

DETERMINANTS OF SABAH TAMU BUSINESS OPERATOR'S MOTIVATION TO REMAIN IN THE TAMU BUSINESS

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ABSTRACT

The Tamu, the traditional market known in Sabah, is a platform for entrepreneurial activity. This study aims to determine factors influencing Sabah Tamu business operator's motivation to remain in the Tamu business. The self-administered questionnaires were distributed through in-person survey and online survey. There were 125 questionnaires successfully gathered for data analysis. The findings showed that entrepreneurs' attitude, skill and resources positively affect the Tamu business operator's motivation to remain in the Tamu business. However, socio-cultural has no significant relationship with the motivation to remain of Sabah Tamu operators. The study results provide insight into the Tamu business operator's motivation to remain in the Tamu business, which government agencies may consider mitigating the adverse financial impact faced by the operator of the Tamu through relevant regulations and support programmes.

Keywords: Informal entrepreneur, Tamu business, motivation to remain, entrepreneurship, Sabah.

INTRODUCTION

Entrepreneurship utilises market-driven strategies to obtain business objectives, specific social or economic goals, and explore new opportunities (Tur-Porcar et al., 2018). In general, entrepreneurs consider economic, social, and environmental goals. Entrepreneurship consists of entrepreneurial actions (e.g., innovation, creation, exploitation, expansion) that contribute to environmental, social and economic goals (Koe et al., 2019; Wei et al., 2019), leading to sustainable development and profitable opportunities such as job creation and poverty reduction (Abaza, 2017; Souisa, 2018). The entrepreneurial process develops when individuals pursue opportunities through action. However, their willingness and capacity to take advantage of these possibilities vary due to their differences (Shane et al., 2003).

Entrepreneurial motivation is the process that induces entrepreneurs to exert substantial effort to attain their entrepreneurial objectives (Segal et al., 2005). Entrepreneurial motivation

explains why entrepreneurs start new businesses or stay in current ones. A person's desire to launch and maintain a new undertaking relies on motivational factors linked to entrepreneurship. Therefore, the motivation of entrepreneurs (e.g., motivation to remain in the existing business) forms the foundation of their business's future direction and success.

Like other countries, increasing employment opportunities and eradicating poverty are among Malaysia's main plans (Mulok et al., 2012; Siwar et al., 2016). To fulfil this objective, Malaysia has promoted entrepreneurship, as establishing business initiatives can aid job creation, enhance economic development, alleviate poverty, and provide various social and economic benefits (Hanafiah et al., 2016). To foster an entrepreneurial culture and encourage this industry to contribute 50% of the country's Gross Domestic Product (GDP) by 2030, the Malaysian government has unveiled the National Entrepreneurship Policy 2030. The policy's goal was to promote entrepreneurship development, which was not prioritised by earlier policies like the New Economic Policy and the National Development Policy.

Sabah has witnessed extensive economic, social and environmental reforms since the state's independence. The implications of these reforms indirectly affect Sabah's general entrepreneurial environment, mainly local and business activities. In Sabah, the Tamu (weekly market), a traditional marketplace, acts as a platform for the entrepreneurial growth of the local (Foo, 2018). Before supermarkets and shopping malls existed, Tamu became vital for local farmers, fishermen, and hawkers to trade goods using barter or money. Besides, Tamu used to serve as a social hub where locals shared significant news and special events, as it effectively disseminated information to remote areas while gathering updates from distant areas. Tamu remains present today, even with the rise of contemporary shopping malls and hypermarkets. Currently, the Tamu takes place in many significant towns throughout Sabah, such as Donggongan in Penampang, Kota Belud, Kudat, Kota Marudu, Sandakan, Tawau, and Keningau. Additionally, for foreigners to understand the culture and lifestyle of locals, the most effective method is to visit the Tamu.

However, 2020 and 2021 posed considerable challenges for Malaysia due to the COVID-19 pandemic, which was not the region's first infectious disease outbreak. For instance, Sabah experienced a major H1N1 outbreak in 2009, leading to considerable health and economic disruptions. The COVID-19 pandemic also impacted various sectors, such as healthcare, agriculture, tourism, travel, trade, and airline (Karim et al., 2020). The Malaysian government implemented strict regulations, including the Movement Control Order (MCO) that began on 18th March 2020. Almost all business activities were suspended until further notice because of the increase in confirmed cases, including Tamu in Sabah.

A survey after the first nationwide Movement Control Order (MCO) showed that nearly half of self-employed workers and a quarter of employers have gone without income (Teoh, 2020). Furthermore, of those self-employed Malaysians who said they still had jobs, 94.8 per cent suffered income losses, with more than a third experiencing a cut of over 90 per cent. Most respondents also said they were not financially prepared for a further extension of the MCO. These situations have influenced the weekly activities of local Sabah Tamu operators because

of the closing activity of Tamu, their business platform. The effect started before the first MCO was implemented in March 2020 (Lily et al., 2021).

Entrepreneurs' motivation to reinvest or remain in their current business has been overlooked by researchers (Katekhaye et al., 2019; Meyer, 2022). Most previous studies emphasised the entrepreneurial intention to be entrepreneurs (Anh & Bokelmann, 2019; Koe et al., 2019; Shah et al., 2018). In addition, most previous studies mainly concentrate on entrepreneurial activities for SMEs at the firm level rather than micro-enterprises or informal entrepreneurs (Gódány et al., 2021; Hanafiah et al., 2016). Informal entrepreneurship is an economic activity that generates legal goods and services but may not function formally or in an organised way (Nasip et al., 2019). Informal entrepreneurial activity can be viewed as a foundation for establishing a formal business. In most situations, there are no permanent business premises on the Tamu site; hence, Tamu business owners are typically considered informal entrepreneurs.

Meyer (2018) investigated the future motivation of entrepreneurs for their involvement in their current businesses, but mainly on female entrepreneurs in South Africa. In the meantime, Hanafiah et al. (2016) study examines entrepreneurial motivation at the firm level instead of individual business operators such as Tamu operators. Therefore, motivation research concerning the Tamu operators or informal entrepreneurs in Sabah is currently lacking.

Therefore, understanding the factors affecting Tamu operators' motivations in Sabah is essential, particularly regarding upcoming disruptions such as pandemics. As indicated earlier, disruptions, such as pandemics like COVID-19, will significantly affect Tamu in Sabah. As shown throughout the COVID-19 pandemic, these motivations directly impact their desire to remain operational, essential for maintaining their living. Identifying these elements can aid policymakers and support organisations in offering focused help to improve resilience and adaptability among Tamu operators amid persistent challenges in the future.

In line with these gaps, the main objective of this study is to investigate the motivation of local Tamu businesses to remain in their current business. Tamu in Sabah can be a valuable case study of factors influencing the Tamu business operator's motivation to remain in their business amid disruptions such as COVID-19 pandemic and a series of future MCOs. Using the Pull-Push theory of entrepreneurship framework, the study will adapt Meyer's (2018) study framework to investigate factors affecting Tamu operators' motivation to remain in the Tamu business. This study examined the effect of the entrepreneur's attitude, skill, resources, and socio-cultural factors on the Tamu operators' motivation to remain in their current business. By understanding the motivations and difficulties Tamu operators encounter, particularly considering past disruptions such as the COVID-19 pandemic, policymakers can create focused strategies that strengthen resilience and secure the sustainability of this crucial sector in Sabah's economy.

LITERATURE REVIEW AND HYPOTHESIS DEVELOPMENT

Self-Determination Theory

Self-Determination Theory (SDT) is a macro theory of human motivation and personality that concerns individuals' inherent development (Krettenauer & Curren, 2020). SDT emphasises how human actions are driven by personal motivation and autonomy. As per SDT, individuals have three basic psychological needs (Nalipay et al., 2020). The needs are autonomy, competence, and relatedness, which are essential for growth and development. When these three fundamental psychological needs are fulfilled, people feel intrinsic motivation, prompting them to participate in activities for the intrinsic motivation and fulfillment they offer (Shir et al., 2019).

Thus, SDT could explain entrepreneurial motivation to stay in their current business by emphasising the innate psychological needs that drive human behaviour. When the three fundamental psychological needs are met, people feel more autonomous motivation, resulting in improved well-being and lasting behavioral change (Ryan & Deci, 2020). Entrepreneurs who feel autonomous in their business decisions, competent in their skills and abilities, and connected to their customers and employees are more likely to stay motivated and committed to their businesses (Baluku et al., 2018).

Entrepreneurial Motivation

Motivation is a mechanism responsible for the intensity, orientation, and perseverance of an individual's attempt to reach a goal (McInerney, 2019). Motivation results from interactions between individuals, the workplace, and society (Salari et al., 2017). The process that encourages business owners to put in significant work to achieve their goals as entrepreneurs is known as entrepreneurial motivation (Segal et al., 2005). The motivations that drive entrepreneurs to launch new firms or to continue operating existing ones are known as entrepreneurial motivations.

The person's desire to launch and maintain a new venture relies on the entrepreneurial drive (Barba-Sánchez & Atienza-Sahuquillo, 2017; Shahzad et al., 2021). Therefore, one could argue that entrepreneurs' motivation fundamentally influences their venture's future direction and success (Su et al., 2020). The entrepreneurial motivation of an individual determines both their intention to launch a new business and their ability to keep that firm running successfully (Meyer, 2018). The motivation encompasses intrinsic and extrinsic factors, such as the desire for autonomy, the opportunity to pursue a passion, financial gain, authority, and the potential for more significant influence and control. These motivations are frequently shaped by the fundamental psychological needs of autonomy, competence, and relatedness, as described in the SDT.

Motivation to remain in business.

Beyond the initial decision to start a business, entrepreneurial motivation is crucial in sustaining and growing the venture (Reuther et al., 2023). The motivation to remain in the current business is influenced by the innate psychological needs of autonomy, competence, and relatedness, as outlined in the SDT. Thus, entrepreneurs who derive intrinsic satisfaction from their work are more likely to persevere through challenges and setbacks, leading to the long-term continuity of their businesses (Devloo et al., 2015). For instance, entrepreneurs who find fulfillment in providing quality products and excellent customer service may be motivated to stay committed to their business, even during economic uncertainty or competition.

Studies on the entrepreneurs' motivations to reinvest or remain in their current business have been overlooked by researchers (Hanafiah et al., 2016; Meyer, 2022). Most of the previous studies have emphasised on entrepreneurial intention to be an entrepreneur (Herdjiono et al., 2018; Koe et al., 2019; Nguyen et al., 2019; Shah et al., 2018), entrepreneurs' business performance (Shin et al., 2017; Souisa, 2018) and intention to quit (M. H. Chen et al., 2017; Khairuddin et al., 2016; Sánchez-Medina et al., 2020). In addition, most previous studies mainly concentrate on the entrepreneurial activities of SMEs at the firm level rather than micro-enterprises, sole proprietors, and informal entrepreneurs (Gódány et al., 2021; Hanafiah et al., 2016). Accordingly, Tamu operators are mainly sole proprietors and informal entrepreneurs, especially those in rural areas. Usually, there are no permanent premises at the Tamu sites where business operators can run their business weekly.

In summary, entrepreneurs are motivated to stay in their current business when their psychological needs for autonomy, competence, and relatedness are satisfied. By fostering an environment that supports these needs, businesses can enhance the intrinsic motivation of entrepreneurs, leading to greater satisfaction, commitment, and longevity in their businesses.

Entrepreneurial Attitude and Entrepreneurial Motivation

Entrepreneurial attitudes refer to entrepreneurs' beliefs and mindsets towards entrepreneurship and their businesses (Mahfud et al., 2020). Attitudes (including entrepreneurial attitude) significantly shape entrepreneurs' perceptions, motivations, and behaviours toward their businesses (Elliott et al., 2015; Mahfud et al., 2020; Suehara Vanity M. Barit, 2023). Positive entrepreneurial attitudes include optimism, resilience, creativity, risk-taking propensity, and a willingness to learn. They are essential for overcoming challenges and seizing opportunities in the entrepreneurial journey that drive entrepreneurs to remain committed to their ventures.

Entrepreneurs with a positive attitude are more likely to experience intrinsic motivation driven by their passion, enthusiasm, and belief in the value of their business (Cnossen et al., 2019). A positive entrepreneurial attitude aligns closely with these psychological needs. For example, entrepreneurs who exhibit optimism and resilience are more likely to perceive their work as meaningful and enjoyable (fulfilling the need for autonomy), feel confident in their abilities to overcome challenges (fulfilling the need for competence), and seek out social connections and support networks (fulfilling the need for relatedness).

As in the case of a Tamu market vendor who approaches their business with a positive attitude despite facing challenges such as fluctuating market demand, competition from other vendors, or logistical hurdles, this entrepreneur maintains an optimistic outlook and sees these challenges as opportunities for growth. They actively seek innovative solutions, adapt their strategies to changing circumstances, and view setbacks as temporary rather than failures. This positive attitude fuels their intrinsic motivation to persevere and stay committed to their business in the Tamu market, as they derive fulfillment from the autonomy, competence, and relatedness experienced within their entrepreneurial endeavours. Therefore, in this study, the following hypothesis is proposed:

H1: There is a positive relationship between entrepreneurial attitudes and entrepreneurial motivation to remain in current business.

Entrepreneurial Skill and Entrepreneurial Motivation

Entrepreneurial skills refer to the specific competencies, knowledge, and capabilities entrepreneurs develop to start, manage, and grow their businesses effectively (Mamabolo et al., 2017). These skills encompass financial management, marketing, sales, communication, strategic planning, problem-solving, and leadership. Entrepreneurial skills are essential for identifying opportunities, mitigating risks, and making informed decisions in the dynamic and uncertain entrepreneurship environment.

Entrepreneurs with diverse entrepreneurial skills are better equipped to navigate the challenges and complexities inherent in running a business (Abdullah et al., 2018; Sariwulan et al., 2020). These skills enhance an entrepreneur's confidence, competence, and self-efficacy, increasing motivation and perseverance in their current ventures (Dijkhuizen et al., 2018). SDT underscores the importance of competence in driving intrinsic motivation. Entrepreneurs who feel competent in their abilities are more likely to experience satisfaction and fulfillment in their work (Shir et al., 2019). Entrepreneurial skills directly fulfil this need for competence by equipping entrepreneurs with the knowledge, expertise, and capabilities to manage their businesses effectively.

As in the case of a Tamu market vendor who has developed various entrepreneurial skills over time, this entrepreneur has honed their marketing skills to effectively promote their products, negotiate with suppliers, and attract customers to their stall. They possess strong communication skills, enabling them to engage with customers, understand their needs, and build lasting relationships. Additionally, they have developed problem-solving skills to address challenges such as inventory management, pricing strategies, and logistical issues. The accumulation of these entrepreneurial skills enhances the entrepreneur's confidence, competence, and motivation to remain engaged in their business within the Tamu market, as they derive satisfaction from their ability to accomplish and nurture their venture effectively. Therefore, in this study, the following hypothesis is proposed:

H2: There is a positive relationship between entrepreneurial skills and entrepreneurial motivation to remain in current business.

Entrepreneurial Resources and Entrepreneurial Motivation

Entrepreneurial resources refer to the tangible and intangible assets, assistance, and networks available to entrepreneurs to support the establishment and growth of their businesses (Moriggi, 2020). These resources include self-knowledge, social networks, mentorship, access to training or education, and government policies or programs to foster entrepreneurship. These resources play a fundamental role in equipping entrepreneurs with the necessary tools, knowledge, and support structures necessary to navigate the difficulties of the business landscape and capitalise on emerging opportunities (Ying et al., 2019).

Entrepreneurs with access to adequate resources are better positioned to address challenges, seize opportunities, and sustain their businesses over time (Chang & Chen, 2020; M.-H. Chen et al., 2015). These resources allow entrepreneurs to pursue their goals, innovate, and adapt to changing market dynamics, enhancing their motivation and commitment to their current ventures.

Entrepreneurial resources directly contribute to fulfilling the psychological needs as indicated by SDT. For instance, human capital enhances competence by equipping entrepreneurs with the knowledge and skills to manage their businesses effectively (Marshall et al., 2020). Meanwhile, social capital fosters relatedness by providing entrepreneurs with supportive networks and relationships as in the case of the Tamu market community. The accumulation of these entrepreneurial resources enhances the entrepreneur's sense of autonomy, competence, and relatedness, motivating them to remain engaged and committed to their business within the Tamu market. Therefore, in this study, the following hypothesis is proposed:

H3: There is a positive relationship between entrepreneurial resources and entrepreneurial motivation to remain in current business.

Socio-Cultural and Motivation to Remain in Business

Socio-cultural factors encompass the broader social, cultural, and environmental influences that shape entrepreneurial behaviour and perceptions within a specific context (Badghish et al., 2023). These factors include cultural norms, societal values, community support systems, institutional frameworks, and regulatory environments. Socio-cultural factors significantly shape entrepreneurship opportunities, challenges, and norms in a particular society or community (Cullen, 2019; Walsh & Winsor, 2019).

A supportive socio-cultural environment that celebrates entrepreneurship and provides resources, networks, and social support can enhance entrepreneurs' motivation and commitment to their current venture (Ghouse et al., 2021; Méndez-Picazo et al., 2021). SDT emphasises the importance of relatedness in driving intrinsic motivation. Socio-cultural factors directly influence an entrepreneur's sense of relatedness by shaping their social connections, sense of belonging, and perceived support within their community (Dauletova & Al-Busaidi, 2022). Entrepreneurs who feel connected to a supportive socio-cultural

environment are more likely to experience intrinsic motivation and derive satisfaction from their entrepreneurial activities.

As in the case of the Tamu market business owner, local traditions, customs, and practices celebrate entrepreneurial endeavours, and community members actively engage with and patronise local businesses. Entrepreneurs within this supportive socio-cultural environment benefit from access to networks, resources, and social support systems. They feel a sense of belonging and connection to their community, fostering intrinsic motivation and commitment to their businesses within the Tamu market. Therefore, in this study, the following hypotheses are proposed:

H4: There is a positive relationship between socio-cultural and entrepreneurial motivation to remain in current business.

METHODOLOGY

A self-administered questionnaire was developed to collect the data. Because of the limited and disorganised data on Tamu operators, the research employed two sampling methods: Snowballing and purposive sampling. The Tamu operators running Tamu commercial activities in Sabah were the study's target population for analysis. Using a five-point Likert scale from "1 strongly disagree" to "5 strongly agree," participants were asked to express their levels of agreement or disagreement with several statements concerning their motivation to remain in their current Tamu business amid the COVID-19 pandemic and potential future pandemics.

This study adapted the survey questionnaire from Meyer's (2018) and Mitchell's (2003) study. Two methods of data collecting were used: an on-site survey and an online survey using Google Forms. The Tamu operators at the various primary Tamu sites in Sabah received the questionnaires. For data analysis, 125 questionnaires were successfully collected. Then, the data was analysed using the PLS-SEM (Ringle et al., 2015).

FINDINGS

Respondent's Profile

Table 1 illustrates the profile of participants in this study. The findings revealed that the majority of participants reported engaging in business at Tamu as their main occupation (60%) and primary income source (61,6%). In the meantime, a majority of them (40.8%) had been involved in the Tamu business for seven years or longer. Additionally, 63.2 percent of the responses came from females.

Table 1: Respondents' Profile

Variables	Categories	No of Respondents	Percent (%)
Activities	Full -Time	75	60.0
	Part-Time	50	40.0
Purpose of Doing Business	Main Income	77	61.6
	Side Income	44	35.2
	Tradition	4	3.2
Duration in Tamu Business	< 3 years	34	27.2
	3 to 6 years	40	32.0
	7 to 9 years	14	11.2
	> 9 years	37	29.6
Gender	Male	46	36.8
	Female	79	63.2
Total		125	100

Evaluation of Measurement Model

Table 2 shows the construct reliability (CR) and convergent validity tests. The results indicate that the variables examined exhibit a strong degree of internal consistency (Roldán & Sánchez-Franco, 2012). The value of average variance extracted (AVE) shows the acceptable value, supporting convergent validity (Hair et al., 2019). Factor loadings with values of at least 0.40 are appropriate, with AVE and CR meeting the threshold recommended by Hair et al. (2019). To prevent AVE from violating the minimum value of 0.500, ES1, MS1, MS2, and MS3 were deleted. Each construct's average variance extracted (AVE) was greater than 0.5. Consequently, both constructs demonstrate sufficient convergent validity since the indicators account for over 50% of the variance in the construct. All components demonstrated strong internal consistency, with entrepreneurial attitude scoring 0.891 (CR), entrepreneurial resource scoring 0.884 (CR), socio-cultural scoring 0.819 (CR), entrepreneurial skill scoring 0.816 (CR), and Motivation to Remain scoring 0.886 (CR).

Table 2: Evaluation of Measurement Model

Constructs	Items	Loadings	AVE	CR
Entrepreneurial Attitude	EA1	0.741	0.541	0.891
	EA2	0.786		
	EA3	0.728		
	EA4	0.761		
	EA5	0.543		
	EA6	0.798		
	EA7	0.760		
Entrepreneurial Resource	ER1	0.560	0.529	0.884
	ER2	0.598		
	ER3	0.774		
	ER4	0.871		
	ER5	0.804		
	ER6	0.550		
	ER7	0.851		
Socio-Cultural	SC1	0.742	0.533	0.819
	SC2	0.753		
	SC3	0.723		
	SC4	0.666		
Entrepreneurial Skill	ES2	0.754	0.526	0.816
	ES3	0.753		
	ES4	0.723		
	ES5	0.666		
Motivation to Remain	MS4	0.733	0.527	0.886
	MS5	0.730		
	MS6	0.656		
	MS7	0.823		
	MS8	0.742		
	MS9	0.711		
	MS10	0.673		

Note: Items ES1, MS1, MS2, and MS3 were deleted due to being below the threshold.

The Fornel-Larker evaluation is utilised to measure discriminant validity, as illustrated in Table 3. As the results indicate that the square root of the AVE for each construct exceeds the correlations between that construct and others in the model (Fornell & Larcker, 1981), there is no issue of discriminant validity.

Table 3: Fornell-Lacker

	EA	ER	SC	ES	Motivation to remain
EA	0.735				
ER	0.599	0.727			
SC	0.632	0.591	0.730		
ES	0.741	0.647	0.634	0.725	
Motivation to remain	0.687	0.654	0.616	0.685	0.726

Assessment of Structural Model

Furthermore, this study assessed structural models using a 5000-bootstrap data resampling to test hypotheses (Hair et al, 2019). The results demonstrate that the direct relationship hypotheses for H1, H2, and H3 are all supported, but the hypothesis for H4 is not. Based on the analysis, it was shown that the hypothesis for H1 was ($\beta=0.276$, $t=2.473$), H2 was ($\beta=0.217$, $t=2.129$) and H3 was ($\beta=0.259$, $t=2.1490$) respectively directly influenced motivation to remain. On the other hand, the hypothesis for H4 ($\beta=0.151$, $t=1.551$) was insignificant, suggesting that H4 does not directly influence motivation to remain. Hence, H1, H2, and H3 was supported, whereas H4 was not.

Table 4: Path Coefficients

Direct Effects	Beta	Std Error	t-value	p-value	Decision
Entrepreneurial Attitude → Motivation to remain	0.276	0.111	2.473	0.007	Supported
Entrepreneurial Skill → Motivation to remain	0.217	0.102	2.129	0.017	Supported
Entrepreneurial Resource → Motivation to remain	0.259	0.104	2.490	0.007	Supported
Socio-Cultural → Motivation to remain	0.151	0.097	1.551	0.061	Not Supported

$t\text{-value} > 1.65^*$ ($p < 0.05$); $t\text{-values} > 2.33^{**}$ ($p < 0.01$)

The study's findings indicated that the internal factors of the entrepreneur and the present state of the firm are significant elements that influence the operator of a Tamu business to continue in their current position. The study results support the findings from Hanafiah et al. (Hanafiah et al., 2016) and Meyer (2018), where factors such as an entrepreneur's skill, attitude, and resources were essential in entrepreneurial motivation to remain in the business. The finding is unsurprising as more than 60 percent of the respondents relied on Tamu as their business platform (See Table 1).

Socio-cultural factors may not significantly influence entrepreneurial motivation to remain in the business, possibly due to a mixed-cultural environment like Tamu in Sabah. The cultural social support viewpoint suggests that innovation and entrepreneurship develop in an

environment where individuals are typically helpful and encouraging, irrespective of their particular cultural background. Furthermore, cross-culture in business emphasises the need to bridge national, regional, and ethnic differences in manners and methods, highlighting the importance of understanding and respecting diverse cultural backgrounds for effective business interactions. Sabah is known for its diverse and multicultural setting, promoting continuing peace among various communities from different backgrounds. The scenario is essential for fostering innovation and entrepreneurship, as it promotes collaboration and assistance among various cultural backgrounds. Therefore, while socio-cultural factors are relevant, they may not be the sole determinants of entrepreneurial motivation to remain in the business, especially in a mixed cultural setting in Sabah.

CONCLUSION

This study investigated the factors affecting Sabah Tamu operators' motivation to remain in the Tamu business. Numerous previous entrepreneurial studies examined the importance of motivation for becoming an entrepreneur but overlooked their motivation to continue in the existing business, especially among informal entrepreneurs. Thus, this study investigates factors influencing Sabah Tamu business operator' motivation to stay in their current business in conjunction with the COVID-19 pandemic and future potential pandemics. The findings indicated that entrepreneurs' attitudes, skills, and resources influenced Tamu operators' motivation to stay in their business. The findings support the validity of SDT elements in understanding entrepreneurial motivation by showing basic psychological needs such as autonomy, competence, and relatedness in promoting intrinsic motivation among entrepreneurs.

The study's findings provide practical strategies for government agencies to boost motivation among Tamu operators. Firstly, government agencies can help by providing training programs, mentorship initiatives, and financial aid designed to meet the psychological needs of Tamu operators (such as competence). By emphasising these objectives, agencies may help entrepreneurs handle problems and sustain their firms effectively.

Furthermore, entrepreneurs should proactively improve their abilities and resources through self-development initiatives. Entrepreneurs can boost their motivation and achieve long-term success in the Tamu market and beyond by investing in their growth and taking advantage of government assistance. This collaborative approach between government agencies and businesses is critical for establishing a supporting ecosystem that promotes entrepreneurship and economic development in Tamu marketplaces. Moreover, while socio-cultural elements may not directly impact motivation, firms should prioritise cultural awareness and community engagement. Tamu business owners may create strong relationships with the Tamu market community by fostering trust and connecting with local values, which will help them succeed in the long run.

In addition, as most respondents serve Tamu as their primary source of income, government agencies need to ensure that the Tamu operators are also included as the recipients of government assistance to ease their financial burden for future potential pandemic. The closure of their platform will significantly affect their income if the situation lasts longer than expected or if a similar situation occurs. Therefore, for recommendations, the government should also include Tamu operators as recipients in the stimulus package to combat the COVID-19-like pandemic in the future.

The government should also introduce and promote special training programmes for Tamu operators and facilitate funding opportunities for these businesses to ensure sustained growth. Limitations include the coverage of the Tamu sites and factors that affect the motivation to stay in business. Future studies may include more Tamu sites and respondents to make the generalisation more applicable. In addition, future research should involve Tamu associations to gain more respondents and in-depth knowledge of issues in Tamu operators.

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Appendix: Measurement Items

Motivation to Remain in Business	
MS1	I prefer being independent and having control of my life
MS	I like having a work-life balance
MS2	I prefer being my own boss
MS3	I desire more wealth and economic stability
MS4	I like being creative and using my talents
MS5	I like pursuing a challenge
MS6	I like filling a gap in the market
MS7	I want to prove that I own a successful business
MS8	I want to contribute to society
MS9	I want to give myself and my family more security by bettering my financial position
MS10	I like the freedom of being able to adapt my own approach to work
Entrepreneur Skills	
ES1	My position in my community and society is important for the growth of my business
ES2	Good customer service is an important factor for the growth of my business
ES3	Having previous business experience helps me grow my business more successfully
ES4	My ability to manage my personnel is a contributing factor to the growth of the business
ES5	Having a reputation for honesty is important for the growth of my business
Entrepreneur Attitudes	
EA1	Hard work ensures the successful growth of my business
EA2	Having good social skills is an important factor for the growth of my business
EA3	The idea of owning my own business is pleasing
EA4	I would feel guilty if I left my business now
EA5	I feel "emotionally attached" to my business
EA6	My business has a great deal of personal meaning for me
EA7	I feel a strong sense of belonging to my business
Entrepreneur Resources	
ER1	Support from my family and friends is important for the growth of my business
ER2	My business growth depends on the level of education
ER3	Government support to entrepreneurs is a contributing factor to the growth of the

	business
ER4	Entrepreneurial training is an important factor for the growth of my business
ER5	Promoting my product or service by means of a good marketing strategy contributes to the growth of my business
ER6	Having competitive prices is an important factor for the growth of my business
ER7	Having some level of political involvement contributes to the growth of my business
Socio-Cultural	
SC1	My cultural background makes it easier for me to gain more respect in my business
SC2	My cultural background makes it easier for me to gain more sales in my business
SC3	I need to balance my business responsibilities with my family issues
SC4	The views held by society on the roles of Tamu to society have a positive impact on my business

Notes: Response: 1 Strongly Disagree 2 Agree 3 Neither Agree or Disagree 4 Agree 5 Strongly Agree