

FOREIGN STUDENTS OPEN THAI TAE BUSINESS IN INDONESIA CASE STUDY OF MBS FAI UMSU

Mr Faread Samoh¹, Novien Rialdy²

Sharia Business Management, Muhammadiyah University of North Sumatra, Indonesia

Email : fsamoh056@gmail.com¹, novienrialdy@umsu.ac.id²

Abstrak

Keywords:

Foreign Students,
Entrepreneurship,
Thai Tea,
Cultural Adaptation,
Creative Economy.

Globalization has led to increased mobility of international students to Indonesia, who play a role not only in academics but also in entrepreneurial activities, particularly in the culinary sector. One growing phenomenon is the involvement of international students in establishing Thai tea businesses, which are popular among Indonesians. This study aims to examine the role of international students in running Thai tea businesses and identify the challenges and social, cultural, and economic impacts they pose. This study uses a descriptive qualitative approach, with international students directly involved in establishing and managing Thai tea businesses in Indonesia. Data were collected through in-depth interviews, observation, and documentation, then analyzed descriptively through the stages of data reduction, data presentation, and conclusion drawing. The results show that international students are able to capitalize on culinary business opportunities by adapting cultural products to suit local consumer tastes, particularly in aspects of taste, price, and marketing strategy. Despite facing obstacles such as differences in language, culture, and business regulations, international students demonstrate adaptability and innovation in maintaining business continuity. This study concludes that Thai tea businesses run by international students not only contribute to the local economy but also serve as a medium for cultural exchange between Thailand and Indonesia.

This is an open access article under the [CC BY-NC-SA 4.0](https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc-sa/4.0/) license



INTRODUCTION

The mobility of international students to Indonesia has increased in line with the development of educational globalization. The presence of international students is generally understood in an academic context, such as scientific and cultural exchange within universities. However, in practice, international students are also involved in



various non-academic activities, one of which is entrepreneurship. The phenomenon of international students opening and managing culinary businesses, particularly Thai tea, is an interesting issue to study because it demonstrates a shift in the role of international students, not just as students but also as economic actors in local communities.

Previous studies have focused more on student entrepreneurship in general or the role of micro-enterprises in the local economy, while studies specifically highlighting international students as entrepreneurs are relatively limited. Furthermore, research on culinary entrepreneurship often focuses on business and marketing aspects, neglecting the accompanying social and cultural dimensions. Therefore, this article takes a different approach by highlighting international student entrepreneurship as a meeting point between the creative economy and cultural exchange. The existence of Thai tea businesses is not solely oriented towards economic gain but also carries a cultural identity that then interacts with local Indonesian culture. This is the originality of this article compared to previous studies.

This issue is important to address because businesses run by international students have the potential to significantly contribute to the local economy, create jobs, and enrich cross-cultural interactions within the community. Furthermore, this study provides new insights into how international students adapt to the social, cultural, and regulatory environment of business in Indonesia. Therefore, this article is expected to contribute to the scientific field of entrepreneurship, international student mobility, and the culture-based creative economy.

To address these issues, this article uses a descriptive qualitative approach. Data were obtained through interviews, observations, and documentation of international students running Thai tea businesses in Indonesia. This approach was chosen to gain a deep understanding of the experiences, adaptation strategies, and challenges faced by international students in pursuing entrepreneurial activities in diverse social and cultural environments.

METHOD

This research is qualitative with a descriptive approach. This type of research was chosen to gain a deeper understanding of the phenomenon of foreign student entrepreneurship in the Thai tea culinary business in Indonesia, particularly regarding the adaptation process, challenges, and resulting contributions.

The data sources in this study consist of primary and secondary data. Primary data were obtained directly from international students running Thai tea businesses in Indonesia, while secondary data were derived from supporting documents, business activity records, and literature relevant to the research topic. The research informants were selected purposively, namely international students actively involved in establishing and managing Thai tea businesses.

The primary research instrument was the researcher herself, who was responsible for designing, collecting, and analyzing the data. Interview guidelines, observation sheets, and documentation were used to assist the data collection process. Data collection techniques included in-depth interviews with informants, direct observation of business activities, and documentation in the form of photographs and activity notes.

Data analysis was conducted descriptively through the stages of data reduction, data presentation, and conclusion drawing. The obtained data was selected and grouped

according to the research focus, then presented in narrative form and concise tables for ease of understanding. Data validity was maintained through cross-checking and comparison of data from various sources.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The research findings indicate that international students' involvement in Thai tea culinary businesses in Indonesia is driven by the significant market opportunity for this contemporary beverage, particularly among the younger generation. Interviews with informants revealed that international students view Thai tea businesses as a way to capitalize on their cultural background, making them relatively easily accepted by Indonesian consumers. These findings demonstrate that international students' entrepreneurship does not emerge by chance, but rather through a process of identifying market opportunities and adapting to local conditions.

In practice, international students implemented various adaptations to ensure Thai tea products were accepted by consumers. These adaptations included adjusting the sweetness level, varying flavors, affordability, and utilizing social media as a marketing tool. Observations indicated that digital marketing strategies, such as promotions via Instagram and WhatsApp, were crucial in reaching consumers. This finding aligns with the view that the success of culinary businesses in the creative economy is heavily influenced by the ability to innovate and adapt to local market tastes.

In addition to opportunities, this study also identified a number of challenges faced by international students in running their businesses. The main challenges include language barriers, understanding business regulations, and time constraints due to their student status. However, the results show that international students are able to overcome these obstacles through a gradual learning process, consultation with local stakeholders, and collaboration with business partners. This demonstrates the ability to adapt socially and culturally, which is a crucial asset for business sustainability.

In terms of impact, the Thai tea business run by international students contributes to the local economy, both through income generation and small-scale employment opportunities. Furthermore, this business also serves as a medium for cultural exchange, where consumers not only consume the product but also learn about Thai culture through its flavors and business concept. These findings reinforce the view that international student entrepreneurship has strategic value not only economically, but also socially and culturally. Thus, the results of this study address the focus of the study in the introduction, which states that international student entrepreneurship is an important phenomenon worthy of study and publication in the context of creative economy development and cross-cultural interaction.

CONCLUSION

Based on the research results and discussion, it can be concluded that international students play a significant role in the development of Thai tea culinary entrepreneurship in Indonesia. Their involvement in this business is driven by their ability to identify market opportunities and leverage their cultural backgrounds to add value to their products. Their Thai tea businesses are not solely focused on economic profit but also demonstrate a process of cultural adaptation through adjustments to taste, pricing, and marketing strategies to suit local consumer preferences.

This research also shows that international students face various challenges in

running their businesses, such as language barriers, understanding business regulations, and limited time as students. However, through adaptability, gradual learning, and collaboration with local stakeholders, these challenges can be overcome, ensuring the businesses remain sustainable. In addition to contributing to the local economy, the Thai tea business run by international students serves as a platform for cultural exchange between Thailand and Indonesia.

Thus, this study confirms that international student entrepreneurship is a significant phenomenon in the context of the creative economy and international educational mobility. The findings are expected to serve as a reference for the development of educational policies, student entrepreneurship, and further research examining the role of international students in the social and economic dynamics of local communities.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

- Putra, AA, Sandra, A., Novia, D., Kurnia, YF, & Rahmi, E. (2023). *Enhancing food-entrepreneurship skills of university students through training in burger production and its entrepreneurial experience*. *Andalasian International Journal of Social and Entrepreneurial Development*.
- Hafizhoh, S., Asmelia, F., Thoha, MA, et al. (2023). *Development of tahu walik culinary business through an entrepreneurial approach*. *Popular: Student Research Journal*.
- Santosa, NM, Siregar, N., Permana, PS, et al. (2025). Strengthening students' entrepreneurial spirit through dimsum business training and practice. *Krepa: Creativity in Community Service*. ([Cahaya Ilmu Bangsa Institute][3])
- Chairunnisa, C., Pujowati, Y., & Lesmana, T. (2025). Analysis of the impact of entrepreneurship education and curriculum innovation on entrepreneurial motivation and student performance in private universities in East Java. *West Science Social and Humanities Studies*. ([West Sciences][4])
- Damanik, GP, Siburian, M., Ataya, ZN, & Azizah, N. (2025). Analysis of the use of foreign terms in business promotion content of students in the Entrepreneurship Study Program. *Jurnal Intelek Insan Cendikia*. ([JIC Nusantara][5])
- Anggara, A., Dewi, RS, Prastiti, IE, et al. (2025). Analysis of the motivations for establishing and challenges in developing the Pempek Budi 24 Ilir micro-culinary business in Medan. *Journal of Entrepreneurship and Technology Management*. ([Arimbi E-Journal][6])
- Rezky T., Febriyanti, S., Rozalia, R., & Hidayat, K. (2025). Exploring the potential of students' entrepreneurial creativity through an innovation bazaar. *Scientific Journal of Economics, Management, Business, and Accounting*. ([E-Journal of Academic Campus][7])
- Pohan, M., Margaret, NT, & Darma, SP (2025). Challenges for traditional culinary entrepreneurs amidst the popularity of modern food in the era of globalization. *Scientific Journal of Economics, Accounting, and Taxation*. ([AREAI Journal][8])
- Lestari, ED, et al. (2021). Entrepreneurship education and entrepreneurial intentions of university students in Vietnam: the mediating roles of self-efficacy and learning orientation. *Educ. Trains*. (see global context). ([ResearchGate][9])
- Alexandra, Y., Situmorang, R., & Purnamaningsih, P. (2023). Entrepreneurship education in hospitality and tourism: insights from graduated hospitality students

as entrepreneurs. Int. Journal of Academic Research in Business and Social Sciences. ([ResearchGate][10])

Hoang, GH, Le, TTT, & Anh, TDK (2020). Entrepreneurship education and entrepreneurial intentions of university students in Vietnam. Educ. Train. (a study of the role of entrepreneurship education). ([ResearchGate][9])

