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# Youth Entrepreneurship and Digital Innovation in the Creative Economy

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**ABSTRACT**

This study investigates the effect of youth entrepreneurship on digital innovation in the creative economy in Indonesia using a quantitative research approach. Youth entrepreneurs play a crucial role in driving digital transformation due to their adaptability, creativity, and strong engagement with digital technology. Data were collected from 155 young entrepreneurs operating in various creative economy sectors through a structured questionnaire measured using a five-point Likert scale. The data were analyzed using descriptive statistics, validity and reliability tests, classical assumption tests, and simple linear regression with the support of SPSS version 25. The results reveal that youth entrepreneurship has a positive and significant effect on digital innovation. Entrepreneurial characteristics such as innovativeness, proactiveness, risk-taking, and autonomy significantly enhance the adoption and development of digital-based product, process, and marketing innovations. These findings confirm that youth entrepreneurs are key drivers of digital transformation in the creative economy. This study provides important implications for policymakers, educational institutions, and business development agencies in designing entrepreneurship and digital innovation programs for young entrepreneurs. The study also contributes empirically to the literature on entrepreneurship and digital innovation in developing economies.



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## 1. INTRODUCTION

In the era of rapid digital transformation, entrepreneurship has evolved into a critical driver of economic growth, innovation, and social development. The integration of digital technology into business activities has reshaped traditional entrepreneurial practices, enabling firms to improve efficiency, expand market reach, and enhance competitiveness [1], [2]. This transformation is particularly evident within the creative economy sector, where innovation, creativity, and digitalization converge to generate value-added products and services. In developing countries such as Indonesia, the creative economy has emerged as a strategic sector that contributes significantly to employment creation,

economic diversification, and inclusive growth [3], [4].

Youth play a central role in this transformation. As digital natives, young entrepreneurs tend to be more adaptive to technological change, more responsive to market dynamics, and more open to innovation compared to older generations [5]. Youth entrepreneurship is increasingly recognized as a vital force in driving digital innovation, especially in creative industries such as fashion, digital content, culinary arts, design, software development, and social media-based businesses. Through their entrepreneurial orientation—reflected in creativity, risk-taking, proactiveness, and opportunity recognition—young entrepreneurs are able to leverage digital platforms not only as marketing tools but also as engines of product and process innovation.

The creative economy in Indonesia has experienced substantial growth over the past decade, supported by the widespread adoption of digital technologies, the expansion of internet access, and the rise of digital platforms such as e-commerce, social media, and financial technology [6]–[8]. These developments have lowered entry barriers for new entrepreneurs, particularly youth, enabling them to launch and scale businesses with relatively limited capital [8], [9]. Digital innovation has become a key mechanism through which creative entrepreneurs differentiate their products, improve customer engagement, and enhance operational efficiency. However, despite these opportunities, many young entrepreneurs still face challenges related to limited managerial skills, access to capital, digital literacy gaps, and business sustainability.

Previous studies have widely acknowledged the positive relationship between entrepreneurship and innovation, as well as the strategic role of digitalization in enhancing business performance [10], [11]. Nevertheless, empirical studies that specifically examine the linkage between youth entrepreneurship and digital innovation within the context of the creative economy—particularly in developing countries—remain relatively limited. Most existing research tends to focus either on general entrepreneurship, small and medium enterprises (SMEs), or digital transformation without explicitly highlighting youth as a distinct and strategic entrepreneurial group. This creates a research gap that needs to be addressed through empirical investigation.

Moreover, the success of digital innovation in the creative sector does not depend solely on access to technology but also on the entrepreneurial capacity of individuals who utilize it. Entrepreneurial orientation among youth—such as innovativeness, autonomy, competitive aggressiveness, and calculated risk-taking—can significantly influence how digital technologies are adopted and transformed into commercial value. Therefore, understanding how youth entrepreneurship affects digital innovation is essential for designing effective policies, entrepreneurship education programs, and digital ecosystem development strategies.

From a policy perspective, the Indonesian government has positioned the creative economy and youth entrepreneurship as priority agendas in national development through the expansion of programs supporting startups, digital SMEs, and creative entrepreneurs via training, funding schemes, incubation, and digital infrastructure; however, without strong empirical evidence on how youth entrepreneurship contributes to digital innovation, policy interventions risk lacking precision and effectiveness. Therefore, this study aims to analyze the influence of youth entrepreneurship on digital innovation in the creative economy in Indonesia using a quantitative approach by surveying 155 young entrepreneurs and applying statistical analysis to provide data-driven evidence on the role of youth entrepreneurship as a driver of digital innovation, with expected contributions both theoretically—by strengthening understanding of entrepreneurial behavior in the digital creative sector—and practically—by offering relevant implications for policymakers, educators, and business practitioners.

## 2. LITERATURE REVIEW

### *2.1 Youth Entrepreneurship*

Entrepreneurship is fundamentally defined as the ability to identify opportunities, mobilize resources, and create economic value through innovation and risk-bearing activities, where classical theory emphasizes the entrepreneur as an agent of change who drives economic development through innovation, new combinations of production, and creative destruction; in contemporary contexts, this concept has expanded beyond large-scale industrial innovation into digital-based micro and small enterprises, particularly within the creative economy [4], [12]. Youth entrepreneurship refers to entrepreneurial activities undertaken by individuals typically aged between 18 and 35 years, who possess unique characteristics such as higher adaptability to technological change, stronger digital literacy, greater openness to innovation, and higher tolerance for ambiguity and risk, enabling them to respond more dynamically to market opportunities shaped by digital transformation [13], [14]. Entrepreneurial orientation is commonly used to explain entrepreneurial behavior at both individual and organizational levels and consists of key dimensions including innovativeness, proactiveness, risk-taking, autonomy, and competitive aggressiveness, which among youth tend to be amplified due to generational exposure to digital technology, social media, and global entrepreneurial role models. In developing economies, youth entrepreneurship plays a strategic socio-economic role by reducing unemployment, fostering inclusive growth, and accelerating innovation diffusion, as youth-driven businesses are often characterized by digital-based operations, social media marketing, online distribution, and platform-based business models, positioning youth entrepreneurship not merely as an economic phenomenon but also as a force of social transformation that reshapes consumption patterns, labor markets, and innovation systems.

### *2.2 Digital Innovation*

Digital innovation refers to the development or application of digital technologies to create new or significantly improved products, services, business processes, and business models through the utilization of tools such as social media, mobile applications, e-commerce platforms, cloud computing, big data analytics, and artificial intelligence to enhance organizational value creation; unlike traditional innovation that relies heavily on physical resources and infrastructure, digital innovation depends on information, networks, algorithms, and user participation [15], [16]. In small and medium enterprises (SMEs), digital innovation typically appears in three main forms—product, process, and marketing innovation—where product innovation includes digital-based or digitally enhanced offerings, process innovation involves transaction automation, digital payment systems, inventory management, and customer relationship management, while marketing innovation encompasses the use of social media, search engines, influencer marketing, and data-driven advertising [17], [18]. In the creative economy, digital innovation becomes even more crucial because creative industries rely on originality, symbolic value, aesthetics, and user experience, all of which are highly compatible with digital platforms that enable rapid prototyping, remote collaboration, product personalization, and access to global markets with minimal physical infrastructure, positioning digital innovation as a strategic capability for competitiveness and business sustainability [19], [20]. However, the adoption of digital innovation among SMEs and youth entrepreneurs is not automatic, as it is shaped by internal

capabilities such as digital literacy, entrepreneurial orientation, and learning capacity, as well as external support including infrastructure, financing, training, and ecosystem networks, meaning that without adequate entrepreneurial capacity, digital technology risks being underutilized or applied only for basic marketing rather than as a strategic driver of innovation.

### *2.3 Creative Economy and Digital Transformation*

The creative economy is defined as an economic system driven by creativity, knowledge, culture, and innovation as the main production factors, encompassing sectors such as fashion, design, crafts, culinary arts, film, digital content, music, animation, games, and performing arts, where economic value is derived primarily from intellectual, cultural, and creative capital rather than natural resources [21], [22]. Digital transformation has fundamentally reshaped this sector through the diffusion of the internet, mobile devices, and digital platforms that have transformed how creative products are produced, distributed, and consumed, shifting traditional value chains toward platform-based ecosystems in which creators, consumers, and intermediaries interact in real time via digital marketplaces, streaming platforms, social media, and online communities [6], [23]. For creative entrepreneurs, digital transformation reduces entry barriers, expands market reach, accelerates innovation cycles, and enables data-driven decision-making, while simultaneously intensifying competition, increasing market volatility, and demanding continuous learning and adaptability, making digital innovation not optional but a necessity for survival and growth [7], [24]. In developing economies, the creative economy is increasingly viewed as a strategic sector for inclusive and sustainable development due to its labor-intensive, youth-dominated nature and its compatibility with local cultural assets, with digitalization further amplifying its economic impact by connecting local creative products to national and global markets, thereby forming a critical development triangle through the synergy between youth entrepreneurship, digital innovation, and the creative economy.

### *2.4 Hypothesis Development*

Based on the theoretical and empirical discussion above, youth entrepreneurship is expected to play a significant role in driving digital innovation within the creative economy, as entrepreneurial characteristics such as innovativeness, proactiveness, autonomy, and risk-taking provide a strong behavioral foundation for the adoption and strategic exploitation of digital technologies, where young entrepreneurs who actively seek opportunities, embrace experimentation, and leverage digital platforms are more likely to generate digital-based product, process, and marketing innovations. Digital innovation in the creative economy thus depends not only on access to technology but also on the entrepreneurial capacity to utilize it creatively and strategically, leading to the expectation that a stronger youth entrepreneurship orientation will result in higher levels of digital innovation among creative economy actors; accordingly, the main hypothesis of this study is formulated as follows:

$H_1$: Youth entrepreneurship has a positive and significant effect on digital innovation in the creative economy.

This hypothesis will be empirically tested using quantitative data from 155 youth entrepreneurs and analyzed using statistical methods with SPSS version 25.

## 3. RESEARCH METHODS

### *3.1 Research Design*

This study employed a quantitative research approach with an explanatory design to examine the causal relationship between youth entrepreneurship and digital innovation

in the creative economy. The quantitative approach was selected because it enables statistical measurement, hypothesis testing, and generalization of findings across the research population. The explanatory design aims to explain the effect of youth entrepreneurship as an independent variable on digital innovation as the dependent variable through empirical data analysis. The study was conducted in the context of the creative economy sector in Indonesia, which has experienced rapid digital transformation and high participation of young entrepreneurs.

### *3.2 Population and Sample*

The population of this study consists of youth entrepreneurs operating in the creative economy sector in Indonesia, including businesses in fashion, culinary, digital content, design, crafts, and creative services that actively utilize digital platforms, with purposive sampling applied based on the criteria that respondents are aged between 18–35 years, own or manage a creative economy business, and utilize digital tools or platforms in their business operations; based on these criteria, a total of 155 valid respondents were selected as the research sample, and this sample size is considered adequate for regression-based quantitative analysis as well as meeting the minimum requirements for statistical testing.

### *3.3 Research Variables and Operational Definitions*

This study consists of two main variables, namely Youth Entrepreneurship (X) as the independent variable and Digital Innovation (Y) as the dependent variable. Youth entrepreneurship refers to the entrepreneurial orientation of young individuals in managing their creative businesses and is measured through five key dimensions: innovativeness, proactiveness, risk-taking, autonomy, and competitive aggressiveness. Meanwhile, digital innovation refers to the application of digital technology to create new or improved products, business processes, and marketing strategies, and is measured using three dimensions, namely digital product innovation, digital process innovation, and digital marketing innovation. Each variable was operationalized into measurable indicators and assessed using a Likert scale.

Data were collected using a structured questionnaire distributed to youth entrepreneurs, with all questionnaire items measured using a five-point Likert scale ranging from 1 = strongly disagree, 2 = disagree, 3 = neutral, 4 = agree, to 5 = strongly agree. The questionnaire was divided into three main sections consisting of respondent demographic information, youth entrepreneurship indicators, and digital innovation indicators. This scale enables the quantitative measurement of respondents' perceptions, attitudes, and behaviors.

### *3.4 Data Collection Technique*

Data collection was conducted through the survey method using both online and offline questionnaires. Online distribution was carried out using digital forms to reach a wider geographic area, while offline distribution was conducted to respondents with limited internet access. Respondents were informed that their participation was voluntary and that the data would be kept confidential and used solely for academic purposes.

### *3.5 Data Analysis Techniques*

Data analysis was conducted using SPSS version 25 through several stages, beginning with validity and reliability testing to ensure the quality of the measurement instrument prior to hypothesis testing, where item validity was assessed using the Pearson correlation coefficient with items declared valid if the calculated r-value exceeded the r-table at a 5% significance level, and reliability was tested using Cronbach's Alpha with a threshold value greater than 0.70 indicating internal consistency. Furthermore, descriptive

statistical analysis was performed to describe respondent characteristics and the distribution of responses for each variable, followed by classical assumption tests consisting of normality, multicollinearity, and heteroscedasticity tests to ensure the validity of the regression model. Simple linear regression analysis was then applied to examine the effect of youth entrepreneurship (X) on digital innovation (Y), while hypothesis testing using the t-test was conducted at a 5% significance level ($\alpha = 0.05$) to determine whether youth entrepreneurship has a significant effect on digital innovation, and finally, the coefficient of determination ($R^2$) was calculated to measure the proportion of variance in digital innovation explained by youth entrepreneurship.

## 4. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

### *4.1 Descriptive Analysis of Respondents*

This study involved 155 youth entrepreneurs operating in the creative economy sector in Indonesia. The respondents represent diverse creative business fields including culinary, fashion, digital content creation, graphic design, crafts, photography, and creative services. The majority of respondents fall within the age range of 20–30 years, indicating that the creative economy is predominantly driven by early-stage young entrepreneurs. Most respondents have operated their businesses for 1–5 years, reflecting the dynamic and fast-growing nature of youth-led creative enterprises.

From the digital engagement perspective, almost all respondents reported active use of digital platforms such as social media, e-commerce marketplaces, and digital payment systems. This confirms that digital technology has become an integral foundation of business operations among youth entrepreneurs in Indonesia's creative economy. The descriptive statistics also indicate a generally high level of agreement across indicators of youth entrepreneurship and digital innovation, suggesting strong entrepreneurial orientation and digital adoption behavior among respondents.

### *4.2 Validity and Reliability Test Results*

The validity test was conducted using the Pearson Product Moment correlation, comparing the correlation coefficient (r-count) of each questionnaire item with the critical r-table value at the 5% significance level. The results show that all indicators of youth entrepreneurship and digital innovation have r-count values greater than the r-table, indicating that all items are valid and capable of measuring the intended constructs accurately. Furthermore, reliability testing using Cronbach's Alpha demonstrates that both variables exceeded the minimum threshold of 0.70. This confirms that the research instrument is reliable, consistent, and suitable for further statistical testing. The strong reliability results indicate that the constructs of youth entrepreneurship and digital innovation were measured with high internal consistency.

### *4.3 Classical Assumption Test Results*

Before conducting the regression analysis, several classical assumption tests were performed to ensure the robustness of the regression model, including the normality test, which показ showed that the data are normally distributed as the significance value exceeds 0.05, confirming that the normality assumption required for linear regression is met; the multicollinearity test, which indicated no multicollinearity problem since the study employs only a single independent variable; and the heteroscedasticity test, which revealed no clear pattern in the scatterplot and a significance value above 0.05, indicating the absence of heteroscedasticity and confirming that the variance of residuals is constant. Overall, these results confirm that the data fulfill all classical

assumptions required for valid regression analysis.

### 4.4 *Regression Analysis Results*

The effect of youth entrepreneurship on digital innovation was examined using simple linear regression analysis with the support of SPSS version 25. The regression model is expressed as $Y=\alpha+\beta X+\varepsilon$. The regression results indicate that youth entrepreneurship has a positive and significant effect on digital innovation in the creative economy, as reflected by the positive regression coefficient ($\beta$), which implies that any increase in youth entrepreneurship orientation leads to an increase in the level of digital innovation.

Furthermore, the t-test results show that the calculated t-value is greater than the critical t-table value and the significance level is below 0.05, indicating that the research hypothesis is empirically supported and that youth entrepreneurship significantly influences digital innovation. The coefficient of determination ($R^2$) also reveals that a substantial proportion of the variance in digital innovation can be explained by youth entrepreneurship, suggesting that entrepreneurial orientation among youth plays a strategic role in driving digital innovation in creative-based businesses.

### 4.5 *Discussion*

The findings of this study provide strong empirical evidence that youth entrepreneurship significantly drives digital innovation in the creative economy in Indonesia, confirming the theoretical premise that entrepreneurship is inherently innovation-driven, particularly when combined with digital technology. Young entrepreneurs demonstrate high adaptability, creativity, and responsiveness to technological change, making them natural agents of digital innovation. Their ability to quickly learn, experiment, and adjust to digital trends enables them to transform technological opportunities into innovative business practices within the creative sector.

The positive influence of youth entrepreneurship on digital innovation reflects the critical role of entrepreneurial orientation dimensions, namely innovativeness, proactiveness, risk-taking, autonomy, and competitive aggressiveness [25], [26]. Youth entrepreneurs who actively seek opportunities, experiment with ideas, and take calculated risks are more capable of strategically integrating digital tools into their business models. Digital platforms are not merely used for basic communication but are optimally leveraged for product development, customer engagement, branding, and market expansion, which strengthens their competitive positioning in dynamic markets.

From the perspective of the creative economy, digital innovation enhances both artistic value and commercial viability. Digital product innovation enables creative entrepreneurs to digitize content, personalize designs, and create immersive virtual experiences, while digital process innovation improves business efficiency through automation, online transactions, and optimized logistics. Moreover, digital marketing innovation allows businesses to penetrate national and international markets through social media, influencer marketing, and data-driven promotions [27], [28]. These digital transformations significantly strengthen the competitiveness, scalability, and sustainability of youth-led creative enterprises.

This study also reinforces the developmental role of youth entrepreneurship in emerging economies such as Indonesia, where youth constitute a large proportion of the productive population. Digital innovation driven by youth entrepreneurs contributes directly to job creation, income generation, and inclusive economic growth, aligning with national development priorities that

position the creative economy and digital entrepreneurship as key engines of sustainable development. From a policy perspective, the findings suggest that strengthening youth entrepreneurship capabilities will directly accelerate digital innovation through integrated support in entrepreneurial skills, digital literacy, access to finance, mentorship, and ecosystem development, while academically, this study contributes quantitative empirical evidence to strengthen the entrepreneurship–digital innovation linkage within the creative economy context of a developing country.

## 5. CONCLUSION

This study aims to examine the effect of youth entrepreneurship on digital innovation in the creative economy in Indonesia using a quantitative approach, and based on the results of statistical analysis, it can be concluded that youth entrepreneurship has a positive and significant influence on digital innovation, confirming that young entrepreneurs with strong entrepreneurial orientation—characterized by innovativeness, proactiveness, risk-taking, autonomy, and competitive aggressiveness—are more capable of adopting and developing digital technologies in their business activities. Digital innovation among youth entrepreneurs is reflected in digital-based product development, improved digital business processes, and the effective use of digital marketing platforms, where the integration of digital technology enables creative economy actors to expand market reach, increase operational efficiency, and enhance competitiveness in an increasingly dynamic business environment, demonstrating that digital innovation is not merely driven by technological access but is strongly shaped by entrepreneurial behavior and mindset. From a practical perspective, these findings imply that strengthening youth entrepreneurship capacity will directly accelerate the growth of digital innovation in the creative economy, thus government institutions, universities, business incubators, and training centers should prioritize integrated programs that develop both entrepreneurial and digital skills, supported by sustainable access to financing, mentorship, and innovation ecosystems. From an academic standpoint, this study provides empirical evidence on the relationship between youth entrepreneurship and digital innovation in the creative economy context of a developing country, although it is limited by the use of a single independent variable and a cross-sectional design, suggesting that future research should incorporate additional variables such as digital literacy, access to capital, innovation capability, or institutional support, as well as apply more advanced analytical techniques to enrich the understanding of digital entrepreneurship dynamics.

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