

Leveraging AI for Strategic Advantage in Entrepreneurial Development

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Abstract-This research paper explores the symbiotic relationship between entrepreneurship and artificial intelligence. It investigates the impact of AI-driven strategies on entrepreneurial development, focusing on enhancing innovation, improving decision making and driving business growth. While extensive research highlights AI's operational advantages, its impact on entrepreneurial development remains insufficiently explored. Through literature reviews and case studies, this paper provides insights into strategies employed by AI-driven startups and their success factors. It also explores the wider impact of AI-driven entrepreneurship on the economy, employment, and industries. This research is a valuable resource for entrepreneurs, policymakers, and academics navigating the AI-infused entrepreneurial landscape. The study contributes to businesses and policymakers aiming to leverage AI for both operational efficiency and creative innovation, providing a framework that connects AI implementation to successful entrepreneurial performance.

Keywords - Entrepreneurship, Artificial Intelligence, Startups, Innovation, Decision-making, Entrepreneurial development

Introduction

In the rapidly changing landscape of entrepreneurship, the integration of Artificial Intelligence (AI) has emerged as a transformative force for reshaping the traditional business paradigms and offering unprecedented opportunities for success. As AI technologies are growing continuously in various sectors, entrepreneurs find themselves at the forefront of a rapidly changing business environment. These two transformative phenomena viz., Entrepreneurship and AI, have converged in an era defined by innovation and rapid technological progress, setting the stage for a profound reshaping of industries, economies, and societies (Upadhyae *et al.*, 2023). With the development of AI, deployment strategies must take security and employment displacement into account. According to a survey conducted during the Yale CEO Summit in June 2023, 119 CEOs took part in that survey and found that 42% of CEOs think that in the next five to ten years, AI would be a threat to humans. According to a second survey, 62 percent of Americans believe that workers would be impacted by AI use over the course of 20 years (Chukwuka & Igweh, 2024). In that sense, AI also holds critical consequences for organizations facing increased pressure in terms of productivity and the need to stay competitive. This situation may lead to increases in unemployment and inequality (Giuggioli & Pellegrini, 2023). However, AI has the potential to offer both positive and negative consequences to society at large. Here, a prominent role will be played by entrepreneurs and the ways in which they are able to use these technologies. A variety of potential approaches, scenarios and contrasting findings still populate academic debates around AI, creating a "green field" (Levesque *et al.*, 2020). We therefore intend to perform a systematic literature review with regards to the relationship between AI and entrepreneurial development, offering potential directions for further research.

There are several reasons why this inquiry is appropriate for this study. It is the first to provide a much-needed systematic framework to fully capitalize on current academic insights. AI is no longer an elite innovation; its affordability and accessibility democratize opportunity for all entrepreneurs, not just large firms. This shift is set to trigger an exponential impact on global entrepreneurial development. COVID-19 acted as a catalyst for digital transformation, forcing organizations to adopt remote and automated AI processes. This post-crisis momentum, fueled by massive recovery funds like the Next Generation EU (NGEU), provides entrepreneurs with a unique, subsidized opportunity to accelerate their digital evolution and sustainable recovery (Giuggioli & Pellegrini, 2023). Thus, the study aims to highlight how the frequent use of AI by decision-makers can improve the performance of entrepreneurs and established firms.

The objective of the research is to analyse the relationship between entrepreneurship and artificial intelligence (AI) with a focus on how AI technologies influence entrepreneurial opportunity recognition, business model innovation, and startup performance. Secondly, the study aims to examine AI's impact on entrepreneurship through literature reviews and case studies, focusing on startup strategies, success factors, and economic implications to provide actionable insights for entrepreneurs, policymakers, and investors. Thus, the study positions itself as an attempt to understand the role of AI in the current economy and how it can be harnessed to generate sustainable growth, competitiveness and relevant entrepreneurial initiatives.

Research Background and Theoretical Foundations

Artificial Intelligence

According to the widely used definition provided by the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD), an AI system is defined as a machine-based system that, for explicit or implicit goals, infers from inputs how to generate outputs (predictions, content, recommendations and decisions) capable of influencing the environment (OECD, 2025). It can be thought of as the “ability of a machine to perform cognitive functions that we associate with human minds, such as perceiving, reasoning, learning, interacting with the environment, problem-solving, decision-making, and even demonstrating creativity” (Rai et al., 2019, p. iii). It is described as a system that can mimic human intelligence in the performance of particular tasks, such as speech recognition, visual insight, suggestion, classification, and decision-making (Chukwuka & Igweh, 2024). AI is integral to the Internet of things (IoT), which is an extended and connected network of physical devices that can interact and communicate amongst themselves and can be controlled or monitored remotely (Ashton, 2009). Researchers have dealt with automation using AI technology since the 1950s with theoretical machine learning models, but the recent advancements of revolution 4.0 have provided them with a platform to actualize these theoretical models (French *et al.*, 2021). In this revolution, AI is considered a dominant research area and its applications are expected to spread into any domain requiring human intelligence (Oztemel & Gursev, 2018).

Artificial intelligence is considered as a key driver of both technological and economic growth (Shoufu et al., 2022) and provides new opportunities for companies (Pfau & Rimpp, 2021). Specifically, as academics such as Gupta and Dhawan (2018) pointed out, AI is a way to make a computer think similarly to how humans think, i.e., intelligently. Thus, it is essential to analyze how AI may impact global productivity and other aspects of life in the near future (Gupta et al., 2023).

AI is a key element in the development and management of knowledge (Pai et al., 2022). Authors such as Dean et al. (2020) pointed to the need to adopt artificial intelligence techniques, as each technique enables groundbreaking implications for organizational efficiency. Technologies such as big data and predictive analytics enable organizations to create new products or services to meet changing customer needs (George et al., 2014), although for information to be of value, effective data management is essential (Jamil & Yukongdi, 2020).

AI, one of the most advanced technologies (Lv et al., 2022; Khanam et al., 2022), has influenced the global economy, thus impacting its development. It has been used for the optimization of business strategies (Saura et al., 2021), enabling organizations to develop more efficient business goals and strategies, such as enhancing service quality, productivity, and cost-effective service excellence (Wirtz, 2020). In sum, it responds to and optimizes processes with the aim of providing appropriate responses to user needs.

Nevertheless, there are still open challenges to be tackled if the adoption of AI in businesses is to be successful, for example the scalability of AI, the lack of AI experts, and the limited understanding of AI in society in general. These are roadblocks hindering the development of AI for business leaders and entrepreneurs (Kaplan & Haenlein, 2020).

Entrepreneurship

Entrepreneurship is an activity that involves the discovery of new venture ideas, evaluations, and the exploitation of opportunities (Shane & Venkataraman, 2000). Entrepreneurial practice is crucial because it drives economic growth, creates employment opportunities, fosters innovation (Obschonka and Audretsch 2020a) and plays a crucial role in the development of society by addressing social issues (Wang et al. 2023c). Entrepreneurs must constantly adapt to market conditions, customer preferences and emerging technologies. This adaptability enables them to remain competitive in the face of emerging trends and challenges. The latest of these challenges is artificial intelligence. With organizations becoming increasingly digital (Dubey et al., 2020), we need to understand the role they play in the sustainability and growth of the business and the positioning of the organization in the market. Given the rapid changes occurring in the market and the increasing competition due to globalization, it becomes essential for entrepreneurs to use advanced technologies to gain a competitive advantage (Darwish et al., 2020). Thus, we also need to understand the benefits and risks that may arise from their use. Entrepreneurs can leverage AI technologies to improve their entrepreneurial operations, automate processes, and collect and analyze data to make better decisions and create innovative solutions (Obschonka and Audretsch 2020a). AI has significantly influenced the strategies and procedures of entrepreneurial organizations, as it helps to access and collect relevant data (Davidsson, 2016), which changes from being just data to relevant smart data (George et al., 2014), which in turn allows AI to become an enabler of new entrepreneurship ideas (von Briel et al., 2018). Mitrache et al. (2024) argue that digital entrepreneurship represents a transformative business paradigm in which value creation is increasingly driven by digital technologies that reshape traditional organizational and market structures. This division helps connect the AI with observable business outcomes, namely that automation increases efficiency (cost and time), insights increase the quality of decisions (revenue, risk reduction), and interaction supports the customer experience (retention, conversion).

The AI–Entrepreneurship Nexus

Due to rapid technological advancements and global market shifts, the ability of entrepreneurs to adapt and leverage new technologies has become increasingly vital. The ability of AI to improve decision-making, reduce costs, and accelerate business model innovation cycles can significantly reduce the barriers to entry for start-ups, making entrepreneurship more accessible and inclusive. However, with a few notable exceptions, most academic research on the subject has been superficial. Further research is crucial for developing strategies that leverage the benefits of AI while preserving the entrepreneurial responsibility that drives innovation and long-term economic growth. This vision invites policymakers, educators, and business leaders to consider how to prepare the next generation of entrepreneurs for a future in which AI tools are integral to entrepreneurial success. In this respect, this review not only highlights the transformative potential of AI in entrepreneurship but also calls for a balanced approach to its adoption (Uriarte et al. 2025). In recent years, the combination of cloud (for scaling), ready-made AI services (APIs, models, OCR, speech), and low-code/no-code platforms (for automation and rapid applications) has significantly reduced the barriers to entry. This changes the way a start-up looks, so companies can build a product faster, with a smaller team, focusing on the problem, workflow and distribution, not on reinventing the core technology (Marius & Lucian, 2025).

The relationship between AI and entrepreneurship has become a major research area, and this importance is reflected in three recent review studies that examine how AI is transforming entrepreneurial activities. Giuggioli and Pellegrini (2023) analyze 60 studies up to 2020 to explore AI's impact on entrepreneurship, presenting a framework that emphasizes AI's role in enhancing decision-making and fostering business opportunities. Although the framework is well structured, its main objective is to understand existing studies; thus, it does not provide a comprehensive research agenda. Li et al. (2022) conducted a bibliometric analysis of AI in entrepreneurial management, reviewing 123 WoS papers published up to early 2021 and identifying key research clusters, but the analysis was limited by its scope and methodology. Blanco-González-Tejero et al. (2023) conducted a descriptive bibliometric study on AI and entrepreneurship, highlighting key topics but lacking in-depth analysis and future research proposals. These three reviews show that AI is increasingly important in entrepreneurship research. Despite these efforts, several gaps remain

in the methodological and theoretical perspectives applied to understand entrepreneurs' growing interest in adopting AI-based technologies. Therefore, the central objectives of the study are to synthesize existing knowledge, identify structural gaps, and establish theoretical frameworks to guide future research, thus fostering innovative research on AI technologies in entrepreneurial development.

In recent years, AI technologies have become significantly more accessible to entrepreneurs, driven by advances such as generative AI and revolutionary tools such as ChatGPT (Michael et al. 2023). These developments have gained media attention, highlighting the transformative potential of AI. AI tools are now more affordable and easier to use, enabling smaller businesses and startups to automate tasks, improve decision-making and innovate effectively (Upadhyay et al. 2022). This accessibility has enabled entrepreneurs to scale their operations and develop new products and services (Michael et al. 2023). COVID-19 pandemic, coupled with these technological advances, has accelerated digital transformation across industries. AI has played a key role in helping businesses adapt to changing market conditions and customer behaviors. In addition, cultural and generational shifts toward digitization have increased the adoption of AI tools in everyday entrepreneurial practices (Truong et al. 2023). The growing interest in AI, fueled by these factors, is also expected to attract increased attention from the scientific community, which will impact both the quantity and quality of research.

The AI spectrum in Entrepreneurship

AI has emerged as a dynamic force with the potential to reshape entrepreneurship worldwide (Ayinaddis, 2025). It fosters creativity, strategic planning and market insights, enabling entrepreneurs to address challenges and seize opportunities. By improving productivity and enabling innovation, AI drives entrepreneurial success and sustains growth in competitive markets (AI-Mamary, 2025). For MSMEs and start-ups looking to harness the power of AI, it is important to first understand the key types of AI most relevant to their journey. Table 1 below provides an overview of these AI categories, setting the stage for successful adoption and deployment. Entrepreneurs of all kinds, from large corporations and MSMEs to innovative start-ups and even informal “mom and pop” shops, adopt AI with varying levels of capacity and motivation. Recent research highlights that while large firms are often the first to experiment with new AI tools, smaller businesses, particularly in developing countries face distinct challenges (Kergroach and Héritier, 2025). In addition to connectivity, these include limited financial resources and, more significantly, uncertainty about how to implement AI effectively.

Through a survey conducted across the global Empretec network, many small business owners stressed that they see AI as “complex”, “expensive”, and “out of touch” with their daily operations. Their perception is shaped by limited awareness of AI's potential and a skills and knowledge gap in applying it to real business challenges, like managing inventory, speeding up accounting, finding new suppliers, or connecting with customers in smarter ways. For technology-driven start-ups, AI is not just a tool – it can be a growth engine. It enables faster scaling, sharpens customer acquisition and unlocks entirely new products and services. By automating routine tasks and delivering real-time, data-driven insights, AI can empower start-ups to move faster, make better decisions, and innovate with purpose. This translates into benefits for customers, such as instant responses through chatbots, more personalized experiences by offering matching products or services, and easier communication across languages with advanced AI powered translation platforms (World Economic Forum, 2025)

Table 1: AI applications for Entrepreneurship

Categorization	Description	Business relevance and type of business
Generative	AI that creates content - text, images, code and more	Used for marketing, prototyping, pitch decks, and product design (MSMEs, start-ups)
Predictive	AI that identifies patterns in data, forecasts outcomes such as- sales trends, customer behavior, inventory needs	Helps with decision-making, resource planning, and investor readiness (SMEs, growth-stage start-ups)
Conversational	AI that interacts with users - voice assistants, customer service bots	Enhances customer engagement and reduces support costs (MSMEs, start-ups)

Autonomous	AI that acts independently: robotics, autonomous vehicles, smart logistics	Increases operational efficiency, brings AI-driven decision intelligence, and scalable innovation (For more advanced enterprises and deep-tech start-ups and innovation hubs (advanced SMEs, scale-ups))
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Source: *The New Frontier in Entrepreneurship*, 2025

In developing economies, many MSMEs and start-ups begin their AI journey with accessible, off-the-shelf tools, like chatbots for customer service, to explore what is possible and understand its benefits before investing in advanced solutions or costly infrastructure. It is highlighted in below mentioned case studies, how a large corporation adopted AI through strategic, phased approaches - offering lessons and inspiration that MSMEs and start-ups in developing countries can adapt to their own scale and resources.

Case Study 1- Sony's outline for AI Adoption: Hiroaki Kitano, Executive Deputy President and Chief Technology Officer at Sony Group Corporation, outlines company's pragmatic approach to AI adoption, a model that can hold lessons for developing ecosystems. Accordingly, Sony's strategy hinges on three complementary pathways:

1. integrating off-the-shelf tools like ChatGPT for widespread productivity gains,
2. collaborating with start-ups and external partners to tap into specialized expertise, and
3. building in-house AI systems for core needs.

This tiered approach mirrors the incremental skill-building, where starting with ready-made solutions allows teams to build confidence before advancing to complex AI development. Kitano emphasizes that this phased progression, from using existing tools to co-creating and finally developing proprietary systems helps mitigate risks while maximizing learning. Sony's model demonstrates how an ecosystem can scaffold growth: by first leveraging global tools, then fostering local partnerships, and ultimately nurturing homegrown innovation.

Another case study indicates that changing mindsets is a first step toward embracing AI. Smallscale entrepreneurs can start by identifying a single, time-consuming task and building a solution around it. Whether it is answering customer questions or organizing documents, repetitive daily tasks are a smart place to begin. The goal is not to become a technology company overnight, but to take a step-by-step approach, seeing AI as a tool to expand market access, boost productivity, and reduce operational costs.

Case Study 2- Cidadania4u's targeted AI integration for legal services: In an interview conducted with Demetrio Magno De Oliveira Souto, Chief Technology Officer of Brazil's legal services business Cidadania4u, in October, 2024, he demonstrates how AI can drive efficiency and innovation for smaller enterprises. The business' experience of achieving a 26-fold productivity increase since January 2023 showcases the transformative potential of AI when tailored to specific business needs. The company adopted a "precision augmentation" approach, developing bespoke AI tools to address unique challenges in citizenship documentation, such as cross-referencing century-old records across languages and jurisdictions. "Off-the-shelf solutions could not handle our specialized workflows," he explains. "We built custom assistants that integrate seamlessly with our existing processes - whether helping employees match 19th-century Portuguese birth records with modern Italian forms or streamlining multilingual client updates."

This case underscores two critical barriers for SMEs, namely the affordability gap in AI tools that meet niche requirements and the integration challenge of adapting technology to legacy workflows. Cidadania4u's approach: developing AI in an incremental and problem-specific manner is an example of how resourceconstrained businesses successfully adopt AI. As Magno De Oliviera Souto notes, "The breakthrough came when we stopped viewing AI as a standalone solution and started treating it as a cultural mindset. Now, teams ask: 'Could AI help here?' before defaulting to manual processes."

The above case highlights that Cidadania4u advanced its AI tool through exchanges with other companies in online chat groups, discovering new ways to use AI for growth and innovation. These networks are especially valuable in developing countries, where formal infrastructure and institutional support may be limited.

Starting with basic AI literacy and providing hands-on training with accessible tools builds confidence and encourages innovation. Such an approach helps entrepreneurs create or adopt AI solutions tailored to local challenges, avoiding limited return on investment, stalled projects, or ineffective tools. When paired with entrepreneurship training, off-the-shelf AI applications can further demystify the technology and provide business owners with the skills and confidence needed for effective adoption (UNCTAD, 2025). The below mentioned case study highlights Microsoft's strategies for AI diffusion.

Case Study 3: Microsoft's framework for responsible AI diffusion: In an interview conducted with Natasha Crampton, Microsoft's Chief Responsible AI Officer in December, 2024, she outlines the company's comprehensive strategy for inclusive AI adoption. Its approach is built around three interdependent pillars:

1. localized capacity-building programmes (such as the AI Business School),
2. open-source infrastructure (through platforms like Azure AI Studio), and
3. ethical governance (via its Responsible AI Framework).

Together, these elements combine access to skills-development, technology and trust-building to achieve meaningful adoption.

Crampton emphasizes that Microsoft's initiatives are specifically designed to lower barriers for developing-economy entrepreneurs, noting that "true AI adoption" requires more than technology. "It demands supportive ecosystems where entrepreneurs can learn, experiment, and grow together." Microsoft strongly advocates for a phased implementation and encourages businesses to start with ready-to-use tools like Copilot before moving to customizable open-source solutions. This provides a replicable blueprint for developing countries building their AI capabilities. She explains that this approach has shown measurable impact, demonstrating 63 per cent faster prototyping speeds and 40 per cent higher customization rates among emerging-market users.

Microsoft also supports peer-to-peer learning networks, which now connect over 8,000 SMEs globally. These communities enable the practical knowledge-sharing that Crampton identifies as critical for overcoming initial adoption hurdles: "The fastest way to understand AI's value is not through abstract discussion, but by using the technology to solve real business challenges." The case underscores how blended technological and social infrastructure can accelerate AI's productive adoption across diverse economic contexts.

Conclusion

The study concludes that artificial intelligence (AI) significantly and positively affects entrepreneurial creativity and performance and have a significant and negative effect on human creativity. The corporate sector may become dependent on quicker, less expensive, and more accurate marketing strategies as a result of the use of AI. By utilizing AI in marketing strategies, an entrepreneur may increase audience reaction and establish a strong competitive advantage over other online firms. In addition to marketing, it may revitalize businesses through creative ideas. Additionally, it provides solutions for challenging jobs, which aids in the rapid expansion of businesses. As a result, we will talk about the development of the business sector, how entrepreneurs use AI topology, and how it plays a variety of roles in the business. The study also demonstrated how AI stimulates consumer demand and advances technical innovation, which benefits entrepreneurship. Furthermore, the service sector and areas experiencing net population influx are where AI has a greater entrepreneurial impact. These results provide light on how artificial intelligence affects entrepreneurial creativity for the development of entrepreneurs and also highlight the need for more robust top-level AI design and implementation within the entrepreneurial ecosystem.

AI is no longer a distant frontier, but a present force reshaping how businesses operate and grow. For entrepreneurs, MSMEs, and start-ups in developing countries, AI holds significant potential to not just catch up, but to leap ahead. It can enhance productivity, broaden access to finance and markets, and enable the creation of new business models. At the same time, realizing these opportunities requires a thoughtful and measured approach. National strategies and policies that are adaptive and context specific play an important part, as they can create the conditions for a meaningful AI that aligns with national priorities, supports innovation and addresses risks in a balanced way.

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