

Digital Readiness, Agility, and Creativity as Drivers of Competitive Advantage in the Creative Industry

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ABSTRACT

This study examines the role of digital readiness in enhancing the competitiveness of creative industry MSMEs by analyzing its direct and indirect relationships with digital agility and digital creativity. A quantitative approach using Structural Equation Modeling (SEM) was applied to data collected from MSMEs in the fashion, culinary, and craft subsectors in West Java, Indonesia. The findings indicate that digital readiness significantly improves digital agility, digital creativity, and digital competitiveness, while digital agility positively influences both digital creativity and digital competitiveness. Digital creativity also strengthens digital competitiveness, with digital agility and digital creativity jointly mediating the relationship between digital readiness and digital competitiveness. These results highlight digital readiness as a fundamental capability that enables MSMEs to adapt to digital transformation, foster innovation, and achieve sustainable competitive advantage. This study contributes an integrated framework linking digital readiness, agility, creativity, and competitiveness, offering practical insights for managers and policymakers to strengthen digital capabilities and innovation.

Keywords: Digital Readiness; Digital Agility; Digital Creativity; Digital Competitiveness; Creative Industry; MSMEs; Digital Transformation.

INTRODUCTION

The digital revolution has profoundly altered the landscape of commercial rivalry. Digitalization has transitioned from a mere operational support tool to the principal domain of corporate rivalry. The swift advancement of digital technology has precipitated substantial alterations in business structures, consumer behavior, and the dynamics of interaction between producers and consumers (Vial, 2019). In this setting, business entities must exhibit robust digital readiness, swift adaptability, and ingenuity in utilizing technology as a competitive advantage. The creative economy in Indonesia constitutes a vital area of the national economy. According to data from the Ministry of Tourism and Creative Economy of Indonesia (Kemenparekraf, 2023), the creative economy accounts for roughly 7–8 percent of the national Gross Domestic Product (GDP) and employs over 20 million individuals. According to Statistics Indonesia (BPS, 2023), this sector has emerged as one of the principal providers of employment outside agriculture and manufacturing.

Within the creative economy, three principal subsectors underpin national contributions: culinary, fashion, and craft. According to Kemenparekraf (2023), the culinary subsector accounts for roughly 40–42 percent of the entire creative economy GDP, with fashion contributing about 17–18 percent and craft around 14–15 percent. These three subsectors regularly serve as the principal contributors to GDP, exports, and employment generation. The preeminence of the fashion, culinary, and craft subsectors is also apparent in the operations of micro, small, and medium enterprises (MSMEs). The predominant creative MSME participants function within these subsectors because of their traits that highlight creativity, local cultural values, and design innovation. Products in these sectors depend primarily on differentiation, aesthetic appeal, quality, and value-added features to drive competitiveness. Consequently, prominent creative sectors offer a pertinent framework for analyzing the dynamics of digitally driven competitiveness.

The swift expansion of online markets and social media platforms has broadened the competitive environment. Platforms like Tokopedia and Shopee allow MSMEs to access national and global marketplaces without geographical constraints. Simultaneously, social media platforms like Instagram and TikTok have emerged as crucial channels for establishing brand identity, crafting narratives, and engaging customers. Nonetheless, the transparency of digital platforms exacerbates competition, as buyers can readily compare analogous products. In fiercely competitive digital markets, a price advantage alone is inadequate. Prominent MSMEs must implement innovation-driven initiatives, prioritize product quality, and enhance their potential to generate supplementary value. Value-added factors may encompass product customisation, digitally enhanced consumer experiences, design distinction, and responsive service quality. Consequently, digital business strategies require integrating technology into value-creation processes rather than relying solely on it as a transactional instrument (Bharadwaj et al., 2013).

However, not all creativity-driven MSMEs are sufficiently digitally prepared. Certain commercial entities continue to use digital platforms solely for basic promotional activities, neglecting to adopt a structured content strategy, analytics, or customer data management. Digital transformation requires fundamental changes in organizational processes, structures, and competencies (Vial, 2019). In addition to digital readiness, the swiftly changing dynamics of digital markets necessitate digital agility. Alterations in platform algorithms, content trends, and customer preferences occur dynamically and frequently, unpredictably. According to dynamic capability theory, the capacity to perceive environmental shifts, capitalize on new possibilities, and reorganize organizational resources is a crucial factor in determining organizational performance

(Teece, Pisano, & Shuen, 1997). Within the realm of creative MSMEs, digital agility empowers entrepreneurs to swiftly and efficiently adapt to fashion trends, culinary inclinations, and design advancements.

Moreover, digital innovation is a crucial differentiator in competitive contexts. Creativity is now manifested not only in tangible items but also in digital ideation, content design, brand narratives, technology-driven service innovation, and the continuous activation of digital presence. Creativity denotes the capacity to produce ideas that are both original and practical. In the digital realm, creativity serves as a competitive advantage that is challenging to replicate, as it arises from the amalgamation of ideas, technology, and market acumen (Amabile, 1996). The competitiveness of creativity-driven MSMEs in digital markets arises from the interplay of digital readiness, digital agility, and digital creativity. The three characteristics are especially pertinent to leading creative industries, such as fashion, culinary arts, and crafts, which substantially impact the national economy while contending with fierce online competition.

Despite substantial growth in the literature on entrepreneurship and digital transformation, there remains a need to consolidate the concepts of digital readiness, digital agility, and digital creativity into a single empirical model that specifically examines creativity-driven MSMEs within the framework of digital market competition. This study is significant for developing a conceptual model that elucidates the strategic factors influencing the digital competitiveness of prominent creative-sector MSMEs in Indonesia.

Although the literature on digital transformation and competitiveness is expanding, previous research has predominantly analyzed digital readiness, agility, and creativity as distinct categories. Insufficient attention has been devoted to understanding how these competencies combine to enhance competitiveness in the creative industry, especially among micro, small, and medium-sized enterprises (MSMEs) in emerging nations. This gap underscores the need for a more cohesive framework that elucidates how digital preparedness can foster agility and creativity, thereby improving digital competitiveness.

The objective of this study is to investigate the influence of digital readiness on enhancing the competitiveness of creative industry MSMEs by assessing its correlation with digital agility and digital creativity. This research examines the direct and indirect linkages between digital preparedness, digital agility, digital creativity, and digital competitiveness in the creative industry sector. This study's innovation is the creation of a comprehensive conceptual model that identifies digital agility and digital creativity as mediating factors connecting digital readiness to digital competitiveness. This study concurrently analyzes these interactions within the framework of creative sector MSMEs in Indonesia, offering a thorough understanding of how digital capabilities can cultivate competitive advantage in a swiftly changing digital landscape.

This research provides both theoretical and practical contributions. It theoretically enhances the literature on digital transformation and competitive strategy by consolidating the concepts of digital readiness, agility, and creativity into a unified analytical framework. The findings offer significant insights for policymakers, industry professionals, and MSME managers in formulating strategies to bolster digital skills, augment innovation capacity, and promote competitiveness in the digital economy.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Digital readiness denotes an organization's preparedness to embrace and strategically implement digital technologies. Digital readiness has three fundamental elements: leadership, corporate culture, and digital infrastructure (Westerman et al., 2014). Adaptive skills are crucial to digital transformation, as they enable firms to respond

effectively to changes in the digital landscape (Warner & Wäger, 2019). In the realm of MSMEs, information technology proficiency has demonstrated the ability to enhance competitiveness by enabling greater operational flexibility and expedited market responsiveness. Thus, digital readiness serves as a crucial basis for fostering agility and innovation in the creative industry sector (Zhou et al., 2005).

Numerous studies demonstrate that the accessibility of digital infrastructure among MSMEs in the creative sector varies considerably. Digital infrastructure is a crucial factor in their capacity for digital transformation. Areas with robust policy support and sufficient digital infrastructure typically exhibit higher levels of digital readiness. Conversely, substantial disparities persist in regions with inadequate internet connectivity and constrained shared resources, adversely impacting the digital preparedness of MSMEs in the creative industry (Tlessova, 2025).

The preparedness of human resources in the digital realm, encompassing technical proficiency, digital literacy, and a digital attitude, constitutes a significant obstacle to technology adoption within creative MSMEs. Inadequate digital literacy and insufficient technical competencies within the workforce continue to pose significant obstacles to the successful utilization of digital marketing tools and artificial intelligence (AI) technology (Rifani et al., 2025). Enhancing digital literacy and executing specialized training programs can substantially improve MSME performance and market accessibility (Rifani et al., 2025; Fariza et al., 2025). Digital leadership is a crucial element affecting MSMEs' preparedness for digital transformation. Models linking agile leadership, dynamic capabilities, and change preparedness suggest that effective digital leadership can accelerate transformation by mobilizing resources and coordinating digital initiatives (Adhiatma et al., 2022). Leaders who actively foster a digital culture and intersectoral collaboration typically exhibit greater preparedness to execute digital transformation efforts (Priambada, 2023; Doly, 2025).

Digital readiness is a fundamental competence that enables the development of digital agility and creativity in the creative sector. Robust digital infrastructure enables the channels and capabilities for rapid experimentation, swift prototyping, and scalable operations. When paired with skilled human resources with robust digital literacy and a digital mindset, MSMEs in the creative sector become increasingly responsive to market opportunities and product innovation, which are essential components of both digital agility and creativity (Rifani et al., 2025; Doly, 2025).

According to these findings, various pragmatic techniques can be employed to improve digital readiness among creative industry MSMEs :

- a. Developing coordinated regional digital infrastructure with shared facilities and affordable internet access (Evmenov & Enikeeva, 2025).
- b. Investing in digital literacy programs and competency development, including digital design and marketing skills (Rifani et al., 2025).
- c. Establishing leadership development programs that promote agile leadership and organizational readiness for digital transformation (Adhiatma et al., 2022).
- d. Strengthening digital learning cultures and cross-sector collaboration to foster adaptive and sustainable digital mindsets (Priambada, 2023).

Digital Agility

Digital agility denotes an organization's capacity to swiftly adapt to changes in the digital landscape through rapid experimentation, adaptable processes, and flexible coordination of digital resources. This capacity has become increasingly significant in addressing challenges of digital transformation and improving competitiveness in global markets. The velocity of digital adaptation among MSMEs in the creative sector is predominantly influenced by factors such as digital preparedness, agile leadership, and

ecosystem support. Research indicates that digital adaptation occurs more swiftly in firms with agile leadership and robust dynamic capabilities. In Indonesia, MSMEs with established digital infrastructure and a culture of innovation transitioned more rapidly to online marketing and e-commerce, especially during the pandemic (Doly, 2025; Abudaqa & Noburu, 2024; Priambada, 2023). In situations with weak digital attitudes or limited training opportunities, digital adaptation generally progresses more slowly (Fariza et al., 2025; Rifani et al., 2025).

The capacity to leverage digital data for decision-making is a crucial element of competitiveness in creative marketplaces. Studies demonstrate that data-driven decision-making can enhance revenue growth and broaden market reach. Nonetheless, these competencies are significantly reliant on data literacy and robust data governance within businesses (Yulianti et al., 2022; Hamdan et al., 2025; Fariza et al., 2025; Rifani et al., 2025). MSMEs with robust analytical skills and sufficient training can leverage data more effectively, whereas those lacking these qualities often struggle to convert data into strategic value.

The ability to recognize and leverage digital opportunities is strongly correlated with MSMEs' competitive performance. Research indicates that leaders who can identify digital opportunities via market signals, digital platforms, and consumer data, and capitalize on them through competitive strategies, partnerships, and strategic resource distribution, generally attain enhanced innovation outcomes and expanded market presence (Adhiatma et al., 2022; Priambada, 2023; Doly, 2025). In Indonesia, agile leadership, change readiness, and dynamic competencies are recognized as essential factors for the successful implementation of digital ecosystems, hence improving competitiveness (Adhiatma et al., 2022).

Digital agility serves as a conduit connecting digital readiness to digital competitiveness. Digital preparedness, encompassing infrastructure, human resources, and leadership, establishes basic capabilities. In contrast, digital agility enables converting these capabilities into a competitive advantage through rapid experimentation, flexible processes, and adaptive resource orchestration. From this viewpoint, digital readiness establishes a foundation for agility, whereas agility enhances the outcomes of readiness by enabling expedited value realization from digital investments and fostering more innovative outputs (Adhiatma et al., 2022; Priambada, 2023; Doly, 2025).

Digital Creativity

Digital creativity encompasses the utilization of digital technologies to generate original creative outputs, such as visual designs, interactive narratives, user experiences, and novel content formats that distinguish items in oversaturated marketplaces. Digital creativity beyond simple content generation: it encompasses the development and adaptation of material across various media to foster more personal and engaging connections with customers. In the creative sector, digital innovation is essential for establishing brand identity, enhancing customer interaction, and creating value-added distinction from competitors. Digital innovation enables companies to create unique visual identities, novel storytelling techniques, and experiential elements that enhance product differentiation.

Research demonstrates that digital branding, innovative content, and digital marketing methods substantially enhance product appeal and value propositions, therefore bolstering competitive advantage. The amalgamation of digital creativity with data-centric marketing and platform dynamics amplifies differentiation through personalized experiences, targeted campaigns, and immersive content formats such as augmented reality (AR) delivered through digital channels (Suryawardani et al., 2022; Hidayati, 2025;

Aviyanti et al., 2022). Innovation in digital content creation begins with integrating creative design expertise with accessible digital tools and platforms, bolstered by formal and informal training programs that enhance content production capabilities. Micro, Small, and Medium Enterprises (MSMEs) in the creative sector increasingly depend on digital content production to enhance branding and online interaction. Training programs in digital content design, online store management, and social media storytelling enhance Engagement and market reach, hence facilitating revenue growth.

Multiple studies in Indonesia indicate that practical skills in content creation, including photography, video production, and social media marketing on platforms like Instagram and TikTok, are essential for improving customer Engagement and sales performance (Yulianti et al., 2022; Dewi et al., 2023; Sari et al., 2025; Hidayati, 2025). Moreover, advancements in digital content forms such as augmented reality (AR), immersive visualizations, and interactive movies provide MSMEs with novel avenues to distinguish themselves through experience storytelling. These formats not only enhance visual appeal but also foster greater consumer interaction with brands, thereby elevating the perceived value of items (Suryawardani et al., 2022; Hidayati, 2025; Aviyanti et al., 2022).

Digital creativity frequently serves as a conduit between digital agility and digital competitiveness. Digital agility, defined by swift experimentation, adaptable methods, and flexible orchestration of digital resources, facilitates the prompt execution of creative content and iterative campaign development. This competency enhances digital preparedness and digital competencies, thereby improving competitive performance. Numerous studies show that agility enhances the execution and development of digital creative efforts, thereby augmenting market performance, consumer Engagement, and brand equity (Adhiatma et al., 2022; Priambada, 2023; Hasirah et al., 2025). In this context, digital creativity serves as the mechanism that transforms agile actions into concrete results, including enhanced sales, market expansion, Engagement, and innovation, especially when bolstered by robust data governance and access to digital platforms (Hidayati, 2025; Herawati et al., 2023; Wibowo et al., 2022).

Digital Competitiveness

Digital competitiveness denotes the capacity of firms or MSMEs to compete proficiently in digital markets through the purposeful utilization of digital technologies. Critical determinants of digital competitiveness encompass digital readiness (infrastructure, people resources, and leadership), digital inventiveness, content proficiency, and cohesive digital strategies. Within the creative sector, digital competitiveness pertains not only to the adoption of technology but also to the innovation in digital content production that distinguishes products and enhances market performance. Differentiation through digital innovation is essential for enhancing the competitiveness of MSMEs in creative sectors.

Innovative digital content development, unique branding, and interactive or immersive user experiences can enhance competitive positioning by elevating perceived consumer value and broadening market reach. This is especially apparent in subsectors such as fashion, crafts, and gourmet products, where digital innovation enables businesses to differentiate themselves in oversaturated markets. Data-driven content creation, consumer insight analysis, and platform-based marketing techniques, including search engine optimization (SEO) and platform-native storytelling, enhance product differentiation and yield substantial competitive advantages (Yulianti et al., 2022; Rizki, 2026; Hidayati, 2025; Herawati et al., 2023).

MSMEs should thus invest in specialized training programs for digital content creation, encompassing photography, scriptwriting, video production, and graphic design. Furthermore, executing platform-specific content strategies across channels such as Instagram, TikTok, and digital marketplaces can enhance customer Engagement and strengthen brand recognition in competitive digital markets. Integrated digital strategies significantly impact MSME market performance. The integration of digital marketing, content production, platform Engagement, data analytics, and ecosystem collaboration empowers MSMEs to broaden market reach, elevate Engagement metrics, and increase market performance indicators, including sales, brand equity, and market share.

The embrace of agile leadership, dynamic capabilities, and change readiness enhances the execution of extensive digital strategies, therefore elevating market performance among innovative MSMEs (Fariza et al., 2025; Rifani et al., 2025; Rizki, 2026; Herawati et al., 2023). Data from Indonesia indicates that when digital strategies are bolstered by training, platform accessibility, and robust governance frameworks, MSMEs achieve notable improvements in marketing effectiveness, product innovation, and revenue growth (Prasetyo, 2025; Fariza et al., 2025; Herawati et al., 2023). To sustain competitive advantage, MSMEs must establish cohesive digital platforms and governance frameworks that support marketing, analytics, and product development, while prioritizing data-driven decision-making and rapid experimentation. Three interrelated domains influence the digital competitiveness of creative industry MSMEs:

- a. Digital Readiness – Access to reliable digital infrastructure, digital marketing capabilities, and leadership that supports change readiness and agile execution.
- b. Digital Creativity and Content Capability – The ability to generate innovative digital content such as photography, video production, storytelling, and immersive technologies.
- c. Integrated Strategy and Digital Agility – The integration of digital platforms, analytics, and stakeholder collaboration supported by agile leadership and dynamic capabilities.

Digital creativity ultimately functions as a mediator linking digital agility to digital competitiveness. Agile experimentation, flexible processes, and adaptive digital resource orchestration enable rapid implementation of creative content and agile campaign iteration. This mechanism transforms digital readiness and capabilities into stronger competitive performance, reflected in improved differentiation and higher levels of customer Engagement (Adhiatma et al., 2022; Hasirah et al., 2025; Wibowo et al., 2022; Hidayati, 2025).

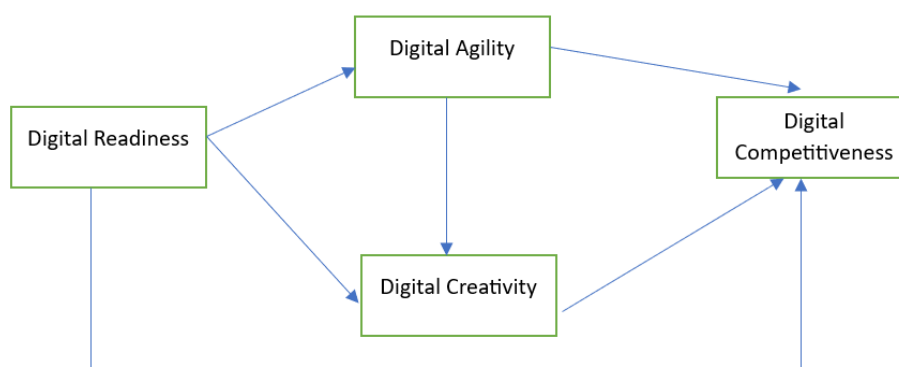


Figure 1. Conceptual Framework

H1: Digital Readiness -> digital agility

H2: Digital Readiness -> digital creativity

H3: Digital Readiness -> digital competitiveness

H4: Digital Readiness -> digital agility -> digital competitiveness

H5 : Digital Readiness -> digital creativity -> digital competitiveness

H6 : Digital Readiness -> digital agility -> digital creativity -> digital competitiveness

H7 : Digital Agility -> Digital Competitiveness

H8 : Digital Creativity -> digital competitiveness

RESEARCH METHOD

This study employs a quantitative research methodology utilizing Structural Equation Modeling (SEM) to examine the interrelations among four principal variables: digital readiness, digital agility, digital creativity, and digital competitiveness within micro, small, and medium enterprises (MSMEs) in the creative industry, specifically in the fashion, culinary, and craft subsectors in West Java, Indonesia. The study seeks to investigate the interplay and mutual influence of digital readiness, digital agility, digital creativity, and digital competitiveness in augmenting the competitiveness of MSMEs that have integrated digital technology into their operations within the region.

The research sample comprises 300 MSMEs selected through purposive sampling. The sampling criteria encompass MSMEs who have incorporated digital technology into their business operations, including digital marketing platforms, e-commerce systems, or online marketplaces. Primary data were obtained via an online survey disseminated to owners or managers of MSMEs. Concurrently, secondary data were collected through a comprehensive literature review encompassing scholarly papers, industry reports, and prior research on digitalization in MSMEs and the adoption of digital technologies in the creative industry.

Quantitative data analysis utilized Structural Equation Modeling (SEM) to investigate the interrelations among the research variables: digital preparedness, digital agility, digital creativity, and digital competitiveness. The digital readiness variable was assessed using multiple indicators, including digital infrastructure, human resource capacity, and digital leadership. Digital agility was assessed by MSMEs' capacity to swiftly adapt and respond effectively to digital transformations and market dynamics. Digital creativity was evaluated using metrics related to digital innovation in content creation and digital marketing. Simultaneously, digital competitiveness was assessed using metrics about market performance and product differentiation.

The survey results were analyzed using statistical methods, including path analysis and regression testing within the SEM framework, to evaluate the hypotheses on the relationships among the variables. These analytical methods provide the assessment of both direct and indirect correlations among digital readiness, digital agility, digital creativity, and digital competitiveness. This analytical approach seeks to elucidate the interplay and influence of digital readiness, digital agility, digital creativity, and digital competitiveness within MSMEs in the creative industry sector. The SEM methodology enables researchers to analyze intricate interactions among latent variables concurrently, thereby offering a more thorough elucidation of each factor's role in augmenting MSME competitiveness in the digital economy.

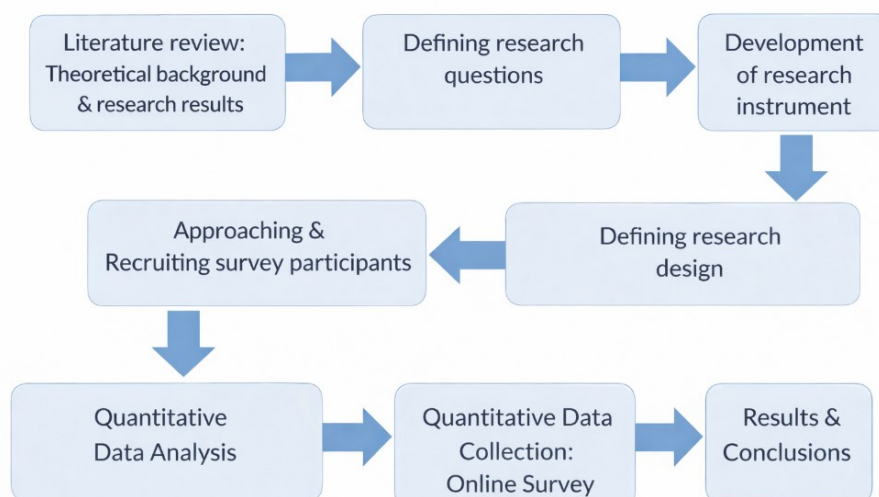


Figure 2. Steps in research Methodology

RESULTS

Table 1. Validity and Reliability Results

Variable	Indicator	Loading Factor	Cronbach's Alpha	CR	AVE
Digital Competitiveness			0.950	0.962	0.835
DCOM1	Sales Performance	0.883			
DCOM2	Cost Efficiency	0.915			
DCOM3	Customer Satisfaction	0.935			
DCOM4	Product Visibility	0.924			
DCOM5	Competitive Position	0.909			
Digital Readiness			0.943	0.956	0.814
DR1	Digital Infrastructure	0.911			
DR2	Digital Human Resources	0.939			
DR3	Digital Systems and Processes	0.930			
DR4	Digital Culture	0.862			
DR5	Digital System Governance	0.867			
Digital Agility			0.955	0.966	0.849
AG1	Responsiveness	0.900			
AG2	Flexibility	0.922			
AG3	Experimentation	0.911			
AG4	Platform Mobility	0.932			
AG5	Digital Anticipation	0.941			
Digital Creativity			0.950	0.962	0.835
DCRE1	Ideation	0.886			
DCRE2	Creative Content	0.932			
DCRE3	Digital Design	0.947			
DCRE4	Creative Process	0.900			
DCRE5	Digital Presence Activities	0.902			

The measuring model's validity and reliability were evaluated by factor loadings, Cronbach's Alpha, Composite Reliability (CR), and Average Variance Extracted (AVE). The findings reveal that all indicator loadings exceeded the suggested threshold of 0.70,

ranging from 0.862 to 0.947, indicating robust indicator reliability across all constructs. The indicators for digital competitiveness exhibit loadings between 0.883 and 0.935, whereas the digital readiness indicators range from 0.862 to 0.939. Likewise, the metrics of digital agility and digital creativity show elevated loadings, affirming the suitability of the assessment items. The internal consistency reliability of each construct is adequate. The Cronbach's Alpha scores span from 0.943 to 0.955, surpassing the suggested minimum of 0.70. The Composite Reliability ratings vary from 0.956 to 0.966, signifying robust construct reliability. Moreover, the AVE values for all constructs range from 0.814 to 0.849, exceeding the minimum threshold of 0.50 and thus affirming sufficient convergent validity. The results indicate that the measurement model meets the criteria for reliability and validity, suggesting that the constructs employed in this study are suitable for subsequent structural model analysis.

Table 2. Hypothesis Testing Results (Total Effects)

Hypothesis	Relationship	Original Sample (β)	T Statistics	P Values	Hypothesis Result
H1	Digital Agility \rightarrow Digital Competitiveness	0.324	7.068	0.000	Supported
H2	Digital Agility \rightarrow Digital Creativity	0.299	5.549	0.000	Supported
H3	Digital Creativity \rightarrow Digital Competitiveness	0.298	6.056	0.000	Supported
H4	Digital readiness \rightarrow Digital Agility	0.706	24.256	0.000	Supported
H5	Digital readiness \rightarrow Digital Competitiveness	0.260	4.877	0.000	Supported
H6	Digital readiness \rightarrow Digital Creativity	0.556	12.374	0.000	Supported
H7	Digital Agility \rightarrow Digital Creativity \rightarrow Digital Competitiveness	0.089	4.083	0.000	Supported
H8	Digital Readiness \rightarrow Digital Agility \rightarrow Digital Competitiveness	0.229	6.842	0.000	Supported
H9	Digital Readiness \rightarrow Digital Agility \rightarrow Digital Creativity \rightarrow Digital Competitiveness	0.063	3.942	0.000	Supported
H10	Digital Agility \rightarrow Digital Creativity \rightarrow Digital Competitiveness	0.089	4.083	0.000	Supported
H11	Digital readiness \rightarrow Digital Creativity \rightarrow Digital Competitiveness	0.165	5.491	0.000	Supported

The evaluation of the structural model was performed by total effects analysis to assess the provided hypotheses. The findings demonstrate that all proposed correlations are statistically significant. Digital agility exerts a substantial positive influence on digital competitiveness ($\beta = 0.324$, $p < 0.001$) and digital inventiveness ($\beta = 0.299$, $p < 0.001$). Moreover, digital creativity substantially enhances digital competitiveness ($\beta = 0.298$, $p < 0.001$), affirming its position as a strategic catalyst for competitive advantage in digital marketplaces. Digital readiness has the greatest impact on digital agility ($\beta = 0.706$, $p < 0.001$), suggesting that MSMEs with enhanced digital infrastructure, people resources, and leadership competencies are more likely to exhibit greater digital agility. Digital readiness markedly influences digital innovation ($\beta = 0.556$, $p < 0.001$) and digital competitiveness ($\beta = 0.260$, $p < 0.001$). The mediation analysis indicates that digital agility and digital creativity together moderate the association between digital preparedness and digital competitiveness. These findings underscore the importance of integrating digital readiness, agility, and creativity to enhance MSME competitiveness in the creative industry.

Direct Effects

The examination of the structural model uncovers multiple substantial direct correlations among digital preparedness, digital agility, digital creativity, and digital competitiveness. The results demonstrate that digital agility positively and significantly influences digital competitiveness ($\beta = 0.324$; $T = 7.068$; $p = 0.000$), indicating that organizations with higher digital agility are better able to enhance their competitiveness in digital markets. The capacity of firms to swiftly adapt to technical advancements and changing market dynamics is essential for sustaining and improving their competitive edge in the digital landscape.

Furthermore, digital agility exhibits a substantial positive effect on digital creativity ($\beta = 0.299$; $T = 5.549$; $p = 0.000$). This discovery suggests that organizational agility in adopting and employing digital technology fosters the development of innovative concepts, creative digital material, and novel methodologies in commercial processes. As firms enhance their adaptability and flexibility in response to digital transformations, they become increasingly proficient at developing innovative solutions that drive commercial growth. Moreover, digital creativity is shown to substantially enhance digital competitiveness ($\beta = 0.298$; $T = 6.056$; $p = 0.000$). This outcome underscores that creativity in digital content, visual design, and digital processes serves as a strategic asset that bolsters market positioning, promotes consumer Engagement, and improves sales success on digital platforms.

The research indicates that digital preparedness exerts a significant and predominant effect on digital agility, evidenced by the highest path coefficient among all direct associations ($\beta = 0.706$; $T = 24.256$; $p = 0.000$). This discovery underscores that digital infrastructure, technical systems, and human resource competencies form the essential foundation that enables firms to operate with greater flexibility and responsiveness in the digital age.

Furthermore, digital preparedness exhibits a substantial direct impact on digital competitiveness ($\beta = 0.260$; $T = 4.877$; $p = 0.000$). This outcome indicates that companies with robust digital capabilities can enhance their competitive standing without relying on intermediaries. Ultimately, digital readiness profoundly impacts digital creativity ($\beta = 0.556$; $T = 12.374$; $p = 0.000$), suggesting that the presence of digital infrastructure and proficient human resources expands enterprises' opportunities to investigate, experiment, and cultivate innovative digital solutions.

Indirect Effects (Mediation Analysis)

The mediation analysis indicates multiple substantial indirect links among digital preparedness, digital agility, digital creativity, and digital competitiveness. The results demonstrate that digital agility indirectly improves digital competitiveness via digital creativity, with an indirect effect coefficient of 0.089 ($T = 4.083$; $p = 0.000$). This outcome indicates that digital agility enhances competitiveness directly and fosters the creation of innovative digital solutions that further elevate competitive performance. In this perspective, digital creativity serves as a crucial tool for transforming flexible digital capabilities into concrete competitive advantages in digital markets.

Additionally, digital preparedness influences digital competitiveness through the mediating factor of digital agility, with a notable indirect effect of 0.229 ($T = 6.842$; $p = 0.000$). This discovery suggests that digital readiness is more significant when firms convert their digital infrastructure, technology capabilities, and human resource competencies into agile, responsive digital initiatives. Digital preparedness alone may be

insufficient to create a competitive advantage unless it is complemented by the organization's capacity for swift, adaptable action in the digital landscape.

The analysis further substantiates a serial mediation mechanism that encompasses digital agility and digital creativity. The findings indicate that digital preparedness indirectly enhances digital competitiveness via a sequential process including digital agility and digital inventiveness, with an indirect impact coefficient of 0.063 ($T = 3.942$; $p = 0.000$). This research demonstrates a value-creation chain in which digital readiness serves as the fundamental skill that enables firms to increase agility, which, in turn, fosters innovative digital solutions and ultimately improves competitive performance.

The mediation pathway from digital agility to digital competitiveness via digital creativity is consistently supported, with an indirect effect coefficient of 0.089 ($T = 4.083$; $p = 0.000$). This further underscores the strategic significance of digital creativity as an essential link between agile digital capabilities and enhanced competitive results. Ultimately, digital preparedness is observed to indirectly affect digital competitiveness via digital creativity, exhibiting a notable indirect effect of 0.165 ($T = 5.491$; $p = 0.000$). This outcome indicates that investments in digital preparedness, including digital infrastructure and technology competencies, can enhance market competitiveness when supported by an organizational ecosystem that fosters the cultivation of digital creativity among corporate participants.

Table 3. *R-Square Test*

	R-square	R-square adjusted
Digital Agility	0,499	0,497
Digital Competitiveness	0,632	0,629
Digital Creativity	0,632	0,630

The coefficient of determination (R^2) indicates the degree to which the independent variables account for the variance in the dependent variable in the model. The findings indicate that Digital Agility has an R^2 of 0.499, indicating that roughly 49.9% of the variance in digital agility is attributable to Digital Readiness, with the remaining variance attributable to external factors not included in the model. Digital Competitiveness and Digital Creativity exhibit identical R^2 values of 0.632, indicating that the model accounts for 63.2% of the variance in these dimensions. This outcome signifies moderate to considerable explanatory capacity, in which the interplay between digital preparedness and digital agility concurrently enhances digital innovation and competitiveness. The updated R^2 values, which remain near the original values (0.629 and 0.630), affirm the model's stability and robustness given the number of predictors in the analysis.

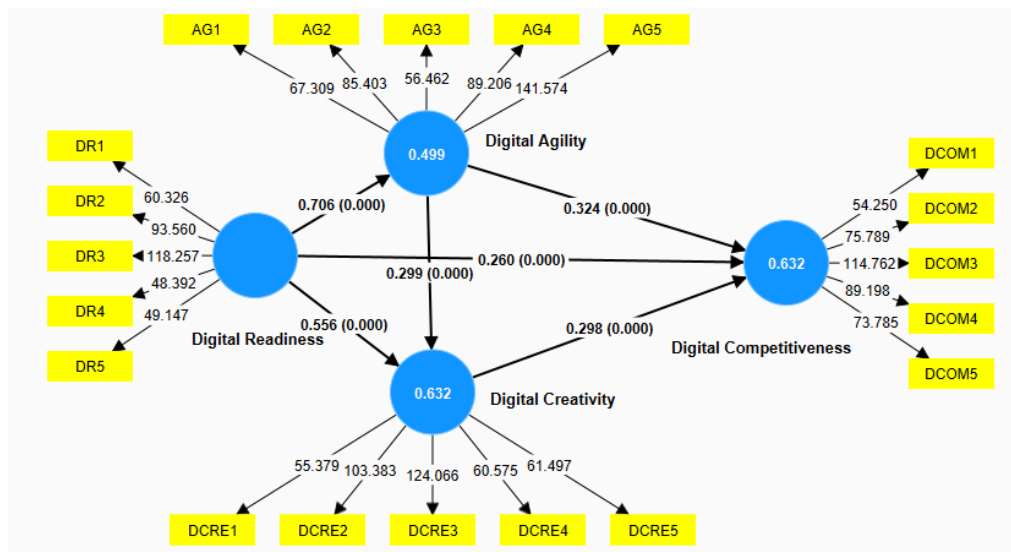


Figure 1. Bootstrapping Model

Table 4. Q-Square Test

	SSO	SSE	Q ² (=1-SSE/SSO)
Digital Agility	1500,000	871,801	0,419
Digital Competitiveness	1500,000	715,991	0,523
Digital Creativity	1500,000	716,600	0,522
Digital Readiness	1500,000	1500,000	0,000

The predictive relevance (Q²) test was performed to assess the model's independent variables' ability to forecast the dependent variables in an out-of-sample setting. A model is deemed to possess predictive relevance when the Q² value surpasses zero (Q² > 0), as per the established criterion. The study reveals that all endogenous constructs exhibit significant predictive value. Digital Competitiveness exhibits the greatest Q² score at 0.523, closely succeeded by Digital Creativity at 0.522, although Digital Agility presents a Q² value of 0.419. All Q² values are well above zero, indicating that the model has considerable predictive relevance. The findings indicate that the independent variables in the model, especially Digital Readiness and Digital Agility, demonstrate statistically significant relationships with the endogenous constructs and possess substantial predictive power in elucidating variations in digital creativity and digital competitiveness among SMEs.

DISCUSSION

Digital readiness denotes an organization's capacity to adopt, integrate, and utilize digital technologies, including leadership commitment, organizational culture, digital competencies, and structural alignment that facilitate effective digital initiatives (Duvivier & Gupta, 2023; Zhang et al., 2023; Fitriani, 2026; Putra, 2025). This preparedness establishes the essential circumstances for firms to adopt agile digital practices and facilitate further digital innovation. Conversely, digital agility denotes the ability of firms to swiftly identify digital opportunities or disruptions, reorganize resources, and implement prompt digital activities. This capacity is commonly viewed as a dynamic capability that enables organizations to operate efficiently in unstable, technology-oriented contexts (Sambamurthy et al., 2003; Duvivier & Gupta, 2023; Zhang et al., 2023). In this context, digital agility serves as a strategic tool that converts digital preparedness into concrete organizational results.

Empirical research repeatedly indicates that digital readiness is a robust predictor of digital agility. Organizations with sufficient leadership support, a robust digital culture, and advanced technology infrastructure are better able to respond to digital disruptions and market fluctuations (Albannai et al., 2024; Alavijeh et al., 2025). Digital readiness promotes the use of digital platforms and data-informed decision-making, thereby expediting agile response cycles and enhancing organizational flexibility (Zhang et al., 2023; Alavijeh et al., 2025). However, preparedness alone does not inherently yield agility. Previous studies indicate that complementary elements, including change management methods and competence development, are essential for converting readiness into agile organizational behavior (Yusuf et al., 2022).

When digital agility is cultivated effectively, companies are better able to experiment with and execute novel digital concepts, thereby enhancing digital creativity. Agile settings generally foster iterative experimentation, swift prototyping, and ongoing learning, enabling the development of innovative digital solutions (Fitriani, 2026; Putra, 2025; Syarkani, 2025; Albannai et al., 2024). Leadership and organizational culture enhance this link, since digital leadership promotes cooperation, strategic risk-taking, and knowledge sharing—conditions vital for the emergence and evolution of innovative digital projects (Albannai et al., 2024; Syarkani, 2025).

Digital creativity significantly enhances digital competitiveness by allowing enterprises to offer distinctive products, creative services, and digitally enabled business models that boost consumer experiences and operational efficiency (Aluwi et al., 2024). In rapidly evolving sectors including hospitality, manufacturing, and services, ongoing digital innovation is essential for achieving competitive advantage (Yusuf et al., 2022; Anggarda, 2025; Albannai et al., 2024). The influence of creativity on competitiveness is enhanced by agile implementation and strategic leadership, emphasizing the link between creative conception and agile execution.

Numerous studies indicate a sequential capability-building route wherein digital preparedness enhances digital agility, which in turn facilitates digital creativity, ultimately resulting in heightened digital competitiveness (Zhang et al., 2023; Anggarda, 2025; Fitriani, 2026). In this context, digital agility serves as a mediator between readiness and competitiveness, whereas digital creativity mediates the relationship between agility and competitiveness (Jing et al., 2023; Salmela et al., 2022). While digital readiness can directly affect competitiveness, empirical research suggests that its influence is typically more significant when conveyed through this sequential mediation process. Moreover, information management and absorptive capacity have been recognized as key factors that strengthen the link between digital innovation and competitive performance (Putra, 2025).

CONCLUSION

This study investigates the interrelationships among digital preparedness, digital agility, digital creativity, and digital competitiveness in the creative industry. The results indicate that digital preparedness is essential for enhancing digital competitiveness, both directly and indirectly, via digital agility and digital inventiveness. Organizations possessing robust digital infrastructure, advanced technological capabilities, and proficient human resources are better equipped to adapt to swift technological changes and respond effectively to evolving digital market conditions. The findings indicate that digital agility markedly improves both digital innovation and digital competitiveness. Companies that adeptly embrace and leverage digital technology are more proficient in generating original concepts, producing creative digital content, and swiftly adapting to evolving client demands. Moreover, digital creativity is identified as a crucial strategic element

that immediately enhances digital competitiveness by improving consumer Engagement, fostering digital innovation, and boosting market performance. The mediation analysis further substantiates that digital agility and digital creativity serve as significant mechanisms connecting digital readiness to digital competitiveness. A serial mediation pathway suggests that digital readiness enhances organizational agility, which in turn promotes digital creativity and ultimately bolsters competitive performance. These findings underscore that digital competitiveness in the creative business is influenced by a cohesive framework of digital skills encompassing readiness, agility, and creativity.

LIMITATION (OPTIONAL)

This study, despite its merits, has numerous limitations that must be recognized. The research exclusively examines creative industry MSMEs within a specific regional context, potentially limiting the applicability of the findings to other industries or geographic regions. The study used a cross-sectional research design, limiting the capacity to observe temporal variations in digital capabilities and competitiveness. This study's variables are confined to digital readiness, digital agility, digital creativity, and digital competitiveness, excluding other pertinent factors like digital leadership, innovation culture, and market orientation that may also affect organizational competitiveness in the digital age

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