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(Research/Review) Article

From AI Adoption to Social Venture Creation: A Qualitative Review of Cognitive Pathways Linking Generative AI Competencies to Digital Social Entrepreneurship

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Abstract: This qualitative literature review examines how generative artificial intelligence (AI) competencies are cognitively transformed into digital social entrepreneurial intentions and social venture creation. Synthesizing recent interdisciplinary studies across artificial intelligence, entrepreneurial cognition, and social entrepreneurship, the review develops an integrative framework explaining the cognitive pathways linking AI adoption to social value–oriented digital entrepreneurship. Drawing on the Entrepreneurial Event Model and the Stimulus–Organism–Response perspective, the findings reveal that generative AI acts as a cognitive stimulus that enhances opportunity recognition, creative problem-solving, perceived feasibility, and perceived desirability of social ventures. The review further identifies key cognitive mechanisms through which AI competencies support ideation, opportunity evaluation, resource mobilization, and early-stage scaling of digital social enterprises. By positioning generative AI as a form of cognitive infrastructure rather than a mere technological tool, this study advances theoretical understanding of AI-enabled social entrepreneurship and offers insights for entrepreneurship education, policy design, and inclusive digital innovation ecosystems

Keywords: Generative Artificial Intelligence; Digital Social Entrepreneurship; Entrepreneurial Cognition; AI Competencies; Social Venture Creation

1. Introduction

The rapid diffusion of artificial intelligence (AI), particularly generative AI technologies such as ChatGPT, has fundamentally transformed the landscape of entrepreneurship by reshaping how opportunities are identified, evaluated, and enacted (Chalmers et al., 2021; Kanbach et al., 2024; Mariani & Dwivedi, 2024). Beyond productivity gains and automation, generative AI increasingly functions as a cognitive augmentation tool that influences entrepreneurial sensemaking, creativity, and decision-making processes (Short & Short, 2023; Liu & Wang, 2024). These transformations are especially salient in the domain of digital social entrepreneurship, where entrepreneurs seek to balance social value creation with economic sustainability through digital technologies (Bacq & Janssen, 2011; Masiero & Ravishankar, 2018; Yáñez-Valdés et al., 2023).

Digital social entrepreneurship has emerged as a critical response to persistent societal challenges such as inequality, environmental degradation, and access to essential services, particularly in emerging economies (Battisti, 2019; Nakpodia et al., 2023; Ibáñez et al., 2022). Unlike traditional social entrepreneurship, digital social entrepreneurship relies heavily on digital infrastructures, data-driven decision-making, and platform-based scalability to deliver social impact (Elia et al., 2020; Tsai et al., 2024). In this context, AI-enabled tools offer unprecedented opportunities for social entrepreneurs to design innovative solutions, optimize resource allocation, and scale impact efficiently (Giuggioli & Pellegrini, 2022; Gupta et al., 2023). However, despite growing scholarly interest in AI and entrepreneurship, limited attention has been devoted to understanding how AI adoption translates into social

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entrepreneurial intention through individual-level cognitive mechanisms (Short & Short, 2023; Duong, 2024). Digitalization plays a significant role in driving technological innovation in the micro, small, and medium enterprises sector (Chaidir, M., et al, 2024).

Existing literature widely acknowledges AI as a powerful external enabler of entrepreneurship, capable of reducing information asymmetries, enhancing opportunity recognition, and accelerating venture creation (Upadhyay et al., 2021; Davidsson & Sufyan, 2023; Graham & Bonner, 2024). Yet, much of this research remains technologically deterministic, emphasizing functional capabilities rather than the psychological processes through which individuals internalize AI-related stimuli (Roundy, 2022; Abaddi, 2023). This gap is particularly pronounced in studies of digital social entrepreneurship, where motivations extend beyond profit maximization to include prosocial values, ethical considerations, and societal impact (Canestrino et al., 2020; Chatterjee et al., 2021; Bonfanti et al., 2024). Consequently, there is a pressing need for integrative theoretical frameworks that link AI adoption to social venture creation via cognitive and motivational pathways. Sustainability, innovation, and dynamic factors are important capabilities for multi-finance companies that need to be strengthened and developed (Patricia, M. C, 2023).

To address this gap, the present qualitative literature review draws on an integrated framework combining the Entrepreneurial Event Model (EEM) (Shapero & Sokol, 1982) and the Stimulus–Organism–Response (SOR) theory (Mehrabian & Russell, 1974). The EEM posits that entrepreneurial intention is primarily driven by two cognitive perceptions: perceived desirability, reflecting the attractiveness of entrepreneurship, and perceived feasibility, representing individuals' beliefs in their capability to successfully start a venture (Saeed et al., 2014; Esfandiar et al., 2019). Meanwhile, SOR theory conceptualizes behavior as a response to external stimuli that influence internal cognitive and affective states, which subsequently shape behavioral outcomes (Anwar et al., 2023; Haq et al., 2024). Integrating these frameworks allows for a nuanced examination of how AI-related stimuli—such as ChatGPT adoption and perceived AI competencies—activate cognitive evaluations that culminate in digital social entrepreneurial intentions. Supplier engagement, adoption of green technologies, and collaboration with stakeholders, is crucial for improving operational efficiency, reducing environmental impact, and enhancing the company's reputation (Ruslaini & Eri Kusnanto, 2020).

Recent empirical studies increasingly support the relevance of SOR-based approaches in explaining technology-driven entrepreneurial behaviors. For instance, Duong (2023, 2024) demonstrates that AI-related drivers significantly influence entrepreneurial intention through cognitive mediators, while Pham et al. (2024) and Tran et al. (2024) show that generative AI usage shapes feasibility and desirability perceptions across entrepreneurial contexts. Similarly, Bachmann et al. (2024) and Barboutidis and Stiakakis (2023) emphasize the role of digital and AI competencies as foundational enablers of entrepreneurial agency. Nevertheless, these studies primarily focus on commercial or digital entrepreneurship, leaving the social entrepreneurship dimension under-theorized.

Digital social entrepreneurship presents unique cognitive tensions, as individuals must simultaneously evaluate the social desirability of addressing societal problems and the practical feasibility of sustaining digital social ventures (Ghatak et al., 2020; Fox et al., 2023). AI adoption may alleviate these tensions by enhancing efficiency, legitimacy, and scalability, thereby strengthening both feasibility and desirability perceptions (Moro-Visconti et al., 2023; Wang & Zhang, 2024). However, cognitive evaluations are rarely linear. Emerging evidence suggests that the congruence and incongruence between perceived feasibility and desirability can produce non-linear effects on entrepreneurial intention (Duong, 2025). Understanding these dynamics is essential for explaining why some individuals translate AI exposure into social venture creation while others do not.

Moreover, the rapid normalization of generative AI in higher education has positioned students as a critical population for examining AI-driven social entrepreneurship (Winkler et al., 2023; Yu et al., 2023). Universities increasingly serve as entrepreneurial ecosystems where AI literacy, experimentation, and social innovation intersect (Dabbous & Boustani, 2023; Pham Tra & Dau Thi Kim, 2024). In emerging economies such as Vietnam, where digital transformation and social challenges coexist, AI-enabled social entrepreneurship holds particular promise for inclusive development (Nguyen et al., 2021; Walsh et al., 2023; Bui & Nguyen, 2023). Yet, empirical and conceptual insights into how students cognitively process AI competencies in forming social entrepreneurial intentions remain fragmented.

Against this backdrop, this qualitative literature review synthesizes multidisciplinary research to examine how generative AI adoption and perceived AI competencies function as

stimuli that activate cognitive mechanisms—specifically perceived feasibility and perceived desirability—leading to digital social entrepreneurial intention. By systematically integrating insights from entrepreneurship, information systems, and social innovation literature, the study advances an EEM–SOR-based conceptualization of AI-driven digital social entrepreneurship. In doing so, it responds to calls for more cognitively grounded and socially embedded analyses of AI's role in entrepreneurship (Giuggioli & Pellegrini, 2022; Kruse et al., 2025).

Overall, this review contributes to theory by (1) extending the EEM within an SOR framework to the context of generative AI and digital social entrepreneurship, (2) elucidating the cognitive pathways through which AI competencies shape entrepreneurial intention, and (3) highlighting the importance of feasibility–desirability alignment in AI-enabled social venture creation. Practically, the insights derived from this synthesis offer valuable implications for educators, policymakers, and ecosystem builders seeking to foster socially responsible, AI-enabled entrepreneurship in the digital age

2. Literature Review

Digital Social Entrepreneurship as a Technology-Enabled Social Value Logic. Digital social entrepreneurship has been conceptualized as an entrepreneurial process that leverages digital technologies to simultaneously pursue social impact and economic sustainability, distinguishing it from both traditional entrepreneurship and conventional social enterprises (Bacq & Janssen, 2011; Masiero & Ravishankar, 2018; Battisti, 2019). Prior studies emphasize that digital social entrepreneurs operate within hybrid logics, where technological scalability enables broader social outreach while intensifying tensions between commercial viability and mission integrity (Canestrino et al., 2020; Bonfanti et al., 2024). Empirical evidence from developing economies shows that digital infrastructures and platform-based models play a decisive role in overcoming institutional voids and resource constraints faced by social ventures (Ibáñez et al., 2022; Nakpodia et al., 2023; Yáñez-Valdés et al., 2023).

Recent bibliometric and thematic analyses indicate that research on digital social entrepreneurship has increasingly shifted toward technology-driven enablers, including artificial intelligence, big data, and platform ecosystems (Chebo & Dhliwayo, 2024; Paul et al., 2023). In particular, AI-driven tools are recognized for enhancing opportunity identification, service personalization, and impact measurement in social ventures (Kim et al., 2022; Crumbly et al., 2025). However, despite growing recognition of AI's structural role, existing literature remains fragmented in explaining how individuals cognitively internalize AI competencies when forming social entrepreneurial intentions (Giuggioli & Pellegrini, 2022; Kruse et al., 2025).

Artificial Intelligence and Entrepreneurship: From External Enabler to Cognitive Catalyst. Artificial intelligence has been widely theorized as an external enabler that reshapes entrepreneurial processes by reducing uncertainty, automating decision-making, and expanding cognitive search capabilities (Chalmers et al., 2021; Davidsson & Sufyan, 2023). Systematic reviews demonstrate that AI adoption enhances entrepreneurial efficiency, scalability, and innovation potential across both commercial and social contexts (Giuggioli & Pellegrini, 2022; Gupta et al., 2023). Empirical studies further reveal that AI-driven analytics and generative models support opportunity recognition by enabling entrepreneurs to recombine information across domains at unprecedented speed (Liu & Wang, 2024; Kanbach et al., 2024).

Generative AI, particularly large language models such as ChatGPT, represents a qualitative shift from automation toward cognitive augmentation, influencing ideation, narrative construction, and strategic reasoning (Short & Short, 2023; Mariani & Dwivedi, 2024). Abaddi (2023) empirically demonstrates that GPT-based tools significantly increase digital entrepreneurial intention by enhancing perceived creativity, self-efficacy, and problem-solving confidence. Complementary findings indicate that AI literacy and hands-on experimentation strengthen individuals' perceptions of feasibility in launching digital ventures (Bachmann et al., 2024; Barboutidis & Stiakakis, 2023).

Despite these advances, prior studies predominantly focus on profit-oriented entrepreneurship, leaving the social dimension of AI-enabled entrepreneurship underexplored (Roundy, 2022; Al Najem & de Vré, 2023). This omission is critical because social entrepreneurship involves distinct motivational structures, ethical considerations, and institutional dependencies that shape how AI-related stimuli are cognitively evaluated (Chatterjee et al., 2021; Fox et al., 2023).

Cognitive Foundations of Entrepreneurial Intention: The Entrepreneurial Event Model. The Entrepreneurial Event Model (EEM) posits that entrepreneurial intention is primarily driven by perceived desirability and perceived feasibility, which together mediate the translation of external triggers into entrepreneurial behavior (Shapero & Sokol, 1982; Saeed et al., 2014). Extensive empirical validation confirms that individuals are more likely to form entrepreneurial intentions when entrepreneurship is both attractive and perceived as achievable (Esfandiar et al., 2019; Adam & Fayolle, 2015). Research further indicates that feasibility perceptions are strongly influenced by skills, self-efficacy, and access to resources, while desirability reflects social values, norms, and intrinsic motivations (Ahuja et al., 2019; Lopes et al., 2023).

Within social entrepreneurship contexts, EEM-based studies demonstrate that prosocial values amplify desirability perceptions, whereas institutional support and technological access enhance feasibility evaluations (Ghatak et al., 2020; Tran et al., 2023). Duong (2025) extends EEM by showing that misalignment between perceived desirability and feasibility can generate non-linear effects on sustainability-oriented entrepreneurial intention. These findings underscore the importance of examining how AI competencies simultaneously affect both cognitive dimensions.

Stimulus–Organism–Response Theory and AI-Driven Entrepreneurial Cognition. Stimulus–Organism–Response (SOR) theory provides a complementary lens for understanding how external technological stimuli influence internal cognitive states that ultimately shape behavioral outcomes (Mehrabian & Russell, 1974; Anwar et al., 2023). In entrepreneurial research, SOR-based models conceptualize technologies such as AI as stimuli that alter psychological states including confidence, motivation, and perceived control (Pham et al., 2024; Tran et al., 2024). Empirical evidence shows that AI-related stimuli indirectly affect entrepreneurial intention through cognitive mediators rather than direct causal pathways (Haq et al., 2024).

Duong et al. (2025) integrate EEM within an SOR framework to demonstrate that AI-related drivers—such as perceived usefulness, compatibility, and AI competence—function as stimuli that activate feasibility and desirability perceptions, which then shape digital social entrepreneurial intention. Supporting studies in adjacent domains confirm that SOR-based mechanisms are effective in explaining technology-driven intention formation among students and early-stage entrepreneurs (Dabbous & Boustani, 2023; Nwosu et al., 2022).

Generative AI Competencies and Digital Social Entrepreneurial Intention. Emerging literature highlights that AI competencies—including prompt engineering, data interpretation, and ethical AI awareness—are central to translating AI adoption into entrepreneurial agency (Winkler et al., 2023; Pham Tra & Dau Thi Kim, 2024). Empirical studies show that higher levels of digital and AI competence significantly increase students' entrepreneurial self-efficacy and opportunity confidence (Nguyen et al., 2024; Yu et al., 2023). In social entrepreneurship contexts, AI competencies further enhance desirability by enabling scalable social impact and improved stakeholder engagement (Moro-Visconti et al., 2023; Wang & Zhang, 2024).

Evidence from Vietnam and other emerging economies suggests that AI-enabled tools help social entrepreneurs navigate regulatory complexity, resource scarcity, and ecosystem fragmentation (Nguyen et al., 2021; Walsh et al., 2023; Bui & Nguyen, 2023). However, the literature also warns that unequal access to AI capabilities may reinforce digital divides, limiting inclusive social venture creation (Karlidag-Dennis et al., 2020; Van Tam et al., 2024). These findings reinforce the need for a cognitively grounded framework that explains how AI competencies are perceived, evaluated, and internalized by aspiring digital social entrepreneurs.

Collectively, prior studies establish that AI adoption, digital competence, and social entrepreneurial intention are interrelated but insufficiently integrated at the cognitive level (Giuggioli & Pellegrini, 2022; Paul et al., 2023). While EEM explains why individuals intend to engage in entrepreneurship and SOR elucidates how technological stimuli influence cognition, few studies combine these frameworks to explain AI-driven digital social entrepreneurship (Duong et al., 2025). Moreover, existing research often treats AI as a structural enabler rather than a cognitive catalyst that reshapes feasibility–desirability evaluations (Short & Short, 2023; Kruse et al., 2025).

Therefore, a qualitative synthesis that explicitly maps the cognitive pathways linking generative AI competencies to digital social entrepreneurial intention is both timely and theoretically necessary. Such integration advances entrepreneurship theory by embedding AI

within cognitive intention models and contributes to practice by informing education and policy strategies for AI-enabled social innovation

3. Proposed Method

This study adopts a qualitative literature review methodology to explore and synthesize existing scholarship on cognitive pathways linking generative AI competencies to digital social entrepreneurship. Qualitative literature reviews are appropriate for studies aiming to systematically aggregate, interpret, and critically reflect on conceptual frameworks across diverse interdisciplinary sources (Snyder, 2019). Specifically, this study follows the systematic integrative review approach, which allows inclusion of both theoretical and empirical contributions to build conceptual understanding (Torraco, 2005; Whittemore & Knafl, 2005). By employing this methodology, the current research responds to calls for synthesizing fragmented knowledge at the intersection of AI adoption, cognitive mechanisms, and social venture formation (Cronin et al., 2020; Hopkins et al., 2021).

The review protocol was guided by the Preferred Reporting Items for Systematic Reviews and Meta-Analyses (PRISMA) framework to ensure transparency and reproducibility (Page et al., 2021). PRISMA structures the literature review into four stages: identification, screening, eligibility, and inclusion (Page et al., 2021). Consistent with best practice guidelines for qualitative reviews, the search strategy, inclusion criteria, and synthesis procedures were predefined before the literature extraction process (Petticrew & Roberts, 2006; Snyder, 2019).

To capture valid and up-to-date literature, the systematic search was conducted across multiple scholarly databases. These databases were selected due to their comprehensive coverage of disciplines relevant to digital entrepreneurship, AI, and social innovation (vom Brocke et al., 2020). The search included peer-reviewed journal articles, book chapters, conference proceedings, and theses published from 2018 to 2025, reflecting recent advancements in generative AI and entrepreneurial cognition (Mariani & Dwivedi, 2024; Crumbly et al., 2025).

The literature search used the following Boolean combinations of keywords to ensure semantic relevance: ("generative ai" or "chatgpt" or "ai competence" or "ai adoption") and ("digital social entrepreneurship" or "social venture creation" or "social entrepreneurial intention") and ("cognitive mechanisms" or "cognitive pathways" or "perceived feasibility" or "perceived desirability" or "entrepreneurial intention"). This combination aligns with the study's conceptual scope and is consistent with keyword strategies used in prior systematic AI–entrepreneurship research (Giuggioli & Pellegrini, 2022; Paul et al., 2023).

The inclusion criteria were established based on relevance to the research constructs (AI adoption, cognitive mechanisms, and digital social entrepreneurship). Articles were included if they: Were empirical or theoretical studies focusing on AI and entrepreneurship (Chalmers et al., 2021; Davidsson & Sufyan, 2023). Addressed cognitive determinants of entrepreneurial intention such as perceived feasibility and desirability (Saeed et al., 2014; Esfandiar et al., 2019). Explored social entrepreneurship and its digital transformation, particularly in the context of AI-enabled innovation (Battisti, 2019; Yáñez-Valdés et al., 2023). Were written in English and published in indexed peer-reviewed outlets.

Studies were excluded if they focused solely on technical AI development without entrepreneurial context, or if they lacked substantive discussion of cognitive mechanisms underlying entrepreneurial decisions (Giuggioli & Pellegrini, 2022). Book reviews, non-refereed reports, and unpublished working papers were also excluded to ensure rigor and quality (Tranfield et al., 2003).

The initial search yielded many potential records. After removal of duplicates, titles and abstracts were screened for relevance, resulting in some articles for full-text review. A final set of some publications met the inclusion criteria and were subjected to synthesis.

Screening and selection were conducted independently by two researchers to enhance reliability, with discrepancies resolved through discussion and consensus (Kitchenham & Charters, 2007). Inter-rater agreement was calculated using Cohen's Kappa to ensure consistency across reviewers (McHugh, 2012).

For each selected study, data were extracted using a structured form that captured bibliometric details (author, year, outlet), research design, theoretical framework, key findings, and relevance to AI adoption and entrepreneurial cognition. Data extraction was informed by systemic review guidelines, emphasizing conceptual coding rather than quantitative meta-analysis (Petticrew & Roberts, 2006; Snyder, 2019).

The synthesis was conducted using thematic analysis, which identifies recurring patterns across heterogeneous studies (Braun & Clarke, 2006; King & Brooks, 2017). Themes were organized around three core constructs central to this review: AI Adoption and Competencies – capturing how individuals perceive and acquire generative AI skills (Short & Short, 2023; Bachmann et al., 2024). Cognitive Mechanisms – specifically perceived feasibility and desirability as mediators of entrepreneurial intention (Shapero & Sokol, 1982; Saeed et al., 2014). Digital Social Entrepreneurship Outcomes – documenting intention formation, venture creation, and social impact (Fox et al., 2023; Duong et al., 2025). The thematic analysis followed iterative coding steps, starting with open coding, followed by axial coding to establish connections, and selective coding to refine themes that directly relate to the proposed cognitive pathways (Saldaña, 2016).

To ensure methodological rigor, each publication was assessed using the Mixed Methods Appraisal Tool (MMAT) (Hong et al., 2018). Although MMAT is traditionally applied to empirical studies, its criteria for clarity of research questions, adequacy of literature background, and validity of inferences were applied to conceptual and theoretical articles as well (Hong et al., 2018). Articles scoring below the minimum threshold were reconsidered for exclusion, ensuring that the synthesis rests on high-quality evidence.

Although systematic literature reviews offer comprehensive insights into established knowledge, they are constrained by the availability and scope of existing publications (Hart, 2018). The reliance on English-language sources may exclude relevant regional studies published in other languages. Additionally, while thematic synthesis facilitates conceptual integration, it does not produce pooled effect sizes typical of quantitative meta-analysis (Snyder, 2019).

As a secondary synthesis of published literature, this study did not involve human subjects and, therefore, did not require institutional ethical approval. However, ethical integrity was maintained through strict adherence to transparent reporting standards (PRISMA), accurate representation of source findings, and proper citation of all intellectual property (APA, 2020).

4. Results

AI Adoption as a Cognitive Stimulus for Social Entrepreneurship. The literature demonstrates that generative AI adoption—including tools such as ChatGPT and other large language models—functions as a stimulus that reshapes individuals' cognitive frameworks related to opportunity recognition and value creation (Short & Short, 2023; Mariani & Dwivedi, 2024). Evidence shows that exposure to AI technologies increases cognitive accessibility of entrepreneurial ideas, particularly for complex social challenges, by enabling rapid ideation, text synthesis, scenario planning, and automated prototyping (Liu & Wang, 2024; Crumbly et al., 2025).

Abaddi (2023) finds that AI-enabled ideation tools significantly influence digital entrepreneurial intentions, as users perceive enhanced creativity and problem-solving efficacy. Consistent with this, Bachmann et al. (2024) highlight that higher levels of digital and AI competencies correlate with stronger intentions to pursue entrepreneurial activity because individuals feel more capable of leveraging technology for innovative outcomes.

Furthermore, AI has been identified as a transformative catalyst for social value creation in digital ventures. Kim, Jang, and Kim (2022) note that AI enables tailored social services and personalized engagements, expanding the scope of social impact ventures. In the context of crisis and resilience, Nakpodia et al. (2023) show that digital technologies—including AI—support social entrepreneurs in navigating dynamic socio-economic constraints, enhancing both reach and impact. These studies collectively show that AI adoption serves not just as a technical input, but as a cognitive stimulus activating entrepreneurial mindsets oriented toward problem-solving and social value provision.

Cognitive Mechanisms Linking AI Competence to Entrepreneurial Intention. Building on the Stimulus–Organism–Response (SOR) framework, the literature reveals that AI-related stimuli are internalized through cognitive mediators such as perceived desirability and perceived feasibility, which in turn shape entrepreneurial intentions (Mehrabian & Russell, 1974; Saeed et al., 2014).

Perceived Feasibility. Perceived feasibility reflects an individual's confidence in executing entrepreneurial tasks successfully. Research consistently finds that AI competencies

strengthen self-efficacy and task confidence, thus enhancing perceived feasibility. For example, Duong et al. (2025) demonstrate that generative AI skills significantly elevate students' perceptions of their ability to launch digital social ventures by simplifying complex tasks such as market research, customer segmentation, and strategy development.

Similarly, Nguyen et al. (2024) find that AI literacy and digital skills significantly improve students' self-efficacy in entrepreneurial contexts, particularly when applied to problem formulation and resource mobilization. These results align with prior findings from studies on digital competence, which show that digital skills increase confidence in tackling entrepreneurial challenges (Barboutidis & Stiakakis, 2023). This suggests that AI competencies serve as foundational enablers that reduce perceived barriers to venture creation.

Perceived Desirability. Perceived desirability reflects how attractive entrepreneurship is as a personal and social career path. Studies indicate that generative AI fosters desirability by broadening individuals' imagination regarding venture possibilities and enabling experimentation with social mission-driven ideas (Ghatak et al., 2020; Fox et al., 2023). Abaddi (2023) observes that exposure to AI tools increases enthusiasm and motivation for innovative venture ideation, especially when individuals see AI as a way to amplify social impact.

Moreover, Battisti (2019) and Ibáñez et al. (2022) find that digital platforms and ecosystems enriched by AI technologies attract socially oriented entrepreneurs due to enhanced connectivity with stakeholders, including beneficiaries, investors, and partners. These cognitive appraisals create a motivational framework where entrepreneurship is seen as both impactful and personally satisfying, which is essential for social venture creation.

Cognitive Congruence and Interaction Effects. Importantly, several authors highlight that the interaction between perceived feasibility and desirability has complex implications for entrepreneurial intention. Duong (2025) shows that alignment between desirability and feasibility amplifies intention, whereas misalignment can generate hesitation or reconfiguration of venture ideas. For example, individuals with high feasibility but low desirability may opt for commercial career paths, while those with high desirability but low feasibility may pivot toward social activism or intrapreneurship (Tran et al., 2023; Lopes et al., 2023).

This interplay underscores the need for AI competencies that can simultaneously enhance both cognitive dimensions—ensuring that aspiring entrepreneurs not only feel capable but also genuinely motivated to pursue digital social ventures.

Pathways to Digital Social Venture Creation. The literature review identifies multiple cognitive pathways through which generative AI drives digital social venture creation. These pathways highlight sequence and feedback loops where AI competence translates into intention, which then translates into venture conceptualization and early-stage enactment.

Ideation and Opportunity Recognition. Generative AI tools support early-stage ideation and opportunity recognition by enabling rapid synthesis of social needs, stakeholder insights, and trend analyses. Crumbly et al. (2025) propose a framework where AI algorithms help entrepreneurs identify unmet social needs by scanning large datasets, accelerating cognitive exploration and opportunity framing. Similarly, Mariani and Dwivedi (2024) show that AI enhances divergent thinking and creative problem-solving, which are critical for identifying novel social venture opportunities.

Resource Mobilization and Strategy Formulation. Once a viable social opportunity is cognitively appraised, AI tools assist in resource mobilization and strategic planning. Studies show that AI-supported analytics help in identifying funding sources, modeling financial scenarios, and optimizing resource allocation (Wang & Zhang, 2024; Bui & Nguyen, 2023). This analytical support reinforces perceived feasibility and reduces cognitive load associated with complex planning tasks.

Stakeholder Engagement and Scaling Impact. AI's role extends to stakeholder engagement and impact scaling. Kim et al. (2022) and Fox et al. (2023) document how AI-enabled personalization and communication tools expand social ventures' ability to build communities and tailor services. Additionally, digital platforms integrated with AI facilitate data-informed learning loops, allowing social entrepreneurs to refine their model based on feedback and impact metrics.

This integrative pathway—from AI competence to cognitive appraisal to venture action—illustrates how generative AI does not merely support discrete tasks but forms a cognitive infrastructure that interweaves technology and agency in social venture creation.

This qualitative review reveals that. AI adoption serves as a cognitive stimulus, enabling individuals to reconceptualize entrepreneurial opportunities through enhanced information processing, creativity, and problem-solving (Short & Short, 2023; Abaddi, 2023). Cognitive mechanisms—specifically perceived feasibility and desirability—mediate the effects of AI competencies on entrepreneurial intention (Duong et al., 2025; Nguyen et al., 2024). Generative AI competencies contribute to social venture pathways by enabling ideation, resource mobilization, strategic planning, and stakeholder engagement (Crumbly et al., 2025; Wang & Zhang, 2024). These findings collectively suggest that while AI adoption provides the technological foundation, the cognitive interpretation and internalization of AI competencies ultimately determine who pursues digital social entrepreneurship and how they do so.

5. Discussion

This qualitative literature review set out to synthesize existing scholarship on how generative AI adoption and competencies are cognitively internalized to influence digital social entrepreneurial intention and subsequent venture creation. Three core themes emerged from the literature: (1) generative AI adoption as a cognitive stimulus that reconfigures entrepreneurial cognition; (2) cognitive mechanisms, specifically perceived feasibility and desirability, as mediators in the relationship between AI competencies and entrepreneurial intention; and (3) cognitive pathways leading from intention to digital social venture creation. The findings reveal a coherent yet nuanced pattern in which the role of generative AI is not merely technological but fundamentally cognitive, shaping how aspiring entrepreneurs perceive opportunities and capabilities in socially impactful digital ventures.

Generative AI Adoption as Cognitive Stimulus. The literature consistently positions generative AI not just as a tool, but as a cognitive stimulus that transforms how individuals recognize, evaluate, and act upon opportunities, especially in digital and social contexts. For example, Short and Short (2023) argue that tools like ChatGPT extend human cognitive capacity by enabling rapid generation of textual content, exploration of alternative scenarios, and ideation support, thereby enhancing entrepreneurial imagination. Similarly, Mariani and Dwivedi (2024) note that generative AI augments creative problem-solving and opportunity recognition—core cognitive processes in entrepreneurial behavior. These findings align with Chalmers, MacKenzie, and Carter's (2021) broader observation that AI reshapes venture creation by amplifying cognitive resources previously constrained by human limits.

Importantly, this AI-as-stimulus perspective has been substantiated in empirical research. Abaddi (2023) finds that exposure to ChatGPT increases digital entrepreneurial intention by enhancing learners' perceived creative self-efficacy and confidence in ideation. Bachmann et al. (2024) extend this by demonstrating that digital and AI competencies strengthen anticipated success and perceived control, two cognitive precursors linked to entrepreneurial intentions. This body of work supports the notion that generative AI technologies act as external enablers that trigger internal cognitive shifts—a view consistent with the Stimulus–Organism–Response (SOR) framework (Mehrabian & Russell, 1974).

However, generative AI's role as a cognitive stimulus appears contingent on users' competencies. Nguyen and Nguyen (2024) show that AI literacy and digital skills significantly boost self-efficacy and task competence perceptions, which in turn influence intention. This suggests that without foundational AI competencies, the cognitive stimulus provided by AI adoption may be attenuated. Thus, while AI adoption can activate cognitive pathways, the extent of its effect depends on the individual's ability to interpret and deploy AI outputs meaningfully.

Perceived Feasibility and Desirability as Cognitive Mediators. A central premise of this review is that cognitive mechanisms—particularly perceived feasibility and perceived desirability from Shapero and Sokol's (1982) Entrepreneurial Event Model (EEM)—mediate the effect of AI adoption on social entrepreneurial intentions. The literature broadly supports this mediation logic but also reveals complex interactions between these cognitive constructs.

Perceived feasibility reflects one's belief in their ability to execute venture-related tasks. Duong et al. (2025) illustrate that generative AI competencies enhance perceived feasibility by lowering barriers associated with technical tasks (e.g., market research, prototyping) and by increasing confidence in managing venture complexity. These results agree with Barboutidis and Stiakakis (2023), who find that digital competence is strongly linked to entrepreneurial self-efficacy. Nguyen et al. (2024) similarly highlight that AI literacy improves

confidence in venture design and strategic planning, thereby reinforcing feasibility perceptions.

Notably, perceived feasibility may also be influenced by contextual factors such as educational support and institutional environment. Tran, Nguyen, St-Jean, Duong, and Trinh (2023) find that university support networks and entrepreneurship education strengthen feasibility perceptions among Vietnamese youth, suggesting that AI competencies alone may not suffice without broader ecosystem backing. Collectively, these studies indicate that AI-driven feasibility is multi-determined, involving individual competencies and contextual support.

Perceived desirability, or the attractiveness of the entrepreneurial pathway, also plays a pivotal role in translating AI adoption into intention. Abaddi's (2023) findings show that AI tools enhance desirability by making entrepreneurship seem more accessible and exciting. This is supported by Battisti (2019) and Ibáñez et al. (2022), whose work on digital social entrepreneurs highlights the motivational power of technology-enabled impact. Individuals witness the potential for broader reach and stakeholder engagement through digital and AI-supported platforms, which strengthens their motivational drive toward social venture creation.

However, the literature suggests that desirability is shaped not only by technology but also by values and social context. Ghatak, Chatterjee, and Bhowmick (2020) emphasize that prosocial values and community orientation are significant predictors of social entrepreneurial intention. Fox, Muldoon, and Davis (2023) further demonstrate that social and institutional support heightens desirability by legitimizing entrepreneurship as a viable and attractive pathway. These studies imply that generative AI enhances desirability indirectly—by enabling agents to conceive personally meaningful and socially impactful ventures.

The interaction between feasibility and desirability warrants particular attention. Duong (2025) reveals that alignment between these two cognitive dimensions exponentially increases entrepreneurial intention. Conversely, misalignment—such as high feasibility but low desirability—can lead to divergent outcomes like choosing commercial entrepreneurship or other career paths. This finding resonates with Lopes, Suchek, and Gomes (2023), who show that sustainability-oriented intentions require both strong feasibility beliefs and desire for societal impact. Thus, cognitive congruence—not just individual pathways—is crucial in understanding AI's influence on social entrepreneurial intention.

Cognitive Pathways to Digital Social Venture Creation. The literature suggests multiple cognitive pathways through which generative AI competencies translate into social venture creation. These pathways encapsulate sequences from AI exposure to cognitive evaluation and behavioral intention, culminating in venture conceptualization and early-stage enactment.

First, ideation and opportunity recognition emerge as crucial initial stages. Crumbly, Pal, and Altay (2025) propose a classification framework for generative AI that supports scanning for social needs and reframing problems, enabling users to generate and evaluate a wider set of potential solutions. Mariani and Dwivedi (2024) similarly find that AI enhances divergent thinking and scenario exploration, facilitating the recognition of socially impactful opportunities that might remain hidden without computational augmentation.

Second, resource mobilization and strategic planning constitute a key pathway where AI competencies play a pivotal role. Wang and Zhang (2024) show that AI capabilities help identify funding sources, model financial scenarios, and optimize resource allocation, which strengthens feasibility beliefs. These insights align with studies in digital entrepreneurship that highlight AI's impact on strategic decision-making and operational planning (Bui & Nguyen, 2023).

Third, stakeholder engagement and scaling pathways appear prominently in the literature. Kim, Jang, and Kim (2022) emphasize AI's role in personalized stakeholder communication and community building, which enhances desirability by aligning venture outputs with beneficiary needs. Fox et al. (2023) and Battisti (2019) further argue that AI-enabled platforms facilitate expansive stakeholder networks, enhancing legitimacy and potential for impact scaling.

Yet, the literature also points to potential cognitive and structural barriers. Nguyen and Nguyen (2024) caution that unequal access to AI tools and digital skills may exacerbate digital divides, limiting who can meaningfully benefit from AI-enabled pathways. Karlidag-Dennis, Hazenberg, and Dinh (2020) similarly highlight that social entrepreneurs from marginalized backgrounds may face additional cognitive and institutional challenges in leveraging technology for social impact.

To illustrate the coherence and variability in empirical evidence, eight prior studies are compared below. Abaddi (2023): Demonstrates the positive impact of ChatGPT on digital entrepreneurial intention through enhanced creativity and self-efficacy, highlighting technology–cognition linkages. Bachmann et al. (2024): Shows that digital competence is a significant predictor of entrepreneurial intention, emphasizing the role of cognitive confidence. Duong et al. (2025): Integrates SOR and EEM to show that AI drivers influence feasibility and desirability, confirming cognitive mediation. Nguyen et al. (2024): Highlights the importance of AI literacy in reinforcing feasibility beliefs, underscoring skill-based cognitive enhancement.

Tran et al. (2023): Finds that institutional support shapes both cognitive pathways and entrepreneurial intention, showing contextual modulation. Lopes et al. (2023): Shows that sustainability-oriented intentions require both desirability and feasibility, illustrating cognitive congruence. Crumbly et al. (2025): Offers a framework where generative AI supports social problem analysis and opportunity recognition. Wang & Zhang (2024): Demonstrates that AI facilitates resource and strategic planning, reinforcing cognitive perceptions of capability.

These comparative findings collectively indicate that AI competencies influence digital social entrepreneurship through cognitive pathways involving both individual capacities and environmental enablers. While some studies focus predominantly on individual-level cognition (e.g., Abaddi, Bachmann et al.), others integrate contextual elements such as institutional support (Tran et al.) or structural barriers (Nguyen & Nguyen).

The review's findings have several theoretical and practical implications. Theoretically, integrating SOR and EEM provides a robust framework for understanding how technological stimuli become internalized as cognitive assets shaping entrepreneurial intention—especially in the social domain. Practically, educators and policymakers should prioritize AI literacy programs that strengthen both feasibility and desirability, and design support systems that ensure equitable access to AI tools

6. Conclusions

This qualitative literature review synthesizes contemporary research to elucidate how generative AI adoption and competencies are cognitively internalized to shape digital social entrepreneurial intention and venture creation. The findings demonstrate that generative AI functions not merely as a technological enabler, but as a cognitive infrastructure that reshapes how individuals perceive opportunities, evaluate feasibility, and construct socially oriented entrepreneurial pathways. By extending existing entrepreneurship and digital innovation theories, this review highlights the central role of cognitive mediation in translating AI competencies into social venture creation.

First, the review establishes that generative AI adoption acts as a cognitive stimulus that enhances opportunity recognition, creative problem-solving, and strategic imagination, particularly in addressing complex social challenges. Exposure to generative AI tools increases individuals' capacity to conceptualize scalable and impact-driven digital solutions, thereby broadening the scope of social entrepreneurial opportunities beyond traditional resource constraints. This finding underscores the transformative role of AI in expanding the cognitive boundaries of social entrepreneurship in digital contexts.

Second, the review confirms that perceived feasibility and perceived desirability serve as critical mediating mechanisms linking generative AI competencies to entrepreneurial intention. AI-related skills strengthen perceived feasibility by reducing task complexity, increasing self-efficacy, and supporting analytical and planning activities. Simultaneously, generative AI enhances perceived desirability by enabling socially meaningful experimentation, amplifying perceived social impact, and reinforcing personal motivation to pursue digital social ventures. Importantly, the review highlights that alignment between feasibility and desirability is essential; when these cognitive dimensions are congruent, entrepreneurial intention is significantly amplified.

Third, the synthesis identifies distinct cognitive pathways through which AI competencies translate into digital social venture creation, encompassing ideation, opportunity evaluation, resource mobilization, stakeholder engagement, and early-stage scaling. These pathways illustrate that generative AI supports not only pre-venture cognition but also the enactment phase of social entrepreneurship by facilitating data-driven learning, adaptive decision-making, and iterative impact assessment. As such, generative AI emerges as a key enabler of both entrepreneurial agency and social value creation in digitally mediated environments.

Overall, this review contributes to the literature by integrating insights from artificial intelligence, entrepreneurial cognition, and social entrepreneurship into a unified conceptual understanding. It advances theoretical frameworks such as the Entrepreneurial Event Model and the Stimulus–Organism–Response paradigm by positioning generative AI competencies as exogenous stimuli that are cognitively processed to produce socially oriented entrepreneurial outcomes. Practically, the findings suggest that fostering AI literacy and cognitive alignment should be a priority for educators, policymakers, and ecosystem builders seeking to promote inclusive and impact-driven digital entrepreneurship.

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