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Gastropreneurs

Empowering Youth Entrepreneurship on Gastronomy

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WP3/A3. Creating Theoretical Core of Learning Units

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LEARNING UNIT 1

Learning Unit
INTRODUCTİON TO GASTRONOMY ENTREPRENEURSHİP

Theoretical Core of the Learning Unit
Theoretical Core This section will clarify the general theoretical framework relevant to the different units, without going into the details of the gastronomy-related topics. (minimum 2 pages)

1. Foundations of entrepreneurship

Entrepreneurship can be understood as the capacity to identify opportunities and transform them into value through new products, services, or organizational models. While historically linked to profit generation and market expansion, contemporary perspectives recognize entrepreneurship as a multidimensional phenomenon that plays a crucial role in innovation, job creation, and in the development of society.



Source: Freepik

From an **economic perspective**, entrepreneurs stimulate growth and create wealth by contributing to the creation of new firms, jobs, and improvements in productivity and employment, and by fostering innovation. For instance, a small tech startup developing an app

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to optimize restaurant reservations not only creates direct employment but also enhances efficiency across the hospitality sector.

Over time, the understanding of entrepreneurship has expanded to include a **social dimension.** Contemporary approaches emphasize the role of entrepreneurs in addressing societal challenges, improving well-being, and supporting inclusive and sustainable growth. Social entrepreneurship, in particular, highlights how entrepreneurial initiatives can create shared value by combining economic viability with positive social impact, such as community development and social inclusion.

Entrepreneurship is also deeply influenced by a **cultural dimension**, as it both reflects and shapes societal values, norms, and attitudes. Cultural contexts affect perceptions of risk-taking, innovation, creativity, and individual initiative, thereby influencing entrepreneurial behaviour. At the same time, entrepreneurial activity can transform cultures by promoting openness to change and encouraging innovative mindsets within communities.

The evolution of entrepreneurship, from early trade to digital platforms shows how entrepreneurial activity adapts to changing economic structures, technological advances, and societal needs. Today's entrepreneurs operate in environments shaped by globalization, digitalization, and sustainability concerns, requiring new competencies and strategic approaches and reinforcing its central role in modern economies and societies. Through their activities, in fact, entrepreneurs stimulate investment, enhance market dynamism, and contribute to the diversification and resilience of both local and global economies.

1.2 The entrepreneurial process

The entrepreneurial process is not strictly linear, as feedback from stakeholders often leads entrepreneurs to adjust opportunities, however three phases can be identified:

- **Opportunity recognition**: identifying unmet needs, inefficiencies or emerging trends that can be transformed into viable business ideas.
- **Resource mobilization**: acquiring and organizing financial, human, technological and social resources.
- **Value creation**: generating economic, social or cultural value through products, services or experiences that meet stakeholder needs.

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Source: ChatGPT

2. The entrepreneurial mindset

Entrepreneurship is sustained not only by processes but also by a distinctive mindset. This combines cognitive, emotional, and ethical elements that enable individuals to operate effectively in uncertain and dynamic environments.

At the core of the entrepreneurial mindset is **risk-taking,** which involves making decisions under uncertainty and manage potential losses through calculated judgment rather than reckless behaviour. **Innovation** is equally central, requiring creativity and the ability to challenge established practices by seeking new ways of creating value in response to unmet needs or emerging trends. It refers to the capacity to generate original ideas and apply creative problem-solving to develop new products, services, or business models.

A crucial role is also played by **resilience**, which is the ability to cope with setbacks, recover from failure, and maintain long-term commitment despite obstacles. Many ventures change direction multiple times before finding a viable model. **Adaptability** complements resilience by enabling entrepreneurs to adjust strategies in response to evolving conditions, such as market shifts, technological change, and evolving consumer demands. A company could for example shif to delivery services during a crisis.

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Leadership and ethics further shape entrepreneurial behaviour. Effective entrepreneurs motivate teams, communicate vision, and act responsibly toward stakeholders. Ethical considerations, such as transparent sourcing or fair labour practices, are increasingly essential for long-term legitimacy. For example, a business choosing to work exclusively with local suppliers to reduce environmental impact demonstrates how ethics can align with competitive advantage.

Lifelong learning also supports entrepreneurial growth. Continuous updating of skills, digital, managerial, or sector-specific, allows entrepreneurs to remain competitive.



Source: Freepik

3. Ecosystem theory and stakeholder networks

Entrepreneurial activity does not occur in isolation but within **ecosystems** composed of entrepreneurs, public institutions, educational and research organizations, networks, resources, and regulatory frameworks. Venture creation and growth depend not only on individual entrepreneurs but also on the quality of the surrounding environment and the interactions among its participants.

These ecosystems operate at local, regional, and global scales. Locally, entrepreneurs benefit from community networks, mentorship, and proximity to customers.

At the regional level, entrepreneurs extend their connections linking their activities to wider supply chains and industrial clusters across cities, thus facilitating knowledge transfer, investment flows and growth. For example, a regional tourism board promoting gastronomic routes can stimulate entrepreneurial opportunities in hospitality and food production. Globally, entrepreneurs access international markets and cross-border partnerships supporting for example knowledge diffusion, and technological advancement.

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Stakeholders, including governments, investors, suppliers, partners, communities and customers, shape entrepreneurial trajectories by providing resources, feedback, and regulatory frameworks. Together, these interconnected stakeholders form complex networks that support entrepreneurial activity and contribute to sustainable venture creation and economic development.

4. Trends and opportunities

Entrepreneurial opportunities emerge from broader trends and structural change in markets, technology and society, such as demographic shifts and evolving socio-economic conditions. Understanding these trends and their underlying drivers enables entrepreneurs to anticipate change, identify emerging needs, and design innovative and relevant business models.

For example, **globalization** has expanded access to international markets, increased competition and facilitated the exchange of ideas, while **digitalization** has transformed how ventures operate, enabling new business models such as platform-based services. Additionally, **sustainability** and the circular economy are increasingly central. Entrepreneurs are expected to design products and processes that minimize waste and environmental impact.

These trends require entrepreneurs to integrate technological awareness, environmental responsibility, and strategic foresight into their planning.

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Source: Freepik

5. Entrepreneurial challenges

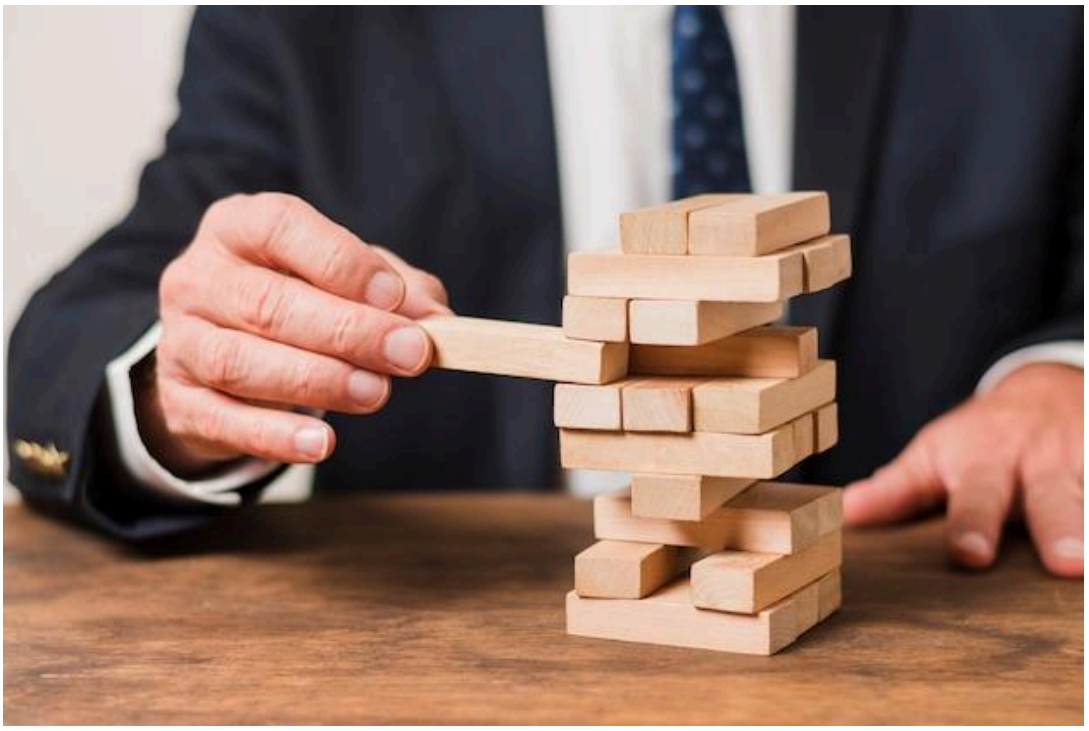
Despite opportunities, entrepreneurs face significant challenges that can affect venture survival, growth, and sustainability.

For example, **regulatory complexity**, licensing, taxation, labour laws and compliance, can increase the complexity of entrepreneurial activities, but is essential for sustainable growth and long-term operational stability. **Human capital** is another critical challenge. Recruiting skilled workers, providing training and upskilling, and retaining talent are essential yet difficult tasks, especially in competitive sectors. Retaining talent is particularly difficult in competitive labour markets, requiring entrepreneurs to offer not only financial incentives but also meaningful work, learning opportunities, and inclusive organizational cultures. Finally, entrepreneurs frequently operate under conditions of **resource limitations**. Limited access to finance or infrastructure may for example prevent promising ventures from expanding.

As ventures grow, **scalability challenges** emerge. Expanding operations, entering new markets, or managing rapid growth requires effective systems, processes, and leadership capabilities. Therefore, entrepreneurs must balance growth ambitions with operational

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sustainability, ensuring that resource allocation, organizational structure, and strategic planning support long-term performance rather than short-term expansion.



Source: Freepik

6. Socio-Cultural Dimensions

Entrepreneurship is deeply embedded in socio-cultural contexts that shape how opportunities are perceived, how businesses operate, and how value is created and distributed.

Entrepreneurial activity is shaped by space, territory, and culture. Local traditions and community values influence business practices, while regional economic structures determine the accessibility of opportunities. Finally, cultural norms and social values play a key role in shaping attitudes toward risk-taking, collaboration, innovation, and entrepreneurship more broadly.

Understanding consumer behaviour is equally important. Shifts in lifestyle, health consciousness, or experiential preferences create new markets. For example, the rising demand for plant-based meals has encouraged entrepreneurs to innovate in food production and service.

Entrepreneurial ventures also contribute to community development by generating employment, revitalizing local economies, and fostering social cohesion through networks of collaboration and shared purpose. For example, in rural or underserved areas, entrepreneurship can support revitalization by preserving local traditions, utilizing local

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resources, and stimulating innovation. Social innovation often emerges when entrepreneurs address community needs through new and inclusive solutions that combine economic viability with social impact.

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