

Community-Based Homestay Models in ASEAN: Insights and Showcases from Thailand, Malaysia, and Indonesia

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ABSTRACT

This chapter examines ASEAN community-based homestays (CBHs) in Thailand, Malaysia, and Indonesia, providing practical examples and critical insights. It examines how CBH models balance cultural preservation, economic empowerment, and environmental sustainability, addressing key challenges faced by host communities. Using case studies, the chapter highlights the importance of local participation, supportive government policies, and collaboration with external stakeholders in ensuring CBH success. Key themes include integrating cultural authenticity, eco-friendly practices, and community-orientedness. Uneven quality standards, restricted capacity-building, and the necessity for management and marketing technology are also discussed in the chapter. By analyzing these models, the chapter offers actionable recommendations to foster sustainable homestay tourism that benefits travelers and local communities. Policymakers, researchers, and practitioners can learn from the findings on the CBH sustainable tourism in ASEAN.

Keywords: Homestay, community-based homestay, community-based tourism, sustainable tourism, community empowerment, ASEAN, Southeast Asia, Thailand, Malaysia, Indonesia.

Introduction

ASEAN tourism has evolved significantly over the years, driven by the region's rich cultural heritage and diverse natural landscapes. These unique attributes have positioned Southeast Asia as a leading global tourism destination (Mustafa et al., 2020), bringing both opportunities and challenges to local communities. The shifting dynamics of global tourism continue to reshape its practices in Asia, blending traditional values with the forces of globalization (Yang & Ong, 2020). Consequently, tourism has become a powerful agent of change, influencing socio-economic development, cultural preservation, and community identity across the region (Dolezal & Trupp, 2015). At the same time, many criticize traditional mass tourism approaches for their limited local advantages and their potential detrimental effects on host communities

(Garau-Vadell et al., 2018), necessitating the use of sustainable, community-driven development methods. Community-based tourism (CBT) is a sustainable alternative that aims to integrate community priorities in tourism development (Dangi & Jamal, 2016). CBT prioritizes community well-being and environmental and sustainability goals, encouraging local engagement in tourism activities (Dangi & Jamal, 2016; Novelli et al., 2017). Importantly, CBT gives local communities power by getting residents involved, encouraging collaboration and partnerships between CBT actors, and building up community skills so that decisions are truly made and owned by the community (Dolezal & Novelli, 2022). This is in line with the UN's Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), especially SDG1 on ending poverty, SDG11 on making cities and communities more sustainable, and SDG17 on partnerships. In other words, CBT is an alternative tourist development model that involves communities in brainstorming, planning, execution, management, monitoring, evaluation, and benefit sharing (Schott & Nhem, 2018). This alternative tourism approach demonstrates a growing awareness of tourism's potential to promote sustainable development and reduce poverty, particularly when local communities oversee tourism development (Nguyen et al., 2024).

The ASEAN Tourism Marketing Strategy recognises the importance of the CBT projects (ASEAN Tourism Marketing Strategy, 2020). The CBT products come in a variety of forms, such as outdoor activities like camping and trekking, as well as indoor activities like cooking local food and participating in other traditional practices; however, homestays are the key to authentic experiences, allowing tourists to immerse themselves in local culture and lifestyles (Pasanchay & Schott, 2021). According to Lynch (2005), homestays refer to accommodation arrangements in which visitors pay to stay in private residences, engage with the host family residing there, and share common areas. Following the CBT principles, the three main pillars of social, economic, and environmental sustainability form the foundation of homestay models (Pakshir & Nair, 2011). According to the literature, the CBT homestays provide economic benefits not only to the individual homestay owners but also to other community members (Janjua et al., 2021; 2023). This localized economic multiplier effect encompasses revenue opportunities for community members and financial assistance from external organizations (Balasingam & Bojei, 2019; Pasanchay & Schott, 2021). Additionally, homestays enhance the community's livelihood capital by empowering women, revitalizing the local culture, and enhancing the local natural environment (Pasanchay & Schott, 2021). Thus, community-based homestay (CBH) incorporates economic growth, cultural preservation, and environmental sustainability into their development strategy (Janjua et al., 2021; Zulkefli et al., 2021).

Southeast Asian nations, particularly Thailand, Malaysia, and Indonesia, utilize CBT as an alternative to mass tourism, as it fosters local ownership, promotes sustainability, and fosters cross-cultural awareness (Dolezal & Trupp, 2015; Balasingam, 2022). Consequently, this approach has placed a greater emphasis on the development elements of tourism in this region, both in academia and in practice (Novelli et al., 2017). This chapter presents insights of ASEAN community-based tourism homestay models Thailand, Malaysia, and Indonesia. In this chapter, the CBT homestays were analyzed, taking into account principles, success measures, and the complex effects they have on local populations. It examines how homestays have evolved towards sustainable tourism development through a comprehensive evaluation of theoretical foundations and actual applications presented in the successful showcases from Thailand, Malaysia and, Indonesia. Given the increased global focus on sustainable tourism development and CBT to meet the UN Sustainable Development Goals, the analysis is pertinent. Policymakers, practitioners, and scholars must grasp CBH accomplishments, problems, and potential as ASEAN tourist industries evolve.

Principles and features of community-based homestay models

Principles and features of local empowerment, cultural preservation, environmental sustainability, and community involvement work together to produce resilient and effective homestay programs that benefit host communities and guests. The CBH model exemplifies sustainable tourism development through cooperative frameworks that prioritize equitable income opportunities, cultural preservation, and biodiversity protection, creating a holistic balance between tourism and local development.

Community empowerment through local economy

Successful CBH models focus on local empowerment and economic gain, going beyond revenue generation to generate transformative economic prospects in host communities. Balasingam and Bojei (2019) show how well-structured revenue distribution mechanisms in successful homestay programs have empowered communities by fostering local businesses. The community economic effect illustrates how tourism income enhances local demand for goods, services, and culture, surpassing direct tourism earnings. In the Southeast Asia, like Malaysia, the government views homestay programmes as tools for promoting rural development and reducing economic disparities between rural and urban areas. The Malaysian government has introduced and diversified various tourism products, including CBH accommodation, as part of its efforts to enhance rural cultural tourism. The Malaysian government has developed homestay accommodation, a form of rural tourism, to diversify cultural tourism offerings and contribute economically to rural communities. This initiative has demonstrated tangible benefits, such as creating job opportunities and improving the quality of life for local residents (Bhuiyan et al., 2011). Liu (2006) highlighted that homestay businesses not only provide tourists with affordable accommodation options but also serve as a supplementary income source for homestay operators.

In Malaysia, the homestay program is a continuous effort by the government to develop tourism in rural areas, with the goal of reducing economic disparities between rural and urban areas and empowering the village community. Malaysian CBHs are managed collectively, empowering local communities to have direct control and share in the benefits of tourism (Hussin & Kunjuraman, 2014). The development of CBT supported by the government is identified start-up factors of homestay accommodation businesses (Ahmad et al., 2014). In 1988, the Desa Murni Homestay Program, which encompasses five villages near Temerloh, Pahang, namely Desa Murni Sanggang, Desa Murni Sonsang, Desa Murni Kerdu, Desa Murni Ketam, and Desa Murni Perangap, was the first homestay program to receive support from the Ministry of Culture and Arts of Malaysia (previously known as MOCAT; now as the Ministry of Tourism, Cultures, and Arts, or MOTAC). These local village communities collaborated to establish the homestay program, and its success has significantly boosted the local economy through financial benefits, with the aim of encouraging rural communities to participate in the tourism sector (Kalsom 2002; 2007). Subsequently, the expansion of homestay experience programs in Sabah continues. Many local communities have established their ecotourism cooperatives. For example, the Koperasi Pelancongan Mukim Batu Puteh Kinabatangan, also known locally as KOPEL Bhd., supports over 340 cooperative members from villages like Kg. Batu Puteh, Kg. Mengaris, Kg. Perpaduan, and Kg. Sentosa Jaya. The Batu Puteh community's KOPEL Bhd offers a variety of services, including homestay lodgings, rainforest ecocamps, and guided ecotourism packages. These offerings, which include river cruises, wildlife observation, and habitat restoration initiatives, contribute significantly to the income of the CBH programs (Kopelkinabatangan.com, 2024; Tungonglakeecocamp, 2024). The ASEAN

Tourism Standard Awards recognized Sabah's homestays for their excellent hospitality and cultural experiences. For example, the Miso Walai Homestay Kinabatangan, a pioneer homestay in Sabah now under KOPEL management, received an award for its ecotourism focus and promotion of the local Orang Sungai Culture in Kinabatangan. Diverse offerings such as homestay lodgings, rainforest ecocamps, and guided ecotourism packages, including river cruises, wildlife observation, and habitat restoration initiatives, contribute to the income of the CBH programs (Kopelkinabatangan.com, 2024; Tungonglakeecocamp, 2024). These economic benefits have led to an increase in the number of homestay programs across Malaysia. In 2022, there were 223 clusters, involving 372 villages and 4313 host families licensed. By 2024, this number had further increased to 502 villages and 3323 operators, generating MYR 34.57 million in revenue (MOTAC, 2024).

Similarly, the CBH models have also been a significant avenue in enhancing economic distribution in Thailand. Phunnarong (2021) further shows CBHs provide a significant source of income for local families. For instance, certified homestays can accommodate thousands of tourists, generating millions of baht in local income annually. In 2017-2018, 123 homestays reported accommodating over 215,000 Thai tourists and nearly 52,000 foreign tourists, contributing substantial revenue to their communities for over 31 million baht annually. The establishment of homestays, thus, creates various job opportunities within the community, ranging from hospitality services to guiding tours and selling local crafts. Therefore, homestay programs in ASEAN countries like Malaysia and Thailand have employed equitable profit-sharing, local job creation, and capacity-building that directly contribute to the socio-economic development of their community.

This diversification helps reduce poverty and improve living standards.

Cultural preservation and exchanges

The second premise, cultural preservation, ensures tourism authenticity. Quality cultural experiences that successful homestay programs pass on cultural traditions from generation to generation are key to program sustainability (Thai Tourism Authority, 2024). Cultural preservation improves tourist experiences, and tourism revenue supports cultural practices. Local communities are entrusted with the authority to design, develop, and oversee tourism initiatives that align harmoniously with their cultural practices and way of life on sustainable tourism practices, especially sociocultural sustainability (Janjua et al., 2021).

Providing quality cultural experiences is crucial the long-run success of Indonesian homestays especially in the Ubud Tourism Area which can be traced back to the early 1930s, coinciding with the arrival of foreign artists who stayed at the Ubud Palace (Putri et al., 2021). The hospitality and warmth extended to these guests during their stay at Puri Agung Ubud left a lasting impression, leading many foreign tourists to seek similar experiences. Ubud Palace's example inspired locals in Indonesian communities like Ubud Village to convert their homes into homestay lodgings for tourists, allowing them to benefit economically while preserving their authentic culture. The pursuit of harmony, recognized as a crucial component in attaining happiness, is actively embraced by homestay proprietors in the Ubud Tourism Area through the implementation of the Tri Hita Karana philosophy in their homestay businesses management (Solihin & Sumawidari, 2021). This philosophy is adapted into three fundamental elements: parahyangan (God), palemahan (nature), and pawongan (fellow human) (Satya & Lase, 2018; Solihin & Sumawidari, 2021). The homeowner asks tourists experience a prayer ceremony during their stay, this is an example of the implementation of parahyangan (God).

The collaboration between the homestay owner with the local people to be hired as employees. This is the case of pawongan (fellow human). Lastly, maintaining a harmonious relation with environment by protect the cleanliness and beauty of the local environment (Putri et al., 2021).

Likewise, homestays have gained popularity in Malaysia as a means of promoting cultural exchange and providing economic opportunities for local communities (Amin & Ibrahim, 2015). Malaysian homestay programs usually provide the visitors to experience authentic local lifestyles, including traditional food, crafts, and customs, promoting cultural understanding and preservation (Ismail et al., 2016). The homestay in Malaysia highlights its rich cultural stories through diverse activities that go beyond accommodations. Tourists can enjoy cultural events and interact directly with the homestay owner's family and residents (Hairal & Hussin, 2021). For example, the KOPEL's tourism initiative is a Malaysian homestay program that exemplifies sustainable cultural preservation by integrating income generation with community empowerment. KOPEL's fund centralizes revenues from diverse activities such as boat services, cultural performances, catering, guiding, and homestays, ensuring equitable distribution and reinvestment into the community. Members contribute by purchasing a minimum share unit of RM100, fostering a sense of ownership and collective responsibility. Guided by the philosophy "Plan the Work and Work the Plan," MESCOT/KOPEL leaders have maintained a disciplined and strategic approach since the inception of their CBH projects. These activities, supported by local joint ventures offering catering, handicrafts, and rentals, empower the community and celebrate their heritage. Furthermore, to ensure continuity and resilience, they developed comprehensive training manuals, enabling the system to function effectively despite personnel changes. This structured approach underscores the importance of cultural preservation as a cornerstone of sustainable tourism, ensuring the community benefits economically while safeguarding its heritage (Hamzah & Mohamad, 2012). This approach also provides visitors with a deeper connection to Malaysia (Mohd Nor, 2024).

Similar to Indonesian and Malaysian homestays, Thai homestay settings also allow visitors to immerse themselves in local cultures and traditions. Homestays provide visitors with opportunities to engage deeply with local cultures. The host families not only are required to provide basic services to guests, including well-maintained accommodations and reasonable foreign language skills, but they also offer authentic cultural experiences such as local cuisine, community lifestyles, participate in cultural activities, and learn traditional skills, which contribute to increased visitor appeal (Phunnarong, 2021). Anantamongkolkul et al. (2019) suggest that homestays, particularly for senior long-stay tourists who seek to fully immerse themselves in local culture, can foster cultural exchanges by encouraging hosts to share their traditions, cuisine, and lifestyles with guests. This also includes participating in some of the host family's daily activities, fostering meaningful interactions and exchanges (Boonratana, 2010). Tourists engage in activities such as cooking traditional meals or participating in local festivals, which fosters mutual understanding and respect. Additionally, Yodsurang et al. (2020) discuss the classification of community identity into three aspects: natural, cultural, and built heritage. In their recent study, Khok Salung, in the Lopburi province of Thailand, Yodsurang et al. (2024) emphasize that preserving the village's cultural identity is one of the initiative's most significant outcomes. The community has effectively preserved and advanced their cultural customs, guaranteeing their transmission to future generations and dissemination to guests.

In summary, CBH activities in these Southeast Asian countries, like Indonesia, Malaysia, and Thailand, aim to deepen understanding of cultural heritage and local identity by fostering interactions and cultural exchanges between hosts and guests. This not only enriches the tourist

experience but also fosters a sense of pride among locals regarding their culture. Sociocultural sustainability enhances the satisfaction of homestay tourists, which in turn can increase their intention to return (Jasrotia et al., 2024). Consequently, homestay owners should prioritize sustainable practices, especially cultural and traditional ones, to effectively attract and retain visitors.

Environmental sustainability

The CBT models differ from typical tourism not only in enhancing local economies and cultural reservation but also in fostering environmental awareness and conservation efforts among residents. locally cultural experiences but also in environmental sustainability. Kunjuraman and Hussin (2017) discovered that community-led environmental monitoring systems, sustainable resource management programs, and environmental education for hosts and guests can effectively utilize homestay programs for successful ecotourism development. Their research provides a solid framework to emphasize the need for stakeholder collaboration and partnership to adapt environmental practices to local ecological situations while retaining regional norms.

For example, in Malaysia, the CBH members often engage in eco-friendly practices, such as mangrove planting and traditional crafts, which promote sustainability in their communities (Bhuiyan, 2019; Mohd Salleh et al., 2014). The involvement of local residents in homestay operations fosters a sense of ownership and responsibility towards their environment (Norziaton et al., 2024). Participants in the community tourism program actively engage in activities such as mangrove forest planting, which directly contributes to environmental conservation efforts (Mohd Nor, 2024). This model serves as a benchmark for integrating tourism with socio-economic growth and environmental stewardship, reinforcing commitment to sustainable and inclusive tourism especially in Malaysia (Nainggolan et al., 2020; Pyke et al., 2018).

Similarly, homestays in Thailand encourage local communities to adopt sustainable practices by responsibly utilizing their natural resources. For example, successful homestay models, like Baan Rim Klong, demonstrate self-reliance and sustainable economic practices that prioritize environmental preservation (Kampetch & Jitpakdee, 2019). The community at Baan Rim Klong Homestay focuses on preserving their environment while providing tourism services, which helps maintain ecological balance. In addition, homestays often collaborate with government and non-governmental organizations to improve infrastructure and promote sustainable tourism. This support can lead to better environmental management practices within the community (Kontogeorgopoulos et al., 2014). Furthermore, homestays often serve as platforms for educating both tourists and local residents about environmental issues. This exchange of knowledge can raise awareness about the importance of sustainability and encourage more responsible behaviors among community members (Luekveerawattana, 2024).

Community involvement and capacity-building and development

Community involvement positively affects homestay programs' success and sustainability (Kim et al., 2024). Community involvement can be achieved through inclusive decision-making processes, clear ways for everyone to benefit, shared accountability for program management, regular community meetings and feedback systems, and integration with community government structures (Kim et al., 2024). These concepts work together to form a system that supports each other, especially in Thailand and Malaysia. The CBHs in Thailand

significantly influence community involvement. This is evident in the case of Baan Rim Klong Homestay, as Kampetch & Jitpakdee (2019) discovered that their homestay program enhances community involvement. In their study, the Baan Rim Klong Homestay organizes regular meetings allowing community members to discuss budgets, income, and expenses, ensuring transparency and shared responsibility in tourism management. This participation fosters a sense of ownership and pride in their community. Homestays also create networks among community members and external stakeholders, such as government agencies. This support system enhances community involvement by providing resources and assistance for tourism development and community projects (Kontogeorgopoulos et al., 2014).

Furthermore, Thai homestays contribute to the development of various skills among local hosts and community members. They often require local members to develop new skills by facilitating training and skill development, such as hospitality management, cooking, and language skills. For example, many homestays offer traditional meals to guests, which encourages hosts to refine their cooking skills. This includes learning new recipes, food presentation, and understanding dietary preferences, which can enhance the overall guest experience. This training not only empowers individuals but also strengthens the community's capacity and community bonds to provide quality services to tourists, fostering a more involved and skilled local workforce (Luekveerawattana, 2024). By sharing their traditions and lifestyles, local residents become more involved in promoting their culture, leading to greater community cohesion (Kampetch & Jitpakdee, 2019). In this regard, hosts must learn how to effectively manage guest experiences, which includes welcoming guests, providing information about local attractions, and ensuring a comfortable stay. This skill is crucial for creating a positive impression and encouraging repeat visits.

Additionally, leadership is a fundamental component of successful CBHs in Thailand. Effective leadership is crucial to the success of these initiatives, as it guides communities in managing resources, engaging with tourists, and fostering a collaborative environment. By fostering local empowerment, promoting sustainability, and facilitating participatory decision-making, effective leaders help communities navigate the complexities of tourism development while preserving their cultural heritage and enhancing their economic viability. As these initiatives continue to evolve, strong leadership will be essential in adapting to changing circumstances and ensuring long-term success in CBT. Kampetch and Jitpakdee (2019) emphasize the critical role of leadership in the management of homestays. The presence of a credible leader fosters confidence and encourages higher engagement among community members in organizational improvements and tourism initiatives (Kampetch & Jitpakdee, 2019; Kontogeorgopoulos et al., 2014). The leader's sincere intention and perseverance are fundamental to overcoming challenges in the initiation of village tourism development. This empowerment also leads to increased participation and a stronger sense of community identity among the residents. This dedication not only improves the quality of life for the community but also fosters a positive environment for tourism (Kontogeorgopoulos et al., 2014).

Types of community-based homestay models

Successful homestay programs create a sustainable tourism ecosystem where economic benefits support cultural preservation, environmental initiatives strengthen community bonds, and cultural activities generate economic opportunities, creating a self-reinforcing cycle of sustainable development (Thai Tourism Authority, 2024). The literature shows that communities that balance all four principles are more resilient to external threats and develop more fairly (Janjua et al., 2021). The ASEAN Homestay Standard has evolved to accommodate

distinct local conditions while retaining the essential concepts of community empowerment and sustainable development in Southeast Asian countries (Wahyuni & Faisal, 2019). Nonetheless, ASEAN communities are deploying and adapting a wide range of CBH models.

In Indonesia, the term "Pondok Wisata" is commonly referred to as "homestay" in Western contexts (Widawati, 2022). This concept can be broadly understood as a familial living arrangement, akin to typical residential households. The Minister of Culture and Tourism's Regulation, Number: PM.86/HK.501/MKP/2010, defines tourist lodges as residential properties primarily occupied by the owner, with portions available for rental. This arrangement allows tourists to engage with the daily lives of the homeowners. Unlike traditional accommodation establishments like hotels, homestays do not require the proprietor to live on the premises. The owner operates the tourist lodge as a sole proprietorship. A distinct business license is generally unnecessary in Indonesia. However, the community managing the homestays must inform the local government or tourism office about their operation. In subsequent operations of homestays, some individuals may choose to erect new structures separate from the current residential buildings. Both family members and tourists share traditional homes, utilizing the available living spaces in the homestays. Typically, the host, who serves as the family head, resides with the guests. This arrangement fosters interaction between the tourists and the family, fostering a perception of the host as a family member, thereby enhancing the overall experience for those staying overnight. This characteristic contributes to the unique nature of homestays, setting them apart from other accommodation options and providing a distinctive appeal to travelers. Furthermore, the service is consistently managed by the same owner, enhancing the personal touch and authenticity of the guest experience.

Likewise, Kontogeorgopoulos et al. (2015) suggest that family-run lodges are traditional homestays in village settings in Thailand, where host-guest interactions preserve real cultural experiences, form the core of CBT. This effective traditional model retains community-regulated pricing and quality while preserving cultural authenticity. This model works well in societies with strong cultural traditions and social systems. Recent research by Kampetch et al. (2023) discovers a successful CBH model, the Community Enterprise Baanrimklong Homestay, situated on the southern side of Bangkok, Thailand's capital city, which has been in operation since 2004. The community enterprise officially began operations by uniting several households in the area to collaboratively engage in its activities. From its inception, the enterprise underwent a gradual evolution, guided by the principles of a sufficiency economy. In essence, it began modestly and expanded over time. Unlike capitalist or community-budget models, the enterprise operates as a partnership, ensuring that stakeholders have an equitable share in the business. This structure fosters shared understanding, collaborative management, and equitable distribution of responsibilities among all members. In addition, robust social capital within the community serves as a strong foundation for fostering entrepreneurial activities at the local level (Thananusak & Suriyankietkaew, 2023).

On the contrary, Zulkefli et al. (2024) show how inter-village cooperation and resource sharing generate regional tourism corridors in Malaysia. On this foundation, the cooperative network concept has become an effective way to spread homestay tourism outside villages. They found that networked communities benefit from standardized service quality and common marketing platforms, which improve economic distribution across villages. This collaborative strategy works well in areas where communities lack the resources or attractions to maintain tourism. Importantly, homestay tourism has potentially led to social entrepreneurship. Mohamad and Nasir (2019) show that a successful combination of traditional community values with the

entrepreneurial competencies that comprise opportunity, networking, commitment, management, learning, and motivation produces sustainable economic, social, and environmental prospects in Malaysian homestay businesses.

Importantly, Janjua et al. (2023) recently identified a hybrid adaptive model that blends innovative ICT usage for sustainable homestay tourism. This adaptable architecture lets towns change their tourism offers to market situations while maintaining strong community control. Their research suggests that ICT competency and marketing practices, with the support of local authorities, are becoming increasingly crucial as tourism communities confront evolving problems and opportunities.

Community-based homestay success stories

Mae Kampong Village, Chiang Mai, Thailand

Mae Kampong Village in Thailand showcases the successful implementation of CBT, especially CBH models, as a means of local community development that can achieve sustainable development goal. The Mae Kampong village is located in a tiny mountain community in the Huai Kaeo subdistrict of the Mae On District, which is fifty kilometers from the city of Chiang Mai. The village's name is derived from a small yellow flower called kampong and the river that flows through it. According to Thai Tourism Authority (2019), there are around 500 people (about 120 families) living in the village. The village's original residents came from the neighboring district of Doi Saket in the past to look for a tea cultivation place. The natural and cultural resources of Mae Kampong are extremely abundant. Regarding natural resources, the Mae Kampong forest's richness includes a variety of untamed animals, trees, and plants, including wild orchids. Adding to that, there is a waterfall in the village that comes from a natural stream. The distinctive Northern Thai culture and ways of life are also present in Mae Kampong. Local people have their own unique rituals and speak the Northern Thai dialect. The Mae Kampong is the most well-known manufacture of fermented tea among the others.

Since CBT was introduced over 20 years ago, Mae Kampong village has become a well-liked tourist destination with a variety of homestay options, charming coffee shops, and nearby attractions including tea and coffee plantations, waterfalls, and picturesque views. Mae Kampong Village's CBH models promote sustainable development and cultural preservation. With its distinctive traditional wooden architecture seamlessly integrated into the natural environment, this unique aesthetic has prompted many Mae Kampong residents to adapt their homes into homestays, offering visitors not only accommodation but also the opportunity to engage deeply with rural life through shared meals and participatory activities, such as visiting tea and coffee plantations or learning to prepare traditional Northern Thai cuisine such as *miang*, a fermented tea leaf that remains a cultural and culinary staple. Innovative repurposing of this resource has led to the use of tea leaves as stuffing for pillows marketed as health-enhancing products, believed to alleviate insomnia and promote longevity. Other locally crafted products, such as natural honey, ornamental plants, and woven basketwork, further reflect the community's integration of traditional knowledge and creative enterprise. Furthermore, this CBH tourism has created more tourism opportunities for villagers, with roles emerging in areas such as ecotour guiding, massage therapy, artisanal crafts, and café management. Even short-term visitors, often traveling from nearby Chiang Mai, contribute significantly to the local economy through souvenir purchases and patronage of local businesses.

Mae Kampong village successfully operates a CBT model by effectively managing its natural and cultural resources, drawing significant tourist interest. The case of Mae Kampong highlights the symbiotic relationship between sustainable tourism and community empowerment, illustrating how localized strategies can preserve cultural heritage while fostering economic resilience. The CBT initiative in Mae Kampong primarily revolves around a homestay program, where visitors stay overnight with local families. This arrangement allows tourists to experience the local culture firsthand, fostering a deeper understanding and appreciation of the community's traditions and lifestyle. By hosting tourists, local families engage in cultural exchange, sharing their customs, food, and daily practices (Kontogeorgopoulos et al., 2014). This interaction not only enriches the visitors' experience but also reinforces the host families' cultural identity and pride in their heritage. The involvement of host families in CBT empowers them to take ownership of their cultural heritage. As they share their way of life with visitors, they become active participants in preserving their culture, ensuring that it remains vibrant and relevant for future generations. A well-managed CBT significantly contributes to the success of Mae Kampong village (Jitpakdee et al., 2016). This local management system established by the village's tourism committee fosters transparency and accountability, facilitating shared decision-making among community members. For instance, Mae Kampong village members were required to annually pay a membership fee, which they collected as a village fund to support and facilitate village affairs. Income generated from CBT activities is distributed fairly among residents, with 30% allocated to a community fund and 70% distributed based on individual contributions to tourism services. The community's rules and agreements on environmental conservation limit the use of forest resources to a minimum. This strong community governance structures that ensure everyone has a fair chance to participate and benefit, the incorporation of traditional cultural practices into the tourism experience, the implementation of environmental protection measures that align with local values, and effective methods to enhance community well-being through tourism revenue (Pasanchay & Schott, 2021). Therefore, successful CBH initiatives in Mae Kampong are underpinned by active participation from local members, ensuring that tourism activities reflect the community's identity and heritage (Jitpakdee et al., 2016; Pasanchay & Schott, 2021).

Kampung Batu Puteh homestay, Kinabatangan, Sabah, Malaysia

The Kg Batu Puteh homestay is located in the village of Batu Puteh, Lower Kinabatangan, Sabah, Malaysia. Malaysia recognizes the Kg Batu Puteh homestay as a pioneering community-based ecotourism initiative. Managed by KOPEL Berhad, the community ecotourism co-op of the Batu Puteh community, since the year 2000, this homestay community exemplifies the transformative potential of tourism to achieve sustainable development goals through the CBH model (Razzaq, et al., 2017). The Batu Puteh community comprises local rural inhabitants, fishermen, and the farmers. The village-based community cooperative includes various ecotourism enterprises and conservation endeavors, comprising over 350 members and collaborative shareholders.

Widely recognized as a model for CBT, Malaysia's homestay program showcases a blend of cultural immersion and sustainable tourism practices. The fundamental principles of the CBH model in Malaysia integrate community ownership, environmental conservation, cultural preservation, and economic resilience. The Kg Batu Puteh homestay community reflects these principles through their integration, as homestay program here is not only considered as lodging services (Muslim et al., 2017), also included of ecotourism activities such as jungle

trekking or mangrove conservation centrally organized by the Miso Walai Homestay Program (Hussin & Kunjuran, 2014). Villagers organize themselves under a cooperative or association to manage the homestay program. By seamlessly integrating cultural immersion, wildlife conservation, and community empowerment, this homestay has become a model for responsible tourism in Malaysia (Norziation et al., 2024; Kulshreshtha & Kulshreshtha, 2019; Miraz et al., 2015).

Local residents lead decision-making processes through cooperative frameworks, ensuring equitable benefits and fostering pride in their environmental conservation and cultural heritage. Importantly, the homestay program aligns with conservation initiatives—such as forest restoration and biodiversity protection—attracts eco-conscious travelers, whose involvement directly supports environmental projects. Nestled along the Kinabatangan River, guests staying at the Kg Batu Puteh homestays can embark on wildlife safaris to witness iconic species like orangutans, proboscis monkeys, and pygmy elephants while also participating in authentic cultural experiences. Furthermore, the homestay's cultural immersion activities, like those at the Miso Walai Homestay, allow visitors to experience the traditional Orang Sungai lifestyle, preserving and celebrating indigenous practices. These diversified income streams from wildlife tours, eco-camps, and cultural performances ensure economic sustainability and reduce dependency on external funding (Hamzah, 2020).

The success of the Kg Batu Puteh homestays is recognized through their achievement of the ASEAN CBT standards. In 2021, the Batu Puteh community was named as the best tourism village in Malaysia by the UN tourism (UN tourism, 2021). The Kg Batu Puteh homestay model is a replicable blueprint for rural tourism across Malaysia, balancing socio-economic development with environmental stewardship. Particularly, the KOPEL's commitment to environmental conservation is evident through initiatives such as tree planting and habitat restoration (Hosen et al., 2023). This remarkable initiative has garnered international acclaim for its successful balance of ecological preservation, cultural heritage, and community well-being, setting a new standard for rural ecotourism. The Kg Batu Puteh community's success demonstrates the potential of CBHs to balance conservation priorities with socio-economic development, serving as a benchmark for sustainable tourism models globally.

Balinese Homestays in Ubud, Bali, Indonesia

Following the principle of CBT, homestays established by the people of Ubud is a means of cultural preservation through the conservation of Traditional Balinese values that are deemed capable of reducing pollution in the environment. Some elements of traditional Balinese architecture, for instance, are literally built out of local materials so they are also designed to blend with the local ecology. The agro-sequence of the homestay was found to blend with the rural setting of Ubud and even served as a magnet for tourists into Bali, both domestically and internationally. A significant number of those who patronize the facility prefer the resort and diversions that Ubud offers, including the millennials who are always keep updated with their life-style.

As a tourist destination, Bali's traditional homestay is a form of accommodation that can host multiple guests. The majority of homestay users are travelers who visit in groups, often comprising five or more individuals. In Bali, there are homestays available at reasonable prices for family vacations. These types of accommodations also offer inexpensive rooms with fairly comprehensive amenities. The cost of these inns is lower than more expensive options, and the booking process can now be completed through online reservations. Balinese Traditional

Homestays are built based on traditional Balinese architecture and principles of local wisdom, particularly the Tri Hita Karana philosophy, which emphasizes harmony with God, fellow humans, and the environment (Solihin & Sumawidari, 2021). These homestays are popular among millennial tourists due to their cultural authenticity, affordability, and the unique experience they offer, including participation in local activities and ceremonies. The homestays contribute to sustainable tourism by preserving cultural values, minimizing environmental impact, and supporting the local community through the CBT program. The highlights of tourism that visitors can enjoy in Ubud are art, culture, religion, socialization, activities in local traditional markets, and the life cycle of rice including its processing. The implementation of the CBT concept is perceived to enhance tourism's contribution to the community, creating more chances for local residents as tourist agents and primary facilitators of social empowerment and regional tourism advancement.

Balinese Traditional Homestay in Ubud is more than just a tourist accommodation that rents out rooms to satisfy visitors. It also provides guests with the opportunity to participate in the activities of the homestay owners. Guests at the Balinese Traditional Homestay receive unique services in the form of sharing their own stories and personal experiences. These special services include sharing stories and guiding guests to add new experiences. According to Kotler, the experience that is accompanied by the continuous sharing of stories and services is referred to as a high contact service (Kotler & Armstrong, 2010). Millennial travelers require not only lodging accommodations, but also additional tourism services beyond the homestay itself. This includes the provision of motorized transportation and the facilitation of their activities while staying at the Balinese Traditional Homestay in Ubud. It is fitting that the preferences of millennial tourists have ignited new business opportunities in the tourism industry, impacting the creation of novel markets, exchange patterns, approaches, and tourism product models (Meyerson & Kline, 2008).

Balinese Traditional Homestays in Ubud aim to offer additional services to their guests. These supplementary offerings are crucial in order to satisfy and cultivate the trust of tourists as consumers (Boselie & Van Der Wiele, 2002). The extra services provided include breakfast featuring traditional Balinese cuisine, as well as accompanying tours to nearby attractions such as rice fields, traditional markets, temples, Balinese art galleries, cultural festivals, and traditional weddings (Pradana & Arcana, 2020).

Challenges of community-based homestays

The CBHs have emerged as a significant component of the tourism landscape in the ASEAN region, particularly in Thailand, Malaysia, and Indonesia. Homestays have gained popularity as a means of providing economic opportunities for local communities, promoting cultural exchanges and local identity, and protecting and preserving the environment. The CBH model has gained significant traction as a means of promoting sustainable tourism and supporting local economic development in ASEAN countries (Dolezal & Trupp, 2015; Ismail et al., 2016; Novelli et al., 2017). However, despite their positive impacts, the homestay industry faces several challenges that hinder its growth and sustainability. Several factors, including seasonal tourism, often compromise the economic viability of homestays, leading to fluctuations in tourist arrivals and inconsistent income for operators (Yusof et al., 2016). The decline of tourist arrivals limits the additional income that homestay operators were expecting to generate for their families (Ismail et al., 2016). The seasonality of tourist arrivals can create cash flow problems, as homestay operators may struggle to maintain a consistent level of revenue throughout the year. Furthermore, many homestay operators depend on external vendors for

activities or supplies, resulting in revenue leakage that undermines the economic benefits intended for the local community (Pusiran & Xiao, 2013; Agyeiwaah et al., 2014). This challenge is compounded by other limitations that have become barriers for fishermen and their families to participate in the homestay program, such as being too busy with their traditional jobs, having less cross-cultural understanding, lacking financial capital, and facing communication and language barriers with visitors (Husin et al., 2015).

Many obstacles exist in implementing CBHs effectively. A new study by Ditta-Apichai et al. (2024) points out some of the problems with CBT programs. These include the wrong belief that communities naturally have the skills and resources to develop tourism, unequal power structures among stakeholders, and little local control over tourism assets. Homestay operators often overly rely on government funding and lack financial management skills, resulting in inadequate income generation (Mohd Nor, 2024). Without sufficient financial resources, homestay operators may find it challenging to sustain or improve their offerings, as they strive to upgrade their facilities and expand their operations.

Social and cultural dynamics within communities can also pose challenges, as the commercialization of cultural traditions may lead to the erosion of cultural values, diluting their authenticity and resulting in "staged" experiences for tourists that do not reflect the true cultural heritage of the community (Mura, 2015). This raises concerns about preserving the authenticity of traditional homestays (Norziaton et al., 2024). Conflicts among community members can arise over resource allocation, roles, and revenue sharing, particularly in cooperative setups where multiple families are involved in the homestay business (Zamzuki et al., 2023). Additionally, some community members may resist adopting modern practices necessary to enhance the homestay experience, which can hinder the overall development of the sector (Ho et al. 2017).

The environmental impact of homestays is another critical area of concern, as increased tourist activity can strain local resources, lead to waste management issues, and damage natural attractions that are essential to the homestay experience (Pérez Albert et al., 2020). Moreover, the need to expand facilities to meet tourist demand can result in overdevelopment (Voon et al., 2022), further exacerbating environmental challenges. Therefore, the provision of tourist accommodation facilities may negatively impact the physical surroundings, leading to litter, pollution, and ecological hazards (Pradana, 2018), particularly in local communities that lack the necessary knowledge and technology for waste management.

Additionally, digital technologies present opportunities as effective marketing tools and communication channels to attract tourists to the ASEAN CBT (Ditta-Apichai et al., 2020; Janjua et al., 2023). To attract guests, homestay operators often engage in marketing activities, such as creating online listings, managing social media, and promoting local attractions. This experience helps them develop skills in marketing and business promotion. However, local homestays often encounter challenges in their practices due to a lack of knowledge and skills in digital market technologies (Ditta-Apichai et al., 2024; Mohd Nor, 2024).

Finally, Novelli et al. (2017) highlight the need for standardised certification systems to ensure quality standards among ASEAN member states. The ASEAN CBT Standard (Kim et al., 2024) addresses these issues by outlining sustainable development, community ownership, and environmental conservation. Though member nations approach standardization differently due to their distinctive features that incorporate cultural values, religions, and social standings in providing services (Adli & Chin, 2021), there is still uniformity and quality across the region.

Conclusion and recommendations

Community-based homestay (CBH) models have significant potential to contribute to sustainable tourism across ASEAN. These models offer unique opportunities to empower local communities, preserve cultural traditions, and protect the environment. With increasing global interest in sustainable and meaningful travel, ASEAN is well-positioned to showcase its CBH initiatives. However, realizing this potential requires addressing key challenges. The lack of region-wide quality standards makes it difficult to maintain consistency and reliability across ASEAN member states. Additionally, limited digital connectivity and low digital literacy restrict many CBH programs from gaining visibility on a global scale. Local operators also face challenges in effectively managing their businesses, embracing innovation, and ensuring long-term sustainability.

To overcome these obstacles and support the success of CBH initiatives, the following strategies are recommended:

1. **Create shared CBH standards:** Developing clear, region-wide grounded standards is essential to ensure quality, consistency, and reliability for travelers. These standards should address service quality, cultural authenticity, eco-friendly practices, and active community involvement.
2. **Build local capacity:** Investing in training programs can help local operators develop essential skills in entrepreneurship, financial management, and innovation. Collaborations with educational institutions and industry experts can provide practical knowledge and tools necessary for homestay operators to thrive.
3. **Keep communities at the heart of CBH initiatives:** Community participation is key to the success of CBH programs. Activities that highlight and preserve local cultural heritage should be central to these initiatives, enhancing their appeal to travelers and ensuring that the benefits stay within the community.
4. **Embrace sustainable practices:** Encouraging environmentally friendly practices—such as waste management, energy efficiency, and eco-friendly accommodations—will improve the long-term sustainability of CBH tourism.
5. **Promote collaboration and shared Knowledge:** Collaboration among policymakers, industry leaders, and local communities is vital for advancing CBH initiatives. Platforms that facilitate the sharing of best practices, success stories, and innovative models can inspire and guide homestay operators across the region.
6. **Improve digital infrastructure and skills:** Enhancing digital infrastructure in rural and underserved areas is critical. Local operators need support in building their digital skills to effectively use online platforms for promotion, guest engagement, and operational management.

By implementing these strategies, CBH tourism can become a leading example of inclusive, responsible, and sustainable tourism in ASEAN. It has the potential to boost local economies, facilitate meaningful cultural exchanges, and contribute to environmental conservation. Through coordinated effort and a clear focus on overcoming current challenges, ASEAN can position its CBH initiatives as a global success story, demonstrating how tourism can make a real difference for both people and the planet.

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