Unit 3: Project Idea Generation

Introduction

The idea is the **first and foundational step** in the entrepreneurial journey. A well-formulated idea increases the chances of success, while a poorly developed idea can hinder progress. In this unit, we will explore the **stages**, **sources**, and **methods** of idea generation in a structured and applied way, as outlined in Lecture 4: "Stages of Establishing an Entrepreneurial Project – Idea Generation."

© Learning Objectives

By the end of this unit, you will be able to:

- Understand the importance of idea generation in entrepreneurial success.
- Identify the **four stages** of idea generation.
- Recognize key sources that inspire innovative business ideas.
- Apply structured methods (e.g., brainstorming, SCAMPER) to develop original project concepts.

🔆 1. Stages of Idea Generation

The process of generating an entrepreneurial idea goes through four main stages:

• 1. Idea Generation (توليد الأفكار)

This stage involves collecting as many potential ideas as possible, inspired by needs, observations, personal interests, or creativity.

A Lidea Formulation (صياغة الفكرة)

At this point, the entrepreneur selects ideas with potential value and develops them into clear, structured, and expressible forms.

• 3. Idea Evaluation (تقييم الفكرة)

This includes analyzing the idea for **feasibility**, **market demand**, **environmental alignment**, and **available resources**.

4. Idea Testing (اختبار الفكرة)

The entrepreneur seeks feedback from experts and stakeholders to validate the idea's viability and potential for success.

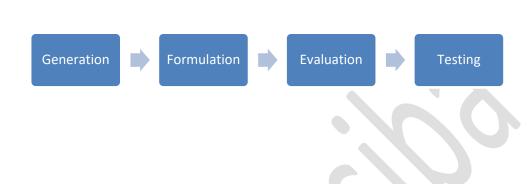


Figure 1: Stages of Idea Development

2. Sources of Entrepreneurial Ideas

Ideas can emerge from diverse practical and creative sources:

Source	Description & Example
Problem-solving needs	Daily challenges (e.g., traffic \rightarrow carpooling app)
Work experience	Engineer uses his experience to start a local tech service
Hobbies & talents	Artist launches an online craft store
Creativity training	Creativity workshops spark innovative recycling business ideas
Research & publications	Reports from chambers of commerce inspire an agritech startup
Industrial/commercial relations	Observing gaps in trade partnerships or supply chains
Customer feedback	Consumers complain about long wait times \rightarrow idea for a smart queue app

	Table 1:	Common	Sources	of Ideas
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Market imitation	Inspired by a foreign product and adapted for local context (without IP violation)	
Market needs	New product ideas based on observed unmet needs in society	

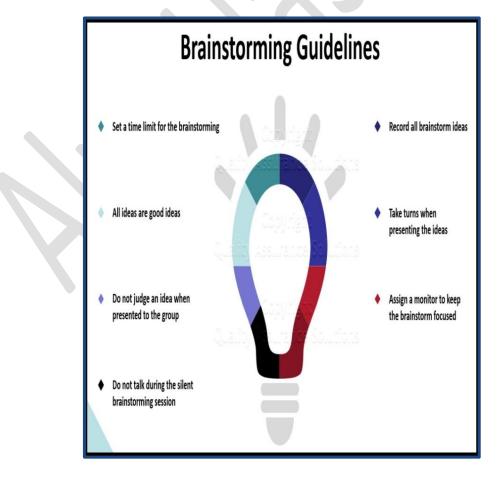
冬 3. Methods for Generating Ideas

There are several structured techniques to help generate and refine ideas:

(العصف الذهني) Brainstorming

Group activity encouraging free idea flow without criticism. Based on:

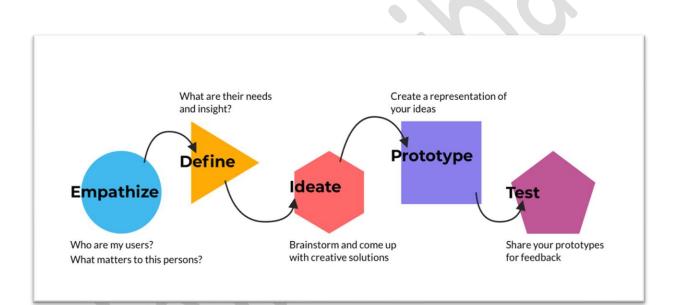
- Freedom of thought
- Quantity over quality
- Postponing evaluation
- Building on others' ideas

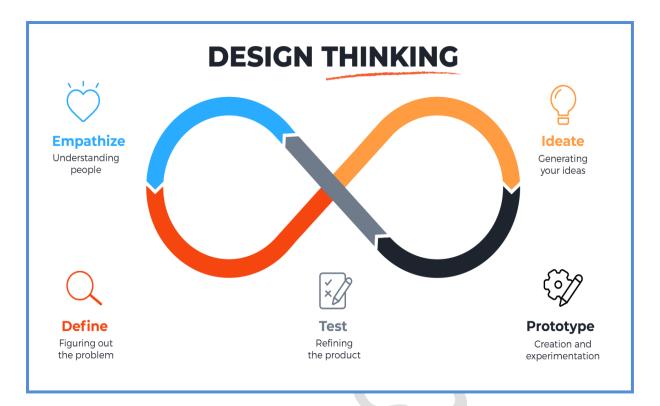


Design Thinking Process

Design thinking is a powerful human-centered methodology based on five phases:

- Empathize: Understand users' needs through observation and interviews.
- **Define**: Frame problems based on insights.
- Ideate: Brainstorm multiple creative solutions.
- **Prototype**: Create simple representations of ideas.
- **Test**: Gather feedback to improve or pivot.





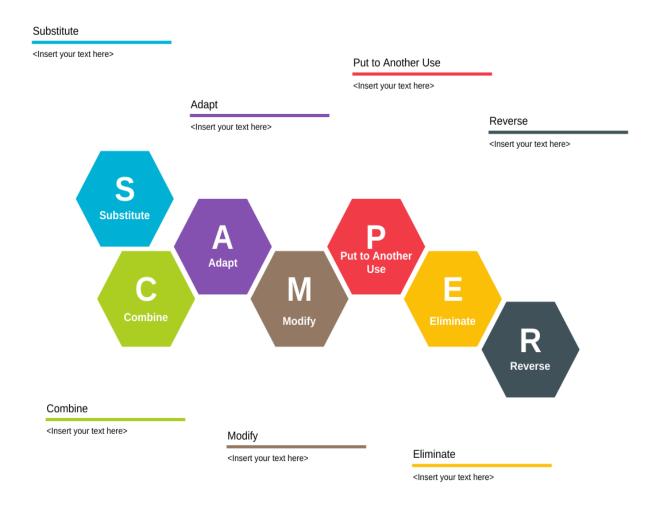
(حلقات النقاش) Discussion Circles

Small focused group (8–14 members) discusses problems or existing products and proposes improvements. More targeted than brainstorming.

📌 SCAMPER Technique

Encourages improvement or innovation by applying these steps:

- Substitute
- Combine
- Adapt
- Modify
- Put to other use
- Eliminate
- Reverse



Use SCAMPER to improve existing ideas systematically:

Action	Description	Example
Substitute	Replace components	Use bamboo instead of plastic in packaging
Combine	Merge functions or products	Smartwatch + health tracker
Adapt	Apply ideas from other fields	Uber-like platform for delivery of groceries
Modify	Change shape, size, appearance	Compact foldable electric bike
Put to use	Use differently	Turn waste glass into building bricks
Eliminate	Remove non-essential components	Minimalist phone without camera
Reverse	Reorder or do opposite	Subscription cancelation-first approach

📌 SWOT Analysis

Used to evaluate the **Strengths**, **Weaknesses**, **Opportunities**, and **Threats** of a selected idea.



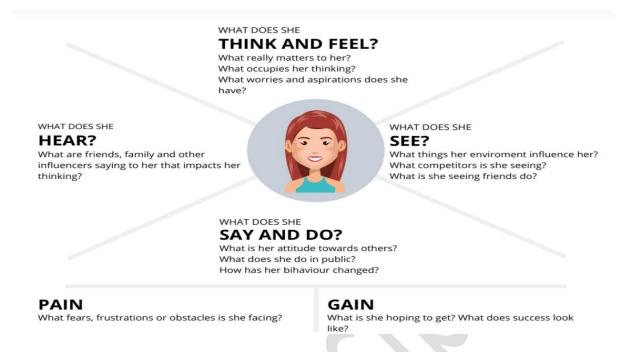
📌 Systematic Inventive Thinking (SIT)

SIT reverses traditional brainstorming. Start with solution patterns and apply them to various contexts. Focus areas include task unification, multiplication, division, attribute dependency, and subtraction.

***** Mind Mapping and Visual Techniques

Use diagrams to explore connected ideas. Examples:

• Mind Maps for branching ideas from a central theme



- Storyboards for visualizing user experience
- Affinity Diagrams for clustering similar ideas

Case Study Example

A young graduate in Saida noticed that many elderly people struggled with accessing pharmacies during winter. She:

- Generated the idea: mobile pharmacy delivery
- Formulated it: built a clear value proposition for elderly users
- Evaluated: analyzed logistics and target market size
- **Tested**: launched a small-scale pilot with 10 households

Activities

Activity Type	Description
Group Brainstorm	Generate 20 ideas in 15 minutes, then vote for top 3 and SWOT each
SCAMPER Drill	Pick a product (e.g., water bottle) and apply all 7 SCAMPER steps

Activity Type Description

Mini Assignment Write a 1-page idea profile (source, target market, SWOT)

Additional Resources

- IDEO's Design Thinking Toolkit
- *Creative Confidence* by Tom Kelley
- Local chambers of commerce reports and entrepreneurship publications

By mastering the **stages**, **sources**, and **methods** of idea generation, you will be equipped to launch innovative and impactful entrepreneurial projects. In the next unit, we will transform your selected idea into a **structured business plan**.