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DIGITAL ENTREPRENEURSHIP INTENTIONS AMONG COLLEGE STUDENTS: A STUDY IN THIRUVANANTHAPURAM DISTRICT

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ABSTRACT

In the dynamic era of the digital economy, the entrepreneurial aspirations of youth are undergoing significant transformation. This study explores the digital entrepreneurship intentions among college students pursuing commerce, management, and arts programs in Thiruvananthapuram district. The research examines the role of educational institutions in nurturing digital entrepreneurial skills, assesses student's awareness of digital entrepreneurship, and investigates their interest and intentions to establish digital startups. Using a structured questionnaire and a sample size of 110 students, primary data were collected and analyzed with correlation analysis, and exploratory factor analysis. The findings reveal a positive correlation between institutional support activities (such as seminars and networking opportunities) and student's entrepreneurial interests and intentions. The study highlights the crucial role of educational institutions in promoting digital entrepreneurship and offers valuable insights for academia, policymakers, and startup ecosystems aiming to cultivate entrepreneurial talent among students.

Keywords:

Digital Entrepreneurship, College Students, Institutional Support, Entrepreneurial Intentions

INTRODUCTION

Entrepreneurship has long been recognized as a key driver of economic growth, innovation, and societal development. It involves the identification of opportunities, the mobilization of resources, and the creation of value through the establishment of new ventures. In the contemporary era, the advent of digital technologies has redefined traditional entrepreneurial practices, giving rise to the concept of digital entrepreneurship. Digital entrepreneurship refers to the process of creating new ventures and transforming existing businesses by leveraging digital technologies such as the internet, mobile platforms, cloud computing, and artificial intelligence. Unlike traditional entrepreneurship, digital

entrepreneurship enables broader market access, lowers entry barriers, and offers innovative business models that transcend geographical boundaries.

The rapid digitalization of economies has created unprecedented opportunities for aspiring entrepreneurs, particularly among the youth. College students, being at the forefront of technology adoption and innovation, are increasingly viewed as a significant segment with the potential to shape the future digital economy. Their familiarity with digital tools, coupled with entrepreneurial aspirations, positions them uniquely to initiate and sustain digital ventures. Understanding the factors influencing their intentions to engage in digital entrepreneurship has become a vital area of academic and practical interest.

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

Digital entrepreneurship education in higher education institutions plays a pivotal role in shaping students' entrepreneurial intentions, both through implicit and explicit learning approaches. The article highlights that EI tends to be higher among students majoring in entrepreneurship studies, while business students are primarily oriented toward developing risk-taking capabilities (Pandit, D, Joshi, M. P & Tiwari, S. R. 2018). Digital entrepreneurship among university students in developing economies is significantly influenced by attitudes, social norms, perceived behavioral control, personal innovativeness, and digital entrepreneurial education (DEE). This study found strong positive correlations between these factors and digital entrepreneurial intentions (DEI), while revealing that DEE inversely moderated the link between perceived behavioral control and DEI (Nguyen, P. N. D., & Nguyen, H. H. 2024). Digital entrepreneurship among Chinese college students is strengthened when managing learning and continuous entrepreneurship education effectively bridge the gap between intention and actual entrepreneurial behavior. This study confirms that both factors play a pivotal driving role in transforming digital entrepreneurship intention into tangible entrepreneurial actions (Li, S., Bu, Y., Zhang, Z., & Huang, Y. 2024).

STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

Despite growing opportunities in the digital economy, not all college students are equally prepared or motivated to venture into digital entrepreneurship. While some institutions actively promote entrepreneurial ecosystems, others lag in offering necessary support structures. The study aims to address the gap by investigating how institutional initiatives impact student's awareness, interest, and intentions toward starting digital businesses.

OBJECTIVES

1. To study the role of educational institutions in promoting digital entrepreneurship
2. To assess the level of awareness about digital entrepreneurship among college students in Thiruvananthapuram district
3. To explore students interest and intentions towards starting a digital business.

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SCOPE OF THE STUDY

The scope of this research is limited to college students pursuing commerce, management, and arts programs in the Thiruvananthapuram district. It focuses on analyzing the relationship between educational support, student's digital entrepreneurship awareness, and their entrepreneurial intentions. The study does not extend to science, engineering, or other streams outside the student population.

SIGNIFICANCE OF THE STUDY

This study provides valuable insights into how educational institutions can better prepare students for the evolving digital entrepreneurial landscape. The findings can guide curriculum development not only enhancing the theoretical background but also incorporating necessary practical sections that encourage students to take risks and embark on their digital entrepreneurial journey. Furthermore, the research highlights the need for a supportive environment that fosters innovation, risk-taking, and the development of entrepreneurial competencies among youth, ultimately contributing to the growth of a resilient and dynamic digital economy.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

Source of data

The data for this study were collected from two sources: primary and secondary data. Primary data were gathered through a structured questionnaire administered to college students pursuing courses in commerce, management, and arts. Secondary data were sourced from academic journals, government reports, startup databases, and previous research on digital entrepreneurship and youth entrepreneurial intentions.

Tools used for analysis

The data were analyzed using various statistical tools through SPSS software. Descriptive statistics were applied to summarize and present the key characteristics of the sample population. Pearson correlation analysis was conducted to examine the relationship between students' awareness of digital entrepreneurship and their intention to start digital businesses. Exploratory factor analysis was used to identify the underlying factors influencing digital entrepreneurship intentions.

Sample selection

Sampling technique: a stratified random sampling technique was used to select participants from various colleges across the Thiruvananthapuram district. This technique ensured that students from different backgrounds were adequately represented in the study.

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Sample size

The sample size for this study consisted of 110 students from various colleges in Thiruvananthapuram district, ensuring a comprehensive and reliable dataset for analysis.

Hypothesis

- H_1: there is a positive correlation between attending seminars/workshops on digital entrepreneurship and student's interest in starting a digital business.
- H_2: there is a positive correlation between awareness of startup networking opportunities and students intention to start a digital business within the next two years.

LIMITATIONS OF THE STUDY

1. The study is confined to a single district, which may limit the generalizability of the findings to other regions.
2. The study primarily focuses on students from commerce, management, and arts streams, potentially overlooking students from other disciplines who may have different entrepreneurial intentions.
3. The study is cross-sectional in nature, capturing data at a single point in time, and does not explore changes in student's entrepreneurial intentions over a longer period.

DATA ANALYSIS

Table 1: A Descriptive Analysis was conducted to understand the demographic characteristics profile of the respondents. The variables considered were gender, age group, and education level.

Variable	Category	Frequency	Percent
Gender	Male	59	53.6
	Female	51	46.4
	Total	110	100
Age group	18–21	41	37.3
	22–24	39	35.5
	Above 25	30	27.2
	Total	110	100
Education level	Bachelors	28	25.5
	Masters	37	33.6
	PhD	12	10.9
	Professionals	33	30.0
	Total	110	100

Source: primary data

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Interpretation:

Table 1 shows the demographic profile of the 110 respondents. A slight majority were male (53.6%), with females at 46.4%, indicating a balanced gender distribution. Most respondents were aged 18–21 years (37.3%), followed by 22–24 years (35.5%), and above 25 years (27.2%), suggesting a predominantly young sample. In terms of education, 33.6% were at the master's level, 30% were professionals, 25.5% at the bachelor's level, and 10.9% were PhD holders. This reflects a diverse educational level, relevant to understanding digital entrepreneurship intentions among college students and young professionals.

Descriptive Statistics For Key Variables

Table 2: The descriptive analysis of the five-point Likert scale items revealed the following insights regarding the role of educational institutions, students' interest, and their intentions toward digital entrepreneurship.

Variable	Mean	Standard deviation	Level of agreement	Interpretation
College conducts seminars on digital entrepreneurship	3.84	0.88	Agree	Students generally agree that colleges conduct relevant seminars.
Entrepreneurship clubs exist	2.91	0.98	Disagree	Mixed responses; many students are unsure or disagree about the presence of clubs.
Faculty encourages exploring digital business	3.57	1.00	Agree	Faculty members are perceived to be supportive of digital entrepreneurship.
Access to digital tools/platforms	2.81	1.01	Disagree	Access to digital platforms is perceived to be limited or inconsistent.
Curriculum includes entrepreneurship	4.00	0.00	Agree	Full agreement that entrepreneurship is included in the curriculum.
College invites successful entrepreneurs	3.33	0.90	Neutral to slightly agree	Moderate agreement on industry engagement through guest lectures or events.
Personally interested in digital business	3.43	0.83	Neutral to slightly agree	Students show good personal interest in starting a digital business.
Follow digital startup news	3.22	0.73	Neutral to slightly agree	Moderate interest in digital entrepreneurship trends and news.
Explore platforms for digital business ideas	3.65	0.71	Agree	Students actively seek out and explore digital business platforms.
Prefer digital over	3.97	0.83	Agree	Strong preference for digital

traditional model				business models over traditional ones.
Intend to start within 2 years	3.49	0.97	Neutral to slightly agree	Students express moderate intention to start a digital business soon.
Already working on a digital idea	2.84	1.32	Disagree	Only a few students are currently working on digital business ideas.
Willing to take risks	2.61	0.91	Disagree	Risk-taking willingness among students is relatively low.
Actively seeking startup resources	2.62	1.02	Disagree	Few students are proactively seeking resources to start their ventures.

Source: Primary data

Interpretation:

- Colleges support digital entrepreneurship through seminars (mean = 3.84), relevant curriculum (mean = 4.00), and faculty encouragement (mean = 3.57), though support infrastructure like entrepreneurship clubs (mean = 2.91) and digital tools access (mean = 2.81) appears limited.
- Awareness levels: moderate awareness is observed, as students somewhat follow digital startup news (mean = 3.22) and are personally interested in the digital business domain (mean = 3.43).
- Interest in digital entrepreneurship: a strong preference for digital over traditional business models (mean = 3.97) and active exploration of digital business platforms (mean = 3.65) highlight students' growing inclination toward digital entrepreneurship.
- Intentions and readiness: while many students intend to start a digital venture within two years (mean = 3.49), lower scores in areas like risk-taking (mean = 2.61), active resource seeking (mean = 2.62), and current involvement (mean = 2.84) indicate a gap between intention and implementation.
- Variation in responses: items such as "already working on a digital idea" (sd = 1.32) and "actively seeking startup resources" (sd = 1.02) showed high standard deviation, indicating significant variation in student responses—some are engaged, while others are not involved at all.

HYPOTHESES TESTING

3.1. HYPOTHESIS 1:

- H_0 (null hypothesis): there is no significant correlation between attending seminars/workshops on digital entrepreneurship and students' interest in starting a digital business.

- H_1 (alternative hypothesis): there is a significant positive correlation between attending seminars/workshops on digital entrepreneurship and students' interest in starting a digital business.

Table 3.1: Correlation between attending seminars/workshops and interest in starting a digital business.

Variables	Pearson correlation (r)	Significance (p-value, 1-tailed)	N	Interpretation
College conducts seminars/workshops on digital entrepreneurship and students personal interest in digital business	0.259	0.003	110	A statistically significant positive correlation was found

Source: Primary data. Note: $p < 0.01$.

Interpretation:

To examine the relationship between attending seminars/workshops on digital entrepreneurship and student's interest in starting a digital business, a Pearson Correlation Analysis was conducted. The results show a positive correlation between the variables with a Pearson correlation coefficient (r) of 0.259, and the relationship is statistically significant at the 0.01 level (1-tailed), $p = 0.003$. This indicates that students who attend more seminars or workshops on digital entrepreneurship are more likely to show interest in starting a digital business. Therefore, the null hypothesis is rejected, and the alternative hypothesis is accepted, confirming a significant positive relationship between these two factors.

3.2: HYPOTHESIS 2

- H_0 (null hypothesis): there is no significant correlation between awareness of startup networking opportunities and student's intention to start a digital business within the next two years.
- H_1 (alternative hypothesis): there is a significant positive correlation between awareness of startup networking opportunities and student's intention to start a digital business within the next two years.

Table 3.2: Correlation between awareness of networking opportunities and intention to start a digital business

Variables	Pearson correlation (r)	Significance (p-value)	N	Interpretation
Awareness of networking opportunities and intention to start a digital business within two years	0.365**	0.000	110	Significant positive correlation

Source: Primary data. Note: $p < 0.01$.

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Interpretation:

A Pearson Correlation Analysis was performed to determine the relationship between awareness of startup networking opportunities and the intention to start a digital business within the next two years. The results (table 3.2) showed a positive and statistically significant correlation ($r = 0.365$, $p < 0.01$). As the p-value is less than 0.01, the null hypothesis (h_{02}) is rejected. It can be inferred that greater awareness of startup networking opportunities is positively correlated with stronger intentions among students to start a digital business within two years. This suggests that initiatives like startup meets play an important role in shaping student's digital entrepreneurial aspirations.

CORRERLATION HYPOSTHSES TESTING:

Table 4.1: Correlation between institutional support and digital entrepreneurship intentions

Variables	1	2	3	4
1. College conducts seminars on digital entrepreneurship	1			
2. Personally interested in starting a digital business	.259	1		
3. Networking opportunities (startup meets, etc.)	.378	.286	1	
4. Intend to start a digital business within 2 years	.254	.601	.365	1

Source: Primary data. Note: n = 110; p < 0.01 (1-tailed).

Interpretation:

The table shows that attending seminars/workshops on digital entrepreneurship is positively correlated with student's personal interest in starting a digital business ($r = 0.259$, $p < 0.01$). Additionally, awareness of networking opportunities (such as startup meets) is positively correlated with the intention to start a digital business within the next two years ($r = 0.365$, $p < 0.01$). All correlations are statistically significant at the 0.01 level.

Table 4.2: Interpretation of SPSS Correlation Output:

Variables tested	Pearson correlation (r)	Sig. (p-value)	Interpretation
College conducts seminars ↔ Personally interested	.259	0.003	Moderate positive correlation, significant
Networking opportunities ↔ Intend to start within 2 years	.365	0.000	Moderate positive correlation, significant

Source: Primary data

Interpretation:

Pearson Correlation Analysis was conducted to test the relationship between attending seminars/workshops on digital entrepreneurship and student's interest in starting a digital business, as well as between awareness of networking opportunities and student's intention to start a digital business within the next two years. Both r values are positive. Both p-values are <

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0.01, so both are statistically significant. Results revealed a significant positive correlation between attending seminars/workshops and student's personal interest in starting a digital business ($r = 0.259$, $p < 0.01$). Similarly, a significant positive correlation was found between awareness of startup networking opportunities and student's intention to start a digital business within the next two years ($r = .365$, $p < 0.01$). Thus, both alternative hypotheses were accepted.

Table 5: Exploratory Factor Analysis of Institutional Support for Digital Entrepreneurship

An exploratory factor analysis (EFA) was conducted to identify the underlying dimensions of institutional support for digital entrepreneurship among college students in Thiruvananthapuram. The analysis utilized principal component analysis (PCA) with Varimax rotation, a method that maximizes the variance of factor loadings for improved interpretability.

Test	Result
Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin (KMO) measure of sampling adequacy	0.835
Bartlett's test of sphericity	Approx. Chi-square = 396.390, df = 21, sig. = 0.000

Communalities

Variable	Extraction
College provides mentorship	0.819
Access to funding	0.692
Entrepreneurship is seen as a serious career	0.714
Networking opportunities (startup meets, etc.)	0.709
Industry collaborations	0.565
Incubation centers/entrepreneurship development cell	0.660
Aware of student-run digital businesses	0.915

Total Variance Explained

Component	% of variance	Cumulative %
1	48.989%	48.989%
2	23.506%	72.494%

Rotated Component Matrix

Variable	Component 1	Component 2
College provides mentorship	0.870	0.250
Access to funding	0.540	0.633
Entrepreneurship is seen as a serious career	0.845	-
Networking opportunities (startup meets, etc.)	0.720	0.436
Industry collaborations	0.725	0.198
Incubation centers/entrepreneurship development cell	0.787	0.202
Aware of student-run digital businesses	-	0.955

Source: Primary Data

Interpretation:

Exploratory Factor Analysis was conducted to identify the underlying dimensions influencing institutional support for digital entrepreneurship among college students. The (KMO) measure of sampling adequacy was 0.835, indicating that the sample was suitable for factor analysis (Kaiser, 1974). Additionally, Bartlett's test of sphericity was significant ($\chi^2(21) = 396.390$, $p < 0.001$), suggesting that the correlation matrix was not an identity matrix and that factor analysis was appropriate. Principal component analysis with Varimax rotation extracted two components, cumulatively explaining 72.494% of the total variance. The first component accounted for 48.989% of the variance and was strongly associated with mentorship, funding, entrepreneurship as a career, and networking opportunities. The second component, accounting for 23.506%, was dominated by variables related to awareness of student-run digital businesses, incubation centers, and industry collaboration. Communalities ranged from 0.565 to 0.915, indicating that a substantial amount of variance in each variable was captured by the extracted components. The rotated component matrix showed clear loadings, with each item aligning well with one of the two components, supporting the construct validity of the scale. These results suggest that the institutional support for digital entrepreneurship among college students in Thiruvananthapuram can be explained through two major dimensions are institutional infrastructure and mentorship (component 1) and awareness and access to external resources (component 2)

FINDINGS

1. **Demographic Profile**: The study surveyed 110 respondents from colleges in Thiruvananthapuram. The gender distribution was nearly balanced, with 53.6% male and 46.4% female. Most participants were between 18–24 years (72.8%), representing the prime age group for entrepreneurial development. In terms of education, 33.6% were master's students, followed by 30% professionals, 25.5% bachelor's students, and 10.9% PhD holders. This diverse educational background strengthens the study's insights into digital entrepreneurship intentions.
2. **Institutional Role**: The study found that educational institutions in Thiruvananthapuram play a moderately active role in promoting digital entrepreneurship. Students generally agreed that seminars are conducted (mean = 3.84), the curriculum includes entrepreneurship (mean = 4.00), and faculty encourages digital business (mean = 3.57). However, infrastructure like entrepreneurship clubs (mean = 2.91) and access to digital tools (mean = 2.81) was lacking.
3. **Student Awareness and Interest**: There was a fair level of awareness and personal interest in digital entrepreneurship. Students moderately follow startup news (mean = 3.22) and show interest in exploring digital platforms (mean = 3.65), with a clear preference for digital models over traditional ones (mean = 3.97).

4. **Entrepreneurial Intentions**: While 3.49 was the mean score for intention to start a digital business within two years, actual engagement is limited—few are currently working on ideas (mean = 2.84), and even fewer are actively seeking resources (mean = 2.62), indicating a gap between intention and action.
5. **Hypothesis Testing**: Both null hypotheses were rejected. A statistically significant positive correlation exists between attending seminars and student's interest ($r = 0.259$, $p < 0.01$), and between awareness of startup networking opportunities and intention to start a business ($r = 0.365$, $p < 0.01$).
6. **Factor Analysis**: Exploratory Factor Analysis revealed two primary components of institutional support: (1) Infrastructure & Mentorship and (2) Awareness & External Resource Access, explaining a cumulative variance of 72.49%.

SUGGESTIONS

- Enhance Institutional Infrastructure: Colleges should establish and promote entrepreneurship clubs, incubation centers, and provide consistent access to digital tools and platforms.
- Increase Exposure through Events: Organizing regular workshops and guest lectures by successful digital entrepreneurs can deepen student engagement.
- Promote Active Mentoring: Mentorship programs involving faculty and industry professionals should be formalized to guide students from ideation to implementation.
- Support Resource Accessibility: Institutions and government bodies must improve access to startup resources such as seed funding, legal aid, and networking platforms.
- Encourage Risk-taking Culture: Soft skills development, entrepreneurial simulations, and startup boot camps should be introduced to improve students' confidence and risk-taking ability.

CONCLUSION

The study underscores the influential role of educational institutions in shaping digital entrepreneurship intentions among college students in Thiruvananthapuram. Initiatives such as seminars, mentorship, and exposure to startup ecosystems significantly contribute to building interest and intent. However, the research also reveals a noticeable gap between entrepreneurial interest and actual initiation, suggesting the need for more structured and practical support mechanisms within campus. To bridge this gap, institutions must go beyond theoretical frameworks and provide experiential learning opportunities through collaborations with startups, incubators, and industry practitioners. Incorporating dedicated digital entrepreneurship modules into academic programs can cultivate essential skills and long-term entrepreneurial thinking. Strengthening access to funding, incubation centers, and networking events will further enable students to translate intent into action. The research highlights that early and consistent

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engagement with digital entrepreneurship environments is essential for sustaining student motivation and translating intent into action. To achieve meaningful outcomes, institutions must adopt a more hands-on and practice-oriented approach by integrating real-world projects, mentorship from experienced entrepreneurs, and access to startup resources within the academic setting. Encouraging student-led initiatives, providing structured incubation support, and fostering peer learning communities can further bridge the gap between entrepreneurial interest and actual execution. By embedding such practical exposure within the learning process, colleges can empower students to take confident steps toward building their own digital ventures and contribute meaningfully to the digital economy.

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