The Sharing Economy: Can Registered Homestay Operators Survive the Challenges Ahead?

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Can registered homestay operators survive in a sharing economy or will it sink? The peer-to-peer marketplace, collectively known as the sharing economy, for example Airbnb has emerged as an alternative supplier of the conventional accommodation business models overhauling the traditional business concept. This paper explores the disruptive impacts of the sharing economy on MOTAC'S traditional homestay business concept and whether the registered homestay operators in Selangor, Malaysia can survive the challenges ahead. The question of how disruptive a sharing economy is and the effect on MOTAC's homestay business is a big concern. This study is exploratory in nature, using the snowballing technique of collecting data. A qualitative approach was applied, and the primary data was gathered through field observations and in-depth interviews with selected stakeholders. The results of this study reveal that registered homestay operators suffer from various challenges. Not all registered homestay operators receive sufficient homestay income after a long involvement in MOTAC homestay business which lead more registered homestay operators to withdraw from registration. This study contributes to an in-depth understanding of the factors that impede registered homestay operator's success in a sharing economy. Therefore, this study not only recommends the importance of collaboration and partnership among tourism stakeholders that enable registered homestay operators to survive the challenges ahead towards sharing economy but also sheds new light on the real effects of the sharing economy and provides important policy implications for policymakers.

Key words: *Sharing Economy, Homestay Operators, Tourism Supply, Airbnb, Disruptive Impacts.*

Introduction

Can registered homestay operators survive in a sharing economy or will it sink? We have all seen the rise of the sharing economy, and many of us have made use of it to earn or save extra money. Home-sharing owners use online platforms to both advertise and provide booking channels to tourists. One of the well-known platforms is Airbnb. Airbnb is a trusted web-based business that connects people to a variety of accommodation and travel experiences at any price point, in more than 65,000 cities and 191 countries. However as we move towards a skill-and-asset-swapping culture, there are challenges ahead. In Malaysia, those who advertised their homes or budget hotels on short-term rent via Airbnb are classified as unregistered homestay operators if they did not register their homestay business with Ministry of Tourism, Arts and Culture, Malaysia (MOTAC). These unregistered homestay operators operate their homestay business without following the guidelines and procedures stipulated by MOTAC. According to MOTAC (2012), unregistered homestay practitioners used the brand of 'homestay', to project a false image of a true Malaysian homestay experience to tourists. Many complaints had been lodged against unregistered homestay serviced apartment providers as tourists have complained of having been cheated in Homestay Programmes. Unregistered homestay operators only provide normal accommodation without giving the tourists an opportunity to experience other culture and "Kampong" lifestyle with host families.

Many studies about the homestay programme in Malaysia focused on measuring the satisfaction level of tourists with regards to the services provided by homestay operators and sustainable rural tourism development from the perspective of the local community (Jabil et al., 2011). The study is rarely conducted on the homestay supply-side perspective to determine whether registered homestay operators can survive the challenges ahead which guided tourism authorities and relevant government agencies in developing better policies (Nor, S. M., et al., 2012). Technological developments and the advance of digitization are the driving force behind the emergence and rapid growth of a sharing economy. The peer-to-peer marketplace, collectively known as the sharing economy, such as Airbnb, has emerged as an alternative supplier of conventional accommodation business models overhauling the traditional concept of business versus consumer by enabling anyone to offer their underutilized apartments in return for cash. Sharing of idle assets rather than owning- "Access over ownership" has become a new tagline.

MOTAC's homestay industry in Selangor experienced a decline in the number of registered homestays from 16 homestays in 2008 to 15 homestays in 2009 due to *Homestay Setangkas* withdrawal from being registered MOTAC's homestay. Unfortunately, in the year 2015, the number of MOTAC's homestays further dropped when *Homestay Seri Kayangan* became inactive as a homestay business followed by Homestay Kampung Kundang and Homestay Sungai Tengi in 2018. The question of how disruptive sharing economy affect is on the

registered homestay business is a big concern. The rapid growth of the sharing economy is believed to disrupt and threaten the traditional business, creating fierce competition in many industries. The main objective of this study is to explore the disruptive impacts of the sharing economy of MOTAC's homestay business and whether the registered homestay operators in Selangor, Malaysia can survive the challenges ahead.

The Sharing Economy and AIRBNB

The sharing economy is an emerging economic-technological phenomenon facilitated through online platforms, creating a win-win situation for stakeholders to collaborate with a broad segment of the population and make use of under-utilized assets via monetary exchange sharing. Furthe, growing consumer awareness, creates an incredibly powerful proposition for individuals, companies, and society at large, helping people in terms of such features as savings, income potential, increased social capital, boost to community, trust building e.g. "stranger trust" as well as enhanced choice and convenience (Richardson, 2015 and Heo, 2016). Fradkin (2017) considers sharing economy as a peer-to-peer marketplace for the exchange of underutilized goods and services without necessity of devoting too much attention. Furthermore, a review from economics commentaries, places the sharing economy as a new source of beneficial competitive pressure and economic innovation that leads to an increase in productivity through (1) use of underutilized assets or "dead capital', (2) creation of new markets through disruptive innovations and incentive for further innovation among incumbent industries (Koopman et al., 2014; Jenk, 2015 and Thierer et al., 2015).

Heimans and Timms's (2014) study on understanding 'New Power' and Matzler and Kathan (2015) in adapting the sharing economy, sums up in the business and management literature of the sharing economy- emphasis is on new business models expected to create new industries, revitalize traditional - radical transparency, openness and collaboration, wisdom of crowds, do-it-yourself and which lead to sustainable economy. Albinsson et.al., (2012) claim that the concept of the "sharing economy" appeared in the early 2000s as a form of new business fuelled by the development of ICT technology and the emergence of social media (e.g., YouTube, Instagram, Facebook, WhatsApp) which have contributed to spreading the sharing of goods and services through online platforms. In the tourism and hospitality sector the rise of the sharing economy is highly visible and many companies are actively participating in the sharing economy to survive endogenous and exogenous challenges in tourism risk and uncertainty of transformed tourism business practice, significant factors which shape the severity of the tourism crisis (Heo, 2016; Ert et al., 2016; Richard and Cleveland, 2016). Furthermore, many literature and economic analyses predicted the challenges and changes of conventional business concepts significant into the foreseeable future as tourism is a dynamic and competitive industry that is exposed to rapid and challenging development, requiring the ability to adapt constantly to the customers' changing needs and desires as the customer's satisfaction, safety

and enjoyment are particularly the focus of tourism business (Oskam and Boswijk, 2016; Richard and Cleveland, 2016 and Cheng, 2016).

Meanwhile, scholars such as Fradkin (2017); Heo, (2016); Ert et al., (2016) and Richard and Cleveland (2016) revealed Airbnb online business model is the most recognizable international brand in the emerging "accommodation sharing economy" which refers to the growing number of property owners who are making their houses available for short-term rentals. Airbnb began with the idea that Joe Gebbia and Brian Chesky in San Francisco would rent out the remaining space in their home available for short-term rental to generate income. Hence, Airbnb helps property owners maximize underutilized housing resources through promotion. These short-term rentals compete with traditional lodging providers by offering alternative accommodation, which is often cost-effective and reveals how consumers are using technology to maximize utility from their fixed travel budgets. In addition, according to Richardson (2015) Airbnb has three key elements of sharing economy in their online business model as follows: (1) Airbnb offers space resources through an online platform. This digital intermediary reduces the cost of connecting potential producers and consumers; (2) It is a peer to peer service which means that Airbnb clients and service providers are interchangeable and Airbnb operators can also be clients when traveling; (3) Airbnb is access-based. This service provides users access to specific resources or services over a period of time. Customers and providers of Airbnb perceive Airbnb as cheaper and more distinctive than traditional accommodation options because of the popularity of the sharing economy system. Customers and providers of Airbnb prefer mutual cooperation and contribute to each other through knowledge, money and service. These factors have increased the elasticity of supply and demand of the accommodation sharing economy.

To some observers and participants, the sharing economy appeared to be a new and appealing way to find a place to stay, a convenient alternative in the global economy. In contrast, for planners and public officials, the sharing economy highlighted an enduring dilemma- how to plan for an informal set of exchanges, using an online platform. The rapid technological developments and the success of the sharing economy have had a negative impact on traditional businesses across various industries who do not cater to these changing trends. Kovacs et al. (2017) argue that sharing economies are not particularly novel, but instead, they resemble other forms of informal vending and entrepreneurial activity. Sharing economy firms are commonly associated with exceptional business opportunities. The high expectations about their future profitability are often based on two characteristics: scalability and network effects. Scalability refers to a firm's ability to flexibly offer its services to a larger number of users without incurring proportional additional costs. Since many firms in the sharing economy offer a self-managed matchmaking service through a digital platform, they can serve additional users at a marginal cost that is close to zero.

Given the economics of software, these firms increase their profit margins as they serve more customers with their platform product. Moreover, the increasing efficiency of cloud computing services like Amazon Web Services allows firms to flexibly adjust their capacity. Given decreasing costs and flexible adjustment, scalable firms have a strong incentive to grow. Network effects describe how a firm's offering becomes more attractive to users as the network of users and suppliers grows. For instance, Airbnb becomes more attractive to travellers as more apartments are available on the platform. In turn, the service becomes more attractive to operators as more people search and book accommodation on the site. This dynamic generally leads to reinforcing the attractiveness to both sides of the market because everybody benefits from a platform's increased network size. Business models that are both scalable and generate network effects are perceived as leading to a virtuous cycle of increased market share and profitability (Klapproth & Martin 2018).

On the other hand, despite the rapid growth of the sharing economy, innovation in ICT has disrupted established industries and led to the emergence of new business models which promise to democratize socio-economic relations, bringing new value to customers, workers and society at large. However as the new business models emerge, they have ignited up many controversies, threaten the traditional business, create fierce competition in the industries and challenges by various stakeholders for example complaints of unfair work practices, protests by people whose livelihoods are affected, concerns expressed by law enforcers in a tussle for new legitimacy (Anna, 2015). In addition, Murillo et al., (2017) state that the sharing economy may also generate many problems and criticism of the sharing economy often involves regulatory uncertainty, for example, unlicensed individuals can offer rental services and charge lower prices. Providing a greater amount of information in the shared platform can create misuse of personal information and racial and gender bias of which many sharing economy supporters are unaware (Murillo et al., 2017).

Malaysian Homestay Concept

In Malaysia, homestay is classified as community-based rural tourism to alleviate the standard of living, encourage the local community to work together, sustain their tradition and identity as well as shared benefits from the homestay client. MOTAC's Homestay programme was launched in 1995. The concept of Malaysian homestay is not about accommodation, but it is intended for tourists to experience the beautiful simplicity of life in the "kampong", allowing tourists the unique opportunity to live with a Malaysian family in a rural setting and learn about the lifestyle and culture by taking part in daily activities with the villagers MOTAC (2011). This is unlike a hotel, motel, lodging houses, inns and bed and breakfast where the tourist stay by themselves and have their own programmed activities.

MOTAC's Homestays can be recognized via MOTAC's Homestay logo exhibited in front of the registered homestay operator premises as shown in figure 1. The MOTAC hold the copyright to the logo, preventing unregistered homestay operators from using it.

Figure 1. Malaysia's Homestay Logo

Methodology

This study is exploratory in nature, using a snowballing technique of collecting data. A qualitative approach was applied whereby in-depth interviews with selected respondents that included 17 officers from governing authorities, like MOTAC and local government, 15 registered and 15 unregistered homestay operators in Selangor selected from Airbnb website as shown in Table 3 below. The selection criteria of Airbnb operators in Klang Valley as follows:

1) Airbnb operators must include tourist attractions that promoted through the website.
2) Airbnb accommodation must be located in Klang Valley and easy to access.
3) Airbnb business owners agree to be interviewed.

Table 1: List of Officer from Governing Bodies in Selangor, Malaysia

NO	OFFICER FROM GOVERNING BODIES
1	Ministry of Tourism, Arts and Culture Malaysia (MOTAC)
2	Ministry of Tourism, Arts and Culture Malaysia, Selangor state office
3	Malaysia Tourism Promotion Board
4	Tourism Selangor Sdn Bhd
5	Malaysian Association of Tour and Travel Agents, Selangor State Office (MATTA)
6	Selangor Homestay Association
7	Ministry of Rural and Regional Development (MRRD)
8	Institute for Rural Advancement (INFRA)
9	Economic Planning Unit, Selangor State
10	Companies Commission of Malaysia, Selangor State office
11	Shah Alam City Council
12	Selayang Municipal Council

13	Sepang Municipal Council
14	Kuala Selangor District Council
15	Hulu Selangor District Council
16	Sabak Bernam District Council
17	Kuala Langat District Council

Source: Author's finding based on the number of Selangor Local Authorities and Direct Governing Bodies Involved in Homestay Programme

These 17 officers of governing bodies were selected for interview participation to gather information about the rise of sharing economy impact and the issues of social inequality as well as weakening its legitimacy.

Table 2: Registered Homestay in Selangor, Malaysia

NO	REGISTERED HOMESTAY	DISTRICT
1	Air Manis	Sabak Bernam
2	Sepintas	Sabak Bernam
3	Sungai Hj. Dorani	Sabak Bernam
4	Seri Kayangan	Sabak Bernam
5	Sg. Nibong Batu 23	Sabak Bernma
6	Papitusulem	Sabak Bernam
7	Sungai Sireh	Kuala Selangor
8	Sg. Tengi	Hulu Selangor
9	Bougainvillea	Gombak
10	Kg Sg Lang Tengah	Kuala Langat
11	Kanchong Darat	Kuala Langat
12	Kg Endah	Kuala Langat
13	Kg Batu Laut	Kuala Langat
14	Kg Kundang	Kuala Langat
15	Banghuris	Sepang

Source: *Industry Development Division, MOTAC*

Table 3: Unregistered Homestay Operator in Selangor, Malaysia from Airbnb Website

NO.	AIRBNB	AREA
1	Classic Malay Home	Kuala Lumpur
2	Lanai Relaxation	Petaling Jaya
3	All Nation Homestay Sekinchan	Sekinchan
4	Homestay @ Empire Damansara	Damansara Perdana
5	Homestay @ Subang Jaya	Subang Jaya
6	D'Bendang Homestay	Tanjong Karang

| 7	Coconut Homestay	Tanjong Karang
8	Jeram Tiny House	Jeram
9	Jerami Park Homestay	Kapar
10	Sekinchan Holidays Farmer Homestay	Sekinchan
11	Omah Liren Homestay	Sungai Besar
12	Garden View	Petaling Jaya
13	Homestay Al-Hanah	Bestari Jaya
14	HomestayKite	Shah Alam
15	KBN_CTK InapRehat Anggerik	Tanjung Karang

Source: Author's finding based on the selection criteria of Airbnb operator in Klang Valley from Airbnb website

Results

Through in-depth interviews, it was revealed that the reduction in transaction costs in sharing economy was facilitated by organizations that often go on to become extremely large and high value international businesses. The success of the sharing economy has had a negative impact on traditional businesses across various industries that do not cater to these changing trends. Although the evidence of those who were operating unregistered homestays was given to the municipal council, state and federal authorities but no clear action has been taken to date. It is evident that the problem faced by MOTAC's homestay may just be the 'tip of the iceberg' as the number of unregistered homestays operators in Malaysia continues to increase. Fair competition and respect for the law are difficult to achieve without public intervention. In the case of homestay, many of the big players in the sharing economy have the means to take advantage of loopholes in national regulations, and the business model seems to revolve around escaping law abidance. Moreover, lack of public surveillance over business operation creates a clear opportunity for tax avoidance (Khan & Adnan Hye 2014; Murillo et al., 2017) and the absence of formal enforcement by MOTAC and the local authorities to control and monitor the increasing number of unregistered homestays led to the likelihood that more registered homestay operators will withdraw from registration as MOTAC's homestay. This is due to the fact that the main motivation factor to participate in the homestay business is the income and this study reveals not all operators who engaged in homestay business received a good income despite lengthy involvement in the homestay business (Nor, S. M., et al., 2017).

Registered Motac's Homestay in Selangor, Malaysia

Figure 2. Registered Homestay in Selangor, Malaysia
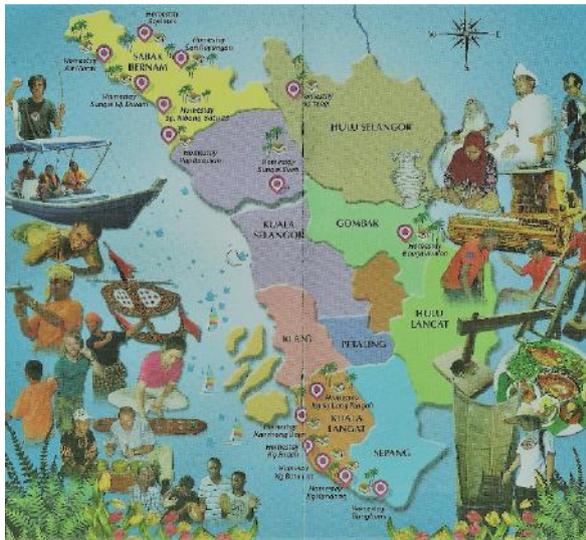
Selangor is located on the west coast of Peninsula Malaysia, covering about 125,000 sq. km. Homestays in Selangor have been developed in almost all districts in Selangor namely Sabak Bernam, Kuala Selangor, Hulu Selangor, Gombak, Hulu Langat, Sepang, and Kuala Langat as shown in Figure 2. In the state of Selangor, there are variants of the homestay programme that are customized to suit the visitor's needs. Table 4 shows registered MOTAC's homestays in Selangor experienced decrease not only in the number of active registered operators from 423 in 2017 to 394 in 2018 but also in the number of tourist arrivals in that period, leading to a decrease in generated income of 2018 at RM1557,569 as well as the number of rooms to 598 from 679. Most homestays are operated by small-scale farmers and villagers with assistance from the state government, the MOTAC, Tourism Malaysia and Tourism Selangor Sdn. Bhd.

Table 4: Registered MOTAC's Homestays in Selangor, Malaysia 2017 to 2018

No.	Registered MOTAC's Homestay	2017				2018			
		No. of Operators	No. of Rooms	Tourist Arrival	Income (RM)	No. of Operators	No. of Rooms	Tourist Arrival	Income (RM)
1	Air Manis	17	45	1,801	111,195	17	45	1,260	47,517
2	Banghuris	80	100	8,925	520,348	80	100	11,486	554,350
3	Bouganvilles	15	20	1,660	100,770	15	20	827	48,950
4	Sg. Haji	20	40	7,668	349,779	20	40	11,287	436,541
5	Dorani Kanchong	50	75	5,568	150,880	50	75	2,346	30,820
6	Darat	**25**	**55**	**213**	**87,050**	**n/a**	**n/a**	**0**	**0**
7	**Kg.**	17	22	891	60,420	17	22	370	42,000
8	**Kundang**	20	36	519	14,030	20	36	177	2,100
9	Kg. Batu Laut	32	79	839	40,820	32	79	283	23,370
10	Sg. Lang	20	20	0	0	20	20	25	500
11	Tengah	25	30	2,674	46,082	25	30	1,478	26,400

12	Papitusulem	40	50	6,485	281,452	40	50	9,943	333,141
13	Sepintas	32	47	7,726	68,570	32	47	810	11,800
14	Batu 23	**30**	**60**	**0**	**0**	**0**	**0**	**0**	**0**
15	Sg. Sireh	-	-	-	-	11	15	26,730	15,030
16	Kg. Endah	-	-	-	-	15	19	n/a	n/a
	Sg. Tengi								
	Sg. Semilang								
	Felda Bukit Cherakah								
	TOTAL	**423**	**679**	**44,969**	**1,831,396**	**394**	**598**	**40,292**	**1,557,569**

Source: Industry Development Division, MOTAC (2019)

Note: In 2009 – Homestay Setangkas withdrew from being registered MOTAC's homestay
followed by Homestay Seri Kayangan in 2015

In 2018 - Homestay Kundang and Homestay Sg, Tengi became inactive from MOTAC's
Homestay

- New registered MOTAC's homestay operators - Homestay Sg. Semilang
establish on 22 November 2017 and Homestay Felda Bukit Cherakah
establish on 7 November 2018

The results show that the number of active registered operators started to decrease in 2009. As a registered operator, the income gained from the homestay business was not directly received from the tourist. Registered homestays have a committee account into which all payments received from the tourists will be credited. This committee will duly pay each registered operator a certain amount that covers the expenditure cost of hosting and some profit. The average homestay income received by registered homestay operator is currently between RM80 to RM150 per month due to the lack of participating tourists. The registered operator also needed to compete among other registered operators in the village. They were not allowed to deal directly with the tourists and bring the tourists to their own house before going through the registration process with the homestay committee. The homestay committee has the authority to assign a registered operator when receiving the tourist. Therefore, some of the registered MOTAC's homestays have opted to leave the homestay business as they were demotivated due to not receiving a tourist and hence less monetary benefits were generated.

Registered Homestay Operators Challenges

Homestay's issues are difficult to deal with and understand and hinder the progress of sustainable homestay development. Homestay issues can be differentiated as external problems, happening outside of the homestay operator control (outside the community) and an internal problems, happening inside of homestay operator control (within the community), while challenges are barriers and or demanding tasks that the operators wish to overcome. From

the results of this study, there were several factors identified as the problems and challenges faced by registered homestay operators when running a homestay business.

Generally, the problems and challenges which dominate and manipulate context for registered homestay operators can be divided into external and internal and were identified by the factors as follows:

External Problems and Challenges
(1) Lack of Homestay Concept and Big Gap of Homestay Income
(2) Strive to comply with strict MOTAC's operating guidelines
(3) The rise of the sharing economy
(4) Connected with widens network
(5) Lack of homestay regulation and monitoring by the ministry, state and local government

This results indicate that building a homestay brand identity is a crucial component for registered homestay operators to deliver their brand promise due to unregistered homestay operators who manipulate the "homestay" term and offer unregistered accommodation to tourists. Signage with "Homestay" titles in front of individually-owned premises may mislead tourists who anticipate a full homestay programme. Brand identity is the homestay DNA which includes what the homestay brand says and what its values are. In Malaysia, the homestay concept is unique because tourists are not only exposed to the way of living with a local family but also have the opportunity to experience the Malaysian culture, especially in the Malay community. Unfortunately, Malaysian homestay brand identity has been tarnished by many owners of lodging operations, using the term 'Homestay' without following the homestay concept set by MOTAC leading to confusion for tourists keen to experience a genuine Malaysian homestay.

An officer from the Tourism Selangor Office said, *"…Tourists have complained of having been cheated in Homestay Programmes…Some did not fulfil the criteria as promoted in the package and tourists were disappointed with the quality of service at the Homestay premises"* (Respondent 31).

Findings from the interviews also revealed that other factors as follows:

Lack of Homestay Concept and Big Gap of Homestay Income

There is a substantial lack of public understanding regarding the homestay concept due to lack of MOTAC homestay marketing and promotion. According to an unregistered homestay operator, *"This is an opportunity to do a homestay business. There is a good demand and it*

gives high returns although we provide no cultural-related activities" (Respondent 16). Moreover, the misuse of the "homestay" title by opportunists not only leads to confusion among tourists regarding the Malaysian homestay concept as stated by MOTAC but also affect the homestay income of registered operators. In addition, the interview results find that the number of registered homestay operators started to decrease in 2009. For a registered homestay operator, the income gained from the homestay business was not directly received from the tourist. Registered homestays have a committee account into which all payments received from the tourists are credited. The associated committee duly pays each registered operator a certain amount that covers the expenditure cost of hosting and includes some profit.

Findings from the study are taht the average homestay income received by registered homestay operators is currently between RM239 to RM529 per month due to the lack of participating tourists. Sometimes the income received dropped to RM100 per month if only one tourist was allocated to the homestay host. The registered homestay operator not only needed to compete with others registered homestay operators in the village but also compete with unregistered homestay operators and was not allowed to deal directly with the tourists and bring the tourist to their own house before going through the registration process with the homestay committee. The homestay committee has the authority to assign a registered homestay operator when receiving the tourist. Therefore, some of the registered homestay operators have opted to leave the homestay business as they were demotivated due to not being allocated visitors and thus less monetary benefit was generated. Furthermore, the big gap found in homestay income between registered homestay operators and unregistered homestay operators become a major factor in the increasing number of unregistered homestay operators in Selangor.

As mentioned by a registered homestay operator (Respondent 3), "*We are disappointed with the big number of unregistered homestay operators, because of them our small income is affected and so our good names…unregistered homestay operators may earn between RM1,200 to RM2,000 per month compared to us it's so hard to get*".

Strive to comply with strict MOTAC's operating guidelines

To be a MOTAC's homestay operator, the potential registered operator must fulfil the registration requirements as shown in Figure 3, such as a minimum of 10 homes per homestay, at least have 2 extra rooms to offer, easy accessibility to tourist in terms of transportation and communication, act-and-think tourism attitude, optimum level of cleanliness and safety, and community activities that involve traditional games and introduction to local culture (Nor S. M. et al., 2012). Apart from that, registered operators must attend a basic homestay course and participate in a practical homestay experience. Moreover, potential registered operators will have a comprehensive on-site evaluation by representatives from MOTAC, Department of Health (DOH), Tourism Malaysia, Homestay Association and the *Jawatan Kuasa Kemajuan*

dan Keselamatan Kampung (JKKK) to ensure that every aspect and requirement is fulfilled before successful registration as MOTAC homestay operator. After having fulfilled these conditions registered MOTAC's homestays are inspected every three years for regulation compliance (Nor S. M. et al., 2017).

Figure 3. MOTAC Homestay Requirement

A respondent from an unregistered homestay claimed that, *"...it's hard to fulfil the requirement set by the ministry because it involves many layers of evaluation...if 5 houses success meet the requirement but the other 5 houses failed then as a whole no one can be a registered homestay...we cannot control other home-owners ...what we can control is our home"* (Respondent 18). Another respondent who also experience unregistered homestay stated (Respondent 20), *"...Nothing to lose not being a MOTAC homestay...because we are the one who can control our business...we have the full freedom to do anything on our business...in fact, we have a lot of opportunities to earn more money without any headaches".*

The rise of the sharing economy

One of the major attractions of using a platform like Airbnb is to earn extra income. An integration of technology and the power of collaborative platforms in the online marketplace has reduced transaction costs making homestay prices cheaper compared to hotels, allowing more data on homestay accommodation and tourist preferred location to be disaggregated. Also known as collaborative consumption or peer-to-peer:

- Use information technology (IT systems), typically available via web-based platforms, such as mobile "apps" on Internet- enabled devices, to facilitate peer-to-peer transactions.
- Rely on user-based rating systems for quality control, ensuring a level of trust between consumers and service providers who have not previously met.

Thus encouraging unregistered homestays operators to make money from their underused assets.

As mentioned by unregistered homestay operator (Respondent 25), *"Many tourists use Airbnb because it can be beneficial for both the owner of the house and the guests...we can offer our homestay price cheaper than hotel...if I rent my apartment with 12 months, monthly I just got fixed RM1800...but if I rent daily rate RM200 and I advertised via Airbnb my potential gross profit per day is RM140, per month RM4,200...sound good, right?"*

Connected with widens network

Through an investigation online marketplaces such as Airbnb mobile application (app), it is easy to see why so many people are opting to become unregistered homestay operators as Airbnb has been operating since 2008 connecting peoples to online booking accommodation in more than 65,000 cities and 191 countries. A respondent from an unregistered homestay said, *"...There are not many business opportunities that I can get free marketing and access to the big number of renter... more people now opting to use Airbnb... guest looking for a 5-star home with a cheaper price...I'm renting out several apartments and rooms full time and has welcomed over 600 guests...There is good demand although I do not provide any activity"* (Respondent 26).

In the case of MOTAC homestays, tourists can only view the list of registered homestay operators from the official MOTAC website at https://www.tourism.gov.my . There is a limited number of mobile websites (web apps) available to book a registered homestay, as well as there being no registered homestay app available to download and install from an online store such as app store or google play.

Chang (2015) in his study on 'Growing Pains: The Role of Regulation in the Collaborative Economy', stated that *"A collaborative economy gives everyone the capability to access underutilized or unused assets...the collaborative economy is so powerful because people stand to gain something from their participation lead to constitute a powerful force that redistributes*

social and economic power into the hands of the consumer…collaborative economy offers a distributed network of individuals builds upon a foundation of trust…large networks are exponentially more valuable than smaller network thus increasing the possibility of monopolizing in the market".

The effectiveness of the online homestay marketplace to connect people with a large network example like Airbnb highlights the possibility of unregistered homestay operators monopolization of the homestay market. This trend can be seen when the number of unregistered homestay operators continues increasing. Small profit and competition with the increasing number of unregistered homestays have further demotivated registered MOTAC's homestay operators to upgrade their facilities and compromised the quality of service as perceived by tourists (Nor S. M. et al., 2012; Kimengsi & Gwan 2017 and Nor S. M. et al., 2017).

Lack of homestay regulation and monitoring by the ministry and state government

An officer from the Tourism Selangor Office said, *"…There is a lot of homestay advertisement in front of a privately- owned house as well as in the online booking…Tourists have complained of having been cheated in Homestay Programmes…Some did not fulfil the offer as promoted on the website and tourists were disappointed with the quality of service"* (Respondent 34). In addition, according to an officer from MOTAC, *"…To be a registered homestay is on voluntary basis…there have strict criteria need to fulfil before being a registered MOTAC's homestay and promoted by MOTAC…Currently, we do not have specific laws for the ministry to act against the unregistered homestay…there is no law to compel them to be a registered homestay with the ministry"* (Respondent 40). Moreover, an officer from MOTAC said, *"We have limited in manpower to monitor unregistered homestays…but we are aware there is a big number out there…unfortunately, no action can be taken to them because their businesses are operated legitimately…it just the matter they not register their homestay with us"* (Respondent 45). Respondent 38 an officer from Companies Commission of Malaysia (CCM) mentioned that *"We cannot stop private homestay operators because they are conducting legal activities and we cannot accuse them to be illegal homestay just because they are not registered with the MOTAC…but we can help the ministry by asking new company registrations for those using the 'Homestay' title need to attach an approval letter from the MOTAC before we proceed to process their application".*

An officer from Sabak Bernam District Council said that, *"…In Selangor, you cannot find any district council except Sabak Bernam strictly enforce private homestay operator to register their homestay business under us…we have the authority to give them a license because their business was operated under our territories…bylaw we have act…call Local Government Act 1976…it's under our - Undang-Undang Kecil Hotel (MDSB, 2007)… but we not allowed them*

using the homestay name like MOTAC homestay…our district council homestay name is housestay to avoid tourists confuse between MOTAC homestay with district council homestay…our first housestay is Shah Jehan housestay…by giving them license their housestay business is not classified as illegal homestay…they still have to fulfil the basic requirement like normal business…as the advantage, it can be our source of revenue" (Respondent 31).

An important distinction must be made between registered MOTAC's homestay and unregistered homestay operators. The role of regulatory action to monitor homestay business is mandatory as long as it is done fairly and does not overly restrict the business. In addition, there is a need to develop the homestay business collaborative economy model because the business should not be illegal. For the start-up, it would be good to benchmark if Sabak Bernam District Council did to curb unregistered homestay operator's issues.

Internal Problems and Challenges

(1) Weak administration and management
(2) Lack of creativity and entrepreneurship skill lead to over-dependence on outside assistance
(3) Incompetent community leadership and commitment.
(4) Inadequate infrastructure facilities
(5) Conflict of interest among homestay coordinator

Weak administration and management

A homestay coordinator or manager is selected by the local community to act as a leader and authorized by MOTAC to run the homestay programme and determine the fees for the homestay packages. The findings from this research reveal weak homestay administration and management lead to miscommunication because the homestay coordinator might not be sure who needs information or where to send information message. In addition, lack of transparency and informal management system are perceived to affect the management of homestay programmes. Conflicts in the community may arise and the negative attitude and breakdown of unity may threaten homestay sustainability.

Through in-depth interviews, it was ascertained that registered homestay operators are never involved in homestay management and administration. Hence, for homestay management, it was difficult to create effective long-term homestay strategies which often require input from marketing, accounting and information technology in order to create the updated homestay packages as well as expanding a new homestay target market and networking channels. According to (Respondent 7) from registered homestay operator, *"…our coordinator did not inform us if they have planning for new homestay business strategies… it was not because we*

do not want to involve in homestay management, the problem is we do not aware about their planning or homestay business strategies…”. Moreover, through the in-depth interview, the researcher noted several comments from registered homestay operators regarding the outdated homestay packages price which is not in line with current inflation. (Respondent 9) from registered homestay operator said that *“our homestay package price is not relevant anymore because the price level that we used until now is from the year 1995…but as you can see the expenses cost is keep increasing…the price of the product now is not the same in 1995…if a long time ago yes…I believe through homestay business…I can get profit…but now I am not so sure because I never record any expenses and revenues from this business”.*

In addition, according to (Respondent 10) from registered homestay operator said that, *“…I have joined homestay business since 1996…and as far as I can remember…the price of our homestay package never revises…and that price now is not worth anymore…our homestay operating cost now is higher compared to 10 years ago…homestay package price needs to be revised”.* Likewise, (Respondent 11) also from registered homestay operator said that *“…the management do not have a proper system to allocate tourist to the homestay host… I never received any tourist since I register as a homestay operator…”.* Moreover, according to (Respondent 15) stated that *“Tourist distribution to the homestay host is not based on a turn, I do receive tourist but very rarely…I don’t want to get homestay money from the coordinator after the tourist goes home…the revenue is too little below RM100…to avoid me felt disappointed I only take the homestay money from the coordinator at the end of the year”.*

Lack of creativity and entrepreneurship skill lead to over-dependence on outside assistance

Various researchers found that there was direct relation between creativity and entrepreneurship, and they cannot be separated (Ko and Butler 2007; Majid et al., 2019; Gielnik et. al., 2013; Siemon et. al., 2016). According to Siemon et.al., (2016) in his study on creativity and entrepreneurship- the role of creativity support systems for start-up, found that information technology can be effectively used to support creativity. In the case of the homestay, the researcher found that there are mental barriers among older community members who did not use information technology to support creativity because they were not familiar with using a computer as well as the problem in identification of homestay business opportunities and social networks leading to over-dependence on outside assistance. The community also has seen a lack of confidence in their business and do not know how to promote and market their product.

During this investigastion, the researcher found that the shop lot at the area of Banghuris homestay is now standing almost idle like a white elephant and subjected to vandalism during the past three years as shown in Figure 4.

Figure 4. Idle Shop Lot at Banghuris Homestay Area

According to the (Respondent 14), from registered homestay operator *"…This shop lot is an effort to market rural products by Rural and Industrial Development Authority (RIDA)…to foster the interest of the rural community towards rural industries…but the community reluctant to run their business there…like myself, I run a small business… I found my business is unstable and not every day I have the customer, but the rental cost is fixed…I have to pay the rental which is cost between RM80 to RM100 per month not included the utility bill…So to be safe better I operate my small business at home…at least I can save my money".*

Incompetent community leadership and commitment

Incompetent community leadership and commitment is often a result of failure to develop the required skills such as communication, management, planning, development vision and discipline. When the community is unwilling to change, the culture created is reactive, hindering creativity, problems are not learned from and others are not included in the problem-solving process. Observation from the research area found that multi-purpose hall at Banghuris homestay is not clean. The cleanliness and beautification of the hall buildings and hallways are important for a healthy and comfortable resident life and provide a good image of the designated village and JKKK as well as the tourist perception. Throughout this study, it was found that the hall had serious damage where the window structure, doors, roofs and floors were broken and pulled out. The damage caused the multi-purpose hall to not be used. Apart from that, the other research area at Kg. Kundang homestay's shows that the JKKK management office also face likelihood of the same damage. (refer to Figure 5 and Figure 6).

Figure 5. Multi-Purpose Hall at Banghuris Homestay

Figure 6. JKKK Management Office at Kg. Kundang Homestay

Through the in-depth interview process, it was found that the multi-purpose hall and the JKKK management office were not cleaned and not maintained by the village JKKK because JKKK does not receive financial resources from any parties for maintenance purposes. Thus, minor maintenance and repairs that are not made can cause serious damage and people cannot afford the facilities provided. Apart from that as shown in Figure 7, there is the issue of improper disposal of solid waste faced by Homestay Bougainvillea. Although the village head keeps reminding the villagers to dispose of their solid waste at community bins, they continue to dispose of their waste in the streets, holes and nearby bushes. Improper waste management contributes to disease and produces a foul odour, not only constituting a source of environmental nuisance but also potentially damaging tourism image.

Figure 7. Solid Waste Problem at Kampung Sungai Kertas (Homestay Bougainvillea)

Inadequate infrastructure facilities

Figure 8. Kg. Kundang Homestay Cultural Stage at the Individual Landlord

Figure 8 shows that registered homestays are faced with inadequate infrastructure facilities. According to (Respondent 12) registered homestay operator, *"…we are faced with insufficient facilities such as a cultural stage for us to do cultural performance… this is due to the political factors…formerly tourism is under the government of Barisan National but after Selangor under the opposition government, the allocation of the tourism budget has not been received at the state level… But the federal government can allocate the budget for the cultural stage with the condition that the cultural stage has to be built on the individual landlord, not in state landlord…For the long-term, if the individual landlord does not want to allow us to use the cultural stage in his land then we cannot do anything".*

Moreover, the same problem is faced by Homestay Bougainvillea where they are confronting the problem of open space hall ownership after 2009 when the Selangor fell under the opposition government. According to (Respondent 5) from Homestay Bougainvillea, *"…after Pembangkang won the election, the ownership of our open space hall has been changed to the state ownership under Selayang Municipal Council…and if we want to use that hall we have to pay rent which is cost around RM1500 per month…previously before Pembangkang won we use that hall without pay anything…and because of that, I am so upset…I used my backyard as a stage for Cultural Show but of course there has the limited space"*, refer Figure 9 until Figure 12.

Figure 9. Open Space Hall Before 2009 when the hall ownership was under Homestay Bougainvillea

Figure 10. Unusable Open Scape Hall After 2009 when Homestay Bougainvillea lost the hall ownership after "Pembangkang" won the Election

Figure 11. Current Homestay Bougainvillea Stage for Cultural Show (limited space at Haji Ruslan's Backyard)

Figure 12. Traditional Instrument "Chaklempong" store at Homestay manager backyard

Conflict of interest with homestay coordinators

A conflict of interest is a situation in which a person or organization is involved in multiple interests, personal monetary interest or otherwise, having the potential to compromise or bias judgment and serving one stakeholder interest which could involve working against another. Conflict of interest among homestay coordinators threatens the registered homestay operator's business opportunity. When the operators sense an imminent layoff, gossip spreads through the village. Registered homestay operator's morale is consequently reduced, and they will stop trusting and respecting the homestay coordinator.

Homestay coordinators who instil fear tends to assign blame, withhold information and answer questions in a vague manner. They refrain from showing compassion and create a persona that appears unapproachable. They also thrive on being unpredictable and this has an effect because when operators are uncertain, they are fearful. In the case of homestay, the researcher found that there have several complaints from registered homestay operator/s regards conflict of interest with their homestay coordinator. This is because the homestay coordinator also offers their house for tourists to stay. Therefore, from the research findings, to avoid the appearance of a conflict of interest with homestay coordinator, it is best for the coordinator to abstain from offering their house to the tourists.

According to (Respondent 13), one of the registered Homestay operators claimed that *"It has been a long time since I last received visiting tourists. When the tourists come to our village, our homestay coordinator always brings them to his own house. At first, I thought maybe the tourists chose to stay there, but when other tourists come, they too stay at his house. Other Homestay operators are also aware of this issue but there is nothing that we can do"*. In addition, there has been conflict at Homestay Seri Kayangan where the homestay coordinator's post has been seized by irresponsible parties after the former homestay coordinator successfully registered a homestay business with MOTAC and took a personal bank loan RM 29,000 to cover the cost of homestay development facilities. Hence the progress of homestay development has been stunted as shown in Figure 13 and more registered operators have shifted direction to a new coordinator who has a greater percentage of votes. Unfortunately, under the new direction and incompetent leadership, Homestay Seri Kayangan experienced a decrease not only in the number of actively registered homestay operators but also in the number of tourist arrivals. Thus, Homestay Seri Kayangan has been inactive from homestay business since 2014 and withdrew from being a registered homestay in 2018.

Figure 13. The development of Homestay Seri Kayangan facilities that have been stunted

The research observation is that weak homestay administration and management skills, lack of creativity and entrepreneurship skill, inadequate infrastructure facilities, over-dependence on outside assistance and incompetent community leadership and commitment carry long-lasting effects and may infect an entire community.

Discussion and Conclusion

The success of the sharing economy has had a negative impact on MOTAC'S homestay traditional businesses which do not cater to changing consumer trends. There is a new trend with the consumer who doesn't want ownership of assets and prefers to "share" assets in an as-needed basis with the convenience of their smartphone or laptop. The value of a product is beginning to be seen in terms of its use, not in its outright ownership, as per traditional consumer models. There is also an increased level of acceptance of online platforms such as Airbnb, as it is evident that people like simplicity and personalization. With Airbnb, people get a more unique and enhanced experience staying at others' home that comes with personalized touches and even opportunities to socialize with other guests and owners. Discovering that sharing economy services are often more convenient and less expensive therefore, people are adapting to collaborative lifestyles.

Empirical evidence of the benefits and costs of the sharing economy and its implications is very limited and inconclusive, particularly with regards to unregistered homestay business. The available research is too limited to give us a comprehensive and coherent picture of the sharing economy in the homestay business context and is often presented by stakeholders in the current controversies. The sharing economy can have positive or negative effects for society as a whole in terms of innovation, security risks and the tax base. It has also driven entrepreneurialism and reinvigorated the concept of sharing. The exciting growth market for alternative accommodation such as homestay encourages more people to rent out their underutilized or unused home for a short-term period. Many tourists use online marketplaces to scout homestay options because the prices are cheaper compared to hotels. Established registered homestay operator's stand to lose if the sharing economy competes with unregistered homestay operators in an unregulated market. Aware of the power large networks offer through the online

marketplace as well as potential monetary benefits from the collaborative economy, the majority of home-owners use the online marketplace as a medium to advertise their home. This phenomenon projects a false image of a true Malaysian homestay experience to tourists. Authorities, particularly MOTAC and local authorities, who give out licenses for homestay businesses must become proactive in dealing with the collaborative economy, as no enforcement agency has stepped forward to take the lead in addressing the mushrooming of the unregistered homestay.

For the case of MOTAC's homestay, registered operators are now concerned and want to address the sharing economy disruptors from stealing their profits. Established registered homestay operators are fighting to sustain their businesses within the conventional business model for its high profitability. MOTAC homestay is threatened by the competition from the current sharing economy which has an interest in keeping barriers to entry high so they can reap extra profit from a more captive market. Major industries like these are not going to appreciate disruptors like Airbnb. The incumbents often use political and regulatory associations to restrict peer-to-peer businesses and protect their market position. Similarly, Airbnb is constantly targeted by the hotel industry which requests that they be taxed in the same way as hotels along with safety and licensing standards compliance to even out the playing field.

New technologies of peer-to-peer economic activity are potentially powerful tools for building a social movement centred on genuine practices of sharing and cooperation in the production and consumption of goods and services. Achieving that potential will require democratizing the ownership and governance of the platforms." Lodging house businesses for all residential apartments, condominium, flats and the gated residential house should be regulated and have to operate within the license regardless of the use of 'homestay' or 'housestay' terms or whether it is a MOTAC, state or district council homestay. Registered MOTAC homestay operators face challenges to survive in their homestay business and become less enthusiastic in delivering good quality of service to tourists. As a result, more registered homestay operators are likely to withdraw from MOTAC's homestay registration not only due to insufficient homestay income compared to an unregistered homestay but also because of compliance with strict operating guidelines set by MOTAC. Moreover, there will be plenty of finger-pointing as tourists have become confused with the actual homestay concept in Malaysia and have many complaints regards to unethical issue in the context of unregistered homestay operators. This may tarnish the good name of registered MOTAC homestays as well as the Malaysian reputation as a winner of international recognition of the UNWTO Ulysses Award for innovation in public policy and governance. Homestay business should always maintain a high level of security, safety, cleanliness and embracing think and proactive tourism.

The implications of the sharing economy debate regarding constant adaptation to customers' changing needs and desires continues to develop and play out, necessitating that competing

claims in tone from enhancing the industry to warnings about the new economy's "dark side". Could the sharing economy become a victim of its own success? Increased regulation and taxes are likely to mean higher prices for consumers, therefore defeating the goal of peer-to-peer businesses which are designed to cut costs and move business away from the hands of overbearing authority and middlemen. Consumers will continue to want goods and services faster, better and cheaper and grab opportunities to gain value from their existing assets. Therefore, regulations need to be revised to suitably align with changes in consumer interests for the growth of the sharing economy. The change is inevitable, and regulations should facilitate increased efficiency for consumers through peer-to-peer services. Established industries should learn to evolve or adapt effectively to meet the modern technological realities, or risk becoming obsolete. They need to get on board with consumer demands for improved services at a lower price and move away from the traditional business models in order to survive and sustain their marketplace and capitalize on the sharing economy's potential benefits.

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