

THE INFLUENCE OF PRODUCT CREATIVITY ON COMPETITIVE ADVANTAGE

Trustorini Handayani

Universitas Komputer Indonesia, Indonesia

Muhammad Gian

Universitas Komputer Indonesia, Indonesia

Niël A Kruger

University of Johannesburg, South Africa

ABSTRACT

This research aimed to explore and analyse the influence of product creativity on competitive advantages in Micro, Small, or Medium Enterprises (MSMEs) within the ceramic centres in Plered Purwakarta. Given that competition in ceramic MSMEs has been becoming steadily more challenging, this research speaks to a practical challenge that must be addressed for their continued survival within this region. The method used in this study is descriptive verificative and is accomplished through regression and correlation analysis techniques. The sample in this study is 65 respondents. The study's descriptive analysis results found that of the total population of ceramic workers in the sample, 65.9% of them were sufficiently creative. When analysing the subconstructs of creativity used in this study, "product novelty" indicators were the highest, with the lowest indicator being "product transformation". The variable value of competitive advantage total score of 63.4% indicates that the target population is quite competitive regarding "price advantage" indicators. However, they scored low on general competition level indicators.

Keywords: product creativity, competitive advantage

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INTRODUCTION

Competition is a fundamental aspect of the business; arguing from the perspective of a rational economic entity, as per the work of Horodnic et al., (2021), an individual will seek the highest level of economic or personal benefit that they are cognitive of if it maintains a low

perceived cost-to-benefit ratio. In simpler terms, where the opportunity for profit exists, people will pursue it. This interaction of independent agents, seeking to maximise their economic benefit, results in entrepreneurial activities within an economy.

Several scholars have described entrepreneur-

ship as creating value, evaluating business prospects, and producing innovative products and services (Newman *et al.*, 2019, Hang & Chen, 2021, Tondy & Tigga, 2019, Fattah *et al.*, 2022). Essentially entrepreneurship is characterised by the ability to find value in business opportunities and develop new and innovative products and services that requires creativity. However, the means and mind to apply oneself entrepreneurially are not equally accessible to everyone. Entrepreneurship can be driven through opportunity or necessity (survival). When driven by opportunity, the entrepreneur is more likely to be successful than when driven by survival. However, other factors, such as the number of family members that are entrepreneurs, have a significant effect on the success rates of entrepreneurs (Parker, 2009). Opportunity entrepreneurship implies the availability of the necessary capital and skills to take advantage of the opportunity. However, traditionally, capital-intensive solutions (advertising, scaling, bulk purchase of inputs) are not generally viable options for the MSMEs, which must employ and amplify creativity to overcome their competitive limitations. Thus, to solve problems and access opportunities, MSMEs develop new ideas, innovations, products or services and must therefore prioritise amplifying creativity (Suryana, 2017). MSME entrepreneurship is characteristically integrated with innovation and creativity, and both have become increasingly important determinants of organisational performance, success, and longer-term survival (Anderson *et al.*, 2014). Creativity is the ability to generate new ideas by combining and changing existing ideas and realising them by bringing them to market as a product or service (Riany & Dahmiri, 2022).

Creativity can be innate or in response to competitive forces. In the latter case, it can be driven by a more severe consumer expectation or by competition from companies that sell similar products. The effect of both of these drives is an increased level of competition. The advantage of competition is that it brings forth the most attractive cost benefit to customers and improves the industry through innovation. If a company can effectively meet the consumer's expectations better than its competitors, it will generate superior economic benefits (Ratna & Paryanti, 2015). Through entrepreneurial creativity, the

MSME creates something new, both in idea generation, around which creativity centres, and in implementation, around which innovation centres, thereby generating something relatively different from what has existed before to be presented to the market (Anderson *et al.*, 2014; Buchari, 2015; Subambang *et al.*, 2016).

What sets creativity apart as a competitive advantage is that innovation's value cannot be immediately copied, whereas price competition can be responded to rapidly (Baranti, 2020). Competitive advantages can also come from various company activities such as designing, producing, marketing, logistics, and after-sales client support supporting its products. The success of an organisation depends on the expertise it retains in the business. Employee knowledge, experience, creativity, qualifications, continuous learning, research and development contribute to this (Urbancová Hana, 2013). The aforementioned competitive advantages affect the business's profitability of the business in different ways, each having a tradeoff (e.g. higher skilled labour requires higher compensation).

LITERATURE REVIEW

Within the ceramics industry, creativity can be seen as being as essential as the technical skills required to produce the tile as artistry and the methods of transferring it to a physical product are intrinsically intertwined. Consequently, the product's value is tied directly to the producer's novelty, beauty, and artistry. Within the Plered Purwakarta region, the number of sales has been rapidly decreasing, with sales value falling 42% from 2018 to 2020, see Figure 1. The effect has been increased competition and a need to differentiate their product offerings for survival.

In a preliminary exploration of Plered Purwakarta, one of the interviewed ceramic industry owners explained that increased input costs drove the decline in sales value due to relatively expensive raw materials. MSMEs must generally operate in a competitive environment with significantly fewer resources than their larger competitors and additional competitive pressures, thus necessitating constant innovation and creativity to maximise their potential success. Secondly, the initial interview showed that the lack of ability to bring ideas to market at the required price point while accounting for

consumer tastes also significantly affected their ability to compete; this is in line with Parker (2009). Although economic pressures can prove to be a consistent challenge, the ceramic artists of

Plered Purwakarta persist, illustrating that despite the challenge, creativity enables competitiveness.

CERAMIC SALES VALUE

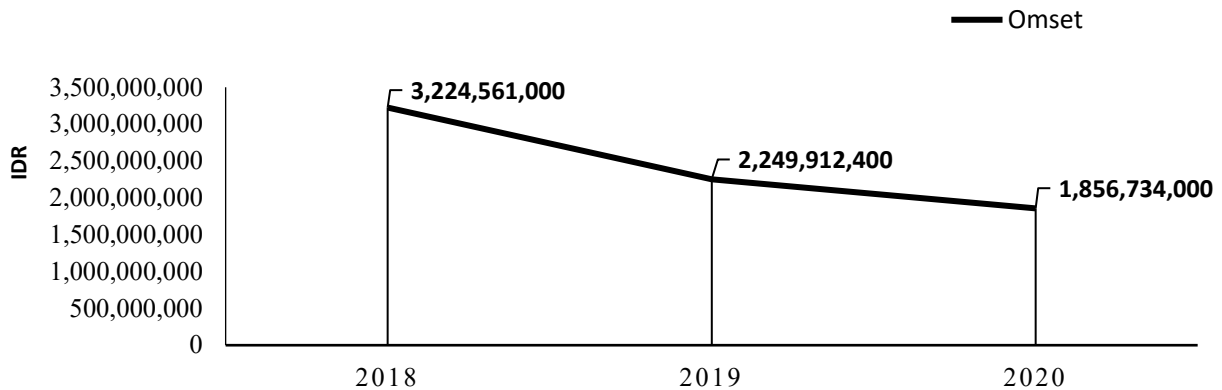


Figure 1. Value of Handicraft Sales to Ceramic Entrepreneurs Plered Purwakarta Regency 2018-2020. Source: Ceramic Industry Centre, Plered, 2021.

In order to empirically investigate the relationship of the competitive advantage of creativity on Plered Purwakarta, the concepts of product creativity, marketing strategy, and the relationship between product creativity and competitive advantage must be discussed.

Product Creativity

There are many definitions of creativity, ranging from making something new and valuable to coming up with something new on the spot. Traditional definitions of creativity emphasise two components. The first is a novelty, and the second is typically associated with usefulness, effectiveness, or value. (Runco, 2004; Runco & Jaeger, 2012; Runco, 2014; Glaveanu & Kaufman, 2021; Kaufman & Glaveanu, 2021; Sternberg, 2022). A creative person conceptualises a new idea; alters what already exists; follows developments and changes in the field and surrounding environment, and then brings forth that idea where its value justifies the efforts to pursue it.

The creative process can be individualised or driven through an organisational culture that encourages and supports creativity. In the latter

context, creativity can be taught as a way of learning and thinking within a business context and then bringing it to production, thereby allowing for increased employment (Kaufman and Beghetto, 2009, Teresa M. Amabile and Michael G. Pratt, 2016).

Many studies have been done on organisational creativity, and across those studies, individual and organisational creativity has been shown to carry disparate limitations and constraints (Shalley et al., 2004, Cnoosen et al., 2019, Tehseen et al., 2020; Fattah et al., 2022). Employee creativity is associated with overall performance (Gong et al., 2009; Amabile & Pratt, 2016). However, according to existing literature, the impetus for creativity is complex and constitutes considerations of personal benefit to the creative individual. This is because the employee's work and personal environment are diverse, leading to numerous complex motivations with different aspects that must be brought together to create a stable environment that fosters creativity (Shalley et al., 2004, Cnoosen et al., 2019, Tehseen et al., 2020; Fattah et al., 2022). In contrast, creativity in an organisation is proportional to the expected "enhancing effect" it will have on perceived

threats and opportunities in status-quo business dynamics (Amabile et al., 1996). Creativity requires time and sacrificed productivity and thus can only positively affect perceived threats where resources are sufficiently available within an organisation. When combined with the capabilities of each individual in the organisation, organisational resources allow for creativity as the ability of an entity (individual or organisation) to create new and potentially valuable ideas and products through imaginative skills (Florida, 2012; Chibuzor, 2014; Tian et al., 2021).

The work environment also plays a significant role in creativity since creativity synthesises old ideas, new concepts, and novel experiences. The work environment needs to be conducive to this and provide a variety of stimuli that will encourage and stimulate creativity in employees (Muniem Abdel Fattah F.A., *et al.*, 2022). Necessity is the mother of innovation. The creative mind is challenged through obstacles, threats or a need to progress and overcome limitations to creativity and innovation (Amabile, 1996; Damanpour, 1991; Amabile & Pratt, 2016; Oguz A, Acar, et al., 2018).

Tian *et al.* (2021) define the product creativity of a company as the ability to develop a new product with features or characteristics that exceed those available on the market to meet unmet needs. New product development begins with a good knowledge of the product you are developing, and existing areas of knowledge help MSMEs creatively develop their products. Therefore, when developing a new product, you need to test different product ideas and determine the best possible option from many options, reinforcing the need for sufficient resources. Product creativity focuses on the product and how it will interact with its market. Thus, the process of product creativity in organisations links individual employees, immediate tasks within the business, and the organisation's larger strategic goals (Chibuzor, 2014; Tian *et al.*, 2021). According to Amabile and Pratt (2016), product creativity within an organisation requires a tradeoff between what is needed to actuate the individual's creativity and the organisational investment to realise that innovation. The organisation presents the individual with the required components in the form of essential resources, raw materials, processes, and skills, which produce new

products when combined in new, well-coordinated ways.

Competitive advantage as Marketing Strategy on MSMEs

Competitiveness can be a valuable tool in achieving organisational goals, regardless of business size, when competing with other organisations. However, being competitive requires that the business uniquely and sustainably provide more value and benefit in its offering than its competitors (Hendrayanti & Nurauliya, 2021).

Competitiveness is a strategic management function rooted in achieving superior results compared to competitors. An organisation's competitiveness is determined by how well its strategy translates to a competitive advantage. Competitive advantage can be in the form of competitive prices, valuation, differentiation, and high product innovation (Kotler, 2010; Anjaningruma & Rudamagab, 2019). However, due to the variable nature of businesses, competitiveness is a fluid and dynamic concept that requires multiple iterations of identifying strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats and positioning the business to take advantage of new technologies, improved production techniques, and cost-reducing manufacturing techniques.

Strategic management can be an intimidating challenge to an MSME owner who must juggle various managerial roles while actively participating in the production (Krüger, 2017, Krüger 2020). However, because competitive advantage has time-interval-related characteristics, it is generally impossible to model competitive advantage if the strategy is successful (Kay 1993, Feurer & Chaharbaghi, 1995; Sołoducho-Pelc, 2014). Consequently, a business cannot precisely imitate the elements of any other organisation perfectly. Moreover, this challenge gains an additional degree of complication for an organisation when seeking to imitate the uniquely differentiating characteristics of their competition or capture their market share.

The foundation of competitive advantage is allocating the company's resources towards faculties within the business that can realise its ambition to create superior value for the customer through a unique product, service or benefits (Porter, 1985; Ma, 1999; Yamin et al.,

1999; Sołoducho-Pelc, 2014). A degree of creativity, defined in this case as a unique ability/capability that allows a business to outperform its competitors through difficult-to-copy innovations, is thus inseparable from the concept of competitive advantage (Porter, 1990; Matei, 2013; Muratovic, 2013; Sołoducho-Pelc, 2014). This more general creativity can be differentiated from product creativity in that it need not directly affect the product as much as it affects the supporting structures around an already present product.

To reduce the strain on an MSME, it can shift a portion of its focus to marketing, supplement market engagement and bring unique, already available products to market, thereby offsetting the opportunity costs associated with product creativity. Through marketing, high-quality market offerings are presented to possible customers who are encouraged to purchase them (Budiarti & Akbar., 2021). Marketing has been proven to be effective in practice and in literature which shows that the implementation of marketing strategies for MSMEs in Indonesia was successful (Yulia et al., 2019; Ramli & Soelton, 2018; Luckyardi et al., 2022). Among their marketing interventions were: improving the quality of already excellent services through market engagement; maintaining the existence of the business environment and business relations through Business-to-Business (B2B) marketing; developing product delivery in collaboration with the government and private parties; minimising promotional activities by increasing market networks both from the agricultural service and independently with the internet; adjusting product prices with raw material costs; creating product innovations in terms of perception and form; adjusting product prices to customer willingness to pay; and establishing permanent outlets as centres of superior commodities (Yulia et al., 2019; Ramli & Soelton, 2018; Luckyardi et al., 2022).

However, for marketing to assist the business to profit, proliferate, and maintain unique competitiveness, it requires a market offering that carries sufficient merit in the value it offers to clients (Porter 1980; Sołoducho-Pelc, 2014). Therefore, MSMEs must carry out various innovations to create high-quality products and an organisation's creativity, which comes with accompanying costs. Yet, in applying marketing and other strategic considerations, the business

can distribute its risks more evenly, allowing for higher survivability and competitiveness.

The relationship between product creativity and competitive advantage

The product creativity of a company is the ability to develop new products with features or attributes that are different from competitors to satisfy unmet consumer needs. (Tian et al., 2021). In the business environment, ever-changing consumer needs require increased corporate creativity and provide business continuity potential. If MSME wants to gain a competitive advantage, the company must have the ability to bring creativity to the development of superior products and realise value and benefits in the market. (Grant, 1991; Ivanová & Čepel, 2018; Tian et al., 2021).

From a Resource Based View (RBV) perspective, MSMEs have the opportunity to achieve a competitive advantage if they can develop new products creatively and innovatively. (Bernie, 1991; Halim & Mat, 2010; Tian et al., 2021). Therefore, innovation through creativity is a strategy that overcomes competition by offering great value and high-quality new products. (Ida, 2017; Tian et al., 2021). To increase an organisation's creativity, as reflected in the company's new products, it needs the ability of the company to utilise and rejoin existing resources to achieve its goals. Ultimately, new product creativity helps MSMEs meet the ever-changing market demands and gain a competitive advantage. (Harwiki et al., 2018; Tian et al., 2021). Most researchers claim creativity leads to positive results such as product performance, competitive advantage, and differentiation (Amabile, 1988; Andrews & Smith, 1996; Im et al., 2014).

METHODOLOGY

In this paper, the magnitude of creativity's effect on competitive advantage will be researched and analysed so that how much influence product creativity has on competitive advantages in the Plered Purwakarta ceramic centre will be explicated.

Research data is generated and sourced from primary and secondary data, respectively. Primary data sets were extracted from interviews with ceramic entrepreneurs and accompanying questionnaires. Information from

the Ceramic Center and the results of previous research related to the variables constitute the secondary data. This research was conducted in the creative ceramic industry, while the aforementioned secondary research was conducted in other fields of MSMEs.

The methods used in this study are descriptive and verificative. The descriptive method describes the state of product creativity and competitive advantage in Plered Ceramics' MSME. The means of this survey was a questionnaire distributed to respondents. Data validity calculations were performed using product-moment correlation formulas to measure the research instrument's accuracy.

The next step was to run a credibility test to determine the consistency of the respondents' responses. The Internal Consistency Reliability was ensured using a Cronbach's alpha reliability factor (α), which allowed the integrity of each item in the research instrument to be validated. Likert scales were used qualitatively to measure attitudes when a phenomenon occurs to a series of quantitative data.

The verificative method was applied through regression and correlation analysis to assess strengths between variables and determination coefficient to see the magnitude of influences between variables and literature studies related to research variables. This creates a basis that generates fundamental expectations and allows for the explanation of the phenomena that occur.

The Slovin method was used to determine the applicable sample of the population. The sample in the study consisted of a selection of 65 out of 183 populations (35.52%) ceramic entrepreneurs in Plered Purwakarta. The sampling withdrawal technique used is a form of non-probability sampling, a sampling technique that does not provide the same opportunities for each element (member) of the population to be selected as a member of the sample (Sugiyono, 2011)

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The results showed the characteristics of the respondents. Firstly, the majority (52.3%) of ceramic entrepreneurs are biologically male. In practice, this is sample indicated that there were only three more men than women, indicating a generally equitably distributed workforce. See Table 1

Table 1 . Characteristics of respondents by Gender

Gender	Frequency	Percentage
Male	34	52.3
Female	31	47.7
Sum	65	100%

Source : Questionnaire data processing, 2022

Characteristic of the respondent by age, summarised in Table 2, show that the mode age fell within the range of 36-40 years (41.5%). The data indicate that although the industry absorbs young people relatively easily (12.3%), it struggles to retain them past the age of 25. This could be indicative of a shrinking industry.

Table 2. Characteristics of respondents by age

Age	Frequency	Percentage
< 25 year	8	12.3
25 - 30 year	4	6.2
31 - 35 year	12	18.5
36 - 40 year	27	41.5
> 40 year	14	21.5
Sum	65	100%

Source : Questionnaire data processing, 2022

The respondents' education characteristics show that most ceramic entrepreneurs have an education level no higher than high school, with only 6.1% having tertiary education, as shown in Table 3.

Table 3. Characteristics of respondents based on the education level

Tingkat Pendidikan	Frequency	Percentage
Primary school	17	26.2
Senior High School	23	35.4
High School	21	32.3
D3	3	4.6
Bachelor	1	1.5
Other	0	0.0
Sum	65	100%

Source : Questionnaire data processing, 2022

The descriptive analysis from this section aimed to describe entrepreneurs' creativity in

Plered ceramic centres. Product creativity in the ceramic centre, shown in Table 4, generated an average score of 65.9%. This translates to a categorically fair score of creativity. The highest indicator, at 69.2%, related to the authenticity and novelty of ceramic products made. This illustrates that entrepreneurs already possess the capacity for creation because they can design products without imitating other products or competitors. Regarding creativity in organisations, the elements of the press, product, process, and personal creativity are significant in ensuring consistent creativity in business operations (Abdulla & Cramond, 2017).

The second lowest indicator at 67.1% is the feasibility of the product seen from the aspect of quality and product ideas. It shows that the resulting product has a low perceived quality and is not necessarily congruent with consumer expectations. When analysed in combination with product transformation, which scores at 61.5 it becomes likely that the inability to meet the needs of the customer might be as a result of inflexibility within the manufacturing processes

Table 4. Summary of respondents' responses to product creativity

Indicator	Score	Category
Highly likely to achieve reliability at the level of product novelty	69.2 %	Good
Product transformation.	61.5 %	Fair
Product feasibility related to quality and product ideas	67.1 %	Fair
Total	65,9 %	Fair

Source: Questionnaire data processing, 2022

The results of the descriptive analysis of variables for competitive advantages are shown in Table 5. The average competitive advantage score is 63.4% which means that it is fairly competitive according to the analysis. Willingness to compete in terms of price scores the highest, at 68.3%, but this leaves their pricing relatively the same as competitors' pricing. General competitiveness scored 59.7%, indicating that ceramic entrepreneurs in Plered do not have good competitiveness despite being

categorically fair.

Table 5. Summary of respondents' responses to Competitive advantage

Indicator	Score	Category
Product uniqueness	66.5 %	Fair
Competitive Price	68.3 %	Good
Rarity	60.9 %	Fair
Competitiveness	59.7 %	Fair
Exchange difficulty	61.8 %	Fair
Total	63,4 %	Fair

Source: Questionnaire data processing, 2022

The results of the verificative analysis show that the regression coefficient value is 0.683, which means that when product creativity is improved, it will create a competitive advantage of 0.683. Further, explain the analysis of the correlation between creativity and competitive advantage, See Table 6

Table 6. The correlation coefficient between Product Creativity and Competitive Advantage

		Product Creativity	Competitive Advantage
Product Creativity	Pearson Correlation	1	.674**
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.000
	N	65	65
Competitive advantage	Pearson Correlation	.674**	1

Source : data processing, 2022

Table 6 showed a correlation value of 67.4%, meaning creativity strongly correlates with competitive advantages in Plered Ceramic entrepreneurs. When analysing the relationship between creativity and competitive advantage, reference can be made to the descriptive analysis that showed low general creativity in the area. Low creativity directly contributes low to competitive advantage. Thus, amplifying creativity through an evolution of the creative mind of ceramic entrepreneurs is needed to compete. If ceramic entrepreneurs can

accomplish this, they will likely increase both the income and sustainability of their businesses (Amabile, 1996; Damanpour, 1991; Amabile & Pratt, 2016).

As stated in the literature section, individuals are motivated to be creative due to a combination of three motives. Firstly, a creative individual has a need to produce something new and stimulating, which motivates individuals to seek new things in terms of new products and services. The second is the need for individuals to impart thoughts and qualities to others. Finally, they become creative in response to the need to resolve their daily problems (Thawabieh et al., 2016). Creative thinking skills, like problem-solving, visual art, writing, open-mindedness, and communication skills, improves communication, sharing of information, better management and thus, better operational procedures (Sözbilir, 2018).

Creativity is essential because entrepreneurs need to be able to respond quickly and in new ways to an ever-changing environment. (Brown & Eisenhardt, 1998; Debbie Richards, 2010). Therefore, entrepreneurs must follow the ever-changing consumer needs by constantly innovating the products they manufacture. Axiomatically, innovation requires individual creative thinking that the business encourages, as it depends on its support to generate the space it needs to do so.

Creative people come up with new ideas, change what already exists, and constantly track developments and changes that occur in the environment. According to Kaufman and Beget (2009) and Stanberg (2022), creativity is the process of learning and thinking about doing something new to create a work. However, an MSME must find innovative ways to develop new products due to its limited resources. The lack of resources necessitates creativity and allows MSMEs to find creative ways to solve new problems in product development. (An et al., 2018; Tian et al., 2021). For MSMEs to be creative, they need creative momentum generated by both individuals and organisations. Secondly, MSMEs must constantly develop new products in concert with their marketing information to help meet changing market demands and gain a competitive advantage. (Harwiki et al., 2018; Tian et al., 2021).

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATION

Ceramic entrepreneurs in Plered are quite creative in manufacturing their products but do not yet have a high competitive advantage. Creativity and innovation are essential factors for competitive advantage. Product creativity is correlated significantly with the competitive advantages of Plered ceramic entrepreneurs. For this reason, training is needed for entrepreneurs to be able to create creative ideas in product manufacturing and to be able to compete in the conditions of the ever-changing business environment.

As indicated by multiple studies, creativity must be driven by both organisations and individuals due to the inherent limitations of both in isolation from each other. Furthermore, a spirit of creativity must be fostered in both to enable innovation and creative problem solving by which obstacles to success can be removed

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ABOUT THE AUTHORS

Trustorini Handayani, email:

Trustorini.handayani@email.unikom.ac.id

Trustorini Handayani is lecturer of Management Department, Faculty of Economic and Business, Universitas Komputer Indonesia, Bandung, Indonesia.

Muhammad Gian is student of Management Department, Faculty of Economic and Business, Universitas Komputer Indonesia, Bandung, Indonesia.

Niël A Kruger is the post-doctoral research fellow with the DHET-NRF Sarchi Entrepreneurship Education, Department of Business Management, College of Business and Economics, University of Johannesburg, South Africa.