not simply an improvement in communication between Nuju Coffee and its consumers, but a change in the relationship between consumer participation and community action. Consumers were gradually positioned as contributors to the social development of the coffee-shop environment. This finding is particularly relevant to the concept of the coffee shop as a third place, because its social value depends not only on physical facilities but also on the quality and continuity of interaction among people who use the space. Community development becomes stronger when existing capacities are recognized and mobilized. In this activity, the capacities were not limited to the coffee shop's management and employees. Consumer knowledge, creativity, networks, experiences, and willingness to participate were also mobilized as community assets.

The findings further indicate that community action does not necessarily have to begin with large-scale programs. Small changes in interaction, communication, content creation, and opportunities for participation can become meaningful when they are collectively designed and owned. This is particularly relevant for local coffee shops, where everyday encounters can become the foundation for broader community relationships. Priyono et al. (2024), for example, demonstrate that community-based coffee shops can function as spaces within entrepreneurial ecosystems where different actors interact and co-create value. The experience of Nuju Coffee similarly indicates that a coffee shop can serve as a micro-level community ecosystem in which consumers and management exchange resources and develop shared initiatives. However, the present activity adds an important dimension by demonstrating how PAR can provide a structured process for converting consumer knowledge into collective action.

The PAR process at Nuju Coffee can be understood as a transformation of the consumer role across three stages: from consumer as respondent, to consumer as contributor, and ultimately to consumer as community actor. At the first stage, consumers provide experiences and opinions. At the second stage, these experiences become knowledge that is discussed and interpreted collectively. At the third stage, participants use the shared knowledge to formulate and implement actions. This transformation



represents the central contribution of the community service activity. It shows that consumer engagement can become a community-development resource when supported by a participatory mechanism that connects listening, reflection, decision-making, action, and evaluation. Thus, the value of PAR in the Nuju Coffee context lies not merely in involving consumers in an activity, but in creating a process through which consumer voices acquire collective meaning and collective meaning is transformed into collective action.

4. Conclusions

This community service activity demonstrates that consumer insights can be transformed into meaningful community action through a Participatory Action Research (PAR) approach at Nuju Coffee. The activity showed that consumers possess valuable knowledge, experiences, creativity, social networks, and ideas that can function as community assets when they are given opportunities to participate in dialogue and collective reflection. Rather than treating consumers merely as buyers or sources of feedback, the PAR process positioned them as active participants in identifying issues, discussing priorities, developing solutions, and contributing to practical actions. The transformation from individual consumer experience to shared community knowledge represents an important shift in how local coffee shops can understand and utilize consumer participation.

The main contribution of the activity lies in demonstrating a participatory pathway consisting of consumer insight, collective reflection, collaborative planning, community action, observation, and reflection. This process strengthened interaction between consumers and Nuju Coffee management while creating opportunities for participants to contribute to communication, customer engagement, content creation, and community-oriented activities. The findings suggest that a coffee shop can function not only as a commercial space but also as a social environment where relationships, knowledge, and collective initiatives can develop. In this sense, PAR provides a practical mechanism for connecting consumer engagement with community empowerment and value co-creation. The activity also reinforces the asset-based perspective that sustainable community development can begin by recognizing and mobilizing resources already available within the community, including consumer knowledge and social relationships.

This activity has several limitations. The intervention was conducted within the specific social and organizational context of Nuju Coffee, meaning that its findings should not be generalized directly to all coffee shops or other types of community-based businesses. In addition, the outcomes primarily reflect qualitative observations, participant experiences, and the participatory process, while longer-term indicators such as sustained participation, customer retention, business performance, and the continuity of community initiatives require further observation. Future community service activities should therefore develop longer PAR cycles, involve a broader range of stakeholders, and establish systematic indicators for measuring changes in participation, community ownership, and social value. Future initiatives could also explore how the model can be adapted to other local businesses and community spaces, thereby strengthening the practical contribution of PAR in transforming everyday consumer interactions into sustained and collaborative community development.



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Conflict of Interest

The authors declare no conflict of interests.

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