

Examining the Effect of Digital Creativity on MSME Performance: The Mediating Role of Innovative Work Behavior in East Surabaya

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ABSTRACT

Using creative work behavior as the intervening variable, this assessment aims to examine and analyze the impact of digital creativity on MSME performance. This study employs a quantitative methodology to target MSME in East Surabaya's food and beverage industry. The sampling techniques used are judgment sampling and incidental sampling, with a total of 77 MSME. Using creative work behavior as the intervening variable, this assessment aims to examine and analyze the impact of digital creativity on MSME performance. This study employs a quantitative methodology to target MSME in East Surabaya's food and beverage industry sector. Using the SmartPLS 3.9 software, SEM-PLS statistical analysis was used in this evaluation. The findings demonstrate that MSME performance is significantly improved by digital innovation. Innovative work practices are also greatly enhanced by digital inventiveness. Additionally, MSME performance is significantly improved by creative work practices. In this evaluation, the impact of digital creativity on MSME performance may be mediated by creative work practices. Through creative labor, this evaluation offers fresh perspectives on how digital creativity affects MSME performance

INTRODUCTION

One of Indonesia's economic pillars, micro, small, and medium-sized businesses (MSME) continuously support the stability and expansion of the country's gross domestic product (GDP) (Anatan & Nur, 2023). However, due to fierce rivalry and a diverse range of company kinds, organizations must maintain high levels of performance and competitiveness. Therefore, business players must always be prepared to compete, produce, and innovate.

Although MSME contribute considerably to the economy, they confront a variety of hurdles or problems that lead to unpredictable company performance. MSME sales are frequently declining, which can leave them without the funds to continue operating and growing their businesses (Suminah et al., 2022). Furthermore, MSME struggle to adapt new technologies and tools, as well as facing limits in human resource skills, which hamper innovation and the competitiveness of MSME in the digital era.

The misalignment of business strategies and innovation is one of the other issues that MSME faces (Latifah et al., 2020), the ineffective implementation of digital marketing (Mehralian & Khazaei, 2022), insufficient human resources expertise and capabilities (Anatan & Nur, 2023), and the reality that MSME sales are more likely to fall than rise (Sudjatmoko et al., 2023).

Competition encompasses the advancement of creativity and technology in addition to price and quality (Mulyana & Sutapa, 2014). Several major elements contribute to corporate achieving success in areas like as management, branding, innovation, technology utilization, product quality, leadership, and teamwork (Srimulyani et al., 2023).

Digitalization has resulted in considerable changes for both enterprises and individuals (Zhang et al., 2022). It is now crucial to stay up-to-date with digital developments and always improve your digital skills (Shao et al., 2021). The quickly expanding discipline of digital creativity arises at the nexus of creativity and digital technology (Lee & Chen, 2015). Although the literature on creativity is substantial, further research on digital creativity in the organizational setting is still required. As a result, developing organizational skills requires analysis and investigation of digital creativity (Janse van Rensburg et al., 2022).

The ability to creatively use digital capabilities is a skill that can help organizations adapt, expand, and be more competitive in today's economic climate. This ability can also make organizations more effective and responsive to opportunities (Adisaksana, 2022). For MSME, digital technology is crucial to increasing productivity and performance (Papadopoulos et al., 2020). A appraisal that proved the positive relationship among The study on organizational performance and innovation was carried out by (Amrul Ichdan et al., 2023; Mulyani, 2024; Zhang et al., 2023). This occurs because digital creativity is essential for business actors in the era of digitalization to ensure their businesses continue to operate and grow.

A key component of corporate rivalry is innovation, which includes the launch of novel goods or procedures, creative marketing strategies, and novel organizational practices in company operations (Kivipõld, 2015). Entrepreneurs must employ innovative work practices to ensure the survival of their company among ever-changing external environments. These techniques also aid enterprises in gaining a competitive advantage (Wei et al., 2020). Innovative work behavior can be utilized across many sorts of organizations and businesses with diverse operational domains (Lewaherilla et al., 2024).

People that demonstrate innovative work behavior are more likely to be proactive in seeking out cutting-edge technologies, promoting novel approaches to accomplish objectives, carrying out current work procedures, and obtaining resources to support creative ideas (De Jong & Den Hartog, 2010). Innovative work behavior and organizational performance are positively correlated, according to several research (Rahman et al., 2022; Rathee et al., 2025; Reynal et al., 2023; Siregar & Suma, 2024). This occurs because individuals with innovative work behavior are better equipped to predict and identify growth opportunities as well as generate creative solutions to challenges encountered in their work. Zain et al. (2024), on the other hand, discovered no correlation between creative actions on the job and the success of businesses.

Based on the occurrence that MSME frequently encounter the aforementioned challenges and the existence of various gaps in previous studies, researching how digital creativity influences MSME performance via innovative work behavior makes this research interesting and noteworthy.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Digital Creativity and Organizational Performance

The quickly expanding discipline of digital creativity arises at the nexus of creativity and digital technology (Lee & Chen, 2015). Therefore, it is vital to analyze and investigate digital creativity in order to develop organizational competences (Hoffmann et al., 2016). For MSME, digital technology is crucial to increasing productivity and performance (Papadopoulos et al., 2020). Digitalization has had a huge impact on both organizations and individuals. Adapting to digital trends and improving digital capabilities are the most important needs at the moment (Shao et al., 2021). Among the most important skills in the digital age is creativity, which is the capacity to solve complicated problems and adjust flexibly to changes (Janse van Rensburg et al., 2022). Meanwhile, Mulyana and Sutapa (2014) assert that rivalry encompasses the advancement of creativity and technology in addition to price and quality. Digital creativity is crucial for organizations because the ability to be digitally creative may make organizations better able to seize opportunities, adapt to changing circumstances, and remain competitive in the marketplace (Adisaksana, 2022). Creativity and organizational performance are positively correlated, according to multiple studies (Amrul Ichdan et al., 2023; Mulyani, 2024; Zhang et al., 2023). Hence, the first hypothesis is:

H1: Digital creativity improves organizational performance.

Digital Creativity and Innovative Work Behavior

While innovation necessitates incorporating these concepts into new goods and procedures, creativity entails the generation of novel and worthwhile ideas (Sarooghi et al., 2015). Hence, creativity is viewed as the primary stage of invention. Innovative work behavior is deliberate innovation that includes introducing and using novel notions in employment-related duties (Janssen, 2000). Innovation and creativity are thought to have a complicated relationship (Jirásek & Sudzina, 2020). Increasing an organization's competitiveness relies heavily on creativity and innovation. Thus, in order for businesses to establish and preserve a competitive edge, creativity and innovation are essential (Hughes et al., 2018). Innovation begins with innovative ideas, which are a critical aspect in organizational creativity (Woodman et al., 1993). Meanwhile, West (2002) considers creativity a critical determinant for innovative work behavior. Several detailed studies have indicated a strong favorable connection among creativity and innovative work behavior (Garlatti Costa et al., 2023; Nam & Nga, 2024; Papachristopoulos & Arvanitis, 2024). As a result, boosting digital creativity and innovative work behavior is an attractive matter. Hence, the second hypothesis is:

H2: Digital creativity promotes innovative work behavior.

Innovative Work Behavior and Organizational Performance

People that regularly practice innovation typically perform better on tasks, are more creative, and are more productive at work overall (Amabile & Pratt, 2016). Individuals with inventive capabilities are better at finding and forecasting growth possibilities and creating new solutions to the difficulties they encounter (De Jong & Den Hartog, 2010). Entrepreneurs must use innovative work practices to adapt to the ever-changing external environment for their businesses to remain viable and to earn a contesting lead (Wei et al., 2020). Various inquiries investigated the effect of innovative work behavior on organizational success (Rahman et al., 2022; Rathee et al., 2025; Reynal et al., 2023; Siregar & Suma, 2024). Uniformly, these inquiries indicate a positive association among innovative work behavior and organizational success. Another research has indicated a considerable favorable influence of innovative work behavior on corporate performance (Jankelova et al., 2021). Innovative work behavior helps to improve organizational performance (Guan et al., 2019). Consequently, the combined effect of people's creative work practices can greatly improve organizational performance (Dinesh Babu et al., 2024). Hence, the third hypothesis is:

H3: Innovative work behavior improves organizational performance.

Digital Creativity, Innovative Work Behavior, and Organizational Performance

In the cutthroat, digitally-driven business world of today, entrepreneurs must come up with creative strategies to keep their companies afloat and prevent bankruptcy. To face these challenges, digital technology encourages business owners to play a more active role in enhancing creativity and innovative work behavior. Innovation and creativity are thought to have a complicated relationship (Jirásek & Sudzina, 2020). Increasing an organization's competitiveness relies heavily on creativity and innovation. Thus, in order for businesses to establish and preserve a competitive advantage, creativity and

innovation are essential (Hughes et al., 2018). Furthermore, the study demonstrates that persons who are actively engaged in innovative work behavior lean toward to acquire fresh technologies, methods, and approaches faster (De Jong & Den Hartog, 2010). This flexible aptitude allows them to flourish in energetic and continuously changing work contexts. This demonstrates that boosting innovative work behavior inside a corporation can enhance employment optimization and success, therefore improving business performance. As a result, this appraisal utilizes innovative work behavior as a bridge among digital innovation and organizational success. Hence, the fourth hypothesis is:

H4: Innovative work behavior bridges the gap between digital creativity and organizational performance.

Figure 1 shows the conceptual framework that includes all of the previously described hypotheses.

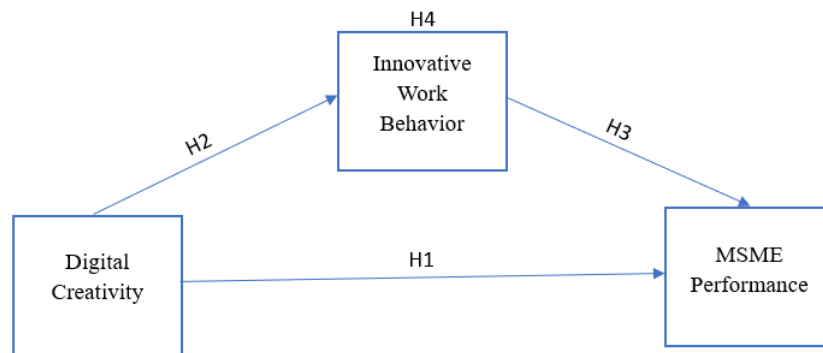


Figure 1. Conceptual Framework

METHODOLOGY

This study uses a numerical method to examine the variable of digital creativity on organizational performance via innovative work behavior. The digital creativity indicators are used to measure the variable modified from Hou et al. (2023), innovative work behavior is assessed using indicators from Reynal et al. (2023), and organizational performance is assessed using indicators from Zhang et al. (2023). The questionnaire employs a four-point Likert scale, with one representing "strongly disagree" and four representing "strongly agree." In this study, the "quite agree" item is omitted since it can produce misunderstanding for MSME owners.

The appraisal's population consists of MSME owners in East Surabaya's food and beverage sector. A two-stage sampling method – judgment sampling and accidental sampling – is used in this evaluation. The majority of MSME in the districts of Gunung Anyar, Rungkut, Sukolilo, and Tenggilis Mejoyo that were assisted by the Surabaya City Office of Small and Medium-Sized Businesses and Cooperatives were used for judgment sampling. Both online and offline questionnaires are used in this investigation's data gathering method. For this study, a total of 77 valid questionnaires were successfully collected and analyzed.

With the use of SmartPLS version 3.9 software, the Structural Equation Modeling (SEM) method was accustomed to examine this investigation.

RESULT

Respondent Characteristics

The respondents to this study are MSME entrepreneurs in the food and beverage business sector based in East Surabaya. There are 77 respondents. This data provides notification on numerous respondent characteristics, such such as age, gender, amount of education completed, time of company operation, kind of business, number of workers, monthly turnover, and the social media and marketplaces used for advertising. The characteristics of the respondents are shown in Table 1.

Table 1. Respondent Characteristics

Characteristics		Number	Percentage
Age	< 30 years	23	29.9%
	30 - 40 years	34	44.2%
	41 - 50 years	17	22.1%
	> 50 years	3	3.9%
Gender	Male	29	37.7%
	Female	48	62.3%
Last Education	High School	45	58.4%
	D3	6	7.8%
	D4/S1	20	26%
	S2	1	1.3%
	S3	0	0%
	Other	5	6.5%
Length of Business Operation	1-5 years	57	74%
	6-10 years	15	19.5%
	> 10 years	5	6.5%
Type of Business Sector	Food	63	81.8%
	Beverage	14	18.2%
Number of Employees	< 5 Employees	69	89.6%
	5 - 19 Employees	7	9.1%
	20 - 99 Employees	1	1.3%
Monthly Turnover	< USD 1.500	69	89.6%
	USD 1.500 - USD 12.700	7	9.1%
	USD 12.700 - USD 257.700	1	1.3%
Social Media and Marketplaces	Instagram	40	17.8%
	Tiktok	28	12.4%
	Facebook	20	8.9%
	WhatsApp	70	31.1%
	Shopee Food	18	8%
	Go Food	30	13.3%
	Grab Food	19	8.5%

Source: Authors' Own Study.

According to (Table 1), the bulk of respondents are women, totaling 48 individuals (62.3%) among the sum respondents and the bulk of responses are

between the ages of 30 and 40, with 34 individuals (44.2%). The majority of respondents, 45 (58.4%), have completed senior high school as their highest level of schooling. In terms of business fields, 63 respondents (81.8%) operate in the food sector, while 57 respondents (74%) have run their businesses for one to five years. Given the number of employees and monthly turnover, the majority of respondents, 69 (89.6%), had less than five employees and less than \$1,500 in monthly revenue. Instagram (17.8%), TikTok (12.4%), Facebook (8.9%), WhatsApp (31.1%), Shopee Food (8%), GoFood (13.3%), and GrabFood (8.5%) are among the social media platforms and marketplaces that are simultaneously utilized for marketing. Respondents might select more than one option for the social media and marketplace question.

Outer Model Analysis

To ensure that the elements exhibited high connections grounded in the recommended spread, an outer model analysis was performed in the first stage with SmartPLS 3.9. In this experiment, the model of measurement was assessed using convergent validity. To assess the validity of convergent, the loading variables for each item were examined first. If the correlation value is more than 0.70, all indicators are considered authentic (Hair et al., 2022). In this appraisal, the loading factor amounts of every variable item are higher than 0.70, indicating validity.

The dependability of indicator blocks and the resulting structures is evaluated by Composite dependability (CR). Additionally, CR is used to evaluate the gauge's coherence based on respondents' responses. Reliability is shown by a CR score of at least 0.70 (Hair et al., 2022). The CR values for every item in this investigation ranged from 0.951 to 0.965, which is higher than the offered criterion.

Additionally, the reliability test findings of the CR are supported by the Cronbach's Alpha (CA) score. In other words, inner coherence is determined using the CA value. A CA value of at least 0.70 is required (Hair et al., 2022). The CA values in this evaluation are all higher than 0.70 and vary from 0.941 to 0.960. Lastly, the Average Variance Extracted (AVE) was computed to determine the convergent validity of the evaluation. According to Hair et al. (2022), AVE is the overall average value of the squared signals related to the inquiry notion. An AVE value of 0.50 indicates that 50% of the components can accurately portray the situation. The recommended criterion of 0.5 was exceeded by the AVE levels for each concept in this evaluation, which varied from 0.591 to 0.731. Table 2 displays the defined outer model.

Table 2. Specified Outer Model

Variable and scale item	Loadings	AVE	CR	CA
Digital Creativity		0.591	0.963	0.960
DC1	0.739			
DC2	0.722			
DC3	0.741			
DC4	0.820			
DC5	0.781			
DC6	0.780			
DC7	0.853			
DC8	0.728			
DC9	0.746			
DC10	0.782			
DC11	0.800			
DC12	0.767			
DC13	0.704			
DC14	0.738			
DC15	0.756			
DC16	0.774			
DC17	0.755			
DC18	0.834			
Innovative Work Behavior		0.731	0.965	0.959
IWB1	0.889			
IWB2	0.869			
IWB3	0.855			
IWB4	0.807			
IWB5	0.854			
IWB6	0.839			
IWB7	0.856			
IWB8	0.859			
IWB9	0.884			
IWB10	0.837			
Organizational Performance		0.707	0.951	0.941
OP1	0.831			
OP2	0.773			
OP3	0.830			
OP4	0.846			
OP5	0.858			
OP6	0.859			
OP7	0.877			
OP8	0.851			

Source: Authors' Own Study.

Inner Model Analysis

It was suggested to include path coefficients, t-statistics, and p-value in the inner model to evaluate the significance of the hypotheses. The bootstrapping approach is used to identify the shape of variables by looking at the significant values in the inner model evaluation. The findings of the direct and indirect effect hypothesis tests are shown in Table 3.

Table 3. Hypothesis Testing for Direct Effect and Indirect Effect

Relationship	Coefficient	T-Statistic	P-Value
Direct Effect			
Digital Creativity → Organizational Performance	0.431	4.912	0.000
Digital Creativity → Innovative Work Behavior	0.430	3.966	0.000
Innovative Work Behavior → Organizational Performance	0.552	5.772	0.000
Indirect Effect			
Digital Creativity → Innovative Work Behavior → Organizational Performance	0.237	4.189	0.000

Source: Authors' Own Study.

Note: Level Significant = T-Statistics \geq 1,96; P-Value \leq 0,05.

H1 is accepted because the route inquiry results show that digital innovation significantly improves organizational performance ($\beta = 0.431$, t-statistic = 4.912, $p < 0.05$). H2 is acknowledged because digital creativity significantly improves inventive work behavior ($\beta = 0.430$, t-statistic = 3.966, $p < 0.05$). H3 is acknowledged because innovative work behavior significantly improves organizational performance ($\beta = 0.552$, t-statistic = 5.772, $p < 0.05$). The study discovered that the association between digital creativity and organizational performance is favorably and substantially mediated by innovative work behavior ($\beta = 0.237$, t-statistic = 4.189, $p < 0.05$), indicating H4. Based on these findings, all of the study's assumptions are accepted.

DISCUSSION

According to this report, digital creativity has a positive impact on MSME performance, which supports hypothesis H1. This inquiry suggests that digital innovation can improve the performance competency of MSME. With digital creativity, MSME are able to adapt and innovate in response to evolving digital trends, particularly in marketing through social media and marketplaces. As a outputs, MSME can endure and continue to increase in today's rivalrous digital era by achieving highly competitive performance. This result also validates earlier studies (Amrul Ichdan et al., 2023; Mulyani, 2024; Zhang et al., 2023).

The appraisal also discovered a positive association among digital creativity and innovative work behavior, which supports hypothesis H2. This research implies that digital creativity can boost innovative work behavior among the SMEs. This is proven by MSME's capacity to constantly study various social media platforms and markets, as well as their receptivity to changes in digital trends, which motivates them to produce innovations in product marketing. This result confirms Sarooghi et al. (2015), statement that innovation necessitates the implementation of these concepts in novel goods and procedures, whereas creativity comprises the generation of fresh and useful concepts. Thus, creativity is viewed as the first step toward innovation. This finding validates earlier investigations (Garlatti Costa et al., 2023; Nam & Nga, 2024; Papachristopoulos & Arvanitis, 2024).

Furthermore, the appraisal discovered that innovative work behavior has a good impact on MSME performance, which supports hypothesis H3. This research indicates that innovative work behavior enhance to alterations in organizational performance (Guan et al., 2019). MSME can improve their performance, creativity, and effectiveness by adopting innovative work behaviors. Innovative work behavior supports a culture of innovation in entrepreneurship by creating a workplace that is open to new ideas. As a result, MSMEs are better prepared to compete effectively with other market actors. This result is also in line with earlier studies (Rahman et al., 2022; Rathee et al., 2025; Reynal et al., 2023; Siregar & Suma, 2024).

Finally, this investigation discovered that innovative work behavior can mediate the association among digital creativity and MSME performance, which supports hypothesis H4. This suggests that the attainment of MSME performance comes from the deployment of strong digital creativity and the promotion of optimal creative work behavior. MSME may survive and flourish in today's highly competitive digital world by demonstrating digital creativity and innovative work behavior. This finding supports the assertion by Hughes et al. (2018), it says that boosting organizational competitiveness relies heavily on creativity and innovation, as they are essential in helping organizations build and preserve competitive advantage.

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATION

This appraisal looks at the impact of digital creativity on MSME performance through creative work practices. The investigation's conclusions show that creative work practices and MSME performance are positively impacted by digital creativity. Additionally, the effect of digital innovation on MSME performance might be mediated by creative work practices.

Because it shows how creative work practices and digital innovation affect MSME performance improvement, this research has significant value for HR professionals. In the competitive digital age of today, digital creativity is critical to firms' survival, growth, and high-performance rivalry. Similarly, innovative work behavior enhance to the development of a enduring rivalrous leverage via the invention of new notion.

Although this study provides significant insights, there are limitations that may impair the findings' generalizability and open up chances for future investigations. The research sample was confined to MSMEs in the food and beverage industry. Increasing the sample size would be preferable by fashion, crafts, and other industries are also included. This makes the research findings more relevant to all MSME industries. Furthermore, future research could incorporate additional variables that may have direct or indirect influence on MSME performance, allowing for the discovery of new and significant conclusions.

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