STREET COFFEE IN PADANG PANJANG AS A SOCIAL HANGOUT SPACE, SOCIAL INTERACTION ARENA, AND CREATIVE ECONOMIC ACTIVITY

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Abstrak

This study aims to explore how Street Coffee functions as a gathering space, how patterns of social interaction are formed within it, and how creative economic activities emerge around the mobile coffee cart. Using a qualitative approach consisting of observation and interviews, the research reveals that Street Coffee operates not merely as a site of consumption but as an inclusive, flexible, and socially vibrant public space. Students from various academic programs utilize the area to relax after classes, engage in informal discussions, complete academic tasks, and build wider social networks. These interactions naturally shape a dynamic social environment where friendships, academic collaborations, and community bonds develop organically.The seller plays a pivotal role in sustaining this social atmosphere. Through warm interpersonal communication and approachable behavior, the seller fosters emotional connection and familiarity among customers, contributing to a sense of belonging. This relational engagement strengthens customer loyalty and encourages students to repeatedly visit the space. Economically, Street Coffee contributes to the growth of creative micro-enterprises. Menu innovation, unique coffee experiences tailored to student preferences, and consistent social interaction between seller and customers generate economic value that extends beyond simple transactions. The informal nature of the space supports the emergence of creative economic practices where ideas, preferences, and cultural expressions circulate freely among visitors. Overall, the findings demonstrate that informal public spaces such as Street Coffee possess the capacity to fulfill social and economic functions simultaneously.

INTRODUCTION

In recent years, coffee-drinking culture in Indonesia has grown rapidly, marked by the increasing number of coffee shops both large and small in various cities. This phenomenon reflects not only a change in lifestyle but also demonstrates how public spaces have expanded into centers for social activities and creative economic expression. Young people, especially university students, often choose coffee shops as their preferred place to study, discuss, gather, and express their social identity (Prihanada et al., n.d.).

Coffee shops today are no longer merely places to purchase beverages. Instead, they have transformed into new social spaces that facilitate interaction among individuals and foster communities with distinct cultural characteristics (Sofyan et al., n.d.). This shift aligns with the rise of urban-lifestyle trends that attach new meanings to "nongkrong" (hanging out) as a form of social relation and youth cultural expression (Yuliani & Riadi, 2019).

In Padang Panjang City, the culture of hanging out in public spaces has also increased significantly. The city shows dynamic social changes, especially within student environments. With a large number of students from various higher-education institutions, the demand for affordable, flexible, and comfortable gathering spaces is rising. As a result, various micro-businesses have emerged, such as mobile coffee carts, small food trucks, and simple street-side coffee stands that utilize public areas as business locations. Their presence not only provides a place of consumption but also shapes new social spaces and fosters interaction between students and the wider community (Teguh et al., 2025). This phenomenon demonstrates how informal commercial spaces can simultaneously perform both social and economic functions (Putra, 2016).

One of the most prominent developments in this trend is the rising popularity of street coffee vendors in Padang Panjang. "Street coffee" refers to small, mobile coffee carts operating on sidewalks or roadside areas, typically located near busy spots or university environments. Their simplicity makes them easy to move and appealing to students. These street coffee carts offer various affordable drinks, including original brewed coffee, palm-sugar coffee milk, café lattes, and non-coffee options such as matcha, red velvet, chocolate, and other youth-oriented flavors. Many carts began operating in 2020 and have continued to grow, reflecting strong demand from students for accessible and flexible hangout spaces.

Street coffee creates a relaxed, open atmosphere in which students feel comfortable spending long hours. The space supports diverse activities such as informal studying, group discussions, and casual socializing. Its fluid characteristics allow natural social interaction between sellers and buyers as well as among customers themselves. Beyond social functions, street coffee also creates economic opportunities for micro-entrepreneurs through creative economic activities carried out in public spaces (Putra, 2016).

Given this development, street coffee in Padang Panjang provides an interesting topic of study, illustrating the relationship between public space, youth hangout culture, social interaction, and the growth of the local creative economy. These informal coffee carts reflect the evolving youth culture and show how informal spaces can play essential roles in supporting both social and economic life within the community.

Therefore, this research aims to understand how street coffee spaces in Padang Panjang are used by students for hanging out, how social interactions are formed within these spaces, and how creative economic activities develop around these coffee carts. The findings are expected to contribute to social science discourse, particularly regarding informal public spaces, youth hangout culture, and student social interaction.

The rapid expansion of street-based coffee culture in Indonesian urban settings also reflects broader transitions in society's consumption patterns, spatial preferences, and leisure activities. As digital technology and mobile lifestyles have become more embedded in everyday routines, contemporary youths are increasingly drawn to informal and flexible spaces rather than formal establishments. These places allow them to customize their activities from studying independently to conducting group meetings or casual gatherings while still remaining connected to the public sphere. In this context, street coffee spaces serve as hybrid zones that blend public accessibility with personalized comfort.

Moreover, the affordability of street coffee products plays a significant role in attracting students. Unlike conventional cafés that often require customers to purchase expensive beverages or adhere to certain social expectations, street coffee offers a more inclusive environment where individuals from different socioeconomic backgrounds can participate without feeling excluded. This inclusivity strengthens its role as a genuinely public space open, egalitarian, and socially fluid. Affordability, in this sense, becomes a social enabler that allows more students to engage in community life.

Another important aspect of the rise of street coffee culture is the changing meaning of "leisure" among the youth. Hanging out is no longer considered a passive or unproductive activity; instead, it has become a socially meaningful practice where ideas are exchanged, friendships are built, networks are expanded, and creative inspiration is often generated. For many students, these informal environments also become alternative learning spaces characterized by more relaxed interactions and collaborative atmospheres that are not always found in traditional classroom settings.

Furthermore, the growth of street coffee in Padang Panjang is closely tied to the increasing urbanization and diversification of youth identities. Students from different regions, study programs, and cultural backgrounds converge in the city, bringing varied preferences, habits, and expectations regarding social spaces. Street coffee becomes a neutral meeting point where these differences can interact organically. Its informality dissolves social barriers and encourages spontaneous communication. Students who might never speak to each other within formal academic environments often find themselves conversing freely while waiting for their drinks or sharing seats in a crowded street coffee area.

From an economic perspective, the rise of street coffee vendors also signals the adaptability and innovation within the local creative economy. Many sellers incorporate aesthetic elements in their cart design, branding, and menu presentation—demonstrating creativity in both product differentiation and customer engagement. Some incorporate social-media marketing, offering special promotions or seasonal menu items that cater to digital audiences. Others focus on storytelling about their products, such as highlighting locally sourced beans or artisanal brewing techniques, thereby elevating the cultural value of their offerings.

The spread of street coffee also interacts with broader discussions on public-space utilization in Indonesian cities. Public spaces sidewalks, parking areas, park corners, empty lots are increasingly being activated by micro-entrepreneurs who transform these areas into vibrant social hubs. While formal regulations may not always accommodate such usage, the reality is that these spaces serve essential functions in community socialization and economic sustainability.

In Padang Panjang, this phenomenon reveals how informal actors creatively negotiate urban space to meet community needs.

Despite these positive aspects, the phenomenon also presents unique challenges. Issues related to litter, noise, pedestrian flow, and environmental impacts occasionally arise, prompting debates regarding the balance between public-space freedom and urban order. However, many of these challenges can be addressed through cooperative arrangements between vendors, customers, and local authorities. The potential for street coffee to evolve into a more structured form of creative economy is significant if supported by appropriate policies such as micro-entrepreneur training, waste-management initiatives, and designated street-vendor zones that maintain both accessibility and order.

In summary, the phenomenon of street coffee in Padang Panjang is not simply a trend in food and beverage consumption. It represents a broader cultural transformation involving youth identities, public-space dynamics, micro entrepreneurship, and creative economic development. This research seeks to illuminate these interconnected dimensions to provide a comprehensive understanding of how informal social spaces influence both community social life and local economic ecosystems.

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The concept of public space forms the theoretical foundation for understanding how *Street Coffee Padang Panjang* functions not only as a commercial site but also as a space where social interactions and creative economic activities emerge. Classic theories of public space position it as an arena in which individuals can gather, communicate, and participate in collective experiences. Over time, however, the concept of public space has expanded beyond traditional physical settings such as parks, plazas, or government squares, encompassing new forms of semi-public and commercial environments that similarly facilitate social behavior. In the contemporary urban context, cafés, co-working spaces, coffee stalls, and creative hubs have become extensions of public spaces where everyday social interactions take place (Nasution & Zahrah, 2017).

Public space is often described as a socially inclusive environment in which individuals from various backgrounds can interact freely. (Widiyanto et al., 2021) argue that modern public spaces should not only guarantee physical access but also ensure social accessibility, meaning that people feel welcomed, safe, and comfortable participating in the activities happening within them. This perspective is vital in understanding informal public spaces such as street coffee stalls, which, although simple in form, possess strong sociocultural value for the communities that inhabit them.

A fundamental reference for analyzing social dynamics in public space is Jürgen Habermas' concept of the public sphere (*Öffentlichkeit*). (Habermas, 1991) conceptualizes the public sphere as a domain where individuals come together to engage in rational dialogue, exchange ideas, and form collective understanding. Although originally situated in the context of European coffee houses, salons, and literary circles, the concept has evolved and is now widely used to analyze informal gathering spaces where spontaneous communication and shared experiences emerge. Street coffee stalls, in this sense, represent miniature public spheres, where participants—often strangers—exchange stories, opinions, and everyday reflections in an open and egalitarian manner.

(Carr, 1992) further expand the idea of public space by emphasizing the qualities that make such spaces functional: comfort, relaxation, discovery, active and passive engagement, and opportunities for social communication. Informal public spaces, including street-side coffee carts, fulfill these criteria in their own modest ways. They provide an atmosphere where individuals can unwind after daily activities, engage in casual conversations, or simply observe the social environment around them. The spontaneous nature of social encounters in these spaces is fundamental in shaping community connections and strengthening social cohesion.

Moreover, theories on youth culture and urban lifestyle help explain why contemporary young people particularly university students actively use cafés and street coffee stalls as social hubs. According to (Sofyan et al., n.d.), the rise of coffee culture in Indonesia is closely associated with changes in lifestyle and identity expression among young adults. Coffee consumption has shifted from a mere culinary act to a symbolic activity representing modernity, creativity, and social belonging. (Yuliani & Riadi, 2019) adds that the act of "hanging out" or *nongkrong* plays a significant role in the formation of youth identity, providing space for self-expression, relaxation, and the negotiation of social relationships.

In addition to social functions, street coffee stalls can also be understood through the theoretical lens of the creative economy. The creative economy refers to economic activities rooted in creativity, innovation, human interaction, and the creation of unique experiences rather than mass production. Small-scale entrepreneurial activities such as mobile coffee carts are an embodiment of micro-level creative economic practices. These businesses rely not only on product sales but also on aesthetic presentation, experiential value, customer interaction, and cultural trends to attract consumers. Interaction between sellers and customers plays a fundamental role in shaping the added value of the business, making the exchange feel personal and emotionally significant (Sumardani, 2025).

Furthermore, the concept of third places introduced by Oldenburg (1999) is highly relevant for analyzing the role of Street Coffee in Padang Panjang. Third places refer to informal public settings outside home (first place) and work/school (second place) where individuals gather for pleasure, relaxation, and conversation. Examples include cafés, barber shops, bookstores, and local eateries. According to Oldenburg, third places are characterized by their accessibility, neutrality, regular patrons, playful atmosphere, and function as community anchors. Street coffee stalls possess similar characteristics affordable, accessible, socially open, and functioning as micro-community hubs where patrons can experience belonging and social connection.

In this context, Street Coffee Padang Panjang can be understood as a hybrid space part commercial, part public, and part cultural. It offers affordable beverages while fostering meaningful social interactions among students and local residents. As an informal gathering point, it becomes a living space where ideas circulate, friendships form, and micro-scale creative economies grow organically.

By integrating theories of public space, the public sphere, youth culture, the creative economy, and third places, this research situates Street Coffee Padang Panjang within a broader sociological understanding of how informal public spaces shape contemporary urban life. This theoretical framework enables a holistic analysis of Street Coffee not only as a business model but also as a dynamic sociocultural phenomenon.

METHOD STUDY

This study employs a qualitative descriptive research design to explore how street coffee spaces in Padang Panjang function as hangout areas, sites of social interaction, and drivers of creative economic activity. Qualitative methods are particularly suitable for this research because they allow an in-depth understanding of social behavior, subjective experiences, and environmental dynamics that cannot be captured through quantitative measurements alone.

Data were collected using three primary techniques: field observation, semi-structured interviews, and documentation. Field observations were conducted directly at several street coffee locations around Padang Panjang, particularly those situated near university areas and busy public spots. These observations focused on environmental setting, seating arrangement, visitor behavior, patterns of interaction, and physical-spatial characteristics of the street coffee carts. Observations were carried out during peak hours (8:00 PM–11:00 PM) and non-peak hours to capture variations in activity and atmosphere.

Semi-structured interviews were conducted with three main groups: street coffee sellers, student customers, and surrounding community members. Sellers were asked about business strategies, customer interactions, motivations, challenges, and their understanding of creative economic practices. Student customers were interviewed regarding their reasons for visiting street coffee, perceived comfort, frequency of visits, and the nature of their social interactions. Interviews with community members aimed to understand the broader social and economic influence of street coffee within the neighborhood. All interviews were conducted informally to maintain a natural conversational flow, and responses were documented manually and through audio recordings when permitted.

Documentation methods included photo-taking of street coffee layouts, recording menu variations, observing price ranges, and collecting social-media materials used by vendors for marketing. These documents served as complementary data to strengthen the interpretation of field findings.

Data were analyzed through thematic analysis. This technique involves coding the data, identifying recurring patterns, categorizing findings into thematic units, and interpreting them in relation to theoretical frameworks such as public-space theory, social-interaction theory, and creative-economy frameworks. Data validation was carried out through triangulation, comparing observations, interview responses, and documentation sources to ensure accuracy and consistency.

Overall, this methodological approach enables a holistic understanding of street coffee as a socio-spatial phenomenon and a creative-economic practice in Padang Panjang.

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

The phenomenon of *Street Coffee Padang Panjang* illustrates how informal public spaces can develop into vibrant social environments that support everyday interactions, student lifestyles, and the growth of micro-scale creative economies. Although the physical structure of these coffee carts is modest, the social and cultural value they generate is significant. The findings presented in this section are derived from field observations and interviews with sellers, regular customers, and university students who frequently visit these street coffee spots.

Street Coffee in Padang Panjang typically operates along busy pedestrian routes, near university gates, roadside clusters, and areas with high student mobility. Most carts begin operating during the late afternoon and reach peak activity between 20:00 and 23:00. The cart layout, although simple, is intentionally arranged to create a comfortable and accessible environment: folding chairs, small portable tables, and mats are placed around the cart, forming a semi-circular spatial configuration that naturally encourages interaction among customers. The absence of physical boundaries, such as walls or enclosed seating, makes the space feel open, casual, and socially inviting.
This spatial openness becomes one of the key factors enabling spontaneous social encounters.

Street Coffee as a Social Micro-Public Sphere

Based on field observations, the interaction patterns at Street Coffee resemble the characteristics of a public sphere as described by Habermas. Conversations occur freely across groups, and informal discussions emerge without the need for structured arrangements. Students often arrive in pairs or small groups, but they easily engage with others sitting nearby. The audible proximity among groups where one group's conversation can be heard by another facilitates a shared social atmosphere. This condition supports spontaneous exchanges, small group discussions, and even light debates on academic topics or campus life.
One of the sellers explained during an interview:

"I choose a cart concept because I want to stay close to my customers. When I chat with them while preparing their drinks, it makes them feel comfortable and more likely to come back again."
(Seller, Interview 2025)

This statement demonstrates the seller's awareness that social comfort is a form of added value, aligning with the creative economy theory that emphasizes emotional and relational capital in sustaining micro-businesses. The seller intentionally adopts a personalized communication style asking about customers' daily routines, recommending menu items, or initiating small jokes to maintain a friendly atmosphere. These interactions transform the selling process into a relational experience.

Street Coffee as an Inclusive Youth Space

Students perceive Street Coffee not only as a place to drink coffee, but also as a social and emotional refuge. Many students reported that they feel more relaxed at Street Coffee compared to indoor cafés, which often feel more formal or financially demanding. The affordability of the drinks, the open-air setting, and the flexible seating

options offer a sense of freedom and comfort that fits the lifestyle of young people.

A student described her experience:

"Street Coffee feels very comfortable because I can talk with friends without worrying about expensive prices. The place is relaxing and helps me unwind after classes."

(Student, Interview 2025)

This reflects the youth culture theory that emphasizes the need for accessible, low-pressure environments where young people can socialize, express themselves, and momentarily escape academic stress. For many students, Street Coffee functions as a "third place" in Oldenburg's sense a neutral, informal space outside home and campus where they can reconnect with friends, exchange ideas, or simply enjoy a moment of leisure.

The Formation of Social Networks and Cross-Group Interaction

Interviews also revealed that Street Coffee facilitates cross-program and cross-campus social interactions. Students often meet individuals from different academic backgrounds, creating opportunities to expand social networks. One customer noted:

"I can meet many new people here because the customers are not only from my department. Sometimes I just say hi, and after a while we start talking and eventually become friends."

(Customer, Interview 2025)

This demonstrates the social inclusivity embedded in Street Coffee's atmosphere. The openness of the space allows customers to initiate or join conversations without social barriers. In sociological terms, this informal and egalitarian interaction pattern aligns with modern public space theories, which emphasize voluntary gathering, shared communication, and spontaneous social engagement as essential functions of contemporary public life.

Street Coffee as a Micro-Creative Economy Ecosystem

From an economic perspective, Street Coffee significantly contributes to the livelihoods of small business owners. Sellers reported consistent daily income due to regular customer visits, especially from students who frequent the stalls multiple times a week. Beyond product sales, value creation occurs in the form of atmosphere, hospitality, and creative menu variations.

One vendor explained:

"Since I started selling here, my income has increased because students buy coffee almost every day. They don't just buy coffee they also talk to me. It feels more alive because I have regular customers and a small community forming around my cart."

(UMKM Seller, Interview 2025)

The emergence of small communities around these carts illustrates that Street Coffee operates not only as a business but also as a social hub. These micro-communities foster customer loyalty, support menu innovation, and enhance the sustainability of the business. Sellers often introduce new drink variations based on customer suggestions or popular trends among students, reflecting the adaptive nature of creative economic practices.

Moreover, Street Coffee indirectly stimulates the surrounding economy by encouraging the presence of complementary small vendors such as snack sellers, local food carts, and mobile dessert stalls. This cluster of micro-businesses forms a micro-

economic ecosystem where collaboration and mutual support naturally take place.

Spatial Dynamics and the Aesthetics of Informality

The informal setting of Street Coffee creates unique spatial dynamics that differ from conventional cafés. The open-air environment, minimalistic setup, and mobility of the carts contribute to a unique aesthetic one that blends urban informality with youthful creativity. This atmosphere attracts students who prefer less rigid social settings. The adaptability of the space also enables the cart to move or reorganize according to weather conditions, crowd size, or special events.

Street Coffee's visual simplicity often decorated with modest lights, chalkboard menus, and compact brewing equipment creates an intimate ambiance that enhances the customer experience. These aesthetic choices reinforce the cart's identity as a casual, friendly, and student-oriented gathering space.

CONCLUSIONS

This study concludes that the practice of surrogate motherhood in Indonesia remains legally untenable due to its incompatibility with the existing national legal framework. The surrogacy agreement, regardless of whether it is altruistic or commercial, lacks legal legitimacy because it contradicts the provisions of the Health Act, which strictly regulates assisted reproductive technologies, and violates the civil law principle requiring a lawful cause (*causa yang halal*) in contractual arrangements. As a result, any child born through surrogacy becomes entangled in an uncertain legal position, particularly in relation to parental status, civil identity, and legal recognition.

Furthermore, the research identifies a critical normative gap concerning the protection and governance of children's genetic data. Indonesia's current legislation does not explicitly determine who holds lawful authority to provide consent for the collection, storage, or utilization of a child's genetic information. The absence of such a rule creates substantial risks of misuse, unauthorized disclosure, or exploitation of genetic data, thereby threatening the child's fundamental right to privacy. Although the Personal Data Protection Act recognizes genetic information as a category of sensitive personal data requiring higher safeguards, it does not provide detailed mechanisms for consent in cases involving minors especially those born through legally unrecognized reproductive arrangements.

Given these challenges, the study emphasizes the urgent need to harmonize the Child Protection Act and the Personal Data Protection Act to ensure legal certainty, clarity of authority over genetic data, and effective enforcement of the best interest of the child. Such harmonization should include explicit statutory provisions governing genetic data consent, parental authority for children born through non-traditional reproductive methods, and clear standards for safeguarding sensitive biological information. Strengthening these regulations will contribute significantly to a more coherent legal framework that both protects children's rights and responds to the evolving complexity of reproductive technologies in Indonesia.

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