

Factors influencing students' intention to choose creative majors in higher education

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Abstract:

Choosing a major is a crucial decision that shapes students' career paths and personal growth. While extensive research has examined major selection in business and science, technology, engineering, mathematics (STEM) fields, studies on creative disciplines remain limited. This study investigates the factors that influence students' intention to pursue creative majors, including arts, design, communication, and fashion, across universities in Hanoi, Vietnam. A mixed-methods approach was employed, combining qualitative thematic analysis (n=21) using NVivo with quantitative analysis (n=307) conducted through PLS-SEM in SmartPLS 4.0. The results indicate that attitude towards creative majors is a significant predictor of students' intentions, primarily shaped by job prospects, personal interest, and self-efficacy. In contrast, media publicity and subjective norms, including the influence of family, peers, teachers, and counsellors, did not have a direct significant impact on students' intentions. Gender differences were observed, with female students demonstrating greater personal interest in creative majors and male students displaying higher self-efficacy. However, these differences did not significantly affect their intention to pursue creative fields. Additionally, higher English proficiency was found to positively influence all key constructs in the model, including self-efficacy, personal interest, job prospects, attitude, and ultimately the intention to pursue creative majors. These findings provide valuable insights for universities to enhance their academic programmes, career counselling services, and recruitment strategies, thereby ensuring stronger support for students pursuing creative disciplines.

Keywords: creative majors, higher education, intention to choose majors, students, universities in Hanoi.

Classification numbers: 1.4, 3.4, 4.1

1. Introduction

Higher education plays a critical role in Vietnam's socio-economic development, equipping students with the skills and knowledge necessary for innovation and global competitiveness. Over the past two decades, Vietnam has significantly expanded access to higher education, with tertiary enrolments increasing from 0.9 million in 2000 to 2.3 million in 2016, raising the gross enrolment rate (GER) from 9 to 28% [1]. Despite this growth, Vietnam's GER remains lower than that of many regional countries, highlighting the ongoing challenge of expanding opportunities for higher education participation. The increasing number of universities, from 214 in 2013 to 242 in 2022 [1, 2], demonstrates a national commitment to improving access to tertiary education. However, this expansion has intensified competition among institutions, necessitating a stronger focus on student recruitment, curriculum relevance, and career-oriented education [3, 4].

Within this evolving educational landscape, creative industries have emerged as a crucial economic sector. The global creative economy generates approximately \$2.3 trillion in annual revenue, accounting for 3.1% of global GDP [5]. The rapid growth of creative goods and services, evident in exports reaching a record high of \$1.4 trillion in 2022, underscores the increasing demand for creative skills worldwide. Vietnam mirrors this trend, with its creative industries experiencing substantial growth over the past decade. Revenue from "creative, arts, and entertainment activities" has increased from over \$25 million in 2012 to more than \$125 million in 2024, reflecting rising consumer demand, technological advancements, and a growing middle class [6]. In recognition of this potential, Vietnam has integrated creativity into its national development strategy, with initiatives such as the "Innovation and creativity in teaching and learning" policy [7] and the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation (UNESCO)'s designation of Hanoi as a "Creative City" [8].

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Creative majors, including arts, design, media, and communication, play a vital role in fostering this creative economy, a rapidly expanding sector that contributes significantly to both global and national economic growth. According to the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD) (2010) [9], creative industries span four main sectors: heritage (cultural traditions, crafts), arts (visual and performing arts), media (publishing, film, television), and functional creations (design, digital media, advertising). These industries are largely driven by intellectual property, artistic expertise, and innovation [10]. Higher education institutions thus serve as essential environments for creative talent, preparing students to thrive in these dynamic, skill-intensive fields [11].

Despite the growing demand and policy support, recent fluctuations in student interest reflect underlying tensions. In 2021, journalism (311.65%) and arts (210.7%) ranked among the top five most sought-after majors [12]. By 2022, journalism, multimedia communication, and public relations reached record-high admission scores [13] and remained top choices in 2023 [14]. However, in 2024, creative majors declined from the list of top registered fields [15], suggesting renewed uncertainty regarding their appeal and perceived value.

While extensive research exists on students' choice of academic majors, the focus has largely centred on business, science, technology, engineering, and mathematics (STEM), and specialised fields such as agriculture and physics. Far less attention has been paid to the decision-making processes behind selecting creative majors, despite their growing relevance in the 21st-century economy. This gap in the literature limits our understanding of what motivates students to pursue careers in creative fields, or what deters them.

Investigating these factors is essential for several reasons. Firstly, it informs the development of targeted educational policies that support students with creative aspirations. Secondly, it enhances career counselling and student guidance programmes by addressing common misconceptions about job prospects in creative industries. Finally, a deeper understanding of students' motivations can help universities refine their programmes to attract and retain talent in creative fields, contributing to the long-term sustainability of Vietnam's creative economy.

Research objective: This study aims to explore the key factors that influence undergraduate students' intention to choose creative majors, with particular emphasis on personal interest, job prospects, self-efficacy, subjective norms, and media and publicity.

Research question: What are the primary factors influencing students' intention to pursue creative majors at the undergraduate level?

2. Theoretical framework

2.1. The Theory of Reasoned Action in academic decision-making

To understand the determinants of students' intention to choose creative majors, this study applies the Theory of Reasoned Action (TRA), developed by M. Fishbein, et al. (1975) [16]. TRA posits that behavioural intention is the strongest predictor of actual behaviour and is shaped by two key factors: attitude towards the behaviour, which refers to how positively or negatively an individual evaluates a specific action based on expected outcomes such as career satisfaction, economic prospects, and personal fulfilment [17]; and subjective norms, which reflect perceived social pressure or encouragement from influential figures such as family, peers, and educators [16].

TRA has been extensively applied in educational research to explore factors influencing students' academic and career choices. Numerous studies have examined how attitudes and subjective norms impact students' selection of various academic disciplines. W. Zhang (2007) [18] utilised TRA to investigate the factors affecting female students' decisions to pursue a major in computer information systems (CIS), highlighting the role of social influences and personal attitudes in shaping their academic choices. Similarly, W.L. Kuechler, et al. (2009) [19] examined the decline in students choosing information systems as a major, demonstrating how changing perceptions and societal influences impacted students' intentions. S. Sathapornvajana, et al. (2012) [20] applied TRA to study Thai students' motivations for enrolling in information technology (IT) programmes, emphasising cultural and social dimensions in academic decision-making. A. Kumar, et al. (2013) [21] explored the factors influencing college students' choices of business majors, further affirming the relevance of TRA in understanding educational preferences.

2.2. Hypotheses development

Each year, adolescents navigate the complex process of selecting a major, which involves exploring options, evaluating personal interests and abilities, and making informed decisions [22]. This choice plays a crucial role in shaping their academic experience, career trajectories, and long-term financial stability [23]. Scholarly interest in major selection has increased steadily, with research publications in Scopus-indexed journals peaking in 2021 [24]. This study focuses on factors that have been extensively examined in previous literature and are recognised as critical determinants of students' academic choices.

2.3. Personal interest

Personal interest is a key determinant in students' academic decision-making, reflecting their attraction

to specific topics and enjoyment of the subject [25, 26]. Closely linked to academic motivation, personal interest plays a crucial role in engagement and persistence in higher education [27]. Research consistently highlights personal interest as a decisive factor in major selection. L.N. Calkins, et al. (2006) [28] found that students opting out of economics prioritised subject interest, while K. MacLeod, et al. (2016) [29] identified personal interest as the most critical determinant for physics majors. M.Y.Y. Goh, et al. (2021) [30] further reinforced that intrinsic motivators outweigh extrinsic factors in career decisions. The TRA also supports the role of personal interest in shaping attitudes toward academic fields. W. Zhang (2007) [18] and W.L. Kuechler, et al. (2009) [19] demonstrated that genuine interest strongly influences students' attitudes towards a major, while E. Awadallah, et al. (2021) [31] confirmed that personal interest directly shapes attitudes towards a field.

H1: Personal interest positively influences a student's attitude to choose creative majors.

2.4. Job prospects

The availability of job opportunities and career advancement potential significantly influence students' choice of major. Research indicates that students balance career stability, growth potential, and personal interest when making academic decisions [18]. W.L. Kuechler, et al. (2009) [19] found that job availability influenced students' attitudes towards Information Systems (IS) majors, while A. Kumar, et al. (2013) [21] identified job prospects as one of the strongest predictors of business major selection. Similarly, L.C. Tang, et al. [32] observed that accounting students placed high importance on career stability and long-term growth potential. Further supporting these findings, K. Stair, et al. (2016) [33] emphasised that clear career pathways impact students' decisions, while students across disciplines prioritise stable employment opportunities [34]. These studies indicate that job prospects are a crucial factor in major selection, though their impact may vary based on individual perceptions and industry expectations.

H2: Job prospects positively influence a student's attitude to choose creative majors.

2.5. Self-efficacy

Self-efficacy, or an individual's belief in their ability to succeed, plays a significant role in academic and career decision-making [35]. In creative fields where career paths can be uncertain and highly competitive, self-efficacy is particularly crucial. Research suggests that self-efficacy influences students' persistence in their chosen fields. G. Harder, et al. (2015) [36] found that business students' self-efficacy shaped their confidence in their major choice, while individuals with higher self-efficacy are more likely to pursue academic and career paths aligned with their perceived competencies [37].

H3: Self-efficacy positively influences a student's attitude to choose creative majors.

2.6. Attitude towards a major

Attitude towards a major is a key predictor of students' intention to pursue a particular field of study. Research applying TRA and the Theory of Planned Behaviour (TPB) consistently demonstrates that positive perceptions of a major strongly influence decision-making. A. Kumar, et al. (2013) [21] found that attitude towards a business major was the strongest predictor of major selection, while W. Zhang (2007) [18] emphasised that students who perceived Information Systems (IS) as offering strong career prospects and high earning potential were more likely to choose the field. Similarly, L.C. Tang, et al. (2016) [32] found that attitudes towards accounting were positively correlated with major selection, while personal interest in IS was more influential than job security or salary expectations [19].

H4: Attitude towards the intended creative majors positively influences a student's intention to choose creative majors.

2.7. Subjective norms: Influence of family, peers, and educators

Family, peers, teachers, and counsellors play an important role in shaping students' academic choices. While subjective norm is widely recognised as a factor in major selection, its influence varies by discipline and context. Q. Liang, et al. (2023) [38] found that wealthier students often choose humanities, while lower-income students prefer financially stable fields. L.C. Tang, et al. (2016) [32] highlighted the role of family and teachers in choosing accounting, and A. Kumar, et al. (2013) [21] noted stronger family influence on female business students, with peers and professors being more influential for males. TRA-based studies also confirm the significant impact of subjective norm, especially from family and instructors [19, 31]. However, other research suggests limited influence; for instance, IT students tend to decide independently [20], and business students report minimal input from parents or advisors [39].

H5: Family & peers, teachers & counsellors influence a student's intention to choose creative majors.

2.8. Media and publicity

Media and publicity serve as key sources of information that shape students' academic decisions. Research suggests that students rely on digital platforms, social media, and university marketing when selecting a major. It is found that students consider the internet a crucial tool for researching educational opportunities [40], while A. Hoag, et al. (2017) [41] demonstrated that media exposure positively predicted the choice of journalism as a major.

H6: Media and publicity positively influence a student's intention to choose creative majors.

2.9. Control variables: Gender and English proficiency

Gender has been widely studied in relation to educational and career decisions. Research suggests that gender differences impact major selection and persistence [42]. A.D. Kugler, et al. (2021) [43] found that women are more likely to switch majors due to negative feedback, while A.L. Mullen (2014) [44] highlighted gender-based selection patterns across disciplines.

English proficiency is another important factor, particularly in Vietnam, where many higher education programmes require English certification. L.D. Doan, et al. (2021) [45] found that higher English proficiency is associated with greater self-efficacy and confidence in academic skills and major selection, highlighting the important role of language ability in shaping students' academic and career decisions [46, 47].

Based on the hypotheses, this study proposes the following framework model as seen in Fig. 1.

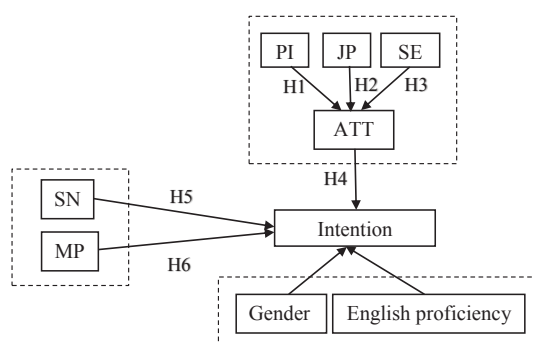


Fig. 1. Hypothesised structural model. PI: Personal interest, JP: Job prospects, SE: Self-efficacy, ATT: Attitude toward a major, SN: Subjective norms, MP: Media and publicity. Source: Authors' construction.

3. Methodology

This study employs a mixed-methods approach, combining qualitative and quantitative research. The qualitative phase explores students' motivations and decision-making processes, while the quantitative phase empirically tests hypothesised relationships using survey data. This approach provides both contextual insights and statistical validation.

The qualitative research involved in-depth interviews with 21 participants, focusing on their decision-making process, career perceptions, and external influences such as family, peers, and educators. The semi-structured interviews explored students' motivations, challenges, and the skills required for creative careers. Thematic analysis of V. Braun, et al (2006) [48] was used to analyse qualitative data, with NVivo software facilitating coding and theme identification.

The quantitative phase involved a structured survey measuring personal interest, job prospects, self-efficacy, subjective norms, media and publicity, and attitude towards creative majors. Gender and English proficiency were included as control variables. The questionnaire, adapted from validated scales, comprised 26 items on a five-point Likert scale. A non-probability sampling strategy, combining purposive and snowball sampling, was employed, targeting students in creative majors at universities in Hanoi. A total of 331 responses were collected in 2025, with 307 valid responses retained after screening, exceeding the required sample size based on J.F. Hair's (2017) [49] guidelines.

Data analysis was conducted using SPSS 26.0 for descriptive statistics and PLS-SEM in SmartPLS 4 to assess measurement validity and test the hypothesised relationships [50]. PLS-SEM is appropriate for this study as it supports prediction-oriented research, handles complex models with multiple constructs, and is robust to non-normal data and moderate sample sizes [49]. ANOVA and t-tests were employed to examine the influence of gender and English proficiency on students' intention to choose creative majors [51].

4. Results and discussion

4.1. Qualitative results

The qualitative findings, based on in-depth interviews with 21 students enrolled in creative majors, provide insight into the factors influencing their academic choices. Personal interest was the most frequently cited motivation, with students emphasising their passion for creativity and self-expression. Participants also highlighted the role of self-efficacy, acknowledging that confidence in their creative abilities influenced their commitment to pursuing these fields.

The role of job prospects in decision-making varied among students. Some expressed confidence in securing opportunities in the creative industries, particularly in design, media, and entrepreneurship. Others conveyed concerns about financial stability and industry competitiveness, which sometimes led to hesitation or reconsideration of their major choices. External influences, including family, peers, and educators, played a mixed role: while some students received encouragement, others faced resistance due to concerns over job security.

Another recurring theme was the perceived skill set required for success in creative careers. Many students recognised that creative disciplines demand both talent and technical skills but emphasised that hard work and continuous learning were more critical than innate ability. Some participants also noted the impact of media and publicity, with exposure to successful creative professionals reinforcing their aspirations. However, media influence was not a dominant factor compared to intrinsic motivation and social support.

4.2. Quantitative results

The final sample consisted of 307 valid responses from students pursuing creative majors. The most common field of study was art (32.3%), followed by design (26.7%), communication (22.1%), and fashion (18.9%). In terms of gender, 59.9% identified as male, 38.1% as female, and 2.0% as non-binary.

Regarding English proficiency, students were classified into five levels: beginner (6.8%), intermediate (24.8%), upper-intermediate (39.1%), advanced (15.3%), and fluent (14.0%). The distribution suggests that a significant proportion of students possess upper-intermediate or higher proficiency, which may influence their confidence in pursuing international career opportunities in creative fields.

Table 1. Correlation matrix of key variables.

	ATT	IC	JP	MP	PI	SE	SN
ATT	1.000						
IC	0.488	1.000					
JP	0.611	0.538	1.000				
MP	0.237	0.233	0.209	1.000			
PI	0.460	0.496	0.393	0.231	1.000		
SE	0.515	0.461	0.482	0.258	0.435	1.000	
SN	0.164	0.202	0.153	0.393	0.078	0.136	1.000

Source: Results from SmartPLS 4. ATT: attitude towards creative majors, IC: intention to choose creative majors, JP: job prospects, MP: media and publicity, PI: personal interest, SE: self-efficacy, SN: subjective norm.

To explore the preliminary relationships among the constructs, a Pearson correlation matrix was generated. As shown in Table 1, intention to choose creative majors (IC) was positively correlated with all other variables, most strongly with job prospects ($r=0.538$), personal interest ($r=0.496$), attitude ($r=0.488$), and self-efficacy ($r=0.461$). Attitude (ATT) demonstrated particularly high correlations with job prospects ($r=0.611$) and self-efficacy ($r=0.515$), suggesting that students with favourable career expectations and greater confidence in their creative abilities tend to develop more positive attitudes towards these majors. Meanwhile, media and publicity (MP) and subjective norms (SN) showed relatively weaker correlations with intention ($r=0.233$ and $r=0.202$, respectively), indicating a limited direct association with students' decision-making. These initial results support the model's structure and underscore the importance of internal factors, such as interest, confidence, and perception of opportunities, in influencing intention. Importantly, all correlation coefficients are below 0.85, indicating no multicollinearity concerns among the variables.

4.2.1. Measurement model assessment

To evaluate the reliability and validity of the measurement model, key criteria were assessed, including Cronbach's alpha, composite reliability (CR), outer loadings, and average

variance extracted (AVE), in line with the recommendations of J.F. Hair, et al. (2017) [49]. Internal consistency was confirmed, with Cronbach's alpha values ranging from 0.720 to 0.864, all exceeding the acceptable threshold of 0.7. Similarly, all constructs achieved CR values between 0.843 and 0.906, indicating strong construct reliability.

Convergent validity was assessed using outer loadings and AVE. All item loadings exceeded 0.7, ranging from 0.736 to 0.881, suggesting that the individual items were well-correlated with their respective constructs. In addition,

Table 2. Measurement model assessment.

Construct	Outer loading	Cronbach's alpha (CA)	Composite reliability (CR)	Average variance extracted (AVE)
Attitude towards creative majors (ATT)		0.720	0.843	0.641
ATT1	0.796			
ATT2	0.798			
ATT3	0.808			
Intention to choose creative majors (IC)		0.808	0.886	0.722
IC1	0.860			
IC2	0.840			
IC3	0.850			
Job prospects (JP)		0.830	0.887	0.662
JP1	0.812			
JP2	0.798			
JP3	0.833			
JP4	0.812			
Media and publicity (MP)		0.842	0.893	0.676
MP1	0.819			
MP2	0.813			
MP3	0.849			
MP4	0.807			
Personal interest (PI)		0.859	0.904	0.702
PI1	0.827			
PI2	0.837			
PI3	0.844			
PI4	0.842			
Self-efficacy (SE)		0.844	0.906	0.762
SE1	0.857			
SE2	0.881			
SE3	0.880			
Subjective norms (SN)		0.864	0.900	0.643
SN1	0.736			
SN2	0.801			
SN3	0.812			
SN4	0.826			
SN5	0.829			

Source: Results from SmartPLS 4.

AVE values for all constructs ranged from 0.641 to 0.762, surpassing the minimum requirement of 0.5 and confirming that each construct captured sufficient variance from its indicators.

Overall, the results support the conclusion that the measurement model demonstrates both strong reliability and adequate convergent validity, making it appropriate for subsequent structural analysis (Table 2).

Discriminant validity was assessed using the Fornell-Larcker criterion and the Heterotrait-Monotrait (HTMT) ratio to determine whether the constructs were sufficiently distinct [52]. The Fornell-Larcker criterion requires that the square root of the average variance extracted (AVE) for each construct exceeds its correlations with other constructs. As shown in Table 3, all constructs met this requirement. For example, the square root of AVE for ATT (0.801) was higher than its correlations with IC (0.488) and JP (0.611), while IC (0.850) exceeded its correlations with JP (0.538), MP (0.233), and PI (0.496). These results indicate a clear distinction among the constructs.

The HTMT ratio further confirmed discriminant validity, with all values remaining below the 0.85 threshold (J. Henseler, et al. (2015) [52]). The highest HTMT values, including JP-ATT (0.790), SE-ATT (0.661), and JP-IC (0.655), were within acceptable limits, confirming that the constructs did not exhibit excessive conceptual overlap (Table 3).

Table 3. Results of discriminant validity.

Fornell-Larcker criterion							
	ATT	IC	JP	MP	PI	SE	SN
ATT	0.801						
IC	0.488	0.850					
JP	0.611	0.538	0.814				
MP	0.237	0.233	0.209	0.822			
PI	0.460	0.496	0.393	0.231	0.838		
SE	0.515	0.461	0.482	0.258	0.435	0.873	
SN	0.164	0.202	0.153	0.393	0.078	0.136	0.802
Heterotrait-Monotrait ratio (HTMT)							
	ATT	IC	JP	MP	PI	SE	SN
ATT							
IC	0.636						
JP	0.790	0.655					
MP	0.302	0.275	0.247				
PI	0.579	0.593	0.461	0.269			
SE	0.661	0.554	0.576	0.303	0.509		
SN	0.196	0.228	0.174	0.447	0.090	0.151	

Source: Results from SmartPLS 4. ATT: attitude towards creative majors, IC: intention to choose creative majors, JP: job prospects, MP: media and publicity, PI: personal interest, SE: self-efficacy, SN: subjective norm.

These findings provide strong support for the measurement model, ensuring that the constructs maintain conceptual distinctiveness and thereby allowing for reliable structural model analysis.

4.2.2. Path coefficients and hypothesis testing

The structural model was evaluated for multicollinearity using variance inflation factor (VIF) values, where a VIF below 5.0 indicates the absence of multicollinearity concerns [49]. Results showed that all VIF values ranged between 1.304 and 1.436, confirming that no multicollinearity issues were present. These findings confirm that the predictors are not excessively correlated, allowing for reliable estimation of the structural model.

Bootstrapping with 10,000 subsamples was employed to obtain stable estimates of path coefficients, t-values, and p-values [49]. Relationships were considered significant if p-value < 0.05 and t-value > 1.96.

Table 4. Structural model and hypothesis testing results.

Paths	Path coefficients	t-values	p-values	Inner VIF	f ²	Hypotheses	Decision
PI → ATT	0.194	3.339	0.001	1.304	0.054	H1	Supported
JP → ATT	0.426	6.801	0.000	1.377	0.247	H2	Supported
SE → ATT	0.226	3.708	0.000	1.436	0.066	H3	Supported
ATT → IC	0.452	7.516	0.000	1.066	0.259	H4	Supported
SN → IC	0.093	1.733	0.083	1.190	0.010	H5	Not supported
MP → IC	0.089	1.603	0.109	1.227	0.009	H6	Not supported

Source: Results from SmartPLS 4. ATT: attitude towards creative majors, IC: intention to choose creative majors, JP: job prospects, MP: media and publicity, PI: personal interest, SE: self-efficacy, SN: subjective norm.

As presented in Table 4, several relationships were statistically significant. ATT → IC ($\beta=0.452$, $p=0.000$) and JP → ATT ($\beta=0.426$, $p=0.000$) were strongly supported, confirming that attitude significantly predicts students' intention to choose creative majors, while job prospects strongly shape attitude. These findings align with existing research [31, 21, 38], which similarly emphasises that a positive attitude towards creative fields and favourable job prospects are key determinants in students' decision-making processes.

Similarly, PI → ATT ($\beta=0.194$, $p=0.001$) and SE → ATT ($\beta=0.226$, $p=0.000$) were also significant, highlighting the importance of personal interest and self-efficacy in influencing attitudes. These results are in line with prior studies [31, 21], which found that students with a strong personal interest in their field and high levels of self-efficacy tend to develop more positive attitudes towards their academic choices, subsequently affecting their intention to pursue specific majors.

Conversely, MP → IC ($\beta=0.089$, $p=0.109$) and SN → IC ($\beta=0.093$, $p=0.083$) were not significant, indicating that media and publicity and subjective norms do not directly impact students' intention to pursue creative majors. The low f-square values (0.009 and 0.010, respectively) further support the negligible effect sizes of these relationships. These results are consistent with earlier findings by C.A. Malgwi, et al. (2005) [39], S. Sathapornvajana, et al. (2012) [20], A. Rababah (2016) [53], and A. Hoag, et al. (2017) [41], who suggested that while external factors such as media influence and social expectations may play a role in shaping students' perceptions, they have limited or no significant impact on their final decision to pursue creative majors.

4.2.3. Predictive capability and model fit

The R^2 values indicate the explanatory power of the model, with attitude (ATT) having an R^2 of 0.461, meaning that 46.1% of the variance in students' attitudes towards creative majors is explained by the predictors. Intention to choose (IC) has an R^2 of 0.253, reflecting a moderate level of explanatory power [54]. The Q^2 values, calculated using the blindfolding procedure, were 0.290 for ATT and 0.178 for IC, both above zero, indicating moderate predictive relevance [49].

Table 5. Model fit indices.

Models	SRMR	d_ULS	d_G	Chi-square	NFI
Saturated	0.049	0.851	0.342	630.467	0.834
Estimated	0.071	1.757	0.393	688.030	0.819

Source: Results from SPSS 26.0.

Model fit indices, presented in Table 5, further confirm the adequacy of the structural model. The SRMR value (0.071) falls below the recommended threshold of 0.08, while the NFI value (0.819) exceeds the acceptable level of 0.80, demonstrating a satisfactory model fit [55]. These results indicate that the model possesses strong explanatory power and predictive relevance, thereby reinforcing the robustness of the findings.

4.2.4. Group comparisons by gender

Gender-based analysis was conducted using Levene's test for homogeneity of variances, followed by ANOVA or Welch's test where appropriate (Table 6). Results revealed that female students reported significantly higher personal interest in creative majors ($M=4.34$) compared to males ($M=3.62$), suggesting a stronger emotional or aspirational alignment with creative fields. Conversely, male students demonstrated greater self-efficacy ($M=4.10$ vs. 3.52), indicating higher confidence in their ability to succeed, which is consistent with prior findings on gendered confidence patterns [37].

However, no significant differences were observed in JP, SN, MP, ATT, or IC. This suggests that while gender influences individual traits such as interest and confidence, it does not significantly shape students' overall attitudes or intentions towards pursuing creative majors.

Table 6. Group comparisons by gender.

Factors	Levene's test (Sig.)	Test used	F/Welch statistic	Sig.	Significant difference
PI	0.000*	Welch	33.872	0.000*	Yes (Female > Male)
JP	0.149	ANOVA	0.252	0.778	No
SE	0.349	ANOVA	13.242	0.000*	Yes (Male > Female)
SN	0.724	ANOVA	1.854	0.158	No
MP	0.840	ANOVA	0.090	0.914	No
ATT	0.724	ANOVA	0.561	0.571	No
IC	0.136	ANOVA	1.152	0.317	No

Source: Results from SPSS 26.0. ATT: attitude towards creative majors, IC: intention to choose creative majors, JP: job prospects, MP: media and publicity, PI: personal interest, SE: self-efficacy, SN: subjective norm.

4.2.5. Group comparisons by English proficiency

The relationship between English proficiency and decision-making factors in choosing creative majors was examined using Welch's robust test, due to violations of variance homogeneity across all factors. The analysis revealed that English proficiency significantly affected all measured constructs, underscoring its substantial influence on students' perceptions and intentions.

Table 7. Group comparisons by English proficiency.

Factors	Levene's test (Sig.)	Welch statistic	Sig.	Significant difference
PI	0.000*	12.238	0.000*	Yes
JP	0.000*	28.315	0.000*	Yes
SE	0.000*	14.286	0.000*	Yes
SN	0.000*	4.199	0.004*	Yes
MP	0.000*	4.533	0.002*	Yes
ATT	0.000*	627.404	0.000*	Yes
IC	0.000*	16.514	0.000*	Yes

Source: Results from SPSS 26.0. ATT: attitude towards creative majors, IC: intention to choose creative majors, JP: job prospects, MP: media and publicity, PI: personal interest, SE: self-efficacy, SN: subjective norm.

The results in Table 7 show that higher English proficiency is positively associated with stronger personal interest, better perceived job prospects, and greater confidence in one's abilities. The findings also suggest that English proficiency influences subjective norms and media and publicity.

Importantly, English proficiency contributes to more positive attitudes (ATT) and a stronger intention to pursue creative majors (IC). As shown in Table 7, students with higher English proficiency demonstrated significantly higher scores in these factors, with Welch statistics of 627.404 ($p=0.000$) for ATT and 16.514 ($p=0.000$) for IC,

indicating a strong, statistically significant relationship. These results highlight the overall influence of English proficiency across key decision-making factors, reinforcing its role in shaping students' attitudes and intentions towards creative fields.

5. Conclusions

This study examined the factors influencing students' intention to pursue creative majors, confirming that attitude towards creative majors is the strongest predictor of intention, shaped by personal interest, self-efficacy, and job prospects. While subjective norms and media exposure influence perceptions, they do not directly impact students' career decisions. These findings suggest that intrinsic motivation plays a greater role than external validation in creative career choices.

Gender differences were evident, with female students demonstrating higher personal interest, whereas male students exhibited greater self-efficacy, reflecting potential variations in confidence and career expectations. However, these differences did not affect the overall intention to choose creative majors. Additionally, English proficiency significantly influenced career confidence and attitudes, indicating that language skills enhance students' perceptions of global career opportunities in creative fields.

5.1. Academic contributions

This study extends research on academic major selection by focusing on creative disciplines, an area often overlooked in favour of STEM and business fields. It reinforces the Theory of Reasoned Action [16] by reaffirming that attitude strongly predicts career intention [21, 31]. Unlike prior studies emphasising subjective norms [19, 39], this research suggests that students in creative fields rely more on personal motivation than on social influences.

The study also contributes to discussions on gender differences and language proficiency in creative education. The findings align with previous research on self-efficacy differences across genders [36, 37] and highlight the role of English proficiency in shaping career confidence [46, 53]. By integrating these variables into the study of creative education, this research provides new insights into how students navigate career decisions in an evolving globalised creative industry.

5.2. Practical contributions

The findings emphasise the need for universities to enhance self-efficacy and career preparedness among students pursuing creative majors. Expanding career counselling, industry partnerships, and practical learning

opportunities can help students develop confidence in their career prospects. Integrating portfolio-based assessments and project-driven curricula will further equip students with the skills necessary for success in creative industries.

Concerns about job stability remain a significant factor influencing students' attitudes. To address this, universities should actively promote clear career pathways, alumni success stories, and industry collaborations that provide real-world exposure. Recruitment efforts should also consider gender differences in motivation, emphasising creative freedom for female students and career stability for male students. Strengthening English training programmes and international learning opportunities will better prepare students for global creative careers.

Policymakers should work to improve public perceptions of creative careers through national awareness campaigns and financial incentives, showcasing successful professionals and highlighting the growing economic contributions of creative industries. Expanding scholarships and funding for creative disciplines will improve accessibility, particularly for underprivileged students. Strengthening industry-academic partnerships can bridge the gap between education and employment, providing students with internships and hands-on experience.

Given the strong link between English proficiency and career confidence, policymakers should expand language training initiatives and international learning programmes to enhance students' global career readiness. Supporting cross-border collaborations and global internship programmes will equip students with the linguistic and professional skills needed for success in creative industries.

5.3. Research limitations and future directions

Future research should adopt a longitudinal approach to examine how students' career intentions evolve post-graduation. Expanding the sample across multiple universities and cultural contexts will improve generalisability and capture regional variations. Investigating socioeconomic background as a moderating factor would provide further insights into financial constraints in creative career decision-making.

As digital media increasingly influences career choices, future studies should explore the impact of social media, influencer marketing, and online career resources on students' academic decisions. Understanding these dynamics can help universities and policymakers develop more effective recruitment and career support strategies.

CRediT author statement

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COMPETING INTERESTS

The authors declare that there is no conflict of interest regarding the publication of this article.

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