Realizing Sustainable Growth: Innovative Talent Management Strategies in Driving Small and Medium-sized Enterprises Growth in the Creative Sector

Novalien Carolina Lewaherilla*, Abu Muna Almaududi Ausat†, Hizbul Khootimah Azzaakiiyyah‡, Syamsu Rijal§

1Department of Management, Faculty of Economics and Business, Universitas Pattimura, Indonesia
2Department of Business Administration, Universitas Subang, Indonesia
3Department of Economics, Universitas Diponegoro, Indonesia
4Department of Economics, Faculty of Economics and Business, Universitas Negeri Makassar, Indonesia

Email: 1novalewaherilla@yahoo.com, 2abumuna742@gmail.com, 3azzaakiiyyahhizbulk@gmail.com, 4syamsurijalasnur@unm.ac.id

Abstract

The creative sector has emerged as a significant contributor to the global economy, including job creation and income generation. Despite its vast potential, SMEs in the creative sector often face challenges in achieving sustainable growth. This research aims to examine innovative talent management strategies in driving SME business growth in the creative sector to realize sustainable growth. The research method employed in this study is a literature review using a qualitative approach and descriptive analysis. Data for this research were gathered from Google Scholar for the period 2019-2024. The study findings indicate that in the face of globalization and rapid changes, the creative sector plays a crucial role in driving sustainable economic growth. SMEs play a vital role in the creative ecosystem, but they encounter various challenges, ranging from intense competition to limited access to resources. Innovative talent management is key to addressing these challenges and capitalizing on opportunities amidst evolving market dynamics. SMEs need to provide training and skill development for employees to strengthen their innovative capabilities.

Keywords: Innovative Talent, Sustainable Growth, SMEs

1. INTRODUCTION

The creative sector has played a crucial role in supporting global economic growth by creating jobs and increasing income (Ausat & Suherlan, 2021). In many countries, especially in the Micro, Small, and Medium Enterprises (MSMEs) sector, the creative sector is a vital component driving the overall creative economy (Ausat et al., 2023). The presence of MSMEs in the creative sector not only significantly contributes to the country’s economy but also provides a platform for innovation, creativity, and sustainable economic growth (Subagja et al., 2022).

Despite its immense potential, MSMEs in the creative sector often face several challenges that hinder sustainable growth. Some emerging challenges include constraints in accessing adequate financial capital, limitations in recruiting and retaining skilled and quality human resources, and a lack of adequate market access for the products and services produced (Kamar et al., 2022). The inability to address these challenges can hinder the growth potential and economic impact that MSMEs in the creative sector can generate, thus requiring holistic and sustainable strategies to overcome these challenges and promote more inclusive and sustainable growth in this sector.

The key to addressing the challenges faced by MSMEs in the creative sector lies in the presence of innovative talent. These MSMEs require individuals with creative talent and innovative capabilities to produce products and services that meet the needs of dynamic markets (Ausat & Peirisal, 2021). Innovative talent serves as the primary foundation in the creation process that distinguishes products and services from their competitors, enabling MSMEs to compete effectively in the competitive global market. Moreover, the presence of innovative talent also opens opportunities for the development of new products and services that can reach a wider market segment, enhance competitiveness, and expand market share for these MSMEs (Yani et al., 2023). In this context, investment in the development of
creative and innovative talent becomes crucial in supporting the growth and sustainability of MSMEs in the creative sector. Managing innovative talent requires careful and planned strategies. These efforts involve a series of steps, including but not limited to recruiting individuals with creative talent, developing their potential through relevant training and work experience, and efforts to retain them in an organizational environment that allows for creative expression and innovation. These strategies should be formulated considering the vision and mission of the organization's business, and adapting to the dynamics of the ever-changing market. In managing innovative talent, companies also need to consider external and internal factors that affect the motivation and performance of creative individuals, such as a supportive work environment, adequate incentive systems, and clarity regarding career development opportunities (Rifai et al., 2023).

The main goal for MSMEs in the creative sector is to achieve sustainable business growth. Sustainable growth is not only important to maintain their relevance amid fierce market competition but also to create a greater positive impact on the local and national economy (Ginting, 2020). Through sustainable growth, MSMEs have the opportunity to expand market reach and penetration, increase production and sales volume, and create more jobs for the community (Harahap et al., 2023). Furthermore, sustainable growth also enables MSMEs to play a greater role in supporting the local supply chain, driving innovation and creativity in the sector, and enhancing the competitiveness of the creative industry as a whole. Therefore, through this research, further discussion will be conducted on how the management of innovative talent strategies can help drive sustainable business growth for MSMEs in the creative sector. This research is expected to provide valuable insights for stakeholders in developing an inclusive and sustainable creative business ecosystem.

2. RESEARCH METHOD

The research method employed in this study is a literature review using a qualitative approach and descriptive analysis. The qualitative approach is utilized to delve into a deep understanding of the researched issue, in this case, the innovative talent management strategies in driving SME business growth in the creative sector. Descriptive analysis is conducted to organize, depict, and summarize the findings obtained from the selected articles. Data for this research were gathered from Google Scholar for the period 2019-2024. Initially, 55 articles were identified, however, after a rigorous selection based on relevance to the research topic, quality, and adequacy of information, only 24 articles were chosen for analysis. This indicates that the research relies on a literature review of recent scholarly articles to gain comprehensive insights into innovative talent management strategies in the context of sustainable growth for SME businesses in the creative sector.

3. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Sustainable growth refers to an economic growth process that occurs in balance, taking into account long-term environmental, social, and economic sustainability (Mensah, 2019). This means that economic growth achieved does not only prioritize profitability but also considers its impact on the environment, social welfare, and the ability to meet the needs of future generations. In this context, sustainable growth requires the adoption of strategies and policies that balance economic growth, environmental protection, and social justice, ensuring that limited natural resources are used efficiently and effectively without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their needs (Hariram et al., 2023).

Innovative talent refers to individuals who possess creative abilities and talents in generating new ideas and unique solutions to address challenges or problems (Thilavongsa et al., 2020). They have the ability to think beyond conventional boundaries, combining various ideas and perspectives to create significant added value. Innovative talent is not limited to technical skills or specific expertise but also encompasses the ability to collaborate, adapt quickly to changes, and have a high interest in learning and experimentation (Rožman et al., 2023). They not only innovate in products or services but also in processes, business models, and customer experiences. In a business context, innovative talent becomes
a valuable asset that drives positive change, strengthens competitiveness, and helps organizations achieve long-term growth and success (Al Aina & Atan, 2020).

SMEs, which stand for Small and Medium Enterprises, refer to businesses with relatively small operational scales and revenues. Micro-enterprises usually have fewer than 10 employees, while small enterprises have between 10 and 50 employees, and medium enterprises have between 50 and 250 employees. SMEs often serve as the backbone of the economy in many countries, significantly contributing to economic growth, job creation, and income distribution (Sutrisno et al., 2023). They tend to have greater flexibility in responding to market changes and can be important sources of innovation (Subagja et al., 2023). Despite their great potential, SMEs often face challenges such as limited access to capital, skilled human resources, and competitive markets (Arjang et al., 2023). Therefore, proper support from the government, financial institutions, and other business ecosystems is crucial to strengthen the role and contribution of SMEs in sustainable economic development (Sudirjo et al., 2023).

In the era of globalization marked by rapid changes, the creative sector has emerged as a key element in driving sustainable economic growth. Small and Medium Enterprises (SMEs) play a central role in this creative ecosystem, acting as primary drivers in advancing innovation and creative expression. However, SMEs in the creative sector face various challenges that cannot be ignored. From intensifying competition in the global market to constraints in accessing limited resources, every strategic decision made has significant impacts on business sustainability (Risdwiyanto et al., 2023). Therefore, efforts to address these challenges with appropriate strategies become crucial for the growth and sustainability of SMEs in the creative sector.

Fundamentally, innovative talent management plays a central role in driving SMEs' business growth in the creative sector. This phenomenon occurs because innovative talent serves as the main agents of change and generators of creativity in the context of the creative industry. They not only present fresh ideas but also bring new perspectives and deep expertise, resulting in creative products and services and expanding business scope. Moreover, innovative talent paves the way for new opportunities, presenting a dynamic and innovative business landscape (Koziol-Nadolna, 2020). Strategic management of innovative talent becomes a primary focus for SMEs in the creative sector, enabling them to harness the full potential of their intellectual assets to strengthen their competitive position and ensure sustainable business continuity.

However, managing innovative talent is a complex task that requires a holistic and sustainable approach. Firstly, SMEs need to establish a conducive work ecosystem that supports the growth of innovative talent. This includes fostering a company culture that embraces new ideas, incentive systems that encourage creativity, and flexibility in exploring and implementing innovative ideas. Furthermore, significant investment in skill and knowledge development is crucial to ensure that innovative talent remains relevant and continues to evolve in line with the constantly changing market dynamics (Zamiri & Esmaeili, 2024). Thus, serious efforts to create an adequate work environment and build individual capacity become strategic steps that cannot be overlooked by SMEs operating in the creative sector.

Moreover, collaboration is identified as a key element in optimizing the utilization of innovative talent. SMEs operating in the creative sector are advised to strengthen networks and partnerships with various stakeholders, including fellow SMEs, research and educational institutions, and government agencies. Engagement in such collaborations not only facilitates the exchange of valuable ideas and knowledge but also opens access to broader resources such as investment capital, required infrastructure, and markets with wider coverage. By intensifying cross-sectoral collaboration, SMEs have a greater opportunity to maximize their innovative potential and expand their positive impact in advancing the creative industry as a whole (Deri Firmansyah et al., 2023).

Furthermore, attention to inclusivity is also regarded as important in managing innovative talent (Amelia & Rofaida, 2023). SMEs operating in the creative sector must ensure that opportunities for development are not only open to a select few individuals but also to diverse backgrounds and societal groups. By considering inclusivity, SMEs have the opportunity to access a more diverse pool of innovative talent, which in turn can enrich existing perspectives in the process of creation and innovation. Concrete steps, such as training and development programs designed to address accessibility
barriers, as well as promoting an inclusive and diversity-friendly work environment, are strategic measures that can be taken to ensure that innovative talent from various societal layers can participate in the creative ecosystem and contribute significantly to the growth and sustainability of SMEs in the creative sector.

SMEs operating in the creative sector are required to pay serious attention to sustainability aspects in managing innovative talent. This sustainability concept encompasses several dimensions, including employee well-being, diversity, and the social impact of business activities. By prioritizing sustainability in managing innovative talent, SMEs have the opportunity to ensure that their business growth achievements not only generate substantial financial profits but also have a significant positive impact on social and environmental levels. Adopted strategies may include building a work environment that prioritizes employee well-being, implementing inclusive policies to promote diversity, and considering the social and environmental implications of every business decision made (Croitoru et al., 2022). Thus, SMEs in the creative sector can play a more active role in driving the transformation towards a sustainable and inclusive economy.

Thus, achieving sustainable growth for SMEs in the creative sector demands the adoption of holistic, collaborative, inclusive, and sustainable innovative talent management strategies. By prioritizing effective innovative talent management, SMEs can address the challenges they face and capitalize on emerging opportunities in the face of ever-changing market dynamics. In this context, a holistic approach takes into account various aspects, from creating a work environment that supports creativity to investing in skill and knowledge development. Collaboration with various stakeholders also becomes key in expanding the reach and access to necessary resources. Moreover, inclusivity should be the primary foundation in ensuring that opportunities for development are open to all societal layers. Thus, SMEs in the creative sector can become the main drivers in promoting sustainable economic growth in the future, contributing to overall inclusive and sustainable economic development.

In order to enhance sustainability, small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) in the creative sector need to pay attention to several strategic steps that can optimize the management of their innovative talents:

a. Investment in Human Resource Development: Providing training and skill development for employees is a crucial strategy in enhancing their ability to innovate and adapt to environmental changes. Through continuous training programs, employees can broaden their creative scope, enhance collaboration with colleagues, and sharpen their problem-solving skills. By focusing consistently on skill development, companies can ensure that employees have the necessary tools to face future challenges, thus promoting overall organizational growth and advancement.

b. Establishment of an Innovative Work Environment: Cultivating a corporate culture that prioritizes experimentation and innovative ideas is essential in maintaining organizational relevance and competitiveness. This process involves deep efforts to promote open communication across all levels, where every individual feels supported to voice their ideas and creative inputs. Appreciating failure as an integral element of learning strengthens a positive attitude towards risk and innovation, paving the way for bolder experiments. Granting employees the freedom to explore new ideas without fear of negative consequences fosters an inclusive culture and encourages risk-taking, creating an environment conducive to sustainable innovation and long-term growth.

c. Collaboration with External Partners: Developing strategic partnerships with research institutions, universities, and local communities is an essential step in accessing and leveraging relevant knowledge and additional resources. Through such collaborations, not only can business networks be expanded, but opportunities for exchanging ideas and knowledge with high strategic value are also created. Collaboration with research institutions provides direct access to cutting-edge research and innovative methodologies, while partnerships with universities facilitate access to academic resources and the creative potential of students and faculty. Meanwhile, collaboration with local communities enriches perspectives by harnessing local wisdom and deep understanding of relevant social and cultural dynamics. By building strong partnerships with these entities, organizations can strengthen their position in tackling complex challenges, broaden knowledge scope, and achieve sustainable competitive advantages.
d. Implementation of Technology and Digital Innovation: Harnessing technology and digital innovation is fundamental to efforts aimed at improving operational efficiency, raising product or service quality standards, and creating more satisfying experiences for customers. Through the implementation of advanced technologies such as artificial intelligence, data analytics, and cyber security systems, micro, small, and medium-sized enterprises (MSMEs) can optimize their business processes, ranging from supply chain management to customer interactions. Artificial intelligence aids in improving operational efficiency through the automation of routine tasks and predictive analysis for more timely decision-making. Meanwhile, data analytics provides deep insights into customer behavior and market trends, enabling MSMEs to design more effective marketing strategies and product development. Additionally, investment in cyber security ensures that sensitive customer data is protected from increasingly complex digital security threats. Thus, the adoption of technology and digital innovation not only strengthens the competitiveness of MSMEs in an increasingly digitized market but also opens up opportunities for sustainable growth and development.

e. Encouraging Community Engagement: Active community engagement in the creative and innovative process has great potential to create products or services that better align with their needs and preferences. Efforts such as organizing participatory events, regularly gathering feedback, and directly interacting with customers are crucial strategies in building deep connections and trust between businesses and consumers. Through continuous collaboration with the community, whether through discussion sessions or structured surveys, businesses can gain deeper insights into fundamental market needs and evolving desires. Thus, this process serves not only as a means to produce more relevant products or services but also strengthens the bond between brands and consumers, creating a strong foundation for sustainable business growth and positive customer relations.

f. Consideration of Sustainability Aspects: Adopting the role of socially and environmentally responsible business entities is not only a marketing strategy but also an action that has a profound positive impact on brand image and customer relations. By prioritizing sustainable business practices, including but not limited to the use of environmentally friendly raw materials, waste reduction, and participation in social initiatives, businesses in the creative sector can affirm their commitment to the sustainability of the planet and social welfare. Through these measures, MSMEs not only differentiate themselves from competitors in an increasingly competitive market but also inspire socially and environmentally conscious customers to choose their products or services. Thus, being agents of social and environmental change not only contributes to the improvement of business sustainability but also helps build meaningful relationships with customers who value the same values.

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By incorporating these steps into their innovative talent management strategies, SMEs in the creative sector can strengthen their business foundations, enhance competitiveness, and achieve sustainable long-term growth. As an integral part of the creative ecosystem, SMEs have tremendous potential to become positive agents of change in creating economic, social, and cultural value for local and global communities.

4. CONCLUSIONS

In the face of globalization and rapid changes, the creative sector emerges as pivotal in driving sustainable economic growth. SMEs play a crucial role in the creative ecosystem, yet they encounter various challenges, ranging from intense competition to limited access to resources. Innovative talent management is key to overcoming these challenges and leveraging opportunities amidst evolving market dynamics. Based on the findings of this research, several recommendations can be made: 1) Investment in Human Resource Development: SMEs should provide training and skill development to employees to strengthen their innovative capabilities. 2) Establishment of an Innovative Work Environment: Foster a company culture that supports experimentation and new ideas. 3) Collaboration with External Parties: Build partnerships with research institutions, universities, and local communities to gain access to additional knowledge and resources. 4) Adoption of Technology and Digital Innovation: Utilize technology and digital innovation to enhance operational efficiency and improve the quality of products or services. 5) Encouragement of Community Engagement: Involve the community in the creative and innovative process to create products or services that better suit their needs. 6) Consideration of Sustainability Aspects: Being socially and environmentally responsible can enhance brand image and attract increasingly conscientious customers. By implementing these steps, SMEs in the creative sector can strengthen their business foundations, enhance competitiveness, and achieve sustainable long-term growth.

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