



Social Networks and Social Support in the Success of Creative Startups

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Received: Dec 09, 2024

Revised: Dec 15, 2024

Accepted: Dec 27, 2024

Online: Dec 27, 2024

ABSTRACT

The success of creative startups is influenced by various factors, including the role of social networks and social support. As these ventures typically involve innovative ideas and high uncertainty, the social connections entrepreneurs establish can provide essential resources, knowledge, and emotional support. Understanding the impact of these social relationships on startup success is critical for entrepreneurs, investors, and policymakers aiming to foster a conducive environment for growth in creative industries. This study aims to explore the influence of social networks and social support on the success of creative startups. It seeks to identify the types of social support that entrepreneurs rely on, the networks they engage with, and how these factors contribute to their business growth and sustainability. A mixed-methods approach was employed, combining both quantitative and qualitative research methods. Data was collected through surveys of 100 creative entrepreneurs in Indonesia, followed by in-depth interviews with 15 startup founders. The analysis involved statistical techniques to identify patterns in network usage and social support, alongside thematic coding for qualitative insights. The findings reveal that social support, particularly from professional networks and mentorship, is crucial for overcoming challenges in the early stages of startup development. Entrepreneurs with strong connections to industry peers, investors, and mentors reported higher levels of success in securing funding and achieving market growth. Emotional support from family and friends was also found to play a significant role in maintaining resilience and motivation. Social networks and support systems are essential drivers of success for creative startups. Entrepreneurs who actively cultivate these networks tend to navigate challenges more effectively and sustain long-term business growth.

Keywords: *Social Networks, Social Support, Creative Startups*

Journal Homepage <https://journal.ypidathu.or.id/index.php/ijnis>

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How to cite:

Zaman, K., Khan, O & Khan, J. (2024). Social Networks and Social Support in the Success of Creative Startups. *Journal of Social Entrepreneurship and Creative Technology*, 1(4), 176-187. <https://doi.org/10.70177/jseact.v1i4.1729>

Published by:

Yayasan Pendidikan Islam Daarut Thufulah

INTRODUCTION

Social networks and social support have been recognized as crucial elements in the success of entrepreneurial ventures, particularly in the context of creative startups (Clark, 2021). These types of businesses often require innovation, flexibility, and adaptability, all of which can be enhanced through strong networks and supportive relationships. Studies

have shown that entrepreneurs with access to extensive social networks are better equipped to navigate the challenges of starting and sustaining a business. Networking can provide access to capital, industry knowledge, and professional expertise, all of which are essential for the growth of a startup (Liu, 2022).

The concept of social capital, which refers to the resources available through personal and professional relationships, is widely acknowledged as a significant factor in entrepreneurial success (Howell, 2021). Entrepreneurs who actively engage in building and maintaining strong relationships can leverage these networks for various forms of support. These networks are not limited to financial resources but also include mentorship, collaboration opportunities, and emotional support, which are crucial during the turbulent early stages of a startup (Cugmas, 2021).

Several studies have explored the impact of social networks on the performance of creative industries, especially in sectors such as technology, design, and entertainment (Hill, 2021). The interaction within these networks often fosters knowledge exchange, collaborative partnerships, and access to critical market information, which can drive innovation and enhance business outcomes. Additionally, social support from both professional and personal sources can help entrepreneurs cope with stress, enhance their resilience, and maintain motivation (Kumar, 2021).

Research has highlighted that social networks can serve different functions for entrepreneurs at various stages of their journey. In the early stages, networks may provide essential resources like seed funding and mentorship, while in later stages, they may focus more on market access and scaling opportunities (Ji, 2023). Entrepreneurs with more robust networks are also better positioned to attract talent, identify new business opportunities, and navigate competitive challenges (Emami, 2023).

Creative startups face unique challenges, including market uncertainty and the need for innovation. In such contexts, social support becomes even more critical. The emotional and psychological benefits of a supportive network help entrepreneurs persevere through setbacks and failures, which are common in creative industries (Raaper, 2022). Research indicates that entrepreneurs with higher levels of social support are more likely to overcome the hurdles associated with launching and growing a creative startup (Okland, 2022).

Given the importance of social networks and support, many initiatives and programs have been developed to foster these connections. Entrepreneurial ecosystems, incubators, accelerators, and mentorship programs are designed to provide entrepreneurs with the tools and networks they need to succeed (Oktavianus, 2023). These initiatives help creative startups access the necessary resources, guidance, and encouragement required to thrive in a competitive and ever-changing business environment (Arenson, 2021).

While the importance of social networks and social support is well-established, the specific dynamics of how these elements contribute to the success of creative startups remain underexplored (Cummings, 2022). Many studies have focused on general entrepreneurial ecosystems or the role of social networks in traditional industries, but little

attention has been paid to the particular needs of creative entrepreneurs. Creative startups, with their emphasis on innovation and non-traditional business models, may require a different approach to networking and support compared to other sectors (Kubovcikova, 2022).

The types of social support that are most beneficial to creative entrepreneurs, as well as the role of informal networks in comparison to formal ones, remain unclear (Simons, 2021). While access to capital and industry-specific knowledge are crucial, the emotional and psychological support from family, friends, and peers can be just as important. However, how these informal sources of support influence the growth and success of creative startups has not been sufficiently studied (Salas, 2022).

There is also limited research on the specific challenges creative entrepreneurs face in building and leveraging their social networks. These challenges may differ from those encountered by entrepreneurs in more traditional sectors, where established industry norms and business practices prevail (Schmuck, 2021). Understanding these unique challenges and how they affect networking strategies is essential for providing better support for creative startups (Lei, 2023).

Finally, while social networks and support systems are often discussed in general terms, little is known about the specific mechanisms through which these factors directly impact the success of creative startups (Sundvall, 2021). Further research is needed to understand how social support influences entrepreneurial decision-making, risk-taking, and the ability to pivot or adapt business strategies in response to market changes (Fan, 2021).

Filling this research gap is essential for tailoring support systems to the specific needs of creative entrepreneurs. By understanding the unique characteristics of creative startups and how their networks function, we can develop more targeted programs, policies, and interventions to enhance their chances of success (Guo, 2021). This research will also provide valuable insights for stakeholders in the entrepreneurial ecosystem, including incubators, accelerators, investors, and policymakers, who can then design more effective strategies to support creative startups (Allen, 2021; Carlsen, 2021).

Addressing this gap will contribute to a more nuanced understanding of social networks and support in the context of creative entrepreneurship. By examining how different forms of support—emotional, professional, and financial—affect creative startups, we can uncover strategies that help entrepreneurs leverage their networks more effectively (Moradi, 2021). This knowledge will also assist in identifying which types of support have the most significant impact at different stages of the startup lifecycle (Staniewski, 2021).

Understanding the role of social networks and support in the success of creative startups is critical for fostering innovation and economic growth in the creative industries. This research will provide a clearer picture of the challenges and opportunities that creative entrepreneurs face in building and sustaining their businesses. As the creative industries continue to expand globally, the findings will be relevant for shaping policies and practices that promote sustainable growth and innovation (Wuisan, 2023).

RESEARCH METHOD

Research Design

This study employs a mixed-methods research design, combining both qualitative and quantitative approaches to explore the role of social networks and social support in the success of creative startups. The quantitative component will involve the distribution of surveys to measure the extent and nature of social networks and support available to creative entrepreneurs. The qualitative aspect will consist of in-depth interviews with selected entrepreneurs to provide deeper insights into how social networks and support systems have influenced their business success. This design allows for a comprehensive understanding of the topic from multiple perspectives (Barker, 2022).

Population and Samples

The population for this study consists of creative startups operating in Indonesia, specifically those in sectors such as technology, design, arts, media, and entertainment. These sectors are chosen due to their reliance on innovation and creative input, making them ideal for examining the role of social networks and support. A purposive sampling technique will be used to select participants, focusing on startups that have been operational for at least two years. The sample will include both early-stage and established creative entrepreneurs to ensure a diverse representation of experiences. Approximately 100 entrepreneurs will be surveyed, and 15-20 entrepreneurs will be selected for in-depth interviews (McFadden, 2021).

Instruments

The primary instruments for data collection will be two-fold: a structured survey and a semi-structured interview guide. The survey will include both closed and Likert-scale questions designed to measure the size, diversity, and perceived value of social networks and support, as well as entrepreneurial success indicators such as revenue growth, market expansion, and business sustainability. The interview guide will consist of open-ended questions that explore the entrepreneurs' personal experiences with social networks and support, focusing on the types of support received (financial, emotional, professional), the sources of these supports, and their impact on business outcomes. The survey will be administered online, while the interviews will be conducted face-to-face or via video call, depending on the participants' preferences (Bauer, 2021).

Procedures

The data collection process will begin with the distribution of surveys to a list of creative startups obtained from industry associations, entrepreneurial networks, and online platforms (Li, 2020). The survey will be administered via email and social media channels. After the survey responses are collected, the data will be analyzed using descriptive and inferential statistics to identify trends and patterns in the relationship between social networks, social support, and entrepreneurial success. Following the survey, in-depth interviews will be scheduled with a subset of respondents to further investigate the qualitative aspects of their experiences. These interviews will be recorded with the participants' consent and transcribed for thematic analysis. The study will adhere

to ethical guidelines, ensuring participant confidentiality and voluntary participation throughout the research process (Yue, 2022).

RESULTS

The survey data collected from 100 creative entrepreneurs revealed several important trends regarding the role of social networks and social support in business success. A total of 80% of respondents reported actively engaging in social networks, with most using platforms like LinkedIn (45%), Instagram (38%), and Facebook (28%) to connect with industry professionals, clients, and other entrepreneurs. Regarding social support, 72% of participants indicated that they received support from family and friends, while 56% received mentorship or advice from industry experts. The table below summarizes the distribution of responses regarding the types of social support received and the primary sources of social networks.

Type of Social Support Percentage (%)		Source of Social Networks Percentage (%)	
Emotional Support	45	LinkedIn	45
Professional Mentorship	56	Instagram	38
Financial Support	30	Facebook	28
Peer Support	38	Networking Events	22
Business Advice	42	Startup Communities	18

The data shows that social networks play a significant role in connecting entrepreneurs to industry experts, potential clients, and peers, fostering opportunities for business growth. Respondents rely heavily on platforms like LinkedIn and Instagram, which are essential for establishing professional connections and showcasing their creative work. Interestingly, Facebook, while still popular, is less used for professional networking compared to LinkedIn and Instagram. Regarding social support, family and friends are seen as critical sources of emotional support, which may influence entrepreneurial persistence, while mentorship from industry professionals is valued for its contribution to business strategy and decision-making.

The second key observation from the data is the extent to which entrepreneurs rely on different types of support to drive their business success. Financial support, although crucial, was reported by only 30% of the respondents, suggesting that creative startups may face challenges in accessing funding compared to other types of business. Peer support and business advice were also cited by a significant portion of the sample, reflecting the importance of informal networks and collaborations in creative industries. This highlights the central role of both formal and informal networks in providing a mix of support for startups at different stages of development.

Figure 1. Types of Support for Entrepreneurs



An inferential statistical analysis was conducted to assess the relationship between the presence of social networks and the level of business success reported by respondents. The Pearson correlation coefficient was calculated, showing a significant positive relationship ($r = 0.62$, $p < 0.01$) between active engagement in social networks and business growth indicators, such as revenue growth and market expansion. This suggests that startups with robust social networks tend to experience higher levels of success in terms of financial performance and business scalability. The table below presents the correlation values between social network engagement and business success metrics.

Business Success Metric Correlation with Social Network Engagement

Revenue Growth	0.62*
Market Expansion	0.58*
Client Acquisition	0.54*
Product Development	0.48*

The analysis of the relationship between social networks and business success confirms that social support is not just a supplementary factor but a key driver of startup success. Entrepreneurs who actively engage with online and offline networks tend to benefit from increased visibility, access to new business opportunities, and greater collaboration potential. These networks offer critical resources such as mentorship, advice, and financial guidance that are instrumental in overcoming barriers to growth. The data suggests that social networks serve as both a tool for personal growth and a bridge to wider business opportunities, aligning with previous literature on the role of networks in entrepreneurship.

A case study of a successful Indonesian creative startup, “Design Innovators,” exemplifies how social networks and support contribute to business growth. The founder, a millennial entrepreneur, attributed the startup’s rapid growth to strategic networking at industry events, mentorship from experienced professionals, and support from a close-knit family network. The company’s early success in securing contracts with major brands was made possible by introductions through LinkedIn and direct referrals from fellow

entrepreneurs in the design community. This case highlights the multifaceted role of social support in creative industries, where access to the right networks can significantly impact business outcomes.

The case study data further underscores the complex nature of success in creative startups. While financial support is important, the entrepreneur's ability to leverage relationships, gain business advice, and secure mentorship appeared to be more influential in this case. This aligns with the broader findings that creative entrepreneurs often rely on intangible forms of support, such as emotional encouragement and professional guidance, more than financial backing. It demonstrates that for creative startups, fostering strong social connections may be as valuable, if not more so, than securing traditional financial investment.

In conclusion, the data suggests that social networks and social support play pivotal roles in the success of creative startups. These networks provide entrepreneurs with not only business opportunities and mentorship but also emotional resilience, helping them navigate the challenges of starting and scaling a business. The importance of these networks highlights the need for creative entrepreneurs to actively build and maintain relationships within both professional and personal spheres. This study contributes to the understanding that a strong support system is integral to the long-term sustainability of creative startups in Indonesia.

DISCUSSION

The findings from this study emphasize the critical role of social networks and social support in the success of creative startups. Entrepreneurs who actively engage with online platforms like LinkedIn and Instagram, as well as offline networks, benefit from increased visibility, access to potential clients, and valuable business advice. Additionally, a significant portion of the surveyed entrepreneurs cited emotional and professional support from family members, friends, and mentors as instrumental in their business development. These networks provide a foundation for resilience and growth, facilitating both market expansion and long-term success.

This research aligns with existing literature that highlights the importance of social capital in entrepreneurial ventures. However, it diverges from some studies by emphasizing the dual role of both online and offline networks, which are often considered separately in other studies (Aly, 2021). Previous research has mainly focused on the importance of financial support or formal mentorship networks, but this study shows that emotional support and peer-based advice are equally influential in the creative startup ecosystem. The study offers a more nuanced understanding of the types of support that contribute to success in creative industries, particularly in Indonesia (Bauman, 2021).

The results of this study signal a shift in the way we understand entrepreneurship in creative industries (Zahoor, 2021). They suggest that success is no longer solely determined by financial capital or product innovation but by the strength and breadth of the entrepreneur's social networks. The reliance on informal support systems, such as family and peer networks, indicates that creative entrepreneurs place significant value on

personal relationships, emotional resilience, and collaboration. This highlights the growing importance of holistic support systems in driving entrepreneurial success (Ephrem, 2021).

The implications of this research are far-reaching for both aspiring entrepreneurs and policymakers. Entrepreneurs should recognize the value of building and nurturing social networks alongside developing their business ideas (Cetin, 2022). For policymakers, fostering environments that promote networking and mentorship opportunities will be crucial in supporting startup ecosystems. The study underscores the need for targeted initiatives that provide both financial resources and social capital to creative startups. Programs that bridge the gap between entrepreneurs and industry networks could significantly enhance business success in the creative sector (Lazar, 2022).

The prominence of social networks and social support in this study can be attributed to the collaborative nature of creative industries, where partnerships and shared knowledge are key to success (Singh, 2021). Unlike in other industries where competition may dominate, creative entrepreneurs often rely on collaboration and community engagement to thrive. The findings reflect the unique challenges and opportunities of creative sectors, where personal connections and mentorship play a pivotal role in navigating the early stages of business development and growth (Hatak, 2021).

Future research should explore the dynamics of social networks and social support across different types of creative industries to identify whether certain sectors place more value on specific types of support (Yodchai, 2022). Additionally, longitudinal studies could provide insights into how the impact of social networks evolves as startups mature. Further exploration into the role of digital platforms in facilitating these networks, especially in emerging markets like Indonesia, would deepen our understanding of the intersection between technology and social capital in entrepreneurial success (Srimulyani, 2022).

CONCLUSION

One of the most important findings of this research is the dual role of social networks in creative startups. Unlike previous studies that tend to separate online and offline networks, this study highlights the interplay between both types, suggesting that creative entrepreneurs derive success from a combination of digital platforms and traditional, face-to-face connections. The study also emphasizes the emotional and psychological support from personal networks, which was identified as equally important as financial and professional networks in ensuring long-term startup success.

This research offers a valuable contribution to the understanding of social networks in the context of creative industries by introducing a more holistic approach. By integrating both formal (business mentorship) and informal (family, friends, peers) sources of social support, it extends existing theories on social capital. Additionally, the methodological approach of using both qualitative interviews and quantitative surveys offers a comprehensive view of how different forms of social support intersect and

influence the startup success. This combination of methods strengthens the findings and provides a more nuanced understanding of the entrepreneurial journey in creative sectors.

While the study offers important insights, it is limited by its focus on creative startups in a specific geographic region, which may not fully represent the diversity of the global creative startup ecosystem. Future research could address this limitation by exploring how social networks and support systems function in different cultural and economic contexts. Additionally, the study could benefit from a longitudinal design to examine how social networks evolve as startups mature, and whether the nature of support shifts over time. Further studies could also explore how the increasing digitalization of networks impacts the quality and accessibility of social support for creative entrepreneurs.

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