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“Don’t Make the Same Mistake!”: Peer-to-Peer Knowledge Sharing among SME Owners in Digital Business Communities

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INTRODUCTION

Small and medium enterprises (SMEs) play a crucial role in economic development, innovation, and employment generation worldwide. ¹ According to the OECD (2023), SMEs account for approximately 90% of businesses globally and contribute significantly to employment creation and economic resilience. Beyond economic contribution, SMEs also stimulate local innovation and entrepreneurial dynamism, particularly in developing countries where small businesses dominate productive sectors (Enaifoghe & Vezi-Magigaba, 2023).

Despite their strategic role, SMEs remain highly vulnerable to business uncertainty, financial instability, managerial limitations, and market disruption (Eggers, 2020). Many SME owners operate with limited access to formal managerial education, structured mentoring, and institutional business support (Wuryanti et al., 2026). Consequently, entrepreneurs frequently depend on experiential learning and knowledge acquisition to sustain their businesses.

Entrepreneurial learning therefore becomes an essential capability for SME sustainability.

Entrepreneurial learning refers to the process through which entrepreneurs develop knowledge, skills, and strategic understanding through experience, reflection, experimentation, and interaction with others (Kakouris & Bokeas, 2025). Unlike large corporations that rely on formalized organizational learning systems, SMEs often learn through direct and trial-and-error processes.

Recent entrepreneurship studies increasingly emphasize that business mistakes and entrepreneurial failures can become valuable learning resources (Iqbal et al., 2026). Failure experiences encourage entrepreneurs to evaluate previous decisions, reassess assumptions, and strengthen adaptive capabilities in uncertain business environments (Lafuente et al., 2024). In this perspective, entrepreneurial mistakes are not merely indicators of poor performance but also mechanisms for developing resilience, awareness, and managerial competence.

Contemporary studies further suggest that entrepreneurial learning is socially embedded rather than purely individual (Capó-Vicedo et al., 2025). Entrepreneurs frequently learn vicariously through observing, discussing, and interpreting the experiences of peers facing similar business situations (Wurth et al., 2023). Through peer interaction, entrepreneurs can identify operational pitfalls, exchange practical solutions, and avoid repeating costly mistakes without directly experiencing the same failures themselves.

This peer-based learning mechanism is particularly important for SMEs because many small business owners have limited access to consulting services, professional training, or formal entrepreneurial education (Autio et al., 2021). As a result, informal entrepreneurial networks increasingly function as critical channels for knowledge sharing and collaborative problem solving.

The rapid expansion of digital technologies and social media platforms has fundamentally transformed the way entrepreneurial learning occurs. Digital platforms now enable entrepreneurs to participate in online communities where operational advice, business experiences, and market insights can be exchanged continuously across geographical boundaries (Zhang & Bu, 2024). In the context of digital entrepreneurship, online

communities increasingly function as collaborative learning ecosystems where knowledge is collectively constructed through interaction and discussion (Nambisan, 2017).

Recent research highlights that social media platforms are no longer merely communication tools but have evolved into infrastructures for entrepreneurial learning and informal business education (Hajli et al., 2024). Within these digital ecosystems, entrepreneurs exchange practical knowledge regarding financial management, customer behavior, employee management, operational challenges, and business growth strategies (Mahastanti et al., 2025).

Importantly, the “social” characteristics of digital platforms fundamentally reshape entrepreneurial learning itself. Unlike traditional entrepreneurial learning that often occurs through formal mentoring or face-to-face networking, social media environments facilitate dialogical, participatory, and decentralized learning processes. Knowledge is generated collaboratively through continuous interaction, public discussion, peer observation, and collective reflection. In platforms such as Facebook Reel comment sections, entrepreneurs do not only consume information passively but also actively negotiate meanings, validate experiences, and construct practical business understanding together through social interaction.

This socially interactive structure changes entrepreneurial learning from an individual cognitive activity into a collective learning process embedded within digital conversation spaces. Entrepreneurial knowledge therefore becomes socially negotiated, experience-driven, and continuously refined through peer responses and community engagement. Such environments create what scholars describe as “learning conversations,” where entrepreneurs exchange warnings, reflections, and practical lessons derived from real business situations (Schou et al., 2022).

Moreover, online entrepreneurial learning frequently occurs through naturally occurring user-generated discussions in comment sections, online forums, and social networking platforms. These interactions often contain highly contextualized experiential knowledge that may not emerge within formal entrepreneurship education (Manea et al., 2019). SME

owners communicate practical lessons regarding operational risk, financial discipline, customer management, and market adaptation in concise but experience-rich interactions (Blank & Dorf, 2020).

The increasing role of digital communities also reflects broader transformations in entrepreneurial knowledge-sharing practices. Knowledge exchange among entrepreneurs is becoming increasingly decentralized, informal, and peer-driven (Gu & Lin, 2021). Rather than relying exclusively on institutionalized knowledge transfer, entrepreneurs now exchange operational insights horizontally through community interaction (Gonzalez-Tamayo et al., 2025). Such peer-to-peer knowledge sharing contributes significantly to entrepreneurial adaptability, innovation capability, and decision-making quality because the knowledge exchanged is grounded in business (Tsai et al., 2022).

Within SME environments, this peer-learning mechanism becomes particularly valuable because small businesses operate under high uncertainty, resource constraints, and operational risk exposure. Previous studies indicate that many SME failures originate from recurring managerial problems such as poor financial management, premature expansion, weak customer orientation, inadequate operational understanding, and ineffective workforce management (Klimas et al., 2020; Gibb, 2019). Access to practical advice from fellow entrepreneurs may therefore help SME owners anticipate risks and improve strategic decision-making.

Despite the growing relevance of digital entrepreneurial communities, empirical research examining naturally occurring peer-to-peer entrepreneurial learning within social media interactions remains limited. Existing studies primarily focus on interviews, surveys, or formal online communities that emphasize individual entrepreneurial cognition and structured networking processes. Although Schou et al. (2022) examined entrepreneurial learning in online communities, their study mainly focused on organized online community participation and broader entrepreneurial interaction patterns.

In contrast, limited attention has been given to spontaneous and organically generated entrepreneurial learning emerging within short-form social media comment interactions

such as Facebook Reel discussions. More specifically, previous studies have not sufficiently explored how SME owners collectively construct entrepreneurial lessons, operational warnings, and experiential business advice through naturally occurring public comment exchanges. This distinction represents the primary novelty of the present study. This gap is important because digital comment environments represent dynamic spaces where entrepreneurs openly communicate business mistakes, operational reflections, and strategic advice in authentic and unstructured forms. Unlike formal interviews where responses are researcher-driven, comment interactions emerge naturally through peer engagement, allowing researchers to observe how entrepreneurial knowledge is socially negotiated and collectively interpreted in real-world digital settings.

To address this gap, the present study investigates peer-to-peer knowledge sharing among SME owners within a digital business community by analyzing comments generated in response to a Facebook Reel inviting entrepreneurs to share one message so that other SME owners “do not make the same mistake.” By employing thematic analysis of user-generated comments, this study seeks to identify dominant entrepreneurial lessons shared among SME owners and examine how digital communities function as informal spaces for collective entrepreneurial learning.

2 Based on the background above, this study addresses these research questions: (1) What dominant entrepreneurial lessons and business concerns are shared among SME owners within Facebook Reel comment discussions? (2) How do peer interactions within digital comment environments facilitate entrepreneurial learning and knowledge sharing among SME owners? (3) In what ways do social media comment spaces function as informal entrepreneurial learning ecosystems for SMEs?

The study contributes to the entrepreneurship and digital business literature in several ways. First, it extends entrepreneurial learning research by demonstrating how experiential business knowledge is socially constructed through spontaneous peer interaction in social media comment environments. Second, it contributes to the discussion on digital entrepreneurial ecosystems by highlighting Facebook Reel comment sections as informal

and decentralized learning infrastructures for SMEs. Third, the study provides grounded insights into the practical business challenges most frequently emphasized by SME owners themselves, thereby offering practitioner-centered perspectives on entrepreneurial learning and business sustainability.

RESEARCH METHOD

This study employed a qualitative descriptive content analysis approach to examine peer-to-peer entrepreneurial learning among SME owners within digital business communities. The study focused on exploring how entrepreneurial knowledge, operational reflections, and business survival strategies were socially constructed through interaction within public social media discussions. Qualitative content analysis is appropriate for interpreting recurring experiential meanings, thematic patterns, and socially embedded communication within digital interaction environments (Krippendorff, 2018).

The data were collected from comments posted on a public Facebook Reel containing the prompt: "From one SME owner to another, leave one message so other SME owners do not make the same mistake." The Reel was retrieved from a publicly accessible *Bisnis Naik Kelas Bareng UMKM Bertumbuh*. (2025) page.

Figure 1 presents the Facebook Reel interface used as the primary research context. The Reel generated substantial public interaction through comments, reactions, and discussion among SME owners. Since the study focused on naturally occurring entrepreneurial conversations, only publicly accessible comments were **2** included in the analysis. Social media interactions are increasingly recognized as valuable sources for examining digitally embedded social behavior and online knowledge-sharing practices (Kozinets, 2020).

Data collection was conducted using a web scraping technique to extract public comments from the discussion thread. A total of 789 comments were initially **1** extracted from the Facebook Reel discussion. During the data cleaning stage, 164 comments were removed because they consisted of duplicate responses, spam content, emoji-only comments, advertisements, unrelated discussions, or comments without meaningful textual

information. After the cleaning process, 625 comments remained for preliminary screening.

Figure 1. Facebook Reel Post Used as the Primary Data Source

Source: Facebook.com

Purposive sampling was subsequently applied to identify comments containing relevant entrepreneurial experiences and business-related insights (Patton, 2015). The inclusion criteria included comments that: (1) discussed SME or entrepreneurial experiences, (2) contained operational advice, warnings, or strategic recommendations, and (3) reflected experiential learning related to financial management, employee management, customer relations, operational competence, or business growth. Meanwhile, comments consisting only of short reactions, unrelated conversations, promotional messages, or non-business discussions were excluded from the analysis.

Based on these criteria, 312 comments were selected as the final analytical dataset. These comments were considered the most relevant because they contained meaningful experiential insights and practical entrepreneurial reflections directly related to SME activities. The selected comments were then categorized into several dominant themes discussed in the Results and Discussion section, including financial discipline, human resource management, strategic business growth, product knowledge, operational competence, and customer orientation.

The study employed qualitative content analysis to identify, interpret, and categorize recurring entrepreneurial learning themes emerging from the discussion data. The coding process focused on identifying patterns of experiential reflection, operational advice, entrepreneurial warnings, and peer-based business insights shared among SME owners. To improve analytical credibility and reduce interpretive bias, the coding process involved researcher triangulation. Two independent coders reviewed and compared thematic categorizations before reaching interpretive agreement regarding the dominant entrepreneurial learning themes identified from the discussion data (Braun & Clarke, 2021). Ethical considerations were also taken into account throughout the research process.


Since the data originated from publicly accessible Facebook interactions, the study only analyzed comments available in the public domain. Usernames, profile identities, and identifiable personal information were anonymized during data extraction, analysis, and publication to protect participant privacy and confidentiality. The researchers did not access private accounts, direct messages, or restricted online communities during the study. Ethical considerations in social media research emphasize the importance of protecting digital user identity even when the data are publicly accessible (Townsend & Wallace, 2016).

Finally, the findings were interpreted using relevant literature on entrepreneurial learning, digital entrepreneurship, and knowledge-sharing ecosystems to explain how digital communities facilitate peer-to-peer entrepreneurial learning among SME owners.

RESULT AND DISCUSSIONS

Financial Discipline and Cash Flow Awareness

Descriptive analysis showed that financial discipline and cash flow awareness emerged as one of the most dominant entrepreneurial concerns among SME owners in the digital discussion. Among the 312 analyzed comments, 31.4% discussed issues related to cash flow stability, financial separation, debt control, spending discipline, and sustainable financial management. This finding indicates that financial resilience is strongly perceived by SME owners as the foundation of long-term business sustainability.

The distribution of financial discipline themes identified in the comment dataset is presented in Figure 2. The visualization was developed  based on the frequency of coded comments within the financial management category. The coding process identified five dominant sub-themes, namely cash flow awareness, financial separation, debt avoidance, spending control, and sustainable growth orientation.

The most dominant issue discussed by participants concerned cash flow awareness. Many entrepreneurs emphasized that unstable cash flow frequently becomes the main reason why SMEs fail to survive despite having high sales turnover. Several comments reflected

practical concerns regarding uncontrolled operational spending, delayed customer payments, and excessive reinvestment before achieving financial stability.

Figure 2. Financial Discipline Themes Among SME Owners

Source: Processed research data (2026).

One participant stated:

“Jangan merasa aman hanya karena omset besar. Banyak usaha tutup bukan karena tidak laku, tapi karena cash flow hancur dan uang usaha dipakai untuk kebutuhan pribadi.”

(Do not feel financially secure only because sales are high. Many businesses fail not because products do not sell, but because cash flow collapses and business money is used for personal needs.)

— Participant C057

Unlike previous studies that primarily discuss financial management as a technical managerial capability (Eggers, 2020), the findings of this study demonstrate that SME owners interpret financial discipline as a survival-oriented entrepreneurial mindset developed through collective experiential learning. In the Facebook discussion environment, financial advice was not communicated formally or theoretically, but emerged organically through warnings, reflections, and emotionally grounded business experiences shared among entrepreneurs.

This finding extends the concept of socially embedded entrepreneurial learning proposed by Capó-Vicedo et al. (2025). The results indicate that financial knowledge within digital entrepreneurial communities is collaboratively constructed through peer interaction rather than transferred through formal institutional mechanisms. Entrepreneurs in the discussion did not simply exchange technical accounting advice; they collectively reinforced behavioral norms related to financial caution, operational discipline, and business sustainability.

The findings also suggest that digital communities function as informal financial learning

ecosystems where entrepreneurs learn not only from success stories but also from business failures and operational mistakes experienced by others. This mechanism allows SME owners to acquire practical financial awareness without directly encountering the same financial risks themselves. In this context, peer-to-peer interaction within digital platforms becomes an important mechanism for reducing entrepreneurial uncertainty and strengthening adaptive business behavior.

Furthermore, the discussion reveals that financial discipline is strongly connected to broader entrepreneurial concerns such as expansion readiness, operational control, and emotional decision-making. Several participants warned against aggressive business growth before achieving stable financial conditions, indicating that entrepreneurs perceive sustainable growth as closely dependent on disciplined financial behavior rather than rapid expansion strategies alone.

Taken together, these findings demonstrate that financial discipline within SME environments is not merely understood as bookkeeping practice or accounting control, but as a socially reinforced entrepreneurial capability shaped through collective reflection, experiential learning, and peer-based digital interaction.

Human Resource Challenges and Employee Management

Human resource management issues emerged as one of the most recurring themes within the entrepreneurial discussion environment. The analysis revealed that many SME owners frequently shared experiences related to employee discipline, workforce trust, team coordination, recruitment challenges, and operational supervision. These discussions indicate that workforce-related problems are commonly perceived as critical operational challenges affecting business stability and sustainability among SME owners.

The thematic prominence of employee management concerns identified from the coding process is presented in Figure 3. The visualization was developed based on recurring patterns and thematic categorizations identified during the qualitative content analysis, particularly those associated with employee discipline, team reliability, leadership control, recruitment trust, and operational coordination.

Employee discipline and workforce reliability appeared as the most frequently discussed concerns. Many SME owners emphasized that operational instability often originates from internal problems rather than external.

Figure 3. Human Resource Challenges Discussed by SME Owners

Source: Processed research data (2026).

One participant explained:

“Jangan terlalu percaya dengan Karyawan, tetap awasi laporan keuangan, gak usah sungkan bertanya kpd karyawan jika stock, penjualan bermasalah.”

Don't trust employees too much, keep an eye on financial reports, don't hesitate to ask employees if there are problems with stock or sales.

— Participant C114

Several comments also highlighted that SMEs generally rely on informal management structures where business owners directly supervise employees and operational activities. This condition makes workforce-related problems more visible and highly influential on daily business performance.

The findings indicate that SME owners perceive employee management not merely as an administrative task but as a strategic entrepreneurial capability closely related to trust, leadership, and operational resilience. Unlike previous studies that mainly discuss SME workforce management from formal organizational perspectives (Gu & Lin, 2021), this study demonstrates that managerial learning within digital entrepreneurial communities is highly experiential and socially embedded through peer interaction.

Furthermore, the findings reveal that digital communities function as informal peer-learning environments where entrepreneurs exchange practical workforce management lessons based on real operational experiences. Through these interactions, SME owners

collectively develop awareness regarding employee discipline, leadership control, and team coordination in order to reduce managerial risks and strengthen business sustainability in uncertain environments.

Strategic Business Growth and Avoiding Premature Expansion

Strategic business growth and concerns regarding premature expansion also emerged as a recurring entrepreneurial theme within the digital discussion. Descriptive quantitative content analysis identified comments discussing business expansion readiness, operational scaling, market timing, and sustainable growth strategies. The findings indicate that many SME owners perceive uncontrolled expansion as a significant source of business instability and financial risk.

Figure 4 presents the thematic prominence of strategic business growth concerns identified during the coding process. The visualization was developed based on recurring entrepreneurial discussions related to business expansion readiness, operational stability, growth sustainability, and the risks associated with premature business scaling.

Figure 4. Strategic Growth Concerns Among SME Owners

Source: Processed research data (2026).

One of the most frequently discussed concerns involved opening new branches too quickly without achieving operational stability. Several entrepreneurs emphasized that aggressive expansion often creates financial pressure, managerial overload, and declining product consistency.

One participant explained:

“Jangan buru-buru buka cabang kalau sistem bisnis belum benar-benar kuat.”

(Do not rush to open new branches before the business system is truly stable.

— Participant C253

The findings suggest that SME owners interpret business growth not merely as expansion achievement, but as a process requiring operational readiness, managerial stability, and

financial discipline. Unlike conventional entrepreneurial perspectives that often associate rapid scaling with business success, the present findings demonstrate that entrepreneurs within digital communities frequently emphasize sustainable and controlled growth.

Later on, this finding extends previous studies on entrepreneurial resilience and adaptive decision-making (Zhang & Bu, 2024). The discussion reveals that digital entrepreneurial communities function as peer-learning environments where entrepreneurs collectively share cautionary experiences regarding expansion failure, operational overload, and unsustainable growth decisions.

Moreover, the results indicate that peer-based entrepreneurial learning within social media environments helps SME owners develop more realistic growth expectations. Through experiential reflections shared by fellow entrepreneurs, participants learn to prioritize business stability, operational systems, and financial preparedness before pursuing aggressive expansion strategies.

Product Knowledge and Operational Competence

Product knowledge and operational competence emerged as another important entrepreneurial learning theme within the digital discussion environment. The analysis revealed that many SME owners shared experiential reflections regarding product understanding, operational consistency, service quality, and business process management. Participants frequently emphasized that insufficient product knowledge and inconsistent operational practices often contribute to declining customer trust, weak business credibility, and unsustainable business performance. These discussions illustrate that operational competence is perceived not merely as a technical managerial skill, but as an essential entrepreneurial capability closely related to customer satisfaction and long-term business sustainability.

Figure 5 presents the thematic prominence of product knowledge and operational competence concerns identified during the coding process. The visualization was developed based on recurring entrepreneurial discussions associated with product understanding, operational discipline, service consistency, customer trust, and quality

management within SME business practices.

Figure 5. Product Knowledge and Operational Competence Among SME Owners

Source: Processed research data (2026).

One of the most frequently discussed concerns involved insufficient product understanding among business owners. Several participants emphasized that entrepreneurs should fully understand the products they sell, including product quality, customer needs, and operational processes. Participants argued that weak product knowledge often results in inconsistent service and declining customer trust.

One participant stated:

“Cari kesenangan pelanggan dengan produkmu,perbaiki kualitasnya, maka dia akan kembali dengan teman teman nya ?????”

Find customer satisfaction with your product, improve the quality, then he will come back with his friends ?????

— Participant C203

The findings suggest that SME owners interpret operational competence not merely as technical business management, but as an entrepreneurial responsibility closely related to consistency, credibility, and customer satisfaction. Unlike previous studies that often discuss operational capability from organizational efficiency perspectives, the present findings demonstrate that entrepreneurs within digital communities emphasize practical operational discipline derived from direct business experience.

Later on, the discussion reveals that digital entrepreneurial communities function as peer-learning environments where entrepreneurs collectively reinforce the importance of product understanding and operational consistency. Through experiential interaction, SME owners exchange practical warnings and operational reflections that help entrepreneurs avoid common managerial mistakes and strengthen customer trust in competitive business

environments.

Customer Orientation and Market Awareness

Discussions related to customer orientation and market awareness also appeared prominently throughout the entrepreneurial interaction process. Many SME owners reflected on the importance of understanding customer expectations, maintaining consumer trust, adapting to changing market preferences, and improving service responsiveness. Participants frequently described how failure to recognize customer needs and market changes contributed to declining competitiveness and weakened business sustainability. These discussions suggest that entrepreneurs increasingly perceive customer awareness as an adaptive entrepreneurial capability necessary for maintaining long-term business relevance within dynamic market environments.

Figure 6. Customer Orientation and Market Awareness Among SME Owners

Source: Processed research data (2026).

Figure 6 illustrates the thematic prominence of customer orientation and market awareness identified during the coding process. The visualization was developed based on recurring discussion patterns associated with customer satisfaction, market responsiveness, service adaptation, consumer behavior awareness, and trust-building practices among SME owners.

One of the most frequently discussed concerns involved the importance of understanding customer needs and maintaining customer trust. Several participants emphasized that many SMEs fail because entrepreneurs focus excessively on product selling while neglecting customer experience and market expectations.

One participant explained:

“Jangan terburu2 dengan banyak customer... Lihat dulu.. apakah beberapa customermu

awal mengulang pembelian sampai 3x.. Jika iya... lakukan promosi.. Bisnismu akan berkembang...”

Don't rush with lots of customers... See first... whether some of your initial customers repeat purchases up to 3 times... If yes... do promotions... Your business will grow...

— Participant C269

These findings indicate that customer orientation among SME owners is closely connected to entrepreneurial adaptability and long-term business resilience. Many participants emphasized that understanding customer preferences, maintaining service quality, and responding to changing market expectations are essential for sustaining business competitiveness. This finding supports previous studies suggesting that SMEs with stronger customer responsiveness tend to demonstrate better adaptive capacity in dynamic market environments (Tsai et al., 2022). However, the present study further demonstrates that customer-oriented learning within digital communities is shaped through practical peer experiences rather than formal managerial training alone.

Another important finding is that entrepreneurs within digital discussion environments collectively construct market awareness through experiential interaction and reflective communication. Participants frequently exchanged warnings regarding declining customer loyalty, stagnant business strategies, and failure to recognize changing consumer behavior. Unlike traditional entrepreneurial learning environments that rely on structured mentoring, the Facebook discussion space enabled entrepreneurs to openly share operational experiences and practical market insights in informal but highly contextualized ways. This finding expands the argument of Schou et al. (2022) by showing that entrepreneurial learning in social media environments often emerges organically through spontaneous peer conversation rather than formalized online community participation. The results also highlight the role of digital entrepreneurial communities as informal peer-learning ecosystems that strengthen customer-centered business thinking among SME owners. This finding is also consistent with Mahendri and Azah (2023), who emphasized that service quality consistency and effective customer relationship management

significantly contribute to strengthening customer loyalty and sustaining long-term business relationships among digital platform users. Through continuous interaction, entrepreneurs collectively reinforce the importance of maintaining customer trust, improving service consistency, and adapting business strategies to evolving consumer expectations. In this context, digital communities not only facilitate knowledge sharing but also encourage the development of adaptive entrepreneurial behavior necessary for sustainability in uncertain conditions (Wurth et al., 2023).

Digital Peer-to-Peer Entrepreneurial Learning Model

Across all themes identified in this study, the comments collectively demonstrate how digital communities function as informal entrepreneurial learning environments for SME owners. Rather than relying on formal business training or institutional mentoring, many entrepreneurs exchange practical knowledge directly through peer interaction in online spaces. The discussion within the Facebook Reel reflects a collaborative learning process where business owners openly share experiences, operational mistakes, financial warnings, and strategic advice based on real entrepreneurial situations.

The analysis indicates that entrepreneurial learning in digital communities occurs through experiential and socially embedded interactions. SME owners not only communicate business success but also discuss failures, risks, and operational challenges that may help others avoid similar mistakes. This pattern reflects the concept of entrepreneurial learning through experience and reflection, where knowledge is developed from practical business situations rather than purely theoretical understanding.

Figure 7 illustrates the Digital Peer-to-Peer Entrepreneurial Learning Model developed through thematic synthesis of recurring interaction patterns identified during the qualitative content analysis process. The model was constructed based on repeatedly observed entrepreneurial discussions, experiential narratives, operational reflections, and peer-learning interactions found across the analyzed comments. Rather than functioning solely as a conceptual illustration, the model represents an interpretive framework derived from the observed flow of entrepreneurial learning within the Facebook discussion environment.

The thematic synthesis indicates that entrepreneurial learning within digital communities evolves through interconnected stages involving community interaction, experiential storytelling, collective reflection, practical knowledge exchange, and the development of adaptive entrepreneurial awareness among SME owners.

The first stage of the model begins with Digital Community Interaction, where SME owners participate in open social media discussions by sharing personal business experiences, operational mistakes, financial failures, and survival strategies. Unlike formal entrepreneurial education environments, the interaction process within the Facebook Reel discussion occurred organically through spontaneous comments and emotionally grounded narratives. Entrepreneurs were not positioned as instructors or learners formally, but interacted as peers facing relatively similar business uncertainties.

Figure 7. Digital Peer-to-Peer Entrepreneurial Learning Model

Source: Developed by the authors (2026).

The second stage involves the Knowledge Sharing Process, where participants exchange practical entrepreneurial insights through warnings, reflections, recommendations, and operational advice. The findings demonstrate that experiential communication became the dominant mechanism of knowledge transfer within the digital community. Many comments did not simply provide technical suggestions, but conveyed contextualized business lessons shaped by real entrepreneurial experiences such as financial mismanagement, employee problems, premature expansion, and customer dissatisfaction.

The third stage consists of Collective Peer Reflection, where entrepreneurs interpret, validate, and reinforce shared business experiences through interactive discussion. In this stage, entrepreneurial learning becomes socially constructed because participants continuously compare their experiences with those shared by other SME owners. This mechanism strengthens collective awareness regarding common business risks and operational challenges frequently encountered within SME environments.

Finally, the interaction flow leads to the formation of Adaptive Entrepreneurial Awareness, where SME owners develop stronger practical understanding regarding financial discipline, operational consistency, customer orientation, workforce management, and sustainable business growth. The findings indicate that digital entrepreneurial communities function not only as communication platforms but also as informal entrepreneurial learning ecosystems that facilitate adaptive business thinking through continuous peer-to-peer interaction. The model therefore extends previous studies on online entrepreneurial learning by demonstrating that social media interactions can generate collaborative experiential learning processes beyond formal mentoring structures (Schou et al., 2022). More specifically, the present findings show that entrepreneurial learning within digital communities is strongly shaped by emotionally embedded storytelling, operational reflection, and peer validation processes emerging organically through public discussion environments.

Taken together, the digital entrepreneurial communities play an important role in facilitating peer-to-peer entrepreneurial learning among SMEs. Through online interaction, entrepreneurs collectively develop practical knowledge, strengthen business awareness, and support one another in navigating uncertainty and operational challenges. The study therefore highlights the growing importance of digital communities as informal entrepreneurial learning ecosystems in contemporary SME environments.

CONCLUSION

This study demonstrates that digital social media communities function as important peer-to-peer entrepreneurial learning environments for SME owners. Based on the analysis of 312 selected comments ¹ extracted from a public Facebook Reel discussion, the findings reveal that entrepreneurial learning within digital communities is primarily shaped through experiential interaction, practical reflection, and peer-based knowledge exchange. Several dominant learning themes emerged from the discussion, including financial discipline and cash flow awareness, human resource management, strategic business growth, product knowledge and operational competence, as well as customer orientation and market

awareness. The findings further indicate that SME owners tend to learn entrepreneurial survival strategies not through formal education alone, but through collective reflections on operational mistakes, business failures, and practical experiences shared organically within digital discussion environments.

The study contributes theoretically by extending the concept of entrepreneurial learning in digital environments beyond formal online communities and structured mentoring systems. Unlike previous studies that mainly focus on institutional entrepreneurial education, the present findings demonstrate that entrepreneurial learning can emerge informally through emotionally embedded peer interaction and experiential storytelling within social media ecosystems. The proposed Digital Peer-to-Peer Entrepreneurial Learning Model also explains how entrepreneurial knowledge flows sequentially from digital community interaction toward collective reflection and adaptive entrepreneurial awareness. Practically, the findings imply that SME development institutions, entrepreneurship educators, and digital business communities should recognize social media interaction spaces as potential informal learning ecosystems capable of strengthening entrepreneurial resilience, operational awareness, and adaptive business capability among SME owners.

Nevertheless, this study has several limitations. First, the research focused only on one Facebook Reel discussion, which may limit the generalizability of the findings across different digital platforms and entrepreneurial contexts. Second, the study relied exclusively on textual comment analysis without conducting direct interviews with participants, limiting deeper exploration of individual entrepreneurial experiences. Future studies are therefore encouraged to examine multiple digital platforms, combine quantitative and qualitative approaches, and investigate how different forms of online interaction influence entrepreneurial learning behavior across various SME sectors and business environments.

Sources

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