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# Environmental Factors and the Entrepreneurial Intentions of UiTM Hospitality Students

Nur Azah Farhana Mohamed Fadzil <sup>1</sup>, Zatul Iffah Mohd Fuza <sup>2</sup>, Wan Nor Bayah Wan Kamarudin <sup>3</sup> Nik Mohammad Zulfadli Nik Mohd Fahmi <sup>4</sup>

<sup>1</sup>Faculty of Hotel and Tourism Management, Universiti Teknologi MARA, Puncak Alam Campus, Selangor, Malaysia

<sup>2, 3, 4</sup> Faculty of Hotel and Tourism Management, Universiti Teknologi MARA, Dungun Campus, Terengganu, Malaysia

Corresponding author email: farhanafadzil1991@gmail.com.my

**Abstract** - Entrepreneurship is critical in all countries, including Malaysia, in order to contribute to economic growth, job creation, and technological advancements. As a result, entrepreneurship studies are critically a phenomenon among scholars as it is considered as one of the strategies to boost the economy and enhance job creation. However, environmental factors are always vulnerable and empirically significant in influencing human behaviour. Therefore, this study aims to determine the impact of environmental factors on the entrepreneurial intention among hotel and tourism management students in UiTM Malaysia. The study investigated the impact of environment factors that focused on students' opportunity recognition and social worthiness on entrepreneurial intention among UiTM hospitality students. A cross-sectional research design was used, with a quantitative questionnaire approach. To select 217 participants, the study used probability sampling with a simple random sample technique. The model was tested using the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences, IBM SPSS Statistics 26.0. The data was then analysed using a multiple regression analysis technique. According to the findings of the study, opportunity recognition and social worthiness are significantly related to entrepreneurial intention among UiTM hospitality students.

**Keywords** - Environmental Factors, Entrepreneurial Intention, Hospitality Students, Social Worthiness, Opportunity Recognition

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## I. Introduction

Pursuing entrepreneurial activities has become a top priority in today's business world. Entrepreneurship, according to Shahzad et al. (2021), has become pertinently relevant these days in the effort to promote long-term economic development. Studies throughout the years have evidently revealed the numbers of internal and external factors attributed to one's decision of starting a business. For instance, a student's career path is strongly influenced by factors derived from their personality traits and related to their external environment (Shahzad et al., 2021). Recently, entrepreneurial development programmes, which include coaching, aim to improve students' entrepreneurial and start-up competencies and knowledge (Rachmawan et al., 2015). These factors should be taken into account when determining students' entrepreneurial intentions, because the success of an

entrepreneurial venture is highly dependent on these elements.

This is evidenced by previous study conducted by Anjum et al. (2020), which conclusively proves that one's entrepreneurial intention can be influenced by the characteristic and personality of that particular individual (Anjum et al., 2020). However, the most significant barrier to starting a business is inadequate knowledge and support. To exemplify, despite the critical need to encourage student entrepreneurship, many entrepreneurial initiatives have failed due to ineffective strategies and implementation (Shahzad et al., 2021). This demonstrates that environmental factors such as opportunity recognition and social worthiness can further solidify students' entrepreneurial intention in their effort to emerge as successful entrepreneurs. In addition to the aforementioned factor, Ajzen (1991) through his Theory of Planned Behaviour added that behaviour (orientation), characteristics (skills), and environment are also significantly influential in determining one's ambition and intention in life. Thus, this paper proposes that opportunity recognition and social worthiness can crucially impact an individual's entrepreneurial intention, specifically the student.

## **II. Literature Review**

### **Environmental Factors**

According to Janik and Slater (2000), social factors are contextual learning. As mentioned in the previous study, 'learning environment' refers to the social, psychological, and pedagogical contexts in which learning that could influence students' attitudes and achievement occurs (Fraser, 1998; Mustapha et al. 2014). Furthermore, when deciding to start a new business, the individual may be influenced and supported by their surroundings, such as their community, parents, and peers. For example, interacting with the entrepreneur community may eventually inspire the individual to become an entrepreneur (Noor et al., 2021).

A previous study, however, highlighted that opportunity recognition has a significant impact on individual-level innovation performance (Volkersz & Urban, 2019). The study is relevant because of its importance in assisting in the improvement of learning outcomes based on environmental factors (Mustapha et al., 2014). Nonetheless, for university students, parents and teachers (or lecturers in the university context) may have an impact on personal development and contribute to social-environmental resources for creating in the family and academic contexts, respectively (Zhang et al., 2021). As for example, Rusu et al. (2022) discovered in their study that the environment has a positive impact on small business development and entrepreneurial activities in society. The social environment shapes personal motivation (Zhang et al., 2021), which can then lead to the idea creation (Sobakinova et al., 2019). Previous research suggests that parental and lecturer responsiveness is important in the development of an individual's motivational aspects and creative outcomes (Zhang et al., 2021).

### **Opportunity Recognition**

Recognising new opportunities and actively exploring and creating new business opportunities are examples of opportunity recognition (Asante & Affum-Osei, 2019). Based on their identified opportunities, entrepreneurs must identify possible ways to explore new businesses. According to the findings of a study conducted by Noguera et al. (2013), Zhang et al. (2020) quote that such a skill is an important predictor of entrepreneurial intentions. The recognition of opportunities is related to an entrepreneur's creativity. This is consistent with Asante and Affum-Osei's (2019) claim that creative thinkers are adept at spotting and seizing new opportunities, as well as vigorously seeking and developing new business opportunities.

In general, previous studies have agreed that opportunities give birth to entrepreneurship. Few studies have looked into how aspiring entrepreneurs can find opportunities, as most have primarily focused on established entrepreneurs (Asante & Affum-Osei, 2019). According to one study, a person who is able to identify threats and opportunities in the industry or business environment is more likely to recognise available entrepreneurship opportunities (Krueger, 1998; Wang et al. 2013). Furthermore, several studies have found that entrepreneurial opportunity recognition positively influences business performances (Salaudeen & Sauri, 2020). However, more efforts must be made to improve its effectiveness (Muddat et al., 2021).

Nonetheless, most works assume that entrepreneurs work in a static environment and, as a result, have not considered the environment as a predictor of a person's ability to recognise entrepreneurial opportunities (Park, 2005; Wang et al. 2013). In short, it is critical for everyone, particularly students who want to become successful entrepreneurs, to seek out opportunities. The researcher discovered that the opportunity recognition process is influenced by various personal, organizational and environmental factors.

### **Social Worthiness**

Previous study have defined 'social worthiness' as the desire to feel appreciated socially through close connections by reaching out to one's network to gather memories about times when a focal individual makes a

positive contribution to society (Cunningham et al., 2020). As mentioned in Bakan (1966) and Bacq and Alt (2018), social worthiness represents a shared understanding of oneself that contextualises the individual as a participant in the social world. Social worthiness is particularly linked to a psychological process representing an experience of interpersonal relationships (Grant, 2007), or ‘a sense of being valued by others’ (Grant & Gino, 2010).

This aspect has the potential to improve relationships between entrepreneurs and their employees, suppliers, and clients. In contrast to empathy, which has been extensively researched in various research contexts, no attention has been paid to the effect of positivity on social entrepreneurial intention (Balakrishnan & Fernandez, 2018). However, Zhang et al. (2020) discover that social worthiness is a significant moderating factor in the development of college students’ entrepreneurial intention.

Furthermore, entrepreneurship in the hospitality and tourism industry is one of the ways for people to contribute to society (Rusu et al., 2022; Bacq & Alt, 2018). To conclude, the entrepreneurial intention level will be higher when the social worthiness among students is high.

### **Entrepreneurial Intentions**

Numbers of definition of entrepreneurial intention have been proposed by many authors. Bird (1988) viewed entrepreneurial intention as an individual’s mindset conceptualising, guiding, coordinating and controlling fundamentally one’s business development, implementation, and evaluation. As for Thompson (2009), entrepreneurial intention is referred to as an individual’s self-admitted conviction to embark on an entrepreneurial venture which is realised through with strategic effort and dedication at a particular period of time. Thompson (2009) further added that the concept of one’s entrepreneurial intention is significantly influenced by his/her strength of intention to start a new business.

Such notion by Thompson (2009) is in agreement with Ajzen (1991) who asserted that the possibility of one’s entrepreneurial action positively correlates with his/her entrepreneurial intention. In fact, entrepreneurial intention refers to a person’s deliberate act of pursuing the start-up of a new business or project as a career (Kautonen et al., 2015). The desire to perform productive activities by effectively directing people to use and implement relevant new venture concepts is also referred to as entrepreneurial intention (Krueger et al., 2000, as cited in Aladejebi, 2018). As mentioned in the study by Aladejebi (2018), entrepreneurship is not solely hereditary as one can be trained and educated to master the skill. It is distinctly comparable in terms of the personality and temperament between people who are eager and people who are constantly in hesitation to venture into entrepreneurship (Krueger et al., 2000; Hsu et al., 2019).

Thus, entrepreneurial intention can be utilised as an effective indicator of one’s tendency to start a business. People with low interest in entrepreneurship will view all business process-related issues as complicated and draining compared to those who are highly interested and involved in entrepreneurship (Esfandiar et al., 2019). Hence, unique entrepreneurial idea should be significantly regarded to impact the economic growth opportunity. This increases students’ awareness and inspires them to start their businesses.

### **The Conceptual Framework**

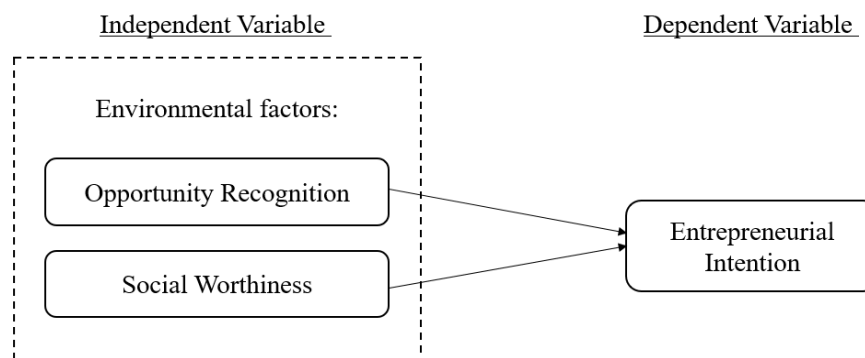


Figure 1: The Framework

**Formulation of Hypotheses**

The study proposed the following hypotheses, which are supported by evidence from the literature:

H1: Opportunity recognition and entrepreneurial intention of UiTM hospitality students are significantly related.

H2: Social worthiness and entrepreneurial intention of UiTM hospitality students are significantly related.

**III. Methodology**

A quantitative approach was used in the study to identify the relationships between environmental factors and entrepreneurial intention. The research design's goal was to determine the degree of relationship between variables and the extent to which one variable explains another variable under study (Sekaran & Bougie, 2013). This research was carried out at a Malaysian public higher education institution. The survey questionnaire data were analysed using IBM SPSS Statistics 26.0.

**Population and Sampling**

This study's population included hospitality students at UiTM from the six branches that offer the hospitality programme. According to the academic affairs data processing results of 2021, there were 1409 hospitality students from various departments such as culinary, hotel, tourism, and food services management programme. A simple random sampling of probability sampling technique was employed to select the minimum sample required. According to the G-Power analysis, the minimum sample size required would be 165. However, in order to preventing the issue of non-biased responses, more than 165 questionnaires were distributed as part of the study. As a result, the total number of respondents for this study was 217. This study's actual sample size exceeded the required minimum sample size. This study is suitable for implementation.

**Procedure for Data Collection**

All the data collection procedures of distributing and retrieving questionnaires were self-administered by the researcher in this study. There are numbers of advantages when self-administering the data collection procedures such as speeding the distribution of questionnaire and responses by participants which is highly crucially for studies that are limited in time, such as this one. In the context of this study, respondents were presented with a five-point Likert scale closed-ended questionnaire, in which the scale ranges from strongly disagree to strongly agree.

**Variable Measurement**

Variables in relation to entrepreneurial intentions in this study were measured based on the five-point Likert scale which ranges from strongly agree to strongly disagree. As for the environmental factors, two key dimensions of opportunity recognition and social worthiness were used as the measurement. The five-point Likert scales used in this study were; 1 (Strongly Disagree), 2 (Disagree), 3 (Average), 4 (Agree), and 5 (Strongly Agree). There were four (4) sections: Section A with seven (7) items displaying the respondent's profile, Section B with three (3) items demonstrating respondents' opportunity recognition, Section C with five (5) items assessing respondents' social worthiness, and Section D with four (4) items assessing respondents' entrepreneurial intention.

**IV. Analysis Results and Discussion****Data normality**

Skewness and kurtosis analysis of the items were performed to ensure that the data met the standard of data normality. The purpose of this analysis was to ensure that the data did not deviate too far from the accepted standard, as non-normal data will have an adverse effect on parameter significance assessment (Hair et al., 2014). The rule of thumb states that for the response pattern to be regarded as normal, the skewness and kurtosis should be close to zero (Hair et al., 2007). When the skewness of a data set is greater than zero, it is considered non-normally distributed. The data analysis in this study is valid and supported, implying that the items were normally distributed. The values of skewness and kurtosis are shown in Table 1.

Table 1: Skewness and Kurtosis (N = 217)

Variable	Item No.	Skewness	Kurtosis
Opportunity Recognition (OR)	OR1	-0.353	-0.425
	OR2	-0.445	-0.411
	OR3	-0.384	-0.377

Social Worthiness (SW)	SW1	-0.811	-0.155
	SW2	-0.733	-0.532
	SW3	-1.047	0.641
	SW4	-0.874	0.329
	SW5	-0.730	-0.109
Entrepreneurial Intention (EI)	EI1	-0.768	0.020
	EI2	-0.497	-0.569
	EI3	-0.694	-0.133
	EI4	-0.882	-0.067

\* The values of skewness and kurtosis

The data set recorded for the study's results was found to meet the requirements of linearity and normality. According to George and Mallery (2010), an acceptable normal univariate distribution has asymmetry and a kurtosis value between -2 and +2. The maximum skewness and kurtosis values in Table 1 demonstrated that all of the data sets in this study were normally distributed.

### Checking for Multicollinearity

All basic assumptions, including multicollinearity, were thoroughly checked prior to conducting correlation and multiple regression analyses. To remove the data from the multicollinearity problem, the variance inflationary factor (VIF) for each of the independent variables was used. Multicollinearity occurs when at least two highly correlated predictors are evaluated concurrently in a regression model. Failure to detect and report multicollinearity may result in incorrect results interpretation (Vatcheva et al., 2016). A multicollinearity can occasionally cause major issues, when the VIF is greater than 10, then there is a problem of multicollinearity (Daoud, 2018). As a result, the presence of multicollinearity will affect the destruction of assumptions for structural equation modelling (Grewal et al., 2004).

A collinearity diagnostic was performed using SPSS to measure the assumptions of multicollinearity. In the test, the tolerance and variation inflation factor (VIF) values were compared to the threshold value. The tolerance value denotes the amount of variability in the independent variables that cannot be explained by other independent variables. The variance inflation factor (VIF) is then frequently used to assess the collinearity of the formative indicators. VIF values of 5 or higher indicate critical collinearity issues between formatively measured construct indicators (Hair et al., 2019).

According to Daoud (2018), tolerance values less than 0.10 indicate collinearity. Although VIF values greater than 5 have been proposed for detecting multicollinearity (Vatcheva et al., 2016), there is no universal agreement on what the cut-off should be based on VIF values to detect multicollinearity. This study found that  $VIF < 5$ . Table 2 shows the tolerance value and VIF of all variables for this study. Based on the table, the tolerance value for all variables were well above 0.10, and the value for VIF for all variables was less than 5, indicating that multicollinearity was not present or that no multicollinearity ( $VIF < 5$ , Tolerance  $> 0.10$ ) must be met when running this method. Both the opportunity recognition and social worthiness indicated a VIF of 2.157 and 1.980, respectively.

Table 2: Multicollinearity statistics among independent variables

Variables	Collinearity Statistics	
	Tolerance	VIF
<b>Environmental Factors:</b>		
Opportunity Recognition	0.464	2.157
Social Worthiness	0.505	1.980

Notes\*  $VIF < 5$ , Tolerance  $> 0.10$

### Descriptive Analysis Result

Next, the descriptive analysis technique was then applied to this study. For this study, 217 questionnaires were completed by UiTM hospitality students. According to the descriptive analysis, there were 192 female students (78.1%) and 25 male students overall. The majority of participants (53.9 %) were between the ages of 21 and 23; 24.2 per cent were between the ages of 18 and 20, and 21.9 per cent were over the age of 24. In terms of work experience, 67.7 per cent of the study's participants had worked experience, while 54.2 per cent had participated in a university-organised entrepreneurship programme. The frequency distribution of the demographic profile of the respondents, included age, gender, mode of study, participation in the university's

entrepreneurship club, participation in a university-organised entrepreneurship programme, working experience, and family entrepreneurial background.

### Reliability analysis

Analysis of the relationship between the dimensions of opportunity recognition and social worthiness for the environmental factors towards entrepreneurial intentions revealed positive means ranging from 3.53 to 4.38 and standard deviation ranging from 0.707 to 1.291. The statement ‘I feel valued as a person when I help people,’ had the highest mean (4.38) while the statement ‘I have been preparing to set up my own business,’ had the lowest mean (3.53).

Table 3: Reliability analysis

Construct Reliability: Indices and items measured by the questionnaire					
Variable	Indicator	Items	Mean Indicator	Std. Deviation	Cronbach's Alpha (a)
Opportunity Recognition	I frequently identify opportunities to start up new businesses.	OR1	3.88	.894	.920
	I frequently identify ideas that can be converted into new products or services.	OR2	3.90	.889	
	I generally have ideas that can be realised into profitable enterprises.	OR3	3.85	.902	
Social Worthiness	I feel valued as a person when I help people.	SW1	4.38	.707	.918
	I feel appreciated as an individual when I help people.	SW2	4.37	.719	
	I feel that I make a positive difference in the lives of people that I help.	SW3	4.37	.778	
	I feel close to people I help.	SW4	4.27	.801	
	I feel strongly trusted by people I help.	SW5	4.22	.816	
Entrepreneurial Intention	I have considered setting up my own business.	EI1	3.74	1.126	.941
	I have been preparing to set up my own business.	EI2	3.53	1.291	
	I am going to try hard to set up my own business.	EI3	3.70	1.127	
	I am likely to set up my own business in the near future.	EI4	3.85	1.123	

*Author's data processing results (2021)*

### Result of Multiple Regression Analysis

After confirming the fundamental presumptions, such as identifying outliers, normality, and linearity, this study was carried out using multiple regressions. Regression analysis, according to Palmer and O'connell (2009), can be used to measure the relationship between a single dependent (criterion) variable and one or more independent (predictor) variables. This analysis is frequently used by studies to test all proposed hypotheses to achieve the objectives. In the context of this study, a single-step regression was used to determine the hypothesised influence of opportunity recognition and social worthiness on entrepreneurial intention. The researcher specifically investigated the relationship between entrepreneurial intention and opportunity recognition, as well as social worthiness. According to primary dimension analysis, there is an overall test of the influence of opportunity recognition on social worthiness and entrepreneurial intention. According to Table 4, the current study's findings have complied with its objectives, answered the established research questions, and fully satisfied and supported H1 and H2.

Table 4: The summary of the test results from multiple regression analysis for the independent variables and dependent variable

Variables	R <sup>2</sup>	Adj.R <sup>2</sup>	F	Sig. (P-Value)	β
Dependent Variable: Entrepreneurial Intention					
a) Opportunity Recognition	.389	.387	187.730	.000***	.624
b) Social Worthiness	.150	.147	52.135	.000***	.388

Note: \* $p < .05$ , \*\* $p < .01$ , \*\*\* $p < .001$

As shown in Table 4, the opportunity recognition construct explained 38.9 per cent of the variance in entrepreneurial intention ( $R^2 = .389$ ). F-value = 187.730, if the significant values,  $p < .05$ , thereby opportunity recognition construct can reliably predict entrepreneurial intention. For standardised coefficients  $\beta$ , the results revealed that there was a positive relationship ( $\beta = .624$ ), indicating that opportunity recognition has a significant and positive influence on entrepreneurial intention. Thus, the H1 can be concluded to be strongly supported.

Furthermore, the social worthiness construct was able to explain 15.0 per cent of the variance in entrepreneurial intention ( $R^2 = .150$ ). F-value = 52.135, if the significant values,  $p < .05$ , thereby social worthiness construct can reliably predict entrepreneurial intention. For standardised coefficients  $\beta$ , the results revealed that there was a positive relationship ( $\beta = .388$ ), indicating that social worthiness significantly and positively influences entrepreneurial intention. Thus, the H2 can be concluded to be strongly supported.

According to the results in the Standardised Coefficients ( $\beta$ ) in Table 4, the greater the absolute value of the beta-coefficient, the greater its effect on entrepreneurial intention. The researcher rejects the null hypothesis and accepts the alternate hypotheses H1 and H2, which are strongly supported, because creativity and risk-taking were discovered to have a significant impact on entrepreneurial intention.

## V. Conclusion

In brief, this study aims at exploring how environmental factors correlates with the UiTM hospitality students' entrepreneurial intentions by investigating the impact of opportunity recognition and social worthiness on their entrepreneurial intention. In analysing the relationship between environmental factors and the UiTM hospitality students' entrepreneurial intentions, this study employed the multiple regression analysis technique. It was revealed by the analysis that opportunity recognition and social worthiness have a significant relationship with entrepreneurial intention. These findings indicate that there is a strong correlation between the entrepreneurial intention of UiTM hospitality students and opportunity recognition as well as social worthiness. As a result, this study highlighted the perspectives of final-year students in Malaysian public higher education institutions, in terms of entrepreneurial intention, opportunity recognition, and social worthiness. Based on the findings of this study, several important inputs are provided for institutions that offer hospitality programmes that help them to formulate relevant action or relative programmes that may enlighten and support their prospective graduates.

Because final-year students are one step closer to entering the job market, it is suggested for higher learning institutions to consider these findings in order to assist and support the needs of their students who require accurate information about employment opportunities based on environmental factors to make better career choices after graduation. The majority of students expressed an interest in becoming entrepreneurs in the future, hence they can be encouraged by guiding them in this direction. The fact that the majority of students can create a business plan while studying entrepreneurship in higher education institutions is truly remarkable.

The findings reveal a high level of entrepreneurial intent and interest in entrepreneurship studies among hospitality students. Therefore, the study is indispensably significant for university authorities and policymakers of entrepreneurship programmes as the findings can serve as suggestions and guidelines in identifying the key environmental factors that influence students' entrepreneurial intention to aid training development as well relevant supports required in the effort to continuously develop the students' entrepreneurial intention. The study would also help the government promote a positive image of entrepreneurship in the minds of students.

Finally, it should be crucially noted by the institutions that they actually shoulder a vital responsibility to provide a supportive and practical learning environment that will positively develop students' entrepreneurial intentions. Thus, environmental factors should be seriously considered and managed to effectively instil as well as enhance students' entrepreneurial intentions. It has been observed that a lack of enabling and supportive environments is a major barrier for students in academic institutions to develop their intention to engage in entrepreneurship activities. As a result of the study's findings, it can be concluded that entrepreneurial intentions

among students are significantly associated with their opportunity recognition and social worthiness towards entrepreneurial intention.

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