

**Examine Entrepreneurial Motivations and
Entrepreneurial Success in Homestay Program:
Evidence from a Developing Region in Sabah,
Malaysia**

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ABSTRACT

This study explores the relationship between entrepreneurial motivation, driven by both push and pull factors, and the entrepreneurial success of homestay entrepreneurs in Sabah, Malaysia. It aims to identify the research gap in our understanding of homestay programs. In addition, there is limited research exploring the factors that contribute to the entrepreneurial success of Sabah homestay. Sabah is currently the second-highest revenue

generator for homestay in Malaysia. However, despite its growth, the homestay industry in Sabah faces challenges that can lead entrepreneurs to leave homestay programs. The resource-based view (RBV) framework was used to analyze the relationship between entrepreneurial motivation and entrepreneurial success. Data were purposively sampled from active homestay entrepreneurs, with a sample size estimated using the G-Power approach. A total of 110 valid questionnaires were collected, and the study employed PLS-SEM techniques for analysis. The findings of the study reveal a significant positive correlation between both pull and push factors and entrepreneurial success. These findings can provide useful managerial applications for related government agencies and universities. The government can support Sabah's homestay industry by providing financial aid, enhancing infrastructure, and organizing talks. Combined with the region's ecotourism potential, could attract younger participants to join the homestay program.

Keywords: Homestay, entrepreneurial, motivation, entrepreneurial success.

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1. INTRODUCTION

This study investigates entrepreneurial motivation driven by pull and push factors that contribute to entrepreneurial success in homestay programs. In Malaysia, a homestay is a registered accommodation under the Ministry of Tourism, Arts, and Culture (MOTAC), where tourists can experience local life and enjoy local delicacies by staying with a registered host family or community (MOTAC, 2019). The Malaysian homestay program, launched in the 1980s, aimed to bridge the economic gap between rural and urban areas. It achieved this by creating new tourism opportunities in rural communities. By allowing local residents to participate in the tourism industry as homestay hosts, the program empowered them to generate income and become stakeholders in the sector (Kasim *et al.*, 2016). A study in Thailand, indicated that existing tourist that visited homestay are very small and specific market segment niche (Porwal *et al.*, 2024). The study on niche markets for homestay reveals a key strategy: tailor experiences to a specific tourist profile. By understanding what unique travellers seek, Sabah homestay programs can enhance their competitiveness, sustainability, and appeal to those desire for authentic cultural engagement. The homestay industry in Sabah has experienced significant growth, with the number of homestay entrepreneurs increasing from 184 in 2010 to 441 by 2023. During this period, the industry generated a total revenue of RM 57,535,863.94. This growth has positioned Sabah as the second-largest contributor to Malaysia's homestay industry. The state's rich natural resources, particularly its diverse flora and fauna, are expected to continue attracting both international and local tourists, further driving the expansion of the homestay sector. The homestay entrepreneurs identify their accommodations as a catalyst for tourism promotion and job creation, particularly in rural areas (Kementerian Pelancongan Seni dan Budaya Malaysia, 2024). Thus, the homestay industry holds significant potential to boost Sabah's economic growth.

This research seeks to bridge the critical gap in our knowledge of homestay programs in Sabah, Malaysia. Which most previous studies in homestay context are focusing on homestay sustainability (Mohamed and Aminudin, 2016; Balasingam *et al.*, 2017; Cheng and Som, 2018; Rasdi *et al.*, 2019), community-based tourism (Kayat and Zainuddin, 2016; Kaluarachchige *et al.*, 2021; Pasanchay and Schott, 2021), community perception (Bhuiyan *et al.*, 2012; Hussin, Md Yasir and Kunjuraman, 2014) and development of the homestay program (Kayat and Nor, 2006; Sood, Lynch and Anastasiadou, 2017; Zulkefli, Che Aziz and Mohd Radzol, 2021). Surprisingly, there is a lack of research focusing on entrepreneurial success within the homestay program in Sabah. Several indicators, such as revenue growth, sales, profitability, market share, personal satisfaction, customer satisfaction, employee engagement, social impact, and industry recognition, are frequently used to quantify entrepreneurial success (Walker and Brown, 2004; Ahmad, Wilson and Kummerow, 2011; Yong and Hassan, 2019; Yong, Zainal and Chekima, 2021).

Past studies have focused on entrepreneurial success in industries such as restaurants, manufacturing, consulting, retail, lifestyle brands, and real estate (Alstete, 2008; Chittithaworn *et al.*, 2011; Tehseen and Sajilan, 2016; Angel, Jenkins and Stephens, 2018; Feng, Ahmad and Zheng, 2023). Only a few have examined entrepreneurial success specifically within Sabah's homestay program (Yong and Hassan, 2019; Yong, Zainal and Chekima, 2021). Despite the absence of a standardized scale for measuring entrepreneurial success in this context, some studies have adopted non-financial metrics such as personal satisfaction (Ahmad, 2011). This study aims to understand the factors motivating homestay entrepreneurs.

This study discovered two of the most important factors of entrepreneurial success in Malaysia's homestay industry: Which is pull factors and push factors in entrepreneurial motivation. The push and pull theory are considered one of the fundamental theories that explain entrepreneurial motivation (Kirkwood, 2009a). This study could measure what motivates people to become homestay entrepreneurs and join homestay programs. Some homestay entrepreneurs are motivated by a desire to generate additional income (Intan Osman *et al.*, 2014; Danthanarayana, Amarawansha and Gamage, 2021). However, the ongoing debate regarding the relative influence of push and pull factors on entrepreneurial motivation remains unresolved.

Although the homestay program in Sabah is growing, it still faces several challenges and has notable weaknesses (Yong and Hassan, 2019). Another researchers highlighted that many homestay entrepreneurs struggle with consistent monthly revenue due to low visitor numbers, leading to financial difficulties (Yassin and Ramlan, 2015; Yassin and Naidu, 2017). A study by Bureau of Innovation and Consultancy UTM (2009) stated that some entrepreneurs have exited the programme due to insufficient demand and income. Kunjuraman and Hussin, (2017a) found that expected financial assistance for homestay development was not provided. Additionally, Yong *et al.*, (2024) identified poor marketing and promotion as significant challenges, impacting guest attraction and revenue. These issues collectively will demotivate homestay entrepreneurs from continuing their businesses.

The findings of this study contribute to the existing body of knowledge on entrepreneurial motivation and success, underscoring the need for further research to gain a more comprehensive understanding of the factors driving growth in the homestay

industry. Entrepreneurial motivation significantly contributes to the success of homestay programs in several keyways (Intan Osman *et al.*, 2014; Yassin, 2015; Angel, Jenkins and Stephens, 2018). Most homestay entrepreneurs joined the homestay programs to generate additional income, particularly in rural areas, which helps uplift local economies. Secondly, homestay entrepreneurs are driven by a desire to showcase and preserve their local culture, offering tourists authentic experiences, historical site while sustaining local traditions. Third, the research findings suggest that homestays may offer unique experiences and activities catering to Muslim travellers cultural and religious needs in the future. Finally, homestay entrepreneurs motivated by social and environmental concerns promote sustainable tourism and empower local communities by creating employment opportunities and encouraging participation. This study is structured to focus on identifying the motivations that encourage homestay entrepreneurs to participate in homestay programs. These insights offer practical applications for key stakeholders, including the Sabah Homestay Association (SHA), the Ministry of Tourism, Arts, and Culture (MOTAC), the Sabah Tourism Board (STB), and the Institute for Rural Advancement (INFRA). Based on the research findings, a comprehensive training module can be developed specifically for homestay entrepreneurs. This module will provide structured and practical guidance, equipping entrepreneurs with the skills needed to enhance their operations. Furthermore, it will serve as a valuable resource for future research, allowing the framework and best practices to be adapted and applied to other homestay programs both within Malaysia and internationally. This approach will not only strengthen local homestay programs but also contribute to the global body of knowledge on sustainable tourism and community-based entrepreneurship.

Table 1: Sabah Homestay Performance

Year	Homestay Operators	Homestay Coordinators	Revenue	Percentages
2010	184	16	2,461,145.30	-
2011	228	16	3,059,462.70	+24%
2012	228	16	2,651,841.20	-13%
2013	242	17	2,433,501.70	-8%
2014	242	17	2,052,034.30	-16%
2015	293	21	2,329,718.60	+14
2016	293	22	2,678,772.60	+15
2017	345	25	3,795,065.36	+42%
2018	394	29	6,235,688.20	+64%
2019	406	30	7,950,954.46	+28%
2020	406	30	1,940,289.68	-76%
2021	436	32	2,140,965.25	+10%
2022	391	31	8,113,591.87	278%
2023	441	34	9,692,832.72	19%
Total			57,535,863.94	

Source: Authors

1.1 The objective of this study

To investigate the relationship between entrepreneurial motivation of pull factor and entrepreneurial success of homestay entrepreneur.

To investigate the relationship between entrepreneurial motivation of push factor and entrepreneurial success of homestay entrepreneurs.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 Theoretical Framework

This paper utilizes resources-based view (RBV) to explain the relationship between entrepreneurial motivation and entrepreneurial success. This section explains the relationship between entrepreneurial motivation driven by pull and push factors towards entrepreneurial success. The article contributes to the field of entrepreneurial motivation and entrepreneurial success. The study extends insights from the resource-based view (RBV) theory on entrepreneurial success. This is because previous study had been using resource-based view in measuring business performance and entrepreneurial success (Jalali, Jaafar and Ramayah, 2014; Tehseen and Ramayah, 2015; Park *et al.*, 2016; Wang and Kim, 2017; Yong, Chekima, *et al.*, 2024). Furthermore, the findings suggest that homestay entrepreneurs motivated by both pull and push factors play an important role in motivating and supporting their rural communities to become successful homestay businesses. The resource-based view theory analyzes how organizations' performance varies according to their unique set of resources (Peteraf and Barney, 2003). The theory operates on two primary assumptions: firstly, that organizations within the same industry can possess varying resources, and secondly, that these resources aren't easily transferable between organizations, thus leading to enduring differences in resources among them (Barney, 1991). However, Mahoney & Pandian (1992) argue that the resource based approach is based on promising framework that has stimulated debated and discussion between researchers from three research perspectives. The resource-based view (RBV) emphasizes the firm's resources as the fundamental determinants of competitive advantage and performance (Bridoux, 2004). Therefore, the entrepreneurial motivation is the strength of the of homestay entrepreneur to become success in homestay program. These results suggest that push and pull factors can be powerful drivers of entrepreneurial success.

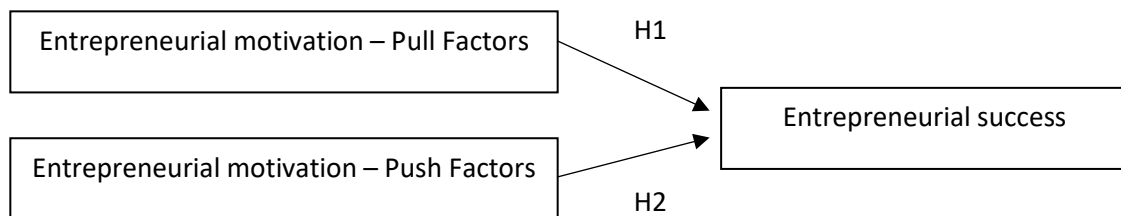


Figure 1: Proposed conceptual framework

2.2 Entrepreneurial Success

The relationship between push and pull factors significantly influences entrepreneurial success (Kirkwood, 2009b; Kariv, 2011; Duan *et al.*, 2020). Entrepreneurial success and entrepreneurial motivation are closely linked, as motivation is a key driver of success for homestay entrepreneurs. There were no clear definitions for entrepreneurial success because the literature contains numerous definitions. Homestay business is literally a small business operated by homestay entrepreneurs. Where, small business success is linked to small business performance (Reijonen and Komppula, 2007). Lack of brand in marketing affect their business performance (Danthanarayana, Amarawansha and Gamage, 2021). Previous studies used success indicator to measure entrepreneurial success in business success in difference context. For example, in accounting firm, advertising firm, banks and insurance, construction company, computer service and sales, education or legal, engineering, hospital or medical, media or communications, management services, real estate, transportation, and wholesale (Lumpkin & Dess, 2001; Noor Hazlina Ahmad, Ramayah, Carlene Wilson, 2010a). In fact, homestay program study is still limited and more study need to be undertaken to explore other factors that may determine this success (Kayat *et al.*, 2016). Several studies have used financial success and non financial success to measure business performances which lead to entrepreneurial success (Ahmad et al., 2011; Dennis & Valacich, 1999; Tehseen & Ramayah, 2015; Walker & Brown, 2004). As a summary, these study used non-financial related performance that measuring satisfaction towards profitability, brand image, create jobs, satisfy customer, sales growth and profit (Ahmad, Wilson and Kummerow, 2011).

2.3 Entrepreneurial motivation

Entrepreneurial motivation is crucial for business success across industries. Entrepreneurial motivation can be divide into two, pull factors and push factors. Pull factors in entrepreneurship refer to motivations that attract individuals to start a business based on the appeal of the business idea and its personal implications. This contrasts with push factors, which are driven by dissatisfaction with current circumstances. Early studies have found that the push-pull theory drives high entrepreneurial performance (Kirkwood, 2009b). By using multiple paradigm research methodologies to gain new insights in motivations, motivation for entrepreneurship can consider as complex and intertwined (Kirkwood and Campbell-Hunt, 2007). Therefore, entrepreneurial motivation has been exposed to an important subject: tourism directed entrepreneurialism (Ross, 2004). However, researchers investigated that motivation factors linked to self-employment, which driven by push and pull factors (Clark and Drinkwater, 2000; Moore and Mueller, 2002; Omar, 2011). As a matter of fact, most of the study in entrepreneurial motivation focuses on women entrepreneurship (Kirkwood, 2009a; Isaga, 2019; Avcı and Gümüş, 2022; Dhar, Farzana and Abedin, 2022; Yap, Keling and Ho, 2022; Feng, Ahmad and Zheng, 2023). There is limited research on entrepreneurial motivation in the homestay industry (Danthanarayana, Amarawansha and Gamage, 2021; Yong *et al.*, 2024). Previous findings indicated that entrepreneurial motivation influences entrepreneurial success (Kirkwood and Walton,

2010; Intan Osman *et al.*, 2014; Salleh *et al.*, 2014). Based on previous studies, we synthesised the findings and defined entrepreneurial motivation as the driving force behind individuals' decisions to start and sustain a business. This motivation is influenced by both pull factors, such as the appeal and opportunities of the business idea, and push factors, including dissatisfaction with current circumstances.

2.4 Entrepreneurial Motivation – Pull Factors

Previous studies show that push factors positively influence the entrepreneurial success. Hence, Hessels, Van Gelderen and Thurik, (2008) stated that motivations of the individual entrepreneur who starts a homestay can significantly influence the goals and aspirations they set for the business. Meanwhile, pull factors make women to achieve personal success, be their own boss, secure financial independence, and contribute to their family's well-being (Yap, Keling and Ho, 2022). According to Set *et al.*, 2015, some ecotourism operators were motivated by the pull factors to start a business. Pull motivations for homestay entrepreneurship can include the need for achievement, the desire for autonomy, and the opportunity to contribute to social development (van der Zwan *et al.*, 2016). This can manifest as a drive to build a successful business, the enjoyment of self-employment, and the passion for fostering cultural exchange and supporting the local community through homestay program. Additionally, a study in Nepal revealed the supporting evidence for pull factors that draw entrepreneurs to homestay businesses (Danthanarayana, Amarawansa and Gamage, 2021). In addition, Eijdenberg and Masurel (2013) shows that pull factors are even more important than push factors. Danthanarayana, Amarawansa and Gamage (2021) identified several pull factors that attract homestay entrepreneurs to the homestay business. These include the enthusiasm of community members to get involved, the lifestyle flexibility it offers, the strong market demand within the tourism industry, encouragement from family to start a homestay venture, and dissatisfaction with previous jobs. This leads to the hypothesis below:

H1: Pull Factor significantly influences entrepreneurial success.

2.5 Entrepreneurial Motivation - Push Factors

Push factors are significant influences on entrepreneurial success, often motivating individuals to leave their employment and start their own businesses. Van der Zwan *et al.* (2016) identify key push factors as the risk of unemployment, family pressure, and general dissatisfaction with one's current situation. These factors drive entrepreneurs to pursue self-employment. Moore and Mueller (2002) suggesting that unemployment rates do not strongly influence the decision to become self-employed. Górány *et al.*, (2021) emphasize that push factors are powerful motivators, especially in contexts where individuals are dissatisfied with their jobs or face limited career prospects. In South Africa, for example, push factors are a stronger motivator for women choosing entrepreneurship than pull factors (Fatoki, 2014). Similarly, Dhar, Farzana and Abedin (2022) find job dissatisfaction and lack of career prospects to be predominant motivators for entrepreneurship. However, some research suggests that push factors play only a minor role for entrepreneurs. Eijdenberg and

Masurel (2013) argue that these factors are less significant, while Islam (2012) highlights that older men may be driven by dissatisfaction with their prior careers. As summary, push factors significantly influence entrepreneurial success by motivating individuals to start their own businesses. While some studies argue that these factors are less impactful, they remain strong motivators, especially when career prospects are limited. Where its push homestay entrepreneurs to join the homestay program. This leads to the hypothesis below:

H2: Push factor significantly influences entrepreneurial success.

3. METHODOLOGY

This study employed a quantitative research approach to investigate the influence of entrepreneurial motivation driven by push and pull factors towards entrepreneurial success of homestay businesses in Sabah, Malaysia. The study use partial squares structural equation modelling (PLS-SEM) techniques (Hair, Ringle and Sarstedt, 2013) for data analysis, specifically to predict the relationships between the entrepreneurial motivation and entrepreneurial success. We used a quantitative approach because most past studies used qualitative methods. As for data collection, a structured questionnaire served as the primary data collection instrument. This self-administered survey consisted of 16 items designed to measure the study's constructs. The questions were adapted and modified from existing instruments to suit the specific context of this research. For measurement instrument. A 5 Likert scale was used to capture respondents' agreement levels with each statement. A face validity is used to develop and test the survey questionnaires before it distributes to homestay entrepreneurs. Therefore, an expert validation was conducted to assess the validity of the survey questionnaire. The contents are requesting by feedback consisting of comments, clarity, grammar checking, quality of each item and approval to distribute the survey questionnaire. The questionnaires were adapted from previous studies for this study (Humbert and Drew, 2010; Intan Osman *et al.*, 2014; Set *et al.*, 2015). The final draft of the survey questionnaire is evaluated by local University academicians and homestay entrepreneurs. Two academician lecturers evaluate the questionnaire that was adopted and adapted from previous study, who are expert in the field of entrepreneurship and marketing. Secondly, the survey questionnaires were evaluated by expert such as the president of Sabah Homestay Association and a government officer who in charge with homestay operation. Their feedback and contributions to developing the survey questionnaire helped refine the survey for data collection among homestay entrepreneurs.

Purposive sampling was employed in this study since it focuses on homestay entrepreneur who understand the nature of homestay business. The questionnaire was administered to eight homestay coordinators in the west coast division of Sabah via WhatsApp. The questionnaire was then shared with the homestay coordinators' respective cluster WhatsApp groups, where the homestay entrepreneurs can fill out the online Google Forms. Secondly, the questionnaire was also distributed directly to respondents at a training workshop organized by the Institute of Rural Advancement (INFRA). The sample size was determined using G*Power, a software tool developed by (Faul *et al.*, 2009). The model consists of two predictors, the effect size is established at 0.15, and the desired power is set at 0.95. However in business and social science studies, it is commonly recommended that

a minimum power of 0.8 be utilized as the minimum acceptable power (Gefen, Rigdon and Straub, 2011; Hair, Ringle and Sarstedt, 2011, 2013). The minimum sample size required was determined to be 68 by computations. A total of 200 survey questionnaires were distributed, only 110 valid questionnaires were valid. The hypotheses testing and analysis were conducted using the partial least squares approach to structural equation modelling, and data were collected from the homestay entrepreneurs in Sabah, Malaysia.

4. RESULT

4.1 Demographics Factors

Based on Table 2, most of the respondents are full-time homestay entrepreneurs, accounting for 51.82%, while 48.18% are part-time homestay entrepreneurs. This indicates a strong commitment to the homestay business within the homestay program in Sabah. Individuals aged over 50 years represent the largest age group, comprising 53.64% of the sample. This indicated that most of the homestay entrepreneurs are old individuals, compared to younger generation. As for females make up 56% of the respondents. This highlighting the significant role of women in the homestay industry. Most homestay entrepreneurs have been in business for 4 to 5 years, with over 41% falling into this category. This indicates a relatively stable period of operation for many respondents. For monthly income, most respondents have income between RM2,000 to RM10,000, encompassing 67.27% of the sample. And only 0.91% have RM 20,000 to RM 30,000 income per month.

Table 2: Demographic of the respondents

No	Description	Item	Descriptive (n=110)	Percent
1	Job	Full time	57	51.82
		Part time	53	48.18
2	Age	21-30 years	6	5.45
		31-40 years	8	7.27
		41-50 years	37	33.64
		More than 50 years	59	53.64
3	Gender	Male	54	49.09
		Female	56	50.91
4	Years of Operation	Less than 1 year	1	0.91
		Within 1 year	9	8.18
		2-3 year	14	12.73
		4-5 year	46	41.82
		6-7 year	8	7.27
		8-9 year	24	21.82
		More than 10 years	8	7.27

5	Income Per Month	less than RM2000	28	25.45
		RM2,001 to RM10,000	74	67.27
		RM20,001 to RM30,000	1	0.91
		More than RM30,000	7	6.36

Source: Data derived from survey

4.2. Assessment of the Measurement Model

Based on Table 5, the reliability and validity of the constructs were examined. The construct reliability was assessed using average variance extracted (AVE) and construct reliability (CR). The entrepreneurial success factors loadings ranged from 0.686 to 0.913. As for pull factors loadings ranged from 0.646 to 0.869. For push factors loadings ranged from 0.767 to 0.925. It exceeds the threshold of 0.50 (Hair, Ringle and Sarstedt, 2011). Thus, the results support the reliability of the constructs. To assess the convergent validity, the AVE standardized factor loadings, and CR were examined. The rule of thumb to indicate convergent validity is AVE value for each construct should be greater than 0.5, the standardized factor loadings higher than 0.50 or ideally 0.70 and CR value should exceed 0.70 (Hair, Ringle and Sarstedt, 2013). The acceptable values of Cronbach's alpha range from 0.70 to 0.90 (Hair, Ringle and Sarstedt, 2011; Mohamad *et al.*, 2015). In this study, Cronbach's Alpha ranges from 0.864 to 0.911, and composite reliability (CR) ranges from 0.904 to 0.956. Therefore, all values indicate acceptable reliability.

Table 3: Convergent validity

Construct	Item Code	Outer loadings	AVE	CR	Cronbach's Alpha
Entrepreneurial success	ES 1	0.686	0.646	0.904	0.864
	ES 2	0.857			
	ES 3	0.913			
	ES 4	0.771			
	ES 5	0.774			
Pull Factors	PULL 1	0.768	0.592	0.956	0.880
	PULL 2	0.744			
	PULL 3	0.715			
	PULL 4	0.850			
	PULL 5	0.646			
	PULL 6	0.869			
Push Factors	PUSH 1	0.915	0.739	0.934	0.911
	PUSH 2	0.925			
	PUSH 3	0.767			
	PUSH 4	0.783			
	PUSH 5	0.895			

4.3 Discriminant Validity

The Heterotrait-Monotrait Ratio (HTMT) - Matrix, as depicted in Table 6, provides valuable statistical insights into the relationships between different constructs within the research model. This matrix aids in evaluating the discriminant validity among these constructs. The data reveals that the HTMT ratios between entrepreneurial success and both pull factors (0.242), and push factors (0.467) are below the conventional threshold of 0.85, indicating distinctiveness between these constructs. Similarly, the HTMT ratio of 0.257 between pull factors and push factors suggests their discriminant validity. These findings confirm that the constructs of entrepreneurial success, pull factors, and push factors are sufficiently distinct from each other within the context of the study, validating the theoretical framework and enhancing the credibility of the research outcomes.

Table 4: Heterotrait-Monotrait Ratio (HTMT) - Matrix

	Entrepreneurial success	Pull factors	Push factor
Entrepreneurial success			
Pull factors	0.242		
Push factors	0.467	0.257	

4.4. Assessment of the Structural Model

The findings presented in Table 7 revealed that entrepreneurial motivation driven by push and pull factors have significant influences on entrepreneurial success. Pull factor have a significant relationship on entrepreneurial success ($\beta = -0.208$, $t = 1.701$, $p < 0.001$) and push factor ($\beta = 0.381$, $t = 4.935$, $p < 0.001$). Hence, H1 and H2 were supported. These variables account for 20.7% of the variance in the entrepreneurial success, substantiating the model's predictive power and meaning for the purposes of interpretation (Fornell and Larcker, 1981). In conclusion, the study demonstrates that both pull and push factors significantly impact entrepreneurial success, affirming the importance of motivation in entrepreneurial success in homestay program.

Table 5. Result of the Structural Model (Hypotheses Testing)

Hypothesis	Relationship	Sample mean (M)	Std dev	t- Values	Decision	F ²	R ²
H1	Pull factor → Entrepreneurial success	-0.208	0.105	1.701*	Supported	0.037	0.207
H2	Push factor → Entrepreneurial success	0.381	0.077	4.935**	Supported	0.167	

* $t > 1.645$, ** $t > 2.33$

5. DISCUSSION

This study examined the factors motivating homestay entrepreneurs in Sabah, Malaysia, and their impact on business success. It found that both "push" factors and "pull" factors significantly contribute to entrepreneurial success in this sector. This suggests that a combination of intrinsic desires and external opportunities drives the success of homestay entrepreneurs in Sabah. Therefore, this study is supported by previous studies such as (Shane, 2003; Kirkwood, 2009a; Osman *et al.*, 2010; Danthanarayana, Amarawansa and Gamage, 2021). There is positive significant between pull factors and entrepreneurial success, supported by (Eijdenberg and Masurel, 2013; van der Zwan *et al.*, 2016; Yap, Keling and Ho, 2022). As for push factors supported by (Buttner and Moore, 1997; Islam, 2012; Gódány *et al.*, 2021; Dhar, Farzana and Abedin, 2022). Based on our findings, we recommend implementing policy measures that facilitate entrepreneurship courses within the homestay program in Sabah. This could include offering tax incentives, restructuring regulatory processes, and providing financial support through grants or low-interest loans. Secondly, we suggest promoting the formation of collaborative networks and partnerships among homestay entrepreneurs, tourism stakeholders, University and local communities. This involve establishing regional associations, organizing networking events, or creating online platforms for resource sharing and collaboration. Thirdly, offering unique experiences and activities catering to Muslim travellers' cultural and religious needs. This paper examines the various motivations behind starting a homestay business, including personal satisfaction, inspiration from successful operators, continuing family business, recognizing industry potential, and the desire to explore new ventures. These factors collectively influence the decision-making process, guiding individuals towards a fulfilling and successful career in the homestay industry. Moreover, understanding these motivations is crucial for policymakers and stakeholders in designing effective support mechanisms and interventions to nurture and sustain the growth of homestay businesses.

5.1 Theoretical Contribution

This study makes a significant theoretical contribution by addressing a research gap related to homestay programs in Sabah, Malaysia. It examines the relationship between entrepreneurial motivation and success within this specific context, thereby enhancing our understanding of the factors that drive entrepreneurial behavior in homestay programs. Grounded in the resource-based view (RBV), the research adds to the growing body of knowledge that links entrepreneurial motivation with success in this sector. By identifying the push and pull factors that motivate homestay entrepreneurs, the study provides valuable insights into the drivers of entrepreneurial behavior, enriching the broader literature on entrepreneurial motivation and success. Additionally, it extends theoretical discussions by emphasizing the importance of aligning entrepreneurial motivations with broader societal goals, offering a nuanced perspective on how individual motivations can contribute to societal development.

5.2 Data Output Implication

This study highlights the critical role of demographic factors in shaping the effectiveness of homestay training programs. The integration of research data into a "Big Data System" supports managerial decision-making by providing insights into the demographic profiles of homestay entrepreneurs in Sabah. This framework enables targeted training sessions organized by government agencies and universities, customized to factors such as age, gender, years of operation, and geographic location. Such tailored training initiatives are projected to enhance organization and effectiveness in meeting the specific needs of homestay entrepreneurs across different districts in Sabah. From this data, we can develop module for homestay training book.

5.3 Practical Implications

These empirical findings have significant implications for key stakeholders, including the Sabah Homestay Association (SHA), the Ministry of Tourism, Arts, and Culture (MOTAC), the Sabah Tourism Board, and the Institute of Rural Advancement (INFRA). Since both pull and push factors have positive significant towards the entrepreneurial success. It is recommended that the government provide financial assistance, grants, or funding to support homestay entrepreneurs. Such support could be used to improve their services, infrastructure, roadside appeal, and marketing strategies and programs. Additionally, offering diverse financing options will helps to motivate homestay entrepreneurs and sustain their homestay businesses. Secondly, training programs should include skills such as website development, digital marketing, and leveraging Generative Artificial Intelligence (AI) to enhance homestay visibility. These digital competencies will help homestay entrepreneurs promote their homestays more efficiently and effectively, by increasing their income. Therefore, universities and educational institutions can play an important role by promoting and designing training programs that enhance the skills and knowledge of homestay entrepreneurs through knowledge transfer initiatives, this is to ensure long-term business sustainability. Similar findings also highlight government should design entrepreneurship support and entrepreneurship training (Patiu *et al.*, 2024). By implementing these measures, and capitalizing on Sabah's growing ecotourism sector, we can encourage younger generations to participate in the homestay program. Finally, collaboration between universities and the government is essential to realizing this vision. This partnership will not only motivate current homestay operators to sustain their businesses but also help boost their revenues.

5.4 Limitation and Future research

The study does not capture the entirety of Malaysia's homestay program, as it focuses exclusively on Sabah. Due to the limited research available on this topic, the study also narrows its focus within Sabah to three specific areas: Kota Kinabalu, Inanam, and Kota Belud. Consequently, the findings may not reflect the complete picture of homestay entrepreneurship across the entire state. This quantitative research seeks to fill a significant gap in the academic literature on this region by providing valuable insights. Furthermore, although the theoretical framework was well-developed, it would be beneficial to replicate the study or conduct additional experiments with different groups of participants and in

various environments to confirm the current research outcomes. Additionally, a knowledge transfer program has been established to train homestay entrepreneurs in digital marketing. On the same day, we distribute the survey questionnaire to the participants. For future research, this study could employ a mixed-method approach to obtain more diverse and comprehensive insights. Furthermore, in the future, this study can integrate Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and Environmental, Social, and Governance (ESG) initiatives into the homestay program. ESG aims to make sustainable decisions and policies that are both responsible and forward-thinking, considering the environmental, social, and governance impacts (Sanjaya and Sianturi, 2024).

6. CONCLUSION

In conclusion, this study provides valuable insights into the factors motivating rural residents to become homestay entrepreneurs in Sabah, Malaysia. By combining theoretical perspectives with practical recommendations, it contributes to both academic practice and the development of the homestay industry in the region. The research identifies the "pull" and "push" factors influencing these entrepreneurial decisions, aiming to enhance the program for all stakeholders. A key demographic insight from the study is that nearly 53.64% of the population engaged in homestay business consists of older individuals which is above 50 years. Secondly, 48.18 % is part time homestay entrepreneurs. This presents unique challenges and opportunities, as older residents may require specific training and resources to maintain and grow their homestay businesses. By investing in digital marketing, competency skills training, and providing financial support, the government can empower these older entrepreneurs to thrive in an increasingly competitive and digital tourism landscape. Meanwhile, 67.27% of homestay entrepreneurs earn between RM2,000 and RM10,000. Therefore, it is essential for the universities or government agencies to provide training on strategies to increase income by leveraging the unique advantages of their homestay locations. Given Sabah's rich biodiversity, with its abundant flora and fauna, tailored training programs can help entrepreneurs better market and utilize these natural resources to attract more visitors and generate higher revenue. It also encourages existing homestay entrepreneurs to expand their businesses and sustain their operations through the collaboration with the government, local university, and community support. The findings offer valuable insights for the Sabah Homestay Association, Ministry of Tourism, Arts and Culture (MOTAC), Sabah Tourism Board, and Institute for Rural Advancement (INFRA) for future development and planning. The government can play an important role by providing financial support, organizing entrepreneurship programs, promoting homestay businesses to international tourists, offering digital marketing and competency skills training, and providing alternative financing options in collaboration with local universities and training agencies. With the implementation of these recommendations and solutions, homestay entrepreneurs may be more motivated to continue their homestay operations and sustained. This approach, combined with Sabah's expanding ecotourism sector, has the potential to inspire the younger generation to become homestay entrepreneurs and participate in the homestay program. These recommendations can also serve as a model for other nations looking to enhance their homestay initiatives, including countries like

Thailand, Indonesia, and many others, by adopting similar strategies for sustainable tourism and economic growth in homestay program.

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