

PROFICIENCY LEVELS IN USING DIGITAL PLATFORMS AMONG POLYTECHNIC STUDENTS AND THEIR INCLINATION TOWARDS ENTREPRENEURIAL CAREERS

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ABSTRACT: This research investigates the proficiency levels in using digital platforms among polytechnic students and their inclination towards entrepreneurship. In the digital age, effective use of digital tools is crucial for entrepreneurial success. This study aims to assess the current digital proficiency among students and determine its impact on their entrepreneurial tendencies. The study focuses on 100 respondents from the Diploma of Marketing and Diploma of Business Studies programs within the Commerce Department, Politeknik Merlimau. All of them have enrolled in a digital entrepreneurship course for one semester. A quantitative method was employed, utilizing surveys to gather data. The survey assessed students' skills in various digital platforms, including social media, e-commerce, digital marketing, and online collaboration tools, as well as their attitudes towards entrepreneurship and their experiences with digital tools in entrepreneurial activities. The study found a strong positive correlation between students' digital platform skills and their entrepreneurial tendencies, indicating that as students become more proficient in using digital tools, their interest in entrepreneurship increases. The findings suggest that integrating digital skills into educational programs is crucial for fostering entrepreneurial intentions among students, preparing them for success in the digital economy.

KEYWORDS: *Digital Entrepreneurship, Digital Platforms, Digital Proficiency.*

1.0 INTRODUCTION

In the contemporary digital economy, proficiency in utilizing digital platforms has emerged as a critical factor for students aspiring to entrepreneurial careers. The integration of digital technology in entrepreneurship not only enhances business efficiency but also opens new avenues for innovation and market expansion. Digital entrepreneurship has significantly contributed to the development of higher education in Malaysia. It equips students with entrepreneurial skills and technological innovation, guiding them toward self-employment, skill enhancement, and better job prospects post-graduation [1]. Modern entrepreneurial activities now require more advanced skills than before to effectively integrate and utilize digital technologies for innovation [2]. The ability to create and manage digital platforms is vital for businesses to connect with and engage their target markets. As noted by [3], companies that use digital platforms like social media, websites, and email marketing are more likely to meet their marketing goals and build customer relationships. This is especially important for budding entrepreneurs, who must master these platforms to enhance brand recognition, foster engagement, and attract potential customers. In Malaysian Polytechnics, the digital entrepreneurship course offered to students focuses on teaching them how to create and manage digital marketing platforms such as Facebook pages, Instagram, WhatsApp for Business, websites, and email marketing. This course is part of a collaboration between Malaysia Digital Economy Corporation (MDEC) and Jabatan Pendidikan Politeknik & Kolej Komuniti under the eUsahawan Program, initiated in 2015. Despite the widespread use of digital technologies among students for personal and academic purposes, there remains a considerable gap in the application of these skills within entrepreneurial contexts [4]. Many students, while familiar with digital tools, struggle with leveraging them effectively for entrepreneurial activities. Previous research has shown that digital literacy, which includes the ability to create, manage, and evaluate digital information, is a key competence for entrepreneurs [5]. This study aims to bridge this gap by investigating the relationship between students' proficiency levels in creating and managing digital platforms

and their inclination towards entrepreneurial careers.

Therefore, the objectives of the study are to investigate, 1) the relationship between proficiency level in creating digital platform and student's entrepreneurial tendency, and 2) the relationship between proficiency level in managing digital platform and student's entrepreneurial tendency. The scope of this study focused on students from Commerce Department, Politeknik Merlimau, Malaysia who have successfully completed the digital entrepreneurship course during their studies. The significance of this study is that it will provides empirical evidence of the importance of integrating advanced digital training in polytechnic curricula to foster entrepreneurial skills, as well offering valuable implications for educators, policymakers, and industry stakeholders aiming to support youth entrepreneurship in the digital economy. The structure of this paper is as follows. First, we present the Literature review supporting the development of two hypotheses. Second, we explain the Research method used in the study, followed by Result and Discussion. Finally, we end the paper with Conclusion of the study

1.1 Digital Entrepreneurship Competencies

The concept of digitalization has transformed the global economic landscape, positioning the digital economy as the most significant economic shift since the industrial revolution. The adoption of digital technology is widely recognized as a key driver of entrepreneurship. Technological advancements have opened up numerous opportunities, especially for young entrepreneurs, to develop and grow their business ventures. Amid the significant changes driven by digital and social transformation, the rise of platform-based companies and new digitally-driven business models has become a highly influential force on a global scale [6]. Digital entrepreneurship competencies (DEC) are the skills needed to use digital tools for starting and growing businesses. These skills have become essential in today's business world, where digital platforms are crucial for marketing, customer interaction, and daily operations [7]. As a result, there is a growing focus on teaching these skills to students to boost their entrepreneurial intentions (EI) [8]. Having digital skills is key to succeeding in business

today. McQuaid [9] points out that it's not just about knowing how to use digital tools, but also about using them strategically to achieve business goals. Aragon-Mendoza et al. [8] also found that students with strong digital skills are more likely to want to start their own businesses because they are better prepared to handle the digital aspects of running a business.

1.2 Effective Use of Digital Platforms on Entrepreneurial Success

In the modern digital landscape, the ability to effectively use digital platforms has become crucial for entrepreneurial success, particularly among small and micro-enterprises. By mastering various digital tools such as websites, social media, e-commerce, and analytics, entrepreneurs can significantly enhance their business visibility, customer engagement, and overall growth. An essential factor in entrepreneurial success is the strategic use of digital marketing. According to Rahayu & Day [10], small businesses that embrace digital platforms for marketing purposes, such as social media and email campaigns, gain a competitive advantage in reaching their target markets. For example, platforms like Instagram, Facebook, and TikTok offer a space for businesses to tailor marketing strategies to specific customer segments. Furthermore, Dwivedi et al. [11] emphasize that utilizing search engine optimization (SEO) and paid advertising can significantly improve brand visibility and customer acquisition, highlighting how a well-crafted digital marketing strategy can contribute to business success. In conclusion, the effective use of digital platforms whether through targeted marketing strategies, active customer engagement, or data analytics serves as a key driver of entrepreneurial success in today's digital marketplace. Mastery of these tools not only extends market reach but also fosters customer relationships and data-informed decisions, laying the foundation for sustainable business growth.

1.3 Creating and Managing Digital Platforms

The activities involved in creating and managing digital platforms can be seen as variables that determine the level of digital platform usage. For example, an entrepreneur who not only creates a Facebook page but also regularly posts content, interacts with customers, and analyze

performance data demonstrates a more advanced level of digital platform use than one who simply creates a page and leaves it inactive. Thus, both "creation" and "management" are key variables that measure the depth and effectiveness of platform utilization. Creating involves setting up and establishing digital presence through websites, social media accounts, e-commerce platforms, or other digital tools. The creation aspect demonstrates the foundational level of digital use, as it requires knowledge of platform setup, content creation, and initial marketing strategies. According to Chaffey & Ellis-Chadwick [12], creating a business platform is establishing a digital presence through websites, social media, and other digital tools. And they do need a basic requirement of setting up these platforms, including knowledge of website design, content creation, and initial marketing strategies. This is supported by Kingsnorth [13] that discusses the foundational steps in digital marketing, emphasizing the creation of websites, social media profiles, and e-commerce platforms as essential elements in building an online presence. While managing encompasses the ongoing activities such as updating content, engaging with customers, monitoring analytics, and running digital marketing campaigns. This aspect reflects a higher level of digital proficiency and strategic use of platforms to achieve business objectives. Ryan [14] emphasizes that managing digital platforms involves monitoring analytics, updating content, and interacting with customers. These management activities are critical for refining marketing strategies, enhancing customer experience, and driving business success. This is supported by Bala & Verma [15] that underscores the importance of digital marketing activities, including content management, customer engagement, and data analytics. It suggests that these ongoing activities are a key aspect of a successful digital strategy. Creating and managing digital platforms, like websites and social media pages, is a critical part of modern entrepreneurship. These platforms are the main way businesses connect with customers, so being able to manage them well is crucial for success. Kraus et al. [16] found that good management of digital platforms leads to better customer engagement and operational efficiency, which in turn makes a business more likely to succeed. In education, Carretero et al. [17] stressed the importance of teaching students how to create and manage digital content. They found that

students who develop these skills are more likely to turn their business ideas into successful digital ventures, boosting their entrepreneurial intentions. This is particularly important in Malaysia, where programs like eUsahawan aim to equip students with digital entrepreneurship skills [18].

1.4 Digital Platform Proficiency and Entrepreneurial Intention

Research shows a clear link between digital entrepreneurship skills and the desire to start a business. For example, Yusoff and Ahmad [19] found that students with strong digital skills were more likely to want to start their own businesses. Similarly, Ismail and Zulkifli [20] reported that digital competencies significantly boost students' confidence in pursuing entrepreneurial careers. Tiwari et al. [21] also showed that students who are good at managing online business operations are more likely to want to become entrepreneurs. The literature consistently highlights the importance of digital entrepreneurship skills in shaping students' entrepreneurial intentions. As digital technologies continue to evolve, the ability to create and manage digital platforms will remain essential for aspiring entrepreneurs. Educational programs that focus on developing these skills are crucial in preparing students for the digital economy. Therefore, this study will test 2 hypotheses as follows;

H1: There is a positive relationship between proficiency levels in creating digital platform and student entrepreneurial tendency.

H2: There is a positive relationship between proficiency levels in managing digital platform and student entrepreneurial tendency.

2.0 METHODOLOGY

This section outlines the methodology utilized in this study, which aims to assess the relationships outlined in the hypotheses developed from the literature review. A quantitative research approach was adopted, utilizing a questionnaire adapted from academic sources. The survey was published online to collect data from participants. The questionnaire comprised 29 items and was divided into two parts: Part A captured the respondents' demographic profile (4 items), while Part B focused on the study's variables (25 items). Part B assessed the dependent variable, entrepreneurial tendency, using five items. The

independent variables, which were proficiency in creating and managing digital platforms, were each measured with ten items. All items were based on specific scales that were previously developed by various researchers and were adapted accordingly. Responses for Part B were recorded using a five-point Likert scale, ranging from "strongly disagree" to "strongly agree" (as detailed in Table 1). The gathered data were then analyzed to explore the relationship between proficiency in creating and managing digital platforms and entrepreneurial tendencies. The study's subjects included 100 students who had successfully completed the Digital Entrepreneurship course from the Commerce Department at Politeknik Merlimau, Malaysia. A non-probability sampling design, specifically judgmental sampling, was employed in this study. According to Sekaran and Bougie [22], this method involves selecting sample members based on specific criteria. For this research, the criterion was students who had successfully passed the Digital Entrepreneurship course. The interpretation of mean scores follows the guidelines proposed by Norasmah [23], as shown in Table 2.

Table 1 5-point Likert Scale

| Scale | Rating |
|-------------------|--------|
| Strongly Disagree | 1 |
| Disagree | 2 |
| Moderate | 3 |
| Agree | 4 |
| Strongly Agree | 5 |

Table 2 Mean score interpretation

| Mean Score | Interpretation |
|-------------|----------------|
| 1.00 - 2.00 | Low |
| 2.01 - 3.00 | Medium Low |
| 3.01 - 4.00 | Medium High |

| | |
|-------------|------|
| 4.01 - 5.00 | High |
|-------------|------|

The reliability of the consolidated questionnaire was assessed using Cronbach's alpha (α), and the results are presented in Table 3. The analysis revealed high Cronbach's alpha values: 0.90 for the "creating digital platform" factor, 0.94 for "managing digital platform," and 0.88 for "entrepreneurial tendency." These values indicate a strong internal consistency for each set of items, suggesting that all items are reliable. Consequently, no items were removed from the questionnaires

Table 3 Cronbach' Alpha

| Factor | Number of Items | Items Deleted | Total item | Cronbach's Alpha |
|---------------------------|-----------------|---------------|------------|------------------|
| Creating digital platform | 10 | 0 | 10 | 0.904 |
| Managing digital platform | 10 | 0 | 10 | 0.935 |
| Entrepreneurial tendency | 5 | 0 | 5 | 0.879 |

3.0 RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

3.1 Respondent's Profiles

The questionnaire's profile section consisted of four questions covering gender, race, study program, and study semester. The collected data were analysed using frequency and percentage distributions, as outlined in Table 4.

Table 4 Respondent's Profiles

| Respondent's Profiles | Frequency | % |
|-----------------------|-----------|----|
| Gender | | |
| <i>Male</i> | 26 | 26 |
| <i>Female</i> | 74 | 74 |
| Race | | |

| | | |
|----------------------------------|----|----|
| <i>Malay</i> | 94 | 94 |
| <i>Chinese</i> | 1 | 1 |
| <i>Indian</i> | 5 | 5 |
| Study Programme | | |
| <i>Diploma in Business Study</i> | 72 | 72 |
| <i>Diploma in Marketing</i> | 28 | 28 |
| Study Semester | | |
| <i>Semester 4 / Year 2</i> | 57 | 57 |
| <i>Semester 5 / Year 3</i> | 43 | 43 |
| N = 100 | | |

The sample included 100 respondents, of which 74% were female and 26% were male. The majority of respondents identified as Malay (94%), with a small representation of Indian (5%) and Chinese (1%) students. Regarding their study programs, 72% were enrolled in the Diploma in Business Studies, while 28% were from the Diploma in Marketing. In terms of their academic progress, 57% were in Semester 4 (Year 2) and 43% in Semester 5 (Year 3).

3.2 Descriptive Analysis

Table 5 displays the mean scores for three variables: Creating Digital Platform, Managing Digital Platform, and Entrepreneurial Tendency. All three variables are rated at a high level, indicating a strong proficiency and inclination in these areas among the participants.

Table 5 Mean Score for Creating Digital Platform, Managing Digital Platform and Entrepreneurial Tendency

| Variables | Mean Score | Level |
|---------------------------|-------------------|--------------|
| Creating Digital Platform | 4.31 | High |
| Managing Digital Platform | 4.21 | High |
| Entrepreneurial Tendency | 4.27 | High |

The mean score of 4.31 for Creating Digital Platform indicates that participants excel in setting up digital platforms. This includes activities such as building websites, creating social media profiles, and establishing e-commerce channels. A high score in this area suggests that participants have a solid understanding of how to initiate and establish a digital presence effectively. Their capability to create these platforms reflects a strong foundational skill essential for starting any digital business or marketing effort. With a mean score of 4.21 for Managing Digital Platform, it is evident that participants are adept at maintaining and optimizing their digital platforms. This involves regular updates, managing content, engaging with customers, and utilizing analytics to track performance and guide strategies. The high score signifies that participants not only know how to set up digital tools but also understand the importance of ongoing management to ensure that these platforms continue to serve their business goals effectively. This skill is crucial for keeping digital channels dynamic and responsive to market changes. The mean score of 4.27 for Entrepreneurial Tendency shows that participants possess a strong entrepreneurial mindset. This includes traits such as innovation, risk-taking, and a proactive approach to seizing business opportunities. The high score reflects a significant inclination towards entrepreneurial activities and attitudes, suggesting that participants are motivated and prepared to pursue entrepreneurial ventures. Their strong entrepreneurial tendencies are likely to be enhanced by their ability to create and manage digital platforms effectively.

3.2 Relationship Between Creating Digital Platform and Entrepreneurial Tendency.

H1: There is a positive relationship between proficiency levels in creating digital platform and students' entrepreneurial tendency.

Table 6 Correlation analysis between creating digital platform and entrepreneurial tendency

| Correlations | | | |
|--------------|--|---------------------------|--------------------------|
| | | Creating digital platform | Entrepreneurial tendency |

| | | | |
|--|---------------------|--------|--------|
| Creating digital platform | Pearson Correlation | 1 | .543** |
| | Sig. (2-tailed) | | .000 |
| | N | 100 | 100 |
| Entrepreneurial tendency | Pearson Correlation | .543** | 1 |
| | Sig. (2-tailed) | .000 | |
| | N | 100 | 100 |
| **. Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2 tailed). | | | |

The analysis in Table 6 reveals a positive and significant correlation between students' proficiency in creating digital platforms and their entrepreneurial tendency ($r = 0.543$, $p = 0.000$). This suggests that students who are more skilled at creating digital platforms are also more inclined to pursue entrepreneurial activities.

Based on these findings, we can summarize the following points:

- i. There exists a statistically significant linear relationship between proficiency in creating digital platforms and entrepreneurial tendency ($r = 0.543$, $p < 0.01$).
- ii. The relationship is positive, indicating that as students' proficiency in creating digital platforms increases, their tendency to engage in entrepreneurship also rises.
- iii. The strength of this relationship is considered relatively strong, given that the correlation coefficient (r) exceeds 0.5.

3.2 Relationship Between Proficiency Levels in Managing Digital Platform and Entrepreneurial Tendency

H2: There is a positive relationship between proficiency levels in managing digital platform and student entrepreneurial tendency.

Table 7 Correlation analysis between managing digital platform and entrepreneurial tendency

| Correlations | | | |
|--------------|---------|---------------------------|--------------------------|
| | | Managing digital platform | Entrepreneurial tendency |
| Managing | Pearson | 1 | .548** |

| | | | |
|--|---------------------|--------|------|
| digital platform | Correlation | | |
| | Sig. (2-tailed) | | .000 |
| | N | 100 | 100 |
| Entrepreneurial tendency | Pearson Correlation | .548** | 1 |
| | Sig. (2-tailed) | .000 | |
| | N | 100 | 100 |
| **. Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2 tailed). | | | |

The analysis in Table 7 indicates a positive and significant correlation between proficiency in managing digital platforms and entrepreneurial tendency ($r = 0.548$, $p = 0.000$) among polytechnic students who completed the Digital Entrepreneurship course. Key findings from the results are as follows:

- i. A statistically significant linear relationship exists between proficiency in managing digital platforms and entrepreneurial tendency ($r = 0.548$, $p < 0.01$).
- ii. The relationship is positive, meaning that as students' proficiency in managing digital platforms increases, their entrepreneurial tendency also rises.
- iii. The strength of this correlation is relatively strong, as indicated by the correlation coefficient exceeding 0.5.

The study's findings reveal a strong positive relationship between students' proficiency in creating and managing digital platforms and their tendency toward entrepreneurship. This confirms previous research suggesting that digital entrepreneurship competencies (DEC) are key drivers of entrepreneurial intention [7, 8]. Essentially, students with higher digital skills are more likely to develop an entrepreneurial mindset. In terms of creating digital platforms, foundational skills such as setting up websites, social media profiles, and e-commerce sites are crucial [12, 13]. Our findings align with Carretero et al. [17], who emphasized that students who acquire these skills are better equipped to turn business ideas into reality. The results show that students proficient in creating digital content have a higher entrepreneurial inclination. Managing digital platforms, including activities like content updates, customer engagement, and performance analysis, also significantly influences entrepreneurial success. This supports research

by Ryan [14] and Kraus et al. [16], which highlighted that active digital platform management improves customer engagement and business performance. Our study affirms these claims, showing that students skilled in managing platforms are more inclined toward entrepreneurship. Furthermore, this study is in line with the findings of Yusoff and Ahmad [19] and Ismail and Zulkifli [20], which suggest that digital skills boost students' confidence in pursuing entrepreneurial careers. It also reflects Tiwari et al. [21]'s work, indicating that students proficient in online business operations are more likely to become entrepreneurs. Overall, these findings underscore the need to incorporate digital entrepreneurship skills in educational programs, especially as they prepare students for the digital economy. Programs like Malaysia's eUsahawan [18] demonstrate how equipping students with digital competencies can strengthen their entrepreneurial intentions and business success potential

4.0 CONCLUSION

As a conclusion, this study confirm that digital platform proficiency is directly linked to students' entrepreneurial tendencies, supporting both hypotheses. Hypothesis 1, which proposed a positive relationship between proficiency in creating digital platforms and entrepreneurial inclination, was validated, indicating that students with stronger skills in platform creation are more likely to pursue entrepreneurial ventures. Similarly, Hypothesis 2, concerning the relationship between managing digital platforms and entrepreneurial tendency, was also confirmed. Students who effectively manage digital tools, such as social media and websites, tend to exhibit a higher inclination towards entrepreneurship. These findings emphasize the need for educational programs, like Malaysia's eUsahawan initiative, to focus on building students' digital entrepreneurship competencies. As digital technologies evolve, these skills will remain essential for aspiring entrepreneurs to thrive in the modern business landscape.

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