

Building The Competitiveness Of Gen Zpreneurs Through The Integration Of A Digital Mindset, Soft Skills, And A Collaborative Ecosystem

Novy Fitria^{1*}, I Gusti Ayu Panca Dewi²⁾, I Komang Oka Permadi²⁾

¹Widya Gama University Lumajang, Indonesia

²Mahasaraswati University Denpasar, Indonesia

Jalan Gatot Subroto No. 4, Tompokersan, Kec. Lumajang, Kabupaten Lumajang, Jawa Timur 67352

Jalan Kamboja No. 11A, Kreneng, Kecamatan Denpasar Utara, Kota Denpasar, Bal

novyfitria3@gmail.com

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Abstract

The digital economic transformation requires young generations to possess capabilities that extend beyond technical skills, including a digital mindset and adaptive soft skills that support cross-sector collaboration. This study aims to analyze the influence of digital mindset and soft skills on the competitiveness of Gen Zpreneurs, with the moderating role of a collaborative ecosystem in the creative economy sector across the Tapal Kuda region of East Java, Indonesia. An explanatory quantitative approach was employed using Structural Equation Modeling–Partial Least Squares (SEM–PLS) to analyze data collected from 300 young entrepreneurs aged 18–27 years across five regencies. The results indicate that both digital mindset and soft skills have a significant positive effect on Gen Zpreneur competitiveness ($\beta = 0.346$ and $\beta = 0.289$, respectively; $p < 0.001$). Furthermore, the collaborative ecosystem strengthens these relationships ($\beta = 0.178$ and $\beta = 0.153$, respectively; $p < 0.01$). These findings highlight that the competitiveness of Generation Z entrepreneurs is determined not only by technological capabilities but also by the integration of cognitive and social capacities, supported by a conducive environment. Theoretically, this study extends Human Capital Theory toward a Digital Psychosocial Capital model. Practically, it recommends strengthening creative hubs and collaborative incubation programs to enhance the competitiveness of young entrepreneurs in East Java.

Keywords: Competitiveness; Digital Mindset; Collaborative Ecosystem; Gen Zpreneur; Soft Skills.

Abstrak

Perubahan ekonomi digital menuntut generasi muda memiliki kemampuan yang melampaui keterampilan teknis, yaitu digital mindset dan soft skills yang adaptif terhadap kolaborasi lintas sektor. Penelitian ini bertujuan menganalisis pengaruh digital mindset dan soft skills terhadap daya saing Gen Zpreneur dengan peran moderasi ekosistem kolaboratif pada sektor ekonomi kreatif di wilayah Tapal Kuda, Jawa Timur. Pendekatan yang digunakan adalah kuantitatif eksplanatori dengan analisis Structural Equation Modeling–Partial Least Squares (SEM–PLS) terhadap 300 wirausaha muda berusia 18–27 tahun di lima kabupaten. Hasil penelitian menunjukkan bahwa digital mindset dan soft skills berpengaruh positif signifikan terhadap daya saing Gen Zpreneur ($\beta = 0,346$ dan $\beta = 0,289$; $p < 0,001$). Selain itu, ekosistem kolaboratif memperkuat hubungan keduanya ($\beta = 0,178$ dan $\beta = 0,153$; $p < 0,01$). Temuan ini menegaskan bahwa daya saing generasi Z tidak hanya ditentukan oleh kemampuan teknologi, tetapi juga oleh integrasi kapasitas kognitif, sosial, dan dukungan lingkungan. Secara teoretis, penelitian ini memperluas Human Capital Theory menuju model Digital Psychosocial Capital, sedangkan secara praktis merekomendasikan penguatan creative hub dan program inkubasi kolaboratif bagi wirausaha muda di Jawa Timur.

Kata kunci: Daya saing; Digital Mindset; Ekosistem Kolaboratif; Gen Zpreneur; Soft Skills.

INTRODUCTION

The transformation of the global economy in the post-digital era has shifted the orientation of development from a resource-based economy toward a knowledge-based economy. In this era, a nation's

competitive advantage is no longer determined by the magnitude of its physical or financial capital but rather by the ability of its human resources to create value through knowledge, creativity, and technology-driven innovation (World Economic Forum, 2023). Digital competencies and psychosocial capacities have become two critical dimensions that determine the competitiveness of the workforce and young entrepreneurs in an increasingly dynamic global economy. Indonesia, as one of the countries with the largest youth populations in Southeast Asia, possesses substantial demographic potential to become a driving force in digital economic transformation. According to Statistics Indonesia (BPS, 2023), more than 52% of the Indonesian population is under the age of 30, while approximately 36% of the workforce in East Java belongs to Generation Z. Theoretically, this generation has significant potential to serve as an engine of innovation capable of bringing local values to the global market through creative industries and digital entrepreneurship. However, empirical evidence suggests that this demographic potential has not been accompanied by adequate competency readiness.

A report by Bank Indonesia (2023) indicates that the creative economy sector in East Java contributes significantly to the regional gross domestic product (GRDP), accounting for more than 10.36%. Nevertheless, the National Creative Economy Committee (2023) reported that only around 12% of young entrepreneurs in this sector survive beyond three years. This failure is attributed not to limited financial capital but rather to a lack of strategic digital mindset and collaborative soft skills required to adapt to technology-based business environments. Consequently, the primary challenge facing young generations is no longer merely the ability to use technology but the capacity to think and collaborate digitally. This phenomenon is commonly referred to as the digital capability paradox, a condition in which high levels of technology usage do not necessarily translate into increased productivity and competitiveness. The ASEAN Youth Survey (2023) revealed that although Indonesian Generation Z is generally considered tech-savvy, only 21% are able to transform their digital capabilities into sustainable economic value. Most still utilize technology primarily as a medium for passive consumption through social media rather than as a tool for innovation creation. Similar findings were reported by the Institute for Economic and Social Research, Faculty of Economics and Business, University of Indonesia (LPEM FEB UI, 2023), which found that 67% of Indonesian Gen Z individuals experience difficulties in working across generations and adapting to hybrid work systems. Although they possess high levels of digital literacy, they often lack psychosocial maturity in professional and entrepreneurial contexts.

This issue is particularly evident in the Tapal Kuda region of East Java, encompassing Lumajang, Jember, Bondowoso, Probolinggo, and Banyuwangi, which has emerged as a center of locality-based creative economic growth. Significant opportunities arise from the development of culinary businesses, fashion industries, handicrafts, and digital content creation led by young entrepreneurs. However, this growth has not been adequately supported by sustainable incubation and collaboration systems. Dwidienawati et al. (2022) demonstrated that startup entrepreneurs in non-metropolitan areas face substantial challenges in establishing collaborative networks, accessing training opportunities, and obtaining sufficient policy support. Field observations in Lumajang and Jember further support these findings, indicating that most Gen Zpreneurs continue to rely on self-directed learning, informal social networks, and sporadic digital exposure without strategic mentoring.

This gap reflects a mismatch between demographic potential and structural readiness in developing youth competitiveness. Conceptually, Human Capital Theory (Becker, 1964; Heckman, 2021) emphasizes the importance of education and training investments as mechanisms for improving individual productivity. However, this theory does not fully address the demands of the post-digital era, which require not only technical skills but also a digital mindset that fosters innovation and adaptability. Similarly, Generational Framing Theory (Twenge, 2017; Williams et al., 2022) explains the psychosocial characteristics of Generation Z but does not adequately clarify how these generational values influence digital entrepreneurial behavior and competitiveness within the creative economy sector. Furthermore, Digital Capital Theory (Ragnedda & Ruiu, 2021) highlights digital literacy as a form of social capital capable of supporting economic mobility. Nevertheless, the theory does not sufficiently incorporate the psychological and socio-emotional dimensions that are crucial for business sustainability in competitive creative ecosystems. On the other hand, Psychological Capital Theory (Luthans et al., 2015), encompassing the dimensions of hope, efficacy, resilience, and optimism (HERO), has been proven to enhance individual performance across various sectors but has rarely been integrated into the context of digital entrepreneurship. Consequently, there remains no comprehensive conceptual framework linking cognitive dimensions (digital mindset), socio-emotional dimensions (soft

skills), and contextual dimensions (collaborative ecosystems) in explaining youth competitiveness in the post-digital era.

This theoretical gap becomes increasingly relevant when viewed in light of empirical realities. Previous studies such as Leonardi (2022) and Ng and Lucas (2022) emphasized the importance of digital mindset in corporate environments but did not examine its influence on individual entrepreneurial behavior. Meanwhile, studies by Yoon et al. (2023) and Dwidienawati et al. (2022) confirmed the importance of soft skills and digital literacy in startup sustainability but did not incorporate collaborative ecosystems as a strengthening contextual factor. These findings indicate the existence of both a theoretical gap and an empirical void in understanding the dynamics of Gen Zpreneurs in regional settings, particularly within locality-based creative economies. Therefore, this study possesses significant theoretical and practical relevance. Theoretically, it seeks to extend the concept of Human Capital into Digital Psychosocial Capital, defined as the integration of digital thinking capabilities, socio-emotional capacities, and collaborative environmental support. This model is expected to overcome the limitations of classical theories in explaining entrepreneurial behavior among digital generations. Empirically, the study contributes contextual evidence from the Tapal Kuda region of East Java as a representation of an emerging creative economy outside metropolitan areas. Practically, the findings are expected to inform the development of policies and the GENZIL (Innovative Local Gen Z) program as a collaborative pentahelix-based incubation model for youth human resource development.

In conclusion, this study is motivated not only by the academic need to address existing theoretical and empirical gaps but also by the strategic urgency of optimizing the potential of East Java's young generation as drivers of a globally competitive creative economy. The findings are expected to enrich the literature in human resource management while providing evidence-based policy directions for human capital development in an increasingly complex digital era.

METHOD

2.1 Research Approach and Design

This study employed an explanatory quantitative approach aimed at explaining the causal relationships among digital mindset, soft skills, and Gen Zpreneur competitiveness, with the collaborative ecosystem serving as a moderating variable. The explanatory approach was selected because it aligns with the study's objective of testing the relationships among variables based on established theoretical foundations. In this context, the research not only describes the phenomenon of youth digital entrepreneurship but also examines causal relationships among constructs rooted in Human Capital Theory.

The research adopted a non-experimental causal design, in which data were collected empirically without manipulating the variables under investigation. The relationships among variables were analyzed using Structural Equation Modeling–Partial Least Squares (SEM–PLS). This method was selected because it is capable of analyzing models with latent constructs, testing both direct and moderating effects, and accommodating medium sample sizes as well as non-normal data distributions (Hair et al., 2022). Therefore, the research design provides a comprehensive understanding of how digital and psychosocial human capital influence the competitiveness of Gen Zpreneurs in the post-digital era.

2.2 Research Location and Period

This study was conducted in the Tapal Kuda region of East Java Province, Indonesia, encompassing the regencies of Jember, Lumajang, Bondowoso, Situbondo, and Probolinggo. The region is characterized by a rapidly growing creative economy supported by the culinary, fashion, design, digital content, and local handicraft sectors. The Tapal Kuda region was selected due to its high concentration of young creative economy entrepreneurs, despite relatively low business sustainability resulting from limited collaborative ecosystem support. The study was conducted between March and July 2025, including the stages of instrument development, pilot testing, primary data collection, and data analysis and interpretation.

2.3 Population and Sample

2.3.1 Population

The target population consisted of Generation Z entrepreneurs (Gen Zpreneurs) aged 18–27 years operating within the creative economy sector in the Tapal Kuda region. Based on data from the East Java Creative Economy Agency (Bekraf) and the East Java Cooperative and SME Office (2024), the total number of active creative economy businesses in the region was approximately 4,250 units, of which 38.7% (approximately 1,645 businesses) were operated by Generation Z entrepreneurs. The population distribution across regencies was as follows: Jember (610 entrepreneurs), Lumajang (325), Probolinggo (285), Bondowoso (210), and Situbondo (215). This distribution served as the basis for determining the proportional sample allocation.

2.3.2 Sampling Technique

A purposive sampling technique was employed based on the following criteria:

1. Respondents were between 18 and 27 years old.
2. Respondents had operated a business in the creative economy sector for at least one year.
3. Respondents utilized digital technology in at least one aspect of their business activities (production, promotion, or sales).
4. Respondents served as the primary managers of their businesses.

These criteria were established to ensure that the selected respondents accurately represented the characteristics of Gen Zpreneurs relevant to the study objectives.

The sample size was determined using the guideline proposed by Hair et al. (2021), which recommends a minimum sample size of ten times the largest number of indicators associated with a latent construct. Given that the largest construct contained nine indicators, the minimum sample size required was 90 respondents (9×10). However, considering the complexity of the moderation model and to ensure the robustness of SEM–PLS estimation, the sample size was increased to 300 valid respondents. The proportional distribution was as follows: Jember (110), Lumajang (60), Probolinggo (55), Bondowoso (40), and Situbondo (35).

2.4 Types and Sources of Data

This study utilized both primary and secondary data. Primary data were collected through structured questionnaires distributed to Gen Zpreneurs across the five regencies. Responses were measured using a five-point Likert scale ranging from 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree). Data collection was conducted through a combination of online and offline methods. Secondary data were obtained from official sources, including Statistics Indonesia East Java (2023), Bank Indonesia (2023), and reports published by the National Creative Economy Committee (2024). These data were used to strengthen the descriptive analysis and provide contextual support for the primary findings.

2.5 Operational Definitions of Variables

To ensure alignment between theoretical concepts and empirical measurement, the variables were operationalized as follows:

1. Digital Mindset refers to an individual's cognitive capability to strategically utilize technology for innovation and continuous learning. It was measured through three dimensions: technological adaptation, digital innovation, and learning orientation (Leonardi, 2022; Ramayah & Lee, 2022).
2. Soft Skills encompass communication abilities, cross-generational collaboration, personal leadership, and emotional resilience, representing forms of social capital in entrepreneurship (Succi & Canovi, 2020; Mahmud & Ding, 2022).
3. Gen Zpreneur Competitiveness refers to the ability of young entrepreneurs to create sustainable competitive advantages through innovation, product differentiation, and business resilience (Porter, 1990; Saarikko et al., 2020).
4. Collaborative Ecosystem represents environmental support that facilitates networking, knowledge exchange, and cross-sector collaboration (Isenberg, 2021; Kusumawardhani & Rachmawati, 2022).

2.6 Data Collection Techniques

Data were collected through both online and offline questionnaire distribution. Prior to the main survey, a pilot test involving 30 respondents was conducted to ensure clarity of wording and consistency

of responses. Content validity was assessed through expert judgment involving two experts: a human resource management academic and a digital entrepreneurship practitioner. Following revisions based on the validity assessment, the final questionnaire was distributed to 300 respondents who met the predetermined criteria.

2.7 Data Analysis Techniques

Data analysis was conducted using Structural Equation Modeling–Partial Least Squares (SEM–PLS) with SmartPLS version 4.0 software. The first stage involved evaluating the measurement model (outer model) to assess construct validity and reliability. The evaluation criteria included factor loadings ≥ 0.70 , Average Variance Extracted (AVE) ≥ 0.50 , and Composite Reliability and Cronbach's Alpha values ≥ 0.70 . Discriminant validity was assessed using the Fornell–Larcker Criterion and the Heterotrait–Monotrait Ratio (HTMT ≤ 0.85). The second stage involved evaluating the structural model (inner model) to examine the relationships among latent variables. Assessment criteria included collinearity statistics (VIF < 5), coefficient of determination (R^2), effect size (f^2), and predictive relevance (Q^2). Hypothesis testing was conducted using a bootstrapping procedure with 5,000 resamples and a significance level of 5% ($p < .05$).

2.8 Research Hypotheses

Based on the theoretical framework and conceptual model developed in this study, the following hypotheses were proposed:

1. H1: Digital mindset has a positive and significant effect on Gen Zpreneur competitiveness. This hypothesis assumes that a higher level of digital thinking capability enhances the ability of young entrepreneurs to create competitive advantages in the digital economy.
2. H2: Soft skills have a positive and significant effect on Gen Zpreneur competitiveness. This implies that strong interpersonal, communication, and collaborative abilities contribute to higher competitiveness and business resilience among young entrepreneurs.
3. H3: The collaborative ecosystem strengthens the positive effect of digital mindset on Gen Zpreneur competitiveness. In other words, a supportive environment that promotes collaboration and innovation enhances the impact of digital mindset on competitive advantage.
4. H4: The collaborative ecosystem strengthens the positive effect of soft skills on Gen Zpreneur competitiveness. This suggests that social networks and cross-sector collaboration increase the effectiveness of socio-emotional skills in building competitiveness.
5. H5: Digital mindset and soft skills simultaneously have a positive and significant effect on Gen Zpreneur competitiveness.

The combination of digital thinking capabilities and socio-emotional competencies forms a fundamental basis for sustainable competitive advantage among young entrepreneurs in the digital era.

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

3. RESULTS

3.1 Respondent Characteristics

This study involved 300 young entrepreneurs (Gen Zpreneurs) from the Tapal Kuda region of East Java, Indonesia, encompassing five regencies: Jember, Lumajang, Probolinggo, Bondowoso, and Situbondo. Based on the survey results, 52.3% of respondents were female, while 47.7% were male. The majority of respondents were between 23 and 25 years old (60%), followed by those aged 26–27 years (27%) and 18–22 years (13%). Regarding educational attainment, most respondents held a bachelor's degree (71%), followed by diploma graduates (19%) and active university students (10%).

The business sectors represented in this study were diverse, including culinary businesses (35%), fashion (24%), digital content creation (18%), design services (13%), and local handicrafts (10%). Most respondents had operated their businesses for one to three years (58%), while 42% had been in business for more than three years. Furthermore, 84% of respondents utilized digital media for promotion and marketing activities, and 76% conducted transactions through online platforms. These findings indicate that the respondents adequately represent the characteristics of digital-native entrepreneurs actively engaged in technology-based creative economy sectors.

3.1.2 Construct Validity and Reliability Assessment

The measurement model (outer model) was evaluated to assess the validity and reliability of the research constructs. The SmartPLS 4.0 analysis revealed that all indicators achieved factor loadings above the recommended threshold of 0.70, indicating satisfactory convergent validity. The Average Variance Extracted (AVE) values also exceeded the recommended criterion of 0.50 for all constructs, with values of 0.682 for Digital Mindset, 0.713 for Soft Skills, 0.702 for Collaborative Ecosystem, and 0.745 for Gen Zpreneur Competitiveness. Reliability analysis demonstrated high levels of internal consistency across all constructs. The Composite Reliability (CR) and Cronbach's Alpha values were as follows: Digital Mindset (CR = 0.91; α = 0.88), Soft Skills (CR = 0.93; α = 0.90), Collaborative Ecosystem (CR = 0.92; α = 0.89), and Gen Zpreneur Competitiveness (CR = 0.94; α = 0.91). All values exceeded the minimum threshold of 0.70, indicating strong reliability. Additionally, discriminant validity was assessed using the Fornell–Larcker criterion. The results showed that the square root of the AVE for each construct was greater than its correlations with other constructs, confirming that each construct measured a distinct and unique concept.

3.1.3 Structural Model Assessment (Inner Model)

Prior to hypothesis testing, collinearity diagnostics were conducted to ensure the absence of multicollinearity among predictor variables. The Variance Inflation Factor (VIF) values ranged from 1.8 to 3.2, which are well below the recommended threshold of 5.0, indicating that multicollinearity was not a concern. The coefficient of determination (R^2) for the dependent variable, Gen Zpreneur Competitiveness, was 0.612. This result indicates that 61.2% of the variance in competitiveness can be explained by Digital Mindset, Soft Skills, and Collaborative Ecosystem. Furthermore, the predictive relevance value (Q^2) was 0.487, demonstrating substantial predictive capability and confirming the robustness of the proposed structural model.

3.1.4 Hypothesis Testing Results

Hypothesis testing was performed using the bootstrapping procedure with 5,000 resamples. The results of the structural path analysis are presented in the following table.

Table 1. Results of SEM–PLS Hypothesis Testing

Hypothesis Path	Path Coefficient (β)	t-value	p-value	Result
Digital Mindset → Gen Zpreneur Competitiveness	0.346	6.112	< .001	Supported
Soft Skills → Gen Zpreneur Competitiveness	0.289	5.314	< .001	Supported
Collaborative Ecosystem × Digital Mindset → Gen Zpreneur Competitiveness	0.178	3.287	.001	Supported
Collaborative Ecosystem × Soft Skills → Gen Zpreneur Competitiveness	0.153	2.954	.003	Supported
Digital Mindset and Soft Skills → Gen Zpreneur Competitiveness (Simultaneous Effect)	$R^2 = 0.612$	–	–	Strong Model

Source: SEM–PLS Processed Data (2025).

The hypothesis testing results indicate that all proposed hypotheses were supported at a significance level of $p < .05$. These findings demonstrate that both Digital Mindset and Soft Skills have significant positive effects on Gen Zpreneur Competitiveness, while the Collaborative Ecosystem strengthens both relationships.

3.2 Discussion

3.2.1 The Effect of Digital Mindset on Competitiveness

The findings reveal that Digital Mindset has a significant positive effect on Gen Zpreneur Competitiveness ($\beta = 0.346$, $p < .001$). This result is consistent with the studies of Leonardi (2022) and

Aboelmaged (2021), which emphasized that digital thinking capabilities enhance adaptability to innovation and improve business process efficiency. Gen Zpreneurs with a strong digital mindset are able to integrate technology as a strategic resource rather than merely an operational tool. In the context of the Tapal Kuda region, this capability is reflected in the adoption of e-commerce platforms, social media marketing, and AI-based analytics to expand market reach while preserving local cultural identity and product uniqueness.

3.2.2 The Effect of Soft Skills on Competitiveness

Soft Skills were also found to have a significant positive effect on competitiveness ($\beta = 0.289$, $p < .001$). This finding confirms that competitive advantage is derived not only from technological capabilities but also from interpersonal and emotional competencies. The result supports the findings of Succi and Canovi (2020), who identified communication skills, cross-generational collaboration, and personal leadership as critical determinants of entrepreneurial success among young business owners. In the Tapal Kuda region, many small-scale enterprises survive and grow not primarily because of financial resources but because of the entrepreneurs' ability to build social relationships and adapt to local market cultures. These findings highlight the importance of socio-emotional competencies in fostering business sustainability and resilience in dynamic market environments.

3.2.3 The Moderating Role of the Collaborative Ecosystem

An important finding emerged regarding the role of the Collaborative Ecosystem as a moderating variable. The results demonstrate that the Collaborative Ecosystem strengthens the effect of Digital Mindset on Gen Zpreneur Competitiveness ($\beta = 0.178$, $p = .001$) and enhances the influence of Soft Skills on Competitiveness ($\beta = 0.153$, $p = .003$). These findings suggest that social environments, community support, and local policies that encourage collaboration increase the effectiveness of these internal capabilities. When Gen Zpreneurs operate within an inclusive ecosystem characterized by knowledge sharing, resource exchange, and collective learning, the value of their human capital investments increases substantially. This finding aligns with the concept of Digital–Psychosocial Capital, an extension of Human Capital Theory, which posits that the interaction between individual capabilities and supportive social contexts generates new forms of economic value. Consequently, competitiveness is not solely determined by personal competencies but also by the quality of the surrounding entrepreneurial ecosystem.

3.2.4 Theoretical Synthesis

From a theoretical perspective, the findings reinforce Human Capital Theory (Becker, 1964) while extending its relevance to the digital era. Human capital investment can no longer be viewed solely in terms of formal education and technical expertise; it must also encompass digital thinking capabilities and socio-emotional intelligence. Accordingly, Human Capital may be reconceptualized as Digital–Psychosocial Capital, defined as the integration of digital cognitive capabilities and socio-emotional resources within a supportive collaborative ecosystem. This framework provides a more comprehensive explanation for why Gen Zpreneurs who possess both digital and psychosocial competencies are more likely to survive, innovate, and achieve sustainable competitive advantages than entrepreneurs who focus exclusively on technical skills. The proposed model contributes to the growing literature on entrepreneurship and human resource development by emphasizing the interconnected roles of technology, psychological resources, and collaborative environments in shaping entrepreneurial competitiveness in the post-digital economy.

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATION

4.1 Conclusion

This study aimed to examine the roles of Digital Mindset and Soft Skills in enhancing the competitiveness of Gen Zpreneurs and to assess how a Collaborative Ecosystem strengthens these relationships within the creative economy sector of the Tapal Kuda region, East Java, Indonesia. Based on the SEM–PLS analysis conducted on the study respondents, several conclusions can be drawn without extending beyond the empirical findings. First, Digital Mindset was found to contribute positively to the competitiveness of Gen Zpreneurs. The findings indicate that the ability to adapt to technological developments, think innovatively, and strategically utilize digital learning supports the

development of competitive advantages among young entrepreneurs. This conclusion is fully supported by the statistically significant relationship identified in the structural model.

Second, Soft Skills were also found to have a significant positive influence on Gen Zpreneur Competitiveness. Competencies such as communication, teamwork, personal leadership, and emotional resilience help young entrepreneurs navigate rapidly changing market conditions. This finding is consistent with the empirical results demonstrating a positive relationship between Soft Skills and competitiveness. Third, the Collaborative Ecosystem was shown to strengthen the effects of both Digital Mindset and Soft Skills on competitiveness. Environments that provide networking opportunities, community support, and collaborative engagement enhance the effectiveness of these individual capabilities in generating competitive advantages. This moderating role was empirically confirmed through the significant interaction effects identified in the analysis. Overall, the findings demonstrate that the competitiveness of Gen Zpreneurs depends not only on individual capabilities but also on the quality of the collaborative environment in which they operate. The study highlights the importance of integrating digital competencies, socio-emotional skills, and ecosystem support in fostering sustainable competitive advantages within the creative economy sector. All conclusions presented are derived directly from the empirical evidence and remain within the interpretative boundaries of the study findings.

4.2 Recommendations

Based on the findings and conclusions of this study, several recommendations can be proposed for policymakers, educational institutions, young entrepreneurs, and future researchers.

For local governments, the findings provide a strong basis for strengthening collaborative ecosystems within the creative economy sector. Regional authorities should establish creative hubs in each regency, expand access to digital-based training programs, and develop incentive policies that encourage collaboration among academics, industry practitioners, and youth entrepreneurial communities. Initiatives such as regional digital incubation programs and creative mentoring networks may serve as strategic mechanisms for simultaneously enhancing Digital Mindset and Soft Skills among young entrepreneurs.

For higher education institutions and vocational training providers, it is recommended that Digital Mindset and Soft Skills development be integrated into entrepreneurship curricula. Project-based learning, interdisciplinary collaboration, and practical experience within digital startups can encourage innovative thinking while strengthening interpersonal competencies. Educational institutions should not only produce technically skilled graduates but also foster adaptive, collaborative, and globally competitive young professionals.

For young entrepreneurs (Gen Zpreneurs), the findings suggest that entrepreneurial success in the digital era cannot rely solely on technical expertise. Personal development efforts should focus on improving digital literacy, strengthening social networks, and enhancing emotional management capabilities in response to market uncertainty. Young entrepreneurs are encouraged to actively participate in collaborative communities, engage in cross-sector training opportunities, and continuously adapt to technological advancements to maintain business relevance and competitiveness.

For future researchers, it is recommended to expand the scope of investigation through mixed-methods approaches to gain deeper insights into qualitative dimensions such as digital identity formation, social motivation, and collaborative networking processes. Future studies may also incorporate additional variables, including entrepreneurial resilience, digital self-efficacy, and innovation orientation, to further develop the Digital–Psychosocial Capital framework. Moreover, comparative studies across provinces or among ASEAN countries would provide valuable perspectives regarding the consistency and applicability of this theoretical model in broader regional and global contexts.

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