

# Apple's Success: An Inspiration or a Guide for Today's Entrepreneurs

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## Abstract

This paper elaborates on the hypothesis that Apple's success shall be an inspiration rather than a business model to be imitated by today's entrepreneurs. Before doing so, this study interconnects the insights of several works of literature about geniuses, talents, personality traits, luck, risks, opportunities, and personal experiences that may affect entrepreneurship. Morgan Housel, Craig Wright, and other scholars' works, perspectives, theories, and research were used to arrive at conclusions. Using the framework presented in this paper can improve our understanding of the challenges today's entrepreneurs could face to succeed and how much Apple's success can influence them in the decision-making process. However, much work remains to be done. Specifically, new theory development work and empirical research are both necessary.

## Keywords

Apple, Apple Computers, Steve Jobs Management Style, Apple Success, Apple Organizational Culture, Apple Entrepreneurial Spirit, Apple Cult

## 1. Introduction

On April 1, 1976, Steve Jobs founded Apple in Los Altos, California. Under Mr. Jobs' leadership, Apple's market capitalization saw an extraordinary surge from \$2 billion to an astonishing \$741 billion, an increase of ~ 37,000% in less than two decades (Patel, 2020). By 2015, the company topped almost every Key Performance Indicator (KPI) measure, including sales, profits, and assets, among the world's largest technology companies (Patel, 2020). Their unmatched growth continued under Tim Cook. According to Biloš, Budimčić and Turkalj (2022) Apple Inc. is one of the global leaders in technology and the leaders in communication, providing services, and development of modern marketing. Biloš,

Budimčić and Turkalj (2022) claimed that Apple created one of the greatest brands in the information and communication industry based on its revenue and brand ranking. Apple created an ecosystem of successful products with many devices, software solutions, and accessories to make life easier (Biloš, Budimčić, & Turkalj, 2022), all a product of the ingenuity of Steve Jobs.

However, when a true genius appears in the world (Wright, 2021), the dunces rally against him because geniuses are troublemakers who make things complicated and uncomfortable since geniuses make everybody change. Steve Jobs was the genius and visionary driving force behind Apple's success. Patel (2020) argued that Jobs understood that Apple needed an engaging and sustainable culture that motivated the talent's commitment throughout the organization. Apple aimed to make the best products in the market, believing this would be the company's legacy. According to Patel (2020), jobs' attitude, typical of a genius, permeated throughout the organization, continuing to exist after his death by talented people. Apple maintains its leadership position in innovation by improving its devices and business model to stimulate new ideas and streamline design.

Dwivedi (2020) claimed that Apple's brand has huge Fanatic followers created in the most ingenious ways possible; their products' quality is unmatched, and the advertising strategies and their placement in the market are unequalled. Dwivedi (2020) suggested that new brands and upcoming followers can learn a lot from Apple's leaders and use this fanaticism strategy to gain popularity among customers and create followers.

## 2. Geniuses, Talents, and Fanatics

A genius has extraordinary mental powers whose original works or insights change society significantly, transcending cultures and times for good or ill (Wright, 2021). Geniuses are rebels, misfits, and troublemakers; they think the opposite, know how to leverage their differences, and move fast and break things (Wright, 2021). Steve Jobs and Alfred Nobel are both geniuses, each on the opposite side of the spectrum. On the other hand, a person of talent or a prodigy adheres to strict rules and tolerates nothing but perfection, paying excessive attention to a single activity (Wright, 2021). A person of talent hits a target no one can hit; a person of genius hits a target nobody can see (Philosopher Arthur Schopenhauer). To be a genius by a modern definition is not enough to hit the hidden target; a successful genius must hit it first (Wright, 2021). On the other hand, a fanatic is a person who can't change his mind and won't change the subject, according to Winston Churchill (Dwivedi, 2020).

## 3. Luck, Risks, Opportunities, and Personal Experiences

Luck and Risks are the reality of every outcome in life guided by forces other than individual efforts (Housel, 2021) towards accomplishing that outcome. Housel (2021) argued that luck and risk are so similar that people cannot believe

in one without acknowledging the existence of the other, and they are so hard to measure that they are often overlooked. Trying to take apart what was a risk, what was luck, and what was good judgment in success or failure would lead to an unsolvable equation. Luck is unrelated to personal experiences, but risks and people's experiences are interconnected.

Craig Wright, an emeritus professor at Yale University, teaches the popular undergraduate course "Exploring the Nature of a Genius". In his book "The Hidden Habits of a Genius" (Wright, 2021), Dr. Wright explained how luck had been a key factor in many discoveries and the successes of many great people. (Wright, 2021) claimed that the word opportunity derives from the Latin: "*Opportuna*," a favorite wind blowing towards the port, and the word "fortunate" originates from the Latin "*Fortuna*", which means "fate" or "luck". However, within the long list of fortunate or lucky people who were intellectually trained and nurtured to take the opportunity of their lives, Wright (2021) did not include Steve Jobs. It is necessary to emphasize that this study found no claims within the available scholarly literature attributing Apple's success to Jobs, luck, or fate.

People have unique experiences of how the world works; a person who grew up in poverty thinks about risks differently from a wealthy banker child (Housel, 2021). Conversely, a person who grew up during the Depression or when inflation was high thinks about taking risks very differently from someone who went through the glory of the tech industry in the late 1990s. Therefore, individual willingness to bear risk depends on personal history (Housel, 2021).

#### 4. Entrepreneurship

Entrepreneurship, according to Juliana et al. (2021) is the process of mobilizing and sacrificing land, capital, and human resources to use a business opportunity or execute an idea that meets society's needs for products and services, creating employment and benefits the venture's owner. Saleem et al. (2022) argued that entrepreneurship development results from economic influences and specific environmental conditions. Saleem et al. (2022) explained that many macro and micro factors affect entrepreneurship development, such as economic and financial factors, good chance to make high profit, better movement of capital, small taxes, banking system, free trade, cheap labor, stable political system, meaningful democracy, and others, to the positive impact of globalization on entrepreneurship, Saleem et al. (2022) claimed that globalization promotes entrepreneurship by developing resource availability and identifying more business opportunities—however, Saleem et al. (2022) study found that other scholars have opposed the idea that globalization suppresses people's creative capacities and entrepreneurial creativity and economic exploitation of less privileged countries, especially in developing countries that promote dependency. Whether positively or negatively, today's globalization and market conditions are not the same as Steve Jobs found while creating Apple Inc. in 1976.

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## 5. Personality Traits and Entrepreneurship

Awwad and Al-Aseer (2021) described personality traits as consistent individual reactions caused by external conditions. Awwad and Al-Aseer (2021) explained that personality theorists have argued that a person's behavior can be predicted using personality. El Othman et al. (2020) suggested a connection between personality traits and decision-making styles. El Othman et al. (2020) study results showed that Emotional Intelligence (EI) exposed a significant positive effect on intuitive decision-making style and a negative impact on avoidant and dependent decision-making styles. Moreover, El Othman et al. (2020) emphasized the role of EI as a conciliator between personality traits (conscientiousness, openness, and extroversion) and decision-making styles. Therefore, it is generally believed that an individual's success as an entrepreneur depends on personality traits since personality traits determine a person's behavior and decision-making, thereby influencing success (Awwad & Al-Aseer, 2021).

Steve Jobs was a visionary whose aim was to improve our lives, and he intuited that his revolutionary products would create more jobs than the ones they eliminated (Wright, 2021). However, Jobs believed that the rules on human behaviors did not apply to him. His personality was unique; he was destructive rather than constructive to others, with no product gain in sight. However, he changed the world of technology. In 2011, Forbes published an article in it: "No person has done more to disrupt the existing ways to do things than Mr. Jobs."

## 6. Apple's Product Simplicity Made the Difference

When Apple launched the iPhone, Steve Jobs's promise was not based on an invention of a medium that did not previously exist; it pledged to keep things simple, improve the details, and continue making technology a seamless extension of ourselves (Good, 2016). Rather than entirely innovations, Apple entered an existing market and inserted products that were easy to use, fabulous to look at, and packaged for the cool and hip and those who just wanted to be (Good, 2016). Apple understood the significance of product packaging as a medium for communicating (Lo, Tung, & Huang, 2017) their value. The most innovative feature of the iPhone was the capability to upgrade and personalize it without building new equipment. The iPhone's success set Apple apart from its competitors and created a fanatic customer base waiting for its next invention.

## 7. Apple's Marketing Strategy

Apple's marketing strategy centered on building a premium brand for consumers in the market (Odaymat, 2018) by increasing brand value, manufacturing, selling products directly, and investing in research and development. Apple's attention to detail can be seen throughout its entire product line. People perceive Apple's detailed design and hard work, from the flower on the Apple watch to how the air pod's case snaps, making Apple one of the most popular brands in the world. Apple brings the best product experience to its users through its in-

novative hardware, software, and customer services (Odaymat, 2018), distinguishing it from all other competitors in the market. The company's consistent marketing and advertising are why the brand is known by many (Odaymat, 2018). Apple's 1997 "Think Different" marketing campaign was one of its most memorable ever (Dwivedi, 2020). The implicit message was that Apple's products were for unpredictable rebels who would one day dominate the world because Apple was created for "...the crazy ones, the misfits, ..., the troublemakers, the round pegs in the square holes..." (Apple—Here is to the Crazy Ones., 1997).

## 8. Discussion

Apple has survived under extreme competitive pressure as it always looks to secure and differentiate its products. Apple's opportunities can only grow with the new emerging technologies because innovation is Apple's DNA. Patel (2020) claimed that according to Business Insider, Apple's wearables, home, and accessories segment gained traction and helped lessen the iPhone revenue losses—however, Patel (2020) suggested that Apple should focus on expanding the range of health offerings in the Apple Watch since they drive many purchase decisions. Patel (2020) also explained that focusing on Artificial Intelligence, Augmented Reality, and Self-Driving Cars could capture additional revenues. Patel (2020) argued that Apple's early investments in autonomous software could create a new interface for consumers to interact with vehicles, capturing significant global market share, which is on track to be worth \$556 billion by 2030 (Patel, 2020). However, based on the above insights of literature review about the concept of modern geniuses, talented individuals, luck, risks, personal experiences, personality traits, and entrepreneurship development, this study suggests that Apple's success should inspire today's entrepreneurs, not be considered a step-by-step business model guide. Like other businesses, Apple doesn't operate in a vacuum; many external factors influence them. These factors differed when Mr. Jobs created Apple from today's business environment conditions. The "silent Revolution" dramatically affected the world economy; perhaps the most notable achievement was the virtual end of inflation as an international phenomenon (Boughton, 2002). The 1990s was a decade of globalization par excellence where free-market economics and pro-market policies triumphed globally; however, while most of the world reflected this trend, countries like China and Vietnam were bucking it (Bagchi, 2018).

With the tagline "Think Different", Apple offered consumers an expressive output that became a status symbol of individuality and empowerment. While Apple continues to portray itself as a cutting-edge, revolutionary liberator, three decades later, some individuals detect that Apple has become the master of what they were trying to defeat (Lee & Soon, 2017). Brand loyalty remains an important concept. However, the methods by which such brand loyalty is propagated today focus on service-dominant logic, customer engagement, and the co-creation of value (Lee & Soon, 2017), which is very different from today's Apple approach.

In this realm, (Lee & Soon, 2017) summed up the current state of brand management concisely when they cited that: “Cooperation is vital, and the customer needs to become involved in the production of a service that helps generate a relationship when the customer interacts with the product.”

Today, entrepreneurs must deal with a different generation than the one Steve Jobs managed. Millennials constitute 45% of today’s labor force, and their interest, motivation, and work-life balance expectations differ from the Gen-X that used to dominate the workforce in the 1980s and 1990s (Wiedmer, 2015) and (Aziz, 2020). Jobs’ personality could have been perfect for managing and motivating his employees when he started Apple; however, Millennials’ traits, such as entitlement, focus, workplace views, ethics, and other peculiarities, require a different management approach.

## 9. Conclusion

This study concluded that Apple’s phenomenon could be an inspiration for today’s entrepreneurs. Steve Jobs created one of the greatest brands in the information and communication industry, an ecosystem of successful products with many devices, software solutions, and accessories that made people’s lives easier and enjoyable. However, today’s business and market environments demand the same creativity and tenacity for a different world from entrepreneurs. It is important to emphasize that this research has an exploratory character and aims to broaden the debate of whether Apple’s success will inspire today’s entrepreneurs. In no way do the authors of this paper intend to undermine Steve Jobs’ accomplishments or those of Apple as an organization. However, studying the possible causes of that success based on the personality of the man behind it (Steve Jobs), the business environment, and technological advances at the time of the company’s creation could be an exciting pathway to analyzing today’s entrepreneurs’ realities.

## Design/Methodology/Approach

This investigation adopted the systematic reviews approach in which frequent searches and formal summaries of the literature are used to identify and classify the results of all primary studies on a particular topic, searching databases such as ProQuest, EBSCO, Emerald, ScienceDirect, and ResearchGate to identify electronic journals and articles to elaborate and conclude. Twenty-five scholarly peer-reviewed papers were consulted to elaborate on the hypothesis, selecting eleven for this paper. The initial search identifies a sample of twenty-five research papers on Apple’s success using the keywords, apple, Steve Jobs management style, apple success, apple organizational Culture, apple entrepreneurial spirit, etc., which are included in the study.

## Findings

Drawing from the available scholarly literature, this study suggests that despite Apple’s past, present, and apparent future success, today’s entrepreneurs shall

find innovative ways to achieve their goals rather than copy Apple's journey to success. Today's entrepreneurs should strive for success by being creative, imaginative, intellectually curious, original, and open to new experiences and ideas since today's business and market environments are very different from the ones that were when Steve Jobs created the Apple computer.

### Research Implications

This paper's epistemology positions implicitly or explicitly influence our thinking, beliefs, and justification of Apple's success and whether to use it as inspiration or a guide for today's entrepreneurs.

### Practical Implication

This paper aims to pragmatically analyze Apple's success to help today's entrepreneurs in their journey to success. Therefore, using the framework presented in this paper can improve our understanding of the challenges today's entrepreneurs could face to succeed and how much Apple's success can influence them in the decision-making process.

### Originality/Value

This study is innovative in proposing a pragmatic view of Apple's computer success.

### Conflicts of Interest

The author declares no conflicts of interest regarding the publication of this paper.

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