

**Rural Tourist Hosts' and their Personality Traits. An Empirical Study
of the Five-Factor Model of Personality Traits on Homestay
Entrepreneurship Intention.**

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ABSTRACT

Homestay entrepreneurship is a significant and vital type of entrepreneurial venture that takes place in rural areas with tourism potential. Homestay has yielded economic, social, and cultural advantages for the owners, as well as fostering comprehensive development in the surrounding communities. This study analysed the effect of the Big Five personality traits, namely 1) agreeableness, 2) conscientiousness, 3) extroversion, 4) neuroticism, and 5) openness to experience, on the homestay entrepreneurship intention of the homestay owners. Exploratory factor analysis and confirmatory factor analysis have been used, showing the structural equation model of the analysis. The results of the structural equation modeling confirmed a positive impact (except neuroticism) of the Big Five personality traits on homestay intention. Findings of this study suggest that homestay entrepreneurs cannot be considered in line with other entrepreneurs, as the results revealed that the impact of agreeableness and openness to experience on homestay entrepreneurship intention was positive and significant. Neuroticism had a significant negative effect while conscientiousness and extroversion had a positive but statistically insignificant effect on homestay intention. Homestay entrepreneurs do not adhere to the normal personality traits of an entrepreneur as shown in prior studies concerning entrepreneurs in other the hospitality industry (hotels, resorts, lodges). This study helps to bring in empirical evidence that the nature of homestay entrepreneurship is anti-commercial hospitality and homestay owners are mostly situational or social entrepreneurs.

Keywords: Big Five personality traits; homestay intention; confirmatory factor analysis; social entrepreneurs: hospitality industry.

1. INTRODUCTION

The tourism industry is in a continuous state of evolution and growth. In the past, travel was primarily driven by trade, but in the current scenario, tourists select destination with the specific purpose of seeking new and personal experiences. This shift has given rise to concepts such as eco-tourism and village tourism, which have made homestays an important accommodation option for hosting these guests with personalised attention (Sood et al., 2017). The origins of homestays can be traced to 1200-550 B.C., when travellers, preachers, and philosophers were offered food, lodging, and shelter throughout their lifelong journeys (Yasami et al., 2017). The origins of the first homestay in India remain ambiguous. However, research indicates that Kerala, Karnataka, Himachal Pradesh, and Maharashtra are the leading states in terms of having number of operational homestays (Kulshreshtha & Kulshreshtha, 2019). Homestay refers to providing accommodation to tourists in his/her home with basic amenities like furnished rooms, washrooms, and food. It offers the tourist an opportunity to interact with the family and the local community while also providing them an opportunity to explore local cuisines, cultures, and the uniqueness of the area (Hjulmand et al., 2003) This gives the tourist the feeling of a home away from home (Basak et al., 2021).

An individual's personality traits are influenced by the environment in which they are raised. Several factors, including education, competition, family background, government policies, and population density, have a substantial influence on an individual's career trajectory and financial decision-making capacity (Usman et al., 2024). Rural communities encounter distinct challenges in contrast to urban areas. The scarcity of skilled and qualified labour, absence of investment incentives, inadequate infrastructure, and limited resources and opportunities frequently pose challenges to entrepreneurial decision-making in the establishment of new ventures and economic growth (Liang & Dunn, 2014). Prior literature has overlooked the investigation of homestay entrepreneurs as a central focus of research.

Malaysian homestay program, initiated in the year 1980, one of the most successful programs to successfully implement homestay program, was initiated with the objective of mitigating the income disparity between urban and rural population. The study suggests that motivation factors-push and pull factors, and entrepreneurial competencies, knowledge, and skills are extremely important for entrepreneurial success in the homestay program (Yong et al., 2024).

2. LITERATURE REVIEW AND HYOTHESIS FORMULATION

Background of Five Factor Model

The foundational cornerstone of literature on personality traits is exemplified in the research initiated by Allport in 1936. He is recognized as a psychologist who specializes in the study of "traits". His initial efforts comprised thoroughly scrutinising the dictionary to discover and assemble a comprehensive set of terms that he deemed suitable to describe an individual. He compiled a catalogue of 4500 characteristics, with similar meaning. Later, Cattell (1945), simplified Allport's extensive list of over 4500 personality traits to 171 by removing uncommon traits and merging common characteristics and asserted that gathering data from a wide range of variables is crucial for achieving a comprehensive understanding of personality. The data initially collected was in the form of life data, which involves gathering information about an individual's natural and habitual behaviours in their daily life. Norman (1967) identified five basic factors and Goldberg (1981) found and labelled the big five factors: surgency, agreeableness, conscientiousness, emotional stability, and intellect. The big five factors were relabelled so that the first letters of the five factors are OCEAN (McCrae and & Costa, 1985).

The Big Five Personality Traits and Behavioural Intention in Small Business Owners

The Big Five personality traits, also known as the Five-Factor Model, provide a widely accepted framework for understanding personality. These traits are Openness to Experience, Conscientiousness, Extraversion, Agreeableness, and Neuroticism (Albrecht & Marty, 2017; Barrera-Verdugo et al., 2023). Research consistently explores how this broad personality dimensions influence various outcomes, including entrepreneurial intentions and performance among small business owners.

Openness to Experience

Openness to experience refers to an individual's inclination towards imagination, curiosity, creativity, and unconventional ideas (Barrera-Verdugo et al., 2023; Leonelli et al., 2018). Entrepreneurs, particularly those starting new ventures, often need to explore new ideas, solve problems creatively, and adopt innovative approaches to products, methods, and strategies (Leonelli et al., 2018; Liang et al., 2015). High openness is positively associated with entrepreneurial intentions (Awwad & Al-Aseer, 2021; Weligodapola et al., 2023) and can influence a business owner's ability to adapt to market changes and acquire new knowledge (Leonelli et al., 2018). It also correlates with creativity and innovation in cognitive style (Runst

& Thomä, 2022) and is important for navigating the dynamic nature of small business environments (Voléry & Mattes, 2022).

Conscientiousness

Conscientiousness is characterized by being organized, reliable, goal-oriented, hardworking, and responsible (Barrera-Verdugo et al., 2023; Bhatti et al., 2017; Hagenauer & Zipko, 2024). This trait is frequently and strongly linked to positive entrepreneurial outcomes, including venture intention, venture creation, and overall business performance (Conejo et al., 2023). Highly conscientious individuals are driven to achieve, possess a strong sense of responsibility (Albrecht & Marty, 2017), and are often seen as effective, accurate, and organized managers (Sobaih et al., 2022). They are more likely to comply with procedures and policies and commit to fulfilling responsibilities (Bhatti et al., 2017). Conscientiousness is considered crucial for leading new ventures to long-term survival (Omar, 2017).

Extraversion

Extraversion encompasses traits like sociability, assertiveness, enthusiasm, energy, and a tendency toward positive emotions (Barrera-Verdugo et al., 2023; Bhatti et al., 2017). Extraverted individuals are often perceived as gregarious and active, viewing challenges as solvable (Bhatti et al., 2017). In an entrepreneurial context, extraversion promotes organizational skills and networking capabilities, leading to positive outcomes like effective stress management and successful network building (Hagenauer & Zipko, 2024). It is positively associated with engagement and commitment due to a predisposition for activation, alertness, and enthusiasm (Albrecht & Marty, 2017). Entrepreneurs often adopt roles similar to salespersons, making extraversion beneficial for persuasion and client acquisition (Liang et al., 2015).

Agreeableness

Agreeableness involves being cooperative, sympathetic, kind-hearted, and warm (Barrera-Verdugo et al., 2023; Bhatti et al., 2017). While agreeable individuals are good at maintaining positive relationships, this trait can sometimes be less aligned with the risk-taking and difficult decision-making often required in entrepreneurship (Sarwar et al., 2023). Some studies suggest that entrepreneurs might exhibit lower levels of agreeableness compared to the general population as entrepreneurial behaviour may involve going against others' wishes or prioritizing business goals over maintaining harmony (Sarwar et al., 2023). However, agreeableness can be

beneficial in service-oriented businesses, fostering respect, trust, and cooperation (Omar, 2017).

Neuroticism

Neuroticism is associated with negative emotions such as anxiety, fear, insecurity, and a susceptibility to stress (Barrera-Verdugo et al., 2023; Bhatti et al., 2017). High neuroticism is generally considered a hindrance to entrepreneurial success, increasing stress and anxiety, and negatively impacting decision-making and overall business performance (Hagenauer & Zipko, 2024). It has been found to be negatively related to entrepreneurial intentions (Awwad & Al-Aseer, 2021; Sarwar et al., 2023). Entrepreneurs need high stress tolerance to cope with the significant risks, insecurity, and demanding work that come with starting a business. However, some research suggests that while neuroticism can lead to challenges, it can also manifest as caution, which might reduce business failure risks (Tsoai & Chipunza, 2022). When channelled effectively, neurotic traits like worry can even drive hard work (Tsoai & Chipunza, 2022).

Personality plays a significant role in shaping behavioural intentions among small business owners. Understanding these relationships can help in predicting entrepreneurial engagement and performance. A study found that personality traits have positive and negative effects on the performance of SMEs in the hospitality sector. This study considered all the subsets of the hospitality sector including restaurants, coffee shops, bed and breakfast (homestay), guest houses, lodges, and hotels (Mhlanga, O. 2019). Prior literature has overlooked the examination of homestay entrepreneurs as a central focus of research. The study on the influence of the Big Five factors on Customer Citizen Behaviour (CBB) revealed that neuroticism had a favourable effect on CBB, contradicting previous research findings. The research was carried out on the clientele who resided in the homestays in Sri Lanka (Lakmali & Kajendra, 2021). The study of FFM on sustainable entrepreneurship intention concluded that neuroticism and openness had less effect on the sustainable entrepreneurship intention because of its nature of being eco-friendly rather than the profit-centric motivation of the business.

Entrepreneurship Intention on Tourism

This literature review aims to synthesise existing research on entrepreneurial intentions within the specialised domain of niche homestay tourism, a rapidly expanding sector within the broader hospitality industry (Bhardwaj & Kalia, 2021). This exploration is crucial given the unique motivational factors and operational

challenges that differentiate homestay entrepreneurship from other small and medium-sized enterprises (Ahmad et al., 2013). Specifically, it investigates how theoretical frameworks of entrepreneurial intention apply to and are modified by the distinctive characteristics of homestay ventures, which often originate from personal motivations and informal settings rather than traditional business models (Ahmad et al., 2013).

The intention to pursue entrepreneurship is dependent on many factors like self-motivation, propensity to take risk, background of the entrepreneurs (Herdjiono et al., 2017). The review will delve into the psychological traits, social capital, and economic factors influencing individuals to pursue homestay ventures, distinguishing them from generic entrepreneurial endeavours (Dias et al., 2022). Furthermore, it will examine the specific antecedents and their interplay in shaping the decision-making process of individuals venturing into this specialised tourism segment (Esfandiar et al., 2017). While a significant body of literature explores entrepreneurial intentions generally, there is a notable research gap concerning its application within the tourism sector, particularly in developing countries (Esfandiar et al., 2017). This gap is particularly pronounced in the nascent stages of tourism entrepreneurship, where early-stage ventures, such as homestays, are under-researched despite their significant catalytic role in local economic development (Dias et al., 2022). This review will therefore provide a comprehensive understanding of the drivers behind entrepreneurial activities in niche homestay tourism, offering insights for policymakers and aspiring entrepreneurs. Moreover, this review addresses the identified void by focusing on the specific context of homestay tourism, acknowledging the nascent stage of entrepreneurship research in hospitality and tourism (Alrawadieh et al., 2021), and aiming to stimulate further inquiry into this underexplored but vital area.

Entrepreneurship, recognised as a catalyst for economic growth and job creation, is fundamental to the prosperity of a destination's tourism and hospitality sector (Maheshwari et al., 2022; Booth et al., 2019). This growth often outpaces other industries, even during economic downturns, with small and medium-sized hospitality and tourism enterprises playing a crucial role in service provision, job creation, and destination development (Fu et al., 2018). The dynamic nature of the tourism industry, particularly in emerging economies, has spurred a significant increase in entrepreneurial activity, with small and medium-sized accommodations like homestays emerging as key contributors to regional development (Jaafar et al., 2011).

Homestay Entrepreneurs

The tourism industry is in a perpetual state of evolution and growth. In the past, travel was primarily driven by trade, but nowadays, tourists select destinations with the specific purpose of seeking new and personal experiences. This shift has given rise to concepts such as eco-tourism and village tourism, which have made homestays an important accommodation option for hosting these guests with personalised attention (Sood et al., 2017). Homestay is the practice of offering tourists accommodation in one's own home, providing them with furnished rooms, washrooms and meals. The tourist is given the chance to engage with the family and the local community, as well as to discover local cuisines, cultures, and the distinctiveness of the area (Hjulmand et al., 2003). According to Basak et al. (2021), this creates a sense of familiarity and comfort for tourists, as if they were in their own homes even when they are away. In his research, Thanvisitthpon (2021) discovered that incorporating local culture into the business model of homestays is an effective strategy for product differentiation. Research has indicated that entrepreneurs residing in rural regions prioritise the integration of social objectives and economic objectives, rather than solely focusing on profitability. The focus is primarily on environmentally sustainable methods, as the natural resources in rural areas are closely tied to the promotion of a specific location (J.N & E.C, 2018; Janjua et al., 2021)

Hypothesis Formulation

Hypothesis 1 (H1). Agreeableness significantly affects Homestay owners' intention toward Homestay entrepreneurship.

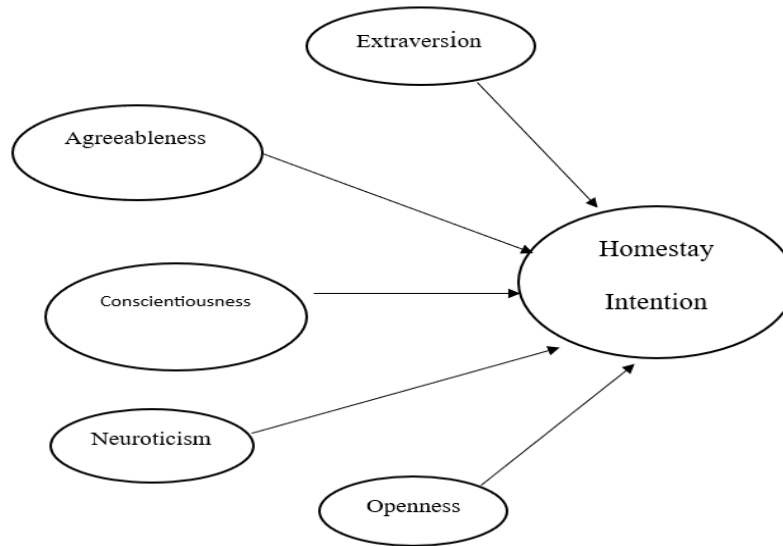
Hypothesis 2 (H2). Conscientiousness significantly affects Homestay owners' intention toward Homestay entrepreneurship.

Hypothesis 3 (H3). Extroversion significantly affects Homestay owners' intention toward Homestay entrepreneurship.

Hypothesis 4 (H4). Neuroticism significantly affects homestay owners' intention toward homestay entrepreneurship.

Hypothesis 5 (H5). Openness to experience significantly affects Homestay owners' intention toward homestay entrepreneurship.

FIGURE 1: Theoretical Model



Source: Authors

3. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

Study Area and Sample Size

The study was conducted in Darjeeling and Kalimpong, two prominent hill destinations located in the northern part of the Indian state of West Bengal. These regions are internationally known for their scenic landscapes, tea plantations, biodiversity, and rich cultural heritage, making them important centres for rural and nature-based tourism (Bhutia, 2014; Basu et al, 2019). This study used a questionnaire survey based on the conceptual framework to gather response from the sampled homestay entrepreneurs. The respondents were asked to provide information about their demographic profile and the details of the homestay businesses they were operating. Later part of the questionnaire had main research questions, adopted from prior studies (Spence et al., 2012; Sobaih & Elshaer, 2022), modified as per the research requirements, which were to be answered on basis of a five-point (1-5) Likert scale with 1 indicating “strongly disagree”, 2 = “disagree”, 3 = “neutral”, 4 = “agree”, and 5 indicating “strongly agree”.

Wolf et al. (2013) suggests that a sample size ranging anywhere between 30 to 460, depending upon the number of factors considered for the study, is suitable. This study was conducted through convenience sampling. A total of 400

questionnaires were distributed with 350 filled questionnaires subsequently being returned, resulting in a response rate of 87.5%, which indicated good reliability.

4. FINDINGS

Demographic Profile and Descriptive Statistics

The demographic profile of respondents indicates that a majority were male (64.3%), while females constituted 35.7% of the sample. Most respondents belonged to the 41–50 years age group (51.1%), followed by those aged 31–40 years (32.0%), indicating that homestay operations are largely managed by middle-aged individuals. In terms of education, the majority had completed secondary or higher secondary education (60.6%), followed by graduates (22.0%), while only a small proportion possessed postgraduate qualifications (2.9%). Regarding income source, most respondents were self-employed (76.0%), with a smaller proportion employed in government jobs (15.4%), agriculture (4.3%), and daily wage work (4.3%). With respect to room capacity, most homestays had four rooms (34.0%), followed by three rooms (24.0%), while a considerable proportion had more than five rooms (16.6%).

TABLE 1: Demographic Profile

	Frequency	(%)
Gender		
Male	225	64.3
Female	125	35.7
Age		
Less than 21	7	2.0
21 - 30	14	4.0
31 – 40	112	32.0
41 – 50	179	51.1
Greater than 50	38	10.9
Educational Qualification		
less than secondary	51	14.6
Secondary/Higher secondary	212	60.6
Graduate	77	22.0
Postgraduation	10	2.9

Income Source		
Agriculture	15	4.3
Government Employee	54	15.4
Self employed	266	76.0
Daily wage	15	4.3
Number of rooms		
1	3	0.9
2	33	9.4
3	84	24.0
4	119	34.0
5	53	15.1
Greater than 5	58	16.6

Source: Authors

TABLE 2: Rotated Component Matrix

Component Variable	1	2	3	4	5	6
ex1			.912			
ex2			.918			
ex3			.920			
ag1					.904	
ag2					.906	
ag3rev					.896	
con1		.923				
con2		.928				
con3		.916				
neu1				.920		
neu2				.917		
neu3revrse				.920		
op1						.907
op2						.919
op3						.912
hi1	.916					
hi2	.906					
hi3	.913					
hi4	.890					

Source: Authors

Reliability and Validity

Cronbach α coefficient (Cronbach, 1951; Tavakol & Dennick, 2011) was implemented to assess the scale reliability. Cronbach, (1951) suggested that α coefficient higher than 0.7 can be deemed to be highly reliable. The Cronbach's α coefficient calculated (TABLE 3) in the study is greater than .90, which shows that the scale used was highly reliable. Composite reliability and variance extracted were calculated to measure the reliability of each factor, as represented in table 2. Composite reliability should be greater than 0.7 and variance extracted >0.5 to indicate reliable factors (Bacon et al., 1995).

TABLE 3: Measurement Reliability Test

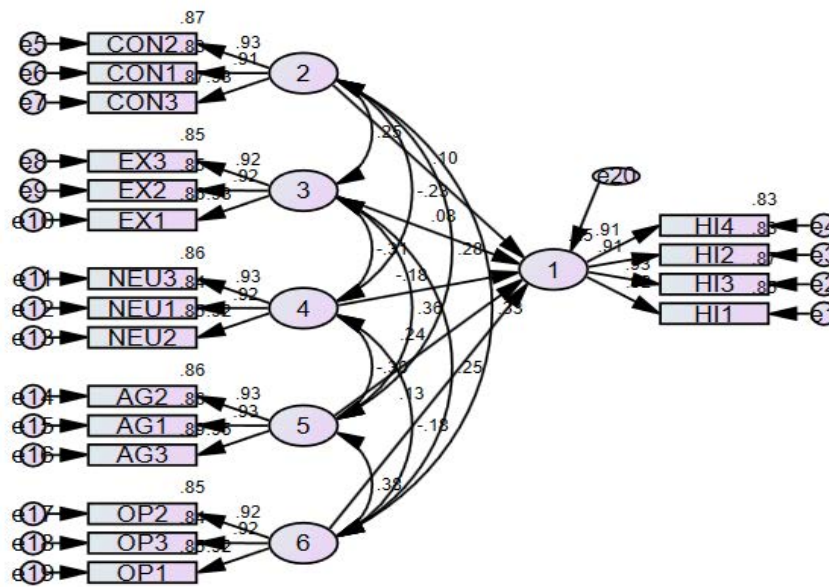
Variables	Items	Factor loadings	Ave	CR	R Squared	Alpha
Homestay Intention	HI1	0.924	0.848	0.957	0.246	0.957
	HI2	0.913				
	HI3	0.932				
	HI4	0.913				
Agreeableness	Ag1	0.926	0.873	0.954		0.954
	Ag2	0.930				
	Ag3	0.946				
Conscientiousness	Con1	0.910	0.854	0.946		0.946
	Con2	0.931				
	Con3	0.931				
Neuroticism	Neu1	0.915	0.849	0.944		0.944
	Neu2	0.924				
	Neu3	0.926				
Openness	Op1	0.921	0.847	0.943		0.943
	Op2	0.920				
	Op3	0.919				
Extraversion	Ex1	0.929	0.853	0.946		0.946
	Ex2	0.922				
	Ex3	0.921				

Source: Authors

Confirmatory Factor Analysis

Confirmatory Factor analysis was conducted to assess the measurement model. The structural model confirmed an excellent fit with the data. The chi-square value was 137.338 with a non-significant p-value ($p = 1.000$), indicating good model fit. The relative chi-square (CMIN/DF) was 1.002, which is below the recommended threshold of 3. The comparative fit index (CFI) was 1.000, and the root mean square error of approximation (RMSEA) was 0.003. These values indicate a good fit of the proposed research model to the observed data.

FIGURE 2: Measurement Model



Source: Authors

TABLE 3: Hypothesis Testing Results

H. No.	Paths	Standardized Estimate	S.E.	t-value	p-value	Remarks
H1	Extraversion ->Homestay Intention	.080	.051	1.443	.149	Not Supported
H2	Agreeableness->Homestay Intention	.239	.054	4.091	.000	Supported
H3	Conscientiousness->Homestay Intention	.105	.051	1.925	.054	Not supported
H4	Neuroticism->Homestay Intention	-.180	.051	-3.308	.000	Supported

H5	Openness to experience->Homestay Intention	.129	.054	2.283	.022	Supported
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Source: Authors

The structural model results show that Agreeableness, Neuroticism, and Openness to Experience significantly influence homestay intention. Agreeableness has a significant positive effect on homestay intention ($\beta = 0.239$, $p < 0.001$). Neuroticism exhibits a significant negative effect ($\beta = -0.180$, $p < 0.001$), suggesting that individuals with higher levels of neuroticism are less likely to pursue homestay business. Openness to Experience also positively and significantly affects homestay intention ($\beta = 0.129$, $p = 0.022$). In contrast, Extraversion ($\beta = 0.080$, $p = 0.149$) and Conscientiousness ($\beta = 0.105$, $p = 0.054$) do not have a statistically significant impact on homestay intention. The paper helps in bringing empirical evidence about the personality traits exhibited by homestay entrepreneurs towards homestay intention. The finding of the paper on neuroticism significantly and negatively affecting homestay intention, openness to experience significantly and positively affecting homestay intention are consistent with results presented by Mhlanga, O (2019) but completely contradicts with findings of the research by Sobaih and Elshaer (2022) except on agreeableness. The finding by Khan et al. (2021) on conscientiousness, extraversion and neuroticism contradicts with the findings of this paper. Two of the five factors, neuroticism and agreeableness had a significant effect on the entrepreneurial intention (Awwad & Al-Aseer, 2021). This study was focused on the students' relationship between personality traits and entrepreneurial intention with mediating role of entrepreneurial alertness.

In a study conducted amongst non-entrepreneurs, maybe entrepreneurs, potential entrepreneurs, and practicing entrepreneurs, the findings suggested that openness was the most important factor differentiating real entrepreneurs from the other categories. This study contradicts with the findings on agreeableness. The study also found that the big five personality traits can be used to predict entrepreneurial startups and entrepreneurial intentions (Antonic et Al., 2015). The findings of the study by Antonic et Al, (2015) reported negative and significant on agreeableness, suggesting that entrepreneurs are less likely to be agreeable, which contradicts with the findings of this study.

The squared multiple correlation (R^2) value for the dependent variable was 0.24, indicating that the independent variables explain 24% of the variance in homestay intention. This suggests a moderate explanatory power of the model, which is acceptable in behavioural and social science research.

5. IMPLICATIONS

The paper aimed at identifying the personality traits affecting the business intention of homestay entrepreneurs. Agreeableness is associated with traits like good-natured, soft hearted, generous and is also associated with the nature of rural population. Since, most of the homestay entrepreneurs (respondents) were first generation entrepreneurs and mostly operational on rural setting justifying that agreeableness ($\beta = 0.239$) was most instrumental in predicting homestay intention. Though extroversion is a valid predictor of business intention in any industry, it was not a significant predictor in this niche area of hospitality industry suggesting that the homestay entrepreneurs need not be outspoken or assertive to carry out their homestay business. The findings of the paper contribute to literature in relation to personality traits and its association with business intention, especially in subsets of hospitality sectors and rural entrepreneurs.

Behavioural intention is often viewed as a strong predictor of actual behaviour, particularly in planned actions like starting and managing a business (Kurjono et al., 2018; Madichie et al., 2018; Tuffour et al., 2018). Theories such as the Theory of Planned Behaviour by Ajzen are foundational in understanding how attitudes, subjective norms, and perceived behavioural control shape intentions (Madichie et al., 2018; Sánchez-Medina et al., 2014; Minoli, 2018; Terek-Stojanović et al., 2023; Tuffour et al., 2018). In the context of entrepreneurship, intentions are considered the initial and crucial step in venture creation (Juhari et al., 2023). The profile of the respondents reveal that the homestay endeavours in the nascent stages. Thus, studying entrepreneurship in the nascent stages help in industry development (Dias et al., 2022).

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