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Reflections On Student Leadership: The Future of The Creative Industry
(Refleksi Kepimpinan Pelajar: Masa Depan Industri Kreatif)

NURUL NABILA JUNAIDI*, MOHAMMAD DANIAL MOHD RAZALI, FAISAL ZULHUMADI & NUR MARISSA VEE SENAP

ABSTRACT

This paper explores leadership development in the context of the creative industry. The motivation behind this study lies in recognising the vital role that leadership plays in driving innovation, fostering collaboration, and navigating the complex and evolving landscape of the creative industry. The main issue addressed is the need for effective leadership practices that enable this industry to thrive and adapt to the changing dynamics of the global market. The methodology involved a comprehensive review of existing literature on leadership theories and practices, coupled with qualitative data collected through interviews with industry professionals and students in creative industry management programs. The study's results revealed vital leadership attributes and competencies required to lead successfully in the creative industry, including adaptability, visionary thinking, collaborative skills, and a deep understanding of technological advancements. The implications of this research contribute to the body of knowledge by providing insights and recommendations for leadership development programs tailored to the creative industry, ultimately equipping future leaders with the skills and mindset necessary to drive innovation and sustainability in this dynamic industry.

Keywords: Leadership Development, Student Leadership, Creative Industry, Future Leaders, Universiti Utara Malaysia (UUM)

ABSTRAK

Kertas kerja ini meneroka pembangunan kepimpinan dalam konteks industri kreatif. Motivasi di sebalik kajian ini terletak pada mengiktiraf peranan penting yang dimainkan oleh kepimpinan dalam memacu inovasi, memupuk kerjasama, dan menavigasi landskap industri kreatif yang kompleks dan berkembang. Isu utama yang ditangani ialah keperluan untuk amalan kepimpinan yang berkesan yang membolehkan industri ini berkembang maju dan menyesuaikan diri dengan perubahan dinamik pasaran global. Metodologi ini melibatkan kajian menyeluruh terhadap literatur sedia ada mengenai teori dan amalan kepimpinan, ditambah pula dengan data kualitatif yang dikumpul melalui temu bual dengan profesional industri dan pelajar dalam program pengurusan industri kreatif. Hasil kajian menunjukkan sifat kepimpinan dan kecekapan penting yang diperlukan untuk memimpin dengan jayanya dalam industri kreatif, termasuk kebolehsuaian, pemikiran berwawasan, kemahiran kolaboratif dan pemahaman mendalam tentang kemajuan teknologi. Implikasi penyelidikan ini menyumbang kepada badan pengetahuan dengan memberikan pandangan dan cadangan untuk program pembangunan kepimpinan yang disesuaikan dengan industri kreatif, akhirnya melengkapkan pemimpin masa depan dengan kemahiran dan minda yang diperlukan untuk memacu inovasi dan kemapanan dalam industri dinamik ini.

Kata kunci: Pembangunan Kepimpinan, Kepimpinan Pelajar, Industri Kreatif, Pemimpin Masa Depan, Universiti Utara Malaysia (UUM)

INTRODUCTION

Student leadership has emerged as a driving force in the changing environment of the creative industry, with enormous potential to affect the future of this thriving sector. As the world evolves, the creative sector has ever-changing problems and possibilities, necessitating imaginative and forward-thinking leadership. This paper aims to offer insight into student leadership and its critical role in imagining and shaping the future of the creative industry.

The creative industry spans several fields, including art, design, media, entertainment, and technology, and each contributes to enriching our cultural fabric. In this fast-paced world, the creative industry is looking for leaders who can navigate complexity, embrace new technologies and inspire diverse teams to deliver groundbreaking work that resonates with global audiences. While experienced leaders are critical in driving the industry, the perspectives of students and emerging talent are equally important in shaping the industry's trajectory.

The creative industry encompasses diverse economic activities that generate or utilise knowledge and information. It is sometimes called the cultural industry in Europe, while the broader concept is the creative economy. These industries are now called the "Orange Economy" in Latin America and the Caribbean. These industries involve many sectors that thrive on creativity and intellectual assets. Experts and analysts have offered different perspectives on what should be encompassed within the scope of the creative industry. Moreover, the terminology itself has become a subject of debate, with notable distinctions and similarities between the terms creative industry, cultural industry, and creative economy (Wikipedia, 2024)

Taking the point of view of a Muslim, an article regarding balancing the demands of Islam and a creative career was published in Berita Harian. One of the panellists from the Round Table Conference of the Muslim Research Group in the Creative Industry (MICMI) organised at Universiti Sains Islam Malaysia (USIM) in 2019 did not deny that the life of media practitioners in the 1980s and 1990s did not escape from a few conditions that went against religious teachings. He admitted that only after religious awareness increases over time, the lifestyle and views of media practitioners on Islam begin to change, and the practice is also increasingly appreciated. Today, there is no denying that almost all media organisations in Malaysia bring religious experts to share religious knowledge with their citizens, and this is done consistently (Siti Suriani Othman, 2019).

In the animation industry, religious superficiality also occurs, and the name of cartoonist Ujang is mentioned as the bearer of a wave of awareness in the group of cartoonists. Agents of change like this are seen to be capable of changing themselves for the better and having a very effective and positive impact, such as culturing Islam in the context of work. The cartoonists then share a positive message through their work.

In accordance with the leadership theory proposed by Longshore (1987), it is posited that an individual can exhibit both transactional and transformational leadership qualities. Thus, the present study aims to investigate transactional and transformational leadership in depth.

Transactional leadership is defined as the capacity to clearly assign tasks, delineate specific roles, and influence employees through rewards and punishments, aligning with well-defined interests. On the other hand, transformational leadership involves behaviours that inspire subordinates' creativity, foster a sense of identity, and encourage a willingness to take risks in a complex environment. This leadership style leverages vision incentives, intellectual stimulation, charismatic guidance, and compassionate care, as Bass (1990) and Makri & Scandura (2010) highlighted.

Given the distinctive nature of creative industries, creative leadership assumes distinct functions compared to conventional leadership approaches. In creative domains, effective leadership entails strategic planning to facilitate long-term goals, guiding creative employees, and establishing an organisational culture that nurtures innovation. An essential objective of leadership within creative industries is to motivate creative individuals to produce both commercially viable and innovative work. Consequently, leadership in this context revolves around unlocking the full potential of creative talents and stimulating their ingenuity to the utmost extent possible.

This paper examines the essential attributes and competencies that student leaders must embody to lead successfully in the creative industry. From adaptability and visionary thinking to collaborative skills and a deep understanding of technological advancements, these qualities empower students to navigate the evolving challenges and tap into opportunities that will define the creative industry's future.

Furthermore, this paper explores how student leadership can foster a culture of innovation, diversity, and sustainability within the creative sector. By nurturing talent, advocating for arts education, and promoting ethical practices, student leaders can instill a sense of purpose and social responsibility in creative

endeavours, aligning them with the evolving needs of our world.

Moreover, this paper celebrates the transformative power of creativity and students' role in shaping their destinies. By unlocking the potential of our future leaders, the foundation is laid for a dynamic, inclusive, and progressive creative industry that remains at the forefront of cultural expression and societal impact.

RESEARCH SIGNIFICANCE

The findings of the research are hoped to influence students as well as the creative industry's future. UUM could develop the potential for creative work to inspire social change by understanding student motivations. This can drive students to utilise their creative talents to solve societal concerns and constructively contribute to the communities they serve. This can result in the development of socially beneficial projects and activities within the creative sector. This paper also addresses the issues mentioned in the introduction related to the future of the creative sector, emphasising the role of creativity and knowledge development that can help position creative businesses to compete worldwide. In the end, the context's importance to students and the future of the creative business stems from its ability to inspire and equip aspiring creative professionals with the information and skills needed to thrive in the dynamic and growing creative landscape. It also emphasises the significance of successful leadership techniques in driving innovation, cultural enrichment, and economic progress in the creative industry. Ultimately, this knowledge empowers students to contribute to the future of the creative industry as visionary leaders and innovative creators.

MATERIALS AND METHODS

To identify the essential leadership attributes and competencies for a successful career in creative industries, a survey was conducted using a questionnaire developed and implemented as a Google Form. The study, focusing on the creative industry, specifically targeted students enrolled in creative industry management programs as respondents to ensure relevance to the study's environment. The participants were selected based on convenience sampling, considering their availability and willingness to participate. The questionnaire was structured with demographic questions and items related to key leadership attributes such as adaptability, visionary thinking, collaborative skills, and technological advancements. The survey responses were collected anonymously to ensure confidentiality. In analysing the data, the quantitative data was collected through the Google Form survey, then exported into Microsoft Excel and SPSS, with descriptive statistical analysis techniques such as T-test, frequencies and percentages used to analyse the responses. The data were then summarised and presented using tables, graphs, and charts to provide a clear overview of the demography and key leadership attributes identified by the creative industry students.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

This section consists of the analysis and interpretation of the data collected from 100 UUM respondents through a structured questionnaire. The charts and graphs were based on the primary data collected. Aside from analysis based on charts, new findings, and author comments on obtained results, the theoretical and practical implications of the obtained results were also discussed. Plus, agreement or disagreement with any previous findings was also included. Possible directions for future research on entrepreneurial motivators and drivers among university students are also provided.

TABLE 1. Gender-wise classification of respondents

Classification	No of Respondents	Percentage (%)
Male	41	41
Female	59	59
Total	100	100

Demographic Questions

Gender classification of respondents

Table 1 shows the gender-wise classification of respondents. The analysis shows that 41% of the respondents are male and 59% are female. Hence, the majority of respondents are female.

Semester classification of respondents

Table 2 shows the semester classification of the respondents. According to the data, semester three to four students account for most respondents (29%), while semester seven to eight students account for the least (21%).

Race-wise classification of the respondents

From Table 3, the majority of respondents are Malay, with 51%. Minor of 34% of the respondents are Chinese, and 15% are Indians.

Adaptability

Adaptability is a crucial leadership attribute that enables leaders to respond effectively to changing circumstances, evolving challenges, and dynamic environments.

Leaders who possess adaptability can navigate uncertainty, embrace new ideas, and make necessary adjustments to Table 4 Adaptability achieves success (Simpson, 2023).

TABLE 2. Semester classification of respondents

Classification	No of Respondents	Percentage (%)
1-2	25	25
3-4	29	29
5-6	25	25
7-8	21	21
Total	100	100

TABLE 3. Race-wise classification of the respondents

Classification	No of Respondents	Percentage (%)
Malay	51	51
Chinese	34	34
Indian	15	15
Total	100	100

As a whole, adaptability as a leadership attribute has a mean of 335(SD=0.684) and a t-value of 4.9705(ρ = .000). Respondent's reason for the high adaptability attribute include adaptability is a critical trait for effective leadership in the creative industry (88.2%), actively seeking opportunities to learn about latest trends and technologies in the creative field to stay relevant (87%), finding creative ways to motivate and inspire my team during uncertain or challenging times (86.2%) and remain calm and composed when facing unexpected obstacles in the creative process (85.4%). Most of the items were rated positively and significantly, which means that the students think adaptability is a strong trait to lead success in the creative industry based on the above questions.

To cultivate adaptability as a leadership attribute, leaders can engage in self-assessment, seek feedback from their team, be open to new ideas, continuously learn, and develop a growth mindset. It is also essential to foster a culture of adaptability within the organisation, where change and innovation are welcomed and rewarded. By embracing adaptability, leaders can lead their teams effectively through any challenge that comes their way.

TABLE 4. Presents the descriptive statistics for adaptability

	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean	%
I believe that adaptability is a critical trait for effective leadership in the creative industry	100	4.41	.605	.060	88.2
I actively seek opportunities to learn about the latest trends and technologies in the creative field to stay relevant	100	4.35	.702	.070	87
I find creative ways to motivate and inspire my team during uncertain or challenging times	100	4.31	.720	.072	86.2
I remain calm and composed when facing unexpected obstacles in the creative process	100	4.27	.709	.071	85.4
Overall Mean Adaptability	100	4.34	.684	.068	86.7

Visionary Thinking

Visionary thinking is a crucial leadership attribute that involves the ability to imagine, articulate, and pursue a compelling and inspiring vision for the future. Leaders who possess visionary thinking can create a clear direction for their organisation, motivate their team members, and guide the company towards long-term success (Indeed Editorial Team, 2022)

Leaders who score high on visionary thinking are more likely to drive innovation, engage their team, and lead the organisation towards a brighter future. These questions can help assess how much a leader embraces visionary thinking as a key leadership attribute.

One-Sample Statistics

Table 5 presents the descriptive statistics for visionary thinking. As a whole, visionary thinking as a leadership attribute has a mean of 4.33 (SD=0.637) and a t-value of 5.255 (ρ = .000). Respondent's reason for the high number of attributes includes having a clear and inspiring vision is essential for driving creativity and innovation in the creative industry (86.8%), regularly communicate a compelling vision for the future of our creative organisation to our team members (85%), open to feedback and suggestions from my team when it comes to shaping our organisation's vision (86.2%) and actively seek external insights and industry trends to refine the organisation's vision and stay ahead in the creative market (88.4%). Most of the items were rated positively and significantly, which means that the students think visionary thinking is a strong trait that leads to success in the creative industry based on the above questions.

Collaborative Skills

Collaborative skills are essential in key leadership attributes as they enable leaders to effectively work with their teams, other departments, stakeholders, and external partners to achieve common goals. A leader with strong collaborative skills can foster a positive work environment, encourage open communication, and leverage the diverse talents of their team (Getha-Taylor & Morse, 2013).

Table 6 presents the descriptive statistics for collaborative skills. As a whole, collaborative skill as a leadership attribute has a mean of 4.34 (SD=0.687) and a t-value of 5.014 (ρ = .000). Respondent's reason for the high number of attributes include collaborative skills are essential for fostering creativity and innovation in the creative industry (87.8%), encouraging open

TABLE 5. Visionary Thinking

	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean	%
I believe that having a clear and inspiring vision is essential for driving creativity and innovation in the creative industry	100	4.34	.670	.067	86.8
I regularly communicate a compelling vision for the future of our creative organisation to our team members	100	4.25	.657	.066	85
I am open to feedback and suggestions from my team when it comes to shaping our organisation's vision	100	4.31	.647	.065	86.2
I actively seek external insights and industry trends to refine our organisation's vision and stay ahead in the creative market	100	4.42	.572	.057	88.4
Overall Mean Adaptability	100	4.33	.637	.064	86.6

TABLE 6. Collaborative Skills

	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean	%
I believe that collaborative skills are essential for fostering creativity and innovation in the creative industry	100	4.39	.650	.065	87.8
I encourage open communication and create a safe space for team members to share their creative concepts and opinions	100	4.41	.621	.062	88.2
I effectively delegate tasks and responsibilities , considering each team member's strengths and expertise	100	4.28	.740	.074	85.6
I actively seek opportunities for collaborative projects with external partners or organisations in the creative industry	100	4.27	.737	.074	85.4
Overall Mean Adaptability	100	4.34	.687	.069	86.68

communication and create a safe space for team members to share their creative concepts and opinions (88.2%), effectively delegate tasks and responsibilities, considering each team member's strengths and expertise (85.6%) and actively seek opportunities for collaborative projects with external partners or organisations in the creative industry (85.4%). Most of the items were rated positively and significantly, which means that the students think collaborative skills are a strong trait to lead successfully in the creative industry based on the above questions.

Technology Advancements

A deep understanding of technological advancements is becoming increasingly important for leaders across various industries. Technology shapes business strategies, enhances operational efficiency, and drives innovation. Leaders with a strong grasp of technological advancements can make informed decisions, lead digital transformation initiatives, and leverage technology to gain a competitive edge (Cortellazzo et al., 2019).

TABLE 7. Technology Advancements

	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean	%
I believe that having a deep understanding of technological advancements is crucial for driving innovation and creativity in the creative industry	100	4.39	.584	.058	87.8
I understand how technology can enhance the creative process and leverage it to optimise our team's performance	100	4.35	.744	.074	87
I collaborate with our IT team or technology experts to explore how emerging technologies can be applied to our creative projects	100	4.29	.820	.082	85.8
I understand how data analytics and technology can provide valuable insights for creative decision making	100	4.32	.777	.078	86.4
Overall Mean Adaptability	100	4.34	.731	.073	86.8

Table 7 presents the descriptive statistics for technology advancements. As a whole, technology advancements as a leadership attribute have a mean of 4.34 (SD=0.731) and a t-value of 4.759 ($\rho = .000$). Respondent's reason for the high number of attributes include having a deep understanding of technological advancements is crucial for driving innovation and creativity in the creative industry (87.8%), understanding how technology can enhance the creative process and leverage it to optimise our team's performance (87%), collaborate with the IT team or technology experts to explore how emerging technologies can be applied to the creative projects (85.8%) and understand how data analytics and technology can provide valuable insights for creative decision making (86.4%). Based on the above questions, most of the items were rated positively and significantly, which means that the students think technology advancements are a strong trait to success in the creative industry.

CONCLUSION

This research paper thoroughly analysed leadership development in the context of the creative industry. Through quantitative surveys, valuable insights were gained into the unique dynamics of UUM's creative industry students, who will be the future leaders in the creative industry. The findings revealed that the attributes to establish successful leadership in the creative industry are driven by adaptability, visionary thinking, collaborative skills, and a deep understanding

of technological advancements.

This paper stressed the significance of leaders in the creative industry who exemplify the key attributes and their impact on fostering adaptability, visionary thinking, collaborative skills, and a deep understanding of technological advancements, demonstrating how these qualities could contribute to their achievements and their organisations' growth. Based on the survey, the students agreed that all four attributes play a significant role in making a successful leader in the creative industry. This study will surely convince UUM management to develop more programs and effective workshops to spur a spirit of leadership among students from various backgrounds. The findings highlight that addressing the challenges requires comprehensive support mechanisms, including mentorship programs and access to resources.

This research study sheds light on the critical role that specific leadership attributes play in driving success within the dynamic and ever-evolving landscape of the creative industry. The findings underscore the undeniable significance of adaptability, visionary thinking, collaborative skills, and a deep understanding of technological advancements as key components of effective leadership in this domain.

The creative industry thrives on innovation, flexibility, and the ability to anticipate and adapt to rapid changes. Leaders with high adaptability are better equipped navigate uncertainties, embrace new challenges, and foster a culture of resilience among their teams. Visionary thinking emerges as a driving force behind transformative ideas and strategies that propel creative organisations towards their long-term goals. Such leaders inspire their teams to envision new horizons and passionately pursue collective aspirations.

Furthermore, collaborative skills are identified as a cornerstone of successful leadership in the creative industry. The capacity to build bridges across diverse talents and foster a spirit of teamwork ensures that creative projects benefit from a rich tapestry of perspectives. Effective collaboration encourages cross-disciplinary innovation, enhances problem-solving, and fosters an environment of mutual trust and respect.

Lastly, the study reinforces the paramount importance of leaders knowing deeply about technological advancements. In a digitally driven world, leaders who harness technology effectively empower their teams to push the boundaries of creativity and efficiency. They capitalise on data-driven insights, implement cutting-edge tools, and drive digital transformation initiatives that enable the organisation to remain competitive and adaptive.

As the creative industry continues to evolve at an unprecedented pace, leaders who embody adaptability, visionary thinking, collaborative skills, and technological understanding are positioned to excel as true catalysts of positive change. This research underscores the value of these attributes and serves as a guiding framework for organisations seeking to nurture and cultivate leadership excellence in the creative sphere. Ultimately, embracing and integrating these attributes will undoubtedly pave the way for a brighter, more innovative, and successful future for the creative industry.

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Nurul Nabila binti Junaidi*
School of Creative Industry Management & Performing Arts (SCIMPA).
Universiti Utara Malaysia,
06010 Sintok, Kedah, Malaysia

Mohammad Danial Mohd Razali
School of Quantitative Science (SQS),
Universiti Utara Malaysia,
06010 Sintok, Kedah, Malaysia

Faisal Zulhumadi
School of Technology Management and Logistics (STML),
Universiti Utara Malaysia,
06010 Sintok, Kedah, Malaysia

Nur Marissa Vee Senap
School of Computing (SOC),
Universiti Utara Malaysia,
06010 Sintok, Kedah, Malaysia

*Corresponding author: bellajay937@gmail.com