ENTREPRENEURSHIP AS A LIVING RESEARCH: CURIOSITY, EXPERIMENTATION, AND ADAPTATION AMONG YOUNG ENTREPRENEURS IN HIPMI DENPASAR

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Entrepreneurship is often portrayed as a journey of opportunity and innovation, yet beneath every entrepreneurial act lies a deeper process of learning through inquiry. This study explores how young entrepreneurs in the Association of Young Indonesian Entrepreneurs, Denpasar Branch (HIPMI Denpasar, Bali), integrate research-oriented thinking into their business practices - how curiosity evolves into experimentation, and experimentation into adaptation. Using a qualitative descriptive approach, five entrepreneurs were interviewed to reveal how they observe, reflect, and refine their strategies in navigating uncertainty. The findings uncover four interrelated themes: (1) curiosity as the origin of opportunity discovery, (2) informal research as a practical decisionmaking process, (3) experimentation as a learning strategy, and (4) adaptation as the foundation of sustainability. Together, these themes illustrate that entrepreneurship functions as a living form of research, where every action becomes a test, every reflection becomes data, and every adaptation becomes insight. The study contributes theoretically by reframing curiosity as a form of strategic intelligence, embedding research within entrepreneurial practice, and positioning community learning as the epistemic infrastructure for resilience. Practically, it suggests that young entrepreneurs already act as researchers in their daily work, and that entrepreneurial education should cultivate reflective inquiry rather than formulaic planning. By linking curiosity, reflection, and adaptation, this study affirms that to be an entrepreneur is to be a lifelong researcher – one who learns not in laboratories, but in life itself.

Keywords: Entrepreneurial Learning, Curiosity, Informal Research Practice, Adaptation, HIPMI Denpasar, Research-Based Entrepreneurship, Sustainable Development Goals.

INTRODUCTION

Entrepreneurship is more than the act of creating a business. It is a continuous learning process through which individuals face uncertainty, make decisions, and adapt to change (Kuratko & Morris, 2018). Among young entrepreneurs, particularly in dynamic urban environments such as Denpasar City, businesses are often born not from formal business plans but from a sense of curiosity about everyday life and the courage to experiment (Hsieh & Pittaway, 2024). Curiosity functions as the seed of entrepreneurship. Loewenstein (1994) defines curiosity as a psychological state that drives individuals to fill gaps in their knowledge. In entrepreneurial contexts, curiosity encourages young people to observe social trends, lifestyle patterns, and consumer behaviors around them (Singh et al., 2022). The origins of many business ideas are simple, personal, and reflective – often beginning with questions such as, "Why does this not exist yet?" or "What if it could be done differently?"

From these moments of questioning, informal forms of research activity begin to take shape. Research, in this sense, is not limited to formal surveys or data collection but emerges through





dialogues with customers, small price experiments, adjustments to product or space design, and careful interpretation of feedback (Friedman et al., 2025). Gustafsson-Pesonen and Remes (2012) argue that entrepreneurship must be learned experientially, through direct engagement, trial, and reflection, rather than as a purely theoretical concept.

In this light, young entrepreneurs are, in essence, researchers in practice, engaging in cycles of observation, interpretation, experimentation, and evaluation (Hlady-Rispal, Fayolle & Gartner, 2021). Their entrepreneurial journey mirrors the logic of scientific inquiry, where each attempt serves as both a test and a lesson. This ability to learn from experience, however, does not occur in isolation. Entrepreneurial communities such as HIPMI Denpasar (Association of Young Indonesian Entrepreneurs, Denpasar Branch) serve as collective learning spaces, enabling peer exchange and shared reflection (Berger & Blanka, 2023). Within these spaces, personal experiences are transformed into collective knowledge, and business decisions are strengthened by dialogue and validation. As a result, young entrepreneurs learn not only what to do, but also why they choose to do it.

Such processes align closely with the principles of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), particularly SDG 8: Decent Work and Economic Growth, which promotes innovation-driven, sustainable, and inclusive economic activities (Yap, Lee & Liew, 2023). Entrepreneurship, viewed through this lens, is not only an economic pursuit but also a form of social learning that contributes to both individual empowerment and broader societal progress.

This study is grounded in the belief that business development among young entrepreneurs is a living form of research. A continuous cycle of curiosity, experimentation, and adaptation that sustains both learning and innovation. It strengthens the theoretical understanding of entrepreneurial learning as a reflective and research-based process, one that integrates curiosity, observation, and experimentation into the very fabric of decision-making. Beyond its theoretical dimension, this study also offers a practical lens: that for young entrepreneurs and entrepreneurial communities, research is not an external academic requirement but an inherent part of entrepreneurship itself, a mindset essential for growth, creativity, and long-term sustainability. Through this perspective, entrepreneurship is reimagined not merely as an act of commerce but as an ongoing inquiry into how humans learn, create, and adapt within an ever-changing world.

Literature Review. Curiosity has always been the quiet force behind every form of discovery. Long before the concept of "entrepreneurial learning" was defined in academic terms, people have been learning by observing, experimenting, and adapting to their environment. Entrepreneurship, in this sense, is not an economic invention but a human instinct, the desire to understand how things work and how they might be made better.

Hsieh and Pittaway (2024) describe curiosity as the spark that ignites entrepreneurial behavior. It transforms uncertainty into a playground for exploration. For young entrepreneurs, curiosity becomes the lens through which they interpret the world. What may seem like a mundane moment, a customer's hesitation, a quiet café corner, or a conversation about pricing, can become the origin of innovation. Curiosity makes them ask, "Why does this happen?" and more importantly, "What could be changed?"

This natural curiosity is what Loewenstein (1994) calls a "knowledge gap tension," a psychological discomfort that compels individuals to seek new understanding. Within entrepreneurship, this tension is productive; it becomes the emotional engine that drives action. The moment a young entrepreneur begins to observe rather than assume, they are already engaging in the first step of research.

Curiosity as Method: From Observation to Learning. Observation, as simple as it seems, is a radical act in entrepreneurship. It demands humility, the ability to suspend judgment and let the





world reveal its patterns. Gibb (2012) notes that the essence of entrepreneurial universities lies not in producing business experts but in nurturing inquiring minds. Similarly, Gustafsson-Pesonen and Remes (2012) argue that entrepreneurial learning happens through participation, not instruction.

These theories find their echo in the lived experiences of young entrepreneurs in Denpasar. Their ventures often begin not with feasibility studies, but with listening to customers, to trends, to their peers. The research mindset they practice is not written in methodology textbooks but embodied in how they navigate ambiguity. It is the transformation of theory into life. The point where curiosity becomes habit, and habit becomes strategy.

The impact of these ideas on the local context is profound. In a community culture where entrepreneurship is often associated with hustle and instinct, reframing it through the lens of curiosity reintroduces reflection as a form of power. It shifts the narrative from "working hard to survive" to "thinking deeply to evolve." Thus, curiosity not only open markets; it opens minds.

Experimentation: Learning Through Doing. Hlady-Rispal, Fayolle, and Gartner (2021) argue that entrepreneurship is best understood not as an event but as a process of iterative learning. Each experiment, be it launching a new menu, adjusting store layout, or testing online promotion, is an act of inquiry. For young entrepreneurs, the experiment is both the research and the business itself. Friedman et al. (2025) describe this process as maker entrepreneurship, where ideas evolve through physical interaction, feedback, and redesign. These experiments are not failures or successes; they are iterations of understanding. Every trial generates data, not numbers, but insights, what works, what resonates, and what feels authentic.

This experiential approach reshapes the traditional relationship between theory and practice. Theories of entrepreneurial learning suggest that reflection follows action (Cope, 2005), but among young entrepreneurs, reflection often happens during action. They think while doing, feel while measuring, and learn while trying. The line between research and real life dissolves.

Adaptation: The Art of Staying Alive. Adaptation is where curiosity and experimentation find their purpose. Entrepreneurship, at its core, is not just about starting; it is about staying. Theories of resilience (Hedner et al., 2011) and strategic flexibility (Berger & Blanka, 2023) highlight how adaptation transforms uncertainty from threat to opportunity. In Denpasar's creative economy, this adaptability takes many forms: shifting market focus after tourism declines, collaborating with other local brands, or embracing sustainability trends in response to global awareness. Each act of adaptation reflects what Hlady-Rispal et al. (2021) describe as reflexive entrepreneurship, where learning from context becomes a continuous act of reinvention.

HIPMI Denpasar, as an ecosystem, becomes not just a networking space but a living laboratory of adaptation. Here, young entrepreneurs share experiments, validate failures, and find reassurance that learning does not always mean succeeding. Theoretical frameworks about learning communities (Berger & Blanka, 2023; Freund et al., 2024) come to life in these gatherings, proving that entrepreneurship is sustained through shared reflection.

What makes these theories more than abstract concepts is their ability to mirror the lived experiences of young entrepreneurs. When theory meets life, it does not remain distant; it becomes descriptive, then prescriptive, and finally transformative. In Denpasar's local entrepreneurial scene, curiosity is no longer just a psychological concept; it is the reason a young barista experiments with coffee flavors. Experimentation is not just a strategy; it is the reason a thrift-store owner rearranges their displays weekly. Adaptation is not merely resilience; it is the quiet wisdom of staying relevant when the crowd shifts. The impact of these theories on the background of this study is thus twofold:

1. They explain the invisible logic behind daily business decisions, revealing that what appears intuitive is actually deeply cognitive.





2. They give language and legitimacy to what young entrepreneurs already do – observe, test, and adapt – as valid forms of research.

Through this lens, the boundary between research and entrepreneurship disappears. Both are quests for understanding, guided by curiosity, refined by experimentation, and sustained by adaptation. Entrepreneurship, therefore, is not an act of invention but of attention. It begins not with capital, but with the courage to ask. The theories discussed of curiosity (Hsieh & Pittaway, 2024; Loewenstein, 1994), experiential learning (Gibb, 2012; Gustafsson-Pesonen & Remes, 2012), experimentation (Hlady-Rispal et al., 2021), and adaptation (Berger & Blanka, 2023) collectively form a mirror that reflects the living reality of young entrepreneurs. Moreover, when reflected back into the background of this study, they reveal a simple truth: "To be an entrepreneur is to be a lifelong researcher — curious, experimental, adaptive, and deeply human".

METHODS

This study employed a qualitative descriptive approach to explore how members of the Association of Young Indonesian Entrepreneurs, Denpasar Branch (HIPMI Denpasar, Bali), integrate research-based thinking into their entrepreneurial practices. The method was chosen because it enables a deep understanding of lived experiences, reflections, and decision-making patterns that cannot be captured through quantitative analysis. The participants were five young entrepreneurs from diverse sectors, hospitality, creative industries, retail, and services, who have been operating their businesses for at least one year and are active HIPMI Denpasar members.

Data were collected through in-depth semi-structured interviews and supported by field observations and reflective notes to capture the nuances of their behavior and mindset. Each interview focused on how curiosity influenced business ideas, how informal research guided decisions, and how adaptation ensured sustainability. The data were analyzed using thematic analysis (Braun & Clarke, 2006), following the steps of coding, pattern identification, and interpretation to uncover the relationship between curiosity, experimentation, and adaptation. To ensure validity, the researcher applied triangulation of data sources and conducted member checking to confirm the credibility of interpretations. Ethical considerations were upheld by maintaining participants' anonymity and ensuring voluntary participation. Through this design, the study aimed to portray entrepreneurship not merely as a business activity but as a reflective process of inquiry, where learning, experimentation, and adaptation become essential components of sustainable business growth.

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

Entrepreneurship, as revealed in this study, unfolds not as a series of calculated moves, but as an ongoing dialogue between curiosity and context, between learning and doing. From the experiences of five young entrepreneurs in Denpasar, four interconnected themes emerged: curiosity-driven opportunity discovery, informal research as a decision-making tool, experimentation as a strategy, and adaptation as the foundation of sustainability. Each theme illustrates how entrepreneurial practices mirror research processes, observing, testing, reflecting, and refining. Transforming daily business life into a living form of inquiry.

Curiosity as the Origin of Entrepreneurial Discovery. Curiosity was the first spark across all participants' journeys. Rather than pursuing predetermined business models, the entrepreneurs began by noticing small inconsistencies in their surroundings—gaps between what people wanted





and what was available. One entrepreneur described it as "the feeling that something should exist, but does not yet."

This emotional tension between what is and what could be aligns with Loewenstein's (1994) concept of the knowledge gap, which drives individuals to seek new understanding. Hsieh and Pittaway (2024) further emphasize that curiosity in entrepreneurship transforms uncertainty into a space for creative exploration. In this study, curiosity appeared not as an abstract trait but as an active lens, a way of looking at the market with wonder and empathy.

For the entrepreneurs of HIPMI Denpasar, curiosity was not about risk-taking, but about sense-making, a tool for reading their environment and asking better questions. It resonates with Gibb (2012), who argued that entrepreneurial universities should cultivate inquiring minds capable of reframing problems as opportunities. Here, the city itself, the cafés, streets, and creative hubs of Denpasar, functioned as their research field, a living classroom where every observation could become an idea.

Informal Research as Everyday Practice. While none of the participants used the word "research" to describe their process, their actions clearly reflected research behavior: they observed, hypothesized, tested, and iterated. Informal research took many forms, such as listening to customer comments, monitoring reactions to social media posts, comparing customer flows across time slots, or even rearranging product displays to observe behavior changes. It aligns with the maker entrepreneurship framework (Friedman et al., 2025), where learning happens through iterative experimentation and reflection. Such processes blur the line between academic inquiry and entrepreneurial action, revealing that research is embedded in practice (Hlady-Rispal, Fayolle & Gartner, 2021).

The participants' descriptions also support the experiential learning model proposed by Gustafsson-Pesonen and Remes (2012), who found that entrepreneurial competence develops through reflection-in-action rather than formal instruction. In Denpasar's context, these young entrepreneurs acted as "street researchers," conducting informal ethnographies of their own customers, such as analyzing behaviors, gathering feedback, and interpreting data intuitively. This observation-reflection cycle helped them to navigate uncertainty and to see patterns invisible to others (Heykal et al., 2024).

Experimentation as Strategy. Every business decision described by participants involved a degree of experimentation. Whether testing new product ideas, adjusting visual presentation, or modifying marketing tone, entrepreneurs used trial and learning as a method for discovery. One participant reflected:

 $\hbox{``I never wait until everything is ready. I try it first-if it does not work, I change it tomorrow.''}$

This attitude exemplifies what Hlady-Rispal et al. (2021) call reflexive entrepreneurship, where practice and learning are intertwined. Similarly, Grimes (2018) describes this process as "strategic pivoting," where feedback is continuously integrated into business evolution.

Such experimentation not only validated ideas but also stimulated creativity and confidence, the key elements of what Hedner et al. (2011) define as entrepreneurial resilience. It also mirrored the research iteration: hypothesis, test, revise. In this way, entrepreneurship and research converged into one unified process of inquiry and adaptation, a dynamic loop of learn-act-reflect-repeat.

Adaptation and the Role of Community. Adaptation emerged as the anchor of sustainability. The participants understood that staying relevant required more than effort; it required awareness.

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They adapted pricing, branding, and even product identity according to context: tourism trends, customer habits, and social media dynamics. This adaptability corresponds with Berger and Blanka's (2023) notion of entrepreneurial ecosystems, where shared learning and social feedback enable businesses to evolve collectively.

For HIPMI members, adaptation was often facilitated by community reflection: conversations with peers, feedback from mentors, and collaborative problem-solving. It supports Reihlen and Werr's (2015) argument that professional identity development in entrepreneurship relies on social learning environments. The community thus functioned as what Freund et al. (2024) call a knowledge network for sustainable innovation, a social infrastructure for continuous adaptation.

Adaptation also reflects the sustainability lens of SDG 8, linking business growth with social resilience and inclusive development (Van Zanten & Van Tulder, 2021). Through reflective action and peer dialogue, the entrepreneurs of HIPMI Denpasar are not only sustaining their ventures but contributing to a culture of reflective entrepreneurship, one that learns collectively, adapts continually, and innovates ethically.

Theoretical Reflection and Impact. In essence, the findings of this study reveal that entrepreneurship among young members of HIPMI Denpasar is not driven solely by business acumen, but by a profound process of learning through inquiry. Curiosity emerges as the initial spark that awakens awareness and opportunity; informal research transforms observation into understanding; experimentation refines intuition through evidence; and adaptation sustains growth through reflection. Together, these interconnected stages illustrate that entrepreneurial practice mirrors the logic of research itself, a cycle of questioning, testing, and evolving within real-life contexts. This synthesis confirms the theoretical propositions of Hsieh and Pittaway (2024), Hlady-Rispal et al. (2021), and Berger and Blanka (2023), affirming that curiosity, research, and adaptability are not separate competencies, but the living structure of entrepreneurship. Thus, the act of running a business becomes a continuous process of discovery – where every decision is a hypothesis, every mistake is data, and every adaptation is knowledge – turning entrepreneurship into a living form of research that unites learning, innovation, and human growth.

CONCLUSION

This study concludes that entrepreneurship among young members of HIPMI Denpasar represents more than economic activity; it is a dynamic form of research in motion. Through curiosity, observation, experimentation, and adaptation, young entrepreneurs engage in a continuous cycle of learning and reflection that shapes their capacity to innovate and sustain their ventures. Curiosity acts as the spark that triggers exploration; informal research becomes the process through which insight is cultivated; and adaptation ensures the continuity of growth in uncertain markets. These interconnected dimensions demonstrate that entrepreneurship is not merely a reaction to opportunity but a method of understanding, a way of making sense of change through reflective practice. In recognizing entrepreneurship as a living research process, this study reaffirms that learning and innovation are inseparable forces that drive sustainable business development and personal transformation.

Social and Developmental Implications. Beyond theoretical insights, this study carries important implications for local economic development and community learning. The experiences of HIPMI Denpasar entrepreneurs show that research-oriented entrepreneurship fosters not only individual success but also social progress, aligning closely with Sustainable Development Goal 8





(Decent Work and Economic Growth). When entrepreneurs adopt reflective, research-based mindsets, they contribute to more adaptive, ethical, and inclusive business ecosystems. Communities like HIPMI thus serve as social laboratories, spaces where curiosity is shared, mistakes are analyzed collectively, and innovation emerges through collaboration. This process nurtures a culture of continuous learning that strengthens both local resilience and human capital. In this way, entrepreneurship becomes a form of community development, advancing not only business sustainability but also the broader goal of empowering young people to become agents of transformation in their society.

Limitations and Future Research. As a qualitative descriptive study, this research focused on a small number of participants within a single community, prioritizing depth of insight over breadth of generalization. While the findings provide valuable conceptual understanding, they are grounded in specific cultural and contextual realities. Future research could expand this exploration through comparative or longitudinal approaches, examining how curiosity-driven entrepreneurship evolves across regions, industries, or stages of business maturity. Integrating mixed-method designs may also provide a more comprehensive understanding of how reflective practices translate into measurable performance outcomes. Furthermore, exploring how gender, digital transformation, and sustainability consciousness interact with research-oriented entrepreneurship could enrich future scholarship. Despite its limitations, this study offers a foundation for reimagining entrepreneurship as a learning journey, an ongoing inquiry that bridges experience, reflection, and growth.

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