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Page: 330 - 337

THE ROLE OF RESEARCH IN SHAPING YOUNG ENTREPRENEURIAL MINDS

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This study aims to provide an understanding that research is not merely an academic formality but can also serve as a valuable asset in the world of entrepreneurship. The concept of Curiosity-Driven Entrepreneurship emphasizes that curiosity plays a crucial role in discovering business opportunities and creating innovations. Through research, students can sharpen their analytical skills, identify market trends, and explore sustainable business potentials. This study highlights success stories of entrepreneurs who started from a place of curiosity, such as the founder of Instagram, who studied digital user behavior before creating a platform that has become a global business ecosystem, and Poison Coffee Shop, which successfully developed unique marketing strategies based on the exploration of trends and consumer preferences. By understanding how research can be applied in the business world, students are expected to shift their paradigm about research from a burdensome task to a strategic skill that can support their future success.

Keywords: Curiosity-Driven Entrepreneurship, Research, Innovation Entrepreneurship, Business Strategy.

INTRODUCTION

The success of a business is often inseparable from the role of research in uncovering untapped opportunities. Many entrepreneurs begin by asking simple questions such as, "What if there is a better way?" or "What do consumers actually need?" From these questions, they start gathering data, conducting experiments, and developing solutions that are eventually embraced by the market. It aligns with Sarasvathy's (2021) concept of practice-based venturing, where entrepreneurs iteratively shape their ventures through inquiry and action rather than fixed plans.

On the other hand, many university students still perceive research as merely an academic requirement to complete their studies. In reality, research skills offer much broader benefits, especially in the world of business. The ability to analyze data, understand market needs, and test hypotheses are invaluable assets for aspiring entrepreneurs (Larasdiputra, 2022; 2023). Research driven by curiosity not only supports ideation (Kier & McMullen, 2020) but also enhances adaptability in uncertain environments (Arikan et al., 2020). With a curiosity-driven and problem-solving approach, research becomes a powerful tool for creating sustainable innovations (Gino, 2018; Hsieh & Pittaway, 2024).

A real-world example of how curiosity-driven research can lead to business success is the transformation of Burbn into Instagram. Kevin Systrom and Mike Krieger initially developed a location-based check-in app, but through observing user behavior, they discovered that the photosharing feature received significantly higher engagement. With this insight, they simplified the app, removed non-essential features, and focused on creating a better photo-sharing experience. This data-driven decision led Instagram to become a leading social media platform, eventually acquired







by Facebook for \$1 billion in 2012. It reflects what Wood, Bakker, and Fisher (2021) call "time-calibrated entrepreneurial action," where successful pivoting is based on learning through time.

A similar story can be found in Poison Coffee Shop, owned by Komang, a university student from Denpasar, Bali. What began as a casual gathering spot for friends to enjoy coffee and conversations at his home gradually transformed into a thriving business. Driven by curiosity and observations of people around him, Komang imagined a more comfortable and conducive space. He noticed the behavior of his friends—who would later become his customers and business partners—and adjusted the café atmosphere accordingly. By leveraging social media and identifying customer preferences, he expanded the reach of his business. This kind of intuitive exploration supports what Gifford (1998) describes as "the allocation of entrepreneurial attention," where focus is channeled through curiosity and feedback loops.

The world of entrepreneurship is filled with constant change and uncertainty. In such situations, entrepreneurs often have to make decisions without knowing the exact probabilities of outcomes, a form of Knightian uncertainty (Arikan et al., 2020). However, with a research-based approach, this uncertainty can be reduced through data collection, experimentation, and continuous iteration (Elias et al., 2022; Hunt et al., 2022). Nogueira, Clausen, and Corbett (2022) even suggest that frequent research practices develop entrepreneurial expertise over time, enhancing the founder's ability to make informed decisions.

Therefore, this study aims to explore how successful entrepreneurs utilize research methods in developing their businesses. The study highlights inspirational stories of companies born from curiosity and data-driven problem-solving (Berkeley Sutardja Center, 2021; Medium, 2021; This Week in Startups, 2023) and offers insights for students to view research not just as an academic obligation but as a core entrepreneurial asset. As Pittaway (2022) emphasizes, ideation and business creation can be taught and enhanced through systematic research methods. In doing so, research is expected to foster innovative thinking and strengthen the link between academia and business practice (Thompson, Verduyn, & Gartner, 2022).

Curiosity-Driven Research as Entrepreneurial Capital for University Students. Writing a scientific paper is often a major challenge for university students. The difficulty is not only rooted in limited academic knowledge but also in the ability to organize ideas, construct logical arguments, and clearly articulate thoughts. Many students also struggle to write cohesively and critically, which often leads them to perceive research as a burdensome requirement rather than a meaningful learning experience. However, from a broader perspective, research can serve as a valuable asset for their future, particularly in cultivating analytical and critical thinking skills—abilities that are essential in both the workforce and entrepreneurial endeavors (Larasdiputra, 2022; Gino, 2018).

The Curiosity-Driven Research approach offers a more engaging perspective on research. When students begin to see research not merely as an academic obligation but as an opportunity to explore topics that genuinely interest them, they become more motivated to engage in the research process. High levels of curiosity empower them to uncover new ideas, identify underexplored opportunities, and craft creative solutions to real-world problems. As Arikan et al. (2020) argue, entrepreneurial curiosity fosters cognitive exploration and enables individuals to navigate uncertainty in ways that can lead to innovation. In this context, research becomes more than just a method for understanding phenomena—it becomes a training ground for thinking like entrepreneurs who search for gaps and opportunities in the market.

The stages of the research process—observation, data collection, structural analysis, and presentation of findings—are remarkably similar to the stages of entrepreneurship. Just like



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entrepreneurs, researchers must understand problems, identify unmet needs, and design innovative solutions. According to Kier and McMullen (2020), this process of ideation rooted in imaginativeness is a critical component of entrepreneurial success, particularly within newly forming teams. When students become accustomed to reading and analyzing various forms of information, they learn to build narratives from data, plan strategic actions, and ultimately draw conclusions that can be applied in real-world scenarios. These cognitive activities reflect what Gifford (1998) described as the careful allocation of limited entrepreneurial attention toward the most promising ventures.

Therefore, educators must instill the understanding that research is not merely a requirement for graduation but a foundational skill that can unlock future opportunities. When students view research as an enjoyable and rewarding exploratory journey, they not only approach it with greater enthusiasm but also become better prepared for the challenges of employment and even entrepreneurship. As Hsieh and Pittaway (2024) note, curiosity is a key driver in entrepreneurial search behavior, allowing individuals to recognize patterns and create value in dynamic environments. By merging curiosity with an entrepreneurial mindset, students can transform research from a burdensome academic task into a long-term investment for their future (Elias et al., 2022; Sarasvathy, 2021).

Curiosity-Driven Entrepreneurship. The concept of Curiosity-Driven Entrepreneurship is rooted in the idea that curiosity is a key element in discovering business opportunities and fostering innovation. Successful entrepreneurs are often not only those with substantial capital but also those who are willing to explore new ideas based on their interests and research into market trends, consumer needs, as well as social and technological shifts. According to Arikan et al. (2020), entrepreneurial curiosity allows individuals to navigate uncertainty and seek novel opportunities that others might overlook. Similarly, Hsieh and Pittaway (2024) emphasize that curiosity plays a vital role in shaping entrepreneurial search behavior and opportunity recognition.

Two real-life examples that reflect this approach include entrepreneurs who built thriving businesses through Instagram and Poison Coffee Shop, which managed to shift the narrative in the coffee industry. These examples show how curiosity, when combined with research and innovation, can lead to unique business models that stand out in competitive markets (Elias et al., 2022).

METHODS

This research employs a qualitative case study approach. Data were collected from two main sources:

- 1. Literature and digital content analysis, focusing on entrepreneurs who successfully built businesses through Instagram. Articles, online reports, and digital media were examined to understand how social media behavior led to business innovation. The study of entrepreneurs on the Instagram platform was conducted through documentation techniques involving the collection and analysis of articles, reports, and digital content that outline their business journeys. This method aimed to understand how social media contributes to business innovation through the exploration of new ideas (Li & Jaharuddin, 2021; Singh et al., 2022).
- 2. In-depth interviews with the founders of Poison Coffee Shop, exploring how research and curiosity shaped their unique business strategy. In addition, this research relies on in-depth interviews with the owner of Poison Coffee to obtain firsthand insights into how research and idea exploration have contributed to the development of their business. The interviews were semi-structured, allowing the researcher to deeply explore the experiences, challenges, and innovative strategies implemented in building the venture. The data collected were analyzed



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using thematic analysis, where key patterns from both documentation and interviews were identified to find connections between research, curiosity, and the development of youth entrepreneurship.

This methodology is expected to provide more in-depth insights into how a research-based approach can serve as a foundation for innovation and success in the entrepreneurial world. As Sarasvathy (2021) asserts, applying entrepreneurial logic through iterative research and experimentation enables individuals to navigate uncertainty and build sustainable businesses from the ground up.

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

Instagram: From Curiosity to Digital Business Revolution. Instagram was born out of the curiosity of Kevin Systrom and Mike Krieger regarding how people engage with visual content online. Their observation of rising photo-sharing behavior, coupled with experimentation and user feedback, led to the development of a platform that now serves millions (Li & Jaharuddin, 2021). Beyond being a social media platform, Instagram evolved into a commercial ecosystem where entrepreneurs can market products, build communities, and scale without physical infrastructure (Singh et al., 2022; Sulaj & Pfoertsch, 2024).

Instagram, now one of the largest social media platforms in the world, was originally born out of the curiosity of Kevin Systrom and Mike Krieger about how humans interact with visuals in the digital realm. They observed that photo-sharing trends were on the rise, but existing platforms failed to offer an optimal user experience. Their curiosity about user behavior on the internet led them to conduct various experiments, develop intuitive features, and eventually create Instagram.

The success of Instagram went beyond being a photo-sharing app—it triggered a new business ecosystem. Many entrepreneurs leveraged Instagram to build their brands and sell products without the need for a physical store. By understanding consumer behavior in the digital space, they were able to craft more effective marketing strategies, reach broader audiences, and build loyal customer communities (Li & Jaharuddin, 2021; Singh et al., 2022). This story demonstrates how research into social and technological trends can become the foundation for revolutionary business ventures. As Sulaj and Pfoertsch (2024) emphasize, the evolution of marketing requires businesses to embrace dynamic consumer behavior and respond through digital innovation.

Poison Coffee Shop: Redefining the Coffeehouse Paradigm. Poison Coffee Shop exemplifies how curiosity about subcultures and branding can drive innovation. Rather than following mainstream coffee aesthetics, the founders developed an underground, mysterious café concept that defied traditional expectations. Research into consumer preferences, niche coffee culture, and community-building via social media supported this bold approach (Elias et al., 2022; Khuan et al., 2024). Interviews revealed that their curiosity about customer psychology and experiential branding played a major role in business differentiation.

Poison Coffee Shop is another compelling example of Curiosity-Driven Entrepreneurship that successfully combines innovation with a unique marketing strategy. Unlike conventional cafés that emphasize cozy atmospheres and aesthetic interior design, Poison Coffee adopted a bolder and more experimental approach. The business began with an "underground" concept in a hidden location, which sparked curiosity among potential customers. The name "Poison" itself is a branding strategy designed to provoke interest. Instead of following the minimalist artisanal coffee trend, Poison embraced a dark, mysterious visual identity that sharply contrasted with typical café concepts. However, behind this bold concept lay rigorous research on coffee trends, consumer



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preferences, and community-based marketing strategies. They used social media to create exclusivity and deliver a unique customer experience (Elias et al., 2022; Khuan et al., 2024).

Poison Coffee proves that exploring trends and being curious about the unconventional can become a major strength in building a successful business. They are not merely selling coffee — they are offering an experience and a strong brand identity. This approach serves as an inspiration for students and aspiring entrepreneurs to go beyond following market trends, daring instead to explore novel ideas as a source of competitive advantage. The concept of Curiosity-Driven Entrepreneurship highlights how intellectual exploration and research-based inquiry are not only academic pursuits but also powerful tools for business development. The cases of Instagram and Poison Coffee exemplify how curiosity, when paired with intentional analysis of market behavior, can lead to disruptive innovations.

Curiosity plays a crucial role in the early stages of entrepreneurial ideation. Entrepreneurs like Kevin Systrom and Mike Krieger demonstrated a proactive approach to identifying gaps in the digital landscape by observing how people interacted with visual content online. Rather than relying solely on instinct, they applied a research-oriented mindset—testing assumptions, iterating on feedback, and refining the user experience—until they reached product-market fit (Li & Jaharuddin, 2021). This behavior aligns with the principles of effectuation theory, which suggests that successful entrepreneurs start with available means (who they are, what they know, and whom they know) and co-create opportunities through experimentation (Sarasvathy, 2021).

Similarly, Poison Coffee Shop disrupted the coffee shop scene by rejecting conventional aesthetics and embracing an underground brand identity that challenged consumer expectations. Their strategic branding was not merely a stylistic choice but was supported by careful market observation and community-building strategies. The founders' curiosity about niche consumer behavior, subculture marketing, and anti-mainstream positioning enabled them to craft a unique and compelling value proposition (Elias et al., 2022). As Sulaj and Pfoertsch (2024) argue, in an era where the traditional marketing mix (4P) is evolving into experience-driven models like the 5E (Experience, Exchange, Evangelism, Everywhere, and Engagement), understanding customer psychology is no longer optional—it is imperative.

Moreover, both cases demonstrate that curiosity must be sustained throughout the business lifecycle, not just at the ideation phase. Entrepreneurs must continually monitor market shifts, technological advances, and evolving customer preferences. Instagram's continued success, for instance, lies in its constant adaptation—introducing new features like Stories and Reels in response to user trends (Singh et al., 2022). It reflects the need for ongoing trendspotting and consumer insight analysis in maintaining business relevance (Khuan et al., 2024).

For university students and aspiring entrepreneurs, this research suggests that academic tools such as literature reviews, thematic analysis, and field research are not limited to academic output. Instead, they can serve as foundational methods in opportunity recognition, product development, and strategic positioning. Curiosity-led research helps reduce uncertainty by providing a deeper understanding of problems, customers, and competitors—crucial elements in creating a viable business (Hsieh & Pittaway, 2024).

Finally, the findings of this study highlight the importance of fostering research literacy and entrepreneurial curiosity in higher education. Programs that integrate inquiry-based learning, case method analysis, and experiential entrepreneurship projects can nurture these qualities. By embedding research as a habitual part of the entrepreneurial process, students are more likely to develop resilient, innovative, and adaptive ventures.





CONCLUSION

This study underscores the pivotal role of curiosity-driven research in fostering innovative entrepreneurship among young individuals, especially university students. By examining the cases of Instagram and Poison Coffee Shop, it becomes evident that success in entrepreneurship is not solely dependent on financial capital or business infrastructure but rather on an entrepreneur's ability to question, explore, and investigate emerging phenomena within society, technology, and consumer behavior. In both cases, the entrepreneurs were not merely following trends. They were interpreting and critically responding to them through a process of discovery and experimentation. Instagram was born from an inquiry into digital visual communication, eventually reshaping how people connect, share, and build personal or commercial identities online (Li & Jaharuddin, 2021). Meanwhile, Poison Coffee reimagined the coffee shop experience through a rebellious, curiosity-inspired brand strategy that resonated with a niche audience, proving that differentiation rooted in cultural insight and trendspotting can generate significant market value (Elias et al., 2022).

The findings affirm that research and curiosity are not confined to academic contexts but are transferable and vital skills for entrepreneurial practice. Entrepreneurs who embed research as a continuous activity (exploring consumer feedback, cultural shifts, and technological advancements) are better positioned to develop sustainable and adaptive business models (Sarasvathy, 2021; Hsieh & Pittaway, 2024). It reflects the notion that modern entrepreneurship demands more than just creativity; it requires research literacy, strategic foresight, and the courage to experiment. For students, educators, and entrepreneurship programs, the implication is clear: We must cultivate environments where curiosity is encouraged and where research is framed not only as a method of knowledge creation but also as a tool for opportunity identification, value proposition design, and strategic differentiation (Khuan et al., 2024; Sulaj & Pfoertsch, 2024). By shifting the perception of research from a compulsory academic exercise to a strategic entrepreneurial asset, universities can better prepare students to innovate meaningfully in an ever-evolving market.

In conclusion, Curiosity-Driven Entrepreneurship offers a compelling framework that integrates the rigor of research with the agility of entrepreneurial action. By grounding innovation in inquiry, aspiring entrepreneurs are empowered to discover untapped needs, challenge conventional business norms, and co-create solutions that are both socially relevant and economically viable. As demonstrated in this study, curiosity is not just the starting point of entrepreneurship; it is its engine.

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