

# **The Influence of Consumers' Implicit Self-Theories on Homestay Accommodation Selection**

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**KEYWORDS:** Homestays; accommodation choice; implicit self-theories; entity theorist; incremental theorist; signalling mechanism

## **ABSTRACT**

In this study we aim to investigate whether entity and incremental theorists' decision to choose/not choose homestay accommodation can be explained by their implicit self-theories. Drawing on data solicited from in-depth interviews with 44 travellers, we found entity theorists chose homestays because homestays align with their personal traits and offer outcomes they desired. Incremental theorists chose homestays since they perceived the act affirms their growth traits and homestays provide opportunities of learning about culture and gaining new skills. Besides the initial decision, consumers' implicit self-theories are found to elicit some influence on their decision of choosing/not choosing homestays in future.

## **1. INTRODUCTION**

Being a type of peer-to-peer accommodation that enables tourists to stay in privately-owned and surplus lodging facilities, homestay accommodation (hereinafter referred to as homestays) garnered much attention from scholars and practitioners in recent years. Kulshreshtha and Kulshreshtha (2019) illustrate that homestays grew radically in the Indian hospitality sector in the past decade. Zhao and colleagues (2020) report that the number of homestays available for lease in mainland China increased by 126% during the period 2016-2019, while Kontogeorgopoulos and colleagues (2015) also acknowledge the rise of homestays in Thailand. A recent report published by The World Bank Group (2018) delineates that the development of homestays can benefit emerging economies by attracting tourists who are interested in a community-based tourism experience. Since homestays can attract tourists who desire to relax in an informal and culturally authentic environment, many researchers (e.g., Ngo, Lohmann, & Hales, 2020; Pasanchay & Scott, 2021) underscore that homestays have now become a critical component in the tourism development plan of developing countries.

Considering the growth in both size and significance of homestays in the tourism context, the body of literature about homestays in the tourism context has been proliferating in the past decade (see Figure 1). Over 900 articles pertaining to homestays and tourism were published and catalogued in Google Scholar between 2017 and 2018.

Another 1,580 homestay and tourism-related articles were published between 2019 and 2020. While homestays have been intensively documented in the tourism literature, extant studies about homestays mostly focus on supplier- and management-related issues (e.g., Bhalla, Coghlan, & Bhattacharya, 2016; Sen & Walter, 2020; Tavakoli, Mura, & Rajaratnam, 2017). Besides a few notable exceptions (e.g., Rasoolimanesh, Dahalan, & Jaafar, 2016; Zhao et al., 2020), consumer-related studies are generally scarce and knowledge about how consumers reach the selection decision is extremely limited.

[Insert Figure 1 here]

Khoo-Lattimore, Prayag, and Cheah (2015) state that the examination of consumers' accommodation choice process can advance theoretical knowledge on consumer decision-making styles. Chen, Tsai, and Chiu (2017) also opine that the results from those accommodation selection studies can equip practitioners with actionable clues for improving their targeting strategy. Considering the theoretical and practical significance of this topic, numerous studies have been conducted to investigate determinants affecting consumers' selection of commercial accommodation like motels (Lockyer & Roberts, 2009), self-catering accommodation (Martín, Román, & Mendoza, 2018), bed-and-breakfast establishments (Hsiao & Chuang, 2015), and capsule hotels (Lee, Lee, & Moon, 2018). Undeniably, the studies listed above make many contributions to knowledge and practice. However, given that homestays differ from commercial accommodation in terms of location, facilities, management, and service style (Lynch, 1999; McIntosh, Lynch, & Sweeney, 2011), a study focusing on consumers' decision of choosing/not choosing homestays is considered essential because the set of determinants affecting one's selection of commercial accommodation may not be applicable to the context of homestays.

Besides the imbalanced scholarly attention paid to the question of how consumers decide whether to choose/not choose homestays, the scarcity of research examining how consumer characteristics and particularly psychographic characteristics affect one's accommodation selection is another void among prior studies. As the representation of one's lay beliefs about the mutability of personal traits, many social psychology and

consumer psychology researchers hold that implicit self-theories are a powerful belief system that can induce downstream impact on various facets of individuals' daily life and behaviour (e.g., Jain, Mathur, & Maheswaran, 2009; Park & John, 2018). Founded in social psychology, implicit self-theories assert that people can be divided into two groups according to their beliefs about the stability of human attributes. The first group is entity theorists, who believe in entity theory and view personal attributes as eternally fixed. The second group is incremental theorists, who believe in incremental theory and view personal attributes as alterable (Dweck, 1999).

Several studies empirically confirm the explanatory power of implicit self-theories in justifying individuals' evaluation of employee performance (Heslin, Latham, & VandeWalle, 2005), organisation's past and present reputation (Septianto, 2020), financial decisions (Rai & Lin, 2019), product advertisement (Park & John, 2012), and product selection (Hogreve, Matta, Hettich, & Reczek, 2020). Rai and Lin (2019) show that incremental theorists prefer risk-seeking investments because incremental theorists tend to be forward-thinking and sensitive to positive outcomes. By contrast, entity theorists often opt for risk-averse investments because they are prevention-focused and sensitive to negative outcomes. Adapting this theory to the domain of homestay selection, since entity theorists hold rigid mindsets and are risk-averse (Carnevale, Yucel-Aybat, & Kachersky, 2018), entity theorists are expected to be less receptive to atypical tourist accommodation like homestays. Conversely, given that incremental theorists are typically open-minded in view of their growth mindset (Dweck, Chiu, & Hong, 1995), they are more receptive to novel and unusual ideas. Homestays are thus more coherent with and welcomed by incremental theorists.

To extend the applicability of implicit self-theories in the tourism and hospitality contexts, in this study, we aim to investigate whether entity and incremental theorists' decision of choosing/not choosing homestay accommodation can be explained by their implicit self-theories and associated behavioural mechanisms. Being one of the first attempts to connect consumers' implicit self-theories with tourist behaviour, this research will complement prior literature (e.g., Hogreve et al., 2020; Rai & Lin, 2019) by exposing how consumers' implicit self-theories shape their judgment and decisions about homestay selection. Moreover, considering that extant knowledge about how consumers reach the selection decision of homestays is limited at the moment of writing, this research will

redress this void and contribute some new knowledge to the body of research about consumer behaviour in the tourism context.

## **2. LITERATURE REVIEW**

### **2.1. Homestay Accommodation**

Despite the absence of a consensus definition shared among researchers and practitioners, a homestay typically refers to a type of accommodation where visitors pay to stay and share a residence with a host and/or a family in the destination to which they are traveling (Lynch, 2005; Musa, Kayat, & Thirumoorthi, 2010). Unlike typical tourist accommodation like hotels and motels, the presentation mode of homestays varies across different countries. In Australia and New Zealand, a homestay generally refers to farm stays (Pearce, 1990). In the United Kingdom, a homestay is a type of accommodation that can allow students to live with locals in order to improve their English proficiency (Tucker & Lynch, 2005). In some developing countries like Costa Rica and Nepal, homestays are a vital component of community-based ecotourism programmes (Kwaramba, Lovett, Louw, & Chipumuro, 2012; Sen & Walter, 2020). While a common definition and presentation mode of homestays is yet to be reached, homestays are proven to be capable of creating a relaxing break in a homelike atmosphere (Moscardo, 2009) and allowing guests to experience the host culture in an authentic way (Yasami, Awang, & Teoh, 2017).

As homestays have become increasingly popular among modern tourists, they have attracted much scholarly attention in recent years. Diverse topics about suppliers and management of homestays have been investigated; these include but are not limited to the investigation of homestays' unique selling propositions (Lynch, 1999), the environmental impact of homestay facilities (Tsai, Lin, Hwang, & Huang, 2014), dilemma and challenges of commercialising authentic homes (Kontogeorgopoulos et al., 2015), hosts' personal relationship with their commercialised home (McIntosh et al., 2011), as well as the role of homestays in community-based ecotourism development (Bhalla et al., 2016).

Without a doubt, the abovementioned studies enrich theoretical knowledge and provide much insight for homestay suppliers to optimize their operation. However, given that homestays are primarily developed for travellers, understanding consumers' perceptions and decisions to choose homestays is needed, but is lacking. Agyeiwaah and colleagues are the few who attempted to examine travellers' decision to choose homestays. In Agyeiwaah et al.'s (2013) study, the researchers reveal that socio-demographics (e.g., age and marital status) are influential factors affecting tourists' motivation for choosing homestays. In their study, Agyeiwaah, Akyeampong, Amenumey, and Boakye (2014) identify five reasons (i.e., cultural immersion, community service and development, security and warmth of home, social interaction, and cheap price) that account for volunteer tourists' preference of homestays. Zhao et al.'s (2020) recent study reports that female business owners and enterprise employees chose to stay in homestays because the act can reflect their unique taste and social status. While interesting findings are reported, the research subjects of existing studies only recruited those who actually stayed in homestays. In other words, extant studies did not provide much insight about those who did not choose homestays as well as how consumer characteristics shape their selection decisions.

## **2.2. Implicit Self-Theories**

### **2.2.1. Central Tenet**

As a proxy of one's lay belief about the mutability of personal traits, the theorem of implicit self-theories suggests that an individual's lay belief would guide their judgment as well as reaction toward phenomena (Dweck, 1999; Hong, Chiu, Dweck, & Sacks, 1997). Generally speaking, human beings can be divided into two groups based upon their lay beliefs about the stability of human and non-human attributes (Dweck et al., 1995). The first group is labelled entity theorists and assume that personal traits are fixed and inalterable. For entity theorists, human beings are born with certain features; actions and efforts to overcome that reality are meaningless because they are likely to be in vain. The second group is labelled incremental theorist and they assume that personal traits are mutable through time and effort. Incremental theorists believe that human attributes like intelligence and culture can grow through effort (Jain & Weiten, 2020).

### 2.2.2. Applications

Literature in various disciplines has proved that consumers' implicit self-belief exerts some influence on their product selection as well as judgement about social groups, self-concepts, and others (e.g., Dweck, 2007; Jost, Rudman, Blair, Carney, Dasgupta, Glaser, & Hardin, 2009; Roy & Naidoo, 2021; Septianto, 2020). For example, in the advertising discipline, Cinelli and Yang's (2016) study outlines the differences in entity and incremental theorists' reactions to the use of larger-sized models in advertising. In the retail field, Hogreve et al.'s (2020) study shows that parents with a growth mindset were less likely to order healthy side items for their children than those with a fixed mindset.

The impact of implicit self-theories on managers' performance appraisal judgments has also been confirmed in human resources management studies. Since entity theorists hold fixed mindsets when assessing a person or phenomenon, entity theorists are less inclined to accept advice from other people and alter their judgment. Conversely, incremental theorists deem that people's personal attributes are mutable and their judgment about a person or a phenomenon can be developed and reformed (Heslin et al., 2005; Hong et al., 1997). Since incremental theorists often pay attention to their self-improvement, appraisers who hold incremental thinking often rebuild the judgement of an appraisal according to its improving attributes.

### 2.2.3. Key Differences between Entity and Incremental Theorists

Table 1 outlines the difference in behavioural characteristics between entity and incremental theorists. In essence, entity and incremental theorists differ in three aspects.

[Insert Table 1 here]

#### *Behavioural Orientation*

Mathur, Chun, and Maheswara (2016) assert that people with a growth mindset (incremental theorists) tend to engage in systematic processing, while those with a fixed

mindset (entity theorists) generally prefer a heuristic approach to process information. Corresponding to the notion shared by Cacioppo and Petty's (1979) dual process model, Mathur et al. (2016) suggest the difference in behavioural manifestations between entity and incremental theorists can be ascribed to their process- versus outcome-focused orientation. Specifically, those with a fixed mindset are mostly outcome-focused, and they usually focus on *what* benefits a product can offer to consumers. Since entity theorists perceive positively- and negatively-framed messages as having the same outcome, manipulating the messages does not induce any influence in persuasion for entity theorists (Jain et al., 2009). On the contrary, those with a growth mindset are process-focused, and they tend to focus on *how* a product delivers benefits to consumers. Since incremental theorists perceive differently-framed messages as dissimilar, framing the message positively or negatively would influence persuasion for those with a growth mindset (Jain et al., 2009).

### *Signalling Mechanism*

Mathur et al. (2016) report that variations in the signalling mechanism are a possible reason that can explain why entity and incremental theorists behave differently. According to Mathur et al. (2016), entity theorists are more interested in exhibiting their positive traits to the self and others whereas incremental theorists seek to self-enhance and demonstrate/confirm their growth traits. Given that entity theorists want to signal that they possess desirable traits, they tend to choose mature brands that possess desirable qualities (Park & John, 2018). Mathur et al. (2016) even posit that entity theorists could be long-term customers of mature brands because the consistent image of these brands aligns with their fixed mindset. Unlike entity theorists, incremental theorists tend to be more interested in brands with qualities of innovative learning and of being hard-working (Aaker, 1997). As these brands are closer aligned to those with a growth mindset, it is understandable that incremental theorists express a more favourable attitude toward the advertised product when self-improvement advertisement appeal is adopted (Park & John, 2012). Mathur et al. (2016) echo and supplement this by affirming that incremental theorists are less brand loyal because they are more likely to try new products and different experiences.



### *Sensitivity to Risk*

Some consumer psychology and business studies suggest that implicit self-theories can manifest in product selection because entity and incremental theorists have different sensitivities to risk. As underscored by Sevincer, Kluge, and Oettingen (2014), entity theorists generally focus on demonstrating their present ability and strive to avoid negative evaluations of their present self. Since entity theorists are more sensitive to negative outcomes and present realities, entity theorists tend to prefer risk-averse options (e.g., prestigious brands) and behaviours (e.g., investing in a low-risk fund) (Park & John, 2018; Rai & Lin, 2019). Conversely, incremental theorists are more open to any negative or positive outcomes and desire better futures since they are driven towards growth and advancement. Given that incremental theorists actively seek to improve their future self, incremental theorists are prone to worry less about uncertainty and open themselves to different experiences (Mathur et al., 2016; Montford, Leary, & Nagel, 2019).

## **3. METHODOLOGY**

### **3.1. Research Approach**

In this study, we employ the interpretive paradigm as its philosophical positioning. From the ontological standpoint, the interpretive paradigm assumes that reality is known through shared, subjective understanding of participants' views of the situation being studied (Cohen, Manion, & Morrison, 2007). This means that different realities can be applied to the same social phenomenon (Creswell & Poth, 2018). To thoroughly understand whether and how consumers' implicit self-theories are associated with their decisions of choosing/not choosing homestay accommodation, following Tribe (2001), the qualitative research approach and specifically the semi-structured interview was employed for data collection. As stressed by Patton (1990), the major advantages of using interviews are the opportunities of acquiring insightful answers and unexpected information on the topic through the use of probing questions. Moreover, interviewees have the possibility to ask interviewers for clarification in case of any misunderstandings or uncertainties.

### 3.2. Data Collection

#### 3.2.1. Stage I: Recruitment of Respondents

The target respondents of this study are self-defined entity and incremental theorists who travelled abroad in the past 12 months. Convenience and snowball sampling were deployed with the aim of recruiting various research subjects and understanding the study phenomenon thoroughly (Patton, 1990). During the period October 2018 to January 2019, the lead and second authors recruited volunteers to participate in a research study via different social media platforms (e.g., Facebook and WeChat). A total of 64 people responded and agreed to participate in this study. All respondents gave positive answers to the two screening questions (Q1: *Did you travel abroad in the past 12 months?* and Q2: *Do you have a full-time job?*), confirming that they are financially secure travellers who travelled abroad in the past 12 months.

#### 3.2.2. Stage II: Tendency Check

In Stage II, the qualified respondents were first asked to complete the tendency (toward entity or incremental theory) check. Following Dweck et al.'s (1995) seminal paper, respondents' tendency toward entity or incremental theory was measured according to their answers to three questions – Q1: *The kind of person someone is, is something very basic about them and it can't be changed very much*; Q2: *People can do things differently, but the important parts of who they are can't really be changed*; and Q3: *Everyone is a certain kind of person and there is not much that can be done to really change that*. Respondents needed to indicate their level of agreement to each of those statements using a six-point Likert scale (1: strongly agree – 6: strongly disagree). The scores on those three items were then averaged to derive an overall score.

Like other studies that applied implicit self-theories (e.g., Hong et al., 1997), this study only retained those with a distinct tendency to participate in in-depth interviews. From the 44 respondents with this distinct tendency, 23 were entity theorists (whose overall score was 3.0 or below) and another 21 respondents were incremental theorists (whose overall score was 4.0 or above). Since some stayed in homestay accommodation

in the past while some did not, they were classified into four groups. Group 1 (G1) were entity theorists who stayed in homestay accommodation before, while Group 2 (G2) were entity theorists who did not stay in homestay accommodation before. Group 3 (G3) were incremental theorists who stayed in homestay accommodation before, while Group 4 (G4) were incremental theorists who did not stay in homestay accommodation before.

Table 2 summarises their profiles. Of those 23 entity theorists who participated in the study, nearly 80% are aged below 35 (avg. age = 30.4). Most of the female entity theorists (91.6%) had homestay experience, while only one-third of male entity theorists (36.4%) stayed in homestay in their previous trips. Almost 70% of participants from this group came from Macau and Hong Kong. With regards to those 21 participants who tended to believe in incremental theory (i.e., incremental theorists), over three-fourth were female (76%) and aged below 30 (76.1%, avg. age = 28.2). Most of the recruited incremental theorists had stayed in homestay at least one time in the past ( $n_{G3} = 15$ ;  $n_{G4} = 6$ ).

[Insert Table 2 here]

### 3.2.3. Stage III: In-Depth Interviews

After completing the tendency check, a semi-structured interview was conducted with each respondent to understand their justifications for choosing/not choosing homestays while traveling. The interviews were guided by questions pertaining to their: (1) reasons for choosing/not choosing homestays (e.g., *why did you choose to stay in homestay accommodation while traveling?*); (2) process involved in finding and selecting those homestays (e.g., *how did you find, select, and reserve that chosen homestay?*); (3) mutability of homestay choice (e.g., *will you stay in homestay accommodation in future? If yes, why? If no, why not?*); and (4) personal profile (e.g., age, country of origin).

The interviews were conducted in English, Mandarin, and Cantonese because the respondents came from different countries. On average, each interview lasted approximately 30 minutes. All discussion contents were audiotaped after obtaining respondents' consent. All discussion content was later transcribed and translated from

Mandarin and Cantonese into English. To assure the accuracy of the translation, the back-translation approach was undertaken by four bilingual translators (Brislin & Freimanis, 1995). The interview transcripts were also proofread by the corresponding respondents to ensure there was no missing or inaccurate content.

### **3.3. Data Analysis**

Considering that interpretive paradigm was employed, in this study, the researchers' role is to "*understand and describe meaning*" through the eyes of "*social actors*" (Gephart, 2004, p. 457). Similar to the approach taken by Oktadiana, Pearce, and Li (2020), conventional content analysis was employed to analyse the interview content. Specifically, all interview transcripts were analysed using the three-stage approach (i.e., open coding, axial coding, and selective coding) to acquire insights and knowledge (Matteucci & Gnoth, 2017). In the open coding stage, the first and second authors made sense of data by reading through all interview transcripts multiple times. Moreover, the manifest content in the data were identified and categorized into different first-order concepts. In the axial coding stage, we categorized those first-order concepts into broader second-order themes using our own interpretations. In the selective coding stage, we revisited the past literature and gathered similar second-order themes into several overarching dimensions.

Alike other qualitative studies (e.g., Kislali, Kavaratzis, & Saren, 2020; Rodrigo & Turnbull, 2019), the content analysis was jointly conducted by the lead and second authors to minimize personal bias. The authors conducted the analysis separately and then cross-compared the results within the research team. Glaser and Strauss's (2017) constant comparative method was also adopted in this study. The content analysis was repeated multiple times to ensure the accuracy and reliability of coding (Hennink, Hutter, & Bailey, 2011).

## **4. FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION**

### **4.1. Why Entity Theorists Choose to Stay in Homestays**

#### **4.1.1. Homestays Match Decision Makers' Personal Traits**

Of those entity theorists who stayed in homestays before, one third justified choosing homestays because they matched their personal traits. For instance, a Chinese female respondent stated, *"I am a very casual person. Accommodation does not need to be good and luxurious. I am fine with homestays as long as they are clean"* (EY-12). Another Malaysian male respondent said, *"I am quite a freestyle person. Sometimes I don't want to stay in a hotel, so I choose a homestay"* (EY-3). One male respondent from Hong Kong noted that homestays were chosen because this choice confirmed his personal characteristics. He declared, *"Since I see myself as an outgoing and adventurous person, and because my wife and I are keen on pursuing new and innovative traveling experience, I therefore often choose to stay in homestays"* (EY-7). Park and John (2012) highlight that entity theorists often prefer brands that possess desirable qualities in order to signal their possession of the same qualities. Since entity theorists deemed that homestays possess some characteristics that match their personal traits, it is therefore understandable that entity theorists chose to stay in homestays.

#### 4.1.2. Homestays Offer Outcomes Desired by Decision Makers

Two thirds of entity theorists suggested that homestays were selected because they offer the expected outcomes or performance they desired. An interviewee from the United States elucidated, *"as long as it is a nice, clean, big, and luxurious house ... I am fine with choosing a homestay"* (EY-6). Some entity theorists distinctly mentioned the act of choosing homestays is an outcome-oriented decision. For example, a Belarusian female respondent said, *"I want to have some authentic experiences ... that's why I chose to stay in a homestay"* (EY-10). Two additional entity theorists shared a similar notion while replying to the question of why they chose homestays in their previous trips. One Macanese female respondent proclaimed, *"I chose homestays mainly because of their [low] price"* (EY-14), while another Chinese female respondent suggested that *"the homestay's easy accessibility to the airport is the leading reason why my travel companions and I chose it"* (EY-9). Considering that entity theorists focus on outcomes during the decision-making process (Mathur et al., 2016; Yin, Yu, & Poon, 2016), even though homestays are not typical tourist accommodation, entity theorists would still consider them when the outcome is deemed satisfactory.

#### 4.1.3. Homestays Heuristics Ease Decision Making

Many entity theorists stated that they chose homestay in their previous trips because it has heuristics that ease their decision making. According to the sharing of a female respondent from Hong Kong, she stayed in a homestay while traveling to Kenting (Taiwan) because “*the review photos showed that the homestay was a Western-style flat, which is the type I personally like*” (EY-8). Interviewee EY-9 mentioned that she stayed in a homestay while visiting Phuket (Thailand) because “*the photos available on Airbnb show that the homestay was clean and well-decorated*”. Interviewee EY-14 stated, “*that homestay was chosen because most review comments [of that homestay] on Airbnb were positive*”. This evidence shows that entity theorists appear to rely on heuristics in deciding whether homestays are chosen. Normally, these heuristics are aligned with those original stereotypes held about typical commercial accommodation, which is the hotel in this case.

One interesting finding that deserves noting is that entity theorists shared the stereotype that homestays were the *natural* accommodation choice in some destinations (e.g., Kyoto, Kenting) as well as while traveling in a big group. Although only a few interviewees in G1 agreed that they chose to stay in homestays because of this stereotypical thought, the high frequency of its being mentioned supports Levy, Stroessner, and Dweck’s (1998) assertion that entity theorists often consider stereotypes in decision-making.

## 4.2. Why Incremental Theorists Choose to Stay in Homestays

#### 4.2.1. Homestays Match Decision Makers’ Growth Traits

In accordance with the central tenet of increment theory, over half of increment theorists chose to stay in homestays in their previous trips because homestays match their growth traits. An interviewee who resides in Macao (IY-1) said she often stayed in homestays while traveling because she is “*an open-minded person who is eager to try new things*”. Another interviewee from mainland China made a similar assertion during her interview. She said, “*I am not a fan of tradition and I always aspire to find innovative experiences. Hence, I prefer choosing homestays instead of hotels*” (IY-3). Besides IY-1 and IY-3,

Interviewee IY-6 stated that he likes homestays because he “[likes] to explore things such as stories of the owner’s family”. Similarly, Interviewee IY-9 prefers homestays because she is a “curious person who prefers staying in places which have different layouts, designs and ambiance”. Considering that incremental theorists often seek to signal or affirm their growth traits (Mathur et al., 2016; Park & John, 2012), adding that homestays feature similar traits in view of their novelty and innovativeness, it is understandable that incremental theorists chose to stay in homestays while traveling.

#### 4.2.2. Homestays Offer Learning Opportunities to Decision Makers

Several incremental theorists commented that they chose homestays rather than commercial establishments because homestays can provide them with learning opportunities. As described by an interviewee from Macao (IY-1), she chose to stay in a homestay because she could explore the local culture and lifestyle. Specifically, she stated, “when I choose a place to travel to, I want to understand and learn the local culture. I think staying in a homestay is the fastest way to achieve this”. Another interviewee from Canada echoed, “I choose homestays because I can get to know the culture better. I can also see the real living mode of that country” (IY-6). Two female respondents from Macao (i.e., IY-12 and IY-14) suggested that homestays differ from commercial establishments because homestay experiences allow them to gain more exposure to and deeper understanding of the authentic culture of the destination. Jain and Weiten’s (2020) review study postulates that incremental theorists’ product preference is contingent upon whether a product can provide owners with an opportunity to learn and develop new skills. Even though this causal relationship is yet to be empirically verified, the current study shows that the pursuit of learning and growth is another reason leading incremental theorists to choose to stay in homestays.

#### 4.2.3. Homestays were Recommended After a Systematic Evaluation

As opposed to entity theorists, who rely on heuristics in decision-making, incremental theorists often undergo a systematic evaluation before deciding to stay in homestays. According to a female respondent from Hong Kong, she did not solely consider homestays (or any accommodation type) while traveling. Her decision was contingent

upon the preference of her travel companions, and she declared, *“I usually choose via Agoda.com and/ Booking.com. I may sometimes read and consider online reviews from Trivago.com”* (IY-9). Several interviewees explicated the rigorous evaluation process they went through before selecting accommodation. For instance, interviewee IY-8 chose to stay in a homestay while visiting Seoul because *“that homestay was recommended by many travel bloggers. It received many positive reviews on online travel agencies’ websites, and user-generated photos showed it is pretty”*. Similarly, interviewee IY-11 described that she would *“often search and cross-compare different information sources (e.g. online travel agencies, travel blogs) before confirming which accommodation option/s will be chosen”*.

Erdley and Dweck (1993) notice that in decision-making incremental theorists often consider information shared by peers or others. During the discussions with incremental theorists, some (e.g., IY-2, IY-5, and IY-15) specified that homestays were chosen because they are the accommodation choice preferred by travel companions. As noted by interviewee IY-5, *“I am always concerned about the decisions of those around me. If my parents insist or prefer to choose homestays, I will go for that choice”*. Interviewee IY-15 also suggested, *“...whenever I need to choose between hotel and homestay, I will consider my travel partners’ preference”*. This evidence demonstrates that incremental theorists differ from their entity counterparts in terms of their decision-making approach. Table 3 itemises the identified reasons with excerpts given by the interviewees.

[Insert Table 3 here]

### **4.3. Why Entity Theorists Choose not to Stay in Homestays**

#### **4.3.1. Homestays do not Match Decision Makers’ Personal Traits**

Half the entity theorists who did not stay in homestay accommodation before noted that it was not considered because homestay does not match their personal traits. According to a middle-aged male respondent from Macao, a homestay was not chosen because *“it is not [his] type of accommodation while traveling”* (EN-2). Another male respondent



from Hong Kong also opined, *“I am a type of stable and cautious person. Since homestays cannot be claimed to be trustworthy and secure, I prefer staying in hotels while traveling”* (EN-4). One interviewee suggested that homestays were not preferable to him because he is *“a lazy person who prefers other people making the bed for me”* (EN-1). For the same reason identified and discussed in section 4.1.1, entity theorists are prone to using products or brands as instruments to demonstrate they possessed certain desirable qualities (Park & John, 2014). As some entity theorists deem that staying in homestays cannot reflect the desired image about themselves, they therefore did not stay in homestays to minimize the cognitive dissonance.

#### 4.3.2. Homestays were not Considered due to Negative Stereotypes

In line with the assertion made by Jain et al. (2009) as well as Levy et al. (1998), many entity theorists mentioned that they did not consider homestays owing to the negative stereotypes they held about homestays. Regarding the location of homestays, interviewee EN-2 noted that homestays are *“mostly far away from public transport”* and *“not safe since their surrounding areas are complicated”*. An Indonesian male respondent also felt that *“homestays are not convenient”* and *“the location is not good, and you need to prepare many things by yourself”* (EN-6). Regarding the cleanliness of homestays, interviewee EN-7 deemed that homestays could not meet his threshold of cleanliness in view of his *“mysophobia”*. Interviewee EN-8 echoed that he has never considered homestays because he has *“a huge concern about homestays’ environment and hygiene”*. This evidence shows that entity theorists hold some negative stereotypes about homestays such as safety and cleanliness concerns. These negative stereotypes may then infer the inferior image of homestays and reduce their interest in choosing homestays while traveling.

### 4.4. Why Incremental Theorists Choose not to Stay in Homestays

#### 4.4.1. Homestays were not Chosen due to Lack of Opportunity

All six incremental theorists who did not stay in homestays stressed that this was due to the absence of opportunity. For example, interviewee IN-1 claimed that she *“would like*

*to stay at homestays to explore different cultures, but [had] not yet had the opportunity*". Many interviewees claimed that they would try homestays if they have the opportunity. Interviewee IN-2 said, *"If I have the opportunity, I might stay at a homestay"*, and interviewee IN-4 also noted, *"I am open for hotel and homestay options. I just need the opportunity to try a homestay"*. These assertions empirically verify prior literature's (e.g., Dweck et al., 1995; Dweck & Leggett, 1988) notion that incremental theorists are open and willing to make a new attempt if the conditions are fulfilled.

4.4.2. A Homestay will be Considered if it Involves Learning Opportunities

Some incremental theorists underscored that they will consider homestays in future trips because they can provide them with learning opportunities. Interviewee IN-1 stated that staying in homestays while traveling is a good option because it is *"a good way to interact with many people from different cultures and experience the local lifestyle"*. Interviewee IN-6 shared a similar opinion during her interview, saying, *"if I can truly learn something by staying in a homestay, I think I would give it a try"*. Since incremental theorists acknowledge that intelligence is malleable (Dweck, 1999; 2007; Dweck & Leggett, 1988), staying in homestays can enrich their knowledge about the destination and its associated culture. Hence, this growth mindset directs incremental theorists to make an attempt in future. The list of interviewees' reasons for not choosing homestays is presented in Table 4.

[Insert Table 4 here]

4.5. Mutability of Homestay Choice

To examine the mutable level of entity and incremental theorists toward homestay choice, respondents were asked to indicate whether they would consider (or re-consider, if they had not stayed in a homestay before) choosing homestays in future. Respondents were also asked to outline reasons and conditions for justifying their choices.

#### 4.5.1. Entity Theorists

Among the 23 entity theorists who participated in this study, around two thirds (n = 15, 65.2%) reported that they would consider or re-consider choosing homestays in future. Similar to the reasons presented in sections 4.1 and 4.3, homestays will be considered by entity theorists because they offer the outcomes they desired. Four entity theorists (EY-1, EY-4, EY-11, and EY-14) claimed that homestays are value for money. Interviewee EY-4 mentioned that *“Homestays will certainly be considered as they are value for money options while traveling with friends”*. Interviewee EY-11’s likeliness to choose homestays in future trips is also high because *“homestays are a “value for money” option for budget travellers”*. Two entity theorists (EY-2 and EY-12) mentioned that they would consider homestays because they can offer a strong homey feeling even when they travel abroad.

Some entity theorists report that homestays will be considered because they offer heuristics that ease their decision making. As noted by EY-7, he *“will continue choosing homestays because they are often located in highly accessible locations”*. The risk-avoidance characteristics of entity theorists are also demonstrated when they justified why they will consider or re-consider homestays. Four entity theorists (EY-1, EY-2, EY-7, and EY-13) suggested that they tend to maintain the status quo after having a positive experience in the past. Interviewee EY-1 stated, *“I will choose a homestay again as I didn’t have any bad experiences”*. Similarly, interviewee EY-2 said, *“I will consider a homestay during future trips since my past experience of staying in a homestay was nice”*.

For the eight entity theorists who will not consider or re-consider choosing homestays in future, the incongruence between homestays’ and decision makers’ traits is one reason leading them to give a negative response. Interviewee EN-1 refused to choose homestays in the future because he is *“the type of person who is afraid of causing trouble to others. Hence, homestays are not [his] choice”*. The negative stereotypes shared by entity theorists are another reason leading them not to choose homestays. Interviewee EN-7 noted that he has mysophobia and said, *“I will not consider homestays because I don’t know if they are clean and sterilized”*. Interviewee EN-6 deemed that homestays are often situated in inconvenient location and thereby inferring that *“a homestay is not*

*good*". All this further proves that entity theorists' decisions are easily affected by stereotypes and dispositional inferences (Dweck et al. 1995; Hong et al., 1997).

#### 4.5.2. Incremental Theorists

All 21 incremental theorists who participated in this study noted that they would choose homestays in future. Five incremental theorists will consider homestays because they can gain deep understanding of local culture and they can make new friends by staying in homestays. As delineated by interviewee IY-9, *"homestays are a less boring option as their design and decoration are not standardized. It can also allow me to talk to other tenants"*. Interviewee IY-14 also specified, *"homestays can allow me to better understand and experience the authentic culture of the destination"*.

Some interviewees suggested that they would consider staying in homestays under specific conditions. Two interviewees reported that homestays would only be considered when they travelled to developed and safe destinations. Interviewee IY-10 suggested, *"If my travel destinations are safe or cosmopolitan cities, I will consider staying in a homestay. But I will say no if I travel to unsafe cities"*. Another two interviewees commented that homestays would only be considered when they travel with specific groups of companions. Interviewee IY-3 said, *"I will continue choosing homestays if I travel with friends. However, they will not be my choice when traveling with senior/elder people"*. These assertions echo with Erdley and Dweck's (1993) notion that incremental theorists do consider situational factors during decision-making. There is one additional finding that deserves noting. One interviewee stated that she would re-consider staying in homestays even though her prior experience was not satisfactory. She believed that her poor experience was *"an unusual case"* and *"most owners are caring and hospitable"* (IY-1). In view of this incremental thinking (Heslin et al., 2005), it is understandable why she agreed to re-consider homestays even if her prior experience was poor. Table 5 synthesizes the reasons shared by the interviewees for choosing homestays or not.

[Insert Table 5 here]

## 5. CONCLUSIONS, IMPLICATIONS AND FUTURE RESEARCH

### 5.1. Conclusions

There are growing calls for greater understanding of the social psychological aspects of decision-making. Among those calls, as the representation of one's lay belief is powerful and can influence consumer behaviour, social psychologists have recently started to adopt implicit self-theories to understand consumer decision-making (e.g., Dweck, 1999; Jain, Mathur, & Maheswaran, 2009). However, our knowledge related to such a useful theory remains limited (Jain & Weiten, 2020), especially in the hospitality and tourism industry, making the understanding of consumer decision-making in the field incomplete. To fill this gap, in this research we apply guests' implicit self-theories and confirm that these theories can help explain guests' decision to choose or not choose homestay accommodation while traveling.

As presented in sections 4.1 and 4.3, entity theorists act in accordance with their belief system, particularly aligning with their behaviour orientation, decision-making approach, signalling mechanism, and sensitivity to uncertainty (see Table 1). They chose to stay in homestays because they align with their personal traits. By contrast, entity theorists refused to choose homestays if they believe homestays do not match their personal traits. Entity theorists who participated in this study also demonstrated that their behavioural orientation is outcome-focused. They chose to stay in homestays after confirming that the homestays offer outcomes or benefits they desired (e.g., authentic experience, low price). Entity theorists also appear to rely on heuristics (e.g., decoration, online reviews) and stereotypical thought (e.g., homestays are a *natural* accommodation choice in some destinations) when deciding whether to choose homestays.

With regards to incremental theorists, their choice or otherwise of homestays also aligns with their growth mindset and process-focused behavioural orientation. As demonstrated in sections 4.2 and 4.4, incremental theorists often consider and evaluate various types of information (e.g., advice from peers) rigorously before making a decision. Besides, since incremental theorists perceive the act of choosing homestays can affirm their growth traits and provide them with opportunities of learning local culture and new

skills, homestays are positively perceived and welcomed by incremental theorists if such opportunities and situations are available.

Regarding the mutability of homestay choice given by entity and incremental theorists, the current study shows that consumers' implicit theories do elicit some influence on their judgment and decisions. In line with their growth mindset, incremental theorists will consider or re-consider homestays in future trips because this type of accommodation can provide tenants with a learning opportunity. But incremental theorists do not thoughtlessly choose homestays under all circumstances. Instead, many incremental theorists will consider homestays under certain conditions such as traveling to safe destinations or not traveling with elder people. Conversely, since entity theorists are outcome-focused, they will choose homestays in future if they determine that homestays are value for money and are situated in highly accessible locations. Besides, as entity theorists often act to signal their desirable personal traits, they will not consider homestays if they recognize homestays are incongruent with such traits. Drawing upon this empirical evidence, it is believed that consumers' implicit self-theories are associated with their decision of choosing or not choosing homestay accommodation.

## **5.2. Implications**

Theoretically, this research contributes some new knowledge to the growing body of research about consumer behaviour in the tourism and hospitality context. Unlike prior studies that only examined the impact of accommodation-related features (e.g., availability of facilities, cleanliness, and safety and security) on consumers' accommodation selection (e.g., Fawzy, 2010; Hao & Har, 2014; Hsiao & Chuang, 2015; Lockyer & Roberts, 2009), this study is one of the limited works that examine how guest characteristics and particularly psychographic characteristics affect accommodation selection. Being one of the first attempts that connect consumers' implicit self-theories with their touristic behaviour, this research reveals the underlying mechanism of how implicit self-theories shape their judgment and decisions regarding homestays.

As noted in the literature review section, implicit self-theories have been applied across a range of contexts to understand their impact on consumer behaviour. Although many studies have already proven the applicability of implicit self-theories in explaining

consumers' decisions and/or behaviour, surprisingly, this concept has rarely been used to explain consumer behaviour in tourism and hospitality settings. Fong, Chan, Law, and Ly's (2018) research is one of the limited numbers of studies that connect the concept of implicit self-theories to touristic behaviour. However, their study focuses on consumers' intention to reuse mobile apps to make hotel reservations. Hence, demonstrating and extending the applicability of implicit self-theories to explain consumers' accommodation selection is deemed to be another theoretical contribution of this work.

Practically, the findings of this research provide homestay hosts with a richer understanding of why consumers choose (or not) homestay accommodation. The qualitative data shows that entity and incremental theorists act in accordance with their belief system and signalling mechanism. The current findings also provide homestay hosts with managerial guidance on how they can personalize their targeting of entity and incremental theorists. As demonstrated in this research and other prior studies (e.g., Mathur et al., 2016), entity theorists are outcome-focused and rely on heuristics in decision-making. When hosts and operators target entity theorists, they should distinctly highlight in their promotion materials *what* consumers can benefit from if they choose their premises (e.g., low price, convenient location, and clean room). More importantly, those selling points need to be aligned with the common preferences of entity theorists regarding traditional accommodation. On the contrary, hosts and operators should match the growth traits of incremental theorists by emphasising *how* consumers can benefit if they choose their premises (e.g., learn more about local history, culture, and lifestyle while staying in homestays). Last but not least, hosts and operators should emphasise the uniqueness they could offer through each homestay experience, as incremental theorists engage less in uncertainty avoidance and are open to any negative or positive outcomes.

Hosts and operators should also be attentive to stereotypes when they target entity theorists. As presented in sections 4.1.3 and 4.3.2, entity theorists often consider stereotypes in decision-making and negative stereotypes may reduce their interest in choosing homestays. In view of the detrimental impact induced by those negative stereotypes, hosts and operators should proactively redress such negative stereotypes. For instance, to allay consumers' potential concerns that homestays are not sanitized and hygienic, hosts can show positive feedback about cleanliness given by past tenants. Hosts can also present any cleaning certificates they earn from professional organizations (e.g.,

AHLEI's Certified Hospitality Housekeeping Executive) on their websites or other distribution channels. By providing this additional proof, the negative impact induced by negative stereotypes is expected to be attenuated.

### **5.3. Limitations and Future Research**

While this study contributes some new knowledge to both scholars and practitioners, it has some limitations that readers should be aware of. First, as this study employed a manual rather than a computerized approach to undertake content analysis, personal bias might exist and human error might have arisen in coding and categorizations (Hsieh & Shannon, 2005). Another limitation of this study is that it only considered respondents' dominant implicit self-theory. Dweck et al. (1995) note that people can believe in both entity and incremental theories because the two theories are not mutually exclusive. Although people might hold both types of implicit self-theories concurrently, only the dominant one (but not both) has been considered in this research. Lastly, as most respondents of this study came from Hong Kong and Macao, the thoughts they shared might not be generalizable to travellers from other regions. To redress this and other sample-related issues like gender imbalance (i.e., 64% are female) and age imbalance (i.e., 69% are aged between 25 and 35), future researchers are advised to enlarge the size and diversity of their samples in order to enhance the generalizability of research findings. Future researchers can employ a quantitative methodology (e.g., questionnaire survey) to validate the impact of consumers' implicit self-theories on accommodation selection and other touristic behaviours.

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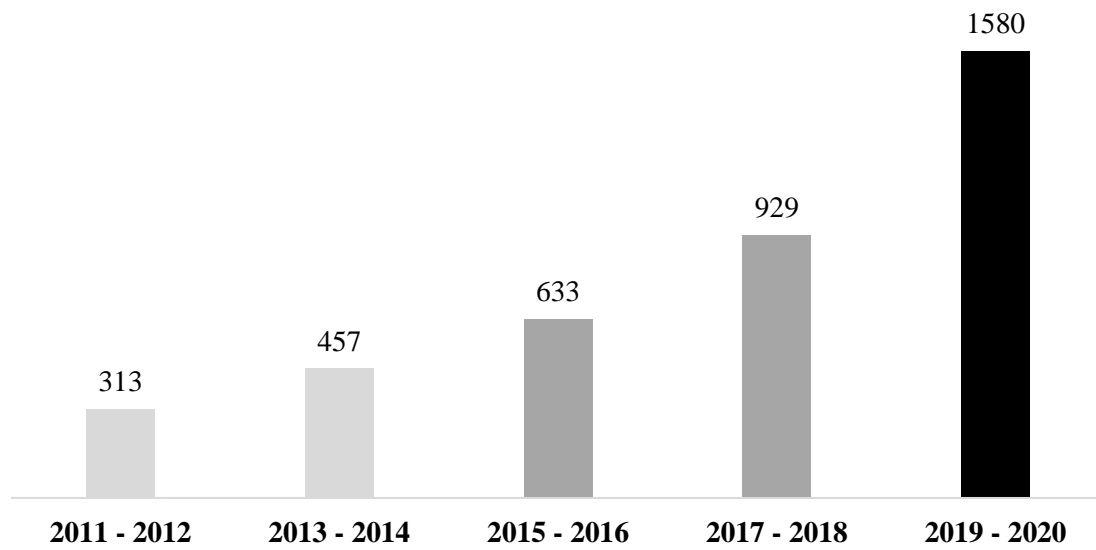
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**Figure 1. Number of tourism studies about homestays available in Google Scholar**



*Note.* Keywords used in this article search were “homestays” and “tourism

**Table 1. Behavioural characteristics of entity theorists and incremental theorists**

	<b>Entity theorists</b>	<b>Incremental theorists</b>
<b>Central tenet</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Human and non-human attributes are fixed</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Human and non-human attributes are malleable</li></ul>
<b>Decision-making approach</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Heuristic approach</li><li>• Often consider stereotypes</li><li>• Less often consider situational factors</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Systematic approach</li><li>• Less often consider stereotypes</li><li>• Often consider situational factors</li></ul>
<b>Behavioural orientation</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Outcome-/Performance-focused</li><li>• Focus on <i>what</i> benefits a product can offer</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Process-/Learning-focused</li><li>• Focus on <i>how</i> a product delivers benefit</li></ul>
<b>Signalling mechanism</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Seek to act with the purpose of signalling the unique/good/desirable traits of oneself</li><li>• Prefer brands that possess desirable traits</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Seek to act with the purpose of signalling the growth/self-improvement traits of oneself</li><li>• Prefer brands with growth traits</li></ul>
<b>Sensitivity to risk</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Risk-avoidance</li><li>• Sensitive to negative outcomes</li><li>• Eager to maintain status quo</li><li>• Tend to be loyal to mature brands</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Risk-seeking</li><li>• Sensitive to positive outcomes</li><li>• Eager to explore new experiences</li><li>• Tend to be less brand loyal</li></ul>

*Sources:* Aaker (1997); Hong, Chiu, Dweck, & Sacks (1997); Jain, Mathur, & Meheswaran (2009); Mathur, Chun, & Maheswara (2016).

**Table 2. Respondents' profile (N = 44)**

Group/Respondents' profile				Avg. age	Gender		Country of origin			
Group number	Number	Tendency toward (average rating) <sup>a</sup>	Homestay experience		Male	Female	Hong Kong	Macao	China	Others
<b>G1</b>	15	Entity theory (2.27)	Yes	32.5	4	11	4	5	2	4 (Belarus, Malaysia, U.K. and U.S.A.)
<b>G2</b>	8	Entity theory (2.04)	No	27.0	7	1	1	6	-	1 (Indonesia)
<b>G3</b>	15	Incremental theory (4.53)	Yes	29.3	4	11	4	7	3	1 (Canada)
<b>G4</b>	6	Incremental theory (4.61)	No	27.7	1	5	-	5	-	1 (Vietnam)

*Note.* <sup>a</sup> Average rating refers to the averaged rating for the three tendency-check questions given by respondents from the corresponding groups.



**Table 3. Reasons for choosing homestays**

Associated characteristics	Reasons for choosing	Excerpts given by the respondents <sup>a</sup>
<b>G1: Entity theorists who stayed in homestays</b>		
Signalling unique traits of oneself	• Homestays match decision makers' personal traits	<p>○ (EY-3) <i>I am quite a freestyle person. Sometimes I don't want to stay in a hotel, so I choose a homestay.</i></p> <p>○ (EY-12) <i>I am a very casual person. Accommodation does not need to be good and luxurious. I am fine with homestays as long as they are clean.</i></p>
Outcome-focused	• Homestays offer outcomes desired by decision makers	<p>○ (EY-6) <i>As long as it is a nice, clean, big, and luxurious house ... I am fine with choosing a homestay.</i></p> <p>○ (EY-10) <i>I want to have some authentic experiences ... that's why I chose to stay in a homestay.</i></p> <p>○ (EY-14) <i>I choose homestays mainly because of their [low] price.</i></p>
Use of heuristic approach	• Homestays heuristics ease decision making	<p>○ (EY-8) <i>That homestay was chosen because the review photos showed that the homestay was a Western-style flat, which is the type I personally like.</i></p> <p>○ (EY-9) <i>The photos available on Airbnb show that the homestay was clean and well-decorated.</i></p> <p>○ (EY-14) <i>That homestay was chosen because most review comments on Airbnb were positive.</i></p>
<b>G3: Incremental theorists who stayed in homestays</b>		
Signal growth traits of oneself	• Homestays match decision makers' growth traits	<p>○ (IY-1) <i>I chose a homestay because I am an open-minded person who is eager to try new things.</i></p> <p>○ (IY-3) <i>I am not a fan of tradition and I always aspire to find innovative experiences. Hence, I prefer choosing homestays instead of hotels.</i></p>
Process-/Learning-focused	• Homestays offer learning opportunities to decision makers	<p>○ (IY-1) <i>When I choose a place to travel to, I want to understand and learn the local culture. I think staying in a homestay is the fastest way to achieve this.</i></p> <p>○ (IY-6) <i>I choose homestays because I can get to know the culture better. I can also see the real living mode of that country.</i></p> <p>○ (IY-15) <i>I love choosing homestays because my previous experience was really good. I learned a lot from the host and travel partners during that stay.</i></p>

Use of systematic approach	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Homestays were chosen after evaluating all alternatives, information and situation factors</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ (IY-5) <i>I am always concerned about the decisions of those around me. If my parents insist or prefer to choose homestays, I will go for that choice.</i></li> <li>○ (IY-8) <i>That homestay was chosen because it was recommended by many travel bloggers. It received many positive reviews on online travel agencies' websites, and user-generated photos showed it is pretty.</i></li> <li>○ (IY-9) <i>I do not always opt for one type of accommodation. I usually choose via Agoda.com and/or Booking.com. I may sometimes read and consider online reviews from Trivago.com.</i></li> </ul>
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Note. <sup>a</sup> EY represents entity theorists who have homestay experience. IY represents incremental theorists who have homestay experience.

**Table 4. Reasons for not choosing homestays**

Associated characteristics	Reasons for not choosing	Excerpts given by the respondents <sup>a</sup>
<b>G2: Entity theorists who did not stay in homestays</b>		
<b>Signalling unique traits of oneself</b>	• <b>Homestays do not match decision makers' personal traits</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ (EN-2) <i>A homestay was not chosen since it is not my type of accommodation while traveling.</i></li> <li>○ (EN-4) <i>I am a type of stable and cautious person. Since homestays cannot be claimed to be trustworthy and secure, I prefer staying in hotels while traveling.</i></li> </ul>
<b>Use of heuristic approach</b>	• <b>Homestays were not considered due to negative stereotypes</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ (EN-2) <i>In my mind, homestays are mostly far away from public transport. Homestays are also not safe since their surrounding areas are complicated.</i></li> <li>○ (EN-6) <i>I feel homestays are not convenient ... the location is not good, and you need to prepare many things by yourself.</i></li> <li>○ (EN-7) <i>I have mysophobia. I am afraid that homestays cannot meet my threshold of cleanliness.</i></li> </ul>
<b>G4: Incremental theorists who did not stay in homestays</b>		
<b>Consideration of situational factors</b>	• <b>Homestays were not chosen due to lack of opportunity</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ (IN-1) <i>I would like to stay at homestays to explore different cultures, but have not yet had the opportunity.</i></li> <li>○ (IN-4) <i>I am open for hotel and homestay options. I just need the opportunity to try a homestay.</i></li> </ul>
<b>Eager to explore new opportunities</b>	• <b>Homestays will be considered if it is a learning opportunity</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ (IN-1) <i>Staying in homestays is a good way to interact with many people from different cultures and experience the local lifestyle.</i></li> <li>○ (IN-6) <i>If I can truly learn something by staying in a homestay, I think I would give it a try.</i></li> </ul>

*Note.* <sup>a</sup> EN represents entity theorists who have no homestay experience. IN represents incremental theorists who have no homestay experience.

**Table 5. Reasons for choosing or not choosing homestays in future**

Associated characteristics	Reasons for choosing/not choosing	Excerpts given by the respondents
<b>Entity theorists (15/23) – Will choose homestays in future</b>		
<b>Outcome-focused</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Homestays offer outcomes desired by decision makers</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ (EY-4) <i>Homestays will certainly be considered as they are value for money options while traveling with friends.</i></li> <li>○ (EY-12) <i>I will choose homestays again, because I like their strong homey atmosphere.</i></li> </ul>
<b>Use of heuristic approach</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Homestays heuristics ease decision making</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ (EY-7) <i>I will continue choosing homestays because they are often located in highly accessible locations.</i></li> </ul>
<b>Sensitivity to risk</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Prior experience is positive, and tend to maintain status quo</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ (EY-1) <i>I will choose a homestay again as I didn't have any bad experiences.</i></li> <li>○ (EY-2) <i>I will consider a homestay during future trips since my past experience of staying in a homestay was nice.</i></li> </ul>
<b>Entity theorists (8/23) – Will not choose homestays in future</b>		
<b>Signalling unique traits</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Homestays do not match decision makers' personal traits</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ (EN-1) <i>I am the type of person who is afraid of causing trouble to others. Hence, homestays are not my choice.</i></li> </ul>
<b>Use of heuristic approach</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Homestays were not considered due to negative stereotypes</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ (EN-6) <i>As I said before, since I have mysophobia, I will therefore not consider homestays because I don't know if they are clean and sterilized.</i></li> </ul>
<b>Incremental theorists (21/21) – Will choose homestays in future</b>		
<b>Process-focused</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Homestays will be considered since decision makers can learn and grow during their stay</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ (IY-9) <i>Homestays are a less boring option as their design and decoration are not standardized. It can also allow me to talk to other tenants.</i></li> <li>○ (IY-14) <i>Homestays can allow me to better understand and experience the authentic culture of the destination.</i></li> </ul>
<b>Consideration of situational factors</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Homestays will only be considered under specific situations</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ (IY-3) <i>I will continue choosing homestays if I travel with friends. However, they will not be my choice when travelling with senior/elder people.</i></li> <li>○ (IY-10) <i>If my travel destinations are safe or cosmopolitan cities, I will consider staying in a homestay. But I will say no if I travel to unsafe cities.</i></li> </ul>

*Note.* <sup>a</sup> EY represents entity theorists who have homestay experience. EN represents entity theorists who have no homestay experience. IY represents incremental theorists who have homestay experience.