*Research Article*

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# A conceptual diagram of Homestay stakeholder's interaction in inducing environmental behaviour

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## Abstract

Previous research studies from many nations have piqued interest in individuals' and organisations' environmental behaviour (EB). EB is defined in this research as any action that is safe or causes insignificant destruction to the environment. There is a shortage of research examining environmental supervision by governing bodies as external stakeholders towards smaller-scale businesses, for instance, the Homestay business. There is still a considerable divergence about environmental behaviour interaction between internal and external stakeholders in the Homestay context. Moreover, it is believed that small businesses like Homestay may face pressures differently from other larger accommodation establishments. By proposing a conceptual diagram relating stakeholder theory (ST) and environmental behaviour (EB), this study consolidates key elements within both contexts, hence proposing the idea that the stakeholder interaction may crucially influence the EB among Homestay operators. It is believed that by observing pertinent research in this emerging field, an in-depth qualitative study to discover EB's real in the Homestay setting can be proposed for future research.

## Keywords:

Stakeholder theory; homestay; environmental behaviour; community-based tourism

## 1    Introduction

Malaysia was considered a less attractive tourist destination in the early 1960s, compared to other ASEAN countries (Din, 1982). In the 1980s, the global financial crisis triggered the government to pay more attention to the tourism industry, especially generating employment opportunities and strengthening finances (Lean & Tang, 2010). Therefore, a series of inbound tourism promotions was initiated by the government starting in 1990, namely the Visit Malaysia Year (VYM) campaign and the State Visit Year (SVY) (Othman & Rosli, 2011). The government of Malaysia has paid extra attention on the tourism sector for development according to specific period. This includes the series of Malaysia Plan, formulation of the Economic Transformation Program (ETP), National Tourism Policy (NTP), National Physical Plan (NPP), and Local Agenda 21 (LA 21) (Bhuiyan, Siwar & Ismail, 2013). The Malaysian Government also urged every state in Malaysia to promote its tourism products attractively in order to facilitate and support the local economy of the states (Ab Gahni et al., 2021). Moreover, rural youth were encouraged to join in enterprises and specific programmes aimed at encouraging local community participation, particularly in utilising their tourism strengths and distinct culture, such as handcraft, forest-based goods, ecotourism, and Homestay (Malaysia, 2016). Besides, in improving Malaysia's connection with long-distance countries, the tourism authorities also linked with international commercial airlines (New Straits Time online, 2019). Thus, it aligns with the latest Visit Malaysia 2020 goal that is to connect all industry players to achieve a common goal.

Yet, regardless of the government's activities in promoting Malaysia, the number of tourist arrivals to Homestay Malaysia still fluctuates due to certain reasons. There was a slight increase in tourist arrivals within the five-year record of 2015 to 2019, along with a growth of 24.6 percent of tourist receipts (Tourism Malaysia Website, 2021). Unfortunately, the numbers extremely dropped in 2020 due to the pandemic Covid-19 around the world. The situation has changed tourists' pattern of pre-planned trips, causing a huge reduction in tourist arrivals in Malaysia because of withdrawals of booked trips (Foo, Chin, Tan & Phuah, 2020).
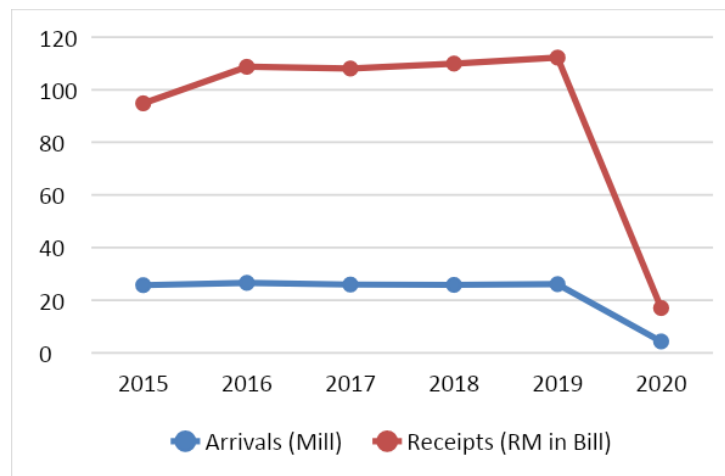


Figure 1: Tourist arrival and receipts to Homestay (Tourism Malaysia Website, 2021)

Nevertheless, by focusing on the slight increasing arrival trends before the pandemic, it is believed that various popular tourism products in the country are still regarded as pulling attraction to tourists. It includes nature-related, culture-related products and ecotourism related products (Jaafar, Abdul-Aziz, Maideen, & Mohd, 2011). Before introducing the city and artificial attractions, the main pull factor was the destination's natural environment and various rural tourist spots (Hassan & Nezakati, 2014). Thus, the Homestay programme is one of the rural attractions that has been offered as a substitute form of family furnished accommodation, highlighting ecotourism and community-based tourism (CBT) products and services (Ismail, Hanafiah, Aminuddin & Mustafa, 2016).

"Homestay" in other countries might be conducted differently than Malaysia Homestay (Ibrahim & Rashid, 2010). The Malaysia Homestay programme is not a typical lodging provider but treated as an experience opportunity where tourists stay with registered host families to be familiarised with their daily lifestyle (Ministry of Tourism and Culture Malaysia Official Website, 2018). It is interrelated to the environment, society, and local customs, targeting certain tourists looking for authentic local experiences (Jamal, Othman, & Muhammad, 2011). The programme was introduced by the MOTAC in collaboration with other authorities such as the Ministry of Rural and Regional Development of Malaysia (Jamaludin, Othman & Awang, 2012). Desa Murni Homestay Temerloh at Pahang was the first Homestay to begin the operation in 1988 (Pusiran & Xiao, 2013; Salleh, Othman, Nordin, Idris & Shukor, 2014; Yusof, Muda, Amin, & Ibrahim, 2013). It was reported by Homestay Unit Industry Development, HUID (2021) that the programme is developing progressively, with 219 Homestays registered in 2021.

The Homestay programme was supported by the government as a stimulator to develop rural communities in achieving the Ninth Malaysia Plan from 2006 to 2010 (Ibrahim & Rashid, 2010). The MOTAC compels at least ten households at one Homestay location, with three bedrooms for a traditional rural house or a long series of houses known as Rumah Panjang for Sabah and Sarawak states (Mohamad Muslim, Numata & Yahya, 2017). Due to the nature of preparative and supervising the Homestay business, operators must follow certain rules set by MOTAC, as the ministry is the main regulatory body for Homestay (Ariff, Yassin & Masram, 2015). Despite the development and expansion of the business, problems may evolve due to conflicts of interest between local communities as well as in terms of the usage of tourism resources in the area where the tourism is developed (Prakoso, Pradipto, Roychansyah, & Nugraha, (2020). Also, operators are worried as they had sensed potential harm to the community due to the expansion, such as air pollution and carrying capacity issues (Borhan & Ahmed, 2012; Shukor, Salleh, Othman & Idris, 2014). The matters are predictable because destinations that promote community-based tourism in rural areas are exposed to environmental harm. Due to industry development, their natural assets and local cultures are at risk (Ismail et al., 2016). Hence, the local tourism authority must assist the development and improvement of quality Homestay services and facilities, particularly by encouraging environmental behaviour (EB). The participation of communities in responsible and

environmentally friendly activities may alter their quality of life, including financial and societal aspects, while providing a positive atmosphere that promotes a productive and healthy lifestyle (Fauziah & Hamzah, 2012).

More to the point, the local people are the most important stakeholders who will be impacted by tourism planning and development, either negatively or positively (Hanafiah, Jamaluddin and Kunjuraman, 2021). The stakeholders hold pressures towards internal management, including green management, which may be positively related to environmental performance (Yu & Ramanathan, 2015). As suggested by Freeman (1984), this study agrees that internal transformation within the Homestay setting might need initial action, but it does not directly challenge the main principle of the business. It is because individual action is normally formed and encouraged by compliance with rules (Shove, Pantzar & Watson, 2012). As such, businesses are commonly pressured by monitoring authorities in implementing EB due to certain requirements such as documentation (Betts, Super, & North, 2018). The businesses will follow instructions while respecting the authority by adhering to their needs (Miles, 2012). Thus, it is important to discover the extent of influence held by MOTAC as a governing body on operators EB.

Besides, researchers focused less on the linkage between environmental management and hospitality business stakeholders (Chan & Hsu, 2016). It includes a scarcity of research that examines the interrelationships between environmental management techniques, employee or management attitudes as well as their behaviours, and environmental performance from an intra-organizational perspective (Choi, Kim, Kim & Agmapisarn, 2019). Previous scholars also discussed differences in environmental strategies between large and small to medium-sized businesses (Vazquez-Brust, Liston-Heyes, Plaza-Úbeda, & Burgos-Jiménez, 2010). However, it is argued that smaller businesses, such as Homestay, might face stakeholder demands contrarily from bigger establishments (Lepoutre & Heene, 2006). As more researchers explore how larger businesses dealt with stakeholders over the years (Lefebvre, Lefebvre & Talbot, 2003; Lepoutre & Heene, 2006; Noci & Verganti, 1999), there is still a dearth of studies investigating the environmental supervision of smaller-scale establishments (Darnall, Henriques & Sadorsky, 2010). Somehow, in Homestay context, it was reported that the relevant authorities provide little encouragement to the Homestay operators in conducting EB (Khan, Aziz, Saad & Rahman, 2018). In fact, a recent systematic review by Janjua, Krishnapillai and Rahman (2021) discovered that only 51 percent of the literature highlighted Homestay as the main interest in the context of sustainable rural tourism. One of the possible reasons is because, according to an interview with a Malaysian Tourism Director, the country is not ready to apply green practices in their business, due to guests' attitudes, a lack of information, and a lack of enforcement of legislation (Yusof, Mansor & Ab Ghani, 2021). On the other hand, hotel business-related studies mainly focus on EB drivers rather than linking the impacts of different stakeholders (Mensah, 2014). Thus, the main purpose of this study is to propose a conceptual diagram in discovering the stakeholder nature within the

Homestay business, that will become a heuristic guide in influencing Homestay operators' EB.

## 2  Literature Review

### 2.1  Overview of environmental behaviour

Environmental behaviour (EB) is described by Gagnon, Leduc and & Savard (2012) as individual action and participation that is harmless or causes insignificant damage to the environment. Previous studies apply various terms, such as environmentally friendly practices, green approaches, green practices, best practices, green environmental attributes, and sustainable practices, representing similar definitions (Yusof & Jamaludin, 2015). These expressions suggest approximately the same notion, although with contrast in emphasis. The EB or action still adds to the positive outcome to the economic, social, cultural, and environmental impacts by holding on to organisational strategies such as planning, management, product development and marketing (Hafiz, Jamaluddin, Zulkifly, & Othman, 2015). Several large organisations focus on their EB and are obligated to be competitive, enhance their brand, and be distinct from competitors within the market (Jones, Hillier & Comfort, 2014). Also, consumers gave attention to eco-label products, organic foods, and recycling programmes due to increased awareness and interest (Chan, Hon, Chan & Okumus, 2014). Individual's value environmental efforts positively because they receive adequate information and consider environmental issues a significant and important matter in life (Chan et al., 2014; Han, Hsu, Lee & Sheu, 2011).

Meanwhile, the hotel businesses have changed towards environmentally friendly operations due to the world trend, and organisations are assessed according to business ethics, social responsibility and socioeconomic responsiveness (Han et al., 2011). Although it was stated that organisations or smaller businesses might not be affected much by resources provided by the company for its stakeholders' environmental affairs (Rueda-Manzanares, Aragón-Correa & Sharma, 2008). It is different in the case of SMEs. The limitation of resources might cause hindrance to their environmental practice implementation (Russo & Fouts, 1997). In a small lodging context, environmental practice is relevant because it was reported by Prud'homme and Raymond (2016) that two out of three small and medium hotels began their plans in sustainable development. Although environmentally friendly accommodations are growing in Malaysia, there have been relatively few recent studies on small lodging businesses and their EB (Yusof & Jamaludin, 2015). It is noticeable that previous researchers mainly focused on the environmentally friendly hospitality industry in the scope of perception and operation of EB. In general, as observed from prior studies, it is difficult to obtain valuable insights related to green practitioners' perspectives in Malaysia and their level of participation (Jamaludin & Yusof, 2013). it is because, Malaysia is considered not fully prepared to conduct green practices in lodging business due to their customer perspectives, limited knowledge, and lack execution of regulations (Yusof, Mansor & Ab Ghani, 2021). Thus,

it is also vital to discover the drivers to implement green practice among practitioners (Chan et al., 2014).

## 2.2    Stakeholder nature in shaping Homestay operators' EB

From individual-oriented to organisational oriented, EB has been recognised as one of the corporate socially responsible activities commonly studied within stakeholder theory (ST) (Bonnafous-Boucher & Pesqueux, 2005). Growing awareness of environmentally friendly activities among stakeholders in the hospitality industry is triggered by the prospect of competitive advantages (Azam, Rashid & Zainol, 2017). The stakeholder is initially described by Freeman (1984) as any group or individual giving or receiving a certain impact by accomplishing the organisation's goals. Moreover, the terms stakeholder, stakeholder model, stakeholder management, and stakeholder theory has been justified in various studies in several ways (Donaldson & Preston, 1995). Other than managers and stakeholders, interchangeable terms used to explain the stakeholders are workforces, customers, suppliers, creditors, communities, and the general public (Hill & Jones, 1992). Nevertheless, the ST is established with stakeholders' accountability in mind while considering personal and shareholders goals, especially to accommodate other stakeholders' benefits such as suppliers, customers, and community (Jones et al., 2014). This is also supported by Yusof, Salleh, Mat and Mohamed (2017), confirms that the support from the community plays a major role in contributing to the sustainability of a Homestay program.

Generally, stakeholders can be categorised as primary and secondary stakeholders (Clarkson, 1998) or external and internal stakeholder groups (Sarkis, Gonzalez-Torre & Adenso-Diaz, 2010) In this study context, it is sensible to treat MOTAC as an external stakeholder because they often pressure businesses, especially decreasing negative effects and increasing positive impacts (Sarkis et al., 2010). Besides, MOTAC holds the most authority on Homestay business due to the nature of the foundation and supervising their operation. Because they control the country's resources and budget, the government is expected to significantly promote and regulate the tourism industry (Yusnita, Yahaya, Mohd Shaladdin & Wan Abd Aziz, 2012). Meanwhile, operators are addressed as internal stakeholders because they are the ones to implement environmental practices within the Homestay business.

Consequently, both stakeholders need to interact and reach mutual goals in environmental practices. Collaboration among stakeholders should be equally satisfying (Miles, 2012). The interactions are involvement, discussion, support, and knowledge exchange (Grafé-Buckens & Hinton, 1998). As individuals, homestay operators' behaviour is not simply happening according to their desires. Instead, individuals have constraints over their actions (Ajzen & Fishbein, 1980; Fishbein & Ajzen, 1975). As a community, it is believed that the Homestay coordinators as Homestay management committee (Kunjuraman & Hussin, 2017), are at the centre of the connections because they are the main stakeholders who have direct interrelation with all other stakeholders (Hill & Jones, 1992). Hence, everybody will be fully involved in achieving certain business goals when leaders increase interactions, encourage their stakeholders, and build

societies (Freeman, Wicks, & Parmar, 2004). Meanwhile, MOTAC, as the external and governing stakeholders, should step up its efforts to assist operators, as the majority of them lack the necessary capital and knowledge to run a homestay business (Yusnita et al., 2012).

As these investigations reported many interesting results, it is discovered that the environmental operating businesses rely on their staff, who practically recognise the purpose of acting green and act environmentally (Chou, 2014). It appears that the responsibilities and considerations of other stakeholders on environmental activities should be measured because of their possible effect on a business (Chan & Hsu, 2016). Though several high-ranked employers involved in environmental regulations acknowledged the significance of stakeholder cooperation, the environmental effort is still time-consuming for various reasons (Orr, 2013). Consequently, Chou (2014) proposed to publish the guidelines and policies for accommodation businesses to start environmental activities. It ensures that the practitioners are aware of the sign that the company is making efforts towards environmental action. The relevance is to make sure various stakeholders are obliged and engaged in environmental practices (Arunothaipipat & Lin, 2013). There might be disagreements among stakeholder interests, but they must be solved so that all stakeholders do not give up the efforts (Freeman, Wicks & Parmar, 2004).

## 3  Proposed conceptual diagram and research aims

The accommodation sector has applied ST to sustainability reporting, highlighting important stakeholders, stakeholder interaction, materiality determination, and stakeholder reaction (de Grosbois & Fennell, 2022). Besides, the principles of ST explain how businesses apply green operating techniques according to the needs, expectations, and preferences of many stakeholders (Buysse & Verbeke, 2003; Donaldson & Preston, 1995; Freeman, 1984; Ramanathan, Poomkaew & Nath, 2014). Besides, according to practitioners, stakeholder pressures would force the company to adopt internal environmental management strategies (Yu & Ramanathan, 2015) Thus, this study adapted the ST and linked it to EB at Homestay to propose a suitable conceptual diagram (Figure 2). As the discussion on underpinning theories continues, the study relates to the stakeholder theory (ST) in describing the interaction between Homestay operators as internal stakeholders and external stakeholders (MOTAC). Figure 2 was formed to summarise the preceding explanation on stakeholder theory (de Grosbois & Fennell, 2022; Freeman, 1984; Miles, 2012) and connect the theory and environmental concepts. By observing relevant research in this emerging field, more information on the environmental phenomenon would help to establish a greater degree of accuracy on this matter.
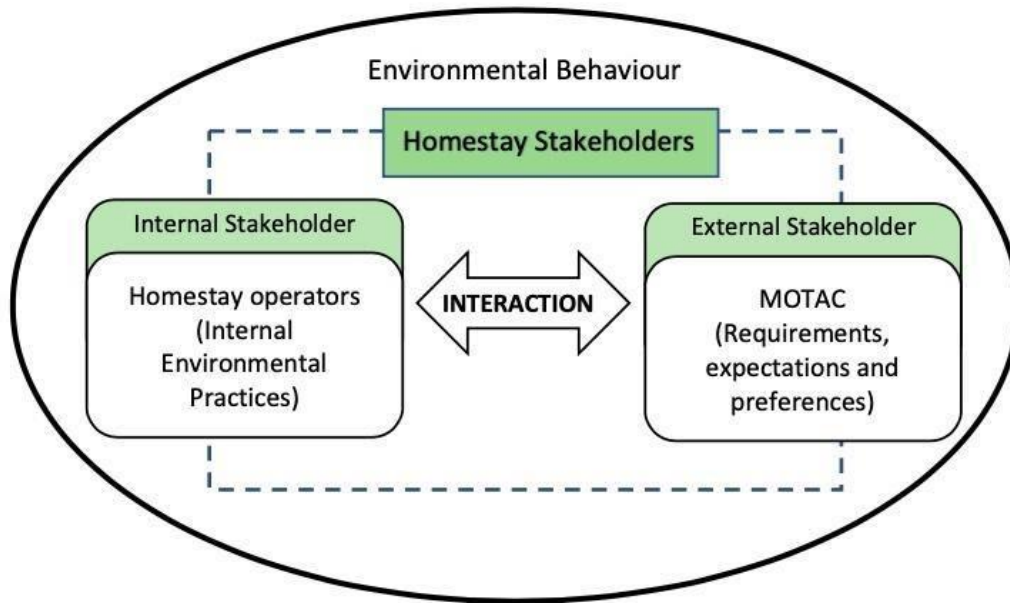
Figure 2: Proposed conceptual diagram of Homestay internal and external stakeholders, and their interaction in EB

By referring to the proposed conceptual diagram, it is expected to suggest an in-depth qualitative study to explore the stakeholder's nature in shaping EB at the Homestay setting. Following this, the study-specific aims are:

a) To explore the extent to which the Homestay operators can control their EB, particularly to foresee their competency, familiarity, affordability, and availability to conduct internal environmental practices (Kurisu, 2016).

b) To discover the MOTAC needs, expectations, and preferences on operators' EB at Homestay setting (Ramanathan et al., 2014).

c) To discover the extent of involvement, discussion, support, and knowledge exchange between Homestay operators and MOTAC in shaping EB at Homestay (Grafé-Buckens & Hinton, 1998)

## 4   Research Methodology

The qualitative design is projected for a deeper grasp of ST and the EB concept for future study. Besides, qualitative techniques aid data gathering when measurements are restricted since it allows for a better grasp of complicated ideas (Johnson & Onwuegbuzie, 2007).

### 4.1   Population

When choosing participants, the data collecting technique should be focused on people who have various viewpoints on the study's issue (Yin, 2016). As a result, the

researcher will approach two distinct populations, notably internal (Homestay operators) and external stakeholders (MOTAC officers) of the Homestay business, through democratic inquiry. Selection of both populations will give more detailed knowledge and trust in findings, deal with validity challenges and obtain a more complete and in-depth understanding (Johnson & Onwuegbuzie, 2007).

## 4.2 Sampling

For the internal stakeholders, information will be obtained from registered Homestay operators listed by Homestay Unit Industry Development, HUID (2021). The qualitative sample frame is predetermined according to the region of operation as in Table 1. At the same time, the unit of analysis is Homestay coordinators, who serve as leaders and are responsible for Homestay oversight. They are also thought to be knowledgeable about environmental-related activities in the Homestay setting.

Table 1: Sampling frame for internal stakeholders

| States | Regions | Number of registered Homestays and coordinators |
|---|---|---|
| Perak Penang Kedah Perlis | Northern | 42 |
| Selangor | Central | 16 |
| Johor Negeri Sembilan Melaka | Southern | 49 |
| Pahang Terengganu Kelantan | East Coast | 35 |
| Sarawak Sabah Labuan | East Malaysia | 77 |

*Note: Information is drawn from the annual report by HUID (2021)*

The sampling frame in Table 1 will be used as a key guideline in making further decisions on sample selection, particularly when collecting data in a larger study environment. Because predicting the precise sample size is difficult, the potential participants will be chosen at random from the HUID registration list, and more informants will be purposefully sought based on the following selection criteria until the data is saturated:

a) Homestay coordinators as Homestay management committee (Kunjuraman & Hussin, 2017) who, depending on their time of service, are more equipped to ponder the issue and express themselves than others.

b) Participants are willing to devote more time to the interview session with less distraction while being coherent, having more experience in the topic, or sharing their experiences with the researcher.

Meanwhile, for external stakeholders, MOTAC officers will be approached as informants. In contrast to the first qualitative population, which will apply random purposeful sampling, the researcher will use snowball purposeful sampling in selecting the MOTAC officers. To imply this method, it was suggested by Saunders, Lewis and Thornhill (2016) that from existing respondents (Homestay coordinators), the researcher may recruit new ones who are local authority experts (officers from MOTAC). Because the population size for MOTAC officers is unknown, estimating the sample size will be difficult. However, it is advised to reach at least six informants (Morse, 2000) or between five and 25 informants (Creswell & Clark, 2007) for phenomenological research. More specifically, it was claimed that data saturation occurred when there were twelve data collecting points (Guest, Bunce, & Johnson, 2006). Thus, when data analysis produces no new information or theme, it is believed to reach saturation and this redundancy alerts researchers that data gathering may be stopped (Faulkner & Trotter, 2017).

Because there are no clear guidelines for selecting the correct sample size for qualitative research, this study will stop data collection by referring to several factors, including the type of information required, the investigation's goal, the risks to be taken, information dependability, and time and resource constraints (Welch & Patton, 1992). MOTAC officials are discovered to be advising Homestay owners depending on their location. As a result, each informant is likely to be a representative of their state office. Nonetheless, the researcher had considered that a larger sample size would be preferable to ensure more dependability in the study's conclusions. (Yin, 2016).

## 4.3 Plan for data collection and instrumentation

A semi-structured interview will be suggested for the study because it is difficult to acquire several opportunities to interview respondents (Roberts, 1989). Informants were allowed to provide insights that they were not specifically asked about since the interviews were semi-structured (Hanafiah, Jamaluddin & Kunjuraman, 2021). Furthermore, the semi-structured interview approach enables probing questions to elicit more information and clarification of responses to explore respondents' perspectives on complicated themes and concerns (Barriball & While, 1994). The interview sessions for selected internal and external stakeholders will be held according to their convenience, at their choice of location. It is expected to finish data collection within two months.

As such, an interview guide will be created to fulfil the qualitative research aims. It is done to guarantee that the questions were tailored to the circumstances and assists in producing the expected outcome. Simultaneously, the proposed conceptual diagram will be referred to, which had been established based on the literature study and connected to notions of stakeholder theory and human behaviour control in the context of Homestay. The guiding principles will be turned into a qualitative research interview guide. Besides, based on consultation with experts in relevant issue areas, the researchers will provide questions to the informants in the local language that is Malay.

Once the draft of the instrument guide is completed, it will first be sent to the field and academic experts for pre-testing and face validation purposes. The instrument will be further revised and adjusted according to experts' comments before actual data collection.

### 4.4 Plan for data analysis

Once data is collected from several interview sessions, responses will be manually transcribed from pre-recorded audio to a word document, known as verbatim transcription. The next step is to use a computer-assisted qualitative data analysis software, Atlas.ti to analyse the transcribed data. This software will be used for various tasks, including arranging project-related files, skimming and comparing documents, observing, classifying, and categorising themes, document annotation, making memos, and providing graphic output. Thematic analysis will be run, and as a result, it is expected to produce a well-organised and relevant finding to achieve research aims.

## 5 Conclusion

The tourism and hospitality industry, which includes the lodging industry, is deserving of a boost in its economy. Without a doubt, the industry's socioeconomic potential and contribution make it important enough to warrant extra attention by undertaking meaningful academic and empirical study, which might subsequently be useful academically, theoretically, practically, and to policymakers. This study is essential to the Homestay business as it will contribute to the literature on environmental practices, namely in exploring the behaviour of Homestay owners. Environmental researchers had focused much on the large-chained and well-established lodging sector (Mensah, 2014), causing the scarcity of studies on environmental practices at small-medium lodging businesses, such as Homestay (Yusof & Jamaludin, 2015). Previous studies also concentrated on the drivers and dimensions of EB but simultaneously neglected the stakeholder's viewpoint.

Furthermore, implementing environmental practices alone does not ensure service improvement, particularly if practitioners have not carefully examined the possible interaction with other stakeholders and strive to be more commercially focused. As a result, the study will serve as a wake-up call to the Homestay's EB phenomenon by exploring the extent of cooperation between operators as internal stakeholders and MOTAC as external stakeholders of Homestay business. Indirectly, discovering the interaction will allow the operators and local tourism authorities to make the best judgments possible for the improvement of environmental procedures in Homestay operations.

On the other hand, by looking into the competency of EB among Homestay operators and identifying the MOTAC's needs, expectations, and preferences of EB at Homestay, the governing authority may come up with a variety of remedies to address EB concerns. It will meet the requirement for environmental practice support among

Homestay operators to enforce environmentally friendly behaviour, encourage cost-cutting, conserve the natural environment, and avoid the degradation of resources in the Homestay region. In summary, the current study reveals just the tip of an iceberg of the stakeholder natures concerning the EB at Homestay setting. More information on the interaction between Homestay internal and external stakeholders would assist in establishing a greater degree of understanding on this matter. If the argument is to be moved forward, a better insight into the interaction needs to be discovered, especially when it is linked to the EB of operators.

## 6    About the author

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