

Innovation, Initiative, and Risk-Taking Courage as the Key to Success in Starting and Managing a Business

Dinda Fadia Az Zahra¹, Risbon Sianturi², Ineu Agustin³, Nurwati Fauziah⁴

Elementary School Education Study Program, Universitas Pendidikan Indonesia, Indonesia

*Correspondence: E-mail: dindafadia@upi.edu

ABSTRACTS

This article discusses the role of innovation, proactivity, and risk-taking courage as key factors in building and managing a business in the midst of the challenges of the era of globalization and increasingly fierce economic competition. Using a case study of AFD Collection, a fashion business that successfully survived and thrived during the COVID-19 pandemic, this article reviews how implementing product innovation, digital marketing strategies, and adapting to market changes can support business continuity and growth. In addition, this article also explores the importance of effective human resource management, optimization of digital technology to improve operational efficiency, and careful planning in dealing with market dynamics. The findings in this article provide strategic insights and practical advice for entrepreneurs, especially in the face of uncertainty and challenges in volatile global markets, so as to strengthen their position in the face of uncertainty and challenges.

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1. INTRODUCTION

At the beginning of 2020, economic issues became a lower priority due to the whole world being faced with the Covid-19 pandemic. This distracts many countries from looking for ways to overcome the problem. The economic sector is predicted to experience a recession, with the economy in Indonesia contracting by minus 5.3% in the second quarter of 2020, as well as other countries (Ardiansyah, 2020). As a result, changes in the economic field in Indonesia are considered very significant. In reality, increasingly uncertain economic conditions are no longer a surprise. The high inflation rate, the closure of local entrepreneurs and the decline in the value of the rupiah are indicators of economic instability. This also contributes to the high unemployment rate in Indonesia (Djodjobo & Tawas, 2014).

Entrepreneurship is seen as something that is hotly discussed in the midst of high unemployment. Badan Pusat Statistik (2021) stated that the condition of the open unemployment rate in Indonesia based on data from the level of education at universities is still quite high, at 6.97%. This shows that entrepreneurship has a crucial role in economic growth in creating jobs, increasing innovation, and encouraging competitiveness. By starting a business, an entrepreneur can introduce products and services to meet market needs, so that it can encourage consumption and investment. It can be said that entrepreneurship is the main driver to achieve a sustainable economy (Gaffar *et al.*, 2022; Koeswandi *et al.*, 2021; Wibowo *et al.*, 2021).

In building a business, an entrepreneur must first know what factors can affect the success of his business. In achieving the desired business performance, there are several factors that affect it, one of which is proactivity (Cemosa & Soelaiman, 2020; Koeswandi *et al.*, 2025; Lestari *et al.*, 2021; Mubarak *et al.*, 2022; Pebriari *et al.*, 2022). Proactive behavior is one of the crucial skills that an entrepreneur must have in order to be able to face competitive competition between business actors. By having a proactive attitude, there is an internal motivation that encourages a person to always be active, do work optimally, and adjust to the work situation. An entrepreneur who

is proactive in the midst of economic competition will continue to look for opportunities, adapt quickly, and innovate to maintain the continuity and growth of his business (Sunarto & Muhid, 2022).

In an era of increasingly fierce global economic competition, the ability to innovate is crucial to maintain competitiveness. In this context, one of the factors that is considered significant is product innovation. This innovation refers to the ability of companies to create and present new products or make modifications to existing products to meet market demand (Riyanto & Heriyati, 2024). This product innovation can be a means as a tool to increase competitiveness and performance in a business. This is evidenced by a previous study conducted by Gunday *et al.* (2011) which stated that product innovation has a positive impact on company performance. With product innovation, a company will have a competitive advantage and be better compared to other businesses that only rely on conventional products. It can also expand market share, increase customer loyalty and overall business performance. Innovation certainly does not always come without challenges. An entrepreneur will always be faced with decision-making activities, where the decisions taken cannot be separated from the possibility of risks posed. The courage to take this risk has an important role, because every innovative step presented will often involve uncertainty. Therefore, the courage to take risks is one of the important characteristics that must be possessed for an entrepreneur to achieve success and maintain the stability of his business. A successful entrepreneur is prepared to take well-calculated risks, while still avoiding unnecessary risks. Based on the above explanation, it is necessary to conduct research on the influence of product innovation, be ready for proactivity and the courage to take risks in starting and managing a business. This research aims to understand how product innovation is able to create added value and maintain business relevance in the market, as well as how courage in facing risks helps entrepreneurs make strategic decisions. By examining these two factors, it is hoped that an effective pattern can be found to support business

success, starting from initial planning to sustainable management in the midst of increasingly fierce and dynamic competition.

2. METHODS

This study uses qualitative research to find out what phenomena occur about the key to success of an entrepreneur to start his business.

Research Methods

This study uses a qualitative descriptive method. Qualitative research is methods to explore and understand the meaning of what is considered to come from social problems (Raco, J. 2018). In this study, an in-depth interview was conducted with an entrepreneur who is engaged in the field of mukena convection and also robes and dresses. Specifically, the purpose of this interview is to find out information about entrepreneurship, such as the ability to innovate that an entrepreneur must have, the attitude of proactivity and courage to start a business. This informant is felt to represent to answer the needs of this research so that later it can reveal its actions in the business world.

Responden

The respondent in this study is Mr. Amir, as the owner of the AFD Collection business, who has direct experience in managing and developing the fashion business.

Place and Time of Research

The research was carried out at the AFD Collection store located on Jalan Raya Cikalong, Cidadali Village, Cikalong District, Tasikmalaya Regency, from September to October 2024.

Data Type

The collection method used by the researcher is primary data, namely by taking data directly on the research object.

3. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Mr. Amir and his wife established the family fashion business "Convection Gamis Tasikmalaya" in 2021. The business started during the COVID-19 pandemic, a difficult time, especially for new businesses. In the Micro, Small and Medium Enterprises (MSMEs) sector, the pandemic has had an impact on the demand side, especially people's consumption and purchasing activities. This ultimately has an impact on the supply side,

especially through layoffs and intimidation. MSMEs are considered to be very affected by the COVID-19 pandemic, threatening the business continuity of many business actors. All levels of society are affected by COVID-19, and saving MSMEs from the impact of COVID-19 is considered important for the economy (Kinanti, A. R. 2024). They remain optimistic, however, and are leveraging digital platforms to sell their goods online. It initially concentrated on making various types of clothes such as robes, dasters, mukena, and school uniforms. Although direct interaction is limited and many businesses face frustration.

Mr. Amir started the company with a capital of around 20-30 million rupiah. They managed to build a strong online presence on platforms like Shopee and TikTok in a thoughtful way. E-marketing or digital marketing is not only the use of digital technology to achieve marketing goals, but also an effort to develop or adapt the marketing concept itself, communicate on a global scale, and change the way companies do business with their customers (Hartono, R., Sudiarjo, A., & Supriatman, A. 2024). The maximum use of digital media makes businesses survive, even growing in the midst of crises that hit many other business sectors.

Mr. Amir and his wife had to separate because they were facing new problems on a personal level in 2023. After that, Mr. Amir continued the business independently with the new name "AFD Collection". According to Putra, M. R. P. N., & Irbayuni, S. (2024) In the commercial world, the identity of a product is very important to show the manufacturer that the product is an original work. Brands and logos are separate identities that have the power to define the characteristics of a product and differentiate it from competitors. A logo is a visual feature, usually in the form of an image, sign, or symbol, that serves as a tangible representation of a brand and conveys the essence of a product. Mr. Amir took advantage of his two years of experience running a business in the midst of a pandemic to maintain and grow the AFD Collection. Gamis, daster, mukena, and school uniform continue to be sold by the AFD Collection. Approximately a hundred products are sold every day, indicating

the consistency of market demand. Mr. Amir makes a weekly profit of between 3-5 million rupiah, and a monthly income ranges from 12-20 million rupiah under normal conditions. However, sales can increase sharply on certain days such as payment day sales, beautiful holidays (such as 11.11 and 12.12), and the month of Ramadan before Eid. Sales of the AFD Collection can soar high at this point, resulting in much greater profits than in normal months.

The use of digital platforms to reach customers in various regions is an important part of AFD Collection's success. Mr. Amir emphasized the importance of expanding market reach through e-commerce and social media during the interview. According to him, consumer behavior has changed as a result of the pandemic, with more and more people preferring to shop online. Although the competition in the online fashion field is getting fiercer, AFD Collection can continue to grow with the right approach and the use of targeted digital promotion strategies. Mr. Amir discussed his digital strategy and team management. Currently, AFD Collection employs 15 people who assist in the day-to-day production and operational processes of the business. Material cutting, sewing, packing, and order management are all jobs performed by these employees. Although this venture has not reached a large scale, Mr. Amir continues to concentrate on improving product quality and maintaining good relationships with customers. She believes that maintaining customer loyalty is very important, especially in the midst of increasingly fierce competition in the fashion business.

In the rapidly evolving digital era, human resource management (HR) is becoming increasingly complex and demanding, especially for micro, small, and medium enterprises (MSMEs) (Apriyani et al., 2024). MSMEs are the backbone of the economies of many countries, including Indonesia, and contribute significantly to job creation and economic growth (Saefullah, Radjawane et al., 2023). However, MSMEs often face various obstacles such as: Limited access to technology, lack of financial management knowledge, and lack of digital skills. This challenge is exacerbated by rapid technological and market changes that require MSMEs to adapt more to

remain competitive (Sutariyono et al., 2020) and (Tohiroh et al., 2021).

Digital skills and talent management are important. Human resource training and development aims not only to improve operational efficiency but also to encourage the growth of innovation and productivity (Saefullah et al., 2024). Digital skills such as the use of management software, digital marketing, and data analysis are essential for MSMEs to optimize their business processes. In addition, mastery of information and communication technology can open up new opportunities for MSMEs to expand their markets locally and globally (Saefullah, Aisha, et al., 2023). Mr. Amir also discussed the difficulties of running a business, especially after having to rebuild his own business. Nevertheless, he believes that the experience he gained while managing the Tasikmalaya Gamis Convection is very helpful in managing the AFD Collection. One of the main problems faced is maintaining production consistency and ensuring the availability of raw materials. AFD Collection is able to maintain its business stability with good management and collaboration with reliable suppliers. As an entrepreneur, Mr. Amir continues to learn and innovate to develop his business. It not only focuses on current sales, but also plans a long-term strategy to strengthen AFD Collection's position in the online fashion market. With a strong spirit, he hopes to continue to expand his business and make AFD Collection one of the well-known local fashion brands in Indonesia.

After the interview, it was decided that the AFD collection was successful due to a strong digital strategy, perseverance, innovation, and the ability to adapt to various conditions. Mr. Amir remains optimistic that his business will continue to grow and achieve greater success in the future with dedication and hard work. To survive in the increasingly competitive business world, it is important for every company to think about what is good and what is bad. Mistakes must be identified to minimize or correct, while profits can be the main capital that drives the company's progress and success.

As a fashion company, AFD Collection has demonstrated a variety of things that help its business survive and thrive, from the quality of the

products it makes to its effective marketing strategies. AFD Collection has advantages that can be emulated by other companies. However, despite the successes, there are also problems and drawbacks that need to be noted. Some examples are limitations in the variety of content on social media and problems in managing raw materials.

The advantage of AFD Collection is the Maximum Utilization of Digital Platforms AFD Collection has successfully used e-commerce platforms such as Shopee and TikTok as sales channels, which allows it to reach a wide range of customers. This increases flexibility and efficiency, especially during the pandemic. Furthermore, the good relationship with customers AFD Collection continues to interact with customers through various online platforms, which results in good relationships and customer loyalty. AFD Collection can improve the services and products provided to customers by listening to their feedback and responding quickly to their complaints or questions. As a result, customer satisfaction will increase. Lastly, Mr. Amir is always looking for ways to create new and interesting products in an effort to stay relevant in a competitive market. AFD Collection is able to offer products that are not only quality but also in accordance with the wishes and needs of customers through design innovation and adjustment to the latest fashion trends. With this new innovation, AFD Collection can compete with other brands in the fashion industry and strengthen its position in the fashion market. They can also increase sales and achieve more sustainable growth in the long run. However, no matter how successful or innovative a business is, it must have weaknesses that must be identified and corrected. There are several disadvantages of AFD Collection, namely the first is Limited Business Scale AFD Collection still has a relatively small business scale compared to its competitors in the fashion industry, even though it already has several online stores. This limits the ability of businesses to expand and reach a wider market. The second is the challenge in management Human resources, especially with a team of 15 people. When demand increases, such as on holidays, many orders overwhelm the team. Product quality and delivery time can be affected if there is no division of tasks and good

communication. Therefore, to become better prepared for the surge in demand and maintain customer satisfaction, AFD Collection must implement an effective management system, including employee training and a clear division of tasks.

4. CONCLUSION

Entrepreneurship has become one of the important pillars in supporting economic growth, especially when global economic conditions are experiencing major challenges, such as what happened during the COVID-19 pandemic. Success in starting and managing a business does not only depend on financial capital, but also on the personal factors possessed by an entrepreneur, such as the ability to innovate, be proactive in facing change, and the courage to take risks. In the context of the AFD Collection business run by Mr. Amir, it is clear that innovation and adaptation to change play a very important role. During the pandemic, when many businesses experienced difficulties, AFD Collection managed to utilize digital platforms to maintain its existence and even develop its business further.

Digital marketing through platforms like Shopee and TikTok has become a key strategy in expanding market reach and increasing sales. In addition, with a proactive approach in dealing with changes and challenges, such as switching to digital marketing and creating innovative products, AFD Collection is able to compete in an increasingly tight market. The courage to take risks is a crucial element in AFD Collection's business journey. Mr. Amir not only took a bold decision by establishing a business during the pandemic, but also continued to innovate products to remain balanced with market needs. This courage proved to be successful, as his business continued to grow and achieve good financial stability. By prioritizing innovation, proactivity, and risk-taking courage, entrepreneurs can face challenges and overcome uncertainty more effectively.

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