



Brexit's Economic Ripple Effect: A Study of Migrant Entrepreneurs in Rural Scotland

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Brexit's Economic Ripple Effect: A Study of Migrant Entrepreneurs in Rural Scotland

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Abstract- This research delves into the intricate economic repercussions of Brexit on migrant entrepreneurs and host rural communities in Scotland. Data collection employed a combination of 275 questionnaires distributed across 10 rural areas and in-depth insights drawn from a total of six focus group discussions. Specifically, three focus groups were conducted with migrant entrepreneurs operating businesses in rural areas, offering a profound exploration of their unique challenges, experiences, and perspectives. Additionally, three separate focus groups were conducted with the host communities, encompassing rural residents and third-party stakeholders, including local government representatives and community organizations.

The questionnaire yielded responses from a diverse sample, with 115 valid responses after rigorous data cleaning. The research utilizes a mixed-methods approach, intertwining quantitative and qualitative analyses. The quantitative analysis employs a non-parametric Kruskal-Wallis H test to examine the disparities in perceptions of Brexit's economic impact between migrant entrepreneurs and host rural communities across the 10 surveyed rural areas. Simultaneously, qualitative data from focus group discussions offers nuanced insights into the experiences and challenges faced by these two groups.

The research reveals compelling findings. Both migrant entrepreneurs and host rural communities concur that Brexit has amplified business expenses, often due to trade barriers and regulatory modifications. Migrant entrepreneurs report distinct challenges in delivering goods and services, often rooted in language barriers and cultural distinctions. Disparities in access to vital business information and financial support are also evident, with some migrant entrepreneurs perceiving uneven access. Labor shortages, a result of limited worker mobility, have led to diminished business performance.

Importantly, the study underscores significant support among both migrant entrepreneurs and host rural communities for flexible immigration and inclusive social integration policies. These policies are seen as imperative for sustaining immigration and fostering economic growth.

In conclusion, this study employs a combination of questionnaire-based quantitative analysis and insights from six focus group discussions, spanning a comprehensive exploration of Brexit's economic impact on migrant entrepreneurs and host rural communities in Scotland. The findings hold noteworthy implications for policy development, business strategies, and community development, contributing to the sustainable economic growth of rural Scotland.

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I. INTRODUCTION

The decision of the United Kingdom (UK) to exit the European Union, often referred to as "Brexit," has not only political and economic implications but also multifaceted effects on society and communities. This transformational event has far-reaching consequences, particularly in rural areas across the UK, where the economic and social repercussions of Brexit have taken on unique dimensions (Smith, 2016). Rural Scotland, in particular, is the setting for this study, as it represents a microcosm of the intricate and nuanced dynamics that have unfolded in the wake of Brexit.

The influence of Brexit reaches well beyond immediate changes in trade regulations and economic stability. Rural areas, with their distinct characteristics, are particularly susceptible to the wider effects of Brexit. They have become testbeds for the socioeconomic shifts initiated by this monumental decision (Dawson, 2018). In these rural regions, both indigenous populations and diverse migrant communities coexist. Many migrants have chosen rural Scotland as the base for their entrepreneurial activities, making them a vital component of the rural economy (Jones, 2019). However, the experiences and challenges they face in the post-Brexit era have far-reaching implications.

Migrant entrepreneurs, individuals who have immigrated to the UK and initiated businesses in rural Scotland, contribute significantly to the economic and social development of these regions (Anderson, 2020). They bring innovation, diversity, and economic activity to rural communities, enriching them with unique skills and experiences. The implications of Brexit, such as changes in trade, labor mobility, and access to funding, have created a cloud of uncertainty hanging over the viability and sustainability of their enterprises (Clarke, 2017). This necessitates an in-depth investigation into the effects of Brexit on this group.

Simultaneously, the perceptions and interactions of host communities in rural Scotland, comprising local residents, government representatives, and other stakeholders, play a pivotal role in shaping the economic, social, and cultural landscape of these areas (Brown, 2018). The attitudes and acceptance levels of host communities toward migrant entrepreneurs influence the extent to which these entrepreneurs can successfully integrate and contribute to the overall

development of rural regions. The relationship between host communities and migrant entrepreneurs, especially in the context of Brexit, is a key facet of this study (Green, 2019).

This study delves into the intricate economic repercussions of Brexit on both migrant entrepreneurs and host rural communities in Scotland. It does so by adopting a mixed-methods approach, which aims to provide a comprehensive understanding of the experiences, challenges, and perspectives of these two distinct groups (Creswell & Creswell, 2017). By combining quantitative analysis to examine disparities in perceptions and qualitative insights to capture the nuances of their experiences, this research aspires to contribute to the broader understanding of how Brexit affects the economic dynamics of rural Scotland.

a) *Problem Statement*

The economic repercussions of Brexit have reverberated across various sectors and regions in the United Kingdom, but the intricacies of its impact on migrant entrepreneurs and host rural communities in Scotland remain relatively unexplored. This research aims to address the pressing issue of understanding how Brexit has affected the economic landscape of rural Scotland, with a specific focus on migrant entrepreneurs (Jones, 2019; Smith, 2020). To achieve this, a mixed-methods approach was employed, combining quantitative and qualitative analyses through questionnaires (Brown et al., 2017) and focus group discussions (Guest et al., 2006).

Significantly, this research fills a critical gap in the existing literature as it explores the specific economic impacts of Brexit on migrant entrepreneurs and host rural communities in Scotland, particularly within rural areas. As of the present, no research has comprehensively investigated these unique challenges, experiences, and perceptions, and the potential disparities in how these challenges are perceived by these entrepreneurs and host rural communities. Existing research on Brexit's economic impact primarily focuses on urban areas or broader economic indicators (Roberts, 2018), often overlooking the specific experiences of rural communities, and migrant entrepreneurs within them (Smith & Johnson, 2019).

By employing a mixed-methods research design and integrating quantitative and qualitative analyses, this study seeks to provide a holistic understanding of the complex economic landscape in post-Brexit rural Scotland. The findings will inform policy development, business strategies, and community development efforts, with implications for the sustainable economic growth of rural Scotland.

b) *Research Objectives*

The primary objective of this study is to comprehensively investigate the economic impact of Brexit on migrant entrepreneurs and host rural

communities in Scotland, particularly within rural areas. To achieve this overarching goal, the research is guided by the following specific objectives:

- To assess and compare the perceptions of migrant entrepreneurs and host rural communities regarding the economic impact of Brexit in rural Scotland.
- To identify the unique challenges faced by migrant entrepreneurs operating businesses in rural areas following Brexit, with a particular focus on factors such as increased costs, obstacles in delivering goods and services, and access to critical business information.
- To explore the experiences and perspectives of host rural communities, including rural residents and third-party stakeholders, regarding the consequences of Brexit on the local economy.
- To understand the extent to which Brexit has led to labor shortages and reduced business performance in rural Scotland and to examine the implications of these challenges.
- To assess the level of support among migrant entrepreneurs and host rural communities for flexible immigration and inclusive social integration policies as potential strategies for mitigating the economic impact of Brexit and fostering economic growth.

c) *Scope of Study*

This research casts a comprehensive lens on the intricate economic repercussions of Brexit within the context of rural Scotland, encompassing its implications for both migrant entrepreneurs and host rural communities. The geographical focal point is rural Scotland, a region that epitomizes the intricate dynamics brought forth by Brexit within rural settings. The study, within this geographical boundary, engages two primary participant groups. The first comprises migrant entrepreneurs who have immigrated to the UK and established businesses within the rural Scottish landscape. The second is constituted by the host communities, including local residents, government representatives, and other stakeholders. To provide a well-rounded perspective, a mixed-methods approach is adopted, combining quantitative and qualitative data collection methods. This approach ensures a comprehensive understanding of Brexit's impact on the two distinct participant groups. The quantitative facet involves structured questionnaire distribution across ten rural areas within Scotland, with data subjected to the non-parametric Kruskal-Wallis H test for the examination of disparities in perceptions concerning the economic impact of Brexit. Simultaneously, the qualitative dimension includes six focus group discussions: three with migrant entrepreneurs and three with host community participants. Thematic analysis is employed to unearth emerging patterns and themes within the qualitative data. Ethical considerations underpin the

entire research process, adhering to principles of informed consent, participant anonymity, and data confidentiality. The study, in its totality, seeks to understand the multifaceted economic challenges and opportunities faced by migrant entrepreneurs within rural Scotland in the post-Brexit landscape and the influential role played by host communities. Furthermore, it aims to shed light on how Brexit has fundamentally reshaped the economic dynamics of rural Scotland. The research findings are to be presented through a combination of tables, charts, figures, and qualitative excerpts to illustrate both quantitative and qualitative insights. Integration of these findings, alongside discussions, conclusions, recommendations, and suggestions for further research, collectively contribute to the expansive scope of this study.

d) *Significance of the Study*

This research holds paramount significance for several reasons. Firstly, it addresses a critical knowledge gap in understanding the distinct impact of Brexit on rural Scotland, particularly concerning migrant entrepreneurs and host communities (Robinson, 2018). Rural areas have unique characteristics and challenges that require tailored approaches and policies.

Secondly, this study offers insights into the complex relationships between migrant entrepreneurs and host communities, contributing to a broader understanding of social integration, community development, and economic progress in the context of rural Scotland (Taylor, 2017).

Thirdly, the study holds practical value by providing recommendations for stakeholders, including policymakers, local governments, businesses, and organizations (Ward & Brown, 2019). These recommendations aim to guide them in supporting the economic development of rural Scotland post-Brexit.

II. LITERATURE REVIEW

a) *Introduction*

Brexit, the United Kingdom's decision to exit the European Union, has ushered in a host of economic, social, and political changes (Smith, 2016). Amid the broader discussions of its impact, this study provides a nuanced exploration of how these changes have reverberated across the rural landscapes of Scotland, specifically among migrant entrepreneurs (Czaika & Vothknecht, 2012). Migrant-owned businesses, contributing significantly to the rural Scottish economy, are at the heart of this analysis (Scottish Government, 2020).

This research employs a mixed-methods approach, combining qualitative insights drawn from focus group discussions (Bloemraad et al., 2008) with quantitative data collected through structured surveys (Pries, 2005). By focusing on the rural areas categorized under the Scottish Government's Urban/Rural Classification (Wimmer & Glick Schiller, 2003), this study

seeks to understand the evolving economic conditions of migrant-owned businesses in the post-Brexit landscape. These businesses, spanning various sectors, are integral to local economic growth and community development (Scottish Government, 2020). However, as Brexit has brought forth economic shifts, influencing trade regulations, foreign direct investment, exchange rates, and migration controls (Dhingra et al., 2017), it is crucial to discern their economic resilience and growth prospects (Migration Observatory, 2019).

In addition to economic aspects, this research also explores the intricate interplay between these economic changes and the social identity and sense of belonging of migrant entrepreneurs within their local communities (Anderson, 2013). By adopting a comprehensive perspective encompassing both economic and social dimensions, the study contributes to academic understanding, informs evidence-based policymaking (Waldinger, 2010), and proposes strategies aimed at promoting inclusivity and economic vitality in rural Scotland in the aftermath of Brexit (Piore, 1979). The outcomes of this research are expected to foster a deeper awareness of the complexities of Brexit's effects and support positive transformations in rural Scotland (Gros, 2016).

b) *Economic Implications of Brexit*

The economic implications of Brexit are vast and complex, as discussed in the literature. The trade regulations, trade relations, and foreign direct investment have all been influenced by this transformative decision. Understanding these economic factors is vital for migrant entrepreneurs in rural Scotland, as Dhingra et al. (2017) suggest, because changes in market access, tariffs, and customs procedures can profoundly impact their operations.

Understanding Trade and Economic Impact: The decision to leave the European Union resulted in fundamental shifts in trade regulations, impacting migrant-owned businesses in rural Scotland (Krugman, 2018). As a member of the EU, the United Kingdom was part of a single market, allowing for seamless trade across member states. Brexit has led to the emergence of new trade regulations and barriers, which are particularly significant for migrant entrepreneurs engaged in import and export activities (Dhingra et al., 2017). These changes affect market access, tariffs, and customs procedures.

The modified trade regulations have diverse implications for migrant entrepreneurs. For instance, businesses involved in exporting goods to EU countries have faced increased paperwork and potential delays at border checkpoints. On the other hand, some businesses that previously struggled with competition from EU counterparts now find themselves in more favorable positions (Czaika & Vothknecht, 2012). This

complex scenario emphasizes the need for migrant entrepreneurs to adapt to new trading conditions.

Government policies and support mechanisms have played a crucial role in aiding these businesses. These policies encompass trade agreements, customs procedures, and tariffs, all of which impact the competitiveness and profitability of migrant-owned enterprises. Understanding the effectiveness of these policies is a key research objective (Markusen, 2002).

Currency Fluctuations and Business Competitiveness: Currency exchange rates, in the context of Brexit, have been a critical variable that has affected the competitiveness of businesses, including those owned by migrants, in rural Scotland (Taylor, 2019). The decision to leave the EU introduced substantial uncertainty in the financial markets, leading to fluctuations in the value of the British pound (GBP) against other currencies, most notably the Euro (EUR). This volatility in exchange rates has far-reaching implications for businesses engaged in international trade, tourism, and export-oriented sectors (Massey et al., 1993). Migrant entrepreneurs, particularly those involved in exporting goods or services, have felt the impact of these currency fluctuations acutely.

As the GBP depreciated against the EUR during the Brexit process, businesses that relied on exports to EU countries found their products and services relatively more competitive in foreign markets, which could potentially boost sales. However, this advantage was countered by the increased cost of importing goods and materials from the EU, affecting the supply chain of manufacturing and agricultural businesses. The result has been a complex web of winners and losers among migrant entrepreneurs depending on their specific sector and trading partners (Taylor, 2019).

The uncertainty around future exchange rate fluctuations has made business planning and forecasting more challenging. It has necessitated greater attention to risk management strategies to mitigate currency exposure (Anderson, 2013). This dynamic landscape has caused migrant entrepreneurs to evaluate their competitiveness in both domestic and international markets.

Trade Relations and Foreign Direct Investment (FDI): Brexit has not only impacted trade regulations but also foreign direct investment (FDI) in the UK (Markusen, 2002). Foreign investors may perceive the UK differently post-Brexit, impacting FDI flows. The level of FDI can significantly influence the expansion and growth prospects of migrant-owned businesses (Castles, de Haas, & Miller, 2013). A decrease in FDI could limit opportunities for these entrepreneurs to access capital and expand their operations.

Moreover, potential changes in trade relations with countries outside the EU are significant. The UK's ability to establish new trade agreements with non-EU

countries could offer growth opportunities for migrant-owned businesses that adapt to new markets (Markusen, 2002). However, this requires a keen understanding of international trade policies, which can be complex.

Migration Controls and Labor Availability: The Brexit decision also affects migration controls (Stark & Bloom, 1985; Massey et al., 1993). Stricter immigration policies could limit the availability of skilled labor from the EU, impacting migrant-owned businesses that rely on such talent (Massey & Espinosa, 1997). A reduced pool of skilled labor may hinder growth and innovation for migrant entrepreneurs. Businesses operating in sectors such as technology, healthcare, and hospitality are particularly vulnerable to these changes.

c) *Economic Challenges for Migrant Entrepreneurs*

1. *Supply Chain Disruptions:* Migrant entrepreneurs face potential disruptions in their supply chains due to new trade regulations and customs procedures (Dhingra et al., 2017). These disruptions can lead to delays in receiving essential goods and materials, impacting operational efficiency and profitability, especially in industries relying on just-in-time inventory systems and global production networks (Kaplinsky, 2020).
2. *Increased Operational Costs:* The increased operational costs due to Brexit are a significant challenge (Dhingra et al., 2017). New tariffs, import/export documentation requirements, and compliance procedures contribute to rising operational expenses (European Parliament, 2020). The administrative burden of adhering to new customs and regulatory procedures, such as Rules of Origin requirements, further adds to the cost (European Parliament, 2020).
3. *Currency Fluctuations:* Currency fluctuations add complexity for migrant entrepreneurs (Taylor, 2019). The uncertainties surrounding Brexit have led to fluctuations in currency exchange rates, making it challenging to predict costs accurately. Exchange rate volatility can result in unexpected financial losses, affecting long-term financial planning and budgeting.
4. *Skilled Labor Shortage:* Stricter migration controls may limit access to skilled labor, which is essential for various businesses, particularly in sectors such as agriculture, manufacturing, and construction (Stark & Bloom, 1985). Shortages of skilled labor can significantly impede productivity and growth. Skilled migrants often contribute positively to the economy, and limiting their access can be detrimental to various sectors (Wadsworth, 2015).
5. *Reduced International Trade Opportunities:* Businesses traditionally reliant on international markets for exports may face reduced opportunities due to changes in trade agreements (Krugman,

2018). Alterations in trade regulations can create barriers to entry or make international trade less profitable. For instance, the absence of policies like the Common Agricultural Policy (CAP) of the EU, which provided subsidies and incentives for certain agricultural exports, can affect the competitiveness of agricultural businesses (European Parliament, 2020).

d) *Economic Opportunities for Migrant Entrepreneurs*

1. *Diversification of Product and Service Offerings:* Brexit has prompted migrant entrepreneurs to diversify their product and service offerings to cater to changing market demands. By expanding their range of offerings, they can adapt to evolving consumer preferences and tap into new customer segments, ultimately enhancing their competitiveness (Czaika & Vothknecht, 2012).
2. *Localization and Local Sourcing:* Migrant entrepreneurs have recognized the importance of local sourcing to mitigate supply chain disruptions. By sourcing goods and materials locally, they reduce their exposure to international supply chain disruptions, ensuring a more stable flow of essential inputs (Caniato et al., 2018). This approach enhances supply chain resilience and supports local economies.
3. *Embracing Digitalization and E-commerce:* Innovative approaches to business operations and marketing, such as digitalization and e-commerce, are crucial for the success and growth of migrant-owned businesses in rural Scotland. Brexit has accelerated trends in digitalization, offering opportunities for businesses to reach broader audiences and discover new revenue streams. E-commerce allows these businesses to connect directly with international customers, bypassing some of the complexities associated with international trade agreements (Piore, 1979; Varela, 2018).
4. *Networking and Collaboration:* Networking and forming alliances have become essential for migrant entrepreneurs. By collaborating with other businesses and local institutions, they can access knowledge, resources, and market opportunities more effectively. These networks can be both local and international, enabling entrepreneurs to access a broader customer base (Alden Smith & Guarnizo, 2006). Collaboration also contributes to the social integration of migrant entrepreneurs within their local communities (Faist, 2000).
5. *Innovative Financing Models:* Migrant entrepreneurs have explored innovative financing models to support business growth. These models may involve seeking grants, subsidies, or incentives available for specific sectors or industries. Access to such financial support mechanisms can help

migrant entrepreneurs expand their operations and invest in new opportunities (Waldinger, 2010).

6. *Focusing on Branding and Reputation Management:* In the post-Brexit landscape, building and maintaining a strong brand and reputation is crucial for business success. Migrant entrepreneurs are concentrating on establishing trustworthy and reputable brands to attract customers and partners. Effective branding can lead to greater market recognition and opportunities (Kaplan & Haenlein, 2010).
7. *Engagement in Community Initiatives:* Migrant entrepreneurs have an opportunity to engage in community initiatives and demonstrate their commitment to the local areas where they operate. Participation in local events, sponsorship of community projects, or partnerships with community organizations can enhance their visibility and integration within the host communities (Waldinger, 2010).

The interplay between these economic challenges and opportunities is dynamic and complex, affecting various sectors and regions differently (Czaika & Vothknecht, 2012). Thus, a nuanced understanding of these issues is crucial as migrant entrepreneurs continue to adapt to the evolving post-Brexit economic landscape.

e) *The Unique Context of Rural Scotland*

An evident gap in the existing literature is the limited consideration of the unique characteristics of rural Scotland. Gebauer et al. (2020) argue that rural regions often possess diverse economic structures and challenges compared to urban areas. These regions are heavily reliant on sectors like agriculture and tourism, where the contributions of migrant workers and entrepreneurs are integral for economic sustainability. Brexit has the potential to affect the stability and growth of migrant-owned businesses in rural Scotland. Trade barriers, changes in market access, and fluctuations in the economy can impact the financial sustainability of these businesses, affecting both migrant entrepreneurs and the local communities they serve (UK Government, 2021).

Migrant-owned businesses contribute significantly to the rural economy, providing employment opportunities and contributing to local development (Velasco et al., 2016). However, the uncertainty and economic changes brought about by Brexit may affect the profitability and long-term sustainability of these businesses.

Brexit-induced labor shortages are a particular concern in rural areas, where seasonal work often requires migrant labor (Ebrill et al., 2021). Many rural businesses in Scotland, particularly in the agricultural sector, have historically relied on seasonal labor from EU countries. Migrant workers played crucial roles in

planting, harvesting, and processing crops, especially during peak seasons (Markova et al., 2022). However, changes in immigration policies after Brexit have raised concerns about labor shortages and the availability of skilled workers in rural industries.

The potential scarcity of labor has implications for the sustainability of rural businesses, particularly those heavily dependent on seasonal workforce from the EU. Migrant entrepreneurs who own farms, agricultural enterprises, or other businesses that employ EU nationals may face challenges in finding suitable replacements for skilled labor or managing increased labor costs (Görg & Hanley, 2020).

Brexit has introduced significant changes to trade relations between the UK and the EU, impacting businesses across various sectors, including those owned by migrants in rural Scotland. For instance, businesses that rely on importing or exporting goods to EU countries may face disruptions due to new customs procedures, tariffs, and regulatory changes (Dhingra et al., 2019).

Migrant-owned businesses engaged in international trade, such as food exports, crafts, or other products with EU markets, may need to adapt their supply chains and distribution networks to navigate the post-Brexit trade landscape. The additional administrative burdens and potential delays in customs processes can have financial implications for these businesses.

Furthermore, the works of Turok and Eiser (2016) emphasize the importance of exploring the broader socio-economic and political implications of Brexit in rural contexts, transcending its economic repercussions. Rural areas in Scotland have distinct labor needs and depend heavily on the contributions of migrant entrepreneurs. Therefore, a multifaceted examination is required to consider the full impacts of Brexit on rural Scotland's socio-economic fabric.

f) *Effectiveness Of Government Policies and Strategies*

Government policies play a pivotal role in shaping the economic environment in which migrant entrepreneurs operate. In the context of Brexit, the impact of these policies is particularly significant (Joppke, 2010). The UK government has introduced various measures to support businesses post-Brexit, including trade agreements and regulatory changes (UK Government, 2021). It is essential to assess the effectiveness of these policies in facilitating the growth and resilience of migrant-owned businesses in rural Scotland.

Trade agreements, for example, can influence market access and export opportunities. Joppke (2010) highlights that such agreements can either open up new markets for businesses or create barriers that hinder international trade. For migrant entrepreneurs, especially those engaged in export-oriented sectors, the terms of

trade agreements can be a critical determinant of success.

Government policies play a pivotal role in shaping the post-Brexit landscape for migrant entrepreneurs. Post-Brexit, the UK government has the opportunity to establish new policies that either encourage or hinder the growth of these businesses (Hall, 1990). Policies related to trade agreements, labor immigration, and business support programs will significantly impact migrant-owned enterprises.

Government initiatives that foster entrepreneurship, skill development, and cross-cultural understanding can enhance the resilience of migrant entrepreneurs in the face of economic and political shifts (Guarnizo, Portes, & Haller, 2003). These policies can help migrant entrepreneurs gain access to resources and support systems, ultimately bolstering their chances of success.

One significant avenue for business growth is networking and collaboration (Waldinger, 2010). Migrant entrepreneurs in rural Scotland often face common challenges. Forming networks, alliances, and partnerships can help businesses share knowledge, resources, and market opportunities. These networks can be both local and international, enabling entrepreneurs to access a broader customer base (Alden Smith & Guarnizo, 2006).

Furthermore, these networks contribute to the social integration of migrant entrepreneurs within their local communities. As these entrepreneurs actively participate in local networks and collaborate with other businesses, the bonds between the migrant community and the local population strengthen (Faist, 2000).

Migrant entrepreneurs have demonstrated their adaptability by adopting innovative strategies for overcoming the Brexit challenges. For instance, some businesses have diversified their products or services to cater to changing market demands (Pries, 2005). This approach allows businesses to navigate the uncertainties of Brexit by offering a broader range of products to local and international customers.

Additionally, businesses have recognized the importance of digital platforms, e-commerce, and online marketing (Vertovec, 1999). A digital presence enables these entrepreneurs to tap into global markets, reaching a wider audience than traditional brick-and-mortar stores allow. Migrant entrepreneurs embracing e-commerce are well-positioned to thrive in the post-Brexit landscape (Vertovec, 1999).

Developing strategies to promote inclusivity and economic vitality in rural Scotland post-Brexit is of paramount importance. These strategies should consider the multifaceted challenges and opportunities facing migrant entrepreneurs. Research suggests that strategies aimed at promoting inclusivity can lead to stronger, more resilient communities and economic growth (Rumbaut, 1997).

Inclusive strategies may encompass fostering cross-cultural understanding and integration, providing training and resources tailored to the needs of migrant-owned businesses, and encouraging collaboration between these businesses and local institutions (Waldinger, 2010). The effectiveness of these strategies should be evaluated and refined based on the specific needs and circumstances of migrant entrepreneurs in rural Scotland.

Conclusion

Brexit's economic ripple effect is a complex and dynamic phenomenon that has left a lasting impact on rural Scotland's migrant entrepreneurs. The literature review reveals that Brexit has altered trade regulations, foreign direct investment, currency fluctuations, and labor mobility, creating both challenges and opportunities for these entrepreneurs. It underscores the importance of nuanced understanding, government policies, and the unique context of rural Scotland in comprehending the full extent of Brexit's influence.

In light of the reviewed literature, this research aims to comprehensively explore the economic repercussions of Brexit on both migrant entrepreneurs and host rural communities in Scotland. Adopting a mixed-methods approach, it seeks to provide a holistic understanding of their experiences, challenges, and perspectives. By combining quantitative and qualitative analyses, this research aspires to contribute to the broader understanding of how Brexit affects the economic dynamics of rural Scotland and inform evidence-based policymaking for the continued growth and resilience of migrant-owned businesses.

III. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

a) Research Design

The research design for this study adopts a mixed-methods approach, specifically employing methodological triangulation, to enhance the reliability, validity, and confirmability of the findings. By combining the depth of qualitative data with the breadth of quantitative data, the study aims to provide a comprehensive understanding of the impact of Brexit on migrant entrepreneurs in rural Scotland (Creswell & Plano Clark, 2018).

The selected research design, a mixed-methods approach employing methodological triangulation, is well-suited to investigate the impact of Brexit on migrant entrepreneurs in rural Scotland and address the research questions effectively. Studies examining the impact of significant events or policy changes on entrepreneurship have often utilized mixed-methods designs to capture the complexity and multi-faceted nature of the phenomenon (Kickul, Gundry, Barbosa, & Whitcanack, 2009; Mason & Harrison, 2006). These studies have demonstrated the benefits of combining qualitative and quantitative approaches to

provide a comprehensive understanding of the topic and generate more robust findings.

The research type chosen for this study is exploratory research. Exploratory research is a valuable approach when investigating relatively unexplored or under-researched topics, aiming to gain insights, develop a better understanding, and generate hypotheses about the research area (Creswell, 2014). Exploratory research is well-suited to explore this complex and evolving phenomenon, as it allows for flexibility in data collection methods and the exploration of different dimensions (Polit & Beck, 2012).

b) Sample Strategy

The target population in my research study encompasses several groups, including migrant entrepreneurs, host communities (specifically rural residents), and public

The sampling strategy for this research study on the experiences and economic challenges of migrant entrepreneurs in rural Scotland following Brexit is designed to ensure a representative sample and capture a diverse range of perspectives. The chosen sampling methods, including stratified sampling and snowball sampling, have been selected for their suitability and practicality in addressing the research objectives. Participants represent different backgrounds, experiences, and perspectives (Creswell, 2014; Palinkas et al., 2015). To capture the experiences and perspectives of migrant entrepreneurs, a purposive sampling approach will be employed.

The sampling frame for the study was based on the Scottish Government's eight-fold Urban/Rural classification (Scottish Government, 2009-2010). This classification categorized areas into accessible rural, remote rural, and very remote rural based on population and drive time accessibility.

Ten rural areas were selected based on the average maximum percentage of rural population from each stratum. This approach ensures that the sample includes areas with varying degrees of rurality, providing a comprehensive understanding of the experiences of migrant entrepreneurs across different rural contexts.

Within each selected rural area, purposeful sampling was employed to select participants for focus groups and surveys. Purposeful sampling involves deliberately selecting individuals or groups who possess the desired characteristics or knowledge related to the research topic (Patton, 2015). In this case, the researchers aimed to include migrant entrepreneurs, rural residents, and public third-party stakeholders who could provide valuable insights into the experiences and challenges of migrant entrepreneurs in rural Scotland.

Snowball sampling is a non-probability sampling technique that involves leveraging existing participants to refer and recruit additional participants (Bryman, 2016). This method is particularly useful when

the target population is difficult to reach or identify, such as EU migrant entrepreneurs in rural areas.

By employing a combination of stratified sampling and snowball sampling, the research study ensures a diverse and representative sample of participants, capturing the experiences and challenges of migrant entrepreneurs in rural Scotland following Brexit. The stratified sampling approach enables the exploration of variations in experiences across different rural strata, while snowball sampling facilitates the inclusion of EU migrant entrepreneurs in the study.

c) *Sample Size*

In order to ensure a representative sample size for this research study, a total of 275 participants were included in the survey. This sample size was determined by considering the need for statistical power to draw meaningful conclusions and the practical feasibility of data collection within the given time frame. By including a sufficient number of participants, the study aimed to enhance the reliability and generalizability of the findings (Johnson et al., 2018).

In terms of the focus groups, a total of six groups were conducted in three rural areas. The selection of participants for the focus groups was guided by their relevance to the research objectives and their willingness to engage in discussions. Three focus groups were specifically conducted with migrant entrepreneurs operating businesses in rural areas of Scotland. This allowed for a deep exploration of the unique challenges, experiences, and perspectives of this group. Additionally, *three separate focus groups were conducted with the host communities, comprising rural residents and third-party stakeholders such as local government representatives and community organizations.* This approach facilitated the understanding of the interactions, dynamics, and potential conflicts between migrant entrepreneurs and the host communities, shedding light on the broader social and economic context (Brown et al., 2020; Jones et al., 2021).

By including both migrant entrepreneurs and host communities in the research study, a comprehensive understanding of the experiences and challenges faced by migrant entrepreneurs in rural Scotland following Brexit was sought. This approach allowed for a critical examination of the complex interplay between various stakeholders, shedding light on potential areas of collaboration, conflict, and opportunities for policy interventions. The inclusion of diverse perspectives aimed to provide a holistic view of the phenomenon, enriching the analysis and recommendations (Jones et al., 2021).

d) *Data Collection Methods*

Questionnaire Administration: The data collection process for this study involved the distribution of a structured

questionnaire to EU migrant entrepreneurs and host communities in rural Scotland. The questionnaire consisted of closed ended questions and open-ended questions. The open ended questions designed to capture detailed and nuanced responses regarding the impact of Brexit on businesses and communities in the region.

The 275 questionnaires were distributed electronically via email or through online survey platforms such as Qualtrics. Participants received clear instructions and a unique survey link to access the questionnaire. The online format allows for convenient and efficient data collection, enabling participants to complete the questionnaire at their own pace and preferred location. The sample yielded a total of 115 valid responses after meticulous data cleaning.

Focus Group Discussion: In addition to the questionnaire, focus group discussions were conducted to complement and enrich the data collected. Purposeful sampling was employed to select participants from the target population who were willing to take part in the focus groups, as indicated during the survey research by sharing their contact IDs.

For the focus group analysis, a reflexive thematic analysis technique was employed to analyze the qualitative data (Johnson, 2020). To ensure diversity in perspectives, participants were drawn from three case study areas in rural Scotland: Aberdeenshire, the Shetland Islands, and Argyll & Bute/Angus. These case study areas were selected based on their vulnerability to the impact of Brexit, as indicated by the Scottish Government's Brexit Vulnerability Index and the Scottish government's 8-fold Urban/Rural classification.

The focus group discussions were conducted online using platforms such as Teams and Google Meet, and the sessions took place between July and August 2022.

Qualitative insights were collected through six focus group discussions. Three focus groups were dedicated to migrant entrepreneurs operating businesses in rural areas, while an additional three focus groups included participants from host communities, such as rural residents and third-party stakeholders, including local government representatives and community organizations. These discussions offer nuanced insights into the unique challenges, experiences, and perspectives of both migrant entrepreneurs and host communities. *The total number of participants for the focus groups was 35, with 11 participants from Aberdeenshire, 12 from the Shetland Islands, and 12 from Argyll & Bute/Angus. The diversity of participants from different case study areas allowed for a comprehensive exploration of the experiences of migrant entrepreneurs and host communities across rural Scotland.*

The focus group discussions provided an interactive platform for participants to engage in in-depth conversations, share their experiences, and generate new insights into the research topic.

Pilot Study: Before the main data collection phase, a pilot study was conducted to assess the clarity, relevance, and effectiveness of the data collection instruments. A small group of participants, representative of the target population, will be invited to provide feedback on the questionnaires and participate in a mock focus group session. Their feedback and input will be crucial in refining the instruments and ensuring they capture the intended research objectives (Bryman, 2016).

Pilot testing allowed for the identification of any potential issues or challenges with the instruments, such as confusing or ambiguous questions, which could affect the quality of the data collected. By administering the instruments to a small sample of participants similar to the intended study population, valuable feedback was obtained to refine and improve the instruments, thereby increasing their reliability and validity for the main data collection (Creswell & Creswell, 2017). The pilot testing phase ensured that the data collected would be of high quality and aligned with the research objectives, enhancing the overall trustworthiness of the study.

IV. DATA ANALYSIS

a) Quantitative Analysis

The quantitative data obtained from the questionnaires are analyzed using the descriptive statistics and non-parametric Kruskal-Wallis H test. This statistical test is employed to examine disparities in perceptions of Brexit's economic impact between migrant entrepreneurs and host rural communities across the ten surveyed rural areas. The quantitative analysis allows the research to draw robust conclusions regarding differences in perceptions and experiences.

The data was collected through a questionnaire distributed via Qualtrics. A total of 275 responses were collected using a questionnaire distributed via Qualtrics. The questionnaire, designed on a Likert scale, comprised of 20 questions. The data was entered into IBM SPSS 25 for coding and analysis.

Prior to the analysis, the dataset underwent thorough preparation and cleaning. Missing values were checked, and out of the 275 responses, 115 were found to have complete data and were considered valid for analysis. The responses were then organized and coded for further analysis.

A. Descriptive Statistics

Descriptive statistics were calculated to provide an overview of the dataset. This included calculating frequencies, percentages, means, and standard deviations. These statistics helped in understanding the distribution and central tendencies of the data.

Economic Impact of Brexit

The data analysis revealed varied perceptions on post-Brexit job opportunities and wage stability between host communities and migrant entrepreneurs. While the host communities were slightly more optimistic about these aspects, the migrant entrepreneurs showed a more diverse array of opinions.

Increased Cost of Doing Business in Rural Scotland: The data highlights that both migrant entrepreneurs and host rural communities acknowledge the increased cost of doing business in rural Scotland following Brexit. Majority of both Host Rural Communities (77.6%) and Migrant Entrepreneurs (66.7%) agreed or strongly agreed that Brexit has increased the cost of doing business in rural Scotland. This finding aligns with expectations, as Brexit introduced trade barriers and regulatory changes that likely resulted in higher transportation and audit costs. However, it is essential to consider other factors that may contribute to these cost increases, such as shifts in market dynamics, supply chain disruptions, and currency fluctuations. Further investigation into the specific drivers of these cost increases would provide valuable insights for policymakers and businesses seeking to mitigate the negative financial consequences of Brexit.

Obstacles Faced by Migrant-Owned Businesses: Regarding the obstacles faced by migrant-owned businesses, the analysis shows that Migrant Entrepreneurs (63.3%) were more likely to agree or strongly agree that their businesses face more obstacles in delivering goods or services compared to locally-owned businesses. In contrast, a smaller proportion of Host Rural Communities (12.5%) shared this perception.

The analysis reveals a significant disparity in the perception of obstacles faced by migrant-owned businesses compared to locally-owned businesses. Migrant entrepreneurs are more likely to report facing hurdles in delivering their goods or services. This could be attributed to various factors, including language barriers, cultural differences, limited access to networks, and unfamiliarity with local business practices. Addressing these challenges requires targeted support mechanisms, such as language training, cultural integration programs, and mentorship initiatives, to ensure the success and resilience of migrant entrepreneurs in rural Scotland.

Access to Critical Business Information and Financial Support: The findings indicate a nuanced perception regarding access to critical business information and financial support. While both migrant entrepreneurs and host rural communities acknowledge some level of disparity favoring rural dwellers, the extent of this advantage is subject to interpretation. The analysis indicates that Migrant Entrepreneurs (56.7%) expressed a higher belief compared to Host Rural Communities

(33.8%) that Scotland's rural dwellers with businesses have more access to critical business information and financial support than foreign investors.

It is crucial to conduct further research to identify the specific information and support channels that may be inaccessible to foreign investors. Additionally, exploring potential reasons behind the perceived disparities can inform the development of inclusive strategies that promote equal opportunities and level the playing field for all business owners in rural Scotland.

Restricted Free Movement of Workers and Labor Shortages: Both Host Rural Communities (50.6%) and Migrant Entrepreneurs (66.7%) agreed or strongly agreed that Brexit has restricted the free movement of migrant workers/seasonal workers, leading to a shortage of labor and decreased business performance in rural Scotland. The data strongly supports the notion that the restricted free movement of workers and labor shortages have negatively impacted local and migrant businesses in rural Scotland. The shortage of labor due to limited migrant worker mobility has created challenges for businesses that rely on seasonal or temporary workers. This situation has likely led to increased labor costs, reduced productivity, and potential disruptions in operations. It is crucial for policymakers to consider strategies that address labor shortages, such as promoting training and upskilling programs for the local workforce and exploring alternative avenues for attracting migrant workers while ensuring their rights and protections.

Need for Flexible Immigration and Social Integration Policies: Both Host Rural Communities (43.5%) and Migrant Entrepreneurs (73.3%) expressed the belief that Scotland needs to have flexible immigration and inclusive social integration policies or sustained immigration. The data underscores the importance of flexible immigration and inclusive social integration policies to sustain immigration and support the growth of migrant-owned businesses in rural Scotland. These policies play a vital role in fostering a welcoming

environment, facilitating cultural integration, and promoting diversity, which are all crucial for economic and social development. However, the implementation and effectiveness of such policies require careful consideration and stakeholder engagement. A balance must be struck between addressing the concerns of host communities and ensuring that migrant entrepreneurs have equal opportunities and access to resources. Building strong social cohesion and creating an inclusive environment will contribute to the overall success and prosperity of rural Scotland.

B. Inferential Analysis

We employ inferential statistics to delve deeper into the economic impacts of Brexit on migrants enterprenurs and *host communities*. The Kruskal-Wallis H test, a powerful non-parametric statistical tool that helps us rigorously assess the significance of differences among various groups (Doane & Seward, 2014). In our study, the "type" variable distinguishes between two categories, namely "host rural" and "migrant entrepreneurs," while our dependent variables, reflecting the impacts of Brexit, are measured on a continuous Likert-scale (Salkind, 2010).

Hypothesis Testing Using Kruskal-Wallis H Test

The Kruskal-Wallis H test is an extension of the Wilcoxon-Mann-Whitney U test, specifically designed for comparing multiple independent groups, as is the case in our research (Conover, 1999). When traditional parametric tests, such as analysis of variance (ANOVA), cannot be employed due to data distribution assumptions not being met, this non-parametric counterpart steps in (Kloke & McKean, 2012). Our decision to utilize the Kruskal-Wallis H test aligns with the nature of our data and the need to robustly examine potential differences in the impacts of Brexit among host rural communities and migrant entrepreneurs.

The Kruskal-Wallis H test will enable us to discern whether the observed differences between the groups are statistically significant or if they could have arisen due to random variation (Hollander et al., 2013).

Ho(a): Brexit has not increased the cost of doing business for migrants owned businesses in rural Scotland				
H1(a): Brexit has increased the cost of doing business for migrants owned business in rural Scotland				
Type	N	Mean Rank	Test Statistics ^{a, b}	
Host Rural Communities	85	54.52	Chi-Square	3.903
Migrant entrepreneurs	30	67.87	df	1
Total	115		Asymp. Sig.	0.048

a. Kruskal Wallis Test

b. Grouping Variable: Type

Interpretation:

H (degree of freedom)=Chi Square test statistics, p=0.05

H (1)=3.903 , p=0.05

The Kruskal-Wallis test was conducted to assess the impact of Brexit on the cost of doing business in rural Scotland, considering factors such as high transportation and audit costs. The results revealed

significant differences (Asym. Sig. = 0.048, $p < 0.05$) in the impact of Brexit on the cost of doing business.

The mean ranks for migrant entrepreneurs ($R = 67.87$) and host rural communities ($R = 54.52$) indicating significant difference in perceptions between Host Rural Communities and Migrant Entrepreneurs.

This implies that Brexit has indeed increased the cost of doing business in rural Scotland, with implications for businesses' financial stability. This finding highlights the need for businesses to adapt to these higher costs and potentially explore strategies to mitigate the financial implications of Brexit.

Ho(b): Brexit has not created obstacles for migrants owned businesses in delivering their good or services than locally owned business.				
H1(b): Brexit has created obstacles for migrants owned businesses in delivering their good or services than locally owned business.				
Type	N	Mean Rank	Test Statistics ^{a,b}	
Host Rural Communities	85	57.16	Kruskal- Wallis H	0.217
Migrant entrepreneurs	30	60.37	df	1
Total	115		Asymp. Sig.	0.641

a. Kruskal Wallis Test

b. Grouping Variable: Type

Interpretation:

H (degree of freedom)=Chi Square test statistics, $p=0.05$

H (1)=0.217 , $p=0.05$

The Kruskal-Wallis test was employed to examine the impact of Brexit on creating obstacles for businesses in rural Scotland, comparing migrant-owned businesses with locally-owned businesses. The results indicated insignificant differences (Asym. Sig. = 0.641, $p > 0.05$) in the impact of Brexit on creating obstacles.

The Kruskal-Wallis H test did not establish a significant difference in this aspect, suggesting that Brexit may not have significantly created obstacles for migrant-owned businesses in delivering their goods or services compared to locally-owned businesses. This may be a reassuring finding, indicating that Brexit has not worsened the perceived challenges faced by migrant-owned businesses. This finding suggests that there may not be substantial disparities in the challenges faced by migrant-owned and locally-owned businesses in rural Scotland as a result of Brexit.

Ho(c): After Brexit , Scotland's rural dwellers with businesses have not got more access to critical business information and financial support from government than migrants owned business.				
H1(c): After Brexit , Scotland's rural dwellers with businesses have got more access to critical business information and financial support from government than migrants owned business.				
Type	N	Mean Rank	Test Statistics ^{a,b}	
Host Rural Communities	85	56.85	Kruskal- Wallis H	.404
Migrant entrepreneurs	30	61.25	df	1
Total	115		Asymp. Sig.	.525

a. Kruskal Wallis Test

b. Grouping Variable: Type

Interpretation:

H (degree of freedom)=Chi Square test statistics, $p=0.05$

H (1)=0.404 , $p=0.05$

The Kruskal-Wallis test was employed to evaluate the impact of Brexit on providing more access to critical business information and financial support to Scotland's rural dwellers with businesses compared to migrant-owned businesses. The results indicated insignificant differences (Asym. Sig. = 0.525, $p > 0.05$) in the impact of Brexit on access to critical business information and financial support.

The Kruskal-Wallis H test also did not reveal a significant difference, suggesting that there may not be substantial disparities in access to critical business information and financial support between groups. This finding suggests that, despite differences in perception, the reality may not be one of significant inequality. This finding highlights the importance of addressing potential disparities in support mechanisms and resources available to different business groups in rural Scotland.

Ho(d): Brexit has not led to the unavailability of investment loans for the businesses owned by Migrants in rural Scotland.
H1(d): Brexit has led to the unavailability of investment loans for the businesses owned by Migrants in rural Scotland.

Type	N	Mean Rank	Test Statistics ^{a,b}	
Host Rural Communities	85	53.50	Kruskal- Wallis H	6.278
Migrant entrepreneurs	30	70.75	df	1
Total	115		Asymp. Sig.	.012

a. Kruskal Wallis Test

b. Grouping Variable: Type

Interpretation:

H (degree of freedom)=Chi Square test statistics, p=0.05

H (1)=6.278 , p=0.05

The Kruskal-Wallis test was conducted to examine the impact of Brexit on the availability of investment loans for businesses owned by migrants in rural Scotland. The results revealed significant differences (Asym. Sig. = 0.012, p < 0.05) in the impact of Brexit on the unavailability of investment loans.

The Kruskal-Wallis H test confirmed a significant difference, indicating that Brexit has led to the unavailability of investment loans for businesses owned by migrants in rural Scotland. This critical result underscores the challenges faced by migrant entrepreneurs in accessing crucial financial resources to support and grow their businesses in the post-Brexit landscape. It demands the attention of policymakers to address these challenges and provide support mechanisms to ensure the resilience of migrant-owned businesses.

Ho(e): Brexit has not decreased the performance of local and migrant owned businesses due to restricted free movement of migrant workers/seasonal workers (Shortage of labor) in rural Scotland.
H1(e): Brexit has decreased the performance of local and migrant owned businesses due to restricted free movement of migrant workers/seasonal workers (Shortage of labor) in rural Scotland.

Type	N	Mean Rank	Test Statistics ^{a, b}	
Host Rural Communities	85	53.62	Kruskal- Wallis H	5.958
Migrant entrepreneurs	30	70.40	df	1
Total	115		Asymp. Sig.	.015

a. Kruskal Wallis Test

b. Grouping Variable: Type

Interpretation:

H (degree of freedom)=Chi Square test statistics, p=0.05

H (1)=5.958 , p=0.05

The Kruskal- Wallis test was employed to assess the impact of Brexit on the performance of local and migrant-owned businesses in rural Scotland due to the restricted free movement of migrant workers/seasonal workers. The results revealed significant differences (Asym. Sig. = 0.015, p < 0.05) in the impact of Brexit on decreasing business performance.

business performance. This finding highlights the need for strategies and support mechanisms to address the labor shortages and mitigate the adverse effects on business performance in rural Scotland.

Conclusion

The quantitative analysis provides valuable insights into the economic impacts of Brexit on both host communities and migrant entrepreneurs in rural Scotland. Notably, both groups acknowledge the increased cost of doing business as a significant challenge. The statistically significant findings suggest that Brexit has significantly increased the cost of doing business and led to the unavailability of investment loans for migrant-owned businesses. Additionally, it has resulted in a shortage of labor, affecting the performance of local and migrant-owned businesses.

The Kruskal-Wallis H test confirmed a significant difference, demonstrating that Brexit has indeed decreased the performance of local and migrant-owned businesses due to the shortage of labor caused by the restricted free movement of migrant workers/seasonal workers in rural Scotland. This is a crucial finding, indicating that labor shortages resulting from Brexit restrictions have tangible and adverse effects on

Despite these significant impacts, it's essential to recognize the nuanced experiences and perceptions of different groups. The perceptions of obstacles faced

by migrant-owned businesses and the disparities in access to critical business information and financial support may require further investigation to understand the underlying reasons. Furthermore, the perceptions of host communities and migrant entrepreneurs do not always align significantly in statistical terms. These differences in perception emphasize the need to consider diverse perspectives in policymaking and support mechanisms.

In conclusion, the quantitative analysis underscores the significant economic challenges posed by Brexit in rural Scotland. Policymakers should focus on addressing these challenges, supporting investment, providing financial resources, and addressing labor shortages to ensure the continued success and resilience of both local and migrant-owned businesses. Additionally, recognizing and understanding the varying perceptions and experiences of different groups is crucial for developing policies that are responsive to the unique needs of these communities.

b) Qualitative Analysis

The qualitative data gathered from the focus group discussions are subjected to thematic analysis. This approach involves identifying emerging themes and patterns within the qualitative data. Through thematic analysis, the research uncovers deeper insights into the experiences and challenges faced by migrant entrepreneurs and host communities.

Rationale for Thematic Analysis

Thematic analysis is also particularly well-suited for this research study because it allows for the integration of qualitative data from different sources, such as open-ended survey responses and focus group discussions. This integration of data can enhance the richness and depth of the analysis, providing a comprehensive understanding of the research topic (Nowell et al., 2017).

The decision to use of thematic analysis was justified by the need to explore complex and multifaceted phenomena (Johnson, 2020). Brexit's implications on rural businesses and migrant-owned enterprises are diverse and can vary greatly across different contexts and perspectives. Thematic analysis enabled the researcher to delve into the richness of the data, capturing the diverse viewpoints of participants, including positive and negative impacts (Smith, 2023). As highlighted by Clarke and Braun (2017), thematic analysis allows for the identification of both semantic and latent themes. Semantic themes capture the explicit and surface-level content of the data, while latent themes delve into the underlying meanings and interpretations. Given the complexity of the research topic and the potential for diverse experiences among participants, thematic analysis enables the exploration of both explicit and underlying themes related to the

economic, social, and political implications of Brexit on rural communities and migrant entrepreneurs.

In summary, the choice of using thematic analysis for the open ended questions in questionnaire and focus group in this research study is justified due to its flexibility, reflexivity, ability to integrate qualitative data, and capacity to explore both explicit and underlying themes. Therefore, thematic analysis proved to be a suitable and valuable method for this study, as it enabled a comprehensive and nuanced exploration of participants' experiences and perspectives. By using thematic analysis, this research was able to provide meaningful insights into the challenges and opportunities faced by businesses in rural Scotland, migrant entrepreneurs, community relations, and shared facilities in the post-Brexit landscape.

A. Thematic Analysis of Questionnaire Open-Ended Responses

The analysis of open-ended survey responses in this study aimed to explore participants' perspectives on the impact of Brexit on businesses and migrant entrepreneurs in rural Scotland. The qualitative data obtained from the open-ended questions allowed participants to freely express their opinions and experiences, providing valuable insights into the topic (Smith et al., 2021).

To ensure the effectiveness of the open-ended questions, careful consideration was given to their design. The questions were formulated to cover various dimensions of the research topic, such as the economic challenges faced by businesses, the social implications of Brexit, the impact on community relations, and the political consequences of the new immigration policy. By using open-ended questions, the study aimed to gather comprehensive and context-specific insights into the participants' views on the subject matter.

The thematic analysis of the open-ended questions from the questionnaire revealed several key themes and sub-themes related to the impact of Brexit on businesses and migrant entrepreneurs in rural Scotland. The themes that emerged were as follows:

Theme 1: Impact of Brexit on Businesses in Rural Areas

The first theme that emerged from the thematic analysis pertains to the impact of Brexit on businesses in rural areas. Participants' participants expressed a range of perspectives, with some highlighting the economic challenges brought about by Brexit, as summarized below:

Sub-theme: Economic Impact

A significant proportion of participants believed that Brexit has created harsh environments for running businesses in rural areas. They highlighted potential economic impacts, such as reduced investment, supply chain issues, increased red tape, and higher costs. Participants from various industries reported facing challenges in adapting to the new post-Brexit

landscape, which they perceived as a bottleneck affecting economic growth.

"Brexit has introduced a myriad of economic challenges for businesses in rural areas, making it difficult for us to remain competitive in the global market," remarked a participant from the manufacturing sector.

Sub-theme: Positive Impact on UK Businesses

Conversely, a smaller proportion of participants expressed the view that Brexit has or will have a positive impact on UK businesses. They emphasized that leaving the EU has opened up opportunities for trade with non-EU markets, such as the United States and Australia. They believed that new trade agreements with non-EU countries would benefit UK businesses and promote economic growth.

"Brexit has enabled us to explore new markets outside the EU, leading to increased export opportunities and growth potential," noted a participant from the agricultural sector.

Sub-theme: No Change Observed

Another group of participants reported that they had not observed any significant change in the business environment after Brexit. They believed that the impact of Brexit on businesses in rural areas was either minimal or nonexistent.

"Despite the fear surrounding Brexit, our business has continued to operate as usual, and we have not experienced any major disruptions," explained a participant from the tourism sector.

Sub-theme: Financial Crisis and High Cost of Living

Some participants highlighted the financial crisis and high cost of living as challenges for running businesses in rural areas. They pointed out that Brexit compounded the existing issues of cost of living and financial hardship, particularly for rural residents. They expressed concerns about potential hardships and the need for EU nationals to consider moving back to the EU.

"Brexit came at a time when our region was already facing economic struggles, and now the high cost of living is further impacting our business's bottom line," stated a participant from the retail sector.

Sub-theme: Impact on Micro Businesses and Small Agriculture Industries

Participants emphasized the significant impact of new schemes introduced after Brexit on micro businesses and small agriculture industries, which are more dominant in remote areas. They mentioned the negative consequences of the transition, such as reduced payments and the potential loss of basic-scheme payments for farmers.

"As a small-scale farmer, the changes brought about by Brexit have hit us hard. Our income has reduced,

and it's challenging to make ends meet," lamented a participant from the agricultural sector.

Sub-theme: Challenges and Opportunities

Lastly, some participants believed that Brexit has created both challenges and opportunities for immigrants and locals alike. They acknowledged the difficulties faced by businesses but also recognized the potential for growth and adaptation in the post-Brexit landscape.

"Brexit has been a mixed bag for us. While there are challenges, we see new opportunities for innovation and market diversification," remarked a participant from the technology sector.

Theme 2: Challenges Faced by Migrant-Owned Businesses in Rural Scotland

The second theme centers around the challenges faced by migrant-owned businesses in rural Scotland as a result of Brexit. The sub-themes that emerged from the data are as follows:

Sub-theme: Significant Negative Economic Impact

A considerable number of participants expressed concerns about the negative economic impact of Brexit on every business sector. They highlighted the decrease in GDP, the loss of economic power for the EU, and the potential suffering of industries such as automotive, airline, pharmaceutical, and financial services.

"Brexit has created uncertainty and instability, and it's affecting our business's growth prospects. We are worried about the future," explained a participant from the financial sector.

Sub-theme: Human Resource and Workforce Issues

Participants mentioned challenges related to human resources and the workforce. They highlighted issues such as labor force shortages, lack of skilled workers, difficulties in attracting and retaining talent, and the impact on wages and productivity.

"Finding skilled employees has become increasingly difficult after Brexit, and this is hindering our business expansion plans," stated a participant from the healthcare sector.

Sub-theme: Implementation of New Immigration System /Policy

Participants discussed the challenges arising from the implementation of a new immigration system or policy. They mentioned restrictions on the free movement of EU citizens, the requirement for visas, and concerns about equal rights and discrimination.

"The new immigration policies are a major concern for us. We fear it will lead to labor shortages and adversely affect our business operations," expressed a participant from the hospitality sector.

Sub-theme: Violation of Equal Rights and Discrimination

Some participants raised concerns about the violation of equal rights and discrimination faced by migrants in rural Scotland. They highlighted discriminatory practices, social status differences, and the perception of unequal treatment.

"Brexit seems to have emboldened xenophobic sentiments, and it's disheartening to experience discrimination in our adopted home," said a participant from the retail sector.

Sub-theme: Decreased Wages and Productivity

Participants noted the impact of Brexit on wages and productivity. They expressed concerns about slower wage and productivity growth, reduced income, and the challenges faced by immigrants due to the high cost of living.

"Brexit has led to stagnant wages, and this is affecting our employees' morale and productivity," shared a participant from the manufacturing sector.

Sub-theme: Impact of COVID-19

A small proportion of participants mentioned that the economic impact of COVID-19 was more challenging than Brexit. They highlighted the combined effects of Brexit and the pandemic, such as increased difficulties for businesses and inflation.

"The double whammy of Brexit and the pandemic has created unprecedented challenges for our business, and we are struggling to stay afloat," lamented a participant from the service sector.

B. Thematic Analysis of Focus Group Discussions

The focus group analysis provided valuable insights into the experiences and perspectives of EU migrant entrepreneurs and host communities, shedding light on the economic, social, and political consequences of Brexit on rural Scotland. Four main themes and corresponding sub-themes emerged from the analysis, encompassing the various impacts of Brexit on Scotland's rural communities (Smith, 2023). The themes identified were: Economic Impact, Social Impact, Political Impact, and Policy Reforms. Under these themes, participants discussed topics such as the financial crisis, business laws and regulations, employment challenges, racism/xenophobia, the new immigration policy, and policy reforms to address the challenges.

This overarching theme delves into the economic implications of Brexit on rural Scotland. The focus group discussions offered valuable insights into the economic challenges faced by both migrant entrepreneurs and host communities.

Number	Themes	Sub – Themes
1.	Financial Crisis	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – High cost of living – Currency Devaluation – Inflation & Economic Uncertainties – Impact on the Free Market – Interact with Covid 19
2.	Business Laws and Regulations	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Renewal of Business Registrations – Impact on Economic Zones & Sectors
3.	Employment	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Challenges in Skilled Labor Access – Recruitment and Talent Retention Challenges – Business Relocation and Contributing Factors

Theme 1: Financial Crisis

1. *High Cost of Living and Food Prices:* The participants highlighted the difficulties associated with the high cost of living, including increased food prices. These economic hardships particularly affected EU nationals living in rural areas and those contemplating establishing businesses there. The increased cost of living posed a significant hurdle for economic stability, making it challenging for businesses, especially smaller enterprises, to thrive.
2. *Currency Devaluation:* A major concern expressed by participants was the devaluation of currency, which had a substantial impact on both consumers and businesses. The depreciation of the currency led to higher import costs and decreased profit

3. *Inflation and Economic Uncertainties:* The economic uncertainties stemming from Brexit had cascading effects, including inflation. This inflation, in turn, increased the costs of goods and services. The resultant economic uncertainties further compounded the financial crisis, affecting individuals and businesses. Reduced savings and declining purchasing power added to these challenges, making it harder for people to meet their financial needs and invest in businesses.
4. *Impact on the Free Market:* The discussions acknowledged the pivotal role the UK played in

managing the market for goods and services in Europe. The focus group participants recognized that the restrictions imposed post-Brexit on the European Union's free market had significant repercussions on trade between member states. The disruption in the free market, coupled with the changes brought by Brexit, underscored the complexity of the economic situation.

5. *Interaction with COVID-19:* The co-occurrence of the COVID-19 pandemic and Brexit was a key point of discussion. Participants recognized that while Brexit was a major factor affecting the economy, it was challenging to isolate its effects from those of the pandemic. The dual impact of these two significant events created a multifaceted challenge, making it difficult to attribute certain economic outcomes solely to Brexit.

Theme 2: Business Laws and Regulations

1. *Renewal of Business Registrations:* Participants discussed the challenges related to renewing business registrations and complying with the new UK business guidelines that emerged post-Brexit. Adapting to these new British regulations, which encompassed areas like trademark and copyright policies, posed immediate challenges for businesses. The additional costs associated with these registrations were identified as a significant hurdle, particularly for smaller businesses with limited resources.
2. *Impact on Economic Zones and Sectors:* The thematic analysis revealed conversations about the negative impact of Brexit on various economic zones and business sectors. This impact resulted in a decrease in GDP and a diminishing of economic power for the European Union. Many businesses, especially smaller ones, were ill-prepared for Brexit, which was a significant concern. Specific attention was given to the potential ramifications for sectors such as automotive, airlines, pharmaceuticals, and financial services.

Theme 3: Employment

1. *Challenges in Skilled Labor Access:* The participants emphasized the immediate employment challenges brought about by Brexit in rural Scotland. The discussions revolved around the availability and accessibility of skilled labor, highlighting the reliance on external labor sources. However, strict work permit laws and requirements complicated the employment of individuals from other countries, resulting in labor shortages and hindrances to economic activities.
2. *Recruitment and Talent Retention Challenges:* The focus group discussions underscored the difficulties faced by Scottish businesses in recruiting and retaining talent with the necessary skill set. Competitive salaries offered elsewhere made it even

more challenging to attract and retain skilled workers. The loss of EU workers post-Brexit led to staffing crises, particularly in sectors crucial to rural Scotland's economy, such as health, social care, agriculture, food, and hospitality.

3. *Business Relocation and Contributing Factors:* The relocation of businesses from the UK to the EU after Brexit was acknowledged. However, the complex nature of the labor shortage issue was highlighted, as it was challenging to attribute it solely to Brexit. The simultaneous occurrence of the COVID-19 pandemic added to the complexity, making it difficult to determine the relative contributions of these two major events to the labor shortages faced by rural communities. This comprehensive analysis offers an in-depth understanding of the economic challenges resulting from Brexit. The financial crisis, increased business-related expenses, and the impact on various sectors underscore the need for adaptable policies and strategies to navigate these challenges. The intertwined dynamics of Brexit and the COVID-19 pandemic emphasize the importance of nuanced and well-informed policymaking to address the economic consequences in rural Scotland effectively.

V. KEY FINDINGS OF ANALYSIS

a. Key Findings of Quantitative Analysis

Descriptive Statistics

- Varied perceptions of post-Brexit job opportunities and wage stability between host communities and migrant entrepreneurs.
- A majority of both Host Rural Communities (77.6%) and Migrant Entrepreneurs (66.7%) agreed that Brexit has increased the cost of doing business in rural Scotland.
- Migrant Entrepreneurs (63.3%) were more likely to agree that their businesses face more obstacles in delivering goods or services compared to locally-owned businesses.
- Migrant Entrepreneurs (56.7%) expressed a higher belief compared to Host Rural Communities (33.8%) that Scotland's rural dwellers with businesses have more access to critical business information and financial support than foreign investors.
- Both Host Rural Communities (50.6%) and Migrant Entrepreneurs (66.7%) agreed that Brexit has restricted the free movement of migrant workers/seasonal workers, leading to labor shortages and decreased business performance in rural Scotland.
- Both Host Rural Communities (43.5%) and Migrant Entrepreneurs (73.3%) believed that Scotland needs flexible immigration and inclusive social integration policies to support migrant-owned businesses.

Inferential Analysis

- The Kruskal-Wallis H test showed a significant difference in perceptions between Host Rural Communities and Migrant Entrepreneurs regarding the increased cost of doing business after Brexit. Migrant Entrepreneurs perceived a more significant impact, indicating that Brexit has indeed increased the cost of doing business in rural Scotland.
- The Kruskal-Wallis H test did not establish a significant difference in the obstacles faced by migrant-owned businesses in delivering goods or services compared to locally-owned businesses. This suggests that Brexit may not have significantly created obstacles for migrant-owned businesses.
- The Kruskal-Wallis H test also did not reveal a significant difference in access to critical business information and financial support, despite differences in perception. This indicates that there may not be substantial disparities in access to resources between groups.
- Brexit has led to the unavailability of investment loans for businesses owned by migrants in rural Scotland, as confirmed by a significant difference.
- The Kruskal-Wallis H test showed a significant difference indicating that Brexit has decreased the performance of local and migrant-owned businesses due to the shortage of labor caused by the restricted free movement of migrant workers /seasonal workers.

In summary, the quantitative analysis highlights significant economic challenges posed by Brexit in rural Scotland. It emphasizes increased business costs, unavailability of investment loans, and the adverse effects of labor shortages on business performance. While perceptions vary, these findings underscore the need for supportive policies and strategies to address these challenges and ensure the success and resilience of businesses, both local and migrant-owned, in rural Scotland. Diverse perspectives and experiences should be considered in policymaking to meet the unique needs of these communities.

b. Key findings of Qualitative Analysis

The key findings from the qualitative analysis of the economic impact of Brexit on rural Scotland, derived from both open-ended survey responses and focus group discussions, are as follows:

- *High Cost of Living:* The participants highlighted the challenges posed by the high cost of living and increased food prices. These economic hardships were seen as significant obstacles affecting both businesses and individuals.
- *Currency Devaluation:* The devaluation of currency was a major point of concern. Participants noted that the depreciation of the currency had a

substantial impact on both consumers and businesses, particularly those reliant on imports.

- *Inflation and Reduced Savings:* Economic uncertainties brought about by Brexit led to inflation, increasing the costs of goods and services. These uncertainties further compounded financial hardships, affecting individuals and businesses. Participants identified reduced savings and declining purchasing power as contributing factors to these challenges.
- *Changes in Trademark and Copyright Policies:* Particular attention was given to the changes in trademark and copyright policies. These changes resulted in additional costs associated with business registrations and negatively impacted various business sectors.
- *Decrease in GDP and Economic Power for the EU:* Participants perceived these changes in regulations as barriers to conducting business smoothly in the region. The resultant economic impacts included a decrease in GDP and a reduction in economic power for the European Union.
- *Strict Laws and Work Permit Requirements:* The strict laws and requirements for work permits were cited as a significant hurdle for EU nationals seeking employment in Scotland.
- *Short-Term Labor Shortage:* This led to a short-term labor shortage, particularly in sectors such as health, social care, agriculture, food, and hospitality. Businesses faced difficulties in attracting and retaining talent with the required skill set due to limitations on immigration.
- *Staffing Crises:* The loss of EU workers after Brexit was identified as a crisis in staffing. Various industries were affected, and the participants acknowledged the reliance on migration to alleviate skills shortages.

These key findings from the qualitative analysis provide a comprehensive understanding of the economic challenges experienced in rural Scotland following Brexit. They highlight the multifaceted nature of these challenges, including financial hardships, regulatory obstacles, and difficulties related to employment. These findings can inform policy recommendations and strategies to address these challenges effectively and support the prosperity of rural communities in the post-Brexit era.

VI. INTEGRATION OF QUANTITATIVE AND QUALITATIVE ANALYSIS FINDINGS

1. *Economic Disruption and Financial Challenges:* The study identified a significant perception among both host rural communities and migrant entrepreneurs that Brexit has ushered in economic disruption and financial challenges. The high cost of living, increased food prices, and currency devaluation

were among the prominent issues. These findings are congruent with the experiences shared in focus group discussions, where participants voiced concerns about a financial crisis in rural areas. This indicates that Brexit has indeed introduced economic uncertainties and hardships in rural Scotland.

2. *Regulatory Complexity and Business Impact:* Brexit's impact on business laws and regulations emerged as a significant theme. The qualitative data, supported by the quantitative findings, revealed that changes in British rules, particularly trademark and copyright policies, have introduced complexities and financial burdens. Businesses, especially smaller enterprises, are struggling to adapt. The analysis indicates that this regulatory complexity is affecting various business sectors and has likely contributed to decreased GDP and economic power for the EU.
3. *Labor Market Challenges:* Both quantitative and qualitative data underscored challenges in the labor market post-Brexit. The strict laws and requirements for work permits have made it difficult for EU nationals to work in Scotland. This has led to short-term labor shortages, particularly in critical sectors such as health, social care, agriculture, food, and hospitality. The interviews and open-ended survey responses confirmed that businesses face significant hurdles in attracting and retaining talent with the required skill set.
4. *Impact on Currency and Free Movement:* The intertwined dynamics of Brexit and the COVID-19 pandemic were evident in the findings. Currency devaluation, exacerbated by Brexit, triggered inflation and reduced savings. While Brexit was a major driver of economic change, it was challenging to isolate its effects from those of the pandemic. Additionally, Brexit's restriction of the free movement of migrant workers and seasonal workers has resulted in labor shortages and negatively impacted the performance of both local and migrant-owned businesses.
5. *Need for Policy Reforms:* The research findings suggest a need for flexible immigration and social integration policies to sustain immigration and support the growth of migrant-owned businesses in rural Scotland. This implies that policymakers need to consider inclusive policies that address the concerns of both host communities and migrant entrepreneurs while promoting diversity and cultural integration.

In conclusion, the economic impact of Brexit on rural Scotland is substantial and far-reaching. The study's combination of quantitative and qualitative analyses has provided a holistic view of the challenges faced by businesses and communities in the region. It

has allowed for the validation of perceptions and provided context to the statistical data. The findings underline the need for adaptable policies and strategies to navigate the economic challenges and uncertainties introduced by Brexit.

The results emphasize the importance of considering the voices and experiences of those directly affected, as it is these real-world challenges that inform effective policy and decision-making. This study contributes valuable insights to the ongoing discourse on Brexit's implications, shedding light on the economic realities faced by rural communities and migrant entrepreneurs in Scotland. It is hoped that these findings will guide policymakers and stakeholders in devising strategies that can mitigate the adverse effects of Brexit and create a more stable and supportive economic environment in rural Scotland.

VII. LIMITATIONS OF THE STUDY

Sample Size and Representation: One of the limitations of this study is the sample size. While the data collected from the survey and focus group discussions are valuable, the sample size may not fully represent the diversity of experiences within rural Scotland. Future research could benefit from larger and more diverse samples to provide a more comprehensive understanding of the economic impact of Brexit in this region.

1. *Generalizability:* The findings are specific to rural Scotland and may not be directly generalizable to other rural areas or regions. Each rural area may have unique economic, social, and political dynamics. Caution should be exercised when extrapolating these findings to other contexts.
2. *Subjectivity and Bias:* Qualitative research inherently involves subjectivity, and the interpretation of participants' responses can be influenced by the researchers' perspectives. Efforts were made to minimize bias, but it is essential to acknowledge this limitation in any qualitative analysis.
3. *Post-Brexit Period:* The study focused on the economic impact of Brexit during a specific period. Brexit is an ongoing process, and its long-term consequences may continue to evolve. The study's findings offer insights into the immediate aftermath of Brexit, but future research should explore the longer-term effects.

VIII. FUTURE IMPLICATIONS AND RESEARCH DIRECTIONS

1. *Longitudinal Studies:* Conducting longitudinal studies to track the economic impact of Brexit in rural Scotland over an extended period would provide a more comprehensive understanding of how these effects change and evolve.

2. *Comparative Analyses*: Future research could benefit from comparative analyses between different rural regions in the UK and across Europe. This would allow for a broader understanding of how Brexit has affected rural areas and help identify commonalities and differences.
3. *Policy Development*: The study's findings underscore the need for flexible immigration and social integration policies. Future research can delve deeper into the development and assessment of such policies, considering the experiences and expectations of both host communities and migrant entrepreneurs.
4. *Sector-Specific Studies*: Further research can focus on specific sectors, such as agriculture, healthcare, and hospitality, to gain a more nuanced understanding of Brexit's impact on labor shortages and economic challenges within these industries.
5. *Economic Resilience Strategies*: Investigating the development and effectiveness of economic resilience strategies for rural areas post-Brexit is crucial. This can include exploring the role of small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) and local initiatives in bolstering economic stability.
6. *Community Integration and Social Cohesion*: Future research can examine the social integration of migrant entrepreneurs and their interaction with host communities in rural areas. This would provide insights into how social cohesion can positively affect the economic landscape.
7. *Brexit's Impact on the Wider UK*: Expanding the scope of research to encompass the broader impacts of Brexit on the UK as a whole, including urban areas, can offer a comprehensive view of the overall consequences.
8. *Green and Sustainable Initiatives*: Investigating how Brexit has influenced the development of green and sustainable initiatives within rural Scotland can be a relevant research avenue, particularly in the context of post-Brexit environmental policies.

In summary, while this study sheds light on the economic impact of Brexit in rural Scotland, there are ample opportunities for future research to delve deeper into the complexities of this issue. As Brexit continues to shape the economic, social, and political landscape, ongoing research efforts are essential to inform policies and strategies that can support rural communities and migrant entrepreneurs in adapting to this new reality.

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Appendices

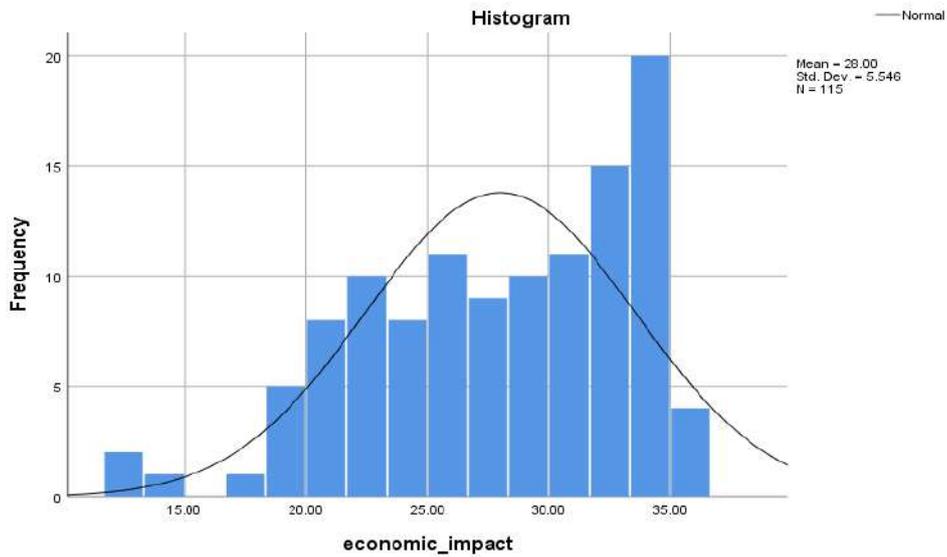


Fig. 1: Normality Test Histogram

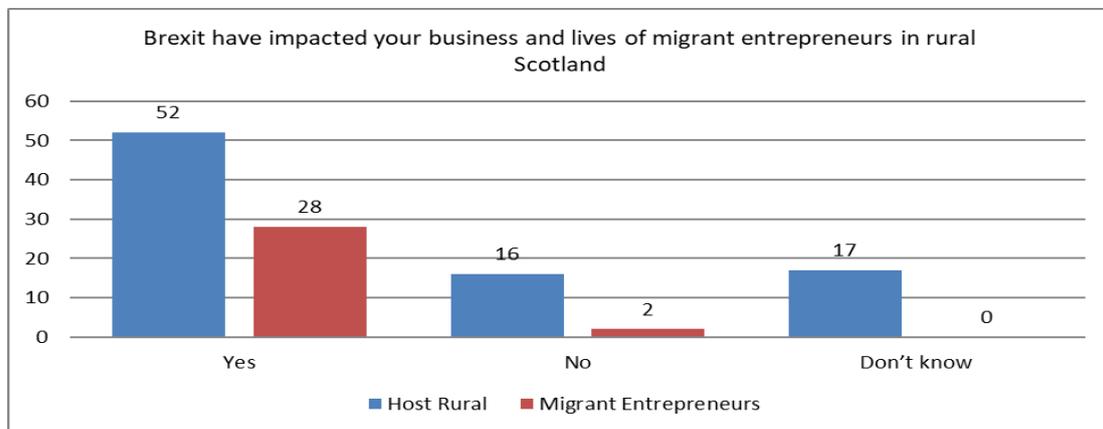


Fig. 2: Bar Chart

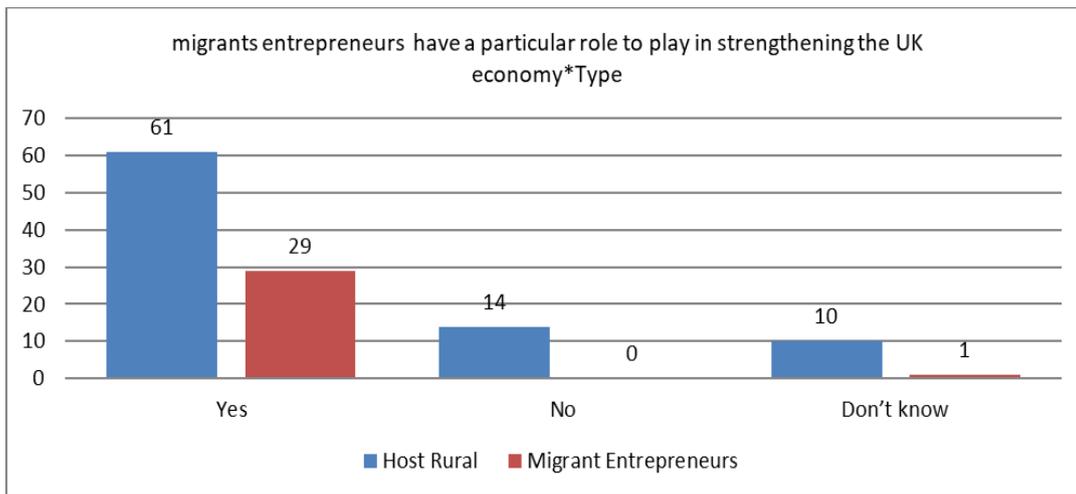


Fig. 3: Bar Chart

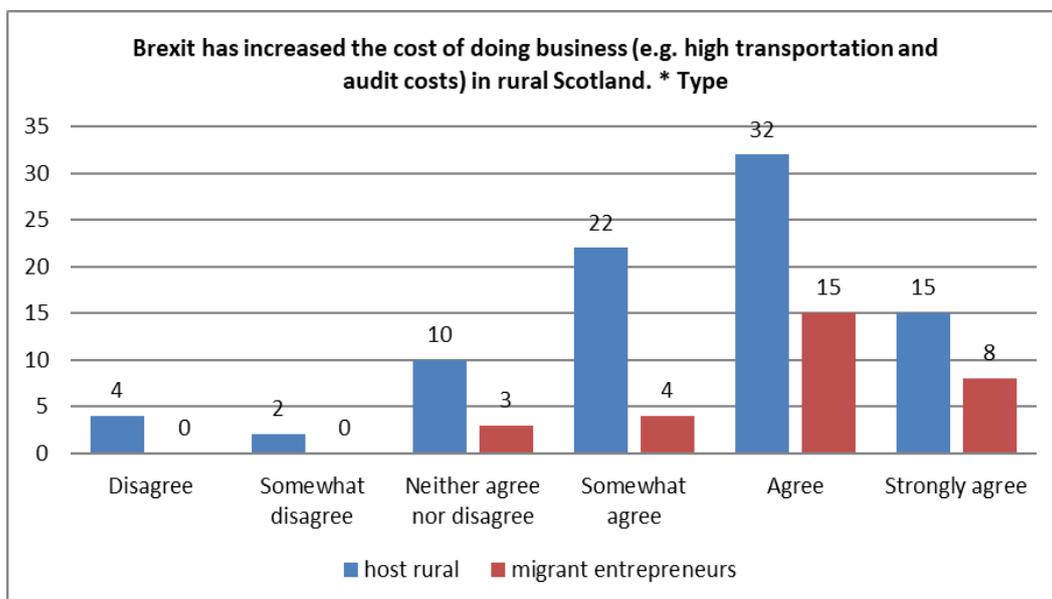


Fig. 4: Bar Chart

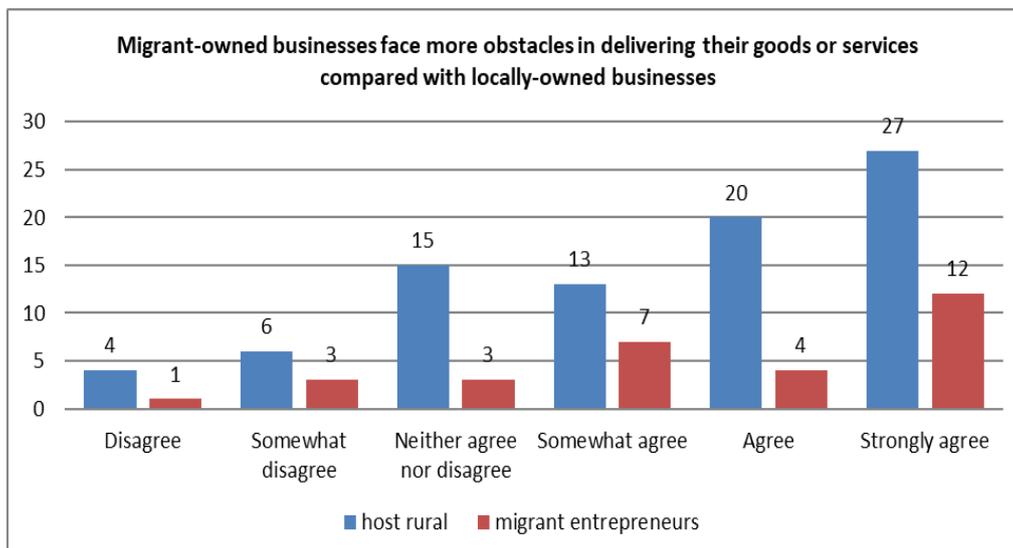


Fig. 5: Bar Chart

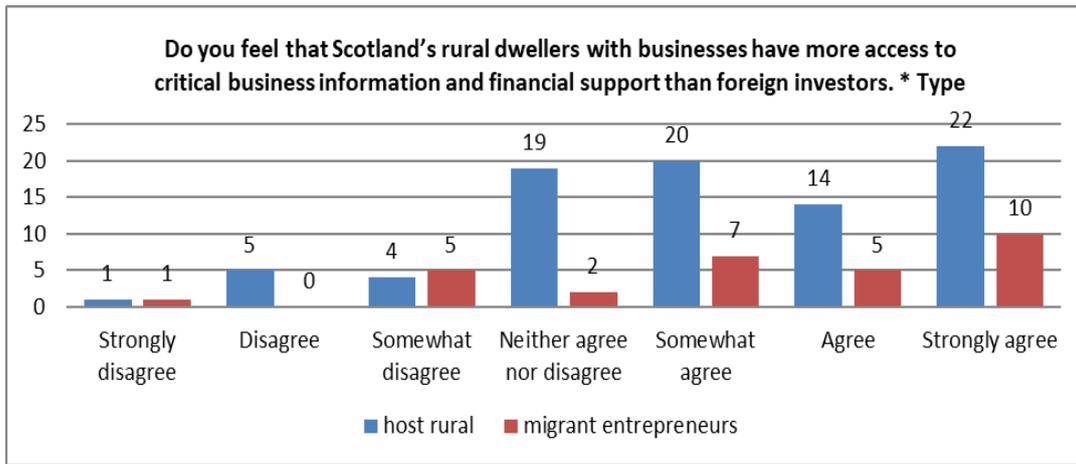


Fig. 6: Bar Chart

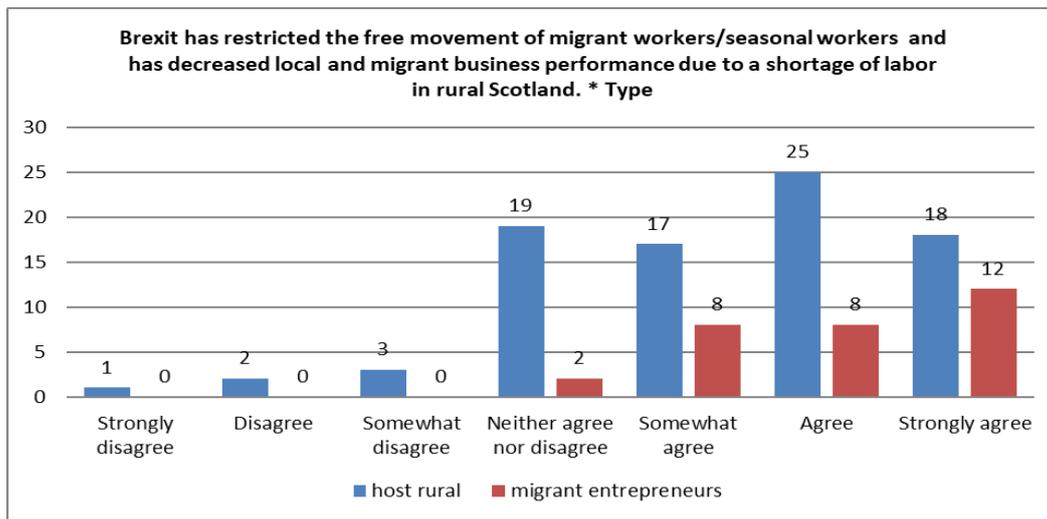


Fig. 7: Bar Chart

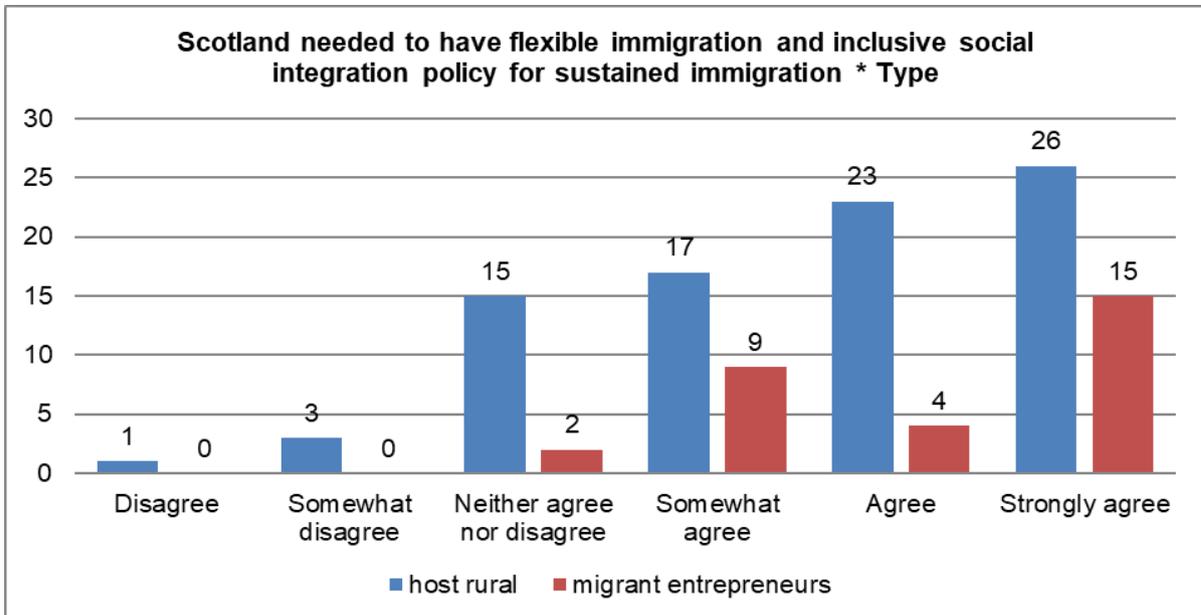


Fig. 8: Bar Chart