

# Entrepreneurship and the Art of Calligraphy

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## ABSTRACT

Calligraphy, as one of Iran's most distinctive and esteemed visual arts, occupies a significant place within its cultural landscape. However, in the contemporary art market, artistic creation alone is insufficient for sustained success. Artists must navigate the complexities of entrepreneurship to establish viable careers and secure their position within the evolving art economy. This research investigates the intricate relationship between entrepreneurship and calligraphy, identifying both the challenges and opportunities faced by calligraphers in this domain.

Furthermore, this study aims to propose solutions for the commercialization of calligraphy, ultimately fostering its growth and prosperity. Employing a mixed-methods approach encompassing both extensive library research and in-depth interviews with calligraphers and art entrepreneurship practitioners, this investigation reveals that entrepreneurial principles can significantly contribute to the development of the art form. By strategically applying marketing strategies, brand building, financial management techniques, and innovative product development, calligraphers can broaden their audience reach, cultivate new market niches, and ultimately enhance their professional standing.

The findings clearly demonstrate a symbiotic relationship between entrepreneurship and calligraphy. The integration of these two fields holds immense potential for the flourishing of calligraphy, enabling artists to achieve their creative ambitions while contributing to the preservation and promotion of this invaluable art

form. Through targeted training and the practical application of entrepreneurial principles, calligraphers can elevate their position within the art world and become effective stewards in safeguarding the legacy of this timeless art.

**Keywords:** Entrepreneurship, Calligraphy Art, Commercialization of Art, Art Development, Entrepreneurial Artist, Art Marketing, Art Branding

## I. INTRODUCTION

The 20th century witnessed a global economic landscape dominated by factory-based production and its associated incentives offered by cities vying for industrial expansion. However, this model, often characterized by environmental degradation and limited profitability, has largely become obsolete in the contemporary era. The rise of the "knowledge-based economy," prioritizing creativity and human capital as drivers of growth, has shifted the paradigm towards a cleaner, more sustainable future with better job prospects. This shift prompted many cities to embrace alternative models for economic regeneration, with some turning to the creative industries, including the arts, as a foundation for their 21st-century development (Sheshjavani, 2011).

Farzpourmachiani M.& Farzpourmachiani A. (2024) "Attrition Entrepreneurship Theory" emphasizes activities that generate income without contributing to societal well-being. These often focus on recycling existing resources rather than fostering genuine innovation. This theory is particularly relevant to the arts, where intellectual property (IP) protection is crucial for artists to secure ownership and benefit from their creations.

Attrition entrepreneurship, by prioritizing short-term gains through imitation, undermines artistic innovation and a robust IP framework.

The economic development of art is a multifaceted process requiring holistic engagement across diverse sectors. It seeks two primary objectives: enhancing the financial well-being of artists and generating employment opportunities through artistic endeavors, both aligning with principles of social justice. While the goals remain consistent, the interpretation and application of economic development within the arts differ between developed and developing nations, reflecting variations in their understanding of social justice.

Art entrepreneurship emerges as a dynamic force within this evolving landscape. It involves individuals and groups actively valorizing underutilized or overlooked artistic assets, creating value from social capital. These innovators delve into the fundamental issues affecting the art world, encompassing artist income disparities, job security concerns, accessibility to art education, intellectual property rights, investor participation, and emerging technological innovations.

Their aim is to develop comprehensive solutions that empower both artists and cultural institutions. Contrary to the perception of entrepreneurs solely focused on profit maximization, artistic entrepreneurs seek to cultivate a more meaningful world. By generating value through artistic endeavors, they contribute to economic growth while simultaneously improving the professional and personal lives of artists, ultimately benefiting society at large.

The Iranian art scene exemplifies this shift with notable developments in the visual arts sector, including the emergence of art auctions that play a significant role in promoting national artistic talent and fostering cultural exchange. These events not only raise awareness but also stimulate trade in cultural artifacts, potentially contributing to broader cultural development.

Furthermore, investment in Iranian visual, performing, and musical works has emerged as a lucrative market. With its relatively low risk profile, this sector presents an attractive opportunity for investors beyond art enthusiasts. Guided by art experts, these investments can contribute significantly to the growth of the art market while generating financial returns.

This transformation extends to traditional artistic disciplines like calligraphy. Once solely focused on artistic expression, calligraphers now recognize the necessity of embracing

entrepreneurial principles for their continued success and growth. Integrating business strategies into their practice allows them to navigate the contemporary art market effectively.

### **Art and Entrepreneurship**

A recent study conducted by Ilia Consulting Company revealed that the calligraphy market possesses the potential to compete with parallel markets even within Iran's current economic climate (Ilia Consulting Company, 2022). Schumpeter (1934), a prominent advocate for entrepreneurship and a renowned German economist, articulated a crucial theory regarding economic development known as "creative destruction." He posited that economic growth and societal advancement are fueled by individuals who take risks, exhibit creativity, and innovate, thereby replacing antiquated and inefficient solutions with novel methods and approaches. Schumpeter designated these individuals as "entrepreneurs." Within this framework, the concept of "creative destruction" holds particular significance. It extends beyond economic domains and finds resonance in artistic expressions. For instance, Mandre Antegna's unique rendition of Christ Crucified exemplifies how an artist employs novel combinations and ideas to transcend limitations and obstacles, achieving a distinctive style.

Entrepreneurs exhibit a distinct set of characteristics, as identified by Joseph and Matthias (2021). These include tolerance for ambiguity and complexity, a strong need for achievement, an internal locus of control, and a willingness to embrace risks, creativity, and innovation. A key distinction between entrepreneurship in the arts and other sectors lies in their motivations and resources. Artistic entrepreneurs may be driven by a desire to monetize talent or expertise, maintain creative autonomy over the artistic process, address perceived cultural gaps within their communities, or engage community members in collaborative endeavors. Artistic entrepreneurship encompasses the strategic management of continuous innovation and risk-taking, aimed at renewing resources and opportunities to generate artistic, economic, and social value.

The city of Austin, Texas, serves as a compelling example of this new paradigm's success. Consistently ranked among the top U.S. cities for quality of life, Austin boasts a strategic location, a 20% growth in its diverse population since 2000, and the status of being the capital of an oil-rich state home to one of the world's leading universities. However, many attribute Austin's

economic prosperity to the slogan adopted by city officials in the 1990s: "Austin, the Live Music Capital of the World." This strategic shift reflects a broader global trend. As the reliance on "heavy industry attraction" strategies waned at both national and international levels, new approaches emerged in the 1990s. The industrial and managerial economy gave way to a knowledge economy and cultural entrepreneurship. The rise of companies such as Microsoft, Apple, and Google in the late 20th century exemplifies this paradigm shift toward entrepreneurial wealth creation.

By the early 21st century, most nations implemented operational plans to actively foster entrepreneurial economic development at local, regional, and national levels. Despite diverse strategies for economic growth, strengthening the arts as a foundation for increasing GDP has gained recognition. A report submitted to the U.S. Congress by "Americans for the Arts" reveals that creative industries comprise 4.4 percent of total trade and 2.2 percent of total employment in the United States (Twose, 2008). This underscores the significant role of creative industries within the U.S. economy. Over the past two decades, global trade in cultural goods has witnessed substantial growth; between 1980 and 1998, annual global trade in printed materials, literature, music, visual arts, cinema, photography, radio, television, games, and sporting goods quadrupled (Twose, 2008). However, this trade primarily occurs between a limited number of partners. Japan, the United States, Germany, and the United Kingdom were the largest exporters, accounting for 55 percent of total exports, and simultaneously, the largest importers. While China emerged as the third most important exporter by 1998, the "big five" continued to dominate cultural exports (accounting for 53%) and imports (57%). This concentration is characteristic of trade patterns among developed countries.

Notably, the United States and the United Kingdom are the only net exporters of cultural services.

There appears to be a direct correlation between a country's development level, employment within the cultural sector, and the volume of cultural goods traded.

### Example of Iranian Calligraphy

As a testament to the enduring power of artistic expression within Iranian culture, Figure 1 presents a meticulously crafted example of calligraphy. This particular artwork, titled *Jooya*, depicted a poem from Mostafa Farzpourmachiani. Rendered by Seied Basiri and exemplifies the technical mastery and aesthetic sensibility that define traditional Iranian calligraphy. The chosen verses further enrich the artwork's meaning, inviting viewers to engage with its layers of beauty, symbolism, and cultural significance.

## II. METHODOLOGY

This study employs a qualitative research methodology, specifically a phenomenological approach, to delve into the lived experiences of calligraphers navigating entrepreneurial challenges and opportunities. Phenomenology aims to provide a profound understanding of individuals' subjective perceptions and interpretations of a specific phenomenon. In this context, the phenomenon under investigation is the experience of calligraphers within the entrepreneurial landscape.

The statistical population comprises active calligraphers residing in Tehran. Due to the unavailability of precise figures regarding the number of active calligraphers nationwide, determining a definitive statistical population proves challenging. Nonetheless, a comprehensive sample selection strategy is implemented to encompass as many members of this community as feasible.

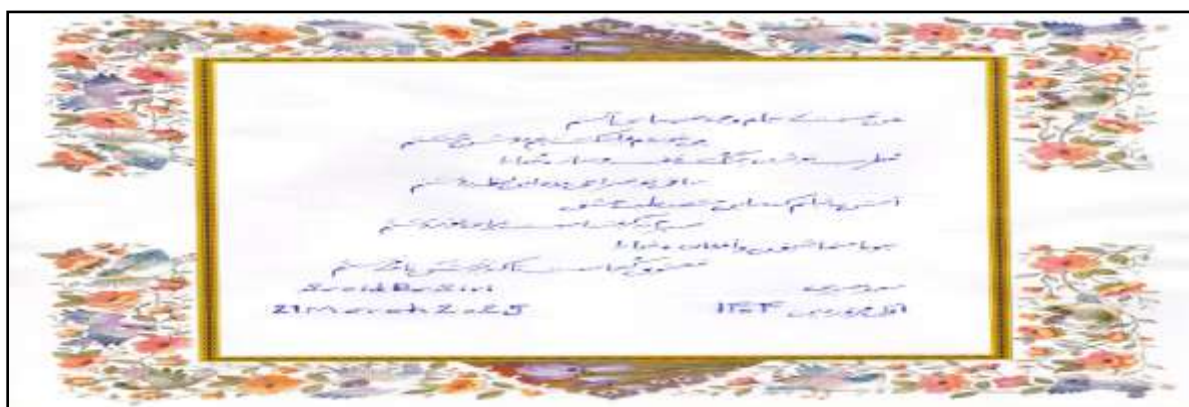


Figure 1: Iranian Calligraphy by Saeid Basiri

Considering the qualitative nature of the research and the inherent limitations in pinpointing an exact statistical population, purposive sampling is employed. This method strategically selects participants based on their expertise and experience relevant to both calligraphy and entrepreneurship. Potential participants are carefully chosen according to criteria such as:

- A documented history of artistic activity and the quantity of works produced
- Participation in art exhibitions and festivals
- Familiarity with entrepreneurial principles and practical experience in related endeavors

Data collection is primarily achieved through in-depth interviews with the selected sample. Subsequently, thematic analysis serves as the analytical framework for interpreting the gathered data. This method involves a meticulous examination of interview transcripts, followed by the identification of initial codes within the textual content. Similar codes are then grouped and

consolidated to discern overarching themes pertinent to the research objectives. Finally, these identified themes are meticulously presented in a comprehensive research report.

### **Interviews with Calligraphy Artists on Entrepreneurship**

The following section delves into the experiences of three calligraphers, each possessing distinct levels of expertise and viewpoints on entrepreneurship within the field. Through their narratives, we aim to illuminate the multifaceted landscape of challenges, opportunities, and perspectives that shape the entrepreneurial journey of calligraphers.

These diverse voices provide valuable insights into the complexities and nuances inherent in pursuing a career as an entrepreneur within the artistic realm of calligraphy. Following Tables have provided Open Coding Table for Calligraphy Artist Interviews.

**Interview 1: Experienced Senior Artist**

Code	Quote	Definition/Explanation
<b>Challenge: Lack of Business Knowledge</b>	"The most important challenge is that artists are not familiar with the principles of business."	Artists prioritize artistic creation over understanding marketing, sales, and financial management.
<b>Challenge: Limited Presentation &amp; Income Generation</b>	"...many artists are unable to properly present their works and earn enough income from their art."	Artists struggle to effectively showcase and sell their work, leading to insufficient revenue.
<b>Solution: Business Education</b>	"Teaching artists the principles of business, marketing, and sales is very important."	Providing formal training in business concepts can equip artists with necessary skills for entrepreneurial success.
<b>Solution: Exhibition &amp; Sales Opportunities</b>	"Creating suitable spaces to display and sell artwork...can help artists connect with a wider audience."	Dedicated galleries and exhibitions provide platforms for artists to reach potential buyers and increase visibility.

**Interview 2: Young Artist Utilizing Cyberspace**

Code	Quote	Definition/Explanation
<b>Opportunity: Online Platform Reach</b>	"Cyberspace and social networks have provided great opportunities for artists...easily display our works...and connect with a larger audience around the world."	Digital platforms offer global exposure and wider audience engagement compared to traditional methods.

Code	Quote	Definition/Explanation
<b>Opportunity: Online Sales Potential</b>	"...we can earn money by selling our works online."	E-commerce platforms facilitate direct sales to customers, bypassing intermediaries and increasing artist revenue.
<b>Challenge: Cyberspace Competition</b>	"There is a lot of competition in cyberspace...artists must be able to present their works in a unique and attractive way in order to attract the attention of the audience."	High volume of online content necessitates creative strategies to stand out and capture viewer interest.
<b>Challenge: Digital Marketing &amp; Content Creation</b>	"...they must be familiar with the principles of digital marketing and content production in order to be successful in this space."	Understanding SEO, social media algorithms, and content strategy is crucial for online visibility and engagement.

### Interview 3: Calligraphy Entrepreneur

Code	Quote	Definition/Explanation
<b>Advice: Business-Oriented Mindset</b>	"Artists should look at their art as a business and plan for it...be purposeful and know where they want to go."	Treating artistic practice as a structured endeavor with goals and strategic planning is essential.
<b>Advice: Continuous Learning &amp; Networking</b>	"They should also take advantage of the opportunities available for education and learning and connect with other artists and entrepreneurs."	Ongoing professional development and collaboration are vital for growth and success in the field.
<b>Resource Recommendation: Books &amp; Training</b>	"Books, training courses, and workshops related to entrepreneurship can be useful for artists."	Accessing structured educational materials provides foundational knowledge and practical skills.
<b>Resource Recommendation: Mentorship &amp; Case Studies</b>	"They can also benefit from the experiences of other successful artists and entrepreneurs in this field."	Learning from role models and analyzing successful business models within the art world offers valuable insights.

### III. FINDINGS

This section outlines the coding methods employed to analyze interview data from calligraphy artists regarding entrepreneurship. Three stages of coding—open, axial, and selective—were utilized to identify themes, relationships between concepts, and ultimately, a core proposition summarizing the research findings.

#### 1. Open Coding:

- **Objective:** Identify initial codes reflecting individual ideas, concepts, and experiences expressed by interviewees.
- **Process:** Direct engagement with interview transcripts, line-by-line analysis to highlight significant words, phrases, and recurring ideas.



Interviewee	Excerpt	Initial Code	Explanation
Experienced Artist	"Artists are not familiar with business principles."	Lack of Business Acumen	Highlights a perceived gap in artists' knowledge base regarding entrepreneurship.
Young Artist	"Cyberspace offers great opportunities to connect with a wider audience."	Online Exposure & Reach	Indicates the potential of digital platforms for artist visibility and engagement.
Calligraphy Entrepreneur	"Treat your art like a business, plan strategically."	Business Mindset	Emphasizes the importance of a structured approach to artistic practice.

## 2. Axial Coding:

- **Objective:** Group related open codes into broader categories (or "axes") that reveal key themes and relationships.
- **Process:** Examination of code connections, identifying overarching concepts and organizing them hierarchically.

Category	Sub-Categories/Open Codes	Definition
Challenges in Entrepreneurship	Lack of Business Acumen; Marketing & Sales Difficulties; Competition	Obstacles faced by artists venturing into entrepreneurial pursuits.
Opportunities for Growth	Online Exposure & Reach; E-commerce Potential; Learning Resources	Avenues for artists to expand their audience, income streams, and skillsets.
Strategies for Success	Business Mindset; Training & Education	Approaches artists can adopt to overcome challenges and thrive in the entrepreneurial landscape.

## 3. Selective Coding:

- **Objective:** Identify a core category that integrates all others, forming the central theme of the research findings.
- **Process:** Analyzing relationships between categories and identifying the overarching concept that connects them.

Core Concept	Supporting Categories	Central Proposition
Developing Entrepreneurship in Calligraphy	Challenges; Opportunities; Strategies	By understanding the unique challenges and opportunities facing calligraphers, targeted educational programs can foster entrepreneurial growth within this field.

## IV. CONCLUSION

This study investigated the entrepreneurial landscape within the calligraphy field through interviews with artists at various experience levels. Utilizing open, axial, and selective coding methods to analyze interview data revealed both significant challenges and exciting opportunities for

calligraphers seeking to establish successful entrepreneurial ventures.

A prominent challenge identified is a lack of business acumen among many artists. While deeply passionate about creating artwork, many interviewees demonstrated limited knowledge in areas such as marketing, sales, and financial management. This often resulted in difficulties

effectively showcasing their work and generating sustainable income from their artistic practice.

The digital realm presents another considerable challenge: intense competition within cyberspace. The proliferation of social media platforms and online marketplaces has created a saturated environment where artists must not only produce unique and captivating works but also master the principles of digital marketing to attract attention and drive sales.

Despite these challenges, entrepreneurship in calligraphy offers numerous opportunities. Cyberspace and social networks provide unparalleled reach, enabling artists to connect with a global audience and monetize their work through online platforms. Furthermore, establishing physical spaces for showcasing and selling artwork, such as galleries or exhibitions, facilitates direct engagement with audiences and fosters meaningful connections.

To effectively navigate these complexities, calligraphers must adopt a business-oriented mindset and actively seek opportunities for professional development.

Training programs focused on business principles, marketing strategies, and sales techniques can equip artists with the essential skills required to succeed. Leveraging cyberspace through social media engagement, online platforms, and networking opportunities can further amplify their reach and visibility.

A wealth of resources exists to support aspiring calligraphy entrepreneurs. Books, workshops, and mentorship programs can provide valuable insights and practical guidance. Additionally, learning from the experiences of successful artists and established entrepreneurs within this field can serve as a potent source of inspiration and knowledge.

This study underscores the critical need for targeted training and support systems that empower calligraphers to harness the opportunities presented by the contemporary entrepreneurial landscape. By bridging the gap between artistic passion and business acumen, we can foster a vibrant and sustainable future for calligraphy as a thriving art form.

### Ethical Considerations

This study adhered to rigorous ethical principles throughout the research process. Key considerations included:

**Informed Consent:** All participants provided informed consent prior to the commencement of interviews. This involved a clear explanation of the

study's objectives, procedures, potential benefits, and risks associated with participation. Participants were assured of their right to withdraw from the study at any point without consequence.

**Confidentiality:** To protect the privacy of participants, all collected data was anonymized. Interview transcripts were coded using unique identifiers, and personal information was kept securely confidential. Research findings are presented in aggregate form, ensuring that individual participants cannot be identified.

**Bias Mitigation:** Efforts were made to minimize bias in both sample selection and data analysis. The sampling strategy aimed for diversity in terms of experience levels, artistic styles, and perspectives within the calligraphy community. Data analysis was conducted objectively, utilizing established coding techniques to identify emergent themes and patterns without imposing preconceived notions or interpretations.

**Transparency and Accuracy:** Research findings are presented honestly and accurately, avoiding any distortion or manipulation of data. All sources and methodologies are clearly documented to ensure transparency and allow for peer review and scrutiny.

By upholding these ethical standards, this study aimed to conduct rigorous research while respecting the rights and dignity of all participants.

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