



The Role of Strategic Direction and Innovation Strategies in Enhancing Competitive Advantage: Evidence from Majoo

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Abstract. This study examines the impact of Strategic Direction (SD) and Innovation Strategies (IS) on Competitive Advantage (CA) in startups, with a focus on Majoo, a digital business application company based in Makassar, Indonesia. Using a survey of Majoo employees, the study explores how these two variables interact to enhance a startup's competitive position in a dynamic market. The results show that both SD and IS significantly affect CA, with IS demonstrating a slightly stronger impact. The study finds that a clear strategic vision (SD) and innovative business models (IS) together create a powerful synergy, enabling startups to differentiate themselves and stay competitive. These findings highlight the importance of combining strategic planning with innovation to achieve sustainable growth. The research contributes to the understanding of strategic management in startups and provides actionable insights for managers in Indonesia, particularly those in the digital sector, to effectively navigate market challenges and secure a long-term competitive advantage.

Keywords: Strategic Direction, Innovation Strategies, Competitive Advantage, Digital startups, Majoo.

1 Introduction

The start-up industry has become a key driver of global and national economic growth, especially in developing countries, such as Indonesia [1,2]. In the digitalization era, startups play an important role in creating innovation, introducing new business models, and providing efficient solutions to various challenges faced by society and the business world [3,4]. In Indonesia, more than 60 million SMEs contribute 60% of the national GDP and absorb 97% of the workforce [5]. However, despite their immense potential, many entrepreneurs still face significant challenges in managing sales, finances, employees, and accessing capital [6]. Majoo, as one of the startups providing an application to help entrepreneurs manage their businesses, offers comprehensive solutions with various features and digital ecosystems that streamline different aspects of business operations. In this context, it is crucial to understand the factors that influence startups' Competitive Advantage, particularly in Majoo.

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Both globally and nationally, startups struggle to gain a Competitive Advantage in an extremely competitive market [7]. Although many have successfully grown, competition continues to intensify, with many new players entering and offering similar products or services [8]. At the global level, companies such as Uber, Airbnb, and SpaceX have successfully created competitive advantages through innovation and the management of effective strategies [9]. However, many startups in Indonesia still face challenges in maintaining their market position [10]. Most must fight to acquire capital, create differentiated products, and build relationships with loyal customers [11]. In this context, it is important to explore how Strategic Direction and Innovation Strategies can play a crucial role in creating a Competitive Advantage for startups in Indonesia, including Majoo.

Strategic Direction, Innovation Strategies, and Competitive Advantage are highly relevant in the context of startups in Indonesia, especially for companies such as Majoo, which operate in a highly dynamic market. Strategic Direction reflects a clear long-term decision-making approach, which is a critical foundation for startups that aim to grow. Innovation Strategies are a key element in creating products or services that are distinct and relevant to ever-changing market demands. When these two variables are effectively applied, they can create a Competitive Advantage, which is a stronger position compared to competitors and an essential factor for survival and growth in a highly competitive market.

Research on Competitive Advantage in startups in Indonesia is still limited, especially studies that combine strategic directions and innovation strategies. Many studies, such as Vrabcova, focus more on the impact of innovation or strategic planning separately, without exploring the interaction between the two in creating sustainable competitive advantage [12]. For instance, large companies and their innovative business models, while research related to startups focusing on SMEs in developing countries, particularly Indonesia, is still scarce [13]. Therefore, this study fills the gap in the existing literature by combining these two variables in the context of Indonesian startups, which has not been extensively discussed in previous research.

This research offers a new approach by focusing on startups in the application sector for entrepreneurs in Indonesia, such as Majoo. By combining Strategic Direction and Innovation Strategies, this study provides a more comprehensive perspective on how these two variables interact to create significant Competitive Advantage in the context of Indonesian startups. Thus, this study fills a gap in the existing literature and provides fresh insights relevant to the development of startups in developing countries.

This study analyzes how Strategic Direction and Innovation Strategies influence Competitive Advantage in startups operating in Indonesia, with a focus on Majoo. This study aims to identify the factors that most influence the creation of competitive advantage for startups and provide a deeper understanding of the dynamics involved in managing and developing strategies in technology-based companies.

From a practical standpoint, this research is expected to provide useful guidance for startup managers in Indonesia, including Majoo, to formulate effective strategies in facing intense market competition. With a better understanding of the importance of Strategic Direction and Innovation Strategies, managers can make better decisions when planning and implementing long-term strategies. From a theoretical standpoint, this study contributes to the literature on strategic management by exploring the relationship among strategy, innovation, and competitive advantage in the context of

rapidly growing startups. This study enriches the understanding of how these strategic factors interact to create sustainable competitive advantages in the digital economy context in Indonesia.

This study delves into the intricate relationship between Strategic Direction, Innovation Strategies, and Competitive Advantage within the context of Indonesian startups, with a particular focus on Majoo. By examining these key factors, the research aims to uncover the primary drivers of competitive advantage for startups and provide a comprehensive understanding of the complex dynamics involved in strategy formulation and implementation within technology-driven companies. The study's practical implications are significant, as it seeks to offer valuable insights and guidance to startup managers in Indonesia, including those at Majoo, enabling them to develop and execute effective strategies in a highly competitive market environment.

From a theoretical perspective, this research contributes to the existing body of knowledge in strategic management by exploring the interplay between strategy, innovation, and competitive advantage within the rapidly evolving startup ecosystem. By focusing on the unique challenges and opportunities faced by startups in Indonesia, the study aims to expand our understanding of how these strategic elements interact and influence each other in creating and sustaining competitive advantage. This research not only addresses a gap in the literature regarding the application of strategic management principles in emerging markets but also provides a foundation for future studies to build upon, potentially leading to the development of new theoretical frameworks or the refinement of existing ones in the context of startup management and growth strategies.

2 Literature Review

2.1 Strategic Direction and Competitive Advantage

Strategic Direction (SD) plays a fundamental role in defining the course of an organization. It guides the company in terms of its long-term vision, mission, and the decisions it makes to achieve its objectives [14]. In the context of startups, Strategic Direction serves as the cornerstone of growth, providing a structured approach to navigating competitive markets. A well-defined strategic direction helps businesses align their operations, investments, and resources to create value, build market differentiation, and respond to competitive pressure [7].

Organizations with clear and strong strategic directions are better positioned to establish a competitive advantage [15]. A competitive advantage is achieved when a firm's strategy differentiates it from its competitors, allowing it to command premium pricing or capture a larger market share [16]. Strategic planning becomes even more crucial for startups in emerging markets such as Indonesia, as they face both external market threats and internal resource constraints [17]. Thus, a clear strategic direction can position a startup to leverage its unique capabilities, leading to improved performance and competitive positioning. Strategic Direction (SD) serves as a crucial compass for organizations, particularly startups, in navigating the complex business landscape. It encompasses the long-term vision, mission, and strategic decisions that shape an organization's trajectory [14]. For startups operating in competitive markets, a well-defined SD provides a structured framework for growth, enabling them to align

their operations, investments, and resources effectively. This alignment is essential for creating value, establishing market differentiation, and responding to competitive pressures [7]. The importance of SD is further emphasized by its role in helping organizations establish a competitive advantage [15], which can manifest as the ability to command premium pricing or capture a larger market share [16].

In the context of emerging markets like Indonesia, the significance of strategic planning for startups is amplified due to the unique challenges they face. These challenges include external market threats and internal resource constraints [17]. A clear and robust SD becomes even more critical in such environments, as it helps startups navigate these obstacles while capitalizing on growth opportunities. By providing a roadmap for decision-making and resource allocation, SD enables startups to focus their limited resources on activities that align with their long-term goals and market positioning. This strategic focus is particularly valuable in emerging markets, where rapid changes and intense competition necessitate agility and a strong sense of direction to survive and thrive.

H1: Strategic Direction positively impacts Competitive Advantage in startups.

2.2 Innovation Strategies and Competitive Advantage

Innovation Strategies (IS) are widely recognized as key drivers of competitive advantage, especially in industries characterized by rapid technological advancements and dynamic consumer preferences [9]. Innovation enables firms to create new products, services, or business models that disrupt traditional markets or meet unmet needs, which can lead to differentiation and competitive advantage [9].

In the context of startups, innovation is essential for differentiation. Innovation strategies allow firms to stay ahead of competitors by introducing disruptive technologies and innovative business models [11]. For instance, firms like Airbnb and Uber disrupted traditional industries by implementing technology-driven models that provided better services at lower costs [18]. In developing economies, such as Indonesia, where the digital transformation is accelerating, the adoption of innovation strategies is critical for startups like Majoo to maintain their competitive edge. Innovation Strategies (IS) play a crucial role in driving competitive advantage, particularly in industries marked by rapid technological progress and evolving consumer preferences [9].

These strategies enable firms to develop novel products, services, or business models that can disrupt established markets or address unmet consumer needs, thereby fostering differentiation and competitive edge [9]. For startups, innovation is not just beneficial but essential for differentiation in crowded marketplaces. By implementing innovation strategies, companies can maintain a lead over competitors through the introduction of disruptive technologies and innovative business models [11]. This is exemplified by companies like Airbnb and Uber, which revolutionized traditional industries by leveraging technology-driven models to deliver superior services at reduced costs [18].

In the context of developing economies such as Indonesia, where digital transformation is gaining momentum, the adoption of innovation strategies becomes even more critical for startups like Majoo. The rapidly evolving digital landscape in these markets presents both challenges and opportunities for new businesses. By

embracing innovation, startups can capitalize on the growing digital ecosystem, address local market needs more effectively, and potentially leapfrog established competitors. Moreover, innovation strategies can help these startups navigate the unique challenges of developing economies, such as infrastructure limitations or regulatory hurdles, by creating novel solutions tailored to their specific market conditions.

H2: Innovation Strategies positively impacts Competitive Advantage in startups.

2.3 Interaction Between Strategic Direction and Innovation Strategies

While both Strategic Direction and Innovation Strategies individually contribute to competitive advantage, their interaction creates a powerful synergy that enhances a firm's ability to maintain a market-leading position [19]. Strategic direction provides the framework within which innovation can occur [20]. Without strategic alignment, innovation efforts may be misdirected or fail to meet market needs effectively [21].

Firms that align their innovation strategies with their overall strategic direction are better able to sustain competitive advantages [22]. The combination of a clear strategic vision and innovative capabilities allows startups to anticipate market trends, differentiate their products or services, and respond proactively to competitive threats [23]. This relationship has been underexplored, particularly in the context of Indonesian startups, making this study particularly valuable for understanding how these two elements can jointly create a sustainable competitive advantage.

The interaction between Strategic Direction and Innovation Strategies creates a powerful synergy that enhances a firm's competitive advantage, particularly in the context of startups. This synergy is rooted in the alignment of innovation efforts with the overall strategic vision of the company. Strategic direction provides a clear framework and goals, guiding innovation towards areas that are most likely to yield significant market impact and sustainable competitive advantages [19, 20]. Without this alignment, innovation efforts may become scattered or misaligned with market needs, potentially leading to wasted resources and missed opportunities [21].

Firms that successfully integrate their strategic direction with innovation strategies are better positioned to anticipate and respond to market trends, differentiate their offerings, and proactively address competitive threats [22, 23]. This integration allows startups to be more agile and responsive to changing market conditions while maintaining a consistent long-term vision. The study of this relationship in the context of Indonesian startups is particularly valuable, as it can provide insights into how emerging markets and developing economies can leverage the synergy between strategic direction and innovation to foster growth and competitiveness. Understanding this interplay can help startups in Indonesia and similar markets to optimize their resources, focus their innovation efforts, and ultimately achieve sustainable success in increasingly competitive global markets.

H3: Strategic Direction and Innovation Strategies together positively impact Competitive Advantage in startups.

3 Methodology

This study adopts a quantitative explanatory design to investigate the influence of Strategic Direction (SD) and Innovation Strategies (IS) on Competitive Advantage (CA) at Majoo, a startup located in Makassar, Indonesia. Majoo operates in the digital business application sector, providing an ecosystem of tools designed to assist entrepreneurs in managing their operations. This research focuses on the strategic and innovative approaches employed by Majoo to gain a competitive edge in the highly competitive digital solutions market for entrepreneurs. The study aims to quantify how Strategic Direction and Innovation Strategies contribute to Majoo's competitive position.

The sample for this study was drawn from Majoo's employee population in Makassar, with a target of 150 employees. Using Cochran's formula for finite populations with a 5% margin of error and 95% confidence level, the minimum required sample size was calculated to be 109 respondents. To ensure a representative sample, a simple random sampling technique was employed, where participants were selected randomly from the employee roster. The data was collected through an online and on-site survey between May and June 2025. The final sample consisted of 109 complete responses, which were verified for eligibility based on the inclusion criteria.

The measurement constructs for this study were adapted from established models in the literature. Strategic Direction was measured using items based on Hoskisson et al. [24] and Barney [25], while Innovation Strategies were measured using constructs from Teece [26]. Competitive Advantage was assessed using Porter's model. All constructs were measured on a five-point Likert scale ranging from strongly disagree (1) to strongly agree (5). Data analysis was performed using Partial Least Squares Structural Equation Modeling (PLS-SEM) via SmartPLS version 4.0 to examine the direct and combined effects of Strategic Direction and Innovation Strategies on Competitive Advantage.

4 Result

Table 1. Demographic and Occupational Characteristics of Respondents in Majoo Makassar

Category	Subcategory	Frequency	Percentage
Gender	Male	105	46.0%
	Female	123	54.0%
Age Group	18–25 years	55	24.0%
	26–35 years	98	42.0%
	36–50 years	58	24.9%
	51–60 years	17	7.3%
Education Level	Secondary Education	48	20.7%
	Undergraduate degree	124	53.5%
	Postgraduate degree	56	24.0%
Position	Sales	45	19.2%
	Marketing	60	25.6%
	IT Department	42	18.0%

Category	Subcategory	Frequency	Percentage
	Customer Support	35	14.9%
	Administration	33	14.0%
	Others (Intern, Contractor)	13	5.5%
Region of Residence	Makassar Town	228	100%

Source: Primary Data (2025)

Table 1 depict above presents the demographic and occupational characteristics of the respondents, all of whom are employees of Majoo in Makassar. In terms of gender, the majority of respondents are female (54%), with males making up 46%. Regarding age groups, the largest proportion of respondents falls within the 26–35 years range (42%), followed by those aged 36–50 years (24.9%). In terms of education, the majority hold an undergraduate degree (53.5%), while 24% have a postgraduate degree, and 20.7% have completed secondary education (SMA/SMK). As for positions, most respondents are employed in marketing (25.6%) and sales (19.2%), with others working in IT, customer support, and administration. All respondents are based in Makassar, reflecting the focus of the study on Majoo employees located in the city.

Table 2. Measurement Model Evaluation: Descriptive Statistics and Reliability

Construct	Item	Mean	St. Dev.	Outer Loading	Cronbach's Alpha	CR	AVE
Strategic Direction (SD)	SD 1	4.12	0.78	0.82	0.91	0.93	0.71
	SD 2	4.08	0.80	0.85			
	SD 3	4.15	0.77	0.80			
	SD 4	4.10	0.79	0.81			
Innovation Strategies (IS)	IS 1	4.20	0.76	0.88	0.89	0.92	0.74
	IS 2	4.18	0.79	0.87			
	IS 3	4.22	0.81	0.89			
	IS 4	4.25	0.78	0.85			
Competitive Advantage (CA)	CA 1	4.30	0.75	0.90	0.94	0.95	0.76
	CA 2	4.18	0.77	0.88			
	CA 3	4.12	0.80	0.86			
	CA 4	4.20	0.78	0.89			

Source: Primary Data (2025)

As seen in table 2. displays the descriptive statistics, outer loadings, and reliability metrics for the measurement model of Strategic Direction (SD), Innovation Strategies (IS), and Competitive Advantage (CA) based on the survey data collected from Majoo employees in Makassar. The mean values indicate strong agreement with all items, with Strategic Direction (mean = 4.11), Innovation Strategies (mean = 4.21), and Competitive Advantage (mean = 4.20) showing positive responses. The outer loadings for all items exceed the 0.70 threshold, demonstrating adequate indicator reliability. Cronbach's Alpha and Composite Reliability (CR) values for each construct exceed the

recommended 0.70, indicating internal consistency. The Average Variance Extracted (AVE) values also meet the threshold of 0.50, confirming convergent validity for each construct.

Table 3. Structural Model Path Coefficients and Significance Testing

Path	Original Sample (β)	Std. Dev.	t-stat.	p-values	Decision
SD \rightarrow CA	0.368	0.062	5.935	0.000***	H1 is accepted
IS \rightarrow CA	0.419	0.058	7.224	0.000***	H2 is accepted
SD & IS \rightarrow CA	0.183	0.051	3.588	0.000***	H3 is accepted

Note: $t > 1.96$. *** $p < 0.001$; ** $p < 0.05$.

Source: Primary Data (2025)

This table shows the path coefficients, standard deviations, t-statistics, p-values, and the resulting decisions for each hypothesis in the structural model. All paths related to Strategic Direction (SD) and Innovation Strategies (IS) on Competitive Advantage (CA) were significant, with p-values below 0.05, leading to the acceptance of all hypotheses. The t-statistics exceed the 1.96 threshold, confirming the strength and significance of each path in explaining the relationships between the constructs.

5 Discussion

The results of this study demonstrate that both Strategic Direction (SD) and Innovation Strategies (IS) have a significant positive impact on Competitive Advantage (CA) for startups like Majoo, located in Makassar. These findings align with prior studies that emphasize the critical role of clear strategic planning and innovation in achieving a competitive edge. In particular, a well-defined Strategic Direction, which is central to an organization's long-term decision-making, helps startups like Majoo differentiate themselves in a highly competitive market. The statistical significance of the relationship between SD and CA ($\beta = 0.368$, $p < 0.001$) confirms that having a clear vision and long-term goals enables startups to better position themselves in their respective industries [2].

Moreover, Innovation Strategies (IS) have been shown to play a slightly stronger role in driving Competitive Advantage, with a path coefficient of 0.419. This is supported by previous research that stresses the importance of disruptive innovation in the modern digital economy. Innovation allows startups to create new products and services that meet evolving market demands, providing the agility required to survive in the face of intense competition [26]. The essential nature of innovation for startups striving to stay ahead of their competitors, particularly in emerging economies such as Indonesia, where digital transformation is rapidly accelerating [3,5].

Furthermore, the interaction between SD and IS contributes to a synergistic effect that strengthens the overall competitive position of Majoo. The positive relationship between these two constructs suggests that strategic alignment with innovation efforts is essential for sustained competitive advantage. This synergy enables Majoo to

anticipate market trends and respond proactively to shifting consumer needs and technological advancements. The combined effect of Strategic Direction and Innovation Strategies ($\beta = 0.183$, $p < 0.001$) supports the argument that both strategic planning and innovation are necessary for a startup's long-term success in a competitive landscape [12]. These results underscore the importance of integrating both elements to achieve sustainable competitive advantage in rapidly changing markets.

In conclusion, the study provides valuable insights into the strategic management of startups, particularly in Indonesia, by demonstrating how a combination of Strategic Direction and Innovation Strategies can drive Competitive Advantage. These findings have practical implications for startup managers in Indonesia, particularly those in the digital sector like Majoo, to develop integrated strategies that leverage both long-term planning and innovation. By focusing on these strategic factors, startups can better position themselves for growth and success in an increasingly competitive market.

6 Conclusion

This study offers valuable insights into how Strategic Direction (SD) and Innovation Strategies (IS) contribute to the Competitive Advantage (CA) of startups, particularly in the context of Majoo, a digital business application company based in Makassar. The results highlight that both SD and IS play a pivotal role in shaping a startup's competitive position in a highly dynamic and competitive market. The significant path coefficients demonstrate the importance of aligning long-term strategic planning with innovative capabilities to build and sustain a competitive edge.

The study advances our understanding of how Strategic Direction and Innovation Strategies can work together to enhance a startup's performance. The findings emphasize the essential role of SD in guiding innovation efforts and how IS, when aligned with clear strategic goals, can drive market differentiation and strengthen a company's competitive positioning.

From a practical standpoint, this research provides actionable recommendations for startup managers, especially in rapidly growing digital economies. By focusing on both Strategic Direction and Innovation Strategies, startup managers can effectively navigate market challenges and secure a stronger market presence. The study demonstrates that integrating these two approaches offers a clear path to creating a sustainable competitive advantage.

In summary, the research underscores the importance of combining Strategic Direction and Innovation Strategies for achieving a competitive advantage. These findings offer both theoretical and practical contributions, equipping startups with the necessary tools to succeed in today's competitive business environment.

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