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Beauty Entrepreneurship: Enhancing Technical Skills and Inspiring Business Ventures

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Abstract

This study examines how entrepreneurship influences the desire to start a business among beauty service industry professionals in Busan, with a particular focus on the role of technical capabilities as a mediator. A total of 200 survey responses were collected, of which 197 were deemed valid for analysis. The findings reveal that entrepreneurship partially influences technical skills and business intentions. Additionally, technical capabilities significantly contribute to the willingness to start a business and mediate the relationship between entrepreneurial and entrepreneurship intent. These insights emphasize the need for targeted research and training to foster entrepreneurial skills among beauty industry workers aspiring to launch their ventures. The study emphasizes the importance of promoting entrepreneurial mindsets and start-up initiatives to increase business readiness in the beauty service sector.

Keywords: Beauty service professionals, K-beauty, Entrepreneurship, Technical skills, Business intention, Start-up development

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Introduction

K-beauty, similar to K-POP, is a term that combines “Korea” and “Beauty,” emerging as the Korean beauty industry gained global recognition. Since the 1990s, the rise of the Korean Wave—including K-dramas, K-POP, and K-movies—has fueled international interest in Korean culture. As a result, Korean makeup, hairstyling, and fashion have gained worldwide popularity, leading to the formation of a dedicated K-beauty fandom. Over time, K-beauty has established itself as a core component of K-culture, influencing global beauty trends [1]. This growing interest has significantly increased expectations for the K-beauty service industry, recognizing it as a high-value sector with substantial economic potential.

Even before the widespread use of the term “K-beauty,” Korea’s beauty service industry thrived as it fulfilled the innate human desire for beauty. This industry has continuously evolved, contributing to both economic development and improvements in quality of life. The industry has expanded in response to customer demands for transformation, fueled by advancements in media [2]. As the beauty service sector grows, so do opportunities for employment and entrepreneurship. Notably, the beauty service industry is labor-intensive, relying heavily on human resources to meet customers’ aesthetic needs through skilled, hands-on services rather than automated systems. Given that this field is predominantly female-dominated, technical expertise is crucial, and certification is often required. As a result, extensive technical training is available. However, education on entrepreneurship remains inadequate.

To address this gap, entrepreneurship education should not only focus on psychological factors such as entrepreneurial orientation, self-efficacy, and attitudes but also incorporate practical elements, including team building, time management,

and leadership—skills essential for launching and managing a business [3]. While previous studies have largely centered on technology-driven ventures and manufacturing industries as sources of high-value creation, research suggests that these entrepreneurial principles can also be applied to the service sector [4].

For sustainable growth in the K-beauty service industry, which is heavily reliant on human capital and consists largely of small-scale businesses, fostering innovation and entrepreneurial thinking is crucial. Entrepreneurship can serve as a key driver of competitiveness by aligning individual skills with market demands and enhancing the industry's value proposition. However, limited research has explored the causal relationship between entrepreneurship and the factors that influence the willingness of beauty service workers to start their businesses. Additionally, studies specifically targeting K-beauty industry professionals remain scarce, highlighting the need for empirical research in this area.

This study aims to reassess the significance of entrepreneurship among K-beauty service industry workers, examine its impact on their willingness to start a business, and analyze the mediating role of technical capabilities in this relationship. Through empirical analysis, this research contributes to the academic field by offering insights into how entrepreneurship can strengthen the entrepreneurial intentions of professionals in the K-beauty sector.

Literature review

K-beauty service industry

K-beauty, much like K-POP, is a term that combines "Korea" and "Beauty," emerging as the Korean beauty industry gained global recognition. With the rise of K-beauty fandoms, it has become an integral part of K-culture and now plays a leading role in shaping global beauty trends [1]. The Korea Health Industry Promotion Park (2012) defines the beauty service industry as one that enhances human beauty and well-being, encompassing sectors such as hair care, skin care, nail art, and makeup. Additionally, Lee [5] describes it as an industry that not only fulfills the desire for beauty but also generates new demand by integrating health, medicine, science, arts, and cultural appreciation, combining both tangible services and intangible emotional experiences with social value.

Entrepreneurship

Schumpeter [6] introduced the concept of entrepreneurship as "creative destruction," emphasizing the role of continuous innovation in adapting to environmental changes. This innovation-driven process is central to capitalism and is fundamental to entrepreneurship. An and Yang [7] highlight a shift in the perception of entrepreneurship, expanding beyond a niche concept reserved for business owners to a broader framework for addressing social and economic challenges. Despite uncertainties, entrepreneurship is defined as a proactive, innovative, and risk-taking mindset aimed at identifying business opportunities and generating value [8].

Innovativeness

Lumpkin and Dess [9] identify innovativeness as a fundamental aspect of entrepreneurship, describing it as the drive to pursue new ideas, processes, and strategies in response to environmental uncertainty and resource limitations. It reflects an entrepreneur's commitment to continuously seeking and developing new business opportunities. According to Kim (2019), innovation enables businesses to mitigate risks and crises by facilitating quick decision-making and adaptive strategies for long-term success.

Proactiveness

Ferreras-Mendez *et al.* [10] define proactiveness as a company's ability to take the initiative and stay ahead of competitors. Lumpkin and Dess [9] describe it as the willingness to engage in direct and strategic competition to improve market positioning. It involves anticipating market shifts and taking action to shape future opportunities. Similarly, Miller and Friesen [11] explain proactiveness as the tendency to make forward-thinking strategic decisions and address emerging market needs before they become apparent.

Risk-taking propensity

Hong [12] defines risk-taking propensity as the willingness to embrace challenges despite uncertain outcomes, particularly in competitive and high-risk environments. Kim *et al*. [13] further explain that risk tolerance involves making bold decisions in pursuit of profit, even when uncertainty is involved. Covin and Slevin [14] suggest that individuals with a strong risk-taking propensity actively seek high-risk opportunities and leverage them for business growth. Furthermore, Morris and Lewis [15] argue that risk-taking not only involves embracing uncertainty but also plays a crucial role in value creation by seizing new market opportunities.

Technical capabilities

Rizki and Susanto [16] define technical capabilities as the collective knowledge and skills required for product development and production, including the ability to acquire, improve, and utilize technology. This capability also involves understanding customer needs and aligning technical expertise to meet market demands [17]. As a key determinant of business performance, technical capabilities form the foundation of competitive advantage, particularly for technology-driven companies. For small businesses and solo entrepreneurs, technical expertise is essential for sustainable growth and long-term success [18].

Will to start a business

Bird [19] defines the desire to start a business as the intention to create a new company or take ownership of an existing one, aiming to generate new opportunities or add value to a current venture. It is the mental state of an individual who, equipped with relevant skills and experience, envisions and prepares for future entrepreneurial ventures [20]. This willingness can be understood as a personal drive or passion to establish a business in the future. According to Jang *et al.* [21], this process involves various stages, including planning, skill development, risk management, collaboration, and overall business administration.

Materials and Methods

Research hypotheses

This study aims to explore how entrepreneurship and technical capabilities influence the intention to start a business among professionals in the K-beauty service industry. The following hypotheses were formulated to examine these relationships, as depicted in the research model **(Figure 1)**:

- H1: There is a positive impact of entrepreneurship on technical capabilities.
- H2: Technical capabilities positively influence the willingness to start a business.
- H3: Entrepreneurship positively affects the willingness to start a business.
- H4: Technical capabilities mediate the relationship between entrepreneurship and entrepreneurial intention.

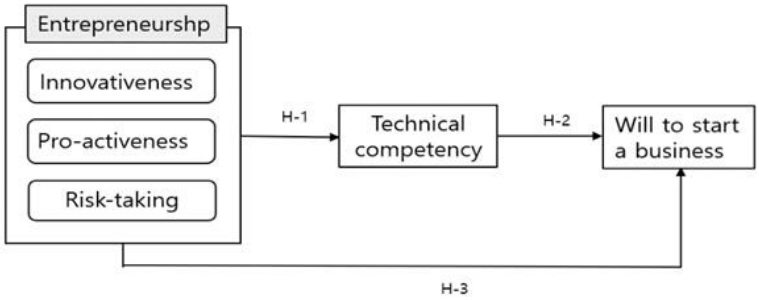

Figure 1. Model of study

Survey participants and data collection

This research targeted employees within the beauty service sector in Busan. The survey was conducted over 30 days, from September 1, 2023, to September 30, 2023. Both online and offline methods were used to gather data, resulting in 200 responses. However, after excluding 3 invalid responses, 197 were retained for the final analysis.

Measurement tool breakdown

The survey included 32 questions, incorporating both nominal scale items for general demographic information and a 5-point Likert scale for other constructs. General characteristics were assessed using 4 questions. The entrepreneurship section was composed of 15 questions, covering innovation, proactivity, and risk tolerance, with 5 questions dedicated to each topic. These were based on the work of Baek [22] and Gi [23]. The technical capabilities section consisted of 4 questions, and the will to start a business was assessed with 5 questions, adapted from Lee [24]. Both the technical capabilities and entrepreneurial intention sections were modified to reflect single-factor constructs.

Statistical analysis

Data were processed using SPSS version 28.0 for coding and cleaning. The analysis involved several key techniques: frequency analysis to examine the general characteristics of the participants, factor analysis to assess the reliability and validity of the constructs for entrepreneurship, technical capabilities, and entrepreneurial intention, and correlation analysis to explore relationships between the variables. To test the hypotheses, regression analysis was employed, while a three-stage mediation regression was used to analyze the mediating effect of technical capabilities.

Results and Discussion

Table 1 presents the frequency analysis of the participants' general characteristics. The analysis revealed that 176 participants (89.3%) were women, while 21 (10.7%) were men. The majority of respondents were in their 20s, totaling 111 individuals (56.3%). Those in their 30s made up 33.0% of the sample (65 individuals), and 10.7% (21 individuals) were aged 40 or older. In terms of educational attainment, 72 respondents (36.5%) held a bachelor's degree, 57 (28.9%) had an associate's degree, 50 (25.4%) possessed a master's degree or higher, and 18 (9.1%) had completed only high school.

Regarding industry specialization, the largest group was in the skincare sector, with 98 participants (49.7%), followed by those in the nail industry (49 participants, or 24.9%), hair (30 participants, or 15.2%), and makeup (20 participants, or 10.2%). Most respondents had fewer than 3 years of work experience, totaling 94 individuals (47.7%). 38 participants (19.3%) had 3 to 5 years of experience, 25 participants (12.7%) had 5 to 7 years, and 31 participants (15.7%) had 7 to 10 years. Only 9 participants (4.6%) had over 10 years of experience.

Entrepreneurship education data showed that the majority (152 participants, or 77.2%) had no prior entrepreneurship education, while 45 participants (22.8%) had some form of entrepreneurship experience. Additionally, 170 participants (86.3%) indicated they had experience with entrepreneurship, while 27 participants (13.7%) had no such experience.

Table 1. Sample descriptive

Characteristics		N	%
Gender	Male	21	10.7
	Female	176	89.3
Age of firm	20's	111	56.3
	30's	65	33.0
	Over 40s	21	10.7
Education	High school graduation	18	9.1
	Graduated from junior college	57	28.9
	University graduation	72	36.5
	Master's degree or higher	50	25.4
Sectors	Hair beauty	30	15.2
	Skincare	98	49.7
	Makeup beauty	20	10.2
	For nail be	49	24.9
Gyeonglyeog	< 3 years	94	47.7
	< 3~5 years	38	19.3
	< 5~7years	25	12.7
	< 7~10 years	31	15.7
	> 10 years	9	4.6
Experience participating in entrepreneurship education	No experience	152	77.2
	Experienced	45	22.8
Start-up experience	No experience	170	86.3
	Experienced	27	13.7
	Total	197	100.0

Reliability analysis

Table 2 presents the reliability analysis results for the scales utilized in the study. The Cronbach's alpha value for entrepreneurship was found to be 0.855. For technical competencies, it was 0.915, and for entrepreneurial will, it was 0.906. All measurement items showed Cronbach's alpha coefficients greater than 0.7, indicating strong reliability of the measurement tool.

Table 2. Reliability results of the scales

Scale	Sub-dimension	Number of items	Cronbach's alpha
Entrepreneurship	Innovativeness	5	0.844
	Pro-activeness	5	0.780

	Risk-taking	5	0.767
Technical competency		7	0.915
Will to start a business		5	0.906

Regression findings

The results of the regression analysis for hypothesis 1, including the verification of hypotheses 1-1, 1-2, and 1-3, are summarized in **Table 3**. The analysis shows that entrepreneurship affects technological capabilities. The explanatory power (R^2) was found to be 46.4%, with F = 57.557 (P = 0.001), which is statistically significant. Specifically, pro-activeness (β = 0.357, P <0.001) and innovativeness (β =0.316, P <0.001) were found to have a significant positive effect on technical capabilities. However, risk-taking (β =0.092, P >0.05) did not significantly affect technical capabilities.

These findings suggest that professionals in the beauty service industry tend to search for innovative technologies, actively apply new ideas, and exhibit a positive attitude toward technology. They also display a strong sense of purpose and entrepreneurial drive, which positively influences their technical capabilities. On the other hand, the willingness to take risks and adjust to changes in uncertain situations did not appear to significantly affect technical capabilities. Similar findings were reported by Kim [25], who found a positive effect of entrepreneurial spirit on technological innovation in tech startups, and Jeon *et al.* [26], who observed that entrepreneurial spirit in small and medium-sized domestic manufacturing companies influenced technological performance.

Table 3. Impact of entrepreneurship on technical capabilities

Dependent variable	Independent variable	Non-standardized coefficient	Standardized coefficient (β)	t	P	Collinearity statistics	
		B	S.E			Tolerance	VIF
Technical competency	Constant	0.995	0.216	4.606	0.001		
	Innovativeness	0.315	0.078	4.027	***0.001	0.445	2.246
	Pro-activeness	0.356	0.077	4.634	***0.001	0.629	1.590
	Risk-taking	0.079	0.065	1.226	0.222	0.486	2.072
Adj. R^2 = 0.464, F = 57.557, P = 0.001, *P < 0.05, **P < 0.01, **P < 0.001							

Regression analysis for hypothesis 2

Table 4 presents the findings from the regression analysis of hypothesis 2. The explanatory power (R^2) was determined to be 39.5%, with an F-value of 128.717 (P = 0.001), which indicates a statistically significant result. Technical competency (β = 0.641, P < 0.001) demonstrated a strong positive effect on the intent to start a business. This means that beauticians who possess specialized skills, take pride in their work, and are proficient in using new techniques to serve clients are more likely to feel confident in their field. As a result, they are more inclined to consider entrepreneurship as a viable path that matches their expertise and passion. This aligns with Go's [27] findings, which indicated that higher technological capabilities contribute to a stronger entrepreneurial intention, and is consistent with Kim and Yang [28], who found that individuals with higher technical skills tend to have a stronger desire to start their businesses.

Table 4: Effect of technical competencies on entrepreneurial intentions

Dependent variable	Independent variable	Non-standardized coefficient	Standardized coefficient (β)	t	P
Will to start a business	Constant	1.095	0.258	4.239	0.001
	Technical competency	0.765	0.631	11.345	***0.001
Adj. R^2 = 0.395, F = 128.717, P = 0.001, *P < .05, **P < .01, **P < .001					

Regression analysis for hypothesis 3

The regression analysis results for Hypothesis 3, including verification of hypotheses 3-1, 3-2, and 3-3, are shown in **Table 5**. The explanatory power (R^2) was 28.4%, with an F-value of 26.915 (P = 0.001), confirming statistical significance. Pro-activeness (β = 0.357, P < 0.001) had a strong positive effect on the intention to start a business, whereas innovativeness (β = 0.171, P > 0.05) and risk-taking (β =0.821, P >0.05) showed no significant effects. This suggests that proactive individuals, who have a clear sense of purpose and are motivated to achieve are more likely to have the intention to start a business. Kang's [29] study showed that pro-activeness positively influences the intention to start a business, which aligns with the current findings. However, risk-taking did not show a significant influence, echoing Lee's [30] findings that risk sensitivity does not always drive entrepreneurial intentions, especially among female students in specific fields.

Table 5. Influence of entrepreneurial factors on the will to start a business

Dependent variable	Independent variable	Non-standardized coefficient	Standardized coefficient (β)	t	P	Collinearity statistics
Will to start a business	Constant	1.317	0.303	4.349	0.001	
	Innovativeness	0.207	0.171	1.890	0.060	0.445
	Pro-activeness	0.431	0.357	4.004	***0.001	0.461
	Risk-taking	0.075	0.071	0.821	0.413	0.483
Adj. R^2 = 0.284, F = 26.915, P = 0.001, *P <0.05, **P < 0.01, **P <0 .001						

Mediation effect analysis for hypothesis 4

The results from the mediation analysis of Hypothesis 4 are shown in **Table 6**. In the first stage, it was found that entrepreneurship significantly impacted the mediator, technical competencies (β =0.673, P <0.001), satisfying the mediation conditions. In the second stage, entrepreneurship also significantly affected the dependent variable, the intention to start a business (β = 0.527, P < 0.001). In the third stage, the regression coefficient for entrepreneurship and the will to start a business decreased compared to the second stage (β = 0.527, P < 0.001 → β = 0.178, P <0.05), but remained significant. Additionally, the mediator (technical competencies) showed a significant effect (β =0.504, P <0.001), indicating that technical competencies partially mediate the relationship between entrepreneurship and the intention to start a business. These findings are consistent with Jeon *et al*. (2020), who found that technological performance plays a mediating role in the relationship between entrepreneurship and financial outcomes. Similarly, Lim [31] supported the notion that strengthened technological commercialization capabilities enhance entrepreneurial capacity, which aligns with the current study's findings on the mediating role of technical competencies in entrepreneurial intentions.

Table 6. Mediating effect of technical competency on the relationship between entrepreneurship and entrepreneurial intention

Step	Dependent variable	Independent variable	Non-standardized coefficient	Standardized coefficient (β)	t	P
1	Technical competency	Entrepreneurship	0.722	0.673	12.716	***0.001
		(Constant)	1.180		5.707	***0.001
			R^2 = 0.453, Adj. R^2 = 0.451	F = 161.690, P = ***0.001		
2	Will to start a business	Entrepreneurship	0.686	0.527	8.658	***0.001
		(Constant)	1.520		5.272	***0.001
			R^2 = 0.278, Adj. R^2 = 0.274	F = 74.966, P = ***0.001		
3	Will to start a business	Entrepreneurship	0.244	0.187	2.526	*0.012
		(Constant)	0.798		2.844	0.005
		Technical competency	0.612	0.504	6.803	***0.001
			R^2 = 0.417, Adj. R^2 = 0.411	F = 69.325, P = ***0.001		

*P < 0.05, **P < 0.01, **P < 0.001

This table illustrates the process of mediation analysis in three steps, showing the influence of entrepreneurship on technical competency and entrepreneurial intention, as well as the role of technical competency in mediating this relationship.

Conclusion

The purpose of this study was to explore how entrepreneurship and technological competency influence entrepreneurial intentions among beauty service workers in the Busan region, with a specific focus on the mediating role of technological competency. The main findings are summarized as follows:

1. Entrepreneurship's effect on technological competency: Entrepreneurship positively influenced technological competency, particularly in the areas of proactiveness and innovation. However, the study found that while beauty service workers generally have strong technological skills, their approach to embracing risk-taking and uncertainty is less pronounced, indicating that they may not be as proactive in adapting to changes or challenges in the industry.
2. Impact of technological competency on entrepreneurial intentions: Technological competency was shown to positively affect entrepreneurial intentions. As workers in the beauty service industry develop specialized skills and feel competent

in their roles, particularly in adopting new trends and techniques, they are more likely to develop an interest in starting their businesses.

3. Entrepreneurship's influence on entrepreneurial intentions: The study also found that entrepreneurship positively impacted entrepreneurial intentions, with proactiveness being the most significant sub-factor. However, neither innovativeness nor risk-taking were found to have a direct influence on entrepreneurial intentions. This suggests that while beauty service workers may have aspirations to become entrepreneurs, their limited experience with risk-taking and innovation may hinder their actual entrepreneurial pursuits.
4. The mediating role of technological competency: Technological competency was identified as a partial mediator in the relationship between entrepreneurship and entrepreneurial intentions. This means that when beauty service workers possess entrepreneurial traits that enhance their technological skills, this positively influences their intentions to pursue entrepreneurship. The development of technological skills—alongside a sense of pride in their work and clear future goals—can lead to higher entrepreneurial aspirations.

In conclusion, the hypothesis that entrepreneurship, through its components of innovativeness, proactiveness, and risk-taking, would positively influence entrepreneurial intentions was partially supported. Of these components, proactiveness had the strongest effect on entrepreneurial intentions. Innovativeness and risk-taking were not found to have a significant impact on entrepreneurial intentions in this industry.

The majority of participants in this study were women, indicating a strong interest in entrepreneurship. However, their lack of entrepreneurial experience, especially in a high-risk industry like beauty services, may explain the passive attitudes towards innovation and risk-taking. Although previous research suggests a positive relationship between entrepreneurship and entrepreneurial intentions, the lack of entrepreneurship education among the participants makes it difficult to assess this relationship definitively. Thus, there is a clear need for more systematic entrepreneurship education tailored to workers in the beauty service industry.

Recommendations

- Fostering entrepreneurship education: Given that many of the participants were women, it is important to offer targeted education programs aimed at women entrepreneurs in the beauty industry. This would help them better understand the process of starting a business and equip them with the necessary skills and knowledge.
- Institutional support: In addition to education, institutional support is crucial for aspiring entrepreneurs in the beauty service industry. This could include mentoring, networking opportunities, and financial assistance to help them overcome the challenges associated with starting a business.

Limitations and future research directions

This study has a few limitations. First, it focused only on beauty service workers in Busan, with a sample size of 197 participants, so the results may not be generalizable. Future studies could include a larger, more diverse sample from across the country to enhance the findings' applicability. Second, the data collected was entirely through surveys, which may reflect subjective opinions. Future research should consider using objective measures alongside surveys to reduce potential bias. Lastly, while much research on entrepreneurship has focused on corporate sectors, there is a need to explore the specific entrepreneurial characteristics relevant to the beauty service industry, such as innovation and risk-taking, and how these can be developed to promote entrepreneurship in this sector.

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