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Exploring The Community Participation: A Case Study of Homestays in Brunei

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Abstract

This paper aims to discover the community participation level of homestays in Brunei. While recognizing the socio-economic benefits and revenue streams that homestays gain from not only providing accommodation facilities, the wide range of cultural activities and exposures provided by the homestays will strengthen the preservation of Brunei's cultural heritage. A case study approach and qualitative research method were conducted in this study. The field-work was conducted in three villages, Kampong Wasan, Kampong Ayer and Kampong Bang Nukat. A total of three homestay operators were interviewed. Based on findings, it demonstrates that all three homestay operators have their objective in running the homestay which is not solely for profit-purpose but to enhance eco-tourism and community their respective village. The key findings reveal that community participation in all three homestays is perceived to be a means of empowering individuals in contributing to on-going socio-economic development of their respective village. Significantly, homestays in Brunei may not only provide accommodation but selling local products can be another revenue stream for them. Furthermore, homestays in Brunei can be extended as training and development centres. This study provides insights on how homestays have contributed to socio-economic of local communities. This study contributes knowledge and practical suggestions to potential and new ventures in tourism, homestay operators and researchers.

Keywords: Homestays, Community-based tourism, Community participation

1 Introduction

There has been a growth of tourism in Brunei in which it compasses a spectrum of services such as accommodation, excursions and transportation. The Ministry of Primary Resources and Tourism (MPRT) in releasing the first quarter of 2018, the total number of international tourists' arrivals to Brunei through the Brunei International Airport reached 70,729 tourists as compared to 67,956 tourists of the same period in 2017 with an increase of 4.1 per cent year-on-year (MPRT). China is amongst the top five countries to Brunei Darussalam in Q1 2018 due to the increase of air connectivity from chartered flights with 26.2 per cent share (MPRT). The other four top countries are Malaysia (21.2%), Indonesia (10.5%), Philippines (7.3%) and Singapore (4.5%). Furthermore, the main purpose of visit to Brunei Darussalam for Q1 2018 is for leisure and holiday (48.8%).

As the percentage of leisure and holiday purposes (48.8%) is appealing, there can be potential opportunities for homestays to be developed for the socioeconomic of local communities and development of tourism in Brunei. Simultaneously, the local culture can be immersed in an authentic way by international and domestic guests. There have been numerous definitions

of homestays. Amirruding (2009) defines homestay as an alternative accommodation whereby tourists can stay with selected families, interact and experience the life as well as the culture of host country.

Different countries may have different concept of homestay. For instance, in Australia, a homestay is accommodating students for studies mostly in the concept of farm house (Pusiran & Xiao, 2013). It is argued by Liu (2006) that homestay businesses are not limited to providing a cheaper alternative for accommodation but a side income to the operators. Homestay programme appears to be successful in developing countries such as Malaysia, Thailand and Philippines (Archarya & Halpenny, 2013, Kontogeorgopoulos et al., 2015) whereby he community-based tourism (CBT) is widely practiced in these three countries. The Ministry of Cultural, Arts and Tourism of Malaysia emphasized on the incorporation and promotion of homestay program as among the main tourism attractions in Malaysia (Liu, 2006). In such a way, the homestay program is formed through community participation in tourism (Gu & Wong, 2006) thus it provides an economic enhancement of villages (Clammer, 1996).

However, in Dagat village, Malaysia, the community-based homestay programme faced both internal and external challenges (Kunjuraman & Hussin, 2017). Internal challenges are such as financial constraints, leadership and novice individuals. While external challenges comprise of the lack of formal organizational structure, absence of monitoring framework, absence of promotional and marketing efforts and lastly, absence of infrastructure. Another study reveals that the limitations of community participation of villages in Langkawi, Selangor and Kedah were resulted from leadership problems, conflicts in the community, passive community and payment method (Kalsom, 2010). Therefore, there have been several studies highlighting on how community participation brings about benefits and challenges to the development of community-based tourism which will be discussed in this paper.

2 Literature review

2.1 Community Participation

A community is described as having a mutual support, specific geographic, social unit that is identified by the members of the community and is formed from communal decision-making (Mann, 2000). Similarly, Anderson (1991) states that a community has a common interest and is active in the same trend that there is a tendency for them to generate a shared identity. Azlizan and Hamzah (2012) mention that community participation is referring to the development and altering of community for the improvement in quality of life and better future of the society.

While Stone (1989) claims that community participation is the contribution toward the creation and development of community upon existing resources. Tosun (1999) notes that community participation comprises self-governance in response to authoritative decisions which can have impact on one's life and working together on the issues of mutual concern. Moreover, it can be a form of voluntary (Amin and Ibrahim; 2016). Snyman (2012) asserts that tourism needs to be in the form of community driven whereby they have the responsibility of controlling infrastructures and facilities around the surroundings. This mirrors Cole's findings (2006) that community members have the ability to seek solutions, are active in change, make decision, involve in implementation and assess solutions.

Several studies highlight that community participation is the transformation of community for pleasant outcomes, establishing collaboration and partnership, advocating the unity and revivifying relationships between stakeholders, people and tourism destinations (Moscardo; 2011; Idziak, Majewski & Zmysłony, 2015). Other studies revealed that lack of capabilities, low educational level, unawareness, unwillingness of community members in decision making process are the significant constraints in Indonesia, Malaysia and Kenya particularly in remote areas (Cole, 2006; Manyara & Jones, 2007; Marzuki et al., 2012). Similar findings of

Kim et al. (2014) that low education among community members, lack of time, power disparities, poor socio-economic conditions, seasonality and locals' distrust in authorities inhibit participation.

2.2 The Concept of Homestays

There have been numerous concepts of homestays in the literature. Homestay is referring to a type of accommodation where guests or tourists pay to stay in private owned homes and there is interaction with the host or a family who also lives in the same home (Lynch, 2005). Salamia et al. (2011) point out that homestays are mainly in rural and suburban areas. Amran (2010) defines homestays as tourists come staying and interacting with local community. Thereby, it allows cultural exchange between the host and tourists by experiencing the local culture (Richard, 2004).

Wall and Long (1996) observe that home that is locally and operated owned can be a tourist accommodation for the participation of local community in tourism activities. Moreover, homestays are perceived to be for budget tourists (Hinch & Butler, 1996). Meanwhile Kalsom's (2002) definition of homestay is community-based development projects whereby the members of community participate and involve at all stages. However, the implementation of activities in the village entails funding from the government and active involvement of villagers to foster understanding and cooperation (Pusiran & Xiao, 2013).

The concept of homestays can be different in the context of country and region. For instance, according to Pusiran and Xiao (2013) homestay is also known as farm stay and agricultural homestay. In Singapore, a homestay refers to urban homestay (Hamzah, 2010). Meanwhile, in South Korea, a homestay is seen as educational homestay (Hamzah, 2010). Peterson (2004) notes that the introduction of customs, clothing, food, arts, festival and routine jobs can be considered as activities of the village or informal employment.

2.3 The Impacts of Homestays

Based on a study by Hatton (2008) conducted in Kampung Desa Murni, Malaysia it was found that making guests welcoming to homestays through cultural activities was focused on beside providing facilities and physical features of the homestay. As a result, there was a growth of Japanese students, women empowerment, culture preservation and local craft production. The operation of homestays in rural communities can be a stepping stone toward sustainable development by enriching the destination image and reducing poverty (Pusiran and Xiao, 2013).

A study by Ngah et al. (2010) on Malaysia's homestay program and how it contributed to the development of rural communities reveals that the growth of homestays in Malaysia led to potential extra income and job opportunities. Similarly, Bhuiyan et al. (2011) mention that homestays provide local communities job opportunities and improve the quality of life. In addition, homestays are means to support the sustainable development of the region and ensure economic, social and cultural benefits for local communities. (Buhailis, 2003); Chaiyatorn et al., 2010).

Operating a homestay is not limited to generating extra income but also for the ability to make own decision, personal satisfaction, flexibility in lifestyle, explore and interact with potential market. In fact, hosting is rather a life choice than extra income generation according to Tucker and Lynch (2005). Furthermore, Tucker and Lynch (2005) add that among the social benefits are the exchange of knowledge, development of long-lasting friendships and meeting people from various backgrounds.

Homestays are mostly operated by host families thus the income generated is directly to them therefore, external actors will not be benefited from monopoly (Anand et al., 2012). This can be since homestays are mostly private owned thus, the operators appear to gain benefits directly. It was stated by Anand et al. (2012) that a homestay can be accessible to house-

holds across economic classes as major investments are not involved. It was reported by Abdul Razzaq et al. (2011) that the monthly income earned by homestays was about RM500 to RM1000 before they participated in the homestay programme but after they participated the monthly income rose from RM1,000 to RM1,500.

Harun et al. (2012) assert that tourism has become one the critical encouragement and resources for infrastructure investment and facilitates in improvising the standards of local communities particularly in rural areas. A homestay programme in Desa Murni Homestay in Malaysia where the first homestay began in 1988 had a significant effect on the economy of locals particularly on financial benefits (Kalsom, 2007). The Malaysian homestay tourism remarks as a successful tourism strategy whereby it encompasses a spectrum of community-based tourism characteristics namely community empowerment, environmental sustainability, fair distribution of financial benefits, improvement in standard of living, community management, tourism projects ownership and control (Kontogeorgopoulos, 2014).

2.4 Homestay Programme Challenges

Wongtapim (2003) lists out that homestays faced problems such as inadequacy in marketing, lack of hospitality service standards, improper government regulation and planning, unfair distribution of benefits among operators, lack of facilities and confusion on hosts and guests' needs and motivation. To some extent, the inability to recognize benefits of tourism and potential costs as well as not recognizing what communities can benefit from tourism development among local people (Simpson, 2010). A study by Husin (2008) reveals that insufficient support from the government, lack of marketing, language barriers are among the limitations of community participation at Lower Kinabatangan, Sabah. Ramli et al. (2015) state that the focus on leadership enhancement and improving ability as well as capacity are suggested to improve homestay business performance in Malaysia. In fact, leadership and community can enhance the sense of ownership thus enabling them to work toward the success of the programme (Pusiran & Xiao, 2013).

Nor Ashikin and Kalsom (2010) express that both internal and external challenges affect the success of community-based homestay programme. Likewise, it was added that leadership is part of an internal factor that may affect the success of community development in homestay programme. Similarly, Kalsom (2009) asserts that lack of local participation, lack of knowledge, poor planning, poor local leadership and poor community structure are causing the failure of homestay programme.

2.5 Community-Based Tourism (CBT)

Community-based tourism (CBT) is a type of tourism that accounts for environment, social and cultural sustainability, is managed by the community for the community to find out and learn about the community's way of life (Denman, 2001; Goodwin & Santilli, 2009). In addition, it entails a high-level involvement of community (Sharply, 2008). Community-based tourism is another form of tourism that has a mutual relationship where tourists are rather part of the system than the central priority (Wearing & McDonald, 2002). It was stated by Mountain Institute (2000) that the involvement of local people in the community are as decision makers for the long-term, commercialization, benefits and monopolization of the community.

As it is managed by the local community, it exhibits less harmful to the sociocultural environment whereby guests will experience cultural elements that are shared (Breugel, 2013). However, lack of community participation and involvement may occur in community-based tourism (Sebele, 2010). To some extent, there can be a tendency for host community to assume that it is the duty of the government to plan economic development opportunities for them as the concept of community-approach is unlikely to be understood (Timothy, 1999).

Based on a study by Tosun (2000), low community participation in community-based tourism are due to operational, structural and cultural limitations. At the operational level, ineffi-

cient coordination, public administration and information. Meanwhile, structural limitations comprise of the professionals' attitude, legal system, lack of trained human resources, high cost of community participation and limited financial. Whereas cultural limitations include low level of local community's awareness and low capacity of poor people. It was emphasized by Okazaki (2008) that the longevity and feasibility of community-based tourism should be tied to the overall socio-economic development of the local community.

2.6 Marketing and Promotional Activities

In essence, marketing is ensuring the right product to be delivered to the right person, at the right place and time. Burnett (2008) states that the concept of marketing is associated with identifying, satisfying and retaining customers. Furthermore, consumer behaviour, promotion and advertising, strategic marketing, channels and distributions are the functions of marketing (Elimimian et al., 2006). Moreover, Felton (1959) notes that marketing accounts for the long-term profit. Furthermore, Today, customers rely on online comments and sharing of experiences from other customers when they are considering choices (Viglia., 2016). In fact, the search for information in accordance to travelers' plans, flights bookings, hotel bookings are part of the decision-making process (Zhao et al., 2015). This asserts that homestays are not only a programme or an individual business, but it carries elements of profit-making thus it is not refrained from performing marketing activities.

Social media

Social media is often perceived as a means of communication with family, relatives and friends, social media which is also can be regarded as a social revolution (Tiago & Verissimo, 2014). Considering the limitations of non-digital technologies, social media provides opportunities to engage and create long-lasting relationships to users (Jenkins et al., 2015). A research by Digital Tourism Think Tank (2013) presents that about 93% of travelled are influenced by reviews in their planning and about 80% of them ask their social network members for recommendation before purchase is made.

Adam (2012) reports that there have been an increase number of consumers whom are connected to social media whereby the sharing of personal stories influences consumers' behaviour, where they go and what purchase is influenced by. This is because social media provides the space for communication among people including the sharing of information as a source for tourists to seek and search for product features, availability, prices and suppliers (Akar & Topchu, 2011; Buhalis & Foerste, 2015; Hensel & Deis, 2010).

Airbnb

Due to Airbnb's exclusive features, it is distinct in product exchange and process of transaction from traditional hotels (Kim et al., 2015). There have been researchers who asserted that Airbnb is a disruptive innovation whereby tourists are attracted through internet-based business model (Christensen & Raynor, 2003). The host only needs to register to begin and selection of accommodation can be made by guests. As a result, Airbnb was perceived to the most successful peer to peer for the hospitality industry (Liu & Matilla, 2017).

3 Methodology

As there is absent of literature on homestays in Brunei, the case study method appears to be an ideal method to guide the study in an exploratory way (Yin, 1995). It was asserted by Stake (1995) that there can be absent of theories from studies that are related to the issues and case. The case study method was systematically designed by first conducting a preliminary study to investigate the current situations of homestay development and possible obstacle faced by homestays. The data from preliminary study were analysed, interpreted and had facilitated in theory building. Later, qualitative research as main primary data collection method was conducted.

Qualitative research as the only methodology has been utilized by both hospitality and tourism researchers (Dirks & Rice, 2004; Paget et al., 2010).). Similarly, Denzin and Lincon (2000) state that qualitative method serves as a function to understand the meaning of human action. Furthermore, individuals' perceptions can be provided through interviewing (Clack et al., 1998). Semi-structured interviews had facilitated in asking supplementary questions for clarification (Veal, 1997).

Field work was carried out in three villages, Kampong Wasan, Kampong Ayer and Kampong Bang Nukat. The researcher chose the locations because they are among prominent and growing tourism locations in Brunei Darussalam. In fact, the roads from Kampong Bang Nukat to kampong Wasan and Kampong Ayer are connected.

A total of three homestay operators were interviewed, Homestay A, Homestay B and Homestay C. As this study relied on a qualitative research method, the researcher visited all three homestays. The selected respondents for the interviews were based on purposive sampling technique as it appears to be realistic (Seidler, 1974) and more efficient than random sampling in the event of practical field (Bernard, 2002). Furthermore, the participants are members of the community of interest whom appear to know about the culture and able to share their knowledge (Bernard, 2002; Tremblay 1995).

Homestay A operator (Male) has 20 years of working experience as an armed forced trainer. While Homestay B operator (Female) has a vast working experience in airline company, led a marketing team, a certified black belt in management, holds a six-sigma certification and was a human resource manager in an insurance company. Meanwhile, Homestay C operator (Female) has 15 years of working experience in development.

Prior to organizing data from qualitative research method, data collected from interviews were first transcribed. Interviews were conducted in both Malay and English Language to ensure participants' comfort and for researcher to understand interviewee's experiences, perceptions as well as feelings.

4 Findings

4.1 The Concept of Homestays

Homestay A, Homestay B and Homestay C have the same homestay concept which is staying with a host family and experiencing the lifestyle of the community and village. It was mentioned by Lynch (2005) that homestay is refers to a type of accommodation where guests or tourists pay to stay in private owned homes and there is interaction with the host or a family who also lives in the same home. Although homestays are perceived to be a cheaper accommodation alternative, all three homestays offer basic facilities such as accommodation, meals, clean toilets and kitchen. This illustrates that guests are not only experiencing experience the culture, but safety and comfort are prioritized as well.

In the case of Homestay B, although it can be perceived as a homestay since it offers basic facilities such as clean toilet, kitchen, living room and bedrooms a homestay however it is classified as a lodge. During the interview highlighted that although she lives at the homestay, it would remain a lodge due to her personal busy routine and only several activities such as walking tour and sight-seeing around the village are offered to guests.

The uniqueness of Homestay C is the fact that it does not only provide hospitality services but comprises of a garden which runs by volunteers and has active involvement of agencies, locals in village, other local communities, local farmers, local volunteers as well as international volunteers. It can therefore be said that the level of community involvement in Homestay C is high. Despite the minimal community participation in Homestay A and low community participation in Homestay B yet it is progressing.

4.2 Objectives to Start a Homestay

Homestay A and Homestay B are rather in the form of private-owned businesses. Significantly, Homestay C is heavily toward community-based tourism due to its active involvement and participation in the community. Although their motive in running a homestay is somewhat different from one another but they share the same sentiments of allowing tourists to experience the way of life of each community. Simultaneously, this allows cultural exchange between the host and tourists by experiencing the local culture Amran (2010). Below are the three homestay operators' objectives to start a homestay.

“The mission is to increase eco-tourism of Brunei Darussalam to [outside] especially for tourists. That is my main focus to upgrade [Brunei's eco-tourism] so people will know more not only in the city but villages.”

- Homestay A Operator

“It is a living heritage. ... My aim is to provide sustainability to the urang kampung [village people]. They are able to support their own income.”

- Homestay B Operator

“Our aim is to expose you know the community around our area and also you know we want people even locals inbound or outbound to see what is actually our community lifestyle”

- Homestay C Operator

During the interview, all three homestay operators expressed that running a homestay is their interest. This has been said Tucker and Lynch (2005) that hosting is rather a life choice than extra income generation.

4.3 Activities at Homestays

Activities are also one of the criteria that needs to be fulfilled by homestay operators particularly in Brunei. Several activities such as outbound activities, making of handicrafts, cultural performances, demonstration of tradition wedding, sight-seeing, demonstration of cooking and making of local kuih are provided to guests by Homestay A and Homestay C. Meanwhile, Homestay B are only providing activities such as walking tour and sight-seeing around Kampong Ayer. Interestingly, Homestay A has a spacious space for the cultural activities at the back of the house. Traditional fishing tools and traditional music instruments are properly placed and showcased. Hence, it can be said that this can allow guests to be participative in cultural activities. In fact, the house is decorated in a mixed of contemporary and traditional manner. Based on a study by Hatton (2008) conducted in Kampung Desa Murni, Malaysia it was found that making guests welcoming to homestays through cultural activities was focused on beside providing facilities and physical features of the homestay.

This illustrates that activities play a role in homestays whereby it provides guests to experience and explore the culture and heritage of Brunei. Hence, this allows cultural exchange between the host and tourists by experiencing the local culture (Richard, 2004).

4.4 Products of Homestays

In the context of this paper, products are referring to those that can be part of a homestay's revenue stream aside from providing accommodation and activities to guests. For instance, Homestay A is selling traditional fishing tools namely “Takiding and Niru” as well as a traditional game namely “Gasing” with a reasonable price as guests tend to purchase for souvenirs.

“Harga pun berpatutan. [The price is reasonable] Kebanyaknya yang souvenirnya apa tu kan bawa balik ke negeri masing-masing ada durang bali souvenirnya lah [Most of the souvenirs are for guests to bring back home].

- Homestay A Operator

Homestay B does not sell any products however it was mentioned during the interview that locals in the village are selling traditional kuih and crackers. Furthermore, there is a mini convenient shop around the area. The homestay operator added that she is likely to purchase traditional kuih for guests’ breakfast. This shows that there can possibly be tourism entrepreneurship among the locals in the community. Thus, it could elevate more involvement of the community.

“Buat tah kita kerupuk diluar [start making crackers outside] supaya urang meliat begambar [so people can see and take pictures], so it helps them to develop the community. That’s what we want. My cousins started doing furniture. So it’s always making sure bila abis durang retired [when village people are tired, they will have activities to do].

- Homestay B Operator

Whereas Homestay C, a farmer’s market space has given the locals to sell their crops such as locals fruits and vegetables. Accordingly, this promotes entrepreneurship among the community. Interestingly, Homestay C’s farm to table menu has been exposed and promoted in one of the luxury hotels in Brunei.

4.5 The Number of Tourists

Based on the interview, it was revealed that guests of all three homestays are from countries namely South America, Malaysia, Singapore as well as Europe. There has been a rising number of guests staying at Homestay A from 2005 till 2018 which accumulates a total number of 9,094 guests. Not depending on Airbnb alone, the operator of Homestay A has also been using TripAdvisor. It can be assumed that the platform has assisted Homestay A in promoting the homestay globally.

Similarly, Homestay B and Homestay C are also using Airbnb. To some extent, 43 countries have visited Homestay C since 2015. The total number of guests for the year 2018 is over 1,600 guests. Although the total number of guests of Homestay B was not revealed during the interview, it can be said that homestay businesses can be an attractive industry due to the growing number of guests. Although homestays are alternative cheaper accommodation however, they can be profitable when it is operated in a consistent manner.

4.6 Marketing and Promotional Activities

Based on the interviews, Airbnb and social media platforms such as Facebook and Instagram are commonly used by all three homestays. In addition, they update their social media from time to time to promote their homestay. This is because social media provides the space for communication among people including the sharing of information as a source for tourists to seek and search for product features, availability, prices and suppliers (Akar & Topchu, 2011; Buhalis & Foerste, 2015; Hensel & Deis, 2010).

Apart from social and Airbnb, word-of-mouth is a powerful tool. In addition, Homestay A, Homestay B and Homestay C participated in exhibitions. Homestay C operator mentioned that most of the guests are bloggers and photographers. Furthermore, Homestay C has been collaborating with celebrity chefs and media from neighbouring countries.

4.7 The Challenges of Homestays

It was revealed during the interview that Homestay A Operator does not encounter any challenges as the operator has been actively engaged with certain agencies for students exchange programme and cultural exchange programme. Meanwhile, Homestay B Operator mentioned that financial constraint is part of the main challenge whereby the cost of maintenance for the house can be expensive.

“One is maintenance. Two is financial and three is urang inda understand [people do not understand] running a business. Every time I buy something, it it’s broken, I have to pay boatman dua puluh ringgit [twenty dollars]. Kalau beli kayu I have to pay. empat puluh ringgit [If I buy woods, I have to pay forty dollars]. So all this are money.”

Nevertheless, the operator has been mentoring village people on running a business. Interestingly, the village people began to improvise the condition of their respective house. As mentioned earlier, around the area of Homestay B, there are several small retail shops, mini museum, crackers selling, and traditional kuih selling. The level of community participation in Homestay B village can be assumed low but is progressing.

5 Discussion and conclusion

5.1 SWOT Analysis

In general, SWOT analysis is used both external and internal environment toward a systematic approach and decision (Kangas et al., 2003, Kurtilla et al., 2000). Prior to the development of community-based tourism, SWOT analysis can assist in reasoning the relevance of developing a community-based tourism in Brunei.

Considering the location of Homestay A, Homestay B and Homestay C in rural and suburban areas, it illustrates that rural tourism can also be pursued whereby rural life, culture, heritage and art are showcased in which tourists and local communities can interact to enrich the tourism experience (Wani & Shafi, 2013). Furthermore, the rising of interest in heritage and outdoors, the seek for tranquility and other trends are among the motivations to attract people to the countryside OECD (1994). Kampong Wasan, Kampong Ayer and Kampong Bang Nukat possess their own uniqueness in terms culture and heritage. It has been mentioned by Edgell and Harbaugh (1993) that rural areas possess distinct cultural, ethnic, historic and geographic factors.

SWOT Analysis below illustrates the possible strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats for the development of community-based tourism in Brunei:

| <u>Strength</u> | <u>Weaknesses</u> |
|---|--|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Location of all three homestays ▪ Rich in norms and cultural value ▪ Homestay A’s continuous communication with various agencies ▪ Homestay B is empowering people in the village to start a business ▪ Homestay C’s consistent high level of community participation and volunteers ▪ Basic accommodation facilities provided ▪ Active marketing activities through social media and Airbnb. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ The maintenance of Homestay B can be costly ▪ Absence of cultural performance at Homestay B ▪ Only hospitality training and no specific homestay training is conducted ▪ Lack of understanding in running a business (Homestay A) |

| | |
|---|---|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ <u>Opportunities</u> ▪ Tourism entrepreneurship in all homestays ▪ More products can be produced by homestays as another revenue stream and income ▪ More attention for development given by the government ▪ Attending community-based tourism workshop ▪ More awareness on homestays as a “business” ▪ Improve socio-economic ▪ Improve living standard ▪ Improve community empowerment ▪ Training and development centres at homestays | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ <u>Threats</u> ▪ Incentives in the form of financial can be costly ▪ High investment on training ▪ Pollution to scenic surroundings |
|---|---|

Table 1
SWOT Analysis

Table 1 above illustrates that community-based tourism can potentially further be developed in Brunei considering the strengths and opportunities mentioned above. The Malaysian homestay tourism remarks as a successful tourism strategy whereby it encompasses of a spectrum of community-based tourism characteristics such namely community empowerment, environmental sustainability, fair distribution of financial benefits, improvement in standard of living, community management, tourism projects ownership and control (Kontogeorgopoulos, 2014). Furthermore, Harun et al. (2012) assert that tourism has become one the critical encouragement and resources for infrastructure investment and facilitates in improvising the standards of local communities particularly in rural areas.

5.2 The Concept of Homestays

There have been numerous definitions of homestay in the literature and it can be different in the context of region and county. Lynch (2005) defines homestay as a type of accommodation where guests or tourists pay to stay in private owned homes and there is interaction with the host or a family who also lives in the same home (Lynch, 2005).

Homestay A and Homestay B are rather in the form of private-owned businesses. Significantly, Homestay C is heavily towards community-based tourism due to its active involvement and participation in the community. Although all three homestay operators' motive in running a homestay is somewhat different from one another but they share the same sentiments of allowing tourists to experience the way of life of the village.

5.3 The Impacts of Homestays

Operating a homestay is not limited to generating extra income but also for the ability to make own decision, personal satisfaction, flexibility in lifestyle, explore and interact with potential market. All three operators have benefited from the operation of homestay in their unique own ways. In fact, running a homestay is their passion and interest. It was mentioned by Tucket and Lynch (2005) that, hosting is rather a life choice than extra income generation

The Stability of Homestay A

It was revealed in the interview that Homestay A operator does not encounter any challenges as the operator has been actively engaged with the certain agencies mostly for students exchange programme and cultural exchange programme. The community-based tourism can potentially be developed in this village as the operator is not only recruiting his siblings but locals in the community and members of village consultative council.

The Challenges of Homestay B

Homestay B operator mentioned that capital resources is part of the main challenge whereby the cost of maintenance for the house can be expensive. Nevertheless, the operator has been mentoring village people in running a business. Interestingly, the village people began

to improvise the condition of their respective house. Community-based tourism can potentially be developed whereby the local communities, families and individuals will get to play their role in ensuring their socio-economic development of their village. However, more support would be needed as As Kalsom (2002) defines homestays as community-based development projects whereby the members of community participate and involve at all stages.

The Success of Homestay C

The success of Homestay C is reasoned for several factors. The homestay comprises of a garden which runs by volunteers and has benefited from the active involvement of various agencies, locals in village, other local communities, local farmers, local volunteers as well as international volunteers. The sharing of knowledge and skills between the international volunteers and local communities has impacted the homestay heavily.

Several projects have been successfully accomplished namely a tree house, a mini farmer market, a patio made from mud, wooden pathways, a swinging house, cooking station and a mini house for children. Moreover, the team have assisted in repairs and maintenance. The tools including building materials and tools used for construction are of that can be found around the garden. This can therefore generate more forest conservation and promote its awareness towards local communities and Brunei as a whole. Alongside, entrepreneurship among the community can be promoted as there is a farmer's market space has given the locals to sell their crops such as local fruits and vegetables. Moreover, the geographical location of the homestay is ideal for plantation of crops.

5.4 Marketing and Promotional Activities

There has been a tremendous increase number of small-medium businesses using the Internet in performing their marketing activities. Social media platforms such as Facebook and Instagram have been the pulse of technology which has made information accessible across the globe. Moreover, accommodation reservation is now easier for tourists and travelers. In fact, they can find and compare prices from numerous booking websites. Thereby, this is one of the ways business operators can market their products and services as marketing ensures the right product to be delivered to the right person, at the right place and time.

Airbnb and social media platforms such as Facebook and Instagram are commonly used by all three homestays. In addition, they update their social media from time to time to promote their homestay. This is because social media provides the space for communication among people including the sharing of information as a source for tourists to seek and search for product features, availability, prices and suppliers (Akar & Topchu, 2011; Buhalis & Foerste, 2015; Hensel & Deis, 2010). Moreover, Felton (1959) asserts that marketing accounts for the long-term profit. Apart from Airbnb and social media, all three homestays have been benefited from words of mouth and exhibition they had participated.

Recommendations

Recognizing the socio-economic benefits and revenue streams that homestays gain from not only providing accommodation facilities, the wide range of cultural activities and exposures provided by homestays will strengthen the preservation of Brunei's cultural heritage. For instance, conducting training or workshops such as conservation, handicrafts, traditional dance and hospitality at homestays may encourage more youth and local communities' participation. Moreover, traditional dances, traditional medicines and local handicrafts may not be easily learned and passed down. Hence, the acquisition of skills and of hands-on experience can be obtained from homestays.

Looking into business opportunities in tourism, entrepreneurship in homestays can further be initiated considering the fact as mentioned earlier that Homestay C has a farmer's market space provided to the locals to sell their crops. Hence, more farmers and locals in the village can learn from each other and gain financial benefits.

Conclusion

This study had attempted to explore the community participation level of homestays in Brunei. Homestays in Brunei may not only provide accommodation but selling local products can be another revenue stream for them. Thusforth, it can be said that homestays in Brunei have been contributing to the socio-economic of the community and the country. Despite the obstacles of having low community participation in Homestay B, the level of community participation is rather progressing. Among the three homestays, community-based tourism (CBT) is widely practiced by Homestay C due to the active participation of local communities and collaborative effort with numerous agencies.

In terms of marketing activities, it was revealed that all three homestays appear to be popular among tourists as they are not only promoted through Airbnb but also words-of-mouth. Astonishingly, Homestay C had been promoted by the media from the neighbouring countries. It was also found that homestays in Brunei possess the potential to be training centres for the development of soft and hard skills of youth. Interestingly, entrepreneurship among the community has been promoted in Homestay C whereby its farmer's market space has given locals to sell their crops.

Contributions

This study provides insights on how homestays in Brunei Darussalam have contributed to socio-economic of local communities. This study also contributes knowledge and practical suggestions to potential and new ventures in tourism particularly. In addition, this study administers homestay operators in discovering intrinsic motivation among community members toward developing more sustainable community-based tourism. Henceforth, researchers will be also benefit for future planning and tourism development.

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