

## Investigating the Key Factors Affecting Restaurant Startup Intention

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### Abstract

This study purports to investigate antecedents of startup intention, with particular reference to the restaurant business. The model of goal-directed behavior (MGB) provided theoretical background in developing the proposed research model with five constructs: attitude, subjective norm, perceived behavioral control, desire, and startup intention. Using convenience sampling, 379 usable data was collected from current employees of foodservice companies in South Korea. To test hypotheses, Structural Equation Modeling (SEM) technique was used. Analysis of the data found support for all of the hypothesized relationships. Specifically, all three independent variables were found to be positively related to desire, which was in turn significantly related to startup intention. The theoretical and practical implications of these findings are discussed in detail.

**Keywords:** Startup; Model of goal-directed behavior; Desire; Behavioral intention

### Introduction

While global economic growth is expected to remain at around 3% in 2019 and 2020, the steady pace of expansion in the worldwide economy veils an increase in downside risks that may aggravate development challenges around the world [1]. This conflux of risks may have the potential to hinder economic activity and inflict significant damage to sustainable economic development prospects. According to International Labour Organization [2] estimates, about 174 million people are currently unemployed and an increase of approximately 40% since the early 1990s and reducing unemployment is considered as an essential challenge for policymakers [3].

To address this problem, many nations have implemented policies to encourage venture startups [4,5] as a means of building a healthier economy [6]. Startups enhance the entrepreneurial environment, which contributes to economic performance by stimulating the financial activities such as innovation, sustainable change, competition, and enhancement of fair rivalry [7,8]. Additionally, while large and small existing firms are likely to create and destroy employment simultaneously, startups always create employment and nurture skills at the outset because they have yet to experience gross job destruction [9,10].

Startups are a vital driving force in the hospitality industry, which is proliferating worldwide and has the potential to make a significant contribution to national economies in terms of both the quantity and quality of employment it generates [4]. Many existing national and company-level strategies seek to encourage startups, but it remains questionable whether these programs actually affect intention to start a new business. Earlier research has investigated antecedents of startup intention such as work environment [11] personality [12] entrepreneurship education [13] and feasibility and desirability [14]. However, as it remains unclear what factors predict startup intention, it seems necessary to examine this issue by adopting a comprehensive approach rather than from individual constructs.

To that end, the present study aims to investigate the extent to which specified individual constructs predict startup intention. Using the model of goal-directed behavior (MGB) as a theoretical frame, the empirical findings contribute both theoretical insights and managerial strategies concerning the restaurant startup intention.

### Theoretical Background

#### Attitude theory: TRA and TPB

Extensive research on the relationship between behavioral intention and actual behavior has confirmed that stronger intention is associated with a higher likelihood of performing a given behavior [15,16]. Furthermore, studies exploring the intervening variables influencing intention have employed attitude theories in various contexts, such as consumer behavior [17] marketing [18] psychology [19] and education [20].

One widely used approach is the theory of reasoned action (TRA), which was developed to account for an individual's behaviors under a high level of volitional control [21]. Given the assumption that humans are naturally rational, TRA hypothesized that actual conduct is determined exclusively by one's intention to perform the behavior, depending upon one's cognitive evaluations of the response and social pressures [22]. TRA proposed the cognitive evaluations as attitude, which is a personal judgment that favors or opposes performing a behavior based on an assessment of the consequences [23]. The social pressures are represented by a subjective norm, which relates to the perceived expectations of other persons close or important to the individual and the individual's motivation to comply [24]. In short, TRA posits that an individual's behavioral intentions are stronger when their attitude to that behavior is positive and when salient referents support that action [22,15].

However, there is low empirical support for TRA under the condition where an individual has a lack of volitional control [25]. To address this limitation, Ajzen [26] proposed the theory of planned behavior (TPB), by suggesting the third construct of perceived

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behavioral control, defined as one's "perceived ease or difficulty of performing behavior. Perceived behavioral control indicates any hindrance to performing the behavior in question, such as opportunity, time, money, knowledge, or skill [27]. While the behavioral intention is also seen to play a key role in predicting actual behavior, TPB argues that all behaviors involve non-volitional aspects (at least potentially), and that intention is, therefore, an output of motivation and ability [28]. For that reason, both volitional and non-volitional factors must be considered [29] and TPB postulates that an individual is likely to perform a particular action if they believe it will generate valuable consequences, if they believe that important referents will value the work, or if they believe they have the necessary capabilities to act [30].

### Model of goal-directed behavior (MGB)

Although there is little doubt that TPB advocates a parsimonious explanation of intentional conduct, its capacity to explain behavioral variability remains questionable [31]. For that reason, Perugini and Bagozzi [32] proposed the model of goal-directed behavior (MGB). Building on TPB, MGB posits a new determinant of behavioral intention: anticipated emotions, which prompt or discourage an individual's disposition toward a particular behavior [33]. MGB also introduces desire as a mediating factor that provides a direct stimulus for intention and transforms the motivational aspects of human behavior embedded in attitude, subjective norms, perceived behavioral control, and anticipated emotions [34].

MGB and TPB are not mutually exclusive; rather, the former is broadly construed as an extension of the latter. However, two significant differences should be noted. First, while MGB focuses on one's goal striving behavior, TPB emphasizes what the individual does or can do [35]. That is, MGB states that individuals perform a specific behavior to achieve their personal goal involved in the action and therefore, they consider the consequences of both goal attainment and failure seriously before making behavioral decisions [36]. Second, while MGB posits the indirect effects of determinants on intention through desire, TPB suggests direct relationships among the variables included in the model [34]. MGB incorporates desire on the basis that TPB fails to fully explain the motivational content required to drive intention to behavior [37]. According to MGB, desire is an essential trigger for behavioral intention; once an individual acknowledges and accepts his desire for what he acts, this will motivate the formation of an intention [32].

MGB has been actively applied in multidisciplinary contexts that include neuroscience [38] information technology [39] psychology [40] and tourism [41]. Although its effectiveness has been certified in the various academic states of affairs, researchers argued that MGB's predictive ability needs to be improved by theory falsification [42]. To which end, the present study sought to verify MGB in the context of the startup. It should be noted that anticipated emotions were excluded from the study because there is insufficient evidence that these differ from attitude. Perugini and Bagozzi [32] stated in their first MGB study that these were treated as additional explanatory variables rather than as the mutually exclusive independent variable; these emotions may contribute to attitude but lack inherent explanatory power. Anticipated emotions were further differentiated from the attitude in that they are associated with goal-related success or failure, while attitude is more self-regulated [32]. Besides, previous studies failed to distinguish between attitude and emotion. For example, Pickens [43] characterized attitudes as a complex combination of personality, beliefs, and behaviors, and Hong, Thong et al., [44] defined attitude in regards to an antecedent stimulus or attitude object, including its

cognitive, emotional, and behavioral dimensions. These formulations assume that attitude inherently entails emotional aspects. Therefore, the attitude was considered as a mental and emotional entity and has remained in the present study, but emotions were not.

## Hypothesis Development

### Relationship of attitude, desire and intention

Attitude is not an agreed construct but varies somewhat according to the research setting. Despite this inconsistency of definition, there is broad agreement that attitude develops through the evaluation of specific behaviors [45,46]. In general, the individual assesses a behavior's likely costs and benefits in deciding whether to involve in that behavior. They are more likely to form a positive attitude when the gain is perceived as more significant than the loss, in turn strengthening behavioral intention [47]. Individuals are, therefore considered more likely to perform behaviors that offer the best-predicted outcomes [48]. In the same way, it can be undertaken that an individual will show a stronger desire toward a behavior if the anticipated outcome is perceived to be positive. On that basis, attitude can be defined as "overall evaluation of specific behavior that influences one's desire to engage in that behavior" [49].

Several MGB research has denoted the relation of attitude to desire. For example, in their study of how perceptions of climate change and tourist experiences determine environmentally responsible tourist behavior, Han et al. [50] reported the mediating role of attitude through desire ( $\beta=0.202$ ,  $p<0.01$ ). In a similar study, Choi and Park [51] employed MGB to investigate duty-free users' attitudes and found empirical evidence that attitude directly influenced desire formation, which in turn had a statistically significant impact on behavioral intention. Based on these previous findings, it can be supposed that if one develops a positive attitude toward starting a new restaurant business, this attitude will enhance his desire to start a new restaurant. On that basis, the following hypothesis was formulated.

*Hypothesis 1:* Attitude is positively related to desire to start a new restaurant.

### Relationship between subjective norm and desire

Subjective norm can be explained as experienced pressure from socially or emotionally significant a individual (e.g., family, friends, and colleagues) that affects decisions about performing a particular behavior [52]. Its role has been discussed as an essential determinant of behavioral intention in various domains, including food choice [53] technology acceptance [54] e-commerce [55] and traffic regulations [56]. Despite this verified effect, the influence of subjective norms has yielded low reliability in many cases [57]. As this may be attributed to the small number of indicator items (two to three items), the present study considered four such items.

According to the MGB, the influence of subjective norms on behavioral intention is mediated by desire, and this relationship has been validated as statistically significant. For example, Song et al. (2012) [58] used the MGB to examine the effect of festival visitors' perceptions of environmental friendliness on behavioral intention. They found that the influence of subjective norms on revisit intention was mediated by desire ( $\beta=0.241$ ,  $t=3.448$ ,  $p<0.01$ ). In a similar context, [59] applied the MGB to investigate decision-making process of overseas travelers and identified the subjective norm as a significant predictor of desire that in turn influenced behavioral intention indirectly ( $\beta=0.213$ ,  $t=4.191$ ,  $p<0.001$ ). Based on this previous evidence, the following hypothesis was formulated.

*Hypothesis 2:* Subjective norm is positively related to desire to start a new restaurant.

### Relationship between perceived behavioral control and desire

Perceived behavior control refers to one's belief in his ability to perform a particular behavior [26]. As perceived inadequacy of available resources is likely to constrain decisions about whether to perform a given act [60], the strength of one's behavioral intention is expected to be influenced by whether he believes he has the necessary abilities to perform that behavior [61].

There is some empirical evidence of a relationship between perceived behavior control and desire, indicating that greater perceived behavioral control strengthens one's intention to execute the behavior. For instance, [60] employed MGB to investigate bike travelers' decisions and reported a significant relationship between perceived behavioral control and desire ( $\beta=0.139$ ,  $t=2.741$ ,  $p<0.01$ ). In a similar study, [62] found that perceived behavioral control of mobile device uses positively affected seniors' desire and behavioral intention. These results suggest that if a person feels they have the requisite resources (e.g., time, money, skills) to open a new restaurant, they are more likely to exhibit higher intention to perform that behavior. On that basis, the following hypothesis was formulated.

*Hypothesis 3:* Perceived behavioral control is positively related to desire to open a new restaurant.

### Proposed model

With comprehensive literature review, we proposed that attitude (AT), subjective norm (SN), perceived behavioral control (PBC) positively affect one's desire (DS), which mediates the relationships between the three independent variables and startup intention (SI) (Figure 1). It is important to note that the specified correlations among the three independent variables are somewhat, not overly, associated with the increased model accuracy [63].

## Methods

### Sample

Convenience sampling was used to recruit current employees of foodservice companies in South Korea for a questionnaire-based survey. A researcher contacted human resource managers in many such firms and the survey questionnaire was distributed among who agreed with the research goal. In total, 410 self-administered questionnaires were distributed; excluding incomplete surveys, 379 were returned, representing a 92.4% response rate.

## Measurement development

MGB measurement scales were modified to fit the restaurant startup context. Five multi-item constructs (AT, SN, PBC, DI, SI) were measured by 17 survey items on a 7-point Likert scale, ranging from 1 (strongly disagree) to 7 (strongly agree). It is suggested that multiple indicators can enhance theoretical validity by addressing various features of the construct [64].

For present purposes, attitude was defined as the individual's overall evaluation of startups, operationalized as four items [65]. Subjective norm was defined as perceived social pressure from one's referents concerning whether to perform a behavior, and this was again measured by four indicators [32,65]. Perceived behavioral control was defined as one's ability to carry out behavior and was measured by three statements[65]. Desire was defined as one's strong wish to start a new restaurant, based on three measures derived from [65,66]. Startup intention was defined as one's perceived likelihood of engaging in a behavior, again based on three measures [32,65].

To establish face validity, questionnaires were reviewed by five graduate students and three professors from a university hospitality department. During the review process, inadequate or unclear questionnaires were refined twice. Once the review was complete, a pretest was conducted with 30 potential survey participants.

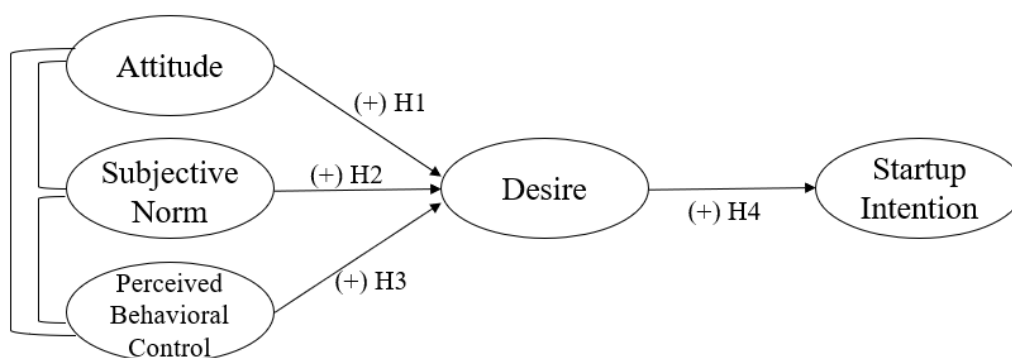
## Data analysis

Structural Equation Modeling (SEM), using AMOS 21 with maximum likelihood estimation, was conducted to test the proposed model. SEM is particularly suitable to check the relevance of MGB in predicting startup intention since the five primary constructs included in the study are all latent variables that need to be tested for statistical significance [67]. The SEM technique is based on two-step method where initially the relationship between theoretical constructs and their observable indicators is assessed to ensure its accuracy, and once the first step is set, the research model is estimated by testing the research hypotheses [68]. Composite reliabilities and validity measures were also checked to confirm internal consistency and validity of the constructs. The model fit was examined by evaluating various fit indices such as normed chi-square ( $\chi^2/df$ ), comparative fit index (CFI), and root mean square error of approximation (RMSEA) which are necessary for single-group analysis [69].

## Results

### Sample profile

Table 1 provides a demographic profile of the sample. The sample



**Figure 1:** Proposed research model.

Variable	Group	Frequency (N=379)	%
Gender	Male	198	52.2
	Female	181	47.8
Age	20s	132	34.8
	30s	106	28.0
	40s	88	23.2
	Older than 50s	53	14.0
Education	High school	170	44.9
	College	195	51.5
	Grad school	14	3.7
Monthly Income (US \$)	20,000 - 30,000	218	57.5
	30,001 - 40,000	95	25.1
	40,001 - 50,000	39	10.3
	50,001 - 60,000	13	3.4
	More than 60,001	14	3.8

**Table 1:** Participants profile.

Scale/Item	Standardized Regression Weights
<b>Attitudes [65]</b>	
I think that the startups would be a meaningful behavior	0.875
... would be a valuable behavior	0.933
... would be a beneficial behavior	0.802
... would be a smart behavior	0.629
<b>Subjective Norms [32, 65]</b>	
People around me would think positively of the startups	0.827
... would support my startups	0.898
... would understand my startups	0.876
... would recommend my startups	0.791
<b>Perceived Behavioral Control [65]</b>	
In general, there would be no problem for the startups	0.738
Money would be no problem for the startups	0.781
Time would be no problem for the startups	0.647
<b>Desires [65,66]</b>	
Through the startups, I would like to obtain experiences	0.823
... I would like to obtain pleasure	0.850
... I would like to obtain unforgettable experiences	0.830
My willpower for the startups is energetic	0.868
<b>Behavioral Intention [32,65]</b>	
I plan to open my restaurant	0.937
I intend to open my restaurant	0.948
I will make every effort to open my restaurant	0.879

**Table 2:** Confirmatory factor analysis results and complete text of scale items.

contained more male (N=198, 52.2%) than female (N=181, 47.8%) and had a wide distribution of ages, with most in their 20s (N=132, 34.8%), followed by 30s (N=106, 28.0%). Most participants had monthly income between \$20,000 and \$30,000 and most were college educated (N=195, 51.5%) or less (N=170, 44.9%).

### Measurement model, reliability and validity

The full read of all multi-item variables with the standardized regression coefficients is exhibited in Table 2, as well as Figure 2 alongside the hypotheses testing results. All t-value was statistically significant in the measurement model associated with any estimated coefficients [70].

Additionally, any multicollinearity issue that might untowardly influence the accuracy of outcomes Kaplan [71] was not detected.

The initial model showed good fit indices (normed  $\chi^2=3.268$ , CFI=0.945, RMSEA=0.077). The modification indices were examined to check whether a strong error covariance exists and found two indicators ("I think that the startups would be a beneficial behavior" and "I think that startups would be a smart behavior") both measuring attitude construct highly co-varied. After this modification, the fit indices were slightly improved and showed adequate fit based on the suggested criterion (normed  $\chi^2=2.941$ , CFI=0.953, RMSEA=0.072). It is important to note that this modification did not affect the magnitude of the structural coefficients or relationships [69].

To check convergent and discriminant validity, average variance extracted (AVE) and composite reliability (CR) values were calculated (Table 3) all were greater than the minimum threshold value of 0.5 and 0.7 respectively [72]. It indicates a sufficient level of convergent validity for the measurement model [69]. Also, the discriminant validity is



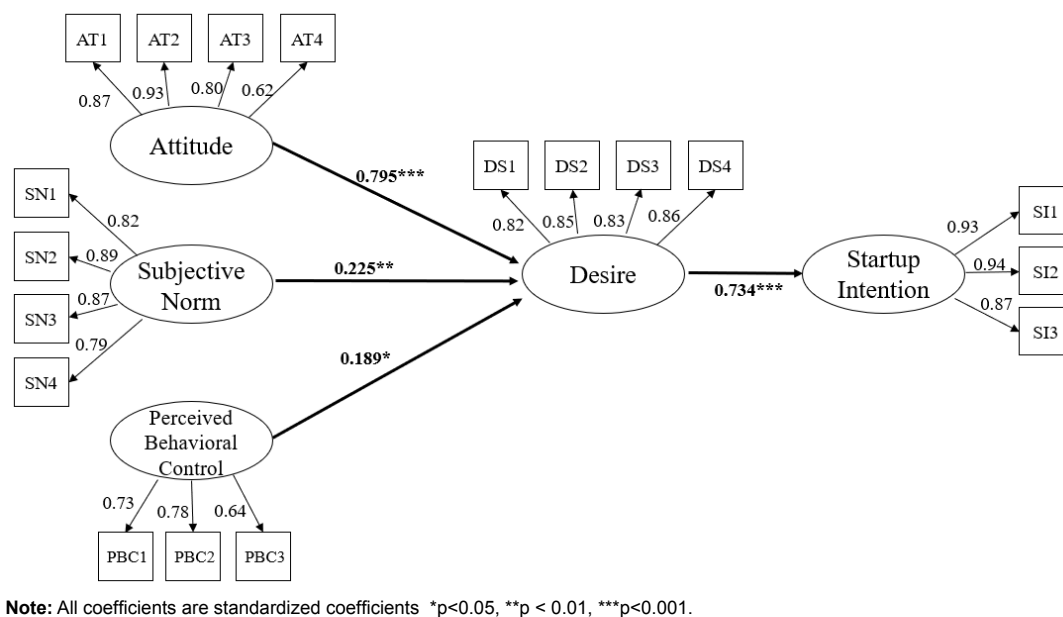


Figure 2: Model results.

	DS	AT	SN	PBC	IT
DS	<b>0.843</b>				
AT	0.619 (0.383)	<b>0.826</b>			
SN	0.467 (0.218)	0.502 (0.252)	<b>0.849</b>		
PBC	0.347 (0.120)	0.303 (0.091)	0.460 (0.211)	<b>0.724</b>	
SI	0.701 (0.491)	0.560 (0.313)	0.541 (0.292)	0.414 (0.171)	<b>0.922</b>
CR	0.908	0.895	0.911	0.767	0.944
AVE	0.711	0.682	0.720	0.524	0.850
Mean	3.42	3.42	3.27	2.68	3.46
Std. Dev	1.20	1.09	1.12	1.21	1.28

Note: DS: Desire; AT: Attitude; SN: Subjective Norm; PBC: Perceived Behavioral Control; SI: Startup Intention; CR: Composite Reliability; AVE: Average Variance Extracted; Std. Dev: Standard deviation. The diagonal values are root of AVE values (in bold). Squared correlation coefficient values are presented in parentheses.

Table 3: Reliability and validity results.

confirmed by assessing that the square root of AVE of each construct, and all were greater than the correlation coefficients for corresponding inter-constructs [73].

## Hypothesis testing

Structural model also met the given guidelines (normed  $\chi^2=3.218$ , CFI=0.945, RMSE =0.077). Hypothesized relationships appear justifiable as summarized in Figure 2. First, the relationship between attitude and desire on the startup is supported (hypothesis 1,  $\beta=0.795$ ,  $t=7.946$ ,  $p<0.001$ ). It indicates that one who has positive thoughts on the startup is likely to have positive desire, resulting in a positive intention to open the restaurant. This result arguably supports Krueger's [74] notion that early exposure to the business industry has a significant influence on both attitudes and intentions. Second, the relationship between subjective norms and desire is supported (hypothesis 2,  $\beta=0.225$ ,  $t=2.225$ ,  $p=0.001$ ). It implies that deciding on a certain performance is influenced by people who have different views, ideas, and approaches [75]. Third, the relationship between perceived behavioral control and desire is supported (hypothesis 3,  $\beta=0.189$ ,  $t=2.522$ ,  $p=0.012$ ), showing that time and financial resources can act a determinant role in enhancing one's desire to opening a new business [50]. Last, the relationship between desire and startup intention is supported (hypothesis 4,  $\beta=0.734$ ,  $t=14.493$ ,  $p<0.001$ ). It intimates

that one who has higher desirability is likely to perform a particular behavior more strongly than one who has less [36].

## Discussion

The startup has been characterized as a means of energizing economic performance. However, few previous studies have addressed the antecedents of startup intention or the extent to which that intention can be predicted, especially in hospitality contexts. To address this gap, the present study employed a revised version of MGB (as an extension of TPB) to test the predictive validity of antecedents of restaurant startup intention. The findings suggest that the proposed determinants (attitude, subjective norm, and perceived behavioral control) had a significant positive impact on desire, which in turn affected startup intention. Among these antecedents, desire was identified as the most significant predictor of intention, which aligns with earlier findings [76].

Overall, these results confirm the validity of the proposed theoretical model. As the goal here is not merely to encourage individuals' startup intention but to strengthen their ability to maintain long-term business success, the model's validity must also be evaluated in the context of practical business strategies.

As a first practical input, it seems likely that attitude (whether favorable or unfavorable) can be enhanced in multiple ways. As attitude formation involves an extended ongoing practicum. Krueger [74] exposure to industry settings can help to improve positive thinking and strengthens decision-making ability. To that end, there is a need for programs that provide direct experience of restaurant work to enhance understanding of the foodservice business and to develop genuinely positive attitudes to market. Early in-school startup practice can also build positive attitudes, engendering higher startup desire [4]. Capstone courses that require students to implement textbook knowledge in real industry conditions seem crucial for young prospective entrepreneurs. Helms and Whitesell [77] for instance, in developing a business plan, qualified students can benefit from opportunities to run a business using their method with inputs from industry experts.

Second, subjective norms can be enhanced by developing networks that encourage stakeholder involvement. By engaging in online and offline programs, individuals hoping to start a new business can communicate their startup intention to relevant stakeholders (e.g., government, company, family, friend), who can make it easier for nascent entrepreneurs to pursue the startup process. Katz and Gartner [78] noted that people could clarify their startup intentions and objectives by interacting with stakeholders and are more likely to be successful in procuring resources, so reducing volitional willingness and increasing the likelihood of business success [79]. Such programs can also serve as a vehicle for meeting other pre-entrepreneurs. As a means of sharing ideas, knowledge, skills, and resources; this can provide a feeling of support that motivates the realization of their dream [80].

Third, perceived behavioral control (volitional willingness) is commonly seen as subjective rather than objective in other words, it is less about the available time or money than the perception that those resources are perceived as sufficient for the intended purpose. To enhance one's perceived behavioral control, government-level supports such as startup funding and startup-friendly policies can help to stimulate startup intentions. Cancino et al. [81] suggested that public supply of resources at an early stage can contribute more than private venture capital to making a business sustainable. Additionally, as obstacles tend to be encountered over time [82] such external supports (which usually allow a specified period to implement decisions) are more likely to propel entrepreneurs from the preparatory stage to execution. As noted above, creating linkages with educational institutions is also vital in enhancing volitional willingness. Improved entrepreneurial education (e.g., venture financing, managerial operations) and training (e.g., internship, capstone) can be expected to strengthen critical skills and knowledge, boosting confidence to perform a given task [83]. Linan [84] noted that entrepreneurship education also plays a significant role in promoting a more positive entrepreneurial culture and entrepreneurial attitudes in society as a whole [85].

Finally, desire interest or motivation can be fostered by strengthening favorable attitudes, providing strong support, and building confidence. Desire can be also increased by providing sufficient evidence that startups can yield valuable outcomes. When a particular behavior entails potentially significant losses and/or gains, this amplifies the tendency to gather information to confirm a favored result [86]. For that reason, it is crucial to convince the potential entrepreneur that they can generate positive outcomes, based on many positive subsequences such as enthusiasm, persistence, and motivation [87].

## Conclusion

Presented findings provide both theoretical and managerial implication. From a theoretical perspective, this study extends the applicability of MGB by testing the proposed model in the context of restaurant startups. The findings provide empirical validation of MGB's predictive value, in turn deepening the conceptualization of MGB. From a practical perspective, the results inform specific strategies to enhance startup intention that are of relevance both for individuals starting new businesses and for national efforts to stimulate economic growth.

The study has some limitations that should be addressed in future research. The first limitation is associated with the respondents. As the research employed convenience sampling method, the research subjects were selected based on their accessibilities. As a result, they may not be representative of the population of the interests. Future studies are recommended to apply a more generalizable approach in data collection (e.g., probability sampling) to assess the same topic and it may substantiate the findings from the current study. Although mostly consistent with previous studies, these results may not be generalized to other startup contexts because the data relate only to current employees in foodservice companies. Additional research is therefore recommended to assess whether there is any significant difference in the magnitude or impact of each MGB construct between currently employed and non-working individuals. The other limitation is related to the research model. The study did not address anticipated positive and negative emotions. Even though this decision was theoretically based, future research should include emotion variables to examine whether the emotion is seen to differ from attitude and should be included in the startup studies.

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