

Exploring Women's Entrepreneurial Leadership and Digital Gamification Marketing in Fashion MSMEs

Made Putri Ariasih^{1,*}, Komang Endrawan Sumadi Putra¹, I Nengah Suarmanayasa¹, Ni Wayan Ayu Santi²

¹ Economic Faculty, Management, Universitas Pendidikan Ganesha

Jalan Udayana No.11, Banjar Tegal, Singaraja, Buleleng, Bali 81116, Indonesia

² Economic Faculty, Economic Education, Universitas Pendidikan Ganesha

Jalan Udayana No.11, Banjar Tegal, Singaraja, Buleleng, Bali 81116, Indonesia

Email: ^{1,*}mariasih@undiksha.ac.id, ²endrawan.sumadi@undiksha.ac.id, ³nengah.suarmanayasa@undiksha.ac.id,

⁴ayu.santi@undiksha.ac.id

Correspondence Author Email: mariasih@undiksha.ac.id

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Abstract—This study explores the role of women's entrepreneurial leadership and digital gamification marketing in enhancing the business performance of fashion MSMEs in Bali, Indonesia. Using a qualitative phenomenological approach, data were collected through in-depth interviews, direct observations, and document reviews involving selected women entrepreneurs in Bali's fashion MSME sector who have successfully implemented both leadership and digital gamification strategies. The snowball sampling technique was applied to identify participants who met specific criteria related to entrepreneurial leadership and digital innovation practices. The findings reveal that women's entrepreneurial leadership, characterized by empathy, inclusiveness, and collaboration, fosters creativity, innovation, and employee motivation, contributing to organizational growth. Gamification in digital marketing, such as point-based rewards, challenges, and social media engagement, enhances customer loyalty and purchase intention. However, MSMEs face challenges such as limited budgets, technological capacity, and maintaining creative consistency. The synergy between leadership and gamification forms a sustainable model leadership drives innovation and engagement, while gamification strengthens customer relationships and brand loyalty. Although the study emphasizes non-financial outcomes, including financial indicators such as profitability or revenue growth would enrich future analyses of business performance.

Keywords: Women's Entrepreneurial Leadership; Digital Gamification Marketing; Fashion MSMEs; Business Performance; Creative Economy

1. INTRODUCTION

Women today have gained significant dominance in the micro, small, and medium enterprise (MSME) sector, yet they continue to face various obstacles in developing and sustaining their businesses. These challenges range from limited family support to complex bureaucratic and licensing processes that hinder business growth (Aparisi-Torrijo & Ribes-Giner, 2022). According to Elsa Ms. Chani, Head of the Micro, Small, and Medium Enterprise Development Group and Financial Inclusion at Bank Indonesia, women represent an essential group within the national economy. The primary needs of MSMEs have been identified as access to financing, market expansion, and marketing support, including branding and promotion. Women's contributions to economic development, particularly in high-potential sectors such as the creative economy, have proven to be highly significant and transformative (Pusparisa, 2023).

In the Province of Bali, the development of fashion-based MSMEs led by women has shown a promising trend. Since 2020, the fashion sector has experienced gradual recovery following the economic disruptions caused by the COVID-19 pandemic (NusaBali, 2020). This recovery has been supported by the growing popularity of the creative and fashion industries, which have demonstrated robust profit margins, with revenues reaching hundreds of millions of rupiahs (Wiratmini, 2019). However, despite these positive developments, several challenges persist. During a recent meeting of the Women-Friendly Cooperative of Bali Province, it was revealed that in 2024, many women entrepreneurs across different districts particularly those engaged in fashion, crafts, herbal products, and service-oriented businesses still struggle to expand their market reach beyond Bali. The inability to penetrate wider markets remains a critical issue, leading some women-led MSMEs, especially in the fashion industry, to cease operations. The discussion also emphasized the urgency of targeting emerging market segments, including youth, women, and digital users or netizens, to sustain competitiveness in the evolving business landscape (Rhismawati, 2024).

The urgency of this research stems from the increasing number of women-led fashion MSMEs in Bali facing stagnation or closure due to declining profitability, limited innovation, and inadequate asset growth. Among the core issues identified, leadership capability has often been cited as a decisive factor influencing business sustainability and performance. Women's leadership, in particular, is still frequently perceived as less assertive, less innovative, and less effective in driving strategic growth (Ariasih et al., 2024). Furthermore, insufficient efforts in developing market access, branding, and promotional activities have contributed to the limited competitiveness of these enterprises (Pusparisa, 2023).

Although previous studies have examined entrepreneurial leadership and digital marketing separately, few have explored how these two constructs interact synergistically to influence MSME performance, particularly within women-led enterprises. The existing literature tends to emphasize either leadership-driven innovation or technology-based marketing outcomes without addressing the dynamic interplay between them. This theoretical gap underscores the necessity for an integrated framework that explains how women's entrepreneurial leadership can enhance the effectiveness of digital gamification marketing, and conversely, how gamified marketing strategies can amplify

leadership-driven innovation and customer engagement. Addressing this gap will contribute to strengthening the theoretical linkage between entrepreneurial leadership and digital marketing theories within the MSME context.

Based on these problems, this study seeks to explore four main questions: (1) What entrepreneurial leadership values are applied by women entrepreneurs in the fashion MSME sector? (2) How are these entrepreneurial leadership values implemented in women-led fashion MSMEs? (3) How do women entrepreneurs apply digital marketing gamification in their fashion MSMEs? and (4) How effective are entrepreneurial leadership and digital marketing gamification in enhancing business performance in women-led fashion MSMEs? Therefore, the purpose of this study is to investigate the application of women's entrepreneurial leadership and digital marketing gamification in improving business performance within the fashion MSME sector.

Business performance, in general, refers to the degree of achievement or success attained by a company within a specific period. It encompasses two main dimensions: financial performance and non-financial performance, both of which are essential for evaluating the overall health of an enterprise (Artha & Satriadhi, 2023). Non-financial performance includes indicators such as brand reputation, customer satisfaction, innovation, and organizational effectiveness, whereas financial performance focuses on measurable aspects expressed in monetary terms, including profitability, growth, and liquidity (Seo & Lee, 2019). The ultimate goal of business performance is to create and sustain firm value, reflected through these multidimensional indicators (Artha & Satriadhi, 2023; Ariasih et al., 2024). Within small and medium enterprises, performance is often assessed through growth in sales, profits, and assets, as well as the efficiency of resource utilization (Glancey et al., 1998; Umar et al., 2023).

Leadership plays a central role in shaping business success. It can be defined as the process through which an individual influences others to achieve common organizational goals. Effective leaders inspire, motivate, and translate organizational vision and mission into actionable strategies. Among the various leadership models ethical, moral, cultural, visionary, transformational, and transactional entrepreneurial leadership is particularly relevant for MSMEs. Entrepreneurial leadership combines leadership qualities with entrepreneurial characteristics, emphasizing innovation, risk-taking, and opportunity recognition (Ariasih et al., 2024; Tandelilin et al., 2024). Entrepreneurial leaders possess the ability to strategically manage resources, influence others, and identify business opportunities to achieve superior performance. They are proactive, innovative, and visionary individuals who encourage teamwork and continuous experimentation. The seven core dimensions of entrepreneurial leadership, risk-taking, proactiveness, vision, innovation, experimentation, charisma, and creativity serve as essential drivers in fostering an organizational culture that promotes opportunity-seeking and innovation (Tandelilin et al., 2024). Motivation also plays a pivotal role in sustaining entrepreneurial leadership, as it drives individuals to develop their ventures and achieve higher performance levels (Jan & Maulida, 2022; Jannah & Pranjoto, 2025; R & Pudjoprastiono, 2024).

In the current digital era, branding and promotion have become critical determinants of MSME sustainability. With rapid technological advancement, digital marketing strategies have evolved to include more interactive and engaging approaches, one of which is digital marketing gamification. Gamification refers to the use of game design elements in non-game contexts to enhance user engagement and motivation (Singh et al., 2021). It enriches the user experience by integrating competition, rewards, and progression systems, thereby influencing consumer behavior and emotional attachment to brands (Arifah, 2022; Sari Dewi et al., 2023; Xi & Hamari, 2020). The implementation of gamified marketing is driven by four fundamental dynamics, reward, competition, autonomy, and absorption that shape how individuals interact with marketing activities (Aparisi-Torrijo & Ribes-Giner, 2022). These dynamics foster enjoyment, accomplishment, and a sense of belonging, encouraging customer participation and purchase intention (Yang et al., 2019). Furthermore, Eisingerich et al. (2019) identify six key principles determining the success of gamification in marketing: (1) social interaction, (2) sense of control, (3) goal setting, (4) progress tracking, (5) rewards, and (6) prompts all of which contribute to sustained user engagement.

In the context of women-led fashion MSMEs in Bali, integrating entrepreneurial leadership with digital marketing gamification offers a promising strategic synergy. Entrepreneurial leadership nurtures innovation, adaptability, and resilience in navigating dynamic market environments, while gamified marketing enhances consumer engagement, emotional connection, and brand loyalty through interactive experiences. This strategic alignment allows women entrepreneurs to not only strengthen internal organizational capabilities but also to respond effectively to shifting consumer behaviors in digital ecosystems. By embracing innovation-oriented leadership, women entrepreneurs can identify emerging opportunities, differentiate their products, and build strong brand identities. Meanwhile, gamified marketing techniques such as personalized rewards, competitive challenges, and interactive storytelling can enhance consumer motivation, foster community engagement, and drive repeat purchases. Collectively, the interplay between entrepreneurial leadership and gamification creates a synergistic feedback loop in which leadership-driven innovation supports creative marketing initiatives, and gamified outcomes provide insights that refine leadership strategy and vision.

Therefore, this study aims to comprehensively explore how women entrepreneurs in Bali's fashion MSME sector implement entrepreneurial leadership and digital marketing gamification to sustain and enhance their business performance. The integration of these two approaches represents not only a practical managerial strategy but also a theoretical advancement in understanding how leadership and digital innovation co-evolve in small business ecosystems. By examining the interaction between these variables, this study seeks to uncover the mechanisms through which women's entrepreneurial leadership translates into superior market performance via gamified customer engagement and digital value creation. In addition, the research aspires to contribute to the broader academic discourse on gender-inclusive entrepreneurship, illustrating how women leaders harness digital tools to overcome structural barriers, achieve market

competitiveness, and build sustainable enterprises. The results are expected to provide empirical insights for policymakers, educators, and practitioners in formulating empowerment programs that encourage women entrepreneurs to synergize visionary leadership with innovative digital marketing strategies, thereby reinforcing the resilience, inclusivity, and competitiveness of Bali's creative economy.

2. RESEARCH METHODS

2.1 Research Approach

The approach used in this study is based on constructivist epistemology, where the application of leadership strategies, digital marketing, and gamification in the context of fashion MSMEs reflects a constructivist perspective on how knowledge and understanding of business and strategy are built and constructed through interaction, experience, and subjective interpretation. In addition, this study also adopts a social epistemological approach, particularly in the context of women's entrepreneurial leadership, as knowledge about leadership and business practices is influenced by social, cultural, and historical factors.

This research employs a qualitative method with a phenomenological approach. The phenomenological method aims to gain an in-depth understanding of the subjective experiences of women entrepreneurs in applying entrepreneurial leadership and digital marketing gamification strategies in their fashion MSMEs (Abdussamad, 2021; Sugiyono, 2019). The sampling technique used in this study is snowball sampling, which involves selecting specific respondents who meet the criteria of having successfully implemented women's entrepreneurial leadership and digital marketing gamification strategies in their fashion businesses (Sugiyono, 2013). This technique is applied due to the absence of exact data or a fixed number of women entrepreneurs who have successfully implemented these strategies. The snowball sampling process resulted in the selection of ten ($n = 10$) women entrepreneurs, and data collection continued until theoretical saturation was reached, where no new significant information emerged from additional participants.

The research location is in Bali Province, considering that the fashion industry in Bali has been growing rapidly, especially through the integration of Balinese local wisdom into its creative processes. The duration of the study is one year.

The data collection techniques include:

- a. Document review, using a document study format instrument;
- b. In-depth interviews, using an interview guide as the main instrument; and
- c. Observation, using an observation guide developed by the researcher.

The qualitative data analysis applied in this research is inductive, meaning that analysis is based on the data obtained from the field. Miles and Huberman (1994) model illustrates the qualitative data analysis process through four interrelated components:

- a. Data Collection: the stage of gathering information from various sources.
- b. Data Reduction: the process of selecting, focusing, simplifying, and transforming raw data.
- c. Data Display: presenting the data in the form of tables, charts, graphs, or narratives to facilitate the drawing of conclusions.
- d. Conclusion Drawing/Verification: interpreting the meaning of the data and verifying the findings (Miles & Huberman, 1994)

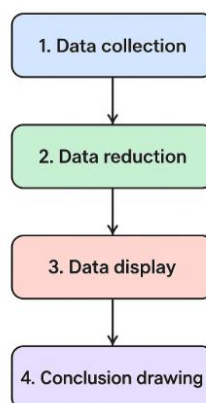


Figure 1. Qualitative Data Analysis Process

2.2 Conceptual Framework

The conceptual framework of this study integrates two main constructs: *women's entrepreneurial leadership* and *digital gamification marketing* as synergistic factors influencing *business performance* in fashion MSMEs. Entrepreneurial leadership provides the internal foundation for innovation, vision, and team collaboration, while digital gamification marketing represents an external strategic approach that enhances customer engagement and loyalty through interactive

digital experiences. The interaction between these two constructs is conceptualized as a mutually reinforcing relationship in which leadership-driven innovation supports effective gamified marketing strategies, and gamification amplifies the impact of leadership on organizational creativity, performance, and sustainability.

2.3 Operational Descriptions of the Variables

In this qualitative study, each variable is explored through observable dimensions derived from theory and empirical data.

- Women's Entrepreneurial Leadership* is identified through indicators of empathy, inclusiveness, creativity, innovation, proactiveness, and collaborative decision-making.
- Digital Gamification Marketing* is explored through the use of gamification elements such as point-based rewards, challenges, social media interaction, goal setting, and progress tracking that drive customer engagement and purchase intention.
- Business Performance* is described in terms of non-financial and financial dimensions, including organizational growth, customer loyalty, innovation outcomes, and perceived business sustainability.

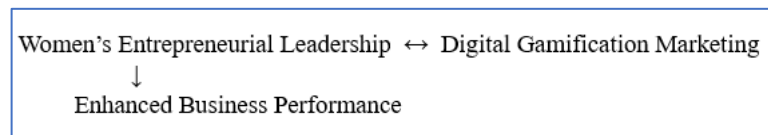


Figure 2. Conceptual Framework Diagram

3. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

This study explores the application of female entrepreneurial leadership and digital gamification marketing strategies in enhancing business performance among fashion MSMEs in Bali Province. The findings reveal that the combination of these two factors has a significant and positive influence on business performance, especially in promoting innovation, teamwork collaboration, and customer engagement through digital platforms. The discussion below interprets these findings in light of existing theories and previous research.

3.1 Entrepreneurial Leadership and Business Performance

The research results indicate that female entrepreneurial leadership among fashion MSMEs in Bali is characterized by empathy, collaboration, innovation, and vision. These attributes align with the argument of Aparisi-Torrijo and Ribes-Giner (2022), who emphasized that female leaders integrate entrepreneurial orientation with strong emotional and social intelligence. This leadership model is not only result-oriented but also value-driven, fostering harmony and collaboration within teams. Such qualities are particularly relevant for creative sectors like fashion, where teamwork and inspiration are essential for sustaining innovation. The interviewed business owner (DL) exemplified this pattern by highlighting the importance of participative decision-making and transparent communication with team members. Observation confirmed that DL maintained an open-plan workspace, encouraging spontaneous team discussions and collaborative idea sharing during product design sessions. These practices visibly fostered an inclusive environment and strengthened the team's creative synergy. This leadership approach enhances employees' sense of belonging and intrinsic motivation to innovate, which subsequently contributes to improved business performance. These findings are consistent with Jan & Maulida (2022), who argued that entrepreneurial leadership plays a key role in fostering organizational agility and adaptability of two critical factors for maintaining business sustainability in dynamic markets.

Moreover, female leaders in fashion MSMEs exhibit a transformational leadership style, inspiring their teams to reach their full potential. In the fashion industry, where creativity and market responsiveness are crucial, transformational leadership enables rapid adaptation to trends and consumer demands. (Ariasih et al., 2024) also confirmed that entrepreneurial leadership among women entrepreneurs in Denpasar City significantly improves business performance through employee empowerment and motivational influence. Observation during field visits further revealed that several MSME leaders conducted informal "morning briefings" where employees were encouraged to present new design ideas and receive direct feedback, reflecting a participative and motivational leadership culture. This transformational dimension emphasizes that leadership in small enterprises should go beyond authority and focus on enabling others to co-create value.

In addition, the study identified several key dimensions of entrepreneurial leadership, including risk-taking, proactiveness, and creativity (Tandelilin et al., 2024). Female leaders in Bali's fashion MSMEs often take calculated risks, such as adopting new digital marketing tools or entering emerging market niches, even with limited technological literacy. This willingness to experiment serves as a catalyst for innovation and competitive advantage. Glancey et al. (1998) suggested that moderate risk-taking behavior is a hallmark of successful small business entrepreneurs, as it stimulates learning and creative problem-solving. From a conceptual standpoint, the findings reinforce the notion that female entrepreneurial leadership is not only an economic function but also a social transformation mechanism. Observation data also showed that several MSME owners consistently displayed prototypes of new collections in their stores to gauge real-time customer reactions an example of proactive experimentation and responsiveness to market feedback. Female leaders

tend to create inclusive environments that encourage team collaboration and shared vision. Such leadership practices enhance both financial and non-financial aspects of performance, including employee satisfaction, brand reputation, and product innovation (Artha & Satriadhi, 2023). Therefore, entrepreneurial leadership among women in MSMEs emerges as a multidimensional construct that integrates strategic foresight, emotional intelligence, and social awareness.

3.2 Digital Gamification Marketing as a Strategic Innovation

The study also demonstrates that digital gamification marketing plays a vital role in improving customer engagement, loyalty, and purchasing behavior. Gamification, as defined by Singh et al. (2021), refers to the use of game design elements such as points, badges, leaderboards, and challenges in non-game contexts to influence user motivation and behavior. In the context of e-commerce and social media marketing, gamification has proven effective in transforming transactional interactions into enjoyable experiences that enhance customer retention. In the present study, MSME owners like DL implemented gamified marketing strategies by integrating point-based reward systems and interactive quizzes on social media. These activities successfully increased consumer participation and emotional connection with the brand. Observation confirmed that MSME stores also displayed QR codes linking to online reward systems, allowing customers to instantly collect points after purchases, demonstrating the integration between offline and digital gamified experiences. The findings align with Xi & Hamari (2020), who found that gamification positively affects brand engagement and brand equity by stimulating “gameful experiences” that evoke positive emotions and social sharing among users.

The fashion MSMEs in Bali employed gamification dynamics such as rewards, social interaction, goal-setting, and progress tracking, consistent with the six key principles outlined by (Eisingerich et al., 2019). Customers, represented by informant KS, expressed satisfaction with these interactive programs, which made shopping more enjoyable and fostered a sense of belonging to the brand community. Through such digital engagement, gamification does not merely function as a marketing tool but as a medium for building long-term customer relationships based on emotional resonance and shared experience. Field observation further noted that some MSME owners used visual leaderboards displayed in their boutiques to show top loyal customers of the month, motivating others to participate and reinforcing social engagement.

Nevertheless, the implementation of gamification also faces challenges, particularly in terms of technological capacity and creativity. Both the MSME leader (DL) and the employee (MT) emphasized that limited financial resources and technical expertise constrain their ability to maintain consistent gamified campaigns. The industrial expert (PR) also noted that many MSMEs lack the digital infrastructure and skills required to design sophisticated gamification systems. (Aparisi-Torrijo & Ribes-Giner, 2022) emphasized that the success of gamification depends heavily on an organization’s digital maturity and its capacity to create sustained user engagement through thoughtful design. This finding underscores the importance of digital literacy and institutional support for MSMEs. Without adequate training and technological assistance, the creative potential of gamification cannot be fully realized. Government programs and private-sector partnerships that offer digital marketing workshops, e-commerce training, and access to gamification platforms would greatly enhance the competitiveness of female-led MSMEs in the digital marketplace.

3.3 Synergy Between Entrepreneurial Leadership and Gamification

A key contribution of this study lies in demonstrating the synergistic relationship between entrepreneurial leadership and digital gamification marketing in improving MSME business performance. Entrepreneurial leadership creates an organizational culture that values innovation and openness to experimentation, while gamification operationalizes this culture into interactive marketing strategies that attract and retain customers. The findings suggest that female leaders with transformational qualities are more willing and capable of adopting technological innovations. They view digital tools not as threats but as opportunities to empower teams and expand customer relationships. This resonates with the transformational entrepreneurial leadership model proposed by (Tandelilin et al., 2024), which emphasizes vision-driven leadership that inspires team creativity and fosters innovation.

Observation confirmed that MSME owners who demonstrated strong entrepreneurial leadership also actively monitored their digital campaigns, discussing online engagement results with their teams during weekly meetings. In several observed cases, female leaders facilitated informal group sessions where employees analyzed social media feedback together and brainstormed gamification ideas for future promotions. This collaborative routine exemplified how leadership and gamification practices mutually reinforced one another.

From an organizational perspective, this synergy leads to greater digital adaptability. Employees like MT reported feeling more motivated to contribute new ideas when supported by inclusive leadership. Empowerment and psychological safety within the team enhanced the execution of creative digital initiatives, including gamification campaigns. This outcome reflects the leadership empowerment concept, where leaders act as facilitators of innovation rather than mere supervisors. Observation also revealed that leaders often celebrated team achievements, such as successful campaign launches, by giving symbolic rewards or recognition during team gatherings—actions that reinforced positive morale and encouraged continuous innovation.

From the customer side, gamification strategies designed under empathetic female leadership produce more authentic and emotionally engaging experiences. Customers perceive such brands as caring and community-oriented, thereby strengthening their loyalty. According to (Liu et al., 2022; Yang et al., 2019), customer engagement driven by emotional satisfaction fosters repeated purchase intention and word-of-mouth advocacy. The present findings align with this framework, showing that gamification not only stimulates transactional behavior but also cultivates brand attachment.

Field observations further confirmed that MSMEs integrating leadership and gamification practices tended to maintain more cohesive store atmospheres, with visible displays of digital challenges, customer leaderboards, and team recognition boards, symbolizing the unity between internal motivation and external engagement. Therefore, the integration of entrepreneurial leadership and gamification represents a dual innovation system: one internal, focused on leadership and team creativity, and one external, centered on customer experience and digital interaction. Together, they form a sustainable model for enhancing MSME competitiveness in the fashion industry.

3.4 Implementation Challenges and Managerial Implications

Despite its promising potential, the study identified several implementation challenges that must be addressed to optimize the impact of these strategies. First, limited financial and technological resources remain major constraints for MSMEs. As (Seo & Lee, 2019) pointed out, the performance of small enterprises and start-ups is significantly influenced by internal capabilities, including capital availability and technological readiness. Many MSMEs in Bali still rely on manual processes and lack access to advanced digital tools, hindering their ability to sustain gamified marketing initiatives.

Second, maintaining creative consistency poses an ongoing challenge. Gamification relies heavily on novelty and engagement; once customers perceive the games as repetitive or uninspired, their interest quickly declines. Eisingerich et al. (2019) argued that the long-term success of gamification lies in maintaining a balance between *fun* and *utility* ensuring that the games provide both entertainment and tangible value to participants. Thus, MSME leaders must invest not only in digital infrastructure but also in continuous creative development.

Third, the findings highlight a need for enhanced digital leadership skills among female entrepreneurs. While many exhibit strong interpersonal and visionary capabilities, they often lack technical knowledge necessary for data-driven decision-making. This gap can be bridged through targeted capacity-building programs, mentorship, and collaboration with academic institutions or digital incubators. (Umar et al., 2023) emphasized that entrepreneurial orientation combined with managerial capacity is essential for improving women entrepreneurs' business performance.

From a managerial standpoint, the study implies that MSME leaders should adopt a strategic innovation mindset, integrating technological, human, and cultural dimensions. Female leaders, in particular, can leverage their empathetic leadership style to motivate digital transformation within their organizations. Meanwhile, policymakers should design inclusive digital empowerment programs to support these entrepreneurs in overcoming resource limitations.

3.5 Broader Implications for Creative Economy Development

Beyond the organizational level, the study contributes to the discourse on creative economy (orange economy) development in Bali. The fusion of entrepreneurial leadership and gamified marketing reflects the essence of the creative economy, innovation, cultural authenticity, and community collaboration. Female leaders, with their empathy and inclusiveness, naturally embody these principles, making them pivotal agents of creative economic growth.

The adoption of gamification infused with local cultural values such as Balinese aesthetics, traditional motifs, or storytelling about local craftsmanship can serve as a strategic differentiation factor in global markets. This aligns with the creative economy framework that emphasizes the integration of cultural identity into business innovation. By leveraging digital tools and creative storytelling, female-led MSMEs in Bali not only promote economic growth but also preserve and globalize Balinese cultural heritage.

Furthermore, empowering female entrepreneurs in this sector contributes to social and economic sustainability. As leaders, they play a dual role: enhancing household income and fostering cultural continuity. The research thus provides empirical support for initiatives that link women's empowerment with creative economy development, echoing the call by Puspatisa, 2023; Rhismawati, 2024 to expand market access for women entrepreneurs in Bali.

3.6 Conceptual Model and Strategic Recommendations

Based on the theoretical synthesis and empirical evidence, the study proposes a conceptual model linking entrepreneurial leadership, digital gamification marketing, and business performance. Entrepreneurial leadership stimulates internal innovation and team engagement; digital gamification marketing strengthens customer interaction and loyalty; together, they enhance both financial and non-financial performance indicators, including profitability, growth, brand image, and customer satisfaction.

To ensure sustainability, several strategic recommendations can be derived:

- a. **Capacity Building:** Provide systematic training on digital marketing and gamification tools tailored to women entrepreneurs in the fashion sector.
- b. **Collaborative Partnerships:** Strengthen partnerships among MSMEs, government agencies, digital platforms, and universities to share technology, knowledge, and market access.
- c. **Continuous Innovation:** Encourage ongoing creativity in gamification design by integrating cultural elements, seasonal campaigns, and personalized rewards.
- d. **Leadership Development:** Enhance digital and managerial competencies among female leaders through mentorship and leadership development programs.
- e. **Community-Based Branding:** Promote collective branding strategies that highlight the cultural uniqueness of Balinese fashion products within broader digital marketplaces.

Moreover, the development of the creative economy in Bali through women-led MSMEs signifies a transformative shift toward inclusive and sustainable innovation ecosystems. By positioning female entrepreneurs as the driving force of cultural-based creativity, the region fosters a dynamic synergy between tradition and technology. Digital gamification, when embedded within the marketing and customer engagement strategies of local businesses, not only enhances brand interaction but also transforms traditional craftsmanship into interactive experiences. This process encourages consumers to engage emotionally with cultural narratives, thus increasing brand loyalty and market visibility. As a result, women entrepreneurs become key cultural ambassadors who translate Balinese artistic heritage into modern, marketable forms while maintaining its authenticity. This intersection between cultural preservation and technological innovation strengthens Bali's position as a global hub for creative entrepreneurship grounded in local wisdom.

In addition, the study underscores the necessity of supportive institutional frameworks and policies to sustain women's participation in the creative economy. Access to digital literacy training, creative financing models, and collaborative platforms among female entrepreneurs can further amplify their competitiveness and resilience. Partnerships between government, academia, and private sectors are essential to enhance innovation capacity and ensure equitable opportunities for women. Integrating local creative values into formal entrepreneurship programs can cultivate a new generation of culturally conscious innovators. Thus, the findings highlight that empowering women in creative industries is not merely an economic strategy, but a holistic developmental approach one that promotes cultural sustainability, digital inclusion, and gender-equitable growth across Bali's creative ecosystem.

4. CONCLUSION

The findings of this study reveal that female entrepreneurial leadership and digital gamification marketing play a crucial role in enhancing the business performance of fashion MSMEs in Bali. Female entrepreneurial leadership is characterized by inclusiveness, empathy, and collaboration, which positively influence team performance and organizational growth. Women leaders tend to promote openness, creativity, and innovation qualities essential for navigating the fast-changing dynamics of the fashion industry. Moreover, digital gamification marketing has proven to be an effective strategy for increasing customer engagement and loyalty. Programs such as point-based rewards and social media challenges not only attract customer attention but also provide enjoyable shopping experiences that lead to higher sales. However, despite these positive outcomes, MSME owners continue to face challenges related to limited budgets, technological resources, and the need to maintain creative consistency in implementing gamification strategies. Overall, the integration of entrepreneurial leadership and gamification can significantly improve MSME business performance, though resource limitations must be addressed for optimal results. To overcome these challenges, several recommendations are proposed. MSMEs should strengthen their technological capacity through collaboration with government agencies, financial institutions, and digital platforms that can provide training and infrastructure support. Continuous innovation in gamification is essential to sustain customer interest, which can be achieved through dedicated creative teams or partnerships with marketing agencies. Furthermore, female leaders should enhance their managerial and digital competencies through workshops and leadership training. Finally, expanding networks and strategic collaborations both domestically and internationally will enable MSMEs to access broader markets, technologies, and knowledge, fostering sustainable business growth and competitiveness. From an academic perspective, this study contributes new theoretical insights by explicitly linking women's entrepreneurial leadership with digital gamification marketing as a synergistic strategic model for MSME performance improvement. It highlights that leadership-driven innovation and customer-centered gamification are mutually reinforcing mechanisms that enhance both organizational creativity and consumer engagement. This finding extends existing literature by positioning women entrepreneurs not merely as business actors but as transformative agents within the creative economy, generating new knowledge on how empathy-based leadership and digital interactivity co-create sustainable value in small business ecosystems. Moreover, the results underscore the relevance of gender-inclusive digital transformation frameworks, showing that technology adoption is most effective when aligned with human-centered leadership values such as empathy, collaboration, and trust. Practically, this implies that digital innovation should not be treated as a purely technical process but as a socio-cultural adaptation guided by inclusive leadership behavior. Nevertheless, this study is not without limitations. First, the qualitative phenomenological approach, while rich in contextual insights, limits the generalizability of the findings to broader populations. Second, the number of participants ($n = 10$) was relatively small and specific to fashion MSMEs in Bali, which may not represent other creative sectors or regions. Third, financial performance indicators such as profitability or revenue growth were not quantitatively measured, leaving room for future research to integrate mixed-method approaches that combine qualitative depth with quantitative validation. Future studies could also explore cross-cultural comparisons or the influence of digital maturity levels on the effectiveness of gamification in different entrepreneurial contexts. Additionally, examining longitudinal data could offer a clearer understanding of how leadership and gamification co-evolve over time in shaping sustained business success.

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