

Malaysian Homestays: The Need for Standardized Regulation

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ABSTRACT

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This study aims to clarify regulations used among each type of registered and unregistered Malaysian homestays and to reveal issues arose regarding the implemented regulations. Selected homestays that are established by the government organizations and individuals were investigated to carry out the comparison on each homestay. Host families and persons in charge of the Ministry of Tourism, Arts and Culture (MOTAC), the Ministry of Agriculture (MOA), and the Ministry of Rural and Regional Development (MRRD) were also interviewed. Findings showed that there is only one guideline used for all types of homestays in Malaysia, which is the Malaysia Homestay Registration Guideline, established by MOTAC. MOTAC has also been selected as a leader of homestays in the Southeast Asian countries by the ASEAN Secretariat; therefore, the ASEAN Homestay Standard is also being referred. However, the implementation of this guideline and standard among other homestays unregistered with MOTAC (homestays established by MOA, MRRD, and individuals) is not compulsory, although encouraged, where they may receive equal benefits in term of facilities and promotion. Some issues arose due to the tax regulated by the local authorities, failure on homestays to be registered with MOTAC, and abandoned homestays. This study recommended that the Malaysia Homestay Registration Guideline to be standardized and regulated to all types of homestays, including individuals and unregistered homestays in Malaysia. This is important in order to reduce issues arose involving the homestay industry, providing safety and comfort to the tourists and, to help to develop rural income among host families and the rural community themselves.

Keywords: Rural tourism, homestay, regulation, management, operation

INTRODUCTION

Homestays in Malaysia have mostly involved the rural communities; therefore, homestays were introduced as the alternative tourism products in the Rural Tourism Master Plan, which was documented in 2001 by the Ministry of Tourism. This document was carried out to provide guidance and technical assistance as to policy direction, infrastructure development, marketing, and training for rural tourism development. This Master Plan was prepared for the Government of Malaysia on behalf of the United Nations Development Program and the World Tourism Organization. The documentation is carried out based on the field investigation done by a team of the World Tourism Organization international consultants who have expertise in tourism, national experts, and staff members of the Ministry of Tourism. The master plan consists of situation analysis, strategic policy recommendations, development

of critical sectors, development proposal by state, and implementation on accommodations, visitor attractions, activities, services and infrastructure, environment, promotional activities, employment, experience, and skills of operators in Malaysian rural tourism.

In this master plan, rural tourism is defined as 'tourism that provides opportunities to visitors to visit rural villages and rural attractions and to experience the culture and heritage of Malaysia as well as provides socio-economic benefits to the local communities.' Day-visits are also included in the definition. Rural tourism encompasses three parts: the central support area, rural and hinterland, focusing on tourism within the core rural area: in the rural space between urban areas and hinterland; however, it may include villages located outside the rural area, where the traditional lifestyle remains preserved. Rural tourism in Malaysia includes eco-tourism, marine tourism, agro-tourism, and homestays. Homestays mentioned in this document are held at the villages located in rural areas; however, agro-tourism and eco-tourism activities that are held outside the villages are often included in the homestay program activities. Homestays can be considered as new rural tourism products, which take place mainly in rural villages and include all types of previous rural tourism activities. Therefore, this program attracts varied types of rural tourism tourists.

According to this master plan, Malaysia has a potential for rural tourism development according to its strengths: lush, tropical landscape and nature, attractive rural sceneries, friendly and welcoming rural people, range of exotic tropical fruits, variety of ethnic cuisines, traditional industries and crafts, a reasonable amount of English spoken, competitive price, reasonably good infrastructure, warm sunny weather, and safe destination within South East Asia. However, the master plan also indicated the weaknesses of rural tourism in Malaysia, such as limited good quality of accommodation, lack of high-profile attractions, lack of variety in the package of attractions, poor safety standards at activity centers, poorly maintained facilities, narrow accommodation base, low standard of hygiene, shortage of information, and inadequate maps and signage.

In the preparation of this master plan, a pilot model area is selected in each state of Malaysia, and a comprehensive blueprint is prepared to define how the areas could be developed as a model rural tourism destination. For the pilot models of the homestays, low accommodation standards, improper facilities, lack of attractions, language difficulties, and little investment in professional marketing are among the reasons to fail on attracting a significant number of tourists. The research team suggested a standalone accommodation, improved marketing, and developing day-visits as the solution to these constraints. The host family houses were also recommended for upgraded with maximum extent possible with traditional features of traditional Malay houses, consistent with reasonable comfort, hygiene, and safety standards.

This master plan is the first document established to carry out a survey on Malaysian rural tourism and to recognize agricultural tourism activities, including the homestays as the official tourism products. It also guides the Ministry of Tourism, Arts, and Culture (MOTAC) for future development planning on the homestays based on the problems surveyed at the pilot model area. Based on this master plan, the Ministry of Tourism has enhanced the regulations on the host family house standards by carrying out more frequent inspections. The new Kampungstay program is also created based on this master plan to provide standalone accommodation, especially for the long-stay tourist.

Nevertheless, there are also other homestays registered with government organizations other than MOTAC, and unregistered homestays with any government organization. The regulation established by MOTAC is not compulsory for these homestays that may cause problems to their implementation and for the comfort and safety among visited tourists. This study aims to reveal the need for a standardized regulation among all types of homestays in Malaysia in order to ensure a proper management and operation among homestays and development of homestays as an important rural tourism product.

LITERATURE REVIEW

The History of Malaysian Homestays

The homestay has been used as a type of accommodation in rural areas since the 1970s, derived from the concept of a 'bed and breakfast' (Hamzah, 1997). It was during the early 1970s when a Malay lady, Mak Long Teh, who lived in a traditional Malay Kampung of Kampung Cherating Lama in Pahang, started providing breakfast, dinner, and a bedroom in her house to long-stay tourists. It was then followed by other Malays, who mostly live in Malay Kampung along the beach by providing their houses as homestays for tourists. Later in the late 1980s, homestays in the Malay Kampung were used by the Japanese youths as accommodations during student exchange programs (Hamzah, 2008). The Ministry of Education (MOE) organized these programs, where the Japanese youths stayed with host families and participated in the community activities to learn the Malay Kampung lifestyle. Hamzah described that homestays at the Malay Kampung as viewed by the Japanese Government as a suitable place for learning foreign cultures without losing their focus on *furusato* (native place in the Japanese Language).

Later, homestays in the Malay Kampung were used as accommodations in agro-tourism programs held by the Ministry of Agriculture (MOA) as a part of the agricultural development projects. Regional development authorities under the Ministry of Rural and Regional Development (MRRD): South East Johore Development Authority (Lembaga Kemajuan Johor Tenggara; KEJORA), Kedah Regional Development Authority (Lembaga Kemajuan Wilayah Kedah; KEDA), Central Terengganu Development Authority (Lembaga Kemajuan Terengganu Tengah; KETENGAH) also started producing their homestays for tourists, especially domestic tourists, which are mainly aimed to solve poverty issues among rural Malays by earning extra income through tourism activities.

In 1995, the Ministry of Tourism, Arts and Culture (MOTAC) introduced the Malaysian Homestay Program as an official tourism product to the whole rural villages in Malaysia, including Sabah and Sarawak, which has become the first rural tourism product to include several government organizations such as MOTAC, MOA, MRRD, and many others, at the national level (MOTAC, 2019).

Today, many rural Malays were also influenced by the homestay trend and started renting out their Malay Kampung houses to tourists. Nevertheless, at most of the homestays managed by regional governments and individual rural Malays, tourists did not live together with the host families. Moreover, the homestays were managed by individuals without the involvement of the existing village organization and the rural community.

Homestays by Government Organizations

Homestays by the Ministry of Agriculture (MOA)

MOA introduced the Agro-tourism Program in 1989, starting with the development of the Malaysia Agriculture Park (Taman Pertanian Malaysia) at Bukit Cahaya Seri Alam, Shah Alam, Selangor (MOA, 2019). The Agro-tourism Program is focusing on farmstay or homestay, where tourists may spend a night at an agricultural center or Malay Kampung houses, and experience rural daily activities. Today, homestays registered with MOA are organized by the Muda Agricultural Development Authority (MADA), the Agriculture Department and the Fisheries Development Authority of Malaysia (FDAM). Today, there are 12 homestays throughout the country, established and registered under the MOA.

Homestays by MOA provide experience living with the family farmers or fishers, where their houses have been renovated, and family farmers are licensed to receive tourists. Some homestays are provided with training programs based on forest or expedition in the lake or sea that arranged by the MOA training centers. Some also consist of a meeting room and hall for activities of a big group of visitors. There are also homestays established in a resort-style, where rest houses, chalets, dormitories, or campsites are newly built without tourists staying together with the villagers.

Homestays by the Ministry of Rural and Regional Development

Homestays by MRRD were established under the Rural Development Institute (INFRA) and the regional development authorities (KEJORA, KEDA, and KETENGAH) in each region (MRRD, 2019). The purposes of these homestays are to develop tourism sector at rural regions under each regional Government, to enable active participation from the target groups in the tourism sector, to add activities that have added value for a more positive yield and in line with the objective of equity growth with balances development (KEDA, 2019). MRRD has indicated the beauty and green environment in the rural surroundings, potential villages in the regions, homestays, eco-tourism, culture, and history as the potentials for agricultural tourism products.

MRRD also provides Homestay Basic Training, organized by the Institute of Rural Advancement (INFRA) for the participated host families and village committee members in order to expose knowledge and skill on food preparation, cleanliness on the environment, housekeeping and promotion before they provide accommodation and facilities to the tourists. MRRD also frequently held seminars, visits, and inspections to participating houses and villages. Later, the Homestay Basic Training is also introduced in the Malaysian Homestay Program, established by MOTAC, where MRRD is involved in the new homestay program.

Today, there are 183 homestays registered with MRRD that are listed under the Homestay iDesa Index. These homestays are mostly located in Sabah and Sarawak, where MRRD is focusing on the hinterland or undeveloped rural area in order to increase their standard of living and to overcome poverty issues. Nevertheless, in some of these homestays, tourists are also provided accommodations separated from the host families or the house owners, and there are no participations from the other village community.

Homestays by the Ministry of Tourism, Culture, and Art (MOTAC): The Malaysian Homestay Program

In 1988, the community of five villages in Temerloh, Pahang, had established the Desa Murni Homestay, were encouraged and supported by MOTAC as a model for the new Malaysian Homestay Program (Kayat and Nor, 2006). The first tourist group of 40 people visited the Desa Murni Homestay for three days and two nights contributed RM6,000 (RM150 per host family) to the village community. The village community did not correctly record the income earned from this program until 2009; however, Kayat and Nor described that in 2006, each host family earned RM1,388 a month from this homestay program, which is higher than an average monthly income of a farmer in the country (RM700).

The Malaysian Homestay Program was then established officially and opened to all rural villages in Malaysia in 1995, when MOTAC saw the development of homestays (by MOA, MRRD, and individuals) in Malaysia and the potential of Malay Kampung as a tourism resource, mainly at the Desa Murni Homestay. This program was opened to Malay Kampung and all rural villages, including Chinese New Villages, Indian settlements, and Orang Asli villages on Peninsular Malaysia and traditional villages on North Borneo. However, in Peninsular Malaysia, only Malay Kampung participated in this program since Malays are still mainly populating rural areas.

This program is mainly aimed to increase rural community participation in the tourism sector. In the Malaysian Homestay Registration Guidelines, MOTAC defined this program as 'a program where tourist stays with a host family, who is registered with MOTAC, interacts with the family, and experiences the daily lifestyle, economic activities, economic activities, and cultural activities in the *kampung*.' The concept of this program is 'tourism based on lifestyle and experience.' MOTAC targets two main groups as the objectives of this program: rural community and tourists. The objectives of this

program that are listed in the Malaysian Homestay Registration Guidelines are to encourage the rural community to participate in the tourism industry, to increase their incomes, and to create tourism entrepreneurs among them. This program is also established to provide unique experiences for tourists who are interested in the *kampung* lifestyle and culture and to create a new affordable rural tourism product at the international level. This program is different from other types of low-cost accommodations such as small hotels, bed-and-breakfasts, and rural resorts, where tourists do not live together with the host family.

In 2000, the chairman of the Desa Murni Homestay Committee established a new organization at the national level called the Malaysian Homestay Association to help and provide guidance to all homestay programs in other rural villages in Malaysia (Hamzah, 2008). Branches of the Malaysian Homestay Association were also established at each state to be involved in the host family house inspection during the registration process. Japanese youths continued to be the main tourists for Malay Kampung after the Ministry of Tourism established the Malaysian Homestay Program in 1995. In this program, the Malaysian Homestay Association held a consultation, travel arrangement, and negotiation between MOE and the host families. The Malaysian Homestay Association also held the marketing and promotion of the homestays in Japan, which has brought more than 50,000 Japanese youths from schools in Japan to the student exchange programs.

Traditional environments, landscapes, and houses in rural villages become a significant attraction for tourists. Therefore, out of 119 homestay programs on Peninsular Malaysia, 74% of the participating villages are traditional villages: 54% of farm villages and 20% paddy villages (Ramele and Yamazaki, 2014). However, FELDA and planned villages also participated in this program by providing unique rural activities (such as rural games and sports activities for families and school students) and applying natural resources surrounding the villages for attractions. Most of the traditional villages on North Borneo that participate in this program are located in coastal, hinterland, and mountain areas; therefore, they are visited mostly by eco-tourists.

Today, there are 212 homestay programs established throughout the country (registered officially with MOTAC under the Malaysian Homestay Program), which involve 361 villages, 4,070 host families, and providing 5,712 rooms at one time (MOTAC, 2019).

Unregistered Homestays/Individual Homestays

Unregistered homestays are defined as homestays operated as a guesthouse where tourists provide only lodging accommodation but at rates cheaper than hotels and other means of accommodation (Yassin, Arif, and Naidu, 2017). These homestays are not registered with any government organization (MOTAC, MOA, or MRRD) and sometimes are located in residential or housing areas without following the concept as indicated in the Malaysian Homestay Registration Guidelines.

However, some registered/individual homestays are also managed by individuals, a small committee, or association such as the Village Development and Safety Committee (JKKK) in the rural villages (Ramele, 2015). These homestays are derived, influenced by the registered homestays in the surrounding area, as a small business in the village. Some homestays are also providing accommodations with the host family and activities with the village's community, similar to activities provided by the registered homestays.

METHODOLOGY

This study aims to standardize the regulation used for all Malaysian homestays in order to enhance their management and operation in developing the rural tourism industry. The objectives of the study are to clarify regulations used among each type of Malaysian homestays (both registered and unregistered with the government organizations) and to reveal issues arose regarding the implemented regulations (process, guidelines, or requirements). In order to achieve these objectives, the methodologies as follows were used:

- i. Literature reviews on implementation and background of each homestay established by the government organizations, and statistics on each homestay were done by referring to the official portals of each involved government organization (MOTAC, MOA, MRRD, and KEDA);
- ii. Previous research (published journals, proceeding papers, unpublished Ph.D. thesis, and articles) on Malaysian homestays' history, background, its evaluation, and economic, social and environmental effects of participated villages and villagers were reviewed;
- iii. Selected homestays that were established by the government organizations and individuals were investigated to carry out the comparison on each homestays' management and operation. Host families at each homestay program (MOTAC, MRRD/KEDA, MOA, and unregistered homestay) were briefly interviewed to reveal the management and operation at each type of homestay.
- iv. An in-depth interview was carried out with the representative from the Tourism Service Branch, Industrial Development Division, MOTAC in order to justify the standardization of existing guidelines to be used for other types of homestays in Malaysia (homestays registered with other government organizations beside MOTAC and unregistered homestays).

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The Malaysian Homestay Registration Guidelines

The homestay has been used as a type of accommodation in rural areas since the 1970s, derived from the concept of a 'bed and breakfast' (Hamzah, 1997). It was during the early 1970s when a Malay lady, Mak Long Teh, who lived in a traditional Malay Kampung of Kampung Cherating Lama in Pahang, started providing breakfast, dinner, and a bedroom in her house to long-stay tourists. It was then followed by other Malays, who mostly live in Malay Kampung along the beach by providing their houses as homestays for tourists. Later in the late 1980s, homestays in the Malay Kampung were used by the Japanese youths as accommodations during student exchange programs (Hamzah, 2008). The Ministry of Education (MOE) organized these programs, where the Japanese youths stayed with host families and participated in the community activities to learn the Malay Kampung lifestyle. Hamzah described that homestays at the Malay Kampung as viewed by the Japanese Government as a suitable place for learning foreign cultures without losing their focus on *furusato* (native place in the Japanese Language).

Based on interviews with representatives from MOTAC, MOA, and MRRD, only MOTAC has carried out guidelines regarding registration, process, management, and operation of a homestay in Malaysia, which is the Malaysia Homestay Registration Guidelines, along with the establishment of the Malaysian Homestay Program in 1995. The guidelines have been revised once according to the demands and requests from the stakeholders. This official document consists of registration procedure and process, rules on food preparation and kitchen cleanliness, the use of the official logo of MOTAC, the house inspection, and re-inspection, and the Homestay Basic Training for the host families (organized by INFRA, MRRD). Host families are also asked to provide separated bedrooms for the

tourists; nevertheless, other shared spaces are encouraged to be shared to create an actual living environment in a traditional *kampung* house as one of the family members.

According to the guidelines, villagers may participate as a homestay committee member, a host family, a cultural performer, a farm guide, a driver, or a cook. For each participating village and host family, the Ministry of Tourism provides the Malaysian Homestay Registration Guidelines, which consists of guidelines and guidance to register a homestay program and host family, and food preparation guidance at each host family house. According to these guidelines, participation in this program is opened to all types of villages and families who live in permanent residences in the rural areas of Malaysia.

Table 1 shows guidelines for participating villages, villagers, host families, and host family houses to be evaluated before establishing a homestay program. A homestay program may have more than one village to have more than ten host families. Before being registered officially with the Ministry of Tourism, each host family has to attend the Homestay Basic Training (organized by INFRA, MRRD) and have their houses inspected for cleanliness and safety requirements. Moreover, a continuous inspection every three years at each house is held by the Ministry of Tourism at each house to ensure the existence of participating villages, the condition of host family houses, or any changes in the number of host families.

A host family house, which is registered with the Ministry of Tourism, is differentiated from homestays under other government organizations or individual homestays with an official logo provided by the Ministry of Tourism (Figure 1). The use of logo at each registered host family's house is regulated due to complaints from tourists on confusion of registered and unregistered host families.

Figure 2 shows the registration process of each homestay program and host family. During the host family house inspection, in addition to the Ministry of Tourism, the Ministry of Health, Homestay Association in each state, and the existing JKKK in the village also participate. The host family house, which has failed the house inspection (mostly due to hygiene issue), is re-inspected after the improvement has been made.

The Malaysian Homestay Registration Guidelines show that there are regulations carried out for participating villagers, especially host families, on the number of rooms for tourists, and house conditions, hygiene, and necessary facilities to ensure the excellent quality of accommodation. Practicing rural economic, community activities, traditional sports, and cultural activities are also listed as the terms for participating village(s) and encouraged more traditional settlements than planned settlements to participate in this program. However, there is no regulation enacted on house extension or alteration at the host family houses that caused many of them extended or altered their houses to provide more space for the tourist room. Control and regulation by the Government are vital to avoid more transformation done, especially to traditional houses that can also affect the traditional environment of Malay Kampung.

Table 1. Malaysian Homestay Registration Guidelines

Village	Consists of more than ten host families participated. Accessible from the main roads Clean and safe
Villagers	Interest towards tourism Practice rural economic and community activities Practice traditional sports and cultural activities
Host families	Interest and knowledge of tourism Practice a rural lifestyle Attended Homestay Basic Training by INFRA
Host families' houses	Inspected by MOTAC Accessible from the roads Provide less than three rooms for tourists Contains living room, dining space, shower and toilet Clean and safe

Source: MOTAC (2019)



Figure 1. Official Logo of the Malaysian Homestay Program at the Host Family House
Source: MOTAC (2019)

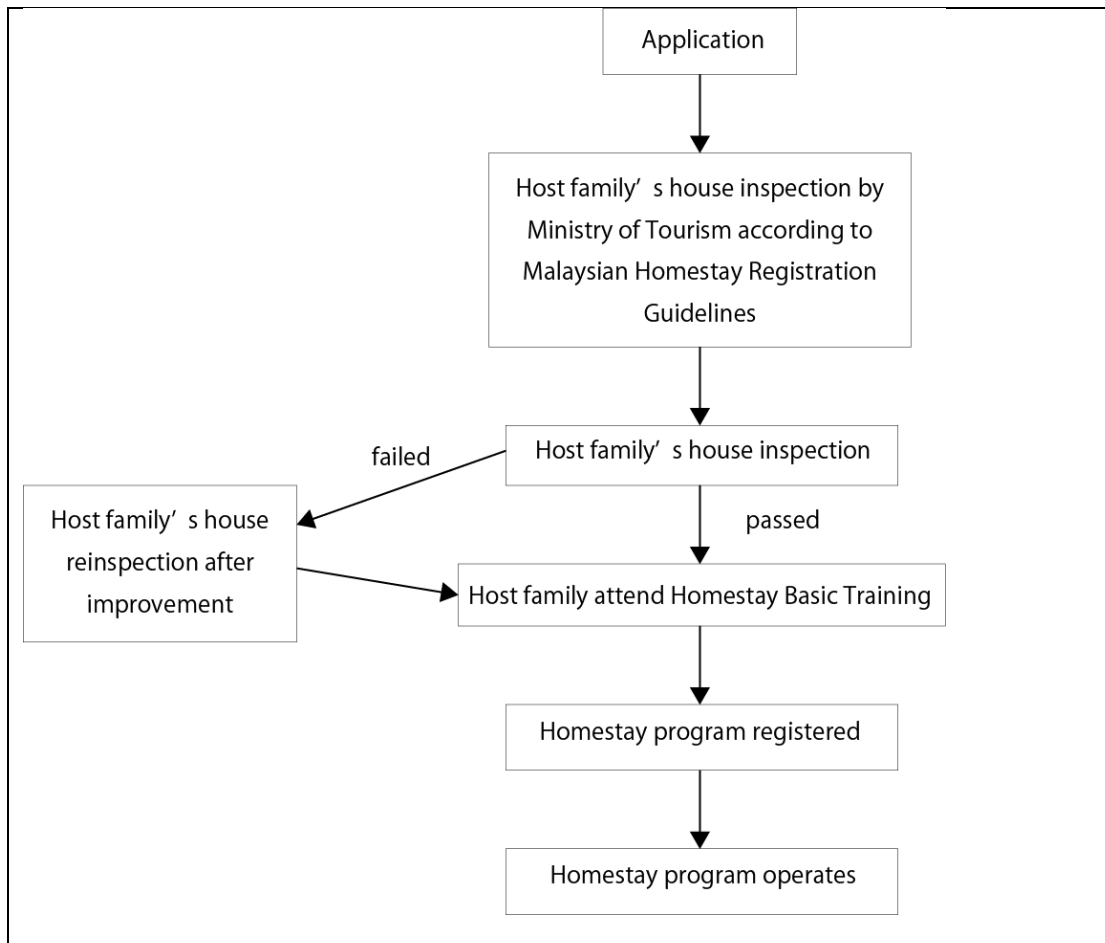


Figure 2. Registration Process of Homestay Program and Host Family
Source: MOTAC (2019)

The ASEAN Homestay Standard

In 2016, MOTAC was selected as a leader of homestays in the Southeast Asian countries by the ASEAN Secretariat; due to the achievement of increasing income, the number of visitors, villages, and host families participated in the Malaysian Homestay Standard. After the selection, ASEAN Homestay Standard is also being referred to as an addition to existing Malaysian Homestay Registration Guidelines, mainly during re-inspection on participated homestays after three years of establishment.

The ASEAN Homestay Standard was carried out in January 2016 by the ASEAN Secretariat, which is aimed to standardize a base level understanding of what a homestay is and to establish a minimum standard across all ASEAN member states (ASEAN Secretariat, 2016). The standard also facilitates a coordinated approach, encouraging partnership with relevant stakeholders, creating a positive environment while revitalizing the rural economy, as well as poverty reduction. The standard focuses on the homestay, where guests will stay with the host family and experience the everyday way of life of the family and community in both a direct and indirect manner. The standard also focuses on the following essential criteria, such as host, accommodation, activities, authenticity, management, location, safety and security, marketing, and sustainability principles.

The standard provides assessment criteria for audit checklist, audit process, certification body, and homestay assessment guidelines for both homestay organizations and providers. In addition to the existing contents of the Malaysian Homestay Registration Guidelines, this standard consists of the requirement for an emergency plan in the host family's house for safety and security purposes.

Guidelines for Other Homestays

Besides homestays from the Malaysian Homestay Program, the Malaysian Homestay Registration Guidelines are also used as guidance by other types of homestays (homestays by other government organizations); however, it is not compulsory. Other homestays registered with other government organizations are encouraged; however, not compulsory, to also be registered with MOTAC to receive the same benefits as other homestays in the Malaysian Homestay Program. If the homestays are located in the same village or district, they are allowed to use the facilities such as homestay activity center, signboards at the highway, and receive the promotion as provided by MOTAC. Nevertheless, they have to follow regulations documented in the Malaysian Homestay Registration Guidelines and the ASEAN Homestay Standard and allow MOTAC to carry out re-inspection after three years of establishment.

On the other hand, homestays registered under the Malaysian Homestay Program are also received support and help from other government organizations. For example, at the Banghuris Homestay in Sepang, Selangor has been receiving supports from MOA for the agricultural development, MRRD for the establishment of Kampung Lestari (a cooperative body built by the villagers for a commercial purpose), and technical supports from the Standard and Industrial Research Institute of Malaysia (SIRIM), mainly on their Small and Medium Entrepreneurship (SME)'s factories. MOTAC recognizes the Banghuris Homestay as among the most successful homestay programs in Malaysia and Selangor due to its achievement in generating income from the homestay program, and development in the agriculture and SME sectors. It is also being a model for other homestay programs registered with MOTAC and also other homestays registered under other government organizations.

Issues Regarding Homestay Registrations in Malaysia

According to MOTAC (2019), they are unable to help to solve issues that arose on homestays that are not registered with the Malaysian Homestay Program or MOTAC. Among the issues arose is business tax issued for homestays registered with a local authority, where homestays are considered as a hotel. This is because in some areas, homestay may be considered as an official business or a Small and Medium Entrepreneurship (SME) among rural villagers by the local authority. This is opposed to the concept of MOTAC, where homestays are considered as a program organized by the Government for tourists and are not issued for any government tax.

On the other hand, some homestays are unable to be registered with the Malaysian Homestay Program due to failure to fulfill requirements in the Malaysian Homestay Registration Guidelines such as minimum numbers of houses participate, extinction of community activity, or community involvement, and failure during an inspection on house's cleanliness. Nevertheless, MOTAC has been continuously supporting these homestays by giving training, course, and guidance, which is also organized by MRRD. Interested villagers are also encouraged to join other surrounding villages' community in order to gain more participation from other host families.

Besides, there is also issue on decreasing interest among registered homestays to continue participating on the homestay program. Lack of participation among youths, depopulation in the village, lack of promotion and tourism resources, and development pressure from surrounding modern hotels and resorts may be considered as the failure reasons. MOTAC continues to encourage participation from these homestays without eliminating them from the host families' directory and continuously promoting other successful stories from other homestays as a motivation. MOTAC also gives awards to those successful homestays for specific categories for encouragement to all registered and unregistered homestays.

Future Planning for Malaysian Homestays

MOTAC has been done a comprehensive survey in 2017 in order to discuss for future development and planning for the homestays registered with the Malaysian Homestay Programs and other homestays. A concept of 'Moving Towards Community-based Tourism (CBT)' is created to be promoted to all homestays in Malaysia to encourage participating host families and other villagers to be involved in community business and community networking. All homestays are encouraged to build their own business or cooperative body in order to increase income other than from the homestay programs. At the same time, MOTAC will be taking action to implement the ASEAN Homestay Standard on all homestays in Malaysia in order to solve current issues regarding registration and standardization among homestays in Malaysia.

CONCLUSIONS

There are three types on homestays established in Malaysia: homestays registered with the Malaysian Homestay Program (MOTAC), homestay registered with other government organizations (MOA and MRRD/regional development authorities), and unregistered/individual homestays. This study aims to clarify the implementation of these types of homestays, to identify regulations used on their registration, management, and operation, and to recommend for standardization on the guidelines used for all homestays in Malaysia.

Findings showed that only MOTAC has carried out an official document called the Malaysian Homestay Registration Guidelines, which is used for homestays' registration process and procedure, and guidance on homestays' management and operation. Moreover, the ASEAN Homestay Standard is also being referred to as additional guidance mainly on the security and safety in the host family's house, after MOTAC has been selected as the leader of all homestays in the ASEAN countries. This selection has also shown that the Malaysian Homestay Program is recognized as a thriving tourism product by the ASEAN Secretariat.

Nevertheless, homestay registered with MOA and MRRD, and other unregistered homestays are also referring to MOTAC's guidelines as guidance on their management and operation. Some of these homestays have taken one step forward by registering themselves with MOTAC under the Malaysian Homestay Program after they have fulfilled all requirements needed. Later, they have been receiving the same benefits and supports from MOTAC, paralleled to other homestays in the Malaysian Homestay Program.

Along with the plan on Malaysian homestay carried out by MOTAC in its comprehensive survey, this study is also recommended that the Malaysian Homestay Registration Guideline and some elements in the ASEAN Homestay Standard are regulated to all types of homestays including homestays registered with other government organizations and other unregistered homestays in Malaysia. Besides MOTAC, other government organizations such as MOA and MRRD are also suggested to be involved directly in the implementation of the guidelines in order to support homestays under their management. This is important in order to reduce issues and to create standardization on all types of homestay's registration, management, and operation.

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